Life-Changing Schools For All Students
California Partnership for the Future of Learning
Community Schools Toolkit
About the California Partnership for the Future of Learning (CA PFL)

The California Partnership for the Future of Learning is a statewide alliance of community organizing and advocacy groups advancing a shared vision of a transformational, racially just education system built for us all. It is led by Catalyst California (formerly Advancement Project), Californians for Justice, PICO California Education for Liberation, and Public Advocates, with the support of Building Healthy Communities Monterey County, Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle, and over a dozen grassroots, research and philanthropic partners. Our work together centers equity, elevates the voices of students and families of color in partnership with educators, focuses on long-term systemic change, and connects to a larger national effort to strengthen public education systems.

Our North Star

The California Partnership for the Future of Learning is advancing a shared vision of racially just relationship-centered community schools that confront the historical legacy and generational impact of inequitable schooling in California and the country to birth a transformational education system built for us all.

To get updates on our Community Schools Toolkit sign-up to our listserv here.
Acknowledgements

This toolkit was made possible by the contributions of the following organizations and networks, many of whom are made up of students, parents/caregivers, educators, school-site and district staff, community members, researchers, policy advocates, organizers and more. We are deeply grateful to everyone lending materials from decades of education organizing, as well as the work they continue to do for the transformation of our public education system.

California Partnership for The Future of Learning Anchor and Support Organizations

Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Monterey County
Californians for Justice
Catalyst California
Community Coalition
Inner City Struggle
Inland Congregations United for Change/PICO California Education for Liberation
Orange County Congregation Community Organization/PICO California Education for Liberation
PICO California
Public Advocates
Sacramento Act/PICO California Education for Liberation
True North Organizing Network/PICO California Education for Liberation

Featured Organizations and Networks

Alameda County Health Care Services Agency Center for Healthy Schools & Communities
Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
The Alliance for California Traditional Arts
BHC Monterey County La Cosecha
BHC Monterey County Padres Unidos
Building Healthy Communities Monterey County
BHC Peninsula Parent Coalition
California Children’s Trust
Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative
EBAYC
Education Trust - West
Elk Grove Unified School District
Facilitating Power
Families in Schools
Felicitas & Gonzalo Mendez High School
Frick United Academy of Language
Garfield Elementary School
International Community School
Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo High School
Learning Policy Institute
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
Movement Strategy Center
Parent Teacher Home Visits
Pittsburg Unified School District
Pomona High School
Pomona Peer Resources
Promesa Boyle Heights
Oakland High School Shop 55
Oakland International High School
Roosevelt High School
Shasta County Office of Education
Youth Alliance

Individual Contributors
We also want to appreciate some individual members of our community who made this particular stage of the Toolkit possible—gathering stories and resources; coordinating with partners, conducting interviews and weaving stories; and making the brilliance and power of our movement accessible as a printed and web-based resource.

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The California Partnership for the Future of Learning (CA PFL) Community Schools Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to:

- Provide background on how the $4.1 billion investment in community schools was won through organizing led by students, families, and community in partnership with educators. Realizing the vision for community schools will depend on continuing to live into authentic partnership grounded in shared power and decision-making at the school, district, and state levels.

- Share examples of how students, families, and communities organize to transform schools in their neighborhoods.

- Support students, families, and community members as leaders and experts in co-creating and sustaining racially just, relationship-centered community schools in partnership with educators at the school and district levels.

“We know that transformation happens when students, families, community, and educators are authentic partners. It takes all of us to create community schools.”

- ROSARIO HERNANDEZ, TRUE NORTH PARENT AND COMMUNITY LEADER, LOLETA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Photo Credit: Californians for Justice
# ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TOOLKIT:

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a Transformational Community Schools Approach?</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to Crisis with Hope: Students, Families &amp; Community Organize for Racially Just, Relationship-Centered Community Schools Across California</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming Vision into Reality: Bringing the Win Home</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implementing the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and Sustaining a Community School</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Start with Diverse Shared Decision-Making Teams</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Students, Families, and Community are Essential to Transforming Schools &amp; Neighborhoods</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ What is Authentic Student, Family and Community Engagement?</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Designing &amp; Planning: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Listening Campaigns: An Approach to Needs and Assets Assessment</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Establishing Your Multi-Stakeholder Shared Decision-Making Teams</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Expanding Capacity for School Transformation</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ The Role of the Community School Coordinator</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nurture Racially Just, Relationship-Centered, and Restorative School Cultures</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Dismantling Racism &amp; Repairing Institutional Harm to Build Healing &amp; Racially Just School Cultures</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Build Authentic Relationships Between Students, Families, Educators, and Community Partners</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Building Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture in Transforming Schools</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Center Mental Health and Wellness for Students, Families, and Staff</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Creating Circles of Support</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ School-Based Health Centers / Wellness Centers</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Long-term Resources for Sustaining Mental Health &amp; Wellness: How to Leverage Partnerships and Funding</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Database</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is a Transformational Community Schools Approach?
Transformational Community Schools is a long-term, place-based strategy for cradle-to-career school and systems transformation that will improve social emotional wellbeing and academic opportunities and outcomes for all students. Transformative Community Schools are not a program, they are an approach to how we do school. Families, students, educators, and local community members work together as partners to organize in- and out-of-school resources, supports, and opportunities so that young people thrive.¹

Trust, respect, and seeing students and families as partners, are essential to creating community schools. When students & families are a part of making decisions, we can expand our capacity to transform our schools.

When we honor the expertise and lived experiences of students, families, and the broader community, we improve the social emotional experiences and academic outcomes for all students. Embracing communities’ inherent wisdom leads to healing, joyful, and culturally sustaining educational experiences that transform students’ lives in profound ways. This approach confronts the legacy and generational impact of divestment and racialized inequities in education, paving the way for school communities to heal. By prioritizing belonging, safety, care, and support over punishment and criminalization, we can reimagine our schools as powerful hubs of opportunity, joy, and belonging.

Together, we can create schools where children and youth, families, educators, and community partners have the support needed to thrive and transform the future of California.


Watch What is a Community School? by The California Endowment, Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, and the CA Partnership for the Future of Learning
Essentials for Community School Transformation

To realize this vision students, families, organizers, and advocates from across California recommend further strengthening the four pillars of California’s Community Schools Framework by applying a racial equity and inclusion lens to each pillar, and based on the understanding that authentically shared power and decision-making and racially just, relationship-centered school climate and culture must be at the foundation of transformational community schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Pillars of California Community Schools Framework Adopted in Jan 2022</th>
<th>Community Vision for Expanded Pillars for Transformative, Racially Just, Relationship-Centered Community Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family and community engagement</td>
<td>Active Student, Family and Community Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative leadership and practices for educators and administrators</td>
<td>Shared Power and Collaborative Leadership and Practices for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities</td>
<td>Enriched, Culturally Sustaining, and Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated student supports</td>
<td>Integrated Student, Family, and Staff Supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CA Partnership for the Future of Learning Train-the-Trainer: What is a Transformative Community School?
Responding to Crisis with Hope: Students, Families & Community Organize for Racially Just Relationship-Centered Community Schools Across California
In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic began, we saw a crisis emerge. Schools across California closed down in response to COVID-19 and students and families lost access to schools as critical hubs of connection, community resources, and learning. This was experienced most acutely by low-income students and families of color. Members of the California Partnership for the Future of Learning responded by conducting a listening campaign with allies from across the state. This listening campaign included more than 20 grassroots education and racial-justice organizations who heard from over 600 students and families from low-income communities of color in more than 20 school districts.

The need for mental health support, accompanied by a sense of belonging and strong relationships, for access to equitable learning opportunities, and for engaging students and families as equal partners in decision-making emerged as key issues.

As a result of this listening campaign, the CA PFL began to shift focus to prioritize increased funding for transformative, racially just and relationship-centered community schools. Students, families, community, and educators developed a policy platform, which aligned with the core pillars and approach of community schools. The pandemic exposed decades of long-standing racialized systemic inequities in education with resulting gaps in opportunity and academic outcomes. However, where families, students, educators, and community built relationships and partnered, schools were better able to support students and adults alike through the crisis. Students, families, community, and educators called on policy makers to expand racially just, relationship-centered schools—which center shared power and decision-making with students, families, educators, and community to heal from the pandemic and transform the future of California.

As one Oakland student shared “We can’t go back to normal. Normal wasn’t working for a lot of people, especially students of color. We must work together with decision-makers to create a school where we are comfortable and can succeed. I don’t want to go back to a classroom, I want to go back to a community.”

Students, families, and community organizers across California leveraged decades of organizing, advocacy, and research to turn the crisis of the pandemic into an opportunity to address the impacts of intergenerational divestment and structural racism in education and move towards their transformative vision of an educational system built for us all. They spoke at legislative hearings and met with policy makers to advocate for equitable investments in transformational, relationship-centered community schools.

For example, student and family leaders, organizers and advocates honored Memorial Day 2020 by testifying at the Senate Education Budget Committee. Judith Mendez, a Spanish speaking mother of two and PICO CA Education for Liberation leader from Oakland, called on legislators “to ensure that equity is a reality, not just in words, but in action.” Jamila Rice, a youth organizer with Californians for Justice in Long Beach lifted the importance of investing in community schools “that provide health care to families, have smaller class sizes,
that help parents learn new skills—schools that prioritize relationships with students, schools that nurture relationships with students who are arriving in this country for the first time.”

On June 29, 2020, the Governor and legislature responded by investing $45 million in grants for sustaining or expanding community schools.

Memorial Day 2020 was also the day of George Floyd’s murder. Communities in California, across the US, and around the world expressed their pain and outrage through taking public action. The racial uprisings following the murder of George Floyd and the ongoing trauma associated with racialized killings, continued to expose the impacts of the systemic racism permeating our society. This further highlighted the critical role community schools can play in healing children and young people and transforming schools and communities. Students, families, organizers, educators, and advocates responded by elevating the urgent need for schools in every community in California to become racially just and relationship-centered community schools.

Fueled by the impacts of the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism, families, students, community organizers and advocates across California were spurred to organize and advocate for much greater transformative investments in Black and Brown children and youth. They shifted from advocating for millions to advocating for BILLIONS of dollars in increased funding for community schools.

In June 2021, this advocacy/organizing effort contributed to an historic investment, as Governor Newsom and the California Legislature approved $3 billion in one-time community schools grant funding over 7 years.

Following the approval of the budget in June 2021, students, families, organizers and advocates shifted the focus to organizing and advocating to support strong and equitable implementation of the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP). While securing the budget allocation was an historic milestone, it was just the first step. Low-income students and families, community partners, and educators knew from experience the importance of impacting the development of the CCSPP at every level—from the school site, to the district, to the state—to ensure that their vision for transformative racially just and relationship-centered community schools becomes a reality for students in thousands of schools across California.

The goal was for students, families, and communities to inform and impact the new statewide California Framework, Planning and Implementation, and Lead and Regional Technical Assistance Center grants for the CCSPP. In August 2021, the CA PFL joined with the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (ABMOC), and allied
organizers, advocates, and community partners from across the state to exchange ideas about how to ensure strong implementation of the CCSPP. This included impacting the development of the new California Community Schools Framework, and the Requests for Applications for Planning and Implementation grants, and the Lead and Regional Technical Assistance Centers.

In November and December of 2021, the CA PFL and ABMoC supported six California Department of Education-hosted regional community schools forums to ensure they were an effective vehicle for students, families, community members, and educators to impact the development of the California Community Schools Framework.

More than 600 students, families, educators, advocates, and community members took part in six virtual multilingual community schools forums organized by geographic region. Participants heard presentations and shared their experiences, hopes and dreams, and program recommendations in Arabic, English, Purepecha, and Spanish.

Forum participants heard an overview of the CCSPP, followed by presentations from student, family, and educator leaders about opportunities and challenges in their regions. Participants then came together in small groups for facilitated conversations to share their hopes, concerns, priorities, and wisdom about what makes an excellent community school, and what is standing in the way of realizing that vision. Following the forums, the CA PFL and ABMoC consolidated the community recommendations into a report and advocacy letter with broad support from 57 allied organizing and advocacy groups from across California.

Students families, and community identified six essential priorities or components for successful, racially just community schools:

1. **Power-sharing with students, families, educators, and community partners:**
   - Nothing About Us Without Us: Students and families must have an equal and respected voice in decision making at the school site and district levels. Multi-interest holder shared decision-making teams must reflect the diversity of the community and include directly impacted students and their families, especially those that are under-resourced and under-represented—along with educators, support staff, administrators, and community partners.
   - Solutions that are collaboratively developed and broadly held are more sustainable over time.

2. **Trusting relationships and communication form the foundation:**
   - Create and support a culture and practice of authentic relationships, centered on supporting students and grounded in cultural humility, mutual respect, and a commitment to engage as informed and equal partners; this includes capacity building for educators and staff.

3. **Learning must be effective, inspiring, and culturally rooted:**
   - Support culturally rooted programs and curricula that foster racially just schools. Provide capacity building and support for staff, particularly aimed at anti-racist pedagogy and practice.
   - Recruit, hire, and retain diverse, multilingual, multi-racial, staff who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.
   - Inspire students through experiential and project-based learning, the arts, music, and outdoor learning connected to the community.
4. **Inclusive, safe, and police-free schools:**
   - Move from criminalization to connections: Prohibit the use of funds for school police, criminalization and exclusionary practices, and school hardening.
   - Commit to implementing restorative and transformative justice practices and culturally rooted programs that promote racial equity and healing.

5. **Schools need more resources and diversity to reflect the communities they serve:**
   - Partner with diverse community organizations that have expertise in student, family and community engagement; racial equity; school climate; culturally rooted teaching and learning; and school transformation to provide Technical Assistance (TA) and coaching. Multi-interest holder shared decision-making school teams should be able to choose coaches and TA providers who are best equipped to support their specific needs.

6. **The urgent need to integrate mental health and wellness:**
   - Provide integrated mental health, wellness, and healing-centered supports that are culturally rooted and destigmatized.

Below are the statewide and regional handouts outlining the shared priorities for community schools identified by students, families, educators, advocates, and community members in the forums:

- **Statewide**
- **Central Coast**
- **Central Valley**
- **Inland Empire**
- **Los Angeles/Southern California**
- **Northern California**
- **Orange County/Southern California**
- **Sacramento**
- **San Francisco Bay Area**
Students, families, organizers, and advocates continued to write letters, participate in State Board of Education meetings, legislative and budget hearings, and meet with policymakers, including representatives of the Department of Finance and Governor’s office, the Legislative Analyst’s Office, Legislative Budget Committee chairs, members and staff, the State Board of Education, the California Department of Education, and members and staff of the Senate and Assembly. As a result, many of the community’s recommendations have been incorporated into the CA Community Schools Framework, adopted in January 2022, the Planning, Implementation, and Lead Technical Assistance Center Grant RFAs released in February and March 2022, and the Regional Technical Assistance Center RFA released in July 2022.

On May 18, 2022, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved over $664 million in grants to establish new and expand existing community schools.

Meanwhile, students, families, and communities continued to organize and advocate to expand the investment in community schools and secure changes to the State of California’s Education Code to support strong implementation of their vision for racially just, relationship-centered community schools.

In June 2022, the legislature and Governor approved an additional $1.1 billion investment in community schools. This investment will be critical to ensuring that CCSPP resources are made available to more communities, especially those who have been most deeply under-resourced over decades.

They also approved changes to the CCSPP in California’s Education Code to better align with the community’s values and vision for transformative community schools by:

• Prohibiting using community school funds for law enforcement and punitive practices;

• Prioritizing community schools grants for districts that share decision making with students, families, educators and community partners; and

• Supporting schools and districts to co-create and continuously improve community schools by requiring their shared decision-making teams—inclusive of students, families, community partners and educators—to provide annual public reports and presentations of their learnings and plans.

Artist: Chelsea Chhem for CA PFL 2021 Arts Showcase
**Community Priority**

**Power-sharing with students, families, educators, and community partners**

- Nothing About Us Without Us: Students and families must have an equal and respected voice in decision making at the school site and district levels. Multi-interest holder shared decision-making teams must reflect the diversity of the community and include directly impacted students and their families, especially those that are under-resourced and under-represented—along with educators, support staff, administrators, and community partners.

- Solutions that are collaboratively developed and broadly held are more sustainable over time.

**What We We’ve Won in the CCSPP Framework, Ed Code & CCSPP Grant RFAs and Deliverables**

- Grants are prioritized for schools and districts that:
  - “Involve pupils, parents, certificated and classified school staff, and cooperating agency personnel in the process of identifying the needs of pupils and families, and in the planning of support services to be offered.” (Ed. Code Sec. 8902(f)(3)).
  - “Identify...a mechanism for sharing governance, which may include a plan to use existing or create shared decision making teams that include pupils, families, educators, and community-based organizations...” (Ed. Code Sec. 8902(f)(6)).
  - In the 2022-23 implementation grant RFA pages 8-9, CDE encouraged “all applicants to include schools meeting qualification thresholds” in their application. This includes schools meeting many priority criteria who serve other high-need student groups, such as Black and indigenous students and students with disabilities, who are not part of the LCFF unduplicated student groups (English learners, foster youth, students from low-income households).

- Implementation grantees “shall annually report and publicly present their community school plans, including data and outcomes from the prior year, at the schoolsite and at a meeting of the governing board of the school district, county board of education, or the governing body of the charter school. Implementation grant recipients shall publicly post their community school grant application and community schools plan on the local educational agency’s internet website.” (Ed. Code Sec. 8902(h)(6)).

  - This was further expanded in the 2022-23 implementation grant RFA, pages 15-16: “Grantees shall annually report and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Priority</th>
<th>What We We've Won in the CCSPP Framework, Ed Code &amp; CCSPP Grant RFAs and Deliverables</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>publicly present their community school plans, including data and outcomes from</td>
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<td>the prior year, at the school site and at a meeting of the LEA’s governing board. The</td>
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<td>presentations should be developed with and presented by each school’s CCSPP shared</td>
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<td>decision-making team or council.”</td>
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<td>• The CCSPP Framework includes a Commitment to Shared Decision Making and Participatory</td>
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<td>Practices among the four cornerstone commitments that are “essential components to all California community schools.” According to this commitment, “All school interest holders including students, families, staff, and community members must have genuine engagement in decision making about school climate, curriculum, and services. Shared decision-making practices must also prioritize transparency and shared accountability to ensuring information is both available and accessible, so that all interest holders can fully participate.” (CCSPP Framework, p. 7)</td>
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<td>◦ 2022-23 Implementation Grant RFA, Community Schools Implementation Plan, page 31: “Applicants are required to submit an Implementation Plan for each applying school site.” Implementation plans should include a description of “the schools’ commitment to implement core principles, including the Cornerstone Commitments (e.g., Shared Decision Making and Participatory Practices) identified in the Framework.”</td>
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<td>• Planning grantees moving into implementation and first time implementation grantees from LEAs with existing community schools must demonstrate having shared decision-making teams in place.</td>
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|                    | ◦ 2022-23 Implementation Grant RFA, Community Schools Artifacts, page 32: “CCSPP Shared Decision-Making Council
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Priority</th>
<th>What We We’ve Won in the CCSPP Framework, Ed Code &amp; CCSPP Grant RFAs and Deliverables</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Priority</strong></td>
<td>(or comparable governance body): Applicants should submit documents reflecting the Council Roster and Meeting Minutes from at least two meetings during the 2022–23 school year. Applicants may submit both LEA and school-site level roster and minutes, but there must be council rosters for each school site included in the LEAs application.”</td>
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<td><strong>Trusting relationships and communication form the foundation</strong></td>
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<td>• Create and support a culture and practice of authentic relationships, centered on supporting students and grounded in cultural humility, mutual respect, and a commitment to engage as informed and equal partners; this includes capacity building for educators and staff.</td>
<td>• Engagement with students, family, schoolsite staff, and community is a pillar of community schools. This may include home visits, home-school collaboration, culturally responsive community partnerships to strengthen family well-being and stability, and school climate surveys. (Ed. Code Sec. 8901(b)(2)).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Implementation grant funds may be used for “Designing and executing educator, family, pupil, and community engagement strategies.” (Ed. Code Sec. 8902(h)(1)).</td>
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<td><strong>Inclusive, safe and police-free schools</strong></td>
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<td>• Move from criminalization to connections: Prohibit the use of funds for school police, criminalization and exclusionary practices, and school hardening.</td>
<td>• Funds are prohibited from being used for punitive disciplinary practices or engaging campus law enforcement. (Ed. Code Sec. 8902(b)(2)).</td>
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<td>• Commit to implementing restorative and transformative justice practices and culturally rooted programs that promote racial equity and healing.</td>
<td>• The CCSPP Framework includes a Commitment to Racially Just and Restorative School Climates among the four cornerstone commitments that are “essential components to all California community schools.”... “The commitment explicitly expects the presence of restorative practice rather than punitive, exclusionary discipline that detaches students from school and from needed supports, too often activating a school to prison pipeline. Such punitive disciplinary practices are inconsistent with this commitment and run counter to the spirit and intent of the CCSPP Framework.” (CCSPP Framework, Page 6)</td>
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<td>Community Priority</td>
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<td>Schools need more resources and diversity to reflect the communities they serve</td>
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<td>• Partner with diverse community organizations that have expertise in student, family, and community engagement; racial equity; school climate; culturally rooted teaching and learning; and school transformation to provide Technical Assistance (TA) and coaching.</td>
<td>• Grants are prioritized for schools and districts that: “Plan to support a network of site-based community schools at schoolsites that have the capacity to ensure that services, professional development, and engagement can occur on schoolsite, or at an adjacent location, with the support of community-based organizations and other relevant providers, for all relevant stakeholders. (Ed. Code Sec. 8902(f)(7)).”</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Multi-interest holder shared decision-making school teams should be able to choose coaches and TA providers who are best equipped to support their specific needs.</td>
<td>• 2022-23 Implementation Grant RFA, Community Schools Artifacts, page 32: “Community Asset Mapping and Needs/Gap Analysis: Applicants should submit documents showing evidence of asset mapping and gap analysis projects for each school included in the application. Applicants may submit project summaries, but should show evidence of key interest holder involvement with the project.”</td>
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Transforming Vision into Reality: Bringing the Win Home
Implementing the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP)

In response to organizing and advocacy efforts, and with support and leadership from the governor, legislature, State Board of Education (SBE) and California Department of Education (CDE), the State is investing $4.1 billion in community schools to support school transformation in partnership with students, families, community, and educators.

Artist: Brandie Bowen for CA PFL 2021 Arts Showcase
### The Community's Expanded 4 Pillars for Transformative, Racially Just, Relationship-Centered Community Schools:

- **Active Student,** Family and Community Engagement
- **Shared Power** and Collaborative Leadership and Practices
- **Enriched, Culturally Sustaining,** and Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities
- Integrated Student, **Family, and Staff** Supports

*Pupil added in statute in 2022 (Ed. Code Sec. 8902(f)(3))

**Bolded language - Community continues to advocate for this language be added to the CA Framework’s 4 pillars**

Community engagement is key! To be prioritized to receive grants, school districts **MUST** involve students, parents/caregivers, school staff, and community partners in the planning process and commit to shared decision-making.

### What kinds of grants are available?

The **first** round of CA Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) grants to schools and districts was approved in May 2022. Two types of grants were awarded: planning and implementation. You can find out whether or not your school or district 16 received a first-round grant and how much money they expect to receive: **planning grants** or **implementation grants.** Additionally, here is a list of the school-based allocations for implementation grantees.

In March 2023, SBE approved an additional $45 million for the **second round of planning grants.** The **second round of implementation grants** was approved in May 2023. **Additional Requests for Applications for implementation grants will be made available annually through the 2024-25 school year.** This creates opportunities for current and future grantees to apply for CCSPP implementation grants. You can sign up to receive updates about future CCSPP grant opportunities from the CA PFL [here](#).

The CCSPP is structured to offer implementation grants to local education agencies with existing community school initiatives and planning grantees who have successfully developed and implemented their vision and plan in partnership with their shared decision-making teams, inclusive of students, families, community partners, and educators, as well as Starting in the 2025-26 fiscal year, extension grants will also be made available for implementation grantees. This funding will extend implementation grants from five years to seven years for ongoing coordination costs of up to one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) annually per site of an existing community school. This funding will be available through the 2030-31 fiscal year.
Planning Grants

Up to $200,000 per district for up to 2 years for districts with no existing community schools to plan for establishing new community schools. Use for:

- Community School Coordinators
- Needs and Assets Assessments
- Training and Support
- Student, Family and Community Engagement
- Preparing Implementation Plans
- Partnership Development and Collaboration

Implementation Grants

$100,000-$500,000/year per school for 5 years for districts that already have community schools to create new or strengthen existing community schools. Use for:

- Staffing, including Community School Coordinators
- Support Services
- Training/Support, including School Culture Efforts
- Student, Family, and Community Engagement
- Needs and Assets Assessments
- Capacity Building
- Program and Funding Sustainability Planning
- Data Collection and Program Evaluations

Funding for Implementation Grants

Annual grant amounts vary by size of school:

For grants approved in 2022, the amounts ranged from $150,000-$500,000 per school for 5 years, depending on school size (year 5 will be 25% less). Local Educational Agency (LEA) must provide 1/3 match in funding or in-kind services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Category</th>
<th>Annual Grant Amount</th>
<th>Annual Grant Amount</th>
<th>Total Grant Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years One through Four</td>
<td>Year Five</td>
<td>over Five Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Small: 25-150 students</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$112,500</td>
<td>$712,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small: 151-400 students</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>$187,500</td>
<td>$1,187,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium: 401-1,000 students</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>$225,000</td>
<td>$1,425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium/Large: 1,001-2,000 students</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>$1,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large: 2,001 or more students</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>$375,000</td>
<td>$2,375,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note: These amounts could vary for grants approved in future years of the CCSPP.**
Who is eligible to apply?

School districts and other local educational agencies are eligible if they have either:

- **50% or more** low-income, English learner and/or foster youth students (“unduplicated students”), or
- **Higher than state average** dropout rates, suspension and expulsion rates, or rates of child homelessness, foster youth, or justice-involved youth.

Who will be prioritized for grants?

**School districts or other local educational agencies that:**

- Serve pupils in schools with at least 80% low-income, English learner, and/or foster youth populations
- Demonstrate need for expanded access to integrated student support services, including disproportionate COVID-19 impact
- Involve pupils, parents, staff, and cooperating agency personnel in the process of identifying needs and in planning support services
- Commit to providing Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), trauma-informed health, mental health, and social services for pupils, and partner with other schools, LEAs, or Community Based Organizations
- For qualifying entities that serve elementary school pupils, or for schools where there is a demonstrated need for childcare, commit to providing early care and educational services for birth to five through an LEA or Community-Based Organization. This includes programs for pregnant and parenting teens.
- Identify a cooperating agency collaboration process for sharing governance with shared decision-making teams that include pupils, families, educators, and community-based organizations, and integrating and redirecting resources and school support services
- Plan to support a network of community schools to ensure that services, professional development, and engagement can occur on school site, or adjacent location, with the support of Community-Based Organizations and other relevant providers
- Identify a plan to sustain community school services after grant expiration
- Serve small and rural schools
- In the 2022-23 implementation grant RFA, CDE encouraged all applicants to include schools meeting qualification thresholds. This includes schools serving other high-need student groups such as Black and indigenous students and students with disabilities.

How can your district or school apply?

Refer to this Quickstart Guide to Community Schools Grants created by Public Advocates.
Community Schools Plans

Initial Proposals

All community school grantees had to submit an initial proposal when they applied for implementation grants. The proposal explains:
- How they will engage students, families, school staff, and community partners
- What programs and services will be available and where
- What resources will be used
- Which partners will be involved

Creating a Community Schools Plan

Each school’s path to becoming a community school is different, so each community school grantee needs to develop their own community school plan. All members of a school community should be involved in creating that plan, which may include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building structures</th>
<th>Coordinating and providing support services</th>
<th>Training and support for school staff and community partners</th>
<th>Implementing new or expanded practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiring a community school coordinator</td>
<td>Partnering with nonprofits and government agencies to provide staffing and services</td>
<td>Leadership coaching for school leaders, teachers, families, students, and community partners</td>
<td>Student-family-teacher conferences and home visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with a network of community schools</td>
<td>Providing trauma-informed health, mental health, and social services</td>
<td>Training to integrate resources to support students</td>
<td>Intensive tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating shared decision-making teams that include students, families, school staff, and community partners</td>
<td>Creating a Coordination of Services Team</td>
<td>Training on social-emotional well-being</td>
<td>Restorative justice practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating spaces for those shared decision-making teams to integrate existing resources and services</td>
<td>Providing childcare and education for children under 5</td>
<td>Training on trauma-informed practices</td>
<td>Before-school, after-school, and summer school programs and activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Make sure that your school or district includes students, families, school staff, and community members on any school and district community schools leadership and decision-making team to shape a plan and vision for community schools.
## Grant Requirements

### Deliverables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Grants</th>
<th>Implementation Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All planning grantees must:</td>
<td>All implementation grantees must:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct a needs assessment and asset map</td>
<td>• Post their grant application and community school plan on district websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engage with students, families, educators, and community partners and make a plan for collaborative leadership and shared decision-making</td>
<td>• Conduct a needs assessment and asset map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and name which schools will be part of the community schools program</td>
<td>• Engage with students, families, educators, and community partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create a plan to sustainably implement community schools</td>
<td>• Create structures for collaborative leadership and shared decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Track and report disaggregated student and school data</td>
<td>• Give students opportunities to make decisions about what they learn and how they learn it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Track outcomes and develop processes to update plans based on those outcomes</td>
<td>• Strengthen and support inclusive school climates through:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building trust between all members of a school community, including students, families, school staff, and community partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing mental health and wellness support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implementing supportive practices to resolve conflict and promote healing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Respond to student and family needs
- Track disaggregated student and school data
- Annually report and publicly present their community school plans, including data, outcomes, and progress toward long-term financial stability, at the school site and at a meeting of the LEA’s governing board.
  - These presentations should be developed with and presented by each school’s CCSPP shared decision-making team or council.
What Role Can Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) Play?

Beyond the vital role that CBOs can play in supporting students and families to engage in shared decision-making processes and to hold schools and districts accountable for their commitments, **CBOs can also contract with schools or districts to provide services.**

For example, CBOs can partner with schools or districts to lead family engagement and parent workshops, consult on developing collaborative leadership and community engagement structures, and provide training for school and district staff. CBOs can also provide mental health services, childcare programs, before/after/summer school programs, or other services.

**Red Flags**

| × The school or district does not post its community schools grant application and plan on its website. | This is a basic first step for transparency and community engagement, and is explicitly required for implementation grantees. |
| × Grant money is being used for punishment-based discipline or law enforcement. | This is explicitly prohibited. Community school funds cannot be used to fund police for any purpose. |
| × Grant money is being used to fund existing programs and services without expanding or changing them. | Community school grants cannot be used to replace existing funding. This money needs to be used to create concrete changes. |
| × Decision-making teams do not include students and families. | Grantees are required to convene community school leadership teams that must include families, students, and community partners. |
| × Communication is not provided in languages used by students and families | Authentic engagement must include all members of a community, especially those who are traditionally left out of decision-making processes. |
| × Annual reports are not being presented at school site meetings and district board meetings by the community school’s shared decision-making team. | This is another basic component of transparency and accountability, and is explicitly required for implementation grantees. |
| × Annual reports do not include data and outcomes from the prior year. | Without data and outcomes, it is impossible to see if the school or district is making progress on its goals. |
# Timelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Grants</th>
<th>Implementation Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>July 2022</strong></td>
<td><strong>July 2022</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full disbursement of Cohort 1 grant funds (can be used for up to two years)</td>
<td>Initial disbursement of Cohort 1 grant funds (funds will be disbursed annually over 5 years and can be rolled over from year to year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 2023</strong></td>
<td><strong>May 2023</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2 grants approved (can be used for up to two years)</td>
<td>Cohort 2 grants approved (funds will be disbursed annually over 5 years and can be rolled over from year to year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring/Summer 2023</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date TBD, Fall 2023</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full disbursement of Cohort 2 grant funds (can be used for up to two years)</td>
<td>Public presentation and submission of Annual Progress Report, Implementation Plan Update, and Expenditure Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date TBD, Fall 2023</strong></td>
<td><strong>June 30, 2024</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 1 Mid-Project Progress Report and Mid-Project Expenditure Report</td>
<td>Public presentation and submission of Annual Progress Report, Implementation Plan Update, initial Sustainability Plan, and Expenditure Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grantees that have completed planning requirements can apply for the next cohort of implementation grants. If they choose to do so, they must submit the End-of-Project Report and Expenditure Report instead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 30, 2024</strong></td>
<td><strong>June 30, 2025</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 1 End-of-Project Report and Expenditure Report due (all planning grant funds must be expended)</td>
<td>Public presentation and submission of Annual Progress Report, Implementation Plan Update, Sustainability Plan Update, and Expenditure Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2 Mid-Project Progress Report and Mid-Project Expenditure Report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2 grantees that have completed planning requirements can apply for the next cohort of implementation grants. If they choose to do so, they must submit the End-of-Project Report and Expenditure Report instead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 30, 2025</strong></td>
<td><strong>June 30, 2026</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2 End-of-Project Report and Expenditure Report due (all planning grant funds must be expended)</td>
<td>Public presentation and submission of Annual Progress Report, Implementation Plan Update, Sustainability Plan Update, and Expenditure Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 30, 2027</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public presentation and submission of End-of-Project Report (including Sustainability Plan) and Expenditure Report (all implementation grant funds must be expended).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CA PFL Resources

- Basic Overview: Community School Grants Slides
- Advocacy Letters, 2021-2022

CDE Resources

- CCSPP Overview
- CA Community Schools Framework, Adopted Jan. 2022
- CCSPP Planning Grant
- CCSPP Implementation Grant
- CCSPP Lead Technical Assistance Center
- CCSPP Regional Technical Assistance Center

To receive updates from CDE, you can subscribe to the CCSPP-Info listserv by sending a “blank” email message to join-CCSPP-Info@mlist.cde.ca.gov.
Building and Sustaining a Community School
Start with Diverse Shared Decision-Making Teams

Students, Families, and Community are Essential to Transforming Schools & Neighborhoods

Students, families and communities of color have always been at the forefront of transforming California schools. For decades, many of the wins we’ve had, including the passage of California’s historic Local Control Funding Formula in 2013, can be credited to community organizing led by students, families, and community, in partnership with educators.

Community partners frequently build the capacity of administrators, educators, and school staff to fill in gaps to serve the community.

A powerful example of this is the story of Felicitas & Gonzalo Mendez High School found in this brief published by the Learning Policy Institute.

From Felicitas & Gonzalo Mendez High School: A Community School That Honors Its Neighborhood’s Legacy of Educational Justice

LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE, August 26, 2021

Felicitas & Gonzalo Mendez High School (Mendez) is a community school located in East Los Angeles. Named for the plaintiffs in the 1946 landmark desegregation case, Mendez has deep ties to the Boyle Heights neighborhood in which it is located, including a robust network of partnerships that engage and support its students and their families. Staff, families, and partners share leadership opportunities at this 12-year-old community school and provide students with rigorous and engaging academics in a nurturing and inclusive environment.

Mendez at a Glance

Mendez High School is a community school in the Eastside of Los Angeles. Mendez opened in 2009 to relieve overcrowding at neighboring Roosevelt High School. The byproduct of a grassroots campaign for new schools, it was the first high school to open in Boyle Heights in 85 years. Today, Mendez serves
1,013 students: 97% identify as Hispanic or Latino, 94% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 13% are currently classified as English learners, and 17% are students with disabilities.

Community organizing laid the foundation for Mendez, beginning with a campaign to establish the first new high school in its neighborhood in 85 years. To reflect the social justice values and cultural heritage of the community, this campaign advocated for the school to be named after the Mendez family. School staff and leadership are quick to connect their mission and vision as a community school to the Mendez legacy. Principal Mauro Bautista gives first-time visitors to the school a brief history lesson that draws a through line from the Mendez family’s fight for desegregation to the school’s commitment to providing its students (who are predominantly Latino/a and from low-income families) with equitable education opportunities.

The school carries on this legacy with its two signature equity initiatives—AP for All and Computer Science for All—and its school safety strategy that is rooted in relationships and restorative practices, rather than punitive measures. In 2019, as part of the school community’s commitment to restorative practices, students and staff led a movement to end the district’s policy of randomly searching students for weapons as they arrive on campus.

Mendez High School’s community-based and equity-focused practices have made possible an impressive shift in the academic outcomes of students in Boyle Heights. By 2020, just 11 years after the school’s establishment, the graduation rate had reached almost 90%, and the school had a 90% college-going rate. The school has had zero expulsions since 2011, and in 2021 over 75% of students reported feeling safe and happy at Mendez. They are also engaged as leaders in their school and in their community.

“Mendez is a place where students can be themselves ... where students can master anything they want,” noted senior Eduardo Ruiz. Eduardo gained admission to several University of California and California State University campuses, including University of California Los Angeles, and chose to attend California State University in Los Angeles.

Watch Principal Bautista on the History of Democracy at Mendez High School

“Trust the community to know what’s right for the community... Each community is going to need something different, but the community members—the parents, the community organizations and especially the students—know what they need.”

- INLAND EMPIRE PARENT AND ADVOCATE
What is Authentic Student, Family and Community Engagement?

For the California Partnership for the Future of Learning, real community engagement is simply “nothing about us without us.” Students and families must have an equal and respected voice in decision making at the school site and district levels.

Shared decision making means having shared power and actual authority to impact decisions: It is not enough to merely seek the input of students, families, and school-involved community groups. Rather, their priorities must impact decisions and be reflected in how dollars are invested to support all aspects of community schooling—from climate and culture to teaching and learning.

“It takes all of us to create racially just, relationship-centered community schools. I hope this brings those closest to the pain into the decision making. School-site and district multi-interest holder shared decision-making community school teams must have decision-making power and include directly impacted students and families that reflect the diversity of the school community; community schools must be developed with students and families who share power and decision making with educators and community-based organizations to create schools that meet the needs of their unique community.”

- LUCERO SOTO, PARENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZER, SACRAMENTO AREA CONGREGATIONS TOGETHER (SACACT) / PICO CA EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION

We know it’s hard to change the mindsets of decision-makers to believe in this type of shared-power and governance. They also might not have the knowledge or skill to govern in partnership with students, families, community partners, and school-based educators.

The Spectrum of Family-Community Engagement for Educational Equity by Facilitating Power, BHC Comite de Padres Unidos-Salinas, and BHC Monterey County, and the Spectrum of Community Engagement adapted for Students by Californians for Justice are helpful tools to guide your school site or district to be in shared power with students, families and communities.
The Spectrum of Family-Community Engagement for Educational Equity

BHC COMITÉ DE PADRES UNIDOS, BHC MONTEREY, AND FACILITATING POWER

The Spectrum of Family Engagement for Educational Equity is based on the Community Engagement to Ownership Spectrum, which was created by Facilitating Power & Movement Strategy Center to chart a pathway towards racial equity and environmental justice through the shift from community engagement to community ownership, referencing Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation.

Padres Unidos-Salinas, a parent organizing group that was founded in 2016 to ensure 31 parents on the Eastside of Salinas, CA (as well as across other school districts), have a voice in their students’ educational success, collaborated with Rosa Gonzalez of Facilitating Power, to adapt the tool for use with school districts. This toolset is grounded in research on best practices in family/community involvement.

### SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO OWNERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance towards community</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Community Engagement Goals</th>
<th>Message to community</th>
<th>Examples of tools</th>
<th>Resource allocation ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Ignite</td>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>Deny access to decision-making processes</td>
<td>“Your voice, needs &amp; interests do not matter”</td>
<td>Closed door meetings</td>
<td>100% systems admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Inform</td>
<td>Mobilization</td>
<td>Provide the community with relevant information</td>
<td>“We will keep you informed”</td>
<td>Fact sheets, Open Houses, Presentations, Billboards, Videos</td>
<td>70-99% to systems admin, 10-30% to promotions and publicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Consult</td>
<td>Tokenization</td>
<td>Gather input from the community</td>
<td>“We care what you think”</td>
<td>Public comment, Focus Groups, Community Forums, Surveys</td>
<td>60-95% to systems admin, 20-40% to consultation activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Involve</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process &amp; inform planning</td>
<td>“We can’t do this well without you”</td>
<td>Community organizing &amp; advocacy, House Meetings, Interactive Workshops, Polling, Community Forums</td>
<td>50-60% to systems admin, 40-50% to community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Collaborate</td>
<td>Delegated Power</td>
<td>Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions</td>
<td>“Your leadership and expertise are critical”</td>
<td>MOUs with Community-Based Organizations, Community Organizing Citizen Advisory Committees, Open Planning Forums with Citizen Polling</td>
<td>20-50% to systems admin, 70-95% to community partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Refer To</td>
<td>Community Ownership</td>
<td>Foster democratic participation and equity by placing full decision-making in the hands of the community. Bridge divide between community &amp; governance</td>
<td>“It’s time to unlock collective power and capacity for transformative solutions”</td>
<td>Community-Driven Planning, Consensus building, Participatory Action Research, Participatory Budgeting, Cooperatives</td>
<td>80-100% to community partners and community-driven processes that ideally generate new value and resources that can be invested in solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This tool was developed by Rosa Gonzalez of Facilitating Power, in collaboration with Movement Strategy Center and the Building Healthy Communities Initiative, in part drawing on content from a number of public participation tools, including Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation, and the Public Participation Spectrum created by the International Association for Public Participation.*
Student Voice Continuum

Student Voice Continuum
CALIFORNIANS FOR JUSTICE

This tool was adapted from the Spectrum of Family-Community Engagement [Facilitating Power and Padres Unidos-Salinas, BHC-Monterey County], Motivation, Engagement, and Student Voice: The Students at the Center Series [Toshalis, Eric & Michael Nakkula. 2012. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future] to illustrate what shared power looks like for students in the education system.

Student Voice Continuum
STUDENT POWER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance Towards Youth</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Lead Together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Reproduce Inequities</td>
<td>Tokenization</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Delegated Power</td>
<td>(Shared) Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Provide youth with relevant information</td>
<td>Gather input from youth</td>
<td>Ensure youth needs and priorities are part of the process &amp; solution</td>
<td>Ensure youth capacity to play a leadership role in design and implementation of decisions</td>
<td>Democratic participation and equity through shared leadership, &amp; decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>“We will keep you informed.”</td>
<td>“We care what you think.”</td>
<td>“You are making us think (and therefore act) differently about the issue.”</td>
<td>“Youth leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue.”</td>
<td>“We cannot unlock transformative solutions without you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Equity</td>
<td>BIYOC = Black, indigenous, youth of color</td>
<td>Underrepresented, intersectional = youth of color that also identify as immigrant, multi-lingual, Queer and Transgender, foster care, systems-impacted, unhoused, or as youth with disabilities</td>
<td>Communication materials are distributed widespread without targeted outreach to BIYOC</td>
<td>Multiple rounds of widespread BIYOC engagement events and activities are conducted through a variety of methods (such as surveys, focus groups, and town halls)</td>
<td>BIYOC and underrepresented, intersectional youth co-lead with adults to engage other BIYOC and stakeholders in the decision-making process and have some decision-making power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Online information postings, fact sheets, presentations, open houses</td>
<td>Focus Groups/Surveys, Community Forums, Public Comment</td>
<td>Youth Advisory Committees, Students on Hiring Committees</td>
<td>Youth on school wide decision making committees or as members on boards or school site councils, youth task force, partnering with a community organization to engage and support youth</td>
<td>Participatory Budgeting, youth-led funding decisions, youth-led initiatives or campaigns, partnering with a community organization to have youth lead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from:
Youth Voice adaptation of “Spectrum of Community Engagement” by Rose Gorald of Facilitating Power, in collaboration with Movement Strategy Center and the Building Healthy Communities Initiative.

Californians for Justice is a statewide youth-powered organization fighting for racial justice. They believe that young people are the leaders we need to create the healthy, just, and vibrant schools all of our communities deserve.
Reflection Exercise

Before you start to take action on your community engagement efforts, we encourage you to use both of the tools to reflect on where your district or school site is currently. It’s important to have honest reflection with your team. This process creates shared understanding and builds trust, which is critical to creating the foundation for a strong team and process of continuous improvement.

Use the following questions adapted from Californians for Justice Student Voice Continuum Training:

• Where is your district and/or school site on the spectrum when it comes to student, family, and community engagement?
• Are there any examples of shared-power with students, family, and community at your district/school?
• What are the challenges/barriers for students, family, and community to have shared power at your school site?
• What support does your school site need in order to address those challenges/barriers?

Artist: Brandie Bowen for CA PFL 2021 Arts Showcase
**Listening Campaigns: An Approach to Needs and Assets Assessment**

Listening Campaigns can be a powerful approach to conducting needs and assets mapping, deepening relationships across race, culture, language, class, and roles, and establishing strong diverse shared decision-making teams. Listening campaigns can directly address issues of power differences across school communities. When school community members engage in deep listening with one another, they have an opportunity to build the mutual understanding, respect, and trust necessary for shifts in culture and practice. Additionally, structured listening campaigns incorporate leadership engagement, development, and team building. These are critical building blocks to establishing shared decision-making teams grounded in the values and practice of active and ongoing listening, engaging all members of the community, and reflection, assessment and planning based on data analysis and findings.

**Garfield Elementary Listening Campaign**

**Garfield Elementary School, Oakland, CA and East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC)**

**Background**

Garfield Elementary is a community school in the Oakland Unified School District that conducted a listening campaign during the 2011-12 school year. The listening campaign was co-led by a partner agency, the East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC), who provided a part-time community organizer dedicated to supporting the campaign. A Core Team consisting of Garfield and EBAYC staff and parent leaders met on a weekly basis for the entire 2011-12 school year to plan and conduct the listening campaign, and to propose and implement changes based on the findings.

**Structure**

In October of 2011, a Core Team of 15 people was formed to conduct a listening campaign with Garfield families, under the leadership of Principal Nima Tahai and EBAYC Director Jamie Lopez. The Core Team consisted of parents, EBAYC staff, classified staff, the principal, and Liz Sullivan, a community organizer contracted by EBAYC through a LISC grant. Some of the Core Team members also served on the School Site Council and English Language Advisory Committees, although the Core Team was an ad hoc group working...
independently of traditional school structures. It was decided to integrate the Listening Campaign process with the OUSD School Quality Review (SQR) self-study as much as possible, in order to avoid duplicative, parallel efforts. The Goal of the Listening Campaign was to create a unifying vision and values statement to guide dramatic improvement in achievement for Garfield students.

**Listening Process**
In October and November, 277 Garfield parents and 182 4th and 5th grade students completed written surveys. In January, the Core Team conducted 134 face-to-face meetings with parents. The parents who participated in the survey and in the “one to one” visits represented the diversity of Garfield school: Latino, Vietnamese, African American, Chinese, Khmer, Filipino, Pacific Islander, Portuguese, Mien, Native American, and others. In addition, Liz Sullivan conducted 1-1 visits with 23 teachers and classified staff.

**Findings**
From the surveys and one to one meetings, the Core Team learned that families think highly of teachers and the principal. They like the after-school programs run by EBAYC and Oakland Parks and Recreation. Parents appreciate the programs and services that are offered through the parent center and the preschool programs such as Lotus Bloom. They also like the programs and services available for disabled children. When parents were asked to “dream big” for their children, they consistently expressed that they want their children to be caring people who graduate from college and get good jobs.

Families expressed concerns about the academic level of the school. Many would like to see more challenging curriculum and homework. Parents would like to see stronger relationships and better communication between the school and the home. They also mentioned the need for more supervision on the yard, especially before school. Most teachers felt the school was starting to move in the right direction, but they expressed concern about the uneven level of instruction from classroom to classroom, and dissatisfaction with the quality of collaboration among teachers.

**Achievement Data Analysis by Subgroup**
In February, the Core Team looked at achievement data for the entire school, and for racial subgroups, and discovered that there is a 200 point gap between Asian students and African American students, and a 100 point gap between Asian students and Latino students. This brought up difficult feelings and the Core Team took the
month of February to create a values framework that would help guide conversations with parents about unequal outcomes between subgroups. The Core Team felt a sense of urgency to accelerate learning for African American students and English Language Learners, and agreed that the rapid 2-3 year achievement gains associated with a “turn-around” strategy were preferable to the slower incremental approach of “school improvement;” which yields gains in a 5-7 year timeframe.

**Vision and Values Statement**

In order to undertake school turnaround, the school needed a powerful, unifying vision, and a common set of values to guide the work. After studying the themes that emerged in the parent surveys and the one to one visits, the Core Team distilled a vision, and four values. The Core Team then collaborated with teachers to refine the statement. The final version follows:

**ALL Garfield students will grow into caring and creative adults prepared to graduate from college and succeed in life.**

**Garfield School Values:**

• Hard work, perseverance and education
• Teachers, Students, and Families as Partners
• Healthy Families, School, and Community
• Diversity as our strength

**Grade Level Meetings**

In March, the Core Team organized grade level meetings for parents to discuss Garfield’s achievement data, including the performance level of racial subgroups, and to get feedback on the proposed vision and values statement from families. A total of 180 parents participated in the grade level meetings in March. Families expressed overwhelming support for the values and the vision, and signed commitment cards to get involved to improve achievement at Garfield.
The Garfield Listening Campaign included the following steps:

**Steps to Conducting a School Listening Campaign**

1. **Identify the purpose of the campaign.**
   - Who do you want to listen to and why?
   - Is the listening campaign about building relationships as well as gathering information?
   - What happens to the information once you have listened?
   - Is there an invitation or next step for the people you listen to?

2. **Identify who will do the listening.**
   - Will the team consist solely of staff, solely of parents or will it be a cross-stakeholder group?

3. **Train your team.**
   - Develop a written outline for 1-1 to visits or small group meetings, with just a few questions—try to keep it simple. See below for a sample outline.
   - Have all team members role play with each other in order to get comfortable.
   - Encourage team members to jot down notes after conversations so they don’t forget.

4. **Set goals.**
   - How many people do you need to listen to in order to get the pulse of the school community?
   - What sub-groups do you need to include whose experience may be different?
   - Ask individuals to set their own personal goals, as well as establish an overall goal.

5. **Set a time frame.**
   - Usually one to two months.
   - Time can be adjusted as necessary, depending on your progress toward the overall goal.

6. **Let the community know in advance about the listening campaign.**
   - Letter from the principal
   - Announcements in meetings
   - Posters in the hall

7. **Check-in with each other regularly to provide support and encouragement.**
   - Decide how frequently the team will meet to share what they are hearing (more frequent meetings are better to build momentum and keep people accountable to each other—once a week is best).
   - Decide if you want to add members to the team and train new people as you go, or keep the group closed.

8. **Consider conducting a survey in addition to face-to-face conversations in order to reach more people.**
   - The survey should complement, but not replace face-to-face conversations.

9. **Report your findings back to the community in written format, and also in a community meeting.**
   - Be clear about how the information will guide decisions and actions moving forward.
   - Recognize and celebrate the work of the team.
   - Thank everyone who participated.
The following pages are tools adapted from Garfield Elementary’s Listening Campaign coordinated by Liz Sullivan:

**Listening Campaign One-on-One Training Agenda**

**Outcomes:**
1. Each participant will practice their one-on-ones for the listening campaign.
2. Each participant will set their goal for the number of people they will reach during the listening campaign.

**Total Time:** 2 hours

**Agenda**

3. **Welcome and Introductions** (20 minutes)
   a. Facilitators introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community, and role in listening campaign.
   b. All participants introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community, and why they joined the listening campaign.

4. **Outcomes for the Meeting** (5 minute)
   a. At this meeting:
      i. Everyone to practice their one-on-ones for the listening campaign.
      ii. Everyone will set their goal for the number of people they will reach during the listening campaign.
   b. Overview the agenda for today.

5. **Overview the Purpose of the One-on-One** (10 minutes)
   a. What is a One-on-One? (1 minute)
      i. One-on-one’s are about building relationships. There is an organizing principle that states: “Power is a product of relationships.” If the relationships among staff and parents at our school are strong and there is trust, then we will have power to improve the school.
   b. Pair Reflection (4 minutes)
      i. Turn to the person next to you and talk about a powerful relationship with another person that has helped you in your life.
   c. Large Group Share Out (5 minutes)
      i. Pairs report back to the whole group.

6. **Overview the Script for One-on-Ones** (20 minutes)
   script is the tool on the next page*
   a. Silent Reading (10 minutes)
      i. Everyone take a few minutes to read over the script to yourself and make note of the following are you’re reading:
1. Anything we need to edit, such as if something doesn’t sound natural.
2. Anything that’s missing that we should add in the script.

b. Group Share Out (10 minutes)
   i. Does anyone want to share what we should edit or add in the script?

7. Practicing One-on-Ones (30 minutes)
   a. Role Play (5 minutes)
      i. So right now 2 of us will volunteer to role-play the one-on-one in front of the whole group.
      One of us will be the interviewer, and the other person will be a parent being interviewed.
   b. Role Play Debrief (5 minutes)
      i. What did folks notice about our role play?
   c. Pair Practice of One-on-Ones (10 minutes)
      i. Now let’s break out into pairs and practice our one-on-one’s using the script.
      ii. You will have 2 rounds of 5 minutes.
      iii. Assign each other the role of interviewer and then interviewee.
      iv. Make sure to switch so that each person gets to try on both roles.
   d. Practice Debrief (10 min)
      i. Okay now I want you to debrief with each other:
         1. How did that go for you?
         2. What went well?
         3. What do you still need to work on?

8. One-on-Ones Goal Setting (15 minutes)
   a. Collective Goal (5 minutes)
      i. So now that we understand how to do the one-on-one’s, we’re going to finish today’s training
      by setting our own individual one-on-one goals and hype each other up!
      ii. Remember our collective goal is [insert total number and what population demographics
      your teams wants to meet].
   b. Individual Goal Setting (5 minutes)
      i. Now I want everyone to take out a piece of paper and write down your personal number goal.
   c. Share Out (5 minutes)
      i. Okay, so now we’re going to have everyone go around and say their number goal. After each
      person says their number we’re going to cheer to hype them up!

9. Closing and Next Steps (20 minutes)
   a. That is the end of our training! Any questions before we close?
   b. Our next meeting to check in on our listening campaign progress is [insert date].
   c. Now let’s go around and have everyone describe how they’re feeling with one word to close out.
Listening Campaign One-on-One Script

Introduce yourself and state the purpose of the meeting:

Hello my name is ________________________________, and I am a _____________________________ at ________________________________ School. Thank you for making time to talk with me.

I am working with [Staff Name] on the [School Name] Listening Campaign. The goal of the [School Name] Listening Campaign is to provide everyone an opportunity to “dream big” and help envision the excellent school that we want [School Name] to become. By the end of the listening campaign, [School Name] will have a clear mandate from our community about the school that families need, students deserve, and staff will strive to create.

Our school will have an inspiring vision and clearly defined values by which we will operate. We will have described the school that we will work together to create in the next [insert number] years.

1. Please tell me a little about yourself:
   • How many children do you have at [School Name] and what are their names, grades, and ages?
   • How long have you been a [School Name] family?
   • Why did you choose this school?

2. What are your hopes and dreams for your children?

3. Do you see college in their future? (Why or why not?)

4. What do you like about [School Name] school? (What works well?)

5. What do you think needs to change so that every student succeeds?

6. There will be a parent meeting at (give the date and time) to help create a unifying vision for [School Name]. Can we count on you to participate?

7. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

8. Do you know any other people that I should talk to?

Thank you again for your time! If you have any questions later, you can give me a call [share your contact information].
Listening Campaign Check-in Agenda

Outcomes:
• The team will check in on progress of one-on-ones
• The team will reflect on common themes we heard in our one-on-ones
• The team will determine the goal of multi-interest holder participation in the large school community report back meeting

Total Time:

1. Introductions and Overview of Meeting (20 minutes)
   a. Introductions (15 min)
      i. Facilitators introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community
      ii. All participants introduce themselves: name, pronouns, role in school community and answer check-in question of your choice
   b. Overview of Meeting (5 min)
      i. At this meeting we will:
         1. Check in on progress of one-on-ones
         2. Reflect on common themes we heard in our one-on-ones
         3. Determine the goal of multi-interest holder participation in the large school community report back meeting

2. Listening Campaign Progress Report Back (30 minutes)
   a. Large Group One-on-One Report Back (15 minutes)
      i. Each person come up and fill out a post-it to answer the following questions on the chart paper:

| CHART PAPER |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| How many one-on-one’s have you done? | |
| What were the names, phone numbers, emails, and demographics (race/ethnicity, gender, language, role, etc.) of the person(s) you met? | |
| What did you hear for each of these questions: The most commonly shared BIG DREAM was... What did they like about the school... What did they think needs to be changed... | |
b. Themes We Heard: Whole Group Discussion (15 minutes)
   i. Do these themes reflect the most common dreams, likes, and concerns that we have heard so far from students, families, staff, and community?
   ii. Are there any surprises?

3. Preparing for the Large School Community Meeting: Sharing our Data (20 minutes)
   a. What do we want to see happen at the school community meeting?
      i. Large Group One-on-One Report Backs
   b. How many parents/caregivers, students, classified staff, teachers, and community partners do we want to attend?
   c. What will all attendees know, feel and do when they leave the meeting?

4. Appreciations and Close (20 minutes)
   a. Our next meeting is [insert date].
   b. To close us out, let’s go around and have everyone say an appreciation to the person next to them.
Who did you talk with?
Conversations were had with [insert number] parents/caregivers, students, classified staff, teachers, and community partners:

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<tr>
<th>First &amp; Last Name</th>
<th>Contact (Phone &amp; Email)</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>If a student or parent/caregiver</th>
<th>Role (parents caregivers, students, classified staff, teachers, and community partners)</th>
<th>Number of Conversations</th>
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What did you hear?

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<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Who did you hear this from? (Demographics)</th>
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<td>The most commonly shared BIG DREAM was...</td>
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<td>What did they like about the school...</td>
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<td>What did they think needs to be changed...</td>
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CA Partnership for the Future of Learning Organizer Train-the-Trainer Launching & Conducting Listening Campaigns


Thursday, January 19, 2023 3:00 - 5:00 pm
The National Center for Community Schools (NCCS) also uses needs and assets assessments “to understand and create a profile of a community school’s needs [and assets].” When executed well, these needs and asset assessments can provide the opportunity for a diverse group of interest holders to engage in the data collection and analysis, and foster shared responsibility and accountability, as they develop a shared understanding of the needs and assets of the community, and how to best address and leverage them.

NCCS has developed a Needs Assessment Toolkit that describes eight comprehensive steps of the assessment process. These include:

1. Getting Started/Convening a Team
2. Archival Data Review
3. Initial Analysis
4. Surveys
5. Key Informant Interviews
6. Focus Groups
7. Final Analysis
8. Reporting

Each school is different and the exact process for conducting a needs and assets assessment may look different and will be context specific. This is also true of the type of existing or new data that a school community collects and analyzes as part of its assessment process. Data sources can include surveys, resource mapping, focus groups, in-depth interviews, listening sessions, as well as academic, school climate, and economic data collection.

Based on interviews with community school experts, common best practices that thriving community schools have used as part of an effective needs and asset assessment process include:

- Building a diverse team to conduct the needs/asset assessment that includes students, families, educators, and community partners as co-owners of the process.
- Creating the appropriate environment for the needs/asset assessment to be successful, including understanding a school’s history and building trusting relationships among interest holders.
- Facilitating a culture of continuous improvement, supported by the investment of human and financial resources.
- Using ongoing data to support transformative vision and goal setting and to advance positive change in such areas as school culture and climate, student mental health and well-being, and academic opportunities and outcomes.
Establishing Your Multi-Stakeholder Shared Decision-Making Teams

Multi-interest holder shared decision-making teams must reflect the diversity of the community and include directly impacted students and their families, especially those that are under-resourced and under-represented—along with educators, support staff, administrators, and community partners. Solutions that are collaboratively developed with families and broadly held are more successful and sustainable over time.

Leadership: “We Are in It Together”
From Felicitas & Gonzalo Mendez High School: A Community School That Honors Its Neighborhood’s Legacy of Educational Justice

To honor the legacy of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez, and as part of the school’s commitment to the community school design, school leaders practice a model of shared power and distributed leadership. For students, this translates into opportunities to make real change on campus. Such was the case when students from InnerCity Struggle’s United Students club successfully campaigned to extend lunchtime to ensure fewer students go hungry and less food is wasted—a move that required changes to the master schedule. For staff, it means exploring, developing, and leading initiatives. The school’s signature equity initiatives and its restorative justice program, for example, were all proposed by staff during Local School Leadership Committee and department meetings. For families and community partners, it includes grassroots organizing training through InnerCity Struggle, the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, and Promesa Boyle Heights. Claudia Martinez-Fritzges, of the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, noted, “At Mendez, there is this ‘We are in it together, we have to solve it together’ attitude.”

Student leadership development is central to the school’s mission, and Mendez staff encourage students to flex their leadership muscles, even when they challenge existing practices. For example, staff proudly shared an example of the Gender Sexuality Alliance club members pushing for more diverse representation in the school’s curriculum during humanities department team meetings. Since Mendez’s founding, students have had access to InnerCity Struggle’s United Students club, which develops their leadership and organizing skills. Another local nonprofit organization, Las Fotos Project, teaches young women photography and leadership skills, as well as how the medium can be used for social change. Las Fotos Project also provides opportunities for Mendez students to showcase their work.

The leadership skills that students develop at Mendez can support continued advocacy work and engaged citizenship after high school. Romero is currently a sophomore at UC Irvine and is majoring in political science. She recalled that in her sophomore year at Mendez, she “really learned how to bring [her] activism work into school,” by writing on issues that she cared about for her English class, like gentrification and the Dakota Access Pipeline. Romero has already seen her many Mendez experiences—including her leadership work with United Students and Las Fotos Project—serve her in higher education. She said, “I don’t think I would be here without Mendez teaching me and showing me … what I can do. I don’t really know what I’m going to end up doing after graduation, but I know that I want to be an advocate for my community.”

Administrators also cultivate staff leadership and encourage new ideas. Grijalva began her career at Mendez teaching English but developed an interest in restorative justice and proposed a pilot project at Mendez. She recalled that Bautista said he was “still
iffy about restorative justice,” but that he invited her “to challenge [him].” According to Grijalva, after she had worked for a couple of years on a restorative justice program that had started as a “side project,” Bautista recognized that the initiative bolstered a positive school climate. He created the restorative justice coordinator position so that staff could continue growing this work at Mendez. The role contributes to both Grijalva’s professional growth and the strong, positive community among students and staff. Families also have opportunities to engage in leadership roles. Mendez has multiple governing bodies with opportunities for shared leadership. In addition to a school site council, which is standard at schools across the state, Mendez has a Local School Leadership Committee, a School Culture Committee, a Family Action Team, and a House of Student Representatives. Bautista participates in the various decisions that these governing bodies weigh in on, ensuring that they can collaboratively make decisions for the school on important issues like budgeting, scheduling, or professional development. By creating space for leadership at multiple levels of the school community, administrators strengthen decisions and ensure that they reflect the needs and interests of the broad school community.

Building the leadership capacity of families and the community has also benefited Mendez. This has been especially visible with the 10-year campaign to bring a wellness center, funded by the district, to the Mendez campus. Promesa Boyle Heights staff, InnerCity Struggle organizers, and Mendez families led the campaign, which included surveying members of the community and identifying a high need for the neighborhood’s young men to be provided with health services. The school broke ground on the 6,500-square-foot building in December 2019.
The Role of the Community School Coordinator

This California Partnership for the Future of Learning backgrounder was informed by community schools research from the Learning Policy Institute, the National Center for Community Schools, the National Education Association, and the Coalition for Community Schools, the Community School Coordinators Network.

Each community school relies on both a network of partnerships and the blending and braiding of resources to ensure student success. The Community School Coordinator (also called the Community School Manager or Community School Director) manages these resources and partnerships and plays a vital role in supporting the systems, structures, and practices needed for students and adults to thrive. In one study, it was estimated that for every $1 invested in the Community School Coordinator, the school community experienced $7.11 in benefit.

Typical responsibilities of the Community School Coordinator include:

- Leading and supporting efforts to create a safe, inclusive, supportive, and welcoming school community, which includes listening to and communicating regularly with key interest holders (especially students, families, and community partners);
- Setting a vision and direction for the school in partnership with the principal, other school staff, and the school community by participating in and coordinating shared leadership opportunities;
- Nurturing and maintaining productive, reciprocal relationships with school staff, students, families, local businesses, community organizations, and government agencies;
- Managing the schools’ assets/needs assessments, including collecting and analyzing data from a broad range of school and community voices; and
- Adapting the school’s programming, partnerships, and resources to meet emerging needs.

Community School Coordinators are typically employed by the school district or by a partner organization, such as a local community-based organization. Employees may be certificated or non-certificated staff. In some districts, Community School Coordinators are administrative staff.

The Many Responsibilities of a Community School Coordinator

Needs/Asset Assessments and Goal Setting

The Community School Coordinator works with school staff and leadership to strategically cultivate partnerships and leverage relationships, services, opportunities, and funding sources (local, state, federal, and private dollars) to meet the needs and interests of students and families. A critical first step in understanding needs and opportunities is the implementation of a thoughtful and inclusive needs and assets assessment. Through this process, school communities are able to identify key priorities (such as students experiencing
psychological and physical safety on campus or increasing community voice in decision-making) and develop an action plan for achieving desired results, including how to best use available resources and personnel and identifying new partnerships needed to meet goals.

An important part of the Community School Coordinator’s role is to work with other school leaders to engage students, families, and staff in co-creating a vision for the school. They also provide critical leadership in supporting a culture of continuous improvement. This includes understanding families’ and students’ emerging and evolving needs and interests and supporting both through relationships, resources, and programming, such as additional services or learning opportunities for students and families.

Managing Relationships with Staff, Students, Families, and External Partners

The Community School Coordinator plays an important role in managing all aspects of partnerships at the school site, including maintaining relationships, developing contracts, and helping to manage the physical use of space. Community School Coordinators can also be key liaisons between partners, staff, students, and families. Community School Coordinators must consistently communicate with and bring together collaborative teams to support students (such as a Coordination of Services Team). To be effective, they should also develop a structure and process for connecting regularly with school staff to discuss partnerships and the changing needs of students and their families; and to match resources to need. Effective Community School Coordinators are also supported by their districts, such as through participation in learning communities in which they share knowledge, grow best practices, and engage in a community of support.

The Community School Coordinator plays an integral role in supporting authentic engagement and partnerships with families. Successful community schools model family engagement that goes far beyond typical outreach practices, such as parent conferences and meetings. For example, Community School Coordinators often support the implementation of Parent Teacher Home Visits. They can bring relevant family learning opportunities to campus and create opportunities for family members to share their skills and expertise with others in the school community. Some schools have a staff person who serves as the parent or family liaison and works closely with the Community School Coordinator to engage students and families. Community School Coordinators can also support youth leadership, including by providing opportunities for engagement in local community issues.

Setting Community School Coordinators Up for Success

There is no single profile of an effective Community School Coordinator. They possess a variety of work and life experiences and backgrounds. The following represent some key considerations when staffing for this position.

Factors to Consider

Parents, teachers, after school program coordinators, family engagement specialists, and staff from partner organizations all serve as Community School Coordinators in schools across the country. What is most important is that the Community School Coordinator is connected to or a member of the school community. Community School Coordinators who are employed by a partner organization (rather than the district) will need to establish effective data-sharing agreements, which can be vital to developing and monitoring systems to support students effectively. At the same time, coordinators who are employees of partner organizations may be able to leverage funding and other resources more effectively by virtue of their independence and community connections. While there is no single path to becoming a Community School Coordinator, key
traits include being able to: manage trusting and authentic relationships with students, families, partners, and staff; analyze the assets and needs of the community; coordinate schedules and services; and balance short-term improvements with transformational change.

**Providing a Foundation of Authentic, Shared Leadership**
Community schools rest on a foundation of shared power and collaborative leadership. Because of the many relationships they manage, and their extensive knowledge of the needs, goals, and assets of their school community, Community School Coordinators play an essential role in cultivating a culture and practice of shared leadership. Effective Community School Coordinators understand that distributed leadership is more sustainable and productive than top-down leadership. They therefore build structures to support broad participation, develop leadership capacity among all members of the community, and shift power to actively invite students, families, and staff into decision-making.

**Watch José Muñoz from the Coalition for Community Schools talk about The Importance of the Community School Coordinator**
Watch an experienced panel of current and former community school coordinators discuss the role of the community school coordinator in school transformation.
Nurture Racially Just, Relationship-centered, and Restorative School Cultures

Dismantling Racism & Repairing Institutional Harm to Build Healing & Racially Just School Cultures

California’s longstanding history of exclusion and racism birthed an education system rooted in discriminatory resourcing and exclusion of historically marginalized students of color. As a result, our public school system has shaped the trajectories of generations of young people, families, and educators, often discriminating on the basis of race, socioeconomic status, and geography, among other socially constructed factors.

In order to have justice for Black, Indigenous, Brown, and immigrant students, students with disabilities, low-income students, and other students and families of color across the state, education decision-makers must look to students, families, community members and educators as the architects of a new normal.

Photo credit: Californians for Justice, Race & Relationship Report, “Dear Racism in Schools Letter” by Trinity Harper
Together, students, families, educators, and community members can reckon with the history of exclusion and racism in public education and build a system with a different approach to education, from the classroom to the boardroom, that is rooted in community, mutual support, strength in diversity, and care. We can build from our cultural strengths to ensure every student, family, and educator feels welcomed, respected, and valued as a critical member in their school.

In this section are tools for schools to begin the hard work of confronting legacies of harm to be able to heal and repair with students, families and educators to build racially just school and restorative school cultures that are a cornerstone of community schools.

**Learning from Each Other: Centering the Experiences and Expertise of Students and Families**

To disrupt the generational legacy of racism and inequitable schooling, we must honor the experiences and expertise of students and families who have been most impacted. Only through authentic partnership with youth and families can we co-create racially just and relationship-centered schools. Schools have many opportunities to value the lived experience of students and families. For example:

- **Invite youth and families to support and lead listening sessions in schools so that schools can better understand their strengths as well as their needs and engage them in co-designing solutions.** For example, a [listening session team](#), even if small, can be the beginning of a shared decision-making team that can support the school with important decisions, such as staffing, programs and services.

- **Students and families can participate with educators in and even lead professional development to build shared understanding and skills.** Students and families can support schools and districts by leading professional development in areas where they have expertise.

- **Invest resources and time to build strong relationships with community partners.** Oftentimes, community partners have deep rooted relationships with students and families, know their strengths and needs and can help schools and districts to build bridges with them.

*Artist: Chamina Elise for [CA PFL 2022 Arts Showcase](#)*
“It all begins with the mindset shift that honors the expertise of parents and youth, a mindset where they are honored and respected.”

- ROSALYN GREEN CHARLES, BLACK POWER BUILDING DIRECTOR, BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES MONTEREY COUNTY

Here are some stories from community schools that walk the walk of centering the experiences and expertise of students and families.

**Cabrillo High School and Long Beach Professional Learning Network (PLN)**

**CABRILLO HIGH SCHOOL, LONG BEACH, CA AND CALIFORNIANS FOR JUSTICE**

**Introduction:**
Californians for Justice (CFJ) is a statewide, youth-powered organization fighting to improve the lives of people of color, immigrants, low-income families, LGBQiA2S+/TGNC youth and other marginalized communities. Through organizing in schools and in their neighborhoods, youth who join Californians for Justice become leaders in their own communities. In 2016, CFJ established a capacity building arm to deepen implementation of local and statewide policy wins by launching Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) with local school districts. CFJ’s capacity building work was fueled by the belief that in order to realize policy wins, we need to address long standing racist beliefs and perceptions of students of color and everyday practices that uphold white supremacy to lead us towards school transformation.

Our main framework for school transformation is centered on establishing Relationship Centered Schools (RCS) in schools throughout California. Although RCS remains our north star for school transformation, we have sharpened our racial justice analysis and our emphasis on Black Liberation. We believe that by naming Black Liberation as the Vehicle for Transforming Schools, California’s public education system will honor cultural and material reparations, become places of healing, and develop students to have self-determination over their lives and their communities. CFJ will lead the Education Justice movement to put power in the hands of Black and Brown youth.

School transformation and advancing racial equity is a process. Californians for Justice has been partnering with Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) for many years and more recently collaborated on a Professional Learning Network (PLN)¹ with 5 high schools where we are

doing hands-on equity work with school design teams. Our aim is to support school leaders (administrators, teachers, school staff, students, and families) to lead together and foster radical transformation that addresses historical and institutional racism.

**Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) Professional Learning Network (PLN):**

Our LBUSD PLN seeks to advance equity and educational justice in at least 5 LBUSD schools by piloting Relationship Centered Schools initiatives that foster a partnership between youth and adults, with BIPOC students at the center. The PLN model is intended to set the foundation for long-term systems and culture change in LBUSD so that students of color receive the supports and resources that they need inside and outside of the classroom to be successful. Alongside long-term system level work, CFJ develops and supports LBUSD school teams to address white supremacy/racism/anti-Blackness by centering the experiences/voices of young Black and Brown students and connecting schools across the district who are experiencing the same challenges. Simultaneously, school teams work towards building a collective understanding of what it will take to create complex/lasting systems change in LBUSD and develop staff and student leaders to co-lead school transformation. Street level data (deep observation and listening) is used to heal and courageously move school teams towards a more racially just system. At the same time, BIPOC students grow their analysis and understanding of racial and educational justice and their skills to participate in change initiatives with adults.

CFJ facilitates monthly design team meetings with each school site as well as monthly PLN meetings during which all 5 high school sites come together to share lessons and do shared learning. Each design team is composed of: School Principal, Assistant Principal, Key administrator, 2 teachers, 1-2 family members/caregivers, and 6 students. Design Teams move through an equity transformation cycle\(^2\) over the course of the year: Listening deeply by collecting street data, uncovering root causes of the issues they learn about, reimagining solutions with student leaders’ voices at the center, and making a courageous move together to address the root causes. Through this process, design teams learn about the power of deeply listening to students and families at the margins, and the creative power of collectively making meaning of data and moving together.

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The goal is for the muscles that are built in the PLN around sharing power and decision making in a meaningful way with students, families and teachers becomes a part of the school’s DNA so that all decision-making spaces in the school begin to shapeshift and hone in on street data and become spaces that students, families and teachers are an active part of.

**Cabrillo High School ARC:**
One of our school communities, Cabrillo High School, began by conducting a series of Empathy Interviews³ with students at the margins. The Assistant Principal supported in identifying students at the margins and everyone went out to gather street data. In the process of making meaning of the experience of students of color at the school it became apparent that anti-Black racism was having a huge impact on Black students. After a few hard conversations and hearing directly from Black students in the design team the Design Team agreed to draft an Equity Dilemma that specifically addressed this issue:

**Cabrillo High School Equity Dilemma:** Increasing support & accountability towards meeting the

needs of Black students for safety (physical and emotional), belonging, and academic excellence.

Once we Listened and Uncovered we moved forward to Re-Imagining and after a couple of creative sessions decided to celebrate Black people, culture and politics past, present and future during the whole academic year (as opposed to only during Black History Month). The team also decided to launch a Black Student Union to support this work and to involve the Associated Student Body and GSA in the execution. Currently, the Cabrillo HS Design Team is developing a podcast to center Black student voices. The school is also implementing one of the ideas from the Design Team to put on a Black History Show titled Black Joy.

Conclusion:
What we’ve found in our work and what we hope for in our journey of advancing is that a huge part of the work is in the personal transformation of school leaders, and in developing our collective ability to Lead Together in a system that has traditionally operated in a much more top-down structure. It takes time to shift our practice and belief systems and establish practices of collaboration with youth, families, teachers and school site/district leaders.

Tools and Agendas Utilized:
- Equity Definition and PLN Overview 2022-23
- Equity Transformation Cycle
- Equity Traps & Tropes - Street Data Chapter 2 by Jamila Dugan
  - Student Support Traps and Tropes
- Student Voice Continuum
- Empathy Interview Sample Questions
- Relationship Centered Schools Professional Learning Network Resources & Agendas

“Power and community are connected. The more communication I have with adults who I am normally intimidated by, the more opportunity for me to feel my power, especially when I feel that they care about what I have to say. Without that feeling, my voice is just noise.”

- MELANIE HUIZER, STUDENT AT WILSON HIGH SCHOOL
“People believe in equity until they become really uncomfortable. Yet it is only then when you can actually change and that power dynamics can really transform. This is hard for adults because they are still operating from a belief that they must interact with students from a position of power and not vulnerability. However, most people once they try it, they find out that they are not only okay, but also liberated by the experience.”

- GEORGE WALTON, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AT CABRILLO HIGH SCHOOL
Supporting Newcomer Students Through a Community School Model

LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE AND OAKLAND INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, OAKLAND, CA

A Shared Learning Initiative, organized by the Learning Policy Institute and the California Partnership for the Future of Learning, creates opportunities for organizers and local parent, student, and community leaders to learn about and experience evidence-based and equitable practices alongside researchers, advocates, educators, and district and state policymakers. In November 2019, Shared Learning Initiative participants spent a day at Oakland International High School. This interactive blog provides a look inside this school serving newcomer students.

By Amber Hu

Colorful murals decorate the entrance to Oakland International High School, welcoming students, staff, and visitors to this small-by-design community school in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). Tucked away on a quiet street of a busy neighborhood, the school is a sanctuary for its nearly 400 students, all of whom are recently arrived immigrants—or newcomers. As part of the Internationals Network, Oakland International combines a commitment to rigorous academics, linguistic dignity, and bilingualism with a high-touch community school infrastructure. The result is a school that excels at preparing students academically and linguistically for their new lives in the United States.

Students at Oakland International represent 27 countries and more than 30 languages. Some are refugees escaping conflict in their home countries, and many arrive with gaps in their education experience. In 2019, more than one third of students were unaccompanied minors. All are English learners. Although staff recognize students’ difficult histories and challenging circumstances, they also celebrate and tap into students’ unique assets. As Learning Lab Co-Director Lauren Markham explains, “We can make a list all day long of the challenges students bring into the classrooms and what struggles they might have, but we want to turn the lens to the assets and strengths that they’re bringing.”
As a community school, Oakland International is well positioned to build relationships with students and families and to connect them to a broad array of programs, services, and supports by leveraging partnerships. Community schools are an evidence-based model organized around four key pillars: integrated student support, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices. Through its attention to the four pillars and its explicit focus on English language acquisition and preparation for college, Oakland International is raising expectations and expanding opportunities for its students.

**Student Wellness as a Precursor to Learning**

An on-site Wellness Center functions like a one-stop shop for students to access a variety of supports, from emergency housing and food to legal assistance or mental health services. For medical, counseling, and health education services, Oakland International partners with Oakland Technical High School (Oakland Tech), just five blocks away. Students from both schools are served by TechniClinic, a health clinic located on the Oakland Tech campus. Managed by La Clinica de la Raza, TechniClinic is one of OUSD’s school-based health centers, a districtwide approach to addressing disparities in education, health, and life outcomes for students. Because many Oakland Tech students have access to medical care through their parents’ insurance, the clinic would be underutilized were it not for the Oakland International students. Through the partnership, students from Oakland International—many of whom do not have medical insurance—have access to free and confidential health care, removing a common barrier to regular school attendance.

**Responding to COVID-19**

In Oakland and around the country, COVID-19 took a disproportionate toll on communities of color, especially newcomers and recent migrants. A survey of Oakland International students early on in the pandemic underscored the destabilizing impact of the coronavirus and its collateral consequences. Forty percent of Oakland International students were working full time,
due, in part, to the need to help support their families after one or more of their parents lost their jobs. Another 40% were working part time or had primary responsibility for taking care of younger siblings, including supporting their distance learning. To support students and families, the school:

• Created an interactive virtual school portal to serve as a dynamic and visually interesting way for students to access what they needed for virtual learning and other supports.

• Activated a system of checking in with students and providing tutoring support by identifying additional adults—besides classroom teachers—who could work with students outside of traditional school hours so they did not fall behind in their schooling.

• Raised more than $100,000 to distribute to students and families for housing, food, and other basic needs.

• Assisted with the myriad of paperwork required to file for unemployment or apply for direct government support.

• Held a weekly food pickup on-site and delivered 70 food boxes per week to families.

Looking ahead to the 2021–22 school year, Oakland International adjusted and expanded programs to meet the needs and realities of their students’ lives. Internships are being redesigned, for example, to enable students who have regular jobs to earn school credit while working. The school is also expanding its career and technical education support and is planning to offer classes on Saturdays and during other nonstandard hours in an effort to recognize and support students who must work to provide for themselves and their families.

Authentic Learning In and Out of the Classroom
Oakland International cultivates a learning community that supports the academic success of its students both during the traditional school day, through project-based learning, and after school, through sports and other enrichment programs. Peer tutors and “newcomer assistants” (staff members who provide individualized support and tutoring after school and on the weekends) add another layer of support. Classes at through sports and other enrichment programs. Peer tutors and “newcomer assistants” (staff members who provide individualized support and tutoring after school and on the weekends) add another layer of support. Classes at Oakland International combine warmly supportive practices and rigorous academics grounded in three of the school’s shared core values:

1. Heterogeneity and collaboration: Lessons are designed to integrate, support, and differentiate instruction for students with varied levels of English language acquisition.

2. Integration of content and language learning: Rather than attending separate classes for English language instruction and core academic subjects, students at Oakland International learn English while learning other academic content.

3. Experiential learning: The school’s project-based curriculum is rooted in students’ lives, communities, and current events.

Powerful academic growth, language acquisition, and social-emotional development also occur outside of the regular school day. For example, a partnership with Soccer Without Borders provides after-school programming that marries soccer with community building and academic and language supports. The model reflects Oakland International’s belief that language learning happens all the time: through interactions with classmates and school staff, during academic classes, and while playing soccer. And most importantly for many students, the program connects them to a supportive community in which youths from different countries who speak different languages are able to connect and bond over the universal language of soccer.
Watch Soccer Without Borders

Community Walks Build Understanding and Relationships

Oakland International employs a variety of strategies to engage and support families, including English as a second language classes (many parents of Oakland International students are also English learners), a communal garden and cooking classes, a legal services clinic, and college and career information nights. All of the services and supports for families are grounded in a commitment to building respectful and trusting relationships. Surveys and focus groups provide an ongoing mechanism to solicit input from parents and caregivers, as do informal gatherings like a monthly “Coffee With Counselors.

Two practices—home visits and community walks—take teachers and staff out of their familiar school surroundings and into the homes and neighborhoods of their students and families.

During community walks, which are designed and led by students and families, teachers are introduced to important neighborhood landmarks and cultural centers and meet with community leaders. Walks also provide an opportunity for school staff to meet with families in their homes or another community gathering place to discuss families’ questions, concerns, and hopes for their students and the school. Because Oakland International students come from many diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, these walks play an important role in the development of trusting relationships and in the undoing of implicit bias. The walks also flip the script on who is teaching and who is learning—teachers become the students, and students and families become the teachers, sharing their expertise, resources, and assets.

Continuity, Growth, and Shared Leadership

Oakland International fosters a culture of relational trust, shared responsibility, and stability—all key elements of a high-functioning school. Site-based committees bring school community members together to analyze issues of concern and develop strategies for addressing them. The site leadership team includes the principal and assistant principal, community school manager, and leaders from grade-level teacher teams. The wellness team and coordination of services team engage additional staff members, as do departmental teams, which meet regularly.

Podcast: Getting to know your students through a neighborhood tour

On a community walk with Yemeni-American students from Oakland International High School, staff joined midday prayers at the Oakland Islamic Center, shared a meal at a student's house, and talked with students about their future dreams. A student journalist from Mills College captured the experience for KALW Crosscurrents.

Listen to the podcast >
Key contributors to Oakland International’s success are its stable staffing—research shows that teacher and principal turnover negatively impacts student achievement—and its investment in staff and leaders. Founding Principal Carmelita Reyes led the school for 12 years, including a few years as Co-Principal with the current Principal, Veronica Garcia Montejano. Lauren Markham served for many years as the school’s Community School Manager and now co-leads the school’s Learning Lab, along with longtime math teacher and former Assistant Principal David Hansen. This continuity has been crucial to building the culture of collaboration, trust, and shared purpose.

Oakland International also taps the leadership and expertise of its teachers and alumni to build both school and district capacity to meet the unique needs of newcomer students. The school has developed its own teacher apprenticeship program, designed to expand the corps of teachers with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to work with newcomers. Prospective teachers learn and work side by side with master teachers and participate in the school’s teacher-led professional development while completing their credential coursework. The Learning Lab, for its part, builds the capacity of educators, nonprofits, district personnel, and other members of the education community in both OUSD and throughout the San Francisco Bay Area to support the success of newcomer students. Through school site visits, professional development workshops, and research projects, the Learning Lab spreads best practices for serving newcomers, a significant and growing population throughout the state.

Oakland International alumni return as school employees, working in the school office, classrooms, and after-school programs. Not only are staff pipeline models like these evidence-based, but they also help build a community of adults who understand what students are going through and how to best support them. One graduate who returned to the school as a Newcomer Assistant shared what drew her back to Oakland International: “My younger sister has struggled with mental health issues because of the separation from my parents, migration, all of that…. I realized I want to help other youth like my sister. I came back here to see what it’s like to work in the field with newcomers.” She now works as a Case Management Safety Lead, and her goal is to become a school counselor.

Ingredients for Success

Oakland International’s high-touch community school model provides the relational glue and comprehensive supports that are key to student success. In 2019, 93% of its students graduated within 5 years (see “Learn More About Extended-Year Graduation” below), and 59% had passed the rigorous courses required for admission to California state universities. By comparison, English learners in OUSD had a graduation rate of only 62% and a college and career readiness rate of 26%. Newcomers districtwide had an overall graduation rate of 42.6%, and just 21% graduated with the courses required for admission to a state university.

Just as importantly, Oakland International students feel motivated, empowered, and connected to the school and the larger community. As one student shares, “The school has helped me a lot in preparing me to go to college. They connected me to many programs outside the school, like internships or volunteer programs, which have prepared me to go to college with experience being a leader and [knowing] how to use my voice.”

Learn More About Extended-Year Graduation

- Four-Year Graduation Rates Leave Off Where the Real Work Begins (blog)
- Design Principles for Schools: Putting the Science of Learning and Development Into Action (report)
- Implementing an Extended-Year Graduation Rate (brief)
Reimagining School Safety - Mapping the Movement for Racial Justice, Restorative Cultures, and Police-Free Schools in California

By Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (ABMoC) and California Partnership for the Future of Learning (CA PFL)

On May 25th, 2020 George Floyd was murdered by the Minneapolis Police Department. His murder was captured on camera by a 17-year-old Black girl named Darnella Frazier. Frazier’s video, and continuous footage of subsequent police and vigilante murders of Black people like Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Dijon Kizzee, Fred Williams, and many others, sparked one of the largest uprisings for racial justice in world history. In June 2020, two large California school districts (Oakland and Los Angeles Unified) took major steps in the movement to decriminalize students and reimagine school safety. OUSD school police were fully abolished and LAUSD defunded their school police department by 35%. Both of these victories resulted from decades of organizing and power-building, with Black-led organizations like the Black Organizing Project (Oakland) and Students Deserve (Los Angeles) at the forefront. Their efforts have been instrumental in shifting the conversation about school safety and discipline away from punishment and towards restorative practices that prioritize the well-being of students. These victories are a significant step towards creating safe and nurturing school environments where all students can thrive, free from the fear of police brutality and criminalization. The reimagining of school safety through the elimination of school police and deep investment in student mental health & wellness, restorative justice, and community based-safety resources like peacebuilders/violence interventionists is a critical tenet of building racially-just relationship-centered community schools.

“We can’t build relationship-centered schools if schools center policing as the way to manage misbehavior. Eliminating school police and the harsh zero-tolerance climates in our schools is the only way we get to community schools.”

- DR. DAVID C. TURNER III, SENIOR ADVISOR FOR THE ALLIANCE FOR BOYS AND MEN OF COLOR, PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE AT UCLA

Since the year 2000 with the passage of Prop 21, after nearly three decades of continued divestment in public schools and an investment in the criminalization of communities of color, a movement grew to humanize young people and reimagine school and community safety. Local victories such as eliminating ticketing for tardiness in Los Angeles in 2007 to statewide victories such as the passage of Proposition 30 in 2012 have helped to lay the foundation for a transformation of school climate and investments in restorative justice.
Across California, the victories for decriminalizing students and reimagining school safety are gaining momentum as a result of decades of grassroots organizing and advocacy from BIPOC organizations and communities, as well as other groups advocating for social justice. As a brief timeline of events, we would like to outline some significant victories from our network partners at the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (ABMoC) and the California Partnership for the Future of Learning (CA PFL) to highlight the progress made toward creating safe and inclusive school environments:

**Replacing Punitive & Racist Practices with Restorative School Cultures**

**School Climate Bill of Rights - Los Angeles Unified School District**

In the 2011-12 school year, nearly 1 out of every 3 school suspensions in LAUSD were for defiance/disruption. These numbers specifically impacted Black, masculine-identified youth (boys/bois and young men), and students with disabilities. Families also felt that the district took little accountability for disparities in punitive discipline. In response, the Brothers Sons Selves Coalition⁴ (BSS- a coalition of community-based organizations across Los Angeles and Long Beach whose mission is to end the criminalization of young bois/boys and men of color) and CADRE crafted the School Climate Bill of Rights (SCBR) which the Board of Education passed in May 2013. The SCBR established the following rights for all LAUSD students:

- Alternatives to suspensions and interventions consistent with School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (SWPBIS)
- Reducing law enforcement presence and involvement in school disciplinary incidents
- Banning Disruption/Defiance suspensions so students could not be removed from the classroom for this subjective category
- Restorative justice in the place of punitive discipline
- Public access to school discipline data online
- Appeals to suspensions and SWPBIS implementation complaint processes

Parents, students, and community members have continuously pushed LAUSD to decriminalize the district and improve learning conditions for Black students, students with disabilities, and other vulnerable student populations in the district. The impact of their organizing efforts rippled throughout the state and the nation to create more positive school environments for all students.

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³ At the time of the School Climate Bill of Rights passing, members included: Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle, Khmer Girls in Action, Brotherhood Crusade, Youth Justice Coalition, Children’s Defense Fund, Labor Community Strategy Center, East LA Weingart YMCA, and Californians for Justice. Current and active partners are InnerCity Struggle, the Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA, Community Coalition, Brotherhood Crusade, the Youth Justice Coalition, Social Justice Learning Institute, Khmer Girls in Action, and California Native Vote Project.
OUSD Eliminating Willful Defiance

In 2015, Dignity in Schools Bay-Area (which includes ABMoC partners Black Organizing Project, ACLU Northern California, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, The Brotherhood of Elders network, GSA Network, and other organizations) led a campaign to eliminate willful defiance school suspensions for grades K-12, following LA’s model and extending state policy to cover grades 4-12 at the time. In addition to this significant victory, the coalition was also able to win a $2.3 million dollar investment in restorative justice. The coalition also won:

- The creation of a Safe and Strong Schools Task Force: to guide the expansion of implementation of the African American Manhood Development program and restorative practices that take a culturally based, healing-informed approach to promote community building to all schools.
- Data Accountability and Transparency: to provide regular data on key discipline data – suspensions, transfers, days lost to suspension – disaggregated by all subgroups to the public.
- A Community Complaint and Feedback Process: to alert the district if restorative approaches are not effective or available at all school sites.

Statewide Policy to Eliminate willful defiance (AB 420 K-3 and SB 419 K-8)

In 2014, California passed AB 420, which prohibited schools from suspending students in grades K-3 for “disrupting school activities or otherwise willfully defying the valid authority of school personnel.” This was a significant step towards reducing the criminalization of young students and prioritizing their education over punishment.

In 2019, California passed SB 419, which expanded AB 420 by prohibiting schools from suspending students in grades 4-8 for willful defiance and eliminating any reference to the term “willful defiance” as a reason for suspension. This was another important step towards reducing the school-to-prison pipeline and promoting restorative practices to address student behavior.
Removing Police From Schools

Oakland George Floyd Resolution (BOP plus Oakland Coalition)

On June 24, 2020, Oakland USD became the first district in California to completely eliminate its school police department. The hard-won victory was the result of nine years of organizing in the Black Organizing Project’s (BOP) Bettering Our School System campaign, which mobilized a coalition of students, families, community members, and school staff to oppose school police as part of a legacy of mass incarceration and psychological warfare rooted in anti-Black racism.

BOP continues its effort to transform Oakland schools by advocating for the Oakland USD to limit student referrals to all law enforcement agencies. Through the implementation of the historic George Floyd Resolution, BOP has collaborated with Oakland USD to reimagine safety practices and transform school culture to “focus on building an anti-racist and restorative system that creates conditions conducive to learning, especially for Black and Brown students, and students with special needs, who have historically and disproportionately been subjected to racism, exclusion, and criminalizing practices in schools.” In addition to eliminating school police, the campaign led to the reimaging of School Security Officer positions into site-based Culture Keepers who promote school safety through relationship-building, de-escalation tactics, and trauma-informed practices.

Sacramento eliminating School Resource Officer (SRO) Contracts (Black Parallel School Board): Reimagining School Safety Without SROs

In June of 2020, the Black Parallel School Board (in coalition with Blacks Making a Difference, Brown Issues, Sacramento Area Congregations Together, Hmong Innovating Politics, Self-Awareness & Recovery, and Public Advocates), worked to eliminate the contract for school resources officers between the Sacramento City Unified School District and the Sacramento City Police Department. The organizing in Sacramento City Unified continues as the coalition is working to implement this victory and fully transform school culture.

Removing Police Power in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties

In June 2020, the MILPA Collective and Building Healthy Communities Monterey County (BHC Monterey County) removed police from school districts in Watsonville Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Salinas, Seaside, Monterey, and Soledad. They successfully advocated for three districts in Salinas to refuse federal grant dollars to hire School Resource Officers (2017-2019) and stopped the planned use of drug-sniffing dogs on school grounds in two school districts in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties (2018-2019).

In 2022 Building Healthy Communities Monterey County, with the support of Public Advocates and Organizing Roots, organized parents in Soledad Unified School District to stop a new SRO Contract and to remove LCFF funding from the police contract proposal. As a result of the strong parent organizing effort, the Soledad Unified Board of Directors recommended creating a Safety Committee that includes parents to ensure their voices are reflected in decisions.
LAUSD Defunding school police by 35% (Police-Free LAUSD Coalition)

In the summer of 2020, Students Deserve, Black Lives Matter-LA, and the Brothers Sons Selves coalition called together a massive group of organizations fighting for education justice in LA to continue the marches, protests, and advocacy to defund school police. This group became the Police-Free LAUSD Coalition. The coalition was successful in defunding the LAUSD School Police by 35%, redirecting $25 million dollars to community-based safety alternatives and the Black Student Achievement Plan. Since then, the Police-Free LAUSD Coalition has helped secure an additional $100+ million in annual investments for targeted mental health and wellness, restorative justice, social-emotional development, and academic resources. The coalition continues to plan marches, actions, and advocacy targeting the school board and uplifting youth voices to demand complete divestment from school policing. Other victories include:

- Removed the remaining school police from being stationed on school campuses.
- Created and placed School Climate Advocates at all middle and high schools in LAUSD. These campus staff are specially trained in trauma-informed care, violence prevention, de-escalation, and conflict resolution to help cultivate positive school culture.
- Banned the use of pepper spray or chemical agents on campus.
- Secured investments for the Black Student Achievement Plan, a collection of equitably targeted resources including psychiatric social workers, restorative justice teachers, academic counselors, wide-ranging community partnerships, African American Studies course, and culturally relevant curriculum development, professional development trainings, academic supports, and interventions.

Eliminating mandatory reporting state-level

The Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, in partnership with ACLU Cal Action, Black Organizing Project, Black Parallel School Board, Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, Disability Rights California, Dolores Huerta Foundation, East Bay Community Law Center, Gente Organizada, Public Counsel, and the Social Justice Learning Institute, are working on legislation to eliminate the California state mandate that requires school personnel to notify law enforcement for minor offenses. This legislation will help local police-free schools efforts by further eliminating policies that foster criminalization in schools.
Investments

Keeping Investments in Communities

As a result of ABMoC & CA Partnership for the Future of Learning partner efforts, the California Legislature has updated the California Community Schools Partnership Program statute to prohibit the use of funding for “punitive disciplinary practices or the engagement of campus law enforcement.”

California took a step towards education equity in 2013 by enacting the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which was a result of 13 years of organizing across the state. LCFF mandated that schools no longer receive equal funding based on enrollment and categorical buckets, but instead that greater financial investment be made in districts and schools that serve vulnerable student populations (i.e low-income students, English language learners, foster youth). Over the past decade, youth, families, and grassroots leaders have been leveraging the engagement and equity requirements of LCFF and the process for developing spending plans called LCAPs to advance restorative school cultures and divest in punitive, law enforcement. This includes efforts of Gente Organizada through their Schools Not Prisons campaign, and the Right to Resources toolkit that grew out of that campaign, co-authored by Public Advocates, ACLU Cal Action, Gente and the Pomona Students Union. Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE) and Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC) brought a successful LCFF complaint against San Bernardino County that resulted in the stopping of the practice of using funds intended for high-need students for law enforcement spending across the county. They were represented by Public Advocates and the ACLU in this complaint.

Numerous communities across the state have leveraged student data, the LCAP, and other budgeting processes to successfully win investments for Black students and other student populations most impacted by the criminalization of Black and Brown youth in our schools:

Direct investments in Black Students and Highlight Marginalized Populations - A truncated list of district programs

- Black Student Achievement Plan (Los Angeles Unified School District)
- African American Male Achievement & African American Female Achievement Programs (Oakland Unified School District)
- Black Student Achievement Initiative (Compton Unified School District)
- Student Equity Needs Index (LAUSD)
- District African American Advisory Council (San Bernardino City Unified School District)
- Black Student Achievement Initiative (Long Beach Unified School District)
Resources for Organizers

- Advancement Project & Alliance for Educational Justice - Resources for Organizers for Police-Free Schools
- ACLU Report “COPS AND NO COUNSELORS How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students”
- #8ToAbolition Resource Guide for Abolitionist Organizing
- City Rising Documentary Series - Youth and Democracy
- From Criminalization to Education - A Community Vision for Safe Schools in LAUSD
- A People’s Plan for Police-Free Schools
- Dignity in Schools Campaign Resources for Restorative & Transformative Justice Campaigns and Implementation Guides
- Dignity in Schools California Police Free Schools Organizing Toolkit

Photo credit: Joshua Ham of the BSS Coalition
The Power of Restorative Circles to Build Relationships and Heal Conflict

Restorative Circles (Community Building Circles) are a powerful restorative practice that deepen relationships, uncover root causes of behavior, focus on healing from trauma, and create more equitable responses to harm. Restorative practices and restorative justice in the United States can trace their roots to varied ancient and indigenous practices from cultures around the world that center on relationship and interconnectedness. Restorative circle processes, in particular, are rooted in the traditional practice of talking circles that various Indigenous and Native people of North America have used for thousands of years.

“In these traditions, Circles are not a “technique” or a set of instructions—they are a way of being, based on deeply held cultural values and relationships.

“During the 1990s, members of First Nations in Canada began teaching the Circle practice to non-Native people. First Nation communities were seeking alternatives to the mass incarceration of their people, which was—and remains—another form of genocide. Returning to Native ways to resolve conflicts and harms required collaboration with non-Native people: lawyers, prosecutors, judges, as well as non-Native neighbors. In the process, non-Native people experienced the Circle process and its power to bring positive transformation for everyone involved. From these interactions, the use of Circles among non-Natives has grown.” From Living Justice Press - The Origins of Circles

When schools practice restorative circles, they are intentionally creating space in the school day for educators and students to share their stories, identities, and opinions in a safe and supportive space. This builds educators’ and students’ empathy across differences, which is key to creating an anti-racist and inclusive culture of belonging in schools.

In Learning Policy Institute’s Building a Positive School Climate Through Restorative Practices brief, the structure of restorative circles is described as the following:

“These are structured processes that are guided by a trained facilitator, typically a teacher or other school staff member. A circle can be used for a wide range of purposes, such as building community, helping students connect their experiences to academic content, or welcoming a student back to school after an extended absence. As the name implies, restorative circles take place in a circle; there is a strong emphasis on the importance of listening, facilitated by using a talking piece. Participants know that they may speak when they are holding the talking piece but that otherwise, their job is to listen.”
Restorative practices are rooted in strong relationships. “If schools invest the bulk of their time and energy in building healthy relationships, only a fraction of their time and energy need be spent repairing those relationships when things go wrong. Restorative discipline is rooted in the core assumption that everyone wants to be in good relationships with others and themselves.... Building strong and positive relationships within a school community is key to using restorative discipline when students and adults make mistakes. Establishing a school culture where all members of the community are cared for and respected forms the foundation. The use of restorative discipline is effective only if there is a whole school approach that rests on the shared aspiration to build a caring school community.” Carolyn Boyes-Watson & Kay Pranis, “Restorative Discipline,” Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community, at p. 285.
Belong Circle Leader Guide: A Relationship-Building Practice

PICO CALIFORNIA

The Belong Circle Leader Guide is a curriculum created by PICO California to support PICO leaders to facilitate community-building Belong Circles. This curriculum has been used in rural, suburban and urban school communities across California. A Belong Circle is an intentional gathering of 10 people who believe in a world of equity and dignity for each of us. The Belong Circle Curriculum takes people on a journey to understand our points of connection, our uniqueness and differences, the structural drivers of exclusion, and the need to take action together, with thousands of other people across California, to make structural changes across our schools, our communities and our state that are rooted in equity and belonging. This curriculum has been used successfully in diverse schools and community spaces from Del Norte to Alameda to Orange County.

Here are the Leader Guides in English and Spanish.

Each Belong Circle Has 5 Essential Elements

1) **An Opening Exercise** that allows people an encounter with themselves and with each other, so we see our points of connection and understand our unique differences.

2) **Popular Education** that provides analysis about the structural drivers of exclusion in CA and opportunities to create equitable systems and policies in our cities, counties and state.

3) **Reflection Questions** for the group to discuss what they learned and experienced in the opening exercise and the popular education video.

4) **Opportunity for Values-based Action** that is integrated with other actions in your region.

5) **Fellowship** by providing some unstructured time to deepen relationships and trust with your Belong Circle. Snacks or a meal are always welcome.
True North Belong Circles

**TRUE NORTH ORGANIZING NETWORK**

True North is a multi-race, multi-faith social justice nonprofit organization that actively organizes in rural America with Native Americans and tribes, Latinx, Hmong, Black, and White communities on the Klamath, Trinity, Smith, Eel, Mad, & Salmon Rivers of northern California and southern Oregon.

One of the school communities that True North supports is Loleta Union Elementary School in Humboldt County. Loleta serves 108 kindergarten to 8th grade students. 93.5% of Loleta’s students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 47.2% of the students are Native, 35.2% are Latinx, and 11.1% are White. 17.6% are English Learners and 30.6% are students with disabilities.

In fall 2022, True North organizers led school-wide Belong Circles with Loleta Union Elementary students, families, teachers, and school staff for the first time. Students ages 4-16 participated in the Circles. The Belong Circles create an opportunity for community members to listen deeply to one another, and to share their visions, hopes, and dreams for bringing their school community together.

Following the first round of Belong Circles, True North identified a need for additional mental health and wellness support for students. They invited leaders from two tribal-based agencies, **Two Feathers Native American Family Services** and **Northern California Indian Development Council**, to join them in facilitating the Circles. They also trained five educators in the Belong Circles methodology.

As the Circles continued, community members began to connect across differences. The Circles created an atmosphere of belonging between Native, Latinx and Spanish speaking, White, and other children, youth, families, teachers, and school staff.

Over 100 students participated in the Belong Circles. They have shared that their classroom atmosphere has improved since the Circles began. Including the teachers in preparing for the activities and ensuring that they are developmentally appropriate and responsive to the needs of the
diverse children and youth at Loleta has been critical to the success of the Circles. Now, some of the teachers are beginning to implement the Belong curriculum in their day-to-day classroom activities.

Belong Circles have also been an important tool in building a shared culture of trust with youth and encouraging them to step more fully into their leadership. True North Organizer and Loleta Union Elementary Community Liaison Rose Hernandez expressed her excitement about how youth have benefited from leading Belong Circles. “One of True North’s Belong Circle facilitators is a Native youth who’s in high school, and this process has been beneficial in his development as a leader. It makes me feel so proud to see our youth in our community get involved to make a change.” Rose shared that the Belong Circles are also impacting the community outside of school. “Using the Belong Circles in the Tsek Houdaqh⁵ Program here at the Wiyot Tribe has been a very important tool to seeing the community come together and express their thoughts and concerns.”

Additional Resources on Belong Circles
- Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley
  PICO California Case Study
- Listen to the Who Belongs? Podcast Episode 43 - The Belong Movement
- Listen to the Who Belongs? Podcast Episode 44 - Belong Circles
- Faith in Action East Bay Belong Toolkit

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⁵ Tsek Houdaqh - “Where the Children Are” in Wiyot
Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Advisory Professional Development & Curriculum

PROMESA BOYLE HEIGHTS AND ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL, LOS ANGELES, CA

Promesa Boyle Heights Roosevelt High School Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Advisory Curriculum was a professional development series for teachers and community partners developed by the Restorative Justice Teacher Nicolette Morales and other members of their Culture Team. It was created during the pandemic and the racial uprisings following the murder of George Floyd. As a school whose population is 96.9% Latinx, Nicolette and other members of the Culture Team asked themselves “What does allyship and solidarity look like with our Black siblings when we can’t be together?”

Across Roosevelt High School, all staff are invested in Restorative Justice in Advisory. So, the Culture Team decided to use their advisory period as the space for teachers and students to engage in what it means for Latinx people and other non-Black people to be in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and an ally to the Black community.

The following curriculum slides are a part of the professional development series teachers and community partners were trained on to work with students in their advisory.

Photo Credit: Members of the Roosevelt High School Culture Team starting top left - Lori Neting (Autism Teacher), Nicolette Morales (Restorative Justice Advisor), Raul Mata (College Counselor), Ana Alveranga (Parent Rep.), Sergio Dacaret (Parent & Special Education Teacher), Javier Cid (Dean of Students), Maggy Vieyra (Psychiatric Social Worker), Brendan Schallert (Literacy Specialist), Arlene Bazan (Pupil Services and Attendance), Sheena Kantorski (PSW), Allyson Rohrbach (Math Coach), Johanna Garcia (Pupil Services and Attendance), Elisa Erhard (Science Teacher). Also, Carolina Couto (Community School Manager, Senior Coordinator, Promesa Boyle Heights) not pictured here.
**Honoring Genius in a Historical Time: Historically Responsive Literacy as Foundation of Rigor at Roosevelt High School:** Professional development for teachers and community partners on Historically Responsive Literacy.

*Please sit by departments!*

**Honoring Genius in a Historical Time: HRL as Foundation of Rigor at RHS**

**RHS Faculty Meeting** - April 6th 2022

HRL Team: Kevin Armenta, Gene Dean, Jose Yobani Lopez Nicki Morales, Brendan Schallert, Adriana Rivera

**Advisory Week 4 Template:** SEL curriculum for teachers to use during the advisory period.
Frick United Academy of Language

Advisory Program

**FRICK UNITED ACADEMY OF LANGUAGE,**

**OAKLAND, CA**

**Frick United School of Language** was born out of a merger and design process between two middle schools in the Oakland Unified School District - Frick Impact Academy and Oakland School of Language (SOL). The new school weaves together the best elements of both schools to provide a rigorous learning environment for middle school students in East Oakland with a focus on bilingualism, biliteracy, and social justice.

Frick serves 316 students in grades 6 to 8. 95.9% of Frick's students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 32.9% are African American, 59.5% are Latinx, 46.8% are English Learners, 19.6% are students with disabilities, and 11.4% are unsheltered.

All students at Frick have the opportunity to study a second language. No matter the English and/or Spanish proficiency of Frick students, the school offers an early start to bilingualism and biliteracy so that students can prepare to graduate from high school with the [State Seal of Biliteracy](#) in Spanish.

**Creating the Advisory Program**

An essential component of Frick United Academy of Language is the focus on ensuring a nurturing environment guided by restorative justice practices and service learning. A core element of this culture is the Advisory Program, which focuses on learning and practicing social-emotional skills, developing a sense of self identity and cultural belonging, growing the ability and openness to interact across cultures, and recognizing and disrupting racial oppression.

The advisory program was developed through Frick United Academy of Language's design process and
draws on strengths and experiences from both of the previous middle schools.

Oakland SOL’s advisory program was developed in 2016-17 by a design team made up of families, students, educators, and a community organizer. Parent leader Lamont Snaer led the work group focused on creating the advisory.

The design team held a vision for a school with a learning environment that supported the whole child. They held a deep belief that academic success rests on a foundational culture of belonging and inclusion. The vision was to support students to become community leaders who build friendships, celebrate differences, and recognize and disrupt systems of racial oppression. The team also had a commitment to creating equity of voice, and ensuring that everyone had opportunities to take turns being learners and experts. They valued and supported a school culture that encouraged those who are often silent to make their voices heard.

In 2019, when the two middle schools began the process of coming together, they formed a combined Frick-SOL design team that included a school culture sub-committee. Members of the Frick-SOL culture sub-committee began to work together to bring the heart of each school’s advisory program together.

Frick educators valued advisory, but also voiced concerns about how to balance it with their core teaching responsibilities, based on prior experiences of not receiving adequate support to develop curriculum and facilitate the advisory space with young people.

In order to respond to these concerns, members of the culture team created an advisory curriculum that was responsive to the needs of students and educators. At Frick, advisory classes take place four days a week for 35 minutes. The school leadership team collaborates to provide every teacher with additional support and capacity building in two key ways: 1) They integrate time on the professional development calendar for additional training and peer exchanges focused on advisory; and 2) They offer one-on-one classroom-based support and coaching for teachers during their advisory classes.

What Does Advisory Look Like?
The Advisory Program is part of the larger Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategy that all staff practice.

During advisory, staff facilitate Community Building Circles (Restorative Circles) as a practice for students to be heard. It’s a space where students who are coming with different kinds of educational experiences can bring their wonderings to a trusted adult and have disagreements in healthy ways; a space where students who are introverted can practice stepping up and sharing their voice; and a space where diverse voices and identities can emerge to build real community.

Advisory is also a space where students can practice multi-racial democracy. At Frick United, the Leadership Class often brings school-wide decisions for a vote in the advisory classes. For example, for school-wide celebrations, the Leadership Class sends out a list of recommended themes and students have an opportunity to discuss and vote on them in every advisory class. This allows more diversity of voice in school-wide decisions and
reinforces the value that every student’s voice matters.

**Multi-Racial Solidarity Building**

At Frick United Academy of Language, advisory also creates space for students and educators to celebrate the diversity of its community and each other’s cultures, finding ways to build cultural pride and cultural humility. Each month, on Friday Community Building Days, students are taught a curriculum that exposes them to different racial/ethnic identities and cultures (e.g. Arab American Heritage Month). The curriculum is often interactive (i.e. videos) and solicits deep discussions. This integration of ethnic studies allows students to build understanding, connections and relationships across race, ethnicity, culture, and language. Most importantly, this builds a sense of safety through creating a real community where everyone belongs.

**Frick Advisory Schedule**

**Monday:** Restorative Justice (RJ) Circle  
**Tuesday:** Literacy (Independent or Shared Reading)  
**Wednesday:** No Advisory  
**Thursday:** Study Hall and Language Lab  
**Friday:** Community Building Day

Frick is currently building its capacity to use the Sown to Grow curriculum being implemented across Oakland Unified School District. Frick plans to expand its use school-wide in fall 2023.

Sown To Grow is a student goal setting and reflection platform that helps students figure out which strategies work best for them. Students set goals, track progress, and reflect on strategies, while teachers guide learning, monitor growth, and provide feedback.

**Advisory Lessons Learned**

Over the last few years, Frick United Academy of Language has gathered these best practices in order for advisory to have a real impact:

- Advisory is not a magic pill that transforms school culture by itself. Advisory needs to be embedded in a comprehensive school-wide approach to creating restorative school culture that includes creating deep authentic relationships and supportive systems and structures, like MTSS.

- Implement the advisory structure school-wide. In order for every student to have access to advisory, every educator needs to commit to engaging in the practice. If it’s not done school-wide, inequities develop—where some students have great experiences and feel supported while others don’t.

- Create structures of support for educators. Hold trainings at the beginning of each school year, allocate professional development and reflection time throughout the year, and provide one-to-one coaching and peer support structures on how to hold advisory.

- Learning happens through trying and failing... and trying again. This kind of practice is new for many of us as adults. Creating a culture of support for educators to be learners is essential. If you’re not doing that, you’re just spinning your wheels.

- Have fun, play games - don’t just do talking circles. Students get really invested in games. They provide a space to connect and have fun. Talking circles alone can become boring. Balancing what is light with what’s heavier provides opportunities to build deeper connections and creates a space for more vulnerability.
Youth Alliance’s Restorative Justice Program

YOUTH ALLIANCE

"Youth of Today Leading Tomorrow’s Future,” by Morgan Cole.

Hollister Youth Alliance works alongside youth to build pathways of opportunity while advancing leadership for a more just and equitable community. Youth can participate in after-school programs that offer safe spaces and connection to other youth, youth support services that provide healing through counseling, family support and guidance, and other resources.

I joined Youth Alliance for an afternoon to experience their work, those who make the work possible and the Youth Alliance community.

Julius Mills-Denti, a Restorative Justice Specialist working with Youth Alliance, guides youth and program discussions at San Andreas Continuation High School in California’s San Benito County.

“People here cannot control themselves – so, there will be fights. But recently, since he’s been doing this [Restorative Justice], there haven’t been any fights. It’s gotten… cool.”

Several high school students sat huddled together in a sharing circle. The legs of their chairs touched one another. Each student placed a small, personal token in the center of a circle atop a spare chair in a portable unit classroom in Hollister, California.

The tokens were not necessarily special—they were whatever happened to be in everyone’s pockets at
that moment. As each person shared something personal about themselves, it became clear that these items symbolized a willingness to contribute to the practice of restorative justice.

Restorative justice is a healing process to restore or make things as right as possible, while holding students accountable, building community and mutual understanding.

Another part of this work Youth Alliance led alongside the high school’s youth involved inviting community members to participate in restorative justice practices on site. Community members came to the school and participated in their own community circle with the youth. They were welcomed by posters and art created and hung by students around the room and campus – artwork focused on not labeling or stereotyping the students. Students said this is all too common at a non-traditional high school such as theirs. People have their biases, their opinions about them. This event sought to change that.

Meeting Unique Community Needs

The semi-rural community of Hollister is partially remote from systems of care, requiring Youth Alliance to offer unique services for youth and families. Parents often commute long distances to secure higher wages for their family, leaving youth alone for portions of the day. The hours of 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. are peak hours for juvenile misconduct and substance abuse, said Eduardo Navarro, a staff member at Youth Alliance. The Youth Alliance creates safe spaces for youth where they are encouraged and inspired to be creative, confident, to lead, and to be involved with their local community.

Youth and Family Support Services

Back at Youth Alliance’s offices, Jeannette Neal, the organization’s Parent Education Coordinator, shared
a troubling story. A Latino kindergarten student was being isolated in a room with no light and an old desk because teachers mistook his learning challenges—and need for special, individualized education—as class disruptions.

This scenario, I was told, is all too common.

Boys of color are three times as likely to be disciplined, referred to law enforcement, or arrested than their white counterparts, according to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights’ School Climate and Safety Report.

This student was experiencing bias firsthand that feeds into the school to prison pipeline. By first grade, he had been suspended multiple times, a form of discipline that did not help him get the support and specialized learning to succeed.

Jeanette helped the student’s mother organize a parent group and an action plan: a series of steps for what to do when the student was reprimanded again. As a result of Hollister Youth Alliance’s involvement, the school was held accountable and the student received an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to best support his learning needs. Youth Alliance supported this family and continues to work with education partners and communities to create restorative responses to youth.

Through Youth Alliance’s various programs, youth, families and communities are provided with innovative and culturally-relevant services to lead in their communities and thrive.

Learn more about Youth Alliance [here](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
Build Authentic Relationships Between Students, Families, Educators, and Community Partners

Building Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships are foundational to all school transformational change. That is why California recognizes in its Community Schools Framework that supportive environments that foster strong relationships and community building are necessary for student learning and development and essential to a strong community school.⁶ A teacher who participated in the Southern California Regional Community Schools Forum in 2021 said his “…school needed two years for relationship building before beginning community schools implementation. Because we waited, we feel like we have a much stronger foundation with families and students. You have to create space for a lot of people to shape the school the whole way through so that they stay invested.”

However, building relationships requires resources, time and capacity-building. To build trust with all members of the school community—students, families, educators and community partners—schools must create and support a culture grounded in cultural humility, mutual respect and a commitment to engage everyone as informed and equal partners.

Schools must start the process by valuing and leveraging the expertise of their school communities through listening and meaningful engagement at all grade levels and with all members of the community. This lets members of the school community (especially students, families and community partners) feel their leadership and partnership is needed, as opposed to tokenized.

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⁶ “The Four Key Conditions of Learning,” CA Community Schools Framework (September 2022), pp 3-4.
“Informal relationships are what build really strong formal systems.”

- ELEANOR ALDERMAN, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT


Shared Leadership & Power for School Transformation: Part I - Building Trusting Relationships

December 8, 2022 | 5:30–7:00 pm PT

The California Partnership for the Future of Learning hosted this learning session about the crucial role that building trusting relationships among students, families, school/district staff, and community partners plays in advancing school transformation, and how to establish the mindsets, systems, structures, and practices that support trust building.

Full Description, Recording in Spanish and Arabic, Printed Resources and Slides Available Here
Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV): A Proven Family Engagement Strategy that Improves Teaching & Learning

The premise of Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV) is simple yet powerful: When the most important people in a child’s life—their families and their teachers—engage with one another as equally-valued co-educators, children do better in school.

For complex reasons, deeply held mistrust and a corrosive cycle of blame often prevent such meaningful home-school partnership. This was the experience of PTHV’s founding parents, two public school moms who were desperately seeking—and not getting—academic support for their children. Using community organizing principles of empowerment, they joined forces with educators and community organizers to pilot a relational home visit model in eight low-income, racially diverse Sacramento City Unified Schools in 1998. The project evolved into a nonprofit organization and word of the program’s success spread. PTHV’s founding parents and teachers answered hundreds of requests to train in school communities like theirs, from Alaska to Florida, in rural, suburban and urban districts across the United States.

As the model was adapted and adopted by widely diverse communities, five non-negotiable core practices emerged that, when followed, maintain the integrity and impact of PTHV’s relational, capacity-building approach that is well-known today.

Because several years of conversations and focus groups with families and educators informed the development of the 2-visit PTHV model, the five non-negotiable core practices that make up the model meet the needs of educators and families remarkably well.

In the intervening years, PTHV has emerged as a foremost leader in relationship-building home visits. With a national network of implementing schools and districts that spans more than 700 communities across 28 states and the District of Columbia, countless stories have emerged from the field describing the transformative power of PTHV. A trio of national studies by RTI International and Johns Hopkins University validate what families and home visit educators have shared through the years—
Home visits that focus on building authentic relationships and mutual trust significantly strengthen school-family relationships, shift mindsets, improve teaching, and bolster student outcomes including attendance and academic achievement.

Given the shared commitment to transforming education systems through the power of trusting relationships, PTHV is a strong foundational practice for successful, racially just community schools. PTHV creates a bank of trust, goodwill, and mutual understanding that can be drawn on as school communities engage in transformative change. Not only do PTHV visits help create community schools’ hallmark culture of inclusivity and care, but this practice supports the implementation of all four, interconnected pillars of community schools:

1) **Shared Power and Collaborative Leadership and Practices.** PTHV builds all of the necessary ingredients for successful shared leadership. By listening to families share hopes and dreams, honoring families’ lived experiences and wisdom, and creating a process for mutual responsibility and accountability, educators lay a strong foundation for shared governance. Further, PTHV practice is proven to shift the mindsets of educators and families to see each other as equal partners who care for the child and develop engaged, family leaders.

2) **Active Student, Family, and Community Engagement.** PTHV has been proven to strengthen home-school relationships and improve two-way communication and collaboration in service of improved student outcomes.

3) **Culturally-Rooted and Sustaining Approaches to Teaching and Learning.** PTHV improves teaching and learning by allowing educators to tap into families’ funds of knowledge and deepen their own learning about students in order to adopt more individualized, culturally sustaining classroom practices.

4) **Integrated Student, Family, and Staff Supports.** PTHV recognizes that students’ education and life experiences are inextricable. This relational home visit practice creates a climate of trust and is, therefore, a strong conduit for engaging families in assessing needs and assets within the school and community, and connecting them with service providers and support.

Transformational change in a school community is disruptive and creates discomfort. Change and transition can come from outside forces, as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, or can come from needed and necessary improvements such as adopting a community schools approach. No matter the origin, a transformational change requires the people affected to trust each other. PTHV practice has been shown to build trust between families and educators and between educator colleagues. Research shows that when adults trust one another, they don’t feel as much fear of change, learn from each other, engage in collaborative decision making, and feel called to make things better. Trust is the currency of change.
Elk Grove Unified School District’s PTHV Practice Drives Change

ELK GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, ELK GROVE, CA

History and Background
Located in southern Sacramento County, Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD) is the fifth-largest school district in California, serving nearly 64,000 students across 68 school sites. Proudly celebrating the diversity of its students and their families, EGUSD aims to provide a learning community that challenges ALL students to realize their greatest potential. At the center of this vision is a re-imagining of students’ educational experiences through relationships and culturally responsive practices. Driving this vision forward is the belief that “people are our priority,” which permeates the district’s decision making, culture, and practices.

In 2016, Superintendent Christopher Hoffman and the Elk Grove School Board hired Program Administrator Lisa Levasseur to create EGUSD’s Family and Community Engagement Office. Lisa began listening to families and staff about their successes, their hopes and dreams, along with their challenges and barriers. From this listening emerged a collective desire to deepen the home-school connection; there was clear consensus that building positive relationships with students and engaging all families should be the focus. As a result, EGUSD leaders and its educational partners, including the Elk Grove Education Association teachers’ union, collaborated with PTHV to launch a relational home visit practice that same year.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. EGUSD experienced a groundswell of support during those first few years of implementation with both certificated and classified staff participating. PTHV trainings were well attended and the volume of home visits quickly grew. To keep up with the increasing demand, EGUSD hired a district home visit coordinator to oversee the practice in 2017 and then partnered with PTHV to develop an in-house training team in 2018.

Undergirding this growth were a few key strategies that supported widespread engagement of both staff and families. First, EGUSD opened up the training and home visit practice to all certificated and classified staff at Title I schools, including but not limited to teachers, students services staff, administrators, paraeducators, office staff, and custodians. A key group of educators that receive annual home visit training are Bilingual Teachers Associates and Bilingual Family Liaisons as EGUSD serves a multilingual, multicultural community. By ensuring that these educators understand the purpose of these relational home visits and preparing them to engage as members of the home visit team—as opposed to solely acting as interpreters—families receive a more authentic and culturally-sustaining visit.

PTHV as a District-Wide Recovery Strategy
By the time COVID-19 shuttered the world in March 2020, EGUSD had built a thriving home visit practice supported by stable funding and a robust infrastructure that included school-level coordinators. Teachers and families alike marveled that the relationships built through PTHV prior to the pandemic buffered some of the initial shock and disconnect that seemed to be so profoundly impacting school communities across the country. These feelings quickly gave way to a yearning to resume home visits. Listening to their teachers’ and families’ wants and needs once again, EGUSD collaborated with PTHV to update the home visit model and training to fit this new virtual space.

EGUSD experienced unexpected growth in their home visit practice as a result of this shift to virtual “bridge” visits; families and teachers who may have initially been hesitant to participate in in-person home visits welcomed this new opportunity to connect and partner.

This interest was fueled by strategic leadership moves as schools returned to in-person instruction. Having been the first California district to transition to remote learning, EGUSD leaders boldly prioritized authentic family engagement.
as a key recovery strategy. While many districts used their federal COVID-19 relief funds to simply offer “more of the same” remedial strategies used pre-pandemic, EGUSD heavily invested in PTHV to ensure that all 68 sites could engage in this proven practice. In turn, educators answered the call to great impact; for example, in the summer months leading up to the 2021-2022 school year, over 5,000 students received a relationship-building home visit.

The Transformative Impact of Parent Teacher Home Visits

As a 26-year veteran educator who has always served in Title I schools, Christine Fletcher has long embraced informal, relational home visits as a way to connect with her students and families. After transferring to Monterey Trail High School (MTHS) nearly a decade ago, Christine experienced a bit of school culture shock given her past experiences; she distinctly remembers a fellow teacher telling her that the school is great “because parents never bother you.”

So when EGUSD launched its PTHV practice at MTHS and other Title I schools, Christine was excited for the opportunity to share her passion for home visiting with others. Building interest proved difficult at first, given long-held practices and beliefs that devalued family engagement. In time, with concerted effort towards creating shared understanding with students and their families, the collective feelings about home visiting changed.

Now, PTHV is a foundational practice embedded into the way “school is done” at MTHS. With Christine serving as the school’s PTHV coordinator and over 70 educators trained, the school has an annual goal to visit—either in-person or virtually—all incoming freshmen and their families; they aim to ease the transition to high school, build positive connections early, and establish ongoing communication with families. This focus on authentic family engagement has had positive effects school-wide, but also on a deeply personal level for Christine and her students, particularly during and emerging from the pandemic.
When shifting to remote instruction, MTHS students who had received a home visit prior to the pandemic “showed up” on zoom daily while attendance for others was a challenge. Teachers were amazed that students whom they had never “seen” on camera during remote instruction before virtual home visits were engaged and visible after. Increased empathy and an “ultra connection” defined how many at MTHS felt despite COVID-19 often being characterized by overwhelm and isolation.

For this, Christine is grateful. And she commends the district for deepening their commitment and investment in relational home visits over the last several years given the impact it has had on her. She describes transformative changes to her teaching practice as a result of PTHV. Classroom management is far easier because it is rooted in positive relationships; families—who call her by first name—trust her and partner with her to resolve challenges while students know that she cares. Home visits also provide Christine the opportunity to learn directly from students and their families about their cultural backgrounds, which is, in turn, used to create lessons that are far more engaging, relevant, and personal to her students.

But perhaps the most profound impact of PTHV is personal. In a time when educators are fleeing the field, Christine continues to find joy and fulfillment in education. She likes to share the story of a meaningful home visit that she did with her colleague, Bao Tran, a MTHS math teacher who is fluent in Vietnamese. The student, a shy girl who could only communicate with her parents about basic needs given their language differences, did not know what to expect and was nervous the week leading up to the visit. Upon hearing—through Bao’s interpretation—her parents express their hopes and dreams for her for the first time, the student shared, “This is exactly what I needed!” They laughed together and they cried together, and the student, parents, and teachers forged a deep sense of connection through the power of PTHV.

Tools and Resources
- Trusting Relationships First: A Toolkit for Healing and Recovery
- What Happens When a Child’s Family Welcomes a Teacher into Their Home?
- PTHV Training Readiness Factors

Check out this video celebrating EGUSD educators who prioritize building relationships of trust with their students and families through Parent Teacher Home Visits.
Strengthening School Teams Through Deep Relationships

**INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, OAKLAND, CA**

By Amber Hu

*During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools had to make drastic shifts both to provide virtual learning and to support their communities, and many schools struggled with the transition. Schools that were able to pivot most successfully, like International Community School, were those that already had a strong relational culture in place before the pandemic, with deep connections among members of the school community.*

International Community School (ICS) is a dual-language K-5 immersion school that develops students’ bilingualism and biliteracy in English and Spanish by integrating language learning with academic content. ICS is committed to building partnerships with families and students so all students can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically, especially in the current context of a global pandemic and deepening racial and socio-economic inequities. The school was able to support students and families during COVID through the powerful combination of integrated student supports and the strong foundation of trusting relationships staff have built with students and families over the years.

To be places where students learn and thrive, schools must be built on strong and trusting relationships between all members of the school community. A key relationship-building practice used at ICS are relational parent-teacher home visits. Each school year, teachers and school staff meet their students’ families in their own homes or other places where they are comfortable. During the visits, educators get to know the family and learn more about the student’s interests, strengths, and hopes and dreams. These are not typical partnerships with families and students so all students can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically, especially in the current context of a global pandemic and deepening racial and socio-economic inequities. The school was able to support students and families during COVID through the powerful combination of integrated student supports and the strong foundation of trusting relationships staff have built with students and families over the years.

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parent-teacher conferences—the focus is less on academics, and more on getting to know the student and their family as people. This establishes trust between the parent and educator and provides a starting point from which to have conversations about academics or challenges a student may be experiencing. The home visits help to weave a relational fabric among the student, family, and teacher that continues throughout the school year and beyond.

As a parent of two graduates of ICS, Judith Mendez is someone who is both very familiar with and instrumental to the relational culture at the school. After years of volunteering as a parent leader, she explained, “All this involvement helped me grow on a personal level—I began to develop relationships through spending time with teachers and staff, and I got more confident. I became like a parent coordinator at ICS, and was also able to get involved at the district level through the family engagement committee to visit other schools to share concerns and ideas with families in other school communities.” She became such a key part of the school community that, rather than losing her when her son graduated, school leaders worked through bureaucratic hurdles and red tape to secure her a paid role at the school as a yard supervisor.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the school leaned on the relationships and skills of people like Judith to respond to emerging needs of students, families, and educators, many of whom were struggling with reduced income, food and health insecurity, job loss, and distance learning. Because campus-based staff couldn’t do their typical jobs during this time, they pivoted to new roles that relied on the deep trust and understanding they have within the school community. For example, Judith partnered with ICS’s full-time Social Worker Diosa Diaz to reach out to Spanish-speaking families as part of a wellness team that formed to check in with the families of students who were not attending classes during distance learning. Because the families knew and trusted Judith, they were honest and vulnerable about their needs, and an ICS team was able to connect families with help. This included food and technology distribution, training and support on platforms for distance learning, and organizing stimulus check donations and redistributing money directly to families in need of financial support.
Throughout this pandemic school year, ICS has kept up other practices to maintain and deepen bonds within the school community. The principal hosts a weekly coffee chat with parents, where they can ask questions, hear about what’s happening at school, and share their thoughts and ideas. They transitioned the school’s weekly assemblies to happen virtually, and the entire school gathers to connect and give shoutouts to each other. Workshops for families have continued virtually and have had better turnout than usual, especially among newcomer families and non-English-speaking families, thanks to live interpretation in Arabic and Mam (an indigenous language from Guatemala). During the pandemic and beyond, the people at ICS will continue to support each other through culture, community, and relationships.

**Key Ideas:**
- Relational fabric strengthens the entire school community by creating trust and connection between all members
- Essential relationship-building practices include parent teacher home visits, one-to-one wellness checks with families by trusted individuals, weekly coffees with the principal, regular family workshops, and community celebrations.
- Schools and districts can reduce bureaucratic barriers to hire staff with deep connections and experience in a school community

**Learn More:**
- [Introduction to Home Visits Training](#) (Parent Teacher Home Visits)
- [Relationship-Centered Schools campaign](#) (Californians for Justice)
- Case Studies on Leveraging Deep Relationships and on Parent Teacher Home Visits in [A Restorative Approach to Equitable Education](#) (Learning Policy Institute)
Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music & Culture in Transforming Schools

Narrative change, storytelling, arts, music and culture are vital strategies to transform public education systems and create racially just, relationship-centered schools. Art enables us to dream up the kinds of schools we are working towards and deserve. Telling our stories builds power. It helps us shape and shift the popular imagination. As one organizer shared at the 2nd Annual California Partnership for the Future of Learning’s (CA PFL) Arts and Culture Celebration in 2022, “Art is not just the cherry on top of our organizing work, it’s an organizing tool and a necessity.”

Arts, music, and culture have immense power to deepen and fortify connections across school communities. Oftentimes, the practices that bring us great joy are what builds a sense of belonging because they are deeply humanizing. They allow members of a school community to share personal, family, and community stories, joyful and vulnerable parts of themselves, and what they truly care about. Many of us have experienced this through cultural events, expositions of student learning, murals, and project-based learning artifacts posted in the hallways and around school campuses, or in gardens that are maintained by students, families, educators, and community members.

Fortunately, arts, music and culture already exist and thrive inside and outside of our school communities. However, in order to tap into the power of joy for building relationships, school teams should reflect on the following:

• How do we acknowledge that existing practices of joy (arts, music, and culture) are important to building relationships throughout our school community?

• How do we become more intentional about weaving practices of joy throughout our school day?

• What more is possible when we—as a school community—center joy in building strong relationships?
Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA)

The Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) has been a leading arts and cultural organization working in some of California’s most underserved communities in Southern California since 1997.

With the support of The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative, and in collaboration with local artists and community-based organizations, like Promesa Boyle Heights and InnerCity Struggle, ACTA has developed deep relationships with community leaders, including education and healthcare partners to cultivate community-led campaigns that center participatory traditional arts practices.

ACTA promotes and supports ways for cultural traditions to thrive now and into the future. Local and ancestral knowledge is honored as a source of strength, resilience, and creativity to counter systemic harm and lack of access to trauma-informed healing and access to equitable education in communities of color.

Restorative Justice through Quilting

Learn how ACTA helps seed restorative justice practices in the community of Boyle Heights, Los Angeles through the transformative work of Building Healthy Communities Artist Fellow and quilter, Juana Mena.

Las Mujeres de los Tejidos Purépecha: Building Healthy Communities Eastern Coachella Valley

In the example of the Women’s Tejidos Purépecha Group of North Shore, the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) organized a regular meeting of women from the community around the practice of embroidery from the indigenous Purépecha people of Michoacán, Mexico, who have settled in the farm worker communities of Mecca and North Shore. In the process of gathering together to learn the new and culturally relevant skill of embroidery at the home of master artist Natividad González Morales, these women had the opportunity to meet one another, break bread, and discuss the problems they face in their daily lives. Advocates from the Building Healthy Communities’ Schools Action Team of Eastern Coachella Valley and the cultural empowerment organization Raíces Cultura joined the meetings to learn about local priorities and provide resources for action. Through learning the indigenous art of embroidery, this community of women have stitched together enduring relationships with one another and key community partners, which in turn has led to stronger partnerships with local schools.
Additional ACTA Resources

- **Weaving Traditional Arts into the Fabric of Community Health** (2011). This briefing studies the potential to promote health through engagement in community-centered traditional arts, and presents an overview of the field of arts-for-health as evidenced by evaluations of two of ACTA’s signature programs: the Living Cultures Grants Program and the Apprenticeship Program. The study was conducted by UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities, led by Dr. Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, and showed that ACTA’s traditional arts programs impacted participants’ mental health through measurable improvements in their self esteem, emotional connection to culture, and sense of personal achievement and collective energy.

- **Building Healthy Communities: Approaching Community Health Through Heritage and Culture in Boyle Heights** (2017). Written by Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson and Citlalli Chávez, this report is intended for anyone interested in better understanding how heritage-based arts practices can contribute to community empowerment, comprehensive neighborhood revitalization and better health outcomes. ACTA’s 32-page case study examines the Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project from 2011 through the fall of 2015 in Boyle Heights, a vibrant neighborhood in Los Angeles, full of challenges, assets and opportunities.

- **SaludArte: Building Health Equity on the Bedrock of Traditional Arts and Culture** (2020). Co-authored by Dr. George Lipsitz of UC Santa Barbara and ACTA, this bilingual publication explores what can happen when traditional artists engage cultural practices to address social determinants of health like structural racism, poverty, and other conditions that impact our ability to lead healthy lives where we live, work, and play.

- **Voices for Change: Collective Songwriting in Boyle Heights** (2016). Another engagement and social change methodology contributed by local traditional artists, including Quetzal Flores and Martha Gonzalez, is collective songwriting. A communal practice with strong roots in Chicano activism, collective songwriting workshops bring community members together to openly discuss local issues that affect their lives and channel their voices into music with meaning.

Additional Resources

- [California Partnership for the Future of Learning Art Showcase 2021](#)
- [California Partnership for the Future of Learning Art Showcase 2022](#)
Center Mental Health and Wellness for Students, Families, and Staff

In the fall of 2021, the California Department of Education, with the support of The California Partnership for the Future of Learning and the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, organized six virtual regional forums across the state during which more than 600 students, families, community members, educators, and school and district administrators spoke about how to create equitable and thriving community schools.

One of the key themes that emerged was the urgent need to prioritize mental health services and cultures of wellness.

Students, families and school staff were struggling with stress, fear, anxiety and isolation as the pandemic continued. At the same time, forum participants emphasized that schools should prioritize mental health and a culture of wellness all the time, not just in response to the COVID-19 health crisis.

Students, families and educators expressed a tremendous need for mental health and wellness supports for everyone connected to the school community.

“We need more support for mental health for students because there’s a lot of depression and things that happen to students, especially because of what they see on social media,” said an Inland Empire parent. “Many times what students need in order to succeed academically is for someone to listen to them.”

A Southern California parent added: “With the pandemic, our kids were closed off. Our kids became antisocial and they were impacted by being isolated, like the parents. I want mental health support for parents, too, because if we are good then we will be able to better support our children.”

Artist: Adrienne for CA PFL 2022 Arts Showcase
“There is currently a lot of hurt with everyone, students, staff, teachers,” said an Inland Empire student. “It keeps building and there is no understanding or compassion.” Students spoke of the importance of de-stigmatizing the need for mental health care and creating a culture of wellness. “Double down on mental health,” said one Bay Area student. “We need to do more to normalize that everyday mental health is a challenge for all people.”

A key pillar of transformative community schools—integrated mental health and wellness supports for students, families and educators—answers this urgent call to prioritize mental health and wellness in our schools.

Read on to learn more about the significant resources available to support youth mental health and wellness and best practice programs in place in schools today.

### Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative’s Youth at the Center: Calls-to-action for a reimagined behavioral health ecosystem from children, youth, and families across California

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative provides a one-time $4.4 billion investment in California’s mental health system.

#### Background from the report:

**As part of Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative’s (CYBHI) commitment to building a more coordinated, youth-centered, equitable, and prevention-oriented ecosystem, the initiative commissioned 29 organizations to convene nearly 50 separate meetings in 2022, engaging more than 600 individual young people, families, and community members in sharing their insights and experiences. The goal of these sessions was to ensure that the work of rebuilding the system of support for youth mental health and wellness was guided by the lived experiences of the people it was intended to serve.**

This report is a summary of that vision: a system of care designed with youth at the center. When viewed collectively, 12 calls-to-action emerged from these conversations with youth, families, and communities that describe how all of us—regardless of role—can transform systems, reimagine services, and shift thinking. It is a critical resource, intended to guide our work, as we begin the process of healing by building a new behavioral health ecosystem together.

Read the rest of the report including team discussion guides [here](#).
Creating Circles of Support

Peer to Peer Counseling Programs

Contributors to this piece include California Children’s Trust, The Los Angeles Trust for Children’s Health, and Pomona Peer Resources.

What is Peer-to-Peer Support in Schools

Partnering with schools is key to any scalable solution to address the youth mental health crisis. Peer-to-Peer (P2P) in schools builds on cultural assets and acknowledges the importance of social influence and peer attachments in the adolescent years. It taps the evidence that young people more commonly turn to informal sources of support, including friends, for psychological needs and social-emotional support. This may subsequently lead young people to be more inclined to seek a similar-aged peer for issues around their mental health and wellbeing.⁷

“Peer-to-peer programs are a great resource for young people, especially for those who feel scared to approach an adult for help. For many of us, there is a barrier that can be felt between us and someone from a different generation.”

- HELEN, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

Why Peer-to-Peer In Schools Works

P2P programs meet youth where they are—in schools. In addition to being a natural resource for connecting with peers, schools provide a trusted and safe environment and minimize transportation barriers. Research shows that reaching children and youth in schools—with a P2P connection and/or more traditional wellness services—provides the support they need to succeed:

• Students who receive mental health services on campus report greater connection to school and more caring relationships with adults at school.⁸

• Mental health treatment in schools is associated with increased access for students of color—who might otherwise go without any treatment.⁹

• Students who receive mental health services on campus have lower suspension rates and get along better with peers than students who have mental health needs and do not receive school-based treatment.¹⁰

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⁷ https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8049263/
⁸ Susan Stone et al., “The Relationship Between Use of School-Based Health Centers and Student-Reported School Assets,” Journal of Adolescent Health. Published online July 10, 2013
“Peer counselors learn to listen more deeply. They are better at getting students to talk than the adults on campus, including myself.”

- SHEILA BALK, PEER RESOURCES ADVISOR, POMONA HIGH SCHOOL

Why We Need to Expand Peer-to-Peer in Schools

There were already signs of a youth mental health crisis before COVID. Over the past decade, California children ages 10–14 experienced a 151% increase in inpatient visits for suicide, suicidal ideation, and self-injury.¹¹ Behavioral health emergency room utilization for youth at Rady Children’s Hospital in San Diego increased 1,746% between 2011 and 2019. UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland reported double the number of youth suicide attempts in the fall of 2020 than in 2019. Under-resourced and underrepresented groups have been disproportionately impacted by the mental health crisis. The suicide rate among Black youth is twice that of their white peers.¹²

Making it worse, California ranks in the lowest 10% of states for providing critical early behavioral, social, and developmental screenings, and 44th in the nation in access to mental health services for children—further evidence that children and youth across California are not getting the mental health support they need.

The provider shortage impacts traditional mental health support in schools as well, and California is far behind the country in the number of School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) that fill the primary care and mental health gaps for students, especially those who rely on Medi-Cal, two-thirds of whom are Black or Latinx.

STUDENT-TO-STAFF RATIOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>California</th>
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<td>626-to-1</td>
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<td>7,308-to-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Department of Education, CALPADS2020, USDOE CRCD2021

¹² https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2680952
Building Blocks of a Successful Peer-to-Peer Program

After examining several best-practice programs and consulting with numerous youth leaders working to advance peer support in their schools, the following common elements were found to be a part of successful programs:

- A long-term commitment from a clinically informed adult ally with strong relationship skills
- Carefully developed and continuously updated curriculum that is co-constructed with youth and usually includes youth surveys, demographic information on students and the school community, data on youth mental health prevalence and system design, and co-development of new curriculum responsive to young people’s priorities
- Fair compensation for youth
- The school community and families adopt a youth development approach that continuously emphasizes and develops: 1) strengths and positive outcomes so young people develop the competencies, values, and connections they need for life, 2) youth as valued partners who have meaningful, decision-making roles in programs and communities, and 3) community involvement and collaboration to make the community a great place to grow up. Inclusion of social justice principles that embrace and center racism and poverty as key drivers of social and emotional challenges for youth
- Regular opportunities for training, including specific cultivation of community resources and referrals
- Strategic alliances in school administrative leadership and teaching staff

Youth Leaders Advocate for the Expansion of Peer-to-Peer

Youth have been at the forefront of the P2P movement, advocating for funding and expansion based on the positive impact they have personally experienced with the model.

In February 2022, youth advocacy leaders Sriya Chilla and Nghia Do provided expert commentary to the California State Assembly Joint Hearing for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Panel on the youth mental health crisis and the need for more relevant and accessible school-based supports, with a focus on P2P support. Their testimony sparked a $10 million effort to support eight high schools as pilot sites in California for a P2P program.
Watch Nghia’s Commentary at the California State Assembly Joint Hearing for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Panel

Nghia Do (he/him)
Video time stamp 4:22

Nghia discusses why students want and need P2P

Youth Supporting Youth
Expanding Peer-to-Peer Programs in High Schools

FEBRUARY 2022
A Conversation With

Nghia Do
Youth Minds Alliance

Alex Briscoe
California Children’s Trust

“What will the state do to incentivize and promote student-centered initiatives such as peer-to-peer so students are not just at the center of care, but are also at the center of engagement—allowing us to be the agents that help others.”

- NGHIA DO
Watch Sriya’s Commentary at the California State Assembly Joint Hearing for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Panel

Sriya Chilla (she/her)
Video time stamp 4:26

Sriya shares more about her advocacy work and expanding P2P

“SB 803 is a great step forward in the peer-to-peer world, but it needs to be followed up with more legislation that includes youth under 18 at the high school level. It’s our responsibility to set up the next generation with the mental health tools they need to succeed at school and in life.”

- SRIYA CHILLA
Types of Peer-to-Peer Programs and Resources

P2P in schools is an evolving model; however, there will probably never be a “one size fits all” P2P program. Every school is unique, and school teams must listen to the needs of students and families to determine what will best serve their mental wellness needs.

There are a number of factors to consider when exploring and evaluating P2P programs for your school. The table below provides a few of the primary factors to consider and offers a continuum of options for how to implement against those factors based on current program examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAMI On Campus High School (NCHS)</th>
<th>MindOneSix</th>
<th>Peer Group Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led clubs that raise mental health awareness and reduce stigma through peer-led activities and education supported with toolkits and resources. These are clubs, not support or therapy groups, and are open to all students who want to learn more for themselves or their family members, or to advocate.</td>
<td>Sacramento City Unified Collaborative work-based learning initiative focused on mental wellness. Each school has a unique CBO partner.</td>
<td>Northeast and Midwest states year-long, evidence-based, daily peer leadership course-for-credit initiated by CBO and taught by school faculty. High school model: 11th and/or 12th graders mentor 9th graders in small groups weekly; Middle school model: 8th graders mentor 6th graders in small groups 3 times/month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The L.A. Trust Student Advisory Boards</td>
<td>Madison Park Academy Mentoring</td>
<td>Pomona Peer Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Unified year-long leadership program. Students conduct health education campaigns and navigate peers to the campus Wellness Centers run by Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other CBO providers.</td>
<td>Oakland Unified year-long mentoring course/internship where 11th and 12th graders mentor middle school students.</td>
<td>Pomona Unified year-long peer counseling class where 10th-12th grade students provide 1-on-1 support to freshmen and students referred in response to mental health needs or discipline issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program type</td>
<td>Awareness Building</td>
<td>The L.A. Trust</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMI California</td>
<td>Club-based, not a support or therapy group</td>
<td>Afterschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program delivery setting</td>
<td>School-wide</td>
<td>School-wide</td>
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<td>Cost to school</td>
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<td>Professional oversight</td>
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<td>Student compensation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Angelica Magana <a href="mailto:nchsa@namica.org">nchsa@namica.org</a></td>
<td>Noe Rivera <a href="mailto:n.rivera@thelatrust.org">n.rivera@thelatrust.org</a></td>
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Pomona Peer Resources

POMONA HIGH SCHOOL, POMONA, CA

Pomona High School’s Peer Resources program aims to offer insight into the skills required to provide a valuable service on campus, while also focusing on self-awareness, personal power, and growth. This UC-approved “G” elective course amplifies student voice and choice and inspires critical thinking, deep listening, and empathy.

Peer Resources Advisor Sheila Balk has been leading Pomona High School’s Peer Counseling program since 1996. She describes the class as “a collaborative,” co-created with the student peer counselors. The multi-year program starts in 10th grade, with students looking at themselves more deeply and developing their listening skills. Ms. Balk shares, “The second year the kids have those ‘ah ha’ moments; 11th and 12th graders tell the 10th graders that the class gets easier the second and third years.”

Skills development is rigorous. Students spend the first semester as a peer counselor practicing in class and during 5 to 6 four-hour Saturday training sessions to hone their skills in confidentiality, active listening, emotion regulation, use of appropriate questioning, paraphrasing, and summarizing along with clarification and reflection of feelings during a client session. In addition, Peer Counselors practice how to guide others in decision-making, problem solving, managing stress, and resolving conflicts effectively. The curriculum is ever-evolving; the newest skill addition is incorporating Restorative Practices. The Peer Counseling wellness center is open daily for walk-ins, teacher or counselor referrals, and other mental health or discipline related needs.

Photo credit: Pomona High School, Terrissa Bygrave, peer counselor
Pomona High School peer counselors have many powerful stories about the impact of peer counseling for their student clients. Twelfth grade peer counselor Carmen Ayala shares, “Clients have told me that the things they learned and talked about in the sessions didn’t only impact their school life, but also their life at home. They didn’t expect that.”

Eleventh grade peer counselor, Jocelyn Marquez, has also experienced how peer counseling supports her clients. “Last year, I had a chance to help someone that was impactful for their life. Last year when I was talking to her she was like a caterpillar and this year she’s like a butterfly, and we’re still in relationship.”

Not only do they see the transformation in others, peer counselors also experience it for themselves. Jocelyn remembers, “I was shy and had an accent in Spanish and didn’t want to speak in front of people.” But being a peer counselor changed that perception of herself: “I realized people don’t care about how you speak, but what you’re talking about. I understand that nobody can make you feel a certain way, you choose to feel a certain way. I feel like I’ve grown in many ways—mostly in my confidence and my ability to speak in public.” Carmen adds, “Before, I was more by myself... Now, I’m very well read in terms of emotions. I’m able to regulate myself, and to support my friends, my teachers, and my family.”

“The best outcome of the pandemic was the breakdown of the mental health stigma. Students are realizing they do not have to suffer depression and anxiety alone. Since returning to in-person classes, we have seen a significant increase in clients seeking a safe space and a listening ear. We stress confidentiality, so students feel secure asking for the help they need. We do not replace professional therapists; rather we are the bridge to connecting people with more intensive services. Peer counseling is the sand that fills the cracks, so students don’t slip through while waiting for professional therapy.”

-SHEILA BALK, PEER RESOURCES ADVISOR

For more information, contact: Sheila Balk, Pomona Peer Resources Advisor at sheilabalk@gmail.com and (909) 519-7475
Coordination of Services Team (COST)

This backgrounder was informed by the work of Alameda County Healthy Care Services Agency Center for Healthy Schools and Communities.

Now a nationally recognized best practice, Coordination of Services Teams (COST) support students in schools and districts across the country and they continue expanding. COST, and the strength-based approach it promotes, not only increases student access to services, but enhances young people’s connection to the school and community, helping all the adults in a child’s life work collaboratively.

What Is a Coordination of Services Team?

A Coordination of Services Team (COST) constitutes a strategy for managing and integrating various learning supports and resources for students. COST teams identify and address student needs holistically and ensure that the overall system of supports works together effectively.

A COST is a multidisciplinary team of school staff and providers who:

• Create a regular forum for reviewing the needs of individual students and the school overall.
• Collaborate on linking referred students to resources and interventions.
• Support students’ academic success and healthy development.

COST uses a centralized, easy-to-use referral system so that anyone in a school community can refer or self-refer students most in need of additional supports. COST then provides a structure for school staff, administrators, and school-based providers who may normally work in separate areas to come together to discuss the strengths and needs of students who are struggling and need support. Together they develop tailored interventions that connect students to academic and social-emotional supports available in a school community.

A school may have other existing systems and structures in place for different purposes such as Student Support Teams (SST), Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, School Attendance Review Board (SARB) process, disciplinary meetings, etc. The main difference is that a COST team triages ALL students, not only those who are diagnosed with a learning or other physical challenge.
WHO IS ON A COST TEAM?

COST team members will vary by school depending on available staff resources and community partners but may include:

- School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal, Teacher on Special Assignment, Community School Manager)
- Attendance clerk
- School Linked Services (SLS) Coordinator, school-based mental health provider and/or county behavioral health liaison
- School Security officer
- Teacher Representatives for Student Study Team (SST), Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504
- School Counselor
- Culture and climate liaison/Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) lead
- School Health Center staff
- Family liaison
- Social workers or case managers
- After school provider

Helpful tip: Every school has “culture keepers” and staff who have developed a close rapport with students, but their role/title may differ by school. Seek out these individuals within your school campus and meet with them.

What Do COST Teams Do?

COST teams perform four major tasks:

- Identify students who need additional supports through a schoolwide referral system.
- Assess referred students and explore strengths and supports needed.
- Coordinate efforts to link referred students to appropriate supports by tracking progress and tailoring interventions over time.
- Assess learning supports and needs school-wide, make recommendations about resource allocation to the administration, and recruit new resources.

Why Start a COST?

What are the Benefits?

COST will strengthen your school’s ability to support its students holistically. Having a COST maximizes and expands available resources, increasing your school’s capacity to respond quickly and appropriately to a wide range of student needs. With this enhanced support, more students are able to stay engaged in school and ultimately graduate healthy and successful.
COST improves coordination, communication, and collaboration across providers working on behalf of students, which leads to:

- Improved capacity to tailor interventions to each student’s unique needs and strengths.
- Higher efficiency and use of limited resources.
- Increased sense of belonging and quality of services among providers on the team.
- Expanded range of universal and prevention services.

An effective COST structure builds upon a school’s Multi-Tiered System of Support and Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 services. Prior to a COST referral, a COST team member can work with a teacher or other staff member on other strategies that can support students to be successful (e.g., 1:1 convo with a student, call home to family, classroom agreements, etc.)

Why Are COST Leaders Important?

COST leaders play a critical role in contributing to a school’s culture and climate amongst students and staff. COST leaders become change leaders by:

- Bringing together a team to work in new ways.
- Challenging the team to create solutions.
- Guiding the team and setting high expectations.
- Creating a collaborative and trusting environment that supports a student-centered approach.
- COST leads often hold other responsibilities at the school site (e.g., family liaisons, social worker, community school coordinator, etc.) but it is important to have a designated COST lead responsible for moving the work forward at a school.

Helpful tip: Identifying and supporting COST “champions” at your school will help to expand the reach in the school community. Taking the time to develop relationships with staff and partners will go a long way.
Student-Centered Approach Provides More Coordinated Supports

Before COST

After COST

Learn more about how to fund and implement COST referral systems in schools in the Californian Children’s Trust slide deck

Additional Resources

- Coordination Practices
  - Coordination of Services Team (COST) Guide
    - COST Introduction
    - COST Handouts
    - COST Tip Sheets
    - COST Training Sheets
    - COST Forms
- Readiness to Learn COST Progress Report
- District Health and Wellness
- HIPPA or FERPA? A Primer on School Health Information Sharing
- Consent and Confidentiality at schoolhealthcenters.org
School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) / Wellness Centers

Currently, our public health systems are deeply fragmented and under-resourced. School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs), also referred to as Wellness Centers, play a critical role in providing mental and physical health care to California’s historically marginalized students and families of color. The national Community Preventive Services Task Force found that “school-based health centers... provide [students and families of color] with health care and health education that gives them a chance to stay in school and perform better academically, which can lift whole communities.” Schools also continue to be ground zero for the youth mental health crisis. School-Based Health Centers can allow schools to respond holistically to students’ health needs.

When school sites have School-Based Health Centers, the impact is immensely positive. California School-Based Health Alliance, a statewide nonprofit organization helping to put more health services in schools, provides the following statistics:

Impact of School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) on Health Care

- SBHCs increase access to health care.
- SBHC users are likely to use primary care—both medical and behavioral health—more consistently.
- SBHC users are more likely to have yearly dental and medical check-ups.
- SBHC users are less likely to go to the emergency room or be hospitalized.

Impact of School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) on Academic Performance

- Research shows that SBHCs have a positive impact on absences, dropout rates, disciplinary problems and other academic outcomes.
- Students receiving SBHC mental health services improve their grades more quickly than their peers.
- States with SBHCs that serve as Medicaid providers have higher student achievement results.
- States that oversee health education and health services have higher test scores and lower dropout rates.
Below are examples of how local communities are organizing to create and sustain School-Based Health Centers.

Students for Wellness Centers

**INLAND CONGREGATIONS UNITED FOR CHANGE (ICUC)**

Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC) is a faith-based non-profit community organization serving San Bernardino and Riverside counties. ICUC empowers people of faith to transform and revitalize the Inland Empire by working in the civic arena for the common good. Since 2015, ICUC youth leaders have been leading a campaign to reimagine school safety and invest in student mental health and wellness in schools in San Bernardino City Unified School District.

**Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline**

ICUC’s campaign for student wellness centers began during the 2014 Yes on Proposition 47 campaign. Proposition 47 was a ballot measure passed by voters that redirected hundreds of millions of dollars a year away from prisons and into programs that prevent crime, including TK-12 education, victim services, mental health services, and substance abuse rehabilitation.

ICUC youth leaders who were deeply engaged in the Yes on Prop 47 campaign saw the connection between Prop 47 and what was happening in their schools, and realized they could have an impact on their district. They started to organize to end the School to Prison Pipeline in San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) by working together with Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE) and Youth Action Project (YAP) to reduce suspensions in SBCUSD based on a policy around willful defiance that was disproportionately impacting Black and Brown students and pushing them towards incarceration.

In 2015-2016, ICUC also worked alongside COPE to pass the “Reducing Student Citations and Arrests” Board Policy and won. The policy put a moratorium on giving students citations for things like Day-Time Curfew Loitering and Loitering in a Public Place. This meant that students would no longer receive citations that could be added to their permanent records and follow young people for years to come.

**Mental Health/Wellness and the Campaign to Reimagine School Safety**

ICUC leaders realized it wasn’t enough to get rid of punitive policies. They also had to advocate for more resources that would proactively address the conditions that lead to creating real safety.

ICUC youth leaders decided to transition into focusing on mental health because they saw themselves and their peers struggling mentally and emotionally in isolation—without adult support or a safe space at school. Students felt they wouldn’t be able to achieve their dreams if they weren’t capable of being fully present emotionally at school.

In 2016, ICUC youth leaders conducted focus groups with about 120 youth and young adults. The most prominent theme—by far—was the lack of access to mental healthcare.

Based on their findings, in 2017, youth leaders began to organize for increased mental health and wellness supports for students. ICUC youth held their first mental health action and invited...
school board members to make commitments to prioritize student mental health and to join youth in learning about possible solutions to close the gap in resources.

They advocated for the expansion of the Heart Team, the district-wide team made up of therapists and nurses that provide services to students. This led to an increase in the number of therapists on the Heart Team from one to three.

Additionally, following the mental health action, school board member Abigail Medina joined a team of ICUC youth leaders on a research trip to Sacramento, where they learned how school-based health centers could make mental health services directly available for students on their campuses from the California School-Based Health Alliance. Later that year, the SBCUSD applied for and was granted funding to pilot a school-based health center at one of the continuation high schools in the district.

The district began to plan what the school-based health center would look like. However, students felt like the district wasn’t practicing meaningful student engagement in the design process. Then, in 2018, as students were advocating to have a seat at the table, the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida rattled the country and catapulted March for Our Lives into a nationwide movement that made its way to ICUC youth leaders.

As the conversation around gun control and student safety unfolded nationally, ICUC leaders identified the disconnect between what they had been saying for years and what local leaders saw as the solution. ICUC youth continued to lift the need to invest more funding in resources for students, while local leaders were driven by the national narrative and pushed for a continued police presence at their schools, leading to a culture of criminalizing students of color. As youth across the country stood up for their safety, ICUC leaders in San Bernardino led 800 students across 5 different high schools to participate in a walkout to make it clear that students across the district needed mental health resources readily accessible to them in order to process the ongoing trauma of school shootings. This advocacy led to the district finally opening up the first School-Based Wellness Center at Sierra High School in 2019 and announcing that a second one would be opened at Pacific High School.

Unfortunately, the pandemic began soon after, schools moved into distance learning, and the center closed temporarily.

Then, in May of 2020, ICUC youth learned of the devastating murder of George Floyd. ICUC’s

“There have been plenty of times when I have seen other students crying at school and have felt the need to offer them comfort myself. I hear the same thing over and over again, they are feeling stress, anxiety, just overwhelmed with all the pressures of being a student, and have nowhere to turn to for support. It is rare to hear a student that feels comfortable enough to reach out to a teacher or counselor on campus.”

- SENIOR AT CAJON HIGH SCHOOL AND A YOUTH LEADER WITH ICUC

*Photo credit: Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC). 2018 Student Walkouts in Support of Mental Wellness Centers*
work around the impact of police brutality and the criminalization of Black and Brown youth in their schools intensified in response. While some members of the community were arguing that having a police presence in schools created safety, ICUC student leaders surveyed about 500 of their peers across 5 high schools to learn more about what students said would make them feel safe. Through this survey, they learned that the top 3 things that make students feel safe at school were:

1. Having a positive relationship with a teacher/staff on campus
2. Knowing there are mental health resources available to them at their school (e.g., therapists/social emotional counselors)
3. Having safe physical spaces where they can go if they are in need of somewhere to safely ground themselves before heading to class (e.g. calming rooms)

The results of the survey and listening with their peers further cemented the case students had been making all along, that in order for students to really be successful, their mental health needs to be a priority.

As months turned into years and the pandemic continued, the need for mental health resources intensified. ICUC leaders began to see how COVID-19 increased anxiety and depression in youth.

In 2021, as federal funding began to roll into communities, ICUC leaders held an action to engage board members around ensuring that some of this funding be allocated to mental health support for students. They urged for the allocation of ESSER II and ESSER III funds toward the immediate creation of Wellness Centers on every high school campus. They conducted research with the California Children’s Trust and applied their learnings to educating district leaders about how they could use Medi-Cal billing to create sustainable funding to support the wellness centers. Such funding could be used for construction projects, including bringing existing facilities up to code, as well as providing mental health services and supports.

ICUC Reimagining School Safety Research Report, April 30th, 2022
The youth leaders created a budget that estimated how much it would cost to establish and maintain Wellness Centers at all 5 SBCUSD high schools and urged school board members to allocate approximately $11 million of the $219 million left in unassigned ESSER II and ESSER III funds towards their development. Unfortunately, board members did not approve the funding for the Wellness Centers. However, thanks to the unwavering advocacy of ICUC leaders, the district went on to allocate a total of $3,264,500 from ESSER III funds towards providing social-emotional and mental health support for students.

Additionally, following the research and advocacy by ICUC leaders and staff, the district began the process of expanding its role in the Medi-Cal billing process to include billing for services provided under nursing, mental health, and counseling to general education students.

They have created a LEA-BOP (Local Education Agency - Billing Option Program) Collaborative and invited ICUC to be one of the founding members. In a letter to ICUC, SBCUSD stated that the “purpose of the Collaborative group is to participate in the decision making for the reinvestment of funds obtained through Medi-Cal reimbursement and to provide an important voice

“...As an only child, it was hard for me to find someone to talk to and I did not want to burden my mom since she was dealing with my dad being hospitalized due to COVID 19. I know many other youth experienced similar situations like myself.”

- LEO, ICUC YOUTH LEADER
in deciding how the funds generated get reinvested into school children and their families. These funds will supplement nursing, mental health and counseling services already in place.”

Today, ICUC youth leaders are continuing to hold the district accountable to ensure that student needs and voices are at the forefront of district decision-making. ICUC students have joined with family leaders to build the unity and power needed to realize their collective vision for their schools. Students and families are also partnering with educators to ensure that they are all fully engaged in school and district decision-making for strong implementation of California’s new Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP).

Student and family leaders see the CCSPP as an opportunity to support creating and sustaining wellness centers as a key component of the racially just, relationship-centered community schools they have envisioned for so many years.

ICUC youth leaders won’t stop organizing until all students get access to the mental health and wellness supports and resources they deserve.
San Bernardino Students for Wellness Centers

ABOUT

Youth leaders and students in San Bernardino have been advocating for mental health resources for over a decade. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to deeply impact the quality of life for students and their families, the need to open mental health wellness centers is imperative.

ICUC youth leaders envision mental health centers at every campus across SBCUSD. We know that through collaboration, dedication, and FAITH, we can work together to make this vision a reality.

TIMELINE

ICUC Student Leaders
approach SBCUSD to make Mental Health a Priority

SBCUSD Awarded Grant to create pilot program to open wellness centers at seven different schools across the district.

ICUC Youth Received responses from 1,050 SBCUSD high school students.

COVID-19 Pandemic Survey surveyed 500 students in the district, despite stay-at-home orders being in full effect.

ICUC Youth Survey organized Mar - April Collection in 1 month (April) over 300 responses.

ISSUE

Sierra High School is the only high school within SBCUSD to have a wellness center. This results in only 2.91% of our high school students receiving access to mental health spaces (SBCUSD Final Budget 2021-2022). This is a missed opportunity to address the substantial financial and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on student health. Students are holding actions, demonstrations, and walkouts in attempts to make their needs and concerns heard!
San Bernardino Students for Wellness Centers

2022 SB Youth Survey Results

SBCUSD Student Comments

We should have access to a "safe room".
- Indian Springs High School Student

“There are no resources to help students with mental health here at my school.”
- Arroyo Valley High School Student

“Mental health doesn’t look like a priority or even a care at all at this school”
- San Bernardino High School Student

“[SBCUSD should] spread awareness of these services with flyers or announcements.”
- San Gorgonio High School Student

What kind of resources/activities would you like to see offered at your Wellness Center:

44% Mental Health Counselor
29% Hazel Health
27% Health Insurance Navigator

81% of students surveyed rated their current mental health services as average to below average (C-F grade)

84% of students surveyed rated personal experiences with their SBCUSD school’s mental health services as average to below average (C-F grade)
Additional Resources from other School-Based Health Center Initiatives

**Inner City Struggle**

- Wellness Centers Now! Resolution:
  - [Wellness Centers Resolution Info Sheet (2014)]

- Roosevelt Modernization Project:
  - [Roosevelt High School Upgrades ‘Must’ Include Wellness Center (2015)]
  - [Commentary: Honor yesterday’s Roosevelt High School heroes by giving today’s students the modern high school they deserve (May 2018)]
  - [Los Angeles Unified’s Theodore Roosevelt Senior High School Campus Cuts Ribbon to the Comprehensive Modernization of New Gymnasium and Classroom Building (2021)]

- Sylvia Mendez Wellness Center Campaign:
  - [Board Member Mónica García and Board of Education Approve to Dedicate and Designate the Wellness Center at Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez High School After Civil Rights Activist Sylvia Mendez (2022)]
California Children’s Trust, an initiative to achieve health equity and healthy development for California’s children, youth, and families

California Children’s Trust (CCT) is a coalition-supported 5-year initiative to reimagine how California finances, defines, administers and delivers children’s mental health supports and services. Equity + Justice are at the center of CCT’s beliefs, actions, and strategy for change. CCT’s belief statement lays out our vision for a transformed behavioral health system.

The Trust’s Framework for Solutions simplifies the immense complexity of reinventing California’s approach to children’s healthy development, by focusing on three core strategies:

1. Maximize funding
2. Expand access and participation
3. Reinvent systems

These three strategies are centered on Equity + Justice, recognizing that if we don’t address root causes, including structural and systemic racism, we cannot achieve, sustain, nor scale our vision of health equity and healthy development for California’s children, youth, and families.

As a 5-year initiative, CCT plans to sunset its work in December 2024. More information about CCT’s history and impact can be found here.
Centering Schools at Scale in Response to the Youth Mental Health Crisis

Even before COVID-19, there was a youth mental health crisis. The global pandemic created further isolation, anxiety, and stress, and exacerbated and deepened equity divides. Schools have always played an essential role in supporting the well-being of our young people and connecting children, youth, and their families to essential community services and supports. This became even more evident during the isolation of the pandemic. As a safe and familiar space, families and students actually rely on schools for connections to—and often the delivery of—essential healthcare for their physical, mental, and behavioral well-being. These school connections to health are often more relevant and effective than the current diagnosis driven medical model which data shows as insufficient to support and heal our children and youth. Even though 96% of children are enrolled in a health plan with a defined mental health benefit—far too few children access care through their health plans.

Since its founding, CCT has worked at the intersection of public health and public education to ensure that schools are a critical part of any solution to address the youth mental health crisis at scale. However, historically, California schools have been woefully under-resourced and are ill-equipped to respond to the social, emotional and mental health needs on their own; schools need resources, partners, and funding to provide the school-based supports our children and youth deserve.

In August 2020, CCT published the Practical Guide for Financing Social, Emotional and Mental Health in Schools to create a road map for school district leaders interested in exploring partnerships and accessing Medi-Cal to meet the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students in schools. CCT also started collaborating with over a dozen school districts and county offices of education across the state to advise them on how to build partnerships and maximize revenue to expand programming.
California’s unprecedented investment in children and youth

In 2021, in response to the growing crisis, state lawmakers heeded the call and prioritized multi-billion dollar investments and cross-sector initiatives in health and education to support the well-being of California’s children and youth. The $4.4 billion investment in Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) and the $41 billion California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) create exciting opportunities for schools to reimagine where and how schools reach young people with the supports they need to learn and thrive. These investments were a welcome addition to already significant federal funds through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) I, II, and III (combined $23.4 billion) and a boost in the state’s Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (~$4 billion ongoing).

In recent years, in large part due to the influx of funding, school districts across the state launched hundreds, if not thousands, of new programs aimed at supporting the social, emotional and mental health of our young people. While the additional funding provides welcome resources for schools, much of it is for short-term or “one-time” use. As a result, schools and districts have the responsibility—and burden—to figure out how to secure funding to sustain programming once the one-time funding runs out.

Medi-Cal is an untapped resource for ONGOING funding in schools.

Medicaid, known in California as Medi-Cal, can and should be a strategic tool used to support and expand social, emotional, and mental health services in schools at scale and address complex trauma that students from under-resourced communities are facing. Despite the known shortcomings—restrictive, administratively burdensome, clinical—California’s Medi-Cal program is slowly changing and should be seen as an important tool for school districts to access the ongoing funding schools need and deserve to support students. Nationally, Medicaid is the third largest federal funding source in schools after Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In California, Medi-Cal funded services have the potential to grow significantly in schools, due in part to historic underinvestment of school social, emotional, and physical healthcare for students.
There are three primary Medi-Cal revenue streams for schools. CCT calls them the “Big Three” Medi-Cal Payors in Schools:

1. **Managed Care Plans**, MCPs, are licensed health plans contracted by the state and include public health plans and private health plans. Every county has at least one MCP which can be found [here](#). Historically, managed care plans have not worked closely with schools, but this is changing. District leaders can explore ongoing contractual funding partnerships with their local managed care plans to co-locate services on sites. **MCPs are the most promising new payor of health services in schools.**

2. **County Mental Health Plans**, MHPs, also called County Behavioral Health Departments or County Health Authorities, manage the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit for children with higher acuity medical needs. MHPs also control Prop 63/Mental Health Services Act funds which can be used to pay for a variety of mental health services in schools. Currently, MHPs are the most common Medi-Cal financed school-based health service and often contract with community-based providers.

3. **Local Education Agency Billing Options Program (LEA BOP)** or **School-based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities program (SMAA)** allows districts to bill the State directly for eligible services to be reimbursed by Medi-Cal. The program is small overall (~$130 million annually). In comparison, MHPs and MCPs currently spend ~$2 billion combined on children's behavioral health through Medi-Cal, with MCPs having the potential (and responsibility) to spend much more. Recent changes have expanded the program to include general education students as well as students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Medi-Cal resources should be seen as a critical component of a comprehensive district-wide strategy and approach to supporting students' healthy development and healing-centered community schools.

**A Shifting Landscape of Payors in Schools...**

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) ushered in several new and exciting opportunities to fundamentally shift how social-emotional and mental health services will be financed and delivered in schools.

- **Wellness Coaches** - CYBHI provides funding and authority to broaden the definition of who can deliver Medi-Cal funded mental health services in schools by developing a new position, Wellness Coaches. This position does not require an advanced degree (a barrier for many qualified individuals) and **creates an opportunity for schools to hire (and pay for) more culturally-rooted healers and practitioners who better reflect the demographics of our students.**

- **Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program** - SBHIP allocates $400 million to encourage the development of a partnership between local managed care plans, county offices of education, and school districts. The funds are distributed to the managed care plan to work with the county offices of education and priority school districts to identify which “targeted interventions” SBHIP will cover in schools. The SBHIP project plans were submitted to the Department of Health Care Services in December 2022 and notifications of approval went out in Spring 2023. Funding from the program lasts for two years in 2024 and 2025.

- **School-Linked Partnership and Capacity Grants** - $400 million will be available for school districts, agencies, and community organizations to apply for grants to build partnerships, capacity, and infrastructure to support ongoing behavioral health services in schools. Check the CYBHI website for more information to apply.
• **Evidence-Based and Community Defined Grants Program** - $429 million is available to scale programs to improve access to prevention, early intervention, and resiliency/recovery services, especially for BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth. There are six competitive grant rounds including a focus in the areas of youth driven programs, early intervention, and community-defined evidence programs and practices. The remaining requests for applications are expected to be released in Summer and Fall 2023.

• **Statewide All-Payer Fee Schedule** - Beginning in January 2024, schools will have “Essential Community Provider” status. This means that schools will automatically be considered “in network” providers for ALL health plans; commercial, public and private health plans will be responsible for paying claims for mental health and substance abuse treatment services provided at or near school campuses. This is likely to translate to increased revenue for school districts billing for services because the rate of reimbursement through the fee schedule is expected to be higher than the current rates through the BOP/SMAA. Additionally, commercial plans will now be required to pay for services that were previously only required for Medi-Cal qualifying students. As a result, many more students will be covered. This change will be a fundamental shift and take a couple of years to roll out. As a start, school districts can begin to set up the infrastructure to start collecting insurance information from all students to assist in billing.

The landscape is rapidly changing and many of these reform initiatives are still in process, however there is no doubt that we are seeing some of the biggest structural changes in the children’s behavioral health landscape in decades. CCT is tracking critical funding opportunities for schools and translating the complex Medi-Cal landscape into more tangible action steps for school districts wishing to secure long-term partnerships and funding to support the social, emotional, and mental health of our young people.

The work is ongoing and there is no one-size-fit-all approach to building a sustainable model of funding. CCT is working to change this by empowering school districts, county agencies, community-based organizations, and partners with the resources and tools to understand these complex changes. Our best advice to school districts and advocates is to continue to prioritize social, emotional and mental health in schools, creatively blend and braid resources, and develop cross-sector collaborations in support of young people.

“The future of mental health looks much less like a 50 minute therapy session and much more like culturally rooted mutual aid and peer-to-peer support.”

- **ALEX BRISCOE, PRINCIPAL, CALIFORNIA CHILDREN’S TRUST**
Below are some tools and stories that can help support school communities and districts to develop local strategies for leveraging these funding opportunities.

**Medi-Cal 101 | Responding To Our Youth Mental Health Crisis: The Path Towards Community Created Solutions**
Pittsburg Unified School District: Blending and Braiding Funds to Support a Continuum of Care

PITTSBURG UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, PITTSBURG, CA

A boost in LCFF funding allowed PUSD to expand Mindful Life Project’s school-wide programming to all 8 elementary schools in Pittsburg. As a result, all 5,400 elementary students are receiving access to Tier 1 universal supports and developing self-coping techniques to help students and teachers sustain their social-emotional well-being.

Getting To Know Pittsburg Unified School District
Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD) is a suburban Pre-K to 12th grade school district in the greater San Francisco Bay Area serving 13 schools and approximately 11,000 students. Over 70% of the students in the district qualify for the free or reduced lunch program, 25% are English Language Learners, and 200+ are homeless and/or in foster care. One in four PUSD parents is not a high school graduate and only 14% have college degrees. PUSD’s at-promise subgroups experience high rates of truancy, chronic absenteeism, suspension, and the vast majority are not meeting grade-level core academic standards. To address these challenges, PUSD is embracing a community schools approach, prioritizing family engagement, building community partnerships, and investing in a broad continuum of social-emotional and mental health supports to achieve their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) goals of improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier school communities.

A Path To Growing Social-Emotional Supports
In line with its LCAP, and to meet the continuum of student needs, PUSD is investing in multiple positions including family liaisons, restorative justice facilitators (for secondary schools), full-service community school coordinators at middle schools, Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and Coordination of Services Team (COST) Care specialists, and behavioral specialists. PUSD is also leveraging partnerships with community-based organizations and public agencies.

To pay for these positions and services, PUSD has leveraged a mix of grants, district funds and partnerships including the “Big Three” Medi-Cal Payors in Schools. Because each funding stream has specific requirements, PUSD has had to blend and braid funds to build a seamless continuum of services for students.

PUSD’s funding sources for social and emotional and mental health supports include:

- **Learning Communities for School Success Program**, funded by Proposition 47 and administered by CDE, PUSD has recently renewed a grant that pays for staff to support the COST structure in schools in partnership with site-based community school managers.
- **Community School Partnership Program (CCSPP)**, PUSD received a $2.8 million implementation grant as part of Cohort 1 to expand their full-service community school model to two additional middle schools.
- **Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services**, PUSD’s local County Mental Health Plan (MHP), provides mental health counseling to Medi-Cal eligible students through a contract with a community-based organization, Lincoln Families.
- **Contra Costa Health Plan**, PUSD’s local Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan (MCP), is funding two mental health clinicians next year for the first time, enabling the district to double the number of therapists. This partnership is made possible because of the new **Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program** (SBHIP).
- **Local Educational Agency Billing Options Program (LEA BOP)**, PUSD also participates in direct Medi-Cal billing and contracts with a third party vendor to administer claims.
- **Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) dollars**, PUSD has also invested its own LCFF funds to
hire staff directly and contract community-based organizations to deliver services.

**Supporting a Continuum of Care**

PUSD has forged partnerships with community-based organizations and utilized the recent boost of funding in schools to deepen its work and expand access to services. One such partnership is with **Mindful Life Project**, a Richmond based non-profit offering whole-school mindfulness based social-emotional learning. In 2020, when the impact of the pandemic was disproportionately impacting PUSD students and communities, PUSD partnered with Mindful Life Project to pilot its program in a virtual format. The pilot grew to offering direct service programming at 3 schools and the next year, a boost in LCFF funding allowed PUSD to expand Mindful Life Project’s school-wide programming to all 8 elementary schools in Pittsburg. As a result, all 5,400 elementary students are receiving access to Tier 1 universal supports and developing self-coping techniques to help students and teachers sustain their social-emotional well-being.

**Lincoln Families** provides mental health support for students who need more intensive Tier 3 interventions, which is funded by a longstanding partnership with **Contra Costa County Behavioral Health Services**. In order to serve non Medi-Cal students, the district invests additional LCFF dollars into the partnership on a fee-for-service basis so students can have access to mental services, regardless of whether they are on Medi-Cal. **Starting in 2025, Pittsburg (and all districts in CA) will be able to bill students’ health plans, including commercial insurance for qualified mental health services through the Universal Fee Schedule**, representing a big shift in how districts may fund some health services going forward.

**Committed and Stable Leadership**

An essential ingredient to PUSD’s success has been strong and stable leadership with a commitment to prioritizing the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.

Superintendent Janet Schulze has been with PUSD for nearly 10 years. She was previously with San...
Francisco Unified School District, where she led the implementation of the district’s equity focused strategic plan. PUSD’s Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Anthony Molina, is an alum of PUSD who has spent his entire 25 year education career serving in various capacities as a teacher, principal, and now district leader in PUSD.

PUSD has a passionate and committed Coordinator of Social-Emotional Support & Counseling, Dr. Tracy Catalde, who holds key external and internal partnerships. With a designated point person to collaborate with schools, build out partnerships, identify timely funding opportunities, and track the shifting landscape of the children’s behavioral health system, Dr. Catalde is able to weave together a continuum of supports promoting the well-being of students.

**Key Takeaways**

**Effective Collaborative Leadership and Shared Decision-making:** PUSD’s Superintendent regularly meets with a group of student leaders through the Superintendent Student Advisory Committee (SUPERSAC) to understand what key needs students are raising and hear their ideas for how to address them. PUSD also collaborates with school staff, including principals, administrators, the Parent/Family Liaison at each school, the district Director of Attendance, and Child Welfare and McKinney/Vento liaisons to align resources and develop tailored approaches to meeting the needs of PUSD’s most at-promise subgroups, such as their African American students and foster youth. PUSD also collaborates with staff from throughout the district, local partner agencies including Behavioral Health, and community-based organizations and associations to link site and community services, strengthen and sustain school-based supports, and build staff capacity.

**Invest in Long-Term Partnerships:** PUSD has invested in long-term partnerships with county agencies and community-based organizations which has provided continuity to students. Notably, they are able to serve both Medi-Cal and non-Medi-Cal students by providing their share of funding for students without insurance, while partnering with the Contra Costa Mental Health Department to draw down Medi-Cal funds. Additional partners include community-based organizations such as Lincoln Families and the Mindful Life Project. Through a blend of various community and government partnerships, PUSD is able to blend and braid funding streams to serve a wide continuum of students across Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 services. These partnerships were also possible because of PUSD’s long-standing commitment to prioritizing mental health and wellness across their district.

**Importance of Stable Leadership and Continuity:** PUSD’s leadership team has embraced social, emotional, and mental health as a top priority and has worked diligently district-wide to identify and embed supports in schools. With the leadership of a dedicated Coordinator of Social-Emotional Support & Counseling, PUSD has been able to weave together a continuum of supports as well as identify funding opportunities over multiple years and build on partnerships. With the shifting funding landscape in children’s mental health, PUSD is well positioned to take advantage of these upcoming changes.

For more information, contact: Tracy Catalde, Psy.D., Ed.D., Coordinator of Social-Emotional Support & Counseling, Pittsburg Unified School District, tcatalde@pittsburgusd.net
East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC): A Community-based Organization Creating Strategic Partnerships with Schools & Districts

OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL’S SHOP 55, OAKLAND, CA

Annually, Shop 55 serves over 1,000 students (~65% of Oakland High’s student population) and is the #1 most utilized School-Based Health Center out of all 28 located across Alameda County, with higher utilization of services than high schools double its size.

What is Shop 55

Shop 55 is a youth-led, trauma-informed, school-based health and wellness center located on the campus of Oakland High School (Oakland High), a comprehensive 9th through 12th grade program with approximately 1,600 students in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). Shop 55 is operated by a local non-profit, East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC), which provides the school with staffing, partnerships, and additional funding opportunities with external public agencies. The center is open Mondays through Fridays 8 am to 6 pm.

Shop 55 began nearly 20 years ago through a robust year-long listening campaign and community-driven needs assessment process to identify how to better support students’ health and wellness at Oakland High School.

The Origin Story—Community-Dreamed and Driven

In 2005, EBAYC created a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and hired 15 dedicated youth from an Asian Health Services’s Peer Health and Leadership Class to conduct a needs assessment and develop recommendations for addressing Oakland High health and wellness issues. YAC surveyed over 1000 Oakland High students. With seed funding provided by the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency and a philanthropic partner, The California Endowment, EBAYC staff, and a youth advisory council conducted four focus groups with teachers, implemented 150 parent surveys, and formed a Wellness Advisory Council comprised of students, families, teachers, staff, district administration, and community partners. The Wellness Advisory Council developed a mission, vision, and strategic plan for Oakland High, including staffing and facility recommendations.

How Shop 55 is a Trusted Student Health and Wellness Partner

Through multidisciplinary partnerships with local community agencies, Shop 55 supports a continuum of student needs through medical and dental check-ups, mental health counseling, crisis support, academic tutoring, physical wellness, reproductive health services, enrichment opportunities, and case management services. In addition to these services, Shop 55 also plays an instrumental role as part of the high school community, particularly supporting school culture and climate. In addition to providing a “one-stop” shop for health and wellness services, Shop 55 manages the Coordination of Services Team (COST) to serve as a central referral for Oakland High students in need of social, emotional, and mental health support. Shop 55 also aims to involve students, staff, and families in a multitude of ways, by serving as both a provider of programs and wellness services, as well as by facilitating Oakland High’s culture and climate team to promote a healthy school culture throughout the school community and leadership.
Shop 55’s services are woven into the Oakland High community as a trusted provider of wellness services across a continuum of care. Annually, Shop 55 serves over 1,000 students (~65% of OHS’ student population) and is the #1 most utilized school-based health center out of all 28 located across Alameda County, with higher utilization of services than high schools double its size. East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC) has served as the lead agency and coordinator of services for Shop 55 since its inception in 2007 and continues to provide case management, operations, and fundraising/financial support.

**Shop 55 Is Built on Innovative Funding Partnerships**

EBAYC strategically partners with a community-based organization that is contracted directly by Alameda County’s Mental Health Plan to deliver mental health services at the school; the community-based organization then hires and employs the clinician who is housed at Shop 55 and also takes on the administrative billing for Medi-Cal services. In addition, they allow school community members to initiate referrals for outside providers and services to ensure students have agency to select a provider they are comfortable with. These well-developed partnerships are maintained through monthly partner meetings, monthly medical and dental meetings, as well as annual convenings between providers and the principal/administration of Oakland High.

Over the last 15 years, Shop 55 has grown its strategic partnerships and expanded its funding streams to include numerous government funds through state, county, and local initiatives, including:

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC)**
- **California Community School Partnerships Program**
- **Alameda County Measure A funds**
- **Oakland Fund for Children & Youth (OFCY)**
- **City of Oakland Department of Violence Prevention**
- **Local philanthropic partners**

Even the Shop 55 space itself is the result of innovative ideas and transformation. Housed in the school’s former auto shop, it was repurposed as computer classrooms temporarily before being transformed into the present wellness center facility. The dedicated physical space of the wellness center is important to its success as it is located on the school campus so it is easily accessible for students, but also conveniently set apart from the main building allowing students to “take an emotional break” as needed and have access to private, confidential counseling rooms.
While Shop 55 offers robust health and wellness services, its unique approach is much more akin to a youth development center, creating a warm and welcoming, rather than clinical vibe. The funds used to renovate the building came from the school district’s general obligation bond dollars, another example of how Shop 55 leverages various funding sources.

**Key Takeaways**

**Invest in a robust youth-led planning and engagement process:** EBAYC and Shop 55 invested time and resources in conducting a listening campaign led by and for directly impacted students. By centering students in the listening campaign and later convening diverse interest holders in the design process, the school community was able to develop a clear shared vision and strategic plan to implement programs and services that were culturally rooted and responsive to students’ hopes and needs.

**Seek out non-traditional sources of funding:** Shop 55 is able to blend numerous public and philanthropic funds together by continuing partnerships with long-standing funders (Alameda County Health Care Service Agency), while also seeking out new and innovative sources to fund mental health and wellness (i.e. violence prevention funds through the City of Oakland). The building itself was renovated with school district funds in addition to in-kind staffing contributions from the school. By expanding its definition of wellness beyond just physical health and taking a more holistic and inclusive approach, Shop 55 has been able to seek out non-traditional sources of funding to support its suite of services. Shop 55 seeks to break down silos between providers that have typically been divided in the past (i.e. medical providers, after-school staff, community school initiatives) and bring them together in an effort to blend and braid funding streams for long-term sustainability.

**Build and nurture transformational school and community partnerships:** EBAYC/Shop 55 is much more than a service provider, they are an essential school partner embedded in the fabric of the school community. Shop 55 staff take on important roles in the school infrastructure contributing to its success, such as leading the school’s COST team, seeking out internship opportunities for students, participating in the School Site Council, and supporting youth to meaningfully participate in opportunities to shape the school’s culture and climate. In 2011, Shop 55 developed plans and obtained funding for a new academic program, a Public Health Academy in partnership with the school, a pathway that is still thriving at the school. Shop 55 is led by an experienced and talented Wellness Center Director, Rany Ath, who is also an alum of Oakland High. Having been in her role for over a decade, Rany is able to develop trusting and lasting relationships with students, staff, community partners, and school and district administration, which exemplifies the work of the wellness center.

For more information, contact: Rany Ath, Wellness Center Director at rany@ebayc.org. To learn more about the Wellness Center, visit www.shop55.org.
Shasta County Office of Education’s (SCOE): A Rural County Office of Education Coordinates Services and Funding

SHASTA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION, REDDING, CA

Since the Community Connect program started in 2020, over 1,500 students have been referred to the program, with nearly 50% of the students’ families choosing to engage further in program services.

Getting To Know the Shasta County Office of Education

Located in Northern California, about 160 miles north of Sacramento, Shasta County is home to three incorporated cities and approximately 180,000 residents. As a rural county, Shasta County Office of Education (SCOE) plays a lead role in providing technical assistance and coordination of student services, while also levering various funding sources to create efficiencies across the county, on behalf of the approximately 26,000 students enrolled in 24 school districts and 77 public schools across almost 3,900 square miles.

Collaboration and Early Childhood Expertise Come Together To Support Families

The Community Connect program highlights SCOE’s broad network of partnerships, and its role in coordinating those myriad partners. Through this program, SCOE partners with 24 districts across the county to provide students and families with case management services and connections to community-based supports. The program was built with community partners like 211 that helped to extend an already existing referral network, and Help Me Grow (HMG, which is a program of First 5 Shasta serving children 0-5 years of age to school age kids). Over the past two years over 1,500 students have been referred to the program, with nearly 50% of the students’ families choosing to engage further in Community Connect services.

Innovative Funding To Support Keeping Families Strong

SCOE’s Community Connect program is funded through a combination of public and private partnerships, with the majority of investments geared towards preventative services.

Key funding streams include:

1. State/county early childhood dollars
   - Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
   - Foster Bridge Services
   - CalWORKs Stage One
   - Help Me Grow Shasta
   - Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program (IEEEP)
   - Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)
   - Shasta Local Education Planning Area

The Community Connect program was born from a collaborative stakeholder planning process focused on student attendance issues across the county. SCOE discovered that families were experiencing difficulty finding services in their community, which were often beyond the scope of what a local county office of education could provide. What initially began as just a resource referral list for other service providers, soon grew to become a case management program that is now Community Connect.

Joy Garcia, Senior Director of Special Projects for SCOE, brought her experiences from the early childhood realm to this stakeholder planning process to help expand services, age ranges, and staffing using the existing Help Me Grow infrastructure and supports. Joy’s previous experience as Executive Director of First 5 Shasta allowed her deep insight into the infrastructure of early childhood planning, staffing, implementation, and funding, which lent itself well to eventually building out the Community Connect program with case management and referral services for a broader age range. Most notably, Joy understands first hand the importance of providing services for families in a prevention focused model rather than intervention.
2. Local philanthropic partners
   - McConnell Foundation
   - Community Foundation of the North State
   - S.H. Cowell Foundation
   - Redding Rancheria

3. One-time Federal/State Investments
   - CDC Covid-19 Public Health Workforce Development Funding
   - CA Community Schools Partnership Program
   - Shasta County Probation’s Juvenile Division’s Truancy Prevention Project
   - Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program (SBHIP)

   In addition to playing a key coordination role as a county office of education, SCOE can also access Medi-Cal reimbursement revenue streams and is actively looking at ways to expand partnerships with each of the “Big Three” Medi-Cal Payors in Schools. SCOE collaborates with local school districts to share their learnings, since smaller districts may not have the existing bandwidth to research and set up an infrastructure for billing on their own.

   Although SCOE has been participating in the LEA BOP program for a while, Joy would describe their participation as “passive.” With new opportunities, SCOE is in the process of selecting a new third party BOP vendor to expand Medi-Cal billing. SCOE is seeking a vendor who will be a creative partner in accessing various Medi-Cal revenue streams and supporting SCOE to take advantage of the shifting landscape. Using SBHIP funds, SCOE will create a toolkit to support districts within the county who are interested in billing Medi-Cal.

   SCOE is also in conversations with their local Managed Care Plan (MCP), Partnership HealthPlan of California, to pay for individual and group therapy sessions provided by mental health clinicians and a behavioral specialist for an Evidence-based Positive Parenting Program and other qualifying services. SCOE will receive individualized technical assistance and coaching to more fully leverage all three Medi-Cal revenue sources as part of the School Health Demonstration Project—an effort to support districts and county offices of education to build the capacity for long-term sustainability of comprehensive health and mental health services by leveraging multiple revenue sources. Once again, SCOE plans to translate its learning to build capacity with the 24 school districts it serves.

Key Takeaways

Consider a cradle-to-career framework: Districts should think expansively about the funding sources available to meet student needs beyond K-12 education and consider embracing a cradle-to-career framework to assess all available funding sources. Because of Joy’s background in human services, SCOE leverages many early childhood funds that often are overlooked by districts and county offices of education. Supporting Shasta’s children earlier also enables the county to shift resources and attention and be able to identify issues and provide support before they grow more severe.

Establish cross-sector partnerships: SCOE has also played a key role as a connector and convener, building important bridges and connections between the county’s 24 school districts as well as various county departments and community agencies such as Shasta’s Health and Human Services Agency, Shasta County Probation Department, First 5 Shasta, and Partnership Health Plan. By working across sectors, SCOE is able to bring more resources and services to the children and families they serve and create efficiencies.

Leverage one-time public dollars to set up infrastructure: Additionally, SCOE is utilizing the one-time California Community Schools Partnership Program funds to sustain programming for high-need students while simultaneously working to increase Medi-Cal reimbursements and building out a fee-for-service model for its attendance and behavioral support services. Other districts and county offices of education can employ a similar model of utilizing one-time funds to bridge the gap while building the internal infrastructure to draw down more sustainable resources through Medi-Cal reimbursement, fee-for-service models,
and other sources of revenue. LEAs can also play a role in providing the technical assistance needed to draw down local, county, and state funding if districts cannot manage that alone. Coordination and consolidation between districts within a given county can be the key to sustainability.

For more information, contact: Joy Garcia, Senior Director of Special Projects at SCOE, jgarcia@shastacoe.org.
How Community Connect Works

Central Access Point
A Central Access Point assists schools in connecting students & their families to the grid of community resources that help them thrive.

Referral
Schools use an online form to refer students and their families to Community Connect.

Communications
For two weeks, Community Connect attempts to communicate with the family using mail, email, phone, & text.

Family Connection
Families who engage with Community Connect are linked to local services using the 211 database & receive support from a case manager.

Case Management
A collaborative process to meet the student’s & family’s needs through communication, linkage to available resources, & ongoing support.

Data Collection & Analysis
To make sure the resource grid is working effectively, data collection & analysis supports evaluation, helps identify systemic gaps, bolsters advocacy efforts, and guides quality improvement.
Why it Works for Students & Their Families

**Prevention & Early Intervention**
Community Connect supports early detection & intervention efforts by connecting students to the grid of community services to best support them & their families.

**Overcome the Help-Seeking Barrier**
A referral from a school triggers an offer of support to parents rather than waiting for them to seek help.

**Seek & Support not Wait & See**
Schools can refer students at the first sign of an issue rather than waiting to intervene.

**Better than a Binder**
Community Connect uses up-to-date info about community services from the 211 database.

**No Wrong Door**
Community Connect has in-depth knowledge of community services that increase the likelihood of a connection between families & services.

**Plus a Helping Hand**
Community Connect Case Managers empower families to overcome barriers to support & follow up with them to make sure linkages are successful.

Why it Works for Community Services

**Coordinated System of Support**
This is a multi-tiered system of support for almost 80 schools serving over 26,000 students & their families.

**Time & Effort for Program Services**
Program staff can provide program services rather than finding or filtering clients.

**Gather & Use Locally-Sourced Data**
Enables identification of opportunity and systemic gaps, determine advantageous partnerships, and guides strategic quality improvement projects.

Funding Sources include CCSPP, MHSSA, MHSA, First 5 Shasta, Probation, IEEEP
## Resource Database

Additional Resources and Tools to Support Building and Strengthening your Community School Organizing Efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Organization/Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a Transformational Community Schools Approach?</td>
<td>What is a Transformative Community School?</td>
<td>California Partnership for the Future of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and Sustaining a Community School</td>
<td>Community Schools Backgrounder and Resources</td>
<td>California Partnership for the Future of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and Sustaining a Community School</td>
<td>Shared Learning to Advance Racially Just Schools</td>
<td>Learning Policy Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP)</td>
<td>California Community Schools Partnership Program: A Transformational Opportunity for Whole Child Education</td>
<td>Learning Policy Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Family &amp; Community Engagement</td>
<td>Beyond the Bake Sale</td>
<td>Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, Don Davies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Family &amp; Community Engagement</td>
<td>Circle of Education® program</td>
<td>Shulamit N. Ritblatt (delibrainy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Family &amp; Community Engagement</td>
<td>Creciendo Juntos (Growing Together): Building Leadership in Latino Parents in a Trauma-Informed Elementary School, From Trauma to Resiliency</td>
<td>Audrey Hokoda, Maria del Carmen Rodriguez, Shulamit N. Ritblatt, Shannon Schiele, Colette L. Ingraham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Family &amp; Community Engagement</td>
<td>Dual Capacity-Building Framework</td>
<td>Karen Mapp and Eyal Bergman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Family &amp; Community Engagement</td>
<td>Spectrum of Community &amp; Family Involvement for Education Equity</td>
<td>BHC Comité De Padres Unidos, BHC Monterey, and Facilitating Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Organization/Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Family &amp; Community Engagement</td>
<td>Student Voice Continuum</td>
<td>Californians for Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Family &amp; Community Engagement</td>
<td>Transformative Family Engagement Standards</td>
<td>Bay Area Coalition for Education Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Campaigns: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>Community Needs Assessment</td>
<td>The Federation for Community Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Campaigns: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>Community School Standards Self Assessment</td>
<td>Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Campaigns: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>Empathy Interviews</td>
<td>Learning Forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Campaigns: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>Identifying Community Assets and Resources</td>
<td>Community Tool Box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Campaigns: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>Is My School a Community School? A Checklist for Teachers and School Staff</td>
<td>American Federation of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Campaigns: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>Learning Walk Tool</td>
<td>Californians for Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Campaigns: Needs &amp; Assets Assessments</td>
<td>The NYCDOE Assets and Needs Assessment A Tool for Supporting the Whole Child in New York City Schools</td>
<td>New York City Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Organization/Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Your Shared Decision-Making Teams</td>
<td>Site Design Team Overview</td>
<td>Californians for Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Your Shared Decision-Making Teams</td>
<td>Strategies For Reengaging Students During And Beyond The COVID-19 Pandemic</td>
<td>National Governors Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Your Shared Decision-Making Teams</td>
<td>Stronger Together: Lessons Learned from Professional Learning Networks Focused on Family Engagement</td>
<td>Families in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Your Shared Decision-Making Teams</td>
<td>Students’ Perspectives Of and Experiences With the SSCE</td>
<td>UCLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of the Community School Coordinator</td>
<td>Leading with Purpose and Passion: A Guide for Community School Directors</td>
<td>National Center for Community Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture Racially Just, Relationship-centered, and Restorative School Cultures</td>
<td>An Equitable Restart for Los Angeles Schools</td>
<td>Families in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture Racially Just, Relationship-centered, and Restorative School Cultures</td>
<td>Healing-Centered Community School Strategies A Key Investment for COVID-19 Recovery</td>
<td>Policy Analysis for California Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centering the Leadership of Black, Indigenous &amp; the Most Impacted People in Our School Communities</td>
<td>Avoiding Traps and Tropes: Placing Inquiry at the Center, From Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation</td>
<td>Jamila Dugan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from Each Other: Centering the Experiences of Students and Families</td>
<td>From Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation</td>
<td>Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from Each Other: Centering the Experiences of Students and Families</td>
<td>Supporting Newcomers Through a Community School Model</td>
<td>Learning Policy Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Organization/Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Restorative Circles</td>
<td>Belong Toolkit</td>
<td>Faith in Action East Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Restorative Circles</td>
<td>Advisory Week 4 Template</td>
<td>Promesa Boyle Heights and Roosevelt High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Restorative Circles</td>
<td>Honoring Genius in a Historical Time: Historically Responsive Literacy as Foundation of Rigor at Roosevelt High School</td>
<td>Promesa Boyle Heights and Roosevelt High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Restorative Circles</td>
<td>RJoy Oakland</td>
<td>RJoy Oakland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Restorative Circles</td>
<td>Youth Alliance's Restorative Justice Program</td>
<td>Youth Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimagining School Safety - Mapping the Movement for Racial Justice, Restorative Cultures, and Police-Free Schools in California</td>
<td>Cancel the Contract: Antelope Valley Schools</td>
<td>Reform L.A. Jails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>Creating Identity-Safe Schools and Classrooms</td>
<td>Learning Policy Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>Home-School Partnerships Key to Supporting Students With Disabilities</td>
<td>Learning Policy Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>PTHV Training Readiness Factors</td>
<td>Parent Teacher Home Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>Trusting Relationships First: A Toolkit for Healing and Recovery</td>
<td>Parent Teacher Home Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>What Happens When a Child’s Family Welcomes a Teacher into Their Home?</td>
<td>Parent Teacher Home Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Las Mujeres de los Tejidos Purépecha: Building Healthy Communities ECV</td>
<td>Alliance for California Traditional Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Organization/Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Alphabet Rockers</td>
<td>Alphabet Rockers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Building Healthy Communities: Approaching Community Health Through Heritage and Culture in Boyle Heights</td>
<td>Alliance for California Traditional Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Restorative Justice through Quilting</td>
<td>Alliance for California Traditional Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture</td>
<td>SaludArte: Building Health Equity on the Bedrock of Traditional Arts and Culture</td>
<td>Alliance for California Traditional Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Weaving Traditional Arts into the Fabric of Community Health</td>
<td>Alliance for California Traditional Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Relationships Through Joy: The Role of Arts, Music &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Voices for Change: Collective Songwriting in Boyle Heights</td>
<td>Alliance for California Traditional Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Mental Health and Wellness for Students, Families, and Staff</td>
<td>California County Scorecard of Children's Well-Being</td>
<td>Children Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Mental Health and Wellness for Students, Families, and Staff</td>
<td>The Teaching Well</td>
<td>The Teaching Well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer to Peer</td>
<td>Youth Supporting Youth</td>
<td>California Children's Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness Centers</td>
<td>School-Based Health Centers: Trusted Lifelines in a Time of Crisis</td>
<td>Learning Policy Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness Centers</td>
<td>The Impact of School-Based Health Centers</td>
<td>The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness Centers</td>
<td>An Introduction to the Wellness Center Model</td>
<td>Santa Clara County Office of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Organization/Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Long-term Resources for Sustaining Mental Health &amp; Wellness: How to Leverage Partnerships and Funding</td>
<td><a href="#">A Young Person’s Guide to Accessing Affordable Mental Health Services Under Medi-Cal</a></td>
<td>National Center for Youth Law</td>
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**Other Useful Community School Toolkits**

- [Community Schools Playbook](#) - Partnership for the Future of Learning
- [The Six Pillars Of Community Schools Toolkit](#) - National Education Association
Glossary

• Alliance for Boys and Men of Color = ABMoC
• Black, Indigenous and People of Color = BIPOC
• California Community Schools Partnership Program = CCSPP
• California Department of Education = CDE
• California Partnership for the Future of Learning = CA PFL
• County Office of Education = COE
• Coordination of Services Team = COST
• Local Control Funding Formula = LCFF
• Local Education Agency (Districts, County Offices of Education and Charter Schools) = LEA
• Multi-Tiered System of Supports = MTSS
• Parent Teacher Home Visits = PTHV
• Professional Development = PD
• State Board of Education = SBE
• School Resource Officers = SRO
• Social Emotional Learning = SEL