Community School System Benchmarks

Community school systems are made up of community-wide, intermediary, and school site leadership teams. These collaborative leadership structures work across seven functions: results-based vision, data and evaluation, finance and resource development, alignment and integration, supportive policy, professional development and technical assistance, and community engagement. Benchmarks for each function help community and school site leaders as well as intermediary entities track their capacity-building as they work to scale up community school systems.

		Community	Intermediary	Site
Structural	**Collaborative Leadership**	☐ An **initiative** is established that creates organized opportunities to meet, facilities discussions; develops relationships; and provides continuous opportunities for feedback and reflection. ☐ Leadership levels, key roles, responsibilities and communication methods are established. ☐ Agreement on management approaches using intermediaries and/or lead agencies is reached. ☐ Accountability for achieving indicators in functional areas is distributed among partners. ☐ MOUs are reviewed periodically and adjusted as appropriate. ☐ Partners continue to expand participation, develop trust and ownership in a community-wide vision.	☐ An intermediary organization with norms, goals and experience consistent with the initiative's vision provides planning, management and coordinates work across the initiative. ☐ Staffed by individuals with visibility and credibility in the school district and community.	☐ Relationships with lead agencies and locals partners based on shared vision are established. ☐ Site teams representing school and partner staff, families and community members lead school site team. ☐ Skilled, full-time coordinators are in place.

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Functional	**Results-Based Vision**	☐ A clear and inspiring vision for a scaled up system drives the initiative. ☐ A convincing, evidence based rationale for scale up is clearly articulated. ☐ A community-wide results and related indicators framework is in place and used to track progress. ☐ A roll out strategy, including a time-line for spreading community schools across the school system is in place.	☐ Staff continue to expand participation, develop trust and ownership in a community-wide vision. ☐ Intermediary staff provide the TA and manage the data collection necessary to develop a results and indicators framework. ☐ Staff convene discussions among community-wide and site leaders to ensure buy in to community-wide vision and results framework and to identify a roll out strategy. ☐ Lead agency or other management support is provided to sites.	☐ Planning and implementation at every school site are aligned with the community-wide vision. ☐ Relationships with lead agencies and local partners based on shared vision are established. ☐ At every site, a results and indicators framework based on the community-wide framework organizes the work. ☐ Site leadership platforms are developed and participate in planning results frameworks and roll out strategies. ☐ Priority is given to specific results based on site needs and indicators are used to track progress. ☐ Memoranda of agreement are reviewed periodically and adjusted as appropriate.
	Data and Evaluation	☐ Data collection and evaluation are included as budgetary line items. ☐ Partners facilitate data sharing through interagency agreements and necessary policy change. ☐ Relevant data on participation, operation and results inform policy and practice decisions to improve implementation and expansion activities. ☐ Partners use data to inform their vision and evaluation to hold themselves accountable for initiative results.	☐ Staff provide appropriate TA to sites to design and implement effective data collection. ☐ Data-sharing agreements are negotiated to allow all partners to review school and community-wide data on agreed-upon results/indicators. ☐ Evaluation is designed to assess the systemic effectiveness of the initiative (creating a shift in ownership, spread, scale and sustainability) as well as progress toward results for children, families, schools and communities. ☐ Evaluation designs include comparison schools and show longitudinal trends to the extent practical. ☐ Staff analyze and package data and make it available to appropriate audiences.	☐ Site teams make decisions about which data are most relevant and useful to collect based on result and indicator frameworks. ☐ Policy barriers based on confidentiality and other requirements are communicated to community-wide leaders for action. ☐ Relevant data on participation, implementation and results is analyzed and used to make continuous improvement in practice and recommendations for policy change.

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Functional	**Alignment and Integration**	☐ Community partners participate in developing the school system's strategic plan. The school system plan reflects the results framework. ☐ RFPs, grant opportunities, and other potential funding requests developed by intermediary and or lead agencies are aligned with the initiative's results framework. ☐ Data collected by the initiative is used by the district to improve the school system's strategic plan. ☐ The initiative collaborates with other community and school reform initiatives working to achieve similar results. ☐ Partners enact policies and provide resources to ensure that sites connected within the initiative's roll out strategy work together to achieve results.	☐ Conversations are convened to ensure that district school plans incorporate community school principles and relate to the results based framework. ☐ RFPs and MOUs underscore the importance of alignment with results. ☐ Regular review of MOUs and results and indicator frameworks ensures that the staffing and delivery of all partners' activities at each site are integrated with school plans and community school priority results. ☐ TA is provided to align policies and integrate practices across multiple sites in order to build functioning networks of community schools.	☐ Site partners, within and across linked sites, participate in developing the school improvement plan which reflects the site's results framework. ☐ School improvement plans coordinate school district resources to achieve agreed upon results. ☐ The school and its partners integrate academic and non-academic supports, services and opportunities to attain agreed upon results for the initiative. ☐ Instructional content and methods, during and after school hours, reflect community school principles and advance selected indicators. ☐ Sites integrate the activities of other community reform initiatives working to achieve similar results. ☐ Sites connected by the initiative's roll out strategy collaborate with each other in planning, implementing and evaluating activities.

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	Supportive Policy	☐ A statement of support for community-wide results and the expansion of community schools is included in the strategic plans of major partners (school board/district, local city, county, United Way, community foundation, and other funders). ☐ Partners solicit and are responsive to resource and policy requests based on site data and practice knowledge. ☐ Partners, including the school board, enact specific policies to support and sustain community schools. ☐ Partners act to change policies within their own organizations to better support scale up. ☐ The district has administrative guidelines enabling the effective operation of community schools. ☐ School board and/or district policy allows community partners to use school facilities at no charge to implement activities aligned with site level results.	☐ Facilitates two-way communication between site and systems-level partners. Assists sites to package data-based findings into appropriate recommendations for changes in policy, resources or additional training and professional development.	☐ A clear and coherent set of practices and policies with respect to site level implementation guides both school staff and community partners and fosters integration between in-school and after school activities. ☐ Sites communicate policy, resource and professional development needs to community-wide leadership based on data collection and regularly scans across all 4 system dimensions: norms, governance, rules and resources. ☐ Personnel policies of school sites, lead agencies and partner agencies are aligned and reviewed regularly to foster positive working relationships across shared staffs.
Functional	**Financing and Resource Development**	☐ Community partners play a significant role in identifying and leveraging new revenue sources. ☐ Funding arrangements for further planning have been negotiated and MOUs established. ☐ Financing decisions ensure that expansion does not threaten core components of the initiative. ☐ Reliable funding streams are coordinated and sustain priority programs and services at community schools.	☐ Provides TA and works with partners to develop a long range financing plan to harness existing public and private resources and to secure new funding sufficient to meet projected costs of scheduled expansion. ☐ Grant money is sought and used strategically to leverage additional resources.	☐ Site level partners play a significant role in identifying and leveraging local revenue sources including in kind contributions from partner agencies. ☐ Grant money is sought and used strategically to leverage additional resources. ☐ Resources are earmarked to finance a community school coordinator position at each site.

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	Professional Development (PD) and Technical Assistance (TA)	☐ The principles and practices of community schools are incorporated in higher education and district-run educator preparation and professional development for principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, nurses, and others. ☐ The principles and practices of community schools are incorporated into professional development for partner staff. ☐ Joint, ongoing professional development for school and partner staffs is available and policies encourage and enable participation. ☐ Partners participate in site visits, community forums and other opportunities designed to familiarize them with the principles and practices of community schools, the assumptions and expectations of community-wide and site partners and to build common ground across the initiative.	☐ Organizes pre-service training for community school coordinators and facilitate their continued training in appropriate, district-led professional development. ☐ Coordinates technical assistance to help the initiative implement and sustain its expansion plan. ☐ Technical assistance and professional development responds to needs identified by participants. ☐ Ensures that participants and TA providers jointly design, implement and evaluate training.	☐ School staff and site level partners participate in joint PD and planning time designed to deepen the integration between in-school and after-school teaching and learning. ☐ Technical assistance facilitates the work of school site teams. ☐ Community school coordinators receive pre-service training from the initiative and site level partners participate in relevant school-run PD activities. ☐ Participants and TA providers jointly design, implement and evaluate training.

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Functional	Community Engagement	☐ The system-wide initiative has a name and logo that are recognized and used throughout the community. ☐ Communication with the public via various media occurs regularly through open meetings, social networking sites, TV, radio, newsletters, flyers, posters, etc. ☐ Community issues that impact schools (e.g., safety, housing, immigration policy) are tracked, evaluated for their impact on the initiative's work, and considered for community-wide action. ☐ Site visits to community schools for elected officials and potential partners as well as for initiative leaders, family members and residents are well attended and designed to build community support. ☐ Open meetings present community-wide data and invite feedback. ☐ An increasing number of people are advocates for community schools.	☐ Communication with the public is planned for, occurs regularly, and is adequately staffed. ☐ Data on the performance of each community school as well as on system-wide expansion are published and made easily accessible to the public and policy makers.	☐ The community school promotes itself as the hub of the neighborhood and utilizes the name and logo of the initiative in building its own identity. ☐ Leadership development opportunities for parent/family members and residents enable them to carry out their leadership tasks. ☐ Community issues that impact schools (e.g., safety, housing, immigration policy) are tracked, evaluated for their impact on the initiative's work, communicated to the initiative and considered for local action. ☐ Expansion sites host visits for elected officials, partners, family members and residents and other schools to showcase accomplishments, invite champions and develop peer networks. ☐ Parents and residents represent the concerns of community schools and their neighborhoods in decision-making forums at all levels (e.g., neighborhood associations, housing commissions, city council, and the school board).