

Chicago Public Schools Community Schools Initiative: Case Study of Coordinating Integrated Student Supports and Expanded Learning Opportunities



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Introduction

To achieve the ideal of community schools acting as comprehensive hubs of service provision and enrichment for students and families, school leaders and collaborators must purposefully coordinate **integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities**. Integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities are considered key pillars, or foundational elements, in implementing the community schools strategy. Although these two pillars of implementation are often discussed as distinct efforts, both entail assessing and understanding of community-specific interests and needs, ongoing cultivation of cross-sector partnerships, and school-based delivery of resources and supports. In this case study, we explore the coordination practices of integrated students supports and expanded learning as interconnected elements of community school implementation that—with attention to shared conditions and strategies—can reinforce one another toward more robust experiences and positive outcomes for all.



Integrated student supports is a school-based approach to the coordination of individualized behavioral supports, social services, and resources for students, which attends to the holistic well-being of children and youth (Maier et al., 2017, p. 19). Considered a whole-child approach, supports often aim to expand and deepen access points to basic necessities (e.g., food, clothing, transportation and housing assistance) and medical services (e.g., physical exams, dental, vision, and mental health programs), which greatly influence students' ability to attend school and fully engage in academic learning. These school-based social supports are often referred to as “wraparound” services.

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Expanded learning time and opportunities are school-based or school-connected enrichment programming that takes place during out-of-school time hours (i.e., before school, after school, during the summer, and on weekends). These activities include extending learning hours through individual and group academic engagement (e.g., tutoring, homework help) and can provide dynamic social enrichment and recreational opportunities for students and families (e.g., art clubs, music programs, sports clubs, field trips, youth leadership councils).

Successful implementation of integrated student supports and expanded learning involves similar practices and processes, such as (1) collaboratively assessing needs alongside community desires and assets, (2) building strong partnerships with external organizations, (3) coordinating systems and supports, (4) tracking and monitoring student experiences and outcomes, and (5) integrating services and programming within the school setting (Moore, 2014; Moore et al., 2017). Structures to support comprehensive data collection and usage are also essential in identifying, coordinating, and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions, supports, and opportunities over time.

In this case study, we highlight intentional strategies, promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned from two Chicago community schools that both demonstrate strengths, but also differ in their approaches, to coordinating and using data to strengthen integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities. Although this case study is not instructional about how to create integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities, our hope is that the findings illustrate how *to coordinate, communicate, and strengthen existing programming and supports* in service of a sustainable community schools strategy.

In the next section, we briefly provide background on Chicago Public School’s Community Schools Initiative, and the evolution of this initiative’s research and technical assistance partnership with the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®).

Background

Since 2002, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has implemented the Community Schools Initiative (CSI) as a strategy to support students, families, and the broader school community. In alignment with the key pillars of the community schools strategy, CSI relies on the development of cross-sector partnerships so that schools can offer high-quality wraparound supports and enrichment opportunities for students and their families.² Given the time and resources required of schools to create and sustain a broad range of cross-sector partnerships, CSI leaders recommend that CPS community schools designate a lead partner agency to facilitate program and additional partnership management. In this approach, the lead partner agency takes responsibility for hiring and managing a full-time school-based resource

² The [Community Schools Playbook](#) identifies four pillars of a comprehensive community schools strategy: integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices.

coordinator, who primarily oversees the school's CSI-funded afterschool and summer learning program. Lead partner agencies often take the lead on hiring additional staff for partner schools' afterschool and summer enrichment and academic programming; the lead partner agencies may also hire school-day staff or contract with external vendors for specific program offerings.

In Chicago, the CSI team identified a set of lead partner agencies, which include community-based organizations, universities, and locally based national nonprofit organizations. Although lead partner agencies help to develop and sustain cross-sector partnerships, it is common for CSI schools to have long-standing community partnerships with other organizations. These organizations may work in parallel or in conjunction with the lead partner agency to support specific populations or provide distinct services. To date, more than 50 organizations have formed partnerships with more than 200 CSI schools.

Finally, although CPS CSI has anchored its community schools model to the four pillars, the primary focus of its partnerships and resources has traditionally been expanded learning time. This emphasis stems from CPS's historical reliance on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant program, administered by the Illinois State Board of Education, to fund implementation of CSI in CPS schools. Specifically, CPS has used 21st CCLC grant funds to fund the resource coordinator position in CSI schools.

CPS CSI Research and Technical Assistance Partnership

For more than a decade, AIR, in partnership with Diehl Consulting Group, has evaluated CPS CSI schools funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and provided research-informed technical assistance to schools to support effective implementation of the community schools strategy.³ Through this evaluation work, the AIR–Diehl team has identified key practices that contribute to effective CSI implementation.

In 2023, CPS, AIR, and Diehl team members worked to translate CPS CSI evaluation findings into a suite of practice-oriented resources to (a) guide CSI continuous improvement efforts in Chicago and (b) make a broader contribution to the field of community schools. The team identified a set of key practices that drive successful CSI implementation, which align with the community schools pillars outlined in the [Community Schools Playbook](#) and previous CPS CSI evaluation findings. We developed case studies and related practice guides for each of these key practices to highlight the efforts of CSI schools engaged in promising approaches.

³ For more information about AIR and Diehl's evaluations of CPS CSI, please see <https://www.air.org/project/chicago-public-schools-community-schools-initiative>.

Key Practices of Effective Community Schools

Collaborative Leadership

Building Strong
Partnerships

Coordinating Integrated
Student Supports and
Expanded Learning

Case studies and complementary practice guides are developed to be useful for school and community leaders who are currently implementing a community schools strategy or are considering this strategy for their schools. We hope that these research-based resources help Chicago Public Schools, and the broader field of community schools, develop deeper insight into the conditions needed in schools to foster high-quality implementation. To see our Coordinating Integrated Student Supports and Expanded Learning practice guide, as well as additional resources, please visit our [website](#).⁴

In the following sections, we provide our guiding case study research questions, selected sample, and methods that informed our inquiry into coordinating integrated student supports and expanded learning.

Research Questions

In our efforts to identify promising practices in the coordination of integrated student supports and expanded learning in Chicago, we set out to answer the following research questions:

1. How, and in what ways, do administrators and staff value integrated student supports and expanded learning at their schools? What do they see as the key benefits?
2. What role does the resource coordinator play in coordinating integrated student supports and expanded learning?
3. What structures support the successful provision and delivery of integrated student supports and expanded learning?
 - a. How does the use of data contribute to successful and relevant delivery of supports, services, and programming?
 - b. What are the common challenges and barriers to data use for integrated student supports and expanded learning?
4. How do conditions and practices that support integrated student supports and expanded learning reinforce other components of community schools implementation?

⁴ Case studies, such as this one, provide research-based context and detailed findings about observed implementation practices at community schools. The practice guide series, informed by case study research, consists of condensed, action-oriented information and strategies intended for use by community schools practitioners.

Sample and Methods

Drawing on evaluation and practice-based insights, the CPS CSI team, AIR, and Diehl Consulting collectively identified a subset of CSI schools that demonstrated features of strong practices for effective community schools. The team identified two schools with unique strengths in their approach to coordinating their integrated student supports and expanded learning: Galarza Center for Excellence and Merrit Elementary.⁵ To begin learning more about CSI efforts at each identified school, the research team held informal conversations with two district-level CSI program coordinators. These conversations offered our research team a general overview and introductions to school leaders and resource coordinators at selected schools. Based on their engagement with selected schools, coordinators also shared further recommendations for interviews and focus group participants, insights into school strengths and challenges in CSI implementation, student and family demographics, and overall climate and culture.

Sample Description

Galarza Center for Excellence (Prekindergarten–8) is a public neighborhood school located on the southwest side of Chicago, serving more than 900 students who primarily identify as Latine and are from low-income households. The school is known for its personalized and blended learning model, where students engage with teachers utilizing adaptive technology to learn at their own pace. According to school staff, Galarza’s surrounding neighborhood has been historically comprised of Spanish-speaking immigrant families living in multigenerational homes. Like many parts of Chicago, a new wave of migrant and refugee youth and families have settled in the neighborhood and are entering the public school system. Nearby, a local organization offers a range of social and economic programs to community members. Additionally, the school provides a range of expanded learning programs through community partnerships, some of which are summarized in the following textbox.

PARTNERSHIPS AT GALARZA

Through its 21st CCLC-funded CSI program, Galarza provides extensive expanded learning programs. Galarza’s Extended Learning Opportunity program provides an additional 60 minutes of instruction per day with the goal of increasing achievement in math, reading, and science. The school’s Community Arts Program classes provide additional enrichment (e.g., arts and crafts) and athletic opportunities. Finally, Galarza offers a mentoring program for students and additional enrichment classes (e.g., adult knitting club, arts and crafts events, health awareness workshops) for families and community members.

⁵ Schools and organizations have been assigned pseudonyms to protect identities of research participants. To see the list of participating schools and lead partner agencies involved in our case study research, please see our [website](#).

In addition to offering a variety of afterschool programs through the 21st CCLC grant, Galarza partners with organizations to provide tailored literacy tutoring for fourth and fifth graders and general academic support for a select group of third and fourth graders. Galarza also partners with Communities In Schools® of Chicago (CIS® of Chicago), a nonprofit organization serving Chicago Public Schools that focuses on school-based implementation of integrated student supports and community partnership programs⁶, and Catholic Outreach Services, a nearby faith-based organization, to offer on-site counseling, and social and emotional skill development. Finally, Galarza leverages long-standing partnerships with local businesses and service providers to support access to basic needs, such as food and clothing, for students and their families.

Merrit Elementary School (PreK–8) is a public neighborhood school located on the north side of Chicago, serving more than 1,000 students. Situated in a racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood, Merrit serves an increasingly diverse migrant and refugee population. According to school leadership, more than 50 home languages are spoken among students, and approximately 70% of Merrit’s student population classify as English learners. At various points throughout the year, the school enrolls and welcomes new students who are refugees or migrants, including some students who may have never attended formal schooling before. Many refugee students and families receive case-managed services through school partnerships. Merrit also collaborates with several neighborhood-based organizations, including one across the street from the school that is dedicated to supporting immigrants and refugees. In the textbox, below, we describe the primary partnerships at Merrit that support integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities.

PARTNERSHIPS AT MERRIT

Merrit Elementary partners with various local providers to offer a range of holistic services. Through the school’s 21st CCLC program, staff lead afterschool academic and enrichment classes and provide additional programs, such as science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) activities; yoga; soccer; and dance, via external vendors. The school also offers adult programs, such as family nights and workshops on topics such as technology, health, and wellness.

South Asian Resource Center for Immigrants (SARI Center) is a nonprofit that provides comprehensive, culturally responsive supports for the neighborhood’s immigrant and refugee population. Supports include adult literacy classes, health education, and assistance with accessing public benefits. SARI also leads the Parent Mentor Program, a state-funded initiative that connects low-income parents

⁶ [Communities in Schools of Chicago](#) supports schools through two core programs: the Intensive Program, where schools like Galarza have an onsite student supports manager to provide direct case management to students, and the Partnerships Program, which connects schools to no-cost services delivered by community partnerships. All schools in their network (Partnership or Intensive Program) benefit from access to these no-cost partner services.

to workforce readiness training and employment. A part-time SARI coordinator works at Merrit 3 days a week, supporting parent mentors who work as classroom assistants, organizing family workshops, and helping parents create schoolwide events.

Another nonprofit, **Summit**, brings free counseling services and culturally relevant support for immigrants and refugees at the school. For example, a part-time clinician at Merrit manages a student caseload, organizes social-emotional learning (SEL) programming, and provides professional development and mental health workshops for staff and parents.

Merrit also collaborates with local hospitals, health agencies, and community-based organizations to deliver wraparound services for refugee students and families.

Data Collection Methods

To develop this case study, we conducted interviews and focus groups with a variety of community schools collaborators at each school and reviewed related primary documents. Interview and focus groups were transcribed by the transcription service Rev.com. To analyze data from diverse sources, we engaged in a process of transcript and document review, analytical memo writing to elevate key themes, and regular check-ins regarding emerging findings with team and participant members. To learn more details about our data collection activities, see the Appendix.

In the remainder of this article, we provide a summary of five key findings organized in response to our research questions. We then delve into each of the findings, offering illustrative examples from our study sample. The article concludes with a discussion and implications of our findings.

Key Findings

Below, we share a summary of our key findings organized in alignment with our research questions.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. *Cultivating the School as a Community Hub*

Both schools' administrators hold a vision of their schools as **community hubs that provide holistic wraparound services and expanded learning opportunities** to meet the whole-child needs of students and families. However, administrators assigned different roles to their resource coordinators in realizing this vision. Notably, Merrit's administrators entrusted the resource coordinator to manage community partnerships and connect expanded learning to the school's overall integrated student supports system, whereas Galarza's administrator expected the resource coordinator to focus on

expanded learning, relying on school counselors and the CIS of Chicago student supports manager to determine wraparound services.

2. Engaging Resource Coordinators in Integrated Student Support Efforts

For resource coordinators to meaningfully engage and contribute to integrated student supports, we learned that Merrit **(1) involved the resource coordinator in school committees**, such as **joining the school's behavioral health team** and participating in **school improvement planning**; **(2) aligned expanded learning opportunities with the school goals for students' SEL**; and **(3) entrusted the resource coordinator to manage community partnerships** alongside school administrators. To enable this work, administrator buy-in for community schools as a whole-school strategy and relational trust between the resource coordinator and administrators were essential conditions.

3. Conditions and Strategies to Coordinate Integrated Student Supports and Expanded Learning

At both schools, conditions and strategies that supported successful data-informed integration of student supports and expanded learning included (1) creating systems or processes (e.g., assigned staff points of contact, outreach tools) to communicate with students and families about available resources; (2) a diverse, representative behavioral health team inclusive of school-based partner staff that meets routinely to assess and recommend supports and opportunities to students; (3) processes for regularly assessing and identifying individual and group needs, interests, and assets; and (4) data usage practices that build schoolwide culture and capacity for data use, encourage regular program quality monitoring, and demonstrate the impact of programming over time.

4. Common Challenges and Tensions

Even in schools where integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities flourish, common challenges included (1) siloed implementation of and outreach for expanded learning and integrated student supports, (2) barriers to access and use of data to inform supports and expanded learning, and (3) cultural and linguistic barriers, which affected accessibility to supports and programs.

5. Connecting Integrated Student Supports and Expanded Learning to Other Community School Pillars

Delivering high-quality integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities depended on the **presence of structures that reinforce other community school pillars and implementation drivers**, such as administrator trust and buy-in, collaborative decision-making groups, strong partnerships that are adaptive to evolving needs, and parents' involvement in their child and school. Supports such as these and programming also **strengthened each school's capacity to engage the community and families** by providing opportunities for cultural affirmation and empowerment.

Cultivating the School as a Community Hub: How Schools Envision the Role of Integrated Student Supports and Expanded Learning

Administrators at both Galarza and Merrit understood the purpose of integrated students supports and expanded learning as fulfilling the goals for their schools to operate as community hubs for students and families. They described their schools as places where students and families have centralized access to wraparound services and both engage and lead a variety of expanded learning opportunities throughout the year. As Galarza’s principal explained, their school stays open until 7:30 p.m. every night, including on weekends, with the goal of providing a welcoming, safe meeting space in the neighborhood. Likewise, administrators at Merrit expressed a commitment to offering extended day, weekend, and summer programming to meet the diverse needs of their community and celebrate cultures and contributions of students and families.

To develop a continuum of student and family supports, both schools’ leadership have intentionally selected, vetted, and leveraged partnerships with local providers to offer on-site medical services, mental health counseling, food and basic need assistance, and robust family engagement opportunities. For example, both Merrit and Galarza offered periodic school-based vision exams and visits from the Chicago Department of Public Health’s [mobile immunization care van](#). The preschool at Galarza also offered an on-site Medicaid public aid liaison to help families enroll while registering their students for preK. Merrit coordinated annual dentist visits for students and families. Both schools worked with a variety of partner organizations who provided on-site clinicians or coordinators that worked with a caseload of students. These partners included Summit at Merrit and Communities in Schools (CIS) of Chicago and Catholic Outreach Services at Galarza. In regard to family engagement efforts, Galarza had a partnership with a food pantry, where parents could come to the school twice a month for grocery pick-up. Galarza’s CIS of Chicago student supports manager collaborated with the behavioral health team to provide presentations and workshops for families. The SARI Center at Merrit facilitated culturally relevant parent and family engagement efforts primarily through its Parent Mentor Program, which provided trainings and education programming to newcomer parents to help them build social connections as well as comfort with navigating new social norms.

Importantly, both school communities ensured robust and specific supports for diverse migrant and refugee populations. Through the CPS Students in Temporary Living Situations program, migrant youth at both schools were eligible to receive wraparound supports, including school fee waivers and assistance with uniforms and transportation. Merrit also had partnerships with several community-based organizations to provide additional supports and services, such as workforce development opportunities, medical services, and high-impact tutoring for youth and families.

Through the work of administrators, resource coordinators, and community school leadership teams, school–community partnerships evolved and strengthened over time to align with emerging needs

and interests. Although Chicago’s community schools strategy has always focused on how to best support youth and families living in concentrated poverty, the level and nature of resource need has greatly expanded over the past 5 years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the city welcoming a high number of newcomer students and families (many of whom were refugees) in summer 2022, both Galarza and Merrit have had to respond swiftly to expanding and diversifying needs of their student communities. For example, both schools expanded their provision of integrated student supports by bringing in new partners (i.e., Summit and Catholic Outreach Services) and deepening existing community partnerships (e.g., through coordinating on-site presence of partner counselors). CPS further supported this expansion by funding additional school-day counselors or social workers at both schools.

Additionally, both schools aligned their approach to integrated student supports with existing multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) frameworks through the work of school-based behavioral health teams. All Chicago Public Schools use the [MTSS framework](#) to guide their approach to identifying, assessing, and responding to individual student, small-group, and whole-school needs. Described as tiers of intervention and support, MTSS has become common language in schools in how to discuss academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports for students (see the following textbox). Although the composition and specific purposes of behavioral health teams vary by school, they often provide opportunities for various school-based staff to convene and collaborate on how to best support individual student needs and often make referrals to supports for students and families accordingly.

Both Galarza and Merrit coordinated tiered mental health interventions through behavioral health teams, which comprised counselors, administrators, lead faculty, and community-based organization staff. Interventions often included small-group or individual counseling services, SEL supports, and expanded learning activities. Schools provided these supports internally through their school counselors or social workers or through an external partner, like Summit, CIS of Chicago, and Catholic Outreach Services. We explore how these teams use data to assign and monitor tiered interventions further in the “Building Blocks” section.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

MTSS is a framework designed to provide targeted academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions for all students. It offers increasingly intense levels of instruction and support to address individual needs. **Tier 1** includes high-quality, schoolwide programs and supports designed to meet the needs of all students. **Tier 2** involves small-group interventions targeting academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs using validated programs for at-risk students. **Tier 3** consists of intensive, individualized interventions for students not responding to Tier 2, addressing low achievement or ongoing needs.

For additional information or resources around implementation of MTSS, we encourage you to explore AIR’s [Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#).

At both schools, administrators and resource coordinators believed that their faculty and staff championed their schools' holistic approach to supporting children and their families. At Galarza, the principal believed the school benefitted from the commitment of longtime teachers and counselors who helped create the school's community school vision and were familiar with the array of school-based and neighborhood opportunities and resources for students. The resource coordinator similarly echoed that school staff at Galarza “go above and beyond” to understand and improve their students' well-being. For example, she explained how staff were encouraged to check in on the emotional well-being of their students and stay informed of any of their nonacademic needs, such as clothing or food assistance. According to the principal, staff at Galarza largely shared the school's vision of being a community hub, which he has tried to emphasize during the hiring and onboarding processes with new staff:

*It's a vision everybody here is aligned with and feels good about, and they were part of [it].... Not all the same staff members are here [since we developed that vision], but I think it still rings true for most people. And when we bring [new faculty and staff] on board and hire them...hopefully I'm able to communicate to them that **this is part of who we are.***

– Galarza administrator

Likewise, accounts from Merrit's administrators, resource coordinator, and partner agency staff illustrated a similar culture where school staff valued the wraparound services, which they can help their students and families access. The director of behavioral health at Summit shared that Merrit staff had buy-in around the importance of emotional wellness that exceeded what she had observed in other schools. She shared how teachers would often reach out to Summit asking for additional SEL resources and generally described an overall culture where the school “believes a child is more than just their math score” and instead values the whole child. However, Merrit's resource coordinator also shared an occasional tension between support service staff and teachers, in which faculty—particularly those teaching “specials” or elective classes—expressed frustration with students frequently getting pulled out during their classes to receive supports.

While resource coordinators and administrators shared that school faculty appreciate wraparound supports, they also acknowledged that familiarity with specific partnerships, and knowledge of how students and families engage with them, varied. For example, the principal and resource coordinator acknowledged that Merrit's teachers may not be completely aware of the number of partnerships and resources available. Partner organizational staff from SARI shared that staff and students had a more limited awareness of their organization and acknowledged the difficulties of helping teachers stay informed of new programs and initiatives. Despite these challenges, however, the resource coordinator and principal believed that school faculty and staff typically knew that student and family supports were available if needed.

Resource coordinators at Galarza and Merrit also had different role emphases and levels of involvement with elements of service coordination. For example, At Merrit, the resource coordinator viewed building and integrating community partnerships as a core part of her work, whereas at Galarza, the resource coordinator considered partnerships that were beyond the purview of expanded learning as the responsibility of school administrators and other counselors. We also observed how administrators envisioned the role of resource coordinators differently, particularly regarding their involvement with coordinating integrated student supports. At Galarza, the administrator understood the resource coordinator’s job as distinctly focused on leading 21st CCLC expanded learning opportunities; he worked more closely with the CIS of Chicago student supports manager and school counselors to coordinate student supports. At Merrit, administrators viewed expanded learning as a “tiered” SEL support and invited the resource coordinator to join the behavioral health team to help identify students in need of programming. Despite administrators’ different approaches to the role of the resource coordinator, both similarly sought to transform their schools into community hubs through designating staff to lead coordination efforts.

In the next section, we further explore the practices observed at Merrit to elevate how resource coordinators and administrators can collaborate in efforts to integrate student supports and expanded learning.

Lead Together: Engaging Resource Coordinators in Integrated Student Support Efforts

As we explored in previous [research on collaborative leadership practices](#), **successful implementation of the community schools pillars (including integrated student supports and expanded learning) depends on a collegial and respectful relationship between the resource coordinator and administrators.** A school administrator's trust in the resource coordinator's capabilities, coupled with consistent communication processes, can deepen the resource coordinator's role in school-day operations, which, in turn, facilitates resource coordinator involvement in the schools' existing approach to integrated student supports.

This approach became evident at Merrit, where the principal and the resource coordinator reported meeting regularly to discuss CSI programs and other school events, collaboratively made decisions about building partnerships, and strategized about CSI efforts in the school. We learned from administrators and school staff how CSI programming, and the resource coordinator's role at the school, have evolved over time and became integral to the school's integrated student supports efforts. As one school staff member explained,

I've seen [CSI programming] grow; for example, it's also part of our behavioral health team. [Our] resource coordinator attends those meetings. It's been discussed in our school priorities under our CIWP [Continuous Improvement Work Plan], so it's now branched out into the different supports available at Merrit, in terms of how can we use that resource to further our school priorities and to target populations within the school and families. So, it's become much more integral to the fabric of our school community.

– Merrit staff member

At Merrit, we identified strategies for involving the resource coordinator and integrating CSI programming into the school's vision, framework, and implementation of integrated student supports. These strategies included (1) inviting and engaging resource coordinators in school teams and improvement planning, (2) aligning expanded learning time with the school's vision for SEL opportunities, and (3) empowering the resource coordinator to lead as the liaison for the school's community-based partnerships.

Involving resource coordinators in relevant school teams and the school improvement planning process: At Merrit, the resource coordinator shared that she regularly participates in her school's behavioral health team, College and Career Readiness Team, and Health and Wellness Team. Through these engagements, the resource coordinator can better identify and understand student- and school-level needs and create relevant programming and partnerships in response. The resource coordinator

emphasized how participation in the behavioral health team, for example, provided structured opportunities to engage in conversations with school staff about their perspectives on students' strengths and needs. These conversations then influenced discussions the resource coordinator had with the principal about how to best distribute and align the use of CSI (21CCLC) funds with priority areas of need. For example, after the resource coordinator learned during a team meeting that many parents were unaware of the expectations of specific morning drop-off times for their children, the coordinator organized a workshop for parents during report card pick-up to discuss the importance of attendance and morning punctuality for their children's learning.

Merrit administrators also invited the resource coordinator into the school improvement planning process, also known as the Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) process. In alignment with the school's overall priorities around connectedness and improving well-being, the CIWP included goals around increasing attendance for afterschool programming to ensure students were being retained in programming and attending regularly. Integrating expanded learning into specific CIWP goals ensured that school administrators and staff remained committed to the success of the program and demonstrated recognition of how a strong CSI program contributes to a positive school climate. An administrator at Merrit explained:

I would say our school improvement plan...we incorporate CSI [efforts] in there. So, for example, one of our [school improvement] priorities is connectedness and well-being. Within [the plan to address this priority] is our counseling, but it's also our out-of-school time [programs]. Are we meeting the needs of what our students are asking for? What does our attendance look like in out-of-school time? How can we improve that attendance? It's one of the main aspects of our school improvement plan, so that we try to incorporate it in everything that we do so that it doesn't look separate from our school.

– Merrit administrator

Developing CSI expanded learning time and enrichment to align, support, and deepen SEL opportunities: Merrit administrators and staff recognized that CSI-funded programming could be utilized to enhance students' social and emotional well-being. For instance, Merrit's resource coordinator described referring students identified in behavioral health team meetings as needing SEL skills development to CSI programming. This understanding of CSI as a mechanism for addressing holistic needs has evolved from its initial conception at Merrit as an afterschool academic program. Merrit administrators explained how their vision for CSI evolved in response to the **growing demand for supports around student well-being**. In the present day, the resource coordinator described collaborating intentionally with program staff to integrate SEL components into afterschool and summer programming. Additionally, the resource coordinator prioritized CSI enrollment for students needing SEL support, such as additional opportunities for peer-to-peer socialization or positive relationships with adults. Merrit school staff articulated how aligning CSI's expanded learning

programming with the school's goals around SEL has **strengthened CSI's integration with the school's values and priorities.**

Enabling resource coordinators to manage community partnerships alongside school administrators:

Merrit's resource coordinator shared how she and the principal regularly meet to discuss opportunities and make decisions about partnerships. The resource coordinator also collaborated with the principal to organize monthly resource fairs, where local agencies and service providers are invited to advertise their services to families.

As discussed in our [research](#) on strong partnerships, the resource coordinator also deliberately integrated Merrit's other primary external partners, Summit and the SARI Center, into CSI implementation by inviting them to sit on the CSI Leadership Team. Maintaining continuous and open communication channels with those partners enabled the resource coordinator to regularly be aware of what new initiatives or resources were available, and to refer students and families to them either through behavioral health team meetings, or ongoing conversations as part of her daily work as a resource coordinator. Ultimately, this system of continuous communication between CSI and other partner organizations ensured that programming and partnerships could meaningfully address gaps in their school's infrastructure for both integrated student supports and expanded learning.

In the next section, we expand on the importance of structures to support continuous communication and other building blocks to enable effective coordination of integrated student supports and expanded learning.

Building Blocks: Conditions and Strategies to Support Integrated Student Supports and Expanded Learning Opportunities

Both Galarza and Merrit developed similar conditions, structures, and strategies to effectively coordinate integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities to students and families: (1) systems and processes (e.g., assigned staff points of contact, specific outreach tools) to communicate with students and families about available resources; (2) a diverse, representative Behavioral health team inclusive of school-based partner staff that meets routinely to assess and recommend supports and opportunities to students; (3) processes to regularly assess, identify, and align individual and group needs and assets; and (4) data usage practices to inform identification of student needs, drive decision making, monitor the quality and effectiveness of existing supports, and demonstrate impact.

We explain how Merrit and Galarza actualized these strategies below in further detail.

Systems and Processes to Communicate the Availability of Resources: Staff at both Merrit and Galarza described relying on ongoing communication structures, such as weekly newsletters, to communicate updated services and program opportunities with students, families, and staff. However, administrators also recognized that referring students and families to wraparound services often depended on the ability of faculty and staff to build trusting relationships. At Merrit, for instance, the increasing number of newcomer students arriving during the school year motivated administrators to develop common routines to better welcome new families at the school, including assigning a staff point of contact to initially reach out and provide family tours of the school. The resource coordinator explained:

*Because we'll have newcomer families enroll at any point in the year, [administrators] are trying to systemically build more connections and touchpoints with these families that just arrived. So, when they get enrolled, someone will take them on a tour of the school. And then after the student has been in the school, 2 weeks later, that person who gave them a tour will call the family and check in to see how it's going. **And so, they are building these touchpoints and relationships. So even if the parent doesn't know whatever is happening [in the school], they know that they can go to this [specific] person and ask them.***

– Merrit resource coordinator

In addition to forming deliberate touchpoints with families, both schools described creating guidebooks and directories that listed available community resources and school partnerships. At Merrit, the resource coordinator described creating a guidebook through asset mapping in collaboration with her community partners. According to the resource coordinator, this asset mapping process and resulting guidebook—an Excel spreadsheet with tabs for each category of wraparound services (e.g., physical health, food assistance, adult education)—consolidated all up-to-date information on available services and supports into one convenience resource. She also shared that by easily identifying the services already offered by local providers in the guidebook, she could avoid duplicative efforts. Similarly, the principal at Galarza described collaborating with a neighborhood coalition that was assembling a community directory (including addresses and contact information of relevant service providers) for local families. Counselors at Galarza also described creating a folder that lists all the resources around the neighborhood available to students and parents.

Diverse, Representative Behavioral Health Teams: Administrators and staff at Merrit and Galarza emphasized the important role of behavioral health teams, which are school committees that work collaboratively to identify student needs, assign student supports, and assess the effectiveness of programs and interventions based on data. At both schools, the behavioral health teams included one

or multiple school administrators, school counselors, social workers, a couple of classroom teachers, and staff from various partner agencies (e.g., a counselor from Summit and the resource coordinator at Merrit, the CIS of Chicago student supports manager at Galarza). Teachers referred students to the behavioral health team through conversations with behavioral health team members or by completing an online referral form. Both behavioral health teams followed similar processes: Members would review individual student cases at each meeting, assess a combination of student data (e.g., teacher accounts, test scores, discipline data), and assign a variety of supports to students. Data were typically reviewed every 4 to 6 weeks to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness.

At both schools, behavioral health team meetings offered opportunities to receive input from diverse school members, ensuring that services were responsive to the changing community needs and experiences. Merrit's resource coordinator noted that the behavioral health team's inclusion of both school and partner staff allowed for on-the-ground strategizing to align current needs with programming. Similarly, counselors at Galarza described how behavioral health team meetings facilitated the CIS of Chicago student supports manager's work to identify appropriate community partnerships. To assess school-level needs and keep teachers informed about their students, Galarza's behavioral health team conducted monthly check-ins with each grade-level team of teachers to provide updates on specific students and gather additional information. At Galarza, school counselors described another responsibility of their behavioral health team: sharing monthly Tier 1 social and emotional (SEL) supports for teachers to engage with in their classrooms. Galarza utilized a nuanced needs assessment process to determine these topics, which we detail in the next section.

Continual Assessment of Evolving Needs and Assets: Both schools engaged in frequent cycles assessment of needs and opportunities to ensure that supports and services aligned with student and family needs. All CSI schools, including Galarza and Merritt, are required to conduct an annual needs assessment with school personnel, students, families, and community members to inform and improve CSI partnership and program planning. In addition to this required input, both schools engaged in additional needs assessments and asset mapping with their behavioral health teams. As outlined in the textbox below, Galarza's behavioral health team engaged in a robust needs assessment process at the start of every school year to include the perspectives of students, teachers, and families.

SPOTLIGHT ON GALARZA: HOW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TEAMS CAN IDENTIFY SUPPORT NEEDS

Galarza counselors shared that at the beginning of each school year, the behavioral health team has identified behavioral and social-emotional learning (SEL) support needs via data collection with 3 groups:

- **Caregivers:** During an annual Open House, the team administered a brief checklist-style survey of SEL topics with parents so they can quickly share their priorities and interests.
- **Students:** Early in the school year, teachers administered a questionnaire to students to rate their level of confidence in handling situations requiring SEL competencies (e.g., managing peer conflict).
- **Staff:** Behavioral health team members administered a staff survey to gather insights on SEL classroom needs and identify desired tiered supports; team members followed up with teachers monthly for new insights and needs.

The behavioral health team then combined and reviewed data to determine the scope and sequence of Tier 1 SEL supports, identify additional group and individualized supports, and create new partnerships.

Both schools also discussed the importance of **collaboratively mapping local community assets** to identify available opportunities and resources and avoid duplicative efforts. At Merrit, administrators collaborated with their resource coordinator to conduct asset mapping when they first received the CSI grant. Similarly, a school counselor at Galarza participated in a “neighborhood walk” with an assistant principal upon her hiring. This activity allowed her to identify existing local providers as well as potential resource gaps:

So, walking through [our main] street, what buildings are there, what organizations are there, what do we notice that our students are subjected to after school or weekends or nonschool days. So that way, we could see what type of programs [we have], where we fill in the gap. So, if we don't see these organizations and we're talking to parents and there seems to be some type of [resource] gap in there, then that's what we reach out to a little bit further outside of our neighborhood [to build partnerships] or we fill it in with our own presentations or things like that.

– Galarza counselor

Similar to needs assessment activities, asset mapping processes were treated as a process of continuous updates rather than designated to specific times of the year. At Merrit, for example, the resource coordinator and administrators regularly reviewed partnership decisions, such as whether to identify new partners or expand existing ones, based on emerging needs. The CIS of Chicago student supports manager at Galarza also frequently assessed the availability of partnerships in response to needs observed in behavioral health team meetings.

In the following textbox, we expand on additional promising practices for needs and assets assessment.

PROMISING PRACTICES FOR ASSESSING NEEDS AND ASSETS

Invite multiple cross-system perspectives: Community school coordinators can build a better understanding of community assets and needs through inclusion of student, caregiver/family, school staff and administrators and community member insights.

Treat everyday conversations as meaningful data: Although systematically collecting information via surveys can help identify broader trends, coordinators can also document feedback and insights via conversations with students, families, and partners.

Engage in ongoing but manageable data collection: Processes to collect these data should be feasible for the coordinator and other collaborators and nested into everyday work. Needs will continue to evolve over the year, so it's imperative that coordinators consider the process as ongoing, rather than occurring only formally during specific touchpoints.

Embed cross-cutting data use into decision making: Decision-making groups, such as CSI Leadership Teams or behavioral health teams, should have access to all needs and assets data, such as student academic records, attendance, or any documented referrals to external service providers. This access supports the collaborative identification of student needs and can build the case for specific programs or approaches. Information should be regularly updated to ensure accuracy of referrals and conversations.

These practices drive the Learning and Re-envisioning Network (LRN), an AIR-led initiative that provides technical assistance to Chicago's community schools through coaching a cohort of resource coordinators on collecting and analyzing student and community data in service of progress monitoring, needs assessment, and CSI program and service planning. To learn more about LRN, please visit our [webpage](#).

Using Data to Drive Decision Making and Measure Impact: To effectively identify, coordinate, and monitor high-quality integrated student supports and expanded learning, **it is essential to foster a culture of data use where school staff and resource coordinators feel confident using data collaboratively with administrators in decision making.** Building schoolwide culture and capacity for meaningful data usage relied on tailored professional development opportunities and active support from school administrators. For instance, counselors at Galarza described how the school principal promoted a culture of data use by regularly presenting and discussing data during team meetings. The principal and fellow administrators provided time and guidance during school improvement days for grade-level teams to learn how to review student data. Both counselors credited their principal's culture of data usage and time spent during behavioral health team meetings collaboratively reviewing data to the comfort that they now had with monitoring interventions through data.

Administrators and resource coordinators at Merrit and Galarza discussed the importance of monitoring the quality of CSI programming through data use. At both schools, administrators and resource coordinators described reviewing Cityspan participation data throughout the year to identify trends in program attendance and to make decisions about whether certain programs should be expanded or discontinued. Administrators at Merrit further described using program attendance data to assess program quality and participation:

We did have some programs that did not have good attendance, and so when we looked at it, we researched why there wasn't good attendance. Was it the teacher or the instructor? Was it the subject area? Was it the kids that were targeted? So, what was the reason for it? And then [we] made adjustments and those changes so that we could have better engagement....And also looking at different age groups of kids to see if we're missing any [thing]. For example, through our data, we found out that for third and fourth grade [students], we didn't have enough programming on Tuesdays or Thursdays. And so, when we're starting next session, that's one thing we focused on.

– Merrit administrator

In addition to reviewing Cityspan attendance data, both resource coordinators described conducting informal program observations and gathering feedback from program staff and students to assess program quality.

Counselors at Galarza described monitoring the effectiveness of tiered interventions for individual students through use of a variety of data sources. Each counselor maintained an ongoing spreadsheet for students on their caseload, which incorporated multiple data points, including daily counselor notes, school-day attendance, and any referrals with Illinois Department of Children & Family Services or Screening, Assessment, and Support Services in the case of a mental health crisis. These spreadsheets helped familiarize new counselors with students and offered insights into any family background (e.g., if the student had siblings from previous years who received support). Once counselors assigned specific interventions to students, counselors engaged in progress monitoring every four to six weeks through reviewing a variety of student data. These data included standardized test scores, grades, attendance, feedback from parents and teachers, and counseling session exit tickets. When administering SEL interventions, counselors also tracked specific skill development by establishing specific goals at the start of counseling and recording notes on the child's skill progress to determine whether the intervention was working as intended or if adjustments were needed.

At both schools, school administrators described innovative methods to measure and communicate the positive effects of CSI participation. Notably, Merrit’s resource coordinator shared how she was exploring effects with her students through use of Ripple Effect Mapping, a participatory data collection method that aims to capture perceptions of program benefits and effects through visualization and storytelling (Chazdon et al., 2017). Merrit’s administrators have also discussed plans to assess the impact of CSI attendance and receipt of integrated student supports on student grades, attendance, and school connectedness, as measured through climate surveys.

Galarza’s principal also described his creative use of data to demonstrate the impact of CSI partnership over time. For example, the principal received technical support from an external organization to compile a database that visualized the different programs and supports an individual student receives alongside their test scores and grades. This approach allowed the principal to analyze whether students in specific programs demonstrated higher-than-average growth in their test scores compared to similar groups of students over time. The principal also created graphs correlating the number of hours that a student attends CSI programs with their grades or test scores to demonstrate the importance of consistent CSI program attendance. Finally, he conducted informal social network analysis of his students to explore the relationship between the number of social connections a student has and their test scores. He explained:

*I’ll survey the students.... I’ll say, “We’re going to assign locker partners for next year, and we’d like to know your opinion. Write down on the sheet of paper your name and the five students you’d like to have as locker partners.” And then I put that into Excel, and I just do a count formula to see how many times a student’s name is mentioned as an aspirational [school] locker partner.... I’ve done the same thing with a raffle, like, “I’ll take you and three friends out to lunch if you’re here on this certain day of school lunch...” When I’ve done this [kind of analysis], four out of the five times I’ve done it, **I find amazing correlation between the number of times a student’s name is mentioned and their average test scores.***

– Galarza principal

Despite these schools’ novel uses of data, both schools also reported common challenges and tensions involved with using data to drive decision making and ensuring the accessibility of data for all stakeholders. We expand on these challenges and others in the next section.

Common Challenges and Tensions

In this section, we explore common challenges to coordinating integrated student supports and expanded learning elevated by case study community school leaders. These include difficulties with integrating expanded learning programming and resource coordinator leadership with integrated student supports planning and efforts, inaccessibility and negative perceptions about data collection and use, and cultural barriers that hindered the accessibility of supports and programming. The solutions that school leaders employed to address these challenges emphasize the importance of creativity and collaboration when coordinating integrated student supports and expanded learning.

resource coordinators and school administrators shared ongoing tensions with efforts to integrate expanded learning programs, and related involvement of resource coordinators, within the school's system of integrated student supports. This tension was evident in Galarza, where both the principal and the resource coordinator described CSI exclusively in the context of afterschool and summer programming rather than as a community school strategy. As a result, the resource coordinator at Galarza did not participate in the school's behavioral health team and felt that the academic and enrichment programming funded through CSI differed substantially from interventions offered by counselors and Communities in Schools (CIS) of Chicago. Galarza's administrator explained:

When you say wraparound services, I'm thinking more of the social emotional supports that many of the students need. So, the resource coordinator...we have a list of programs that we know students enjoy doing that we can offer after school. And so, she's managing the budget to make sure we have enough funds to have those programs that we know students like and that we have staff available to teach those classes that kids like. And a lot of times, those are not explicitly social-emotional. Those can be sports; those are going to be afterschool tutoring groups. They could be clubs that are more arts and crafts focused, a variety.

– Galarza administrator

One factor that has contributed to siloing of expanded learning from school-based efforts like integrated student supports stemmed from CPS funding CSI primarily through the federal 21st CCLC grant, an afterschool program funding stream. 21st CCLC funds restricted funding for student activities during the school-day. To improve outreach for expanded learning activities, Merrit's resource coordinator organized school day events for families and community members, which students could join, that featured afterschool clubs (e.g., Bollywood dance club). With support from school administrators, the resource coordinator has also been able to deepen her role beyond expanded learning by serving as liaison for all community partnerships and by participating in the behavioral health team and the CIWP process.

As observed in previous [research](#) on the need for collaborative leadership in CSI implementation, the ability of resource coordinators to contribute to school-day operations and utilize school resources beyond CSI funding depended on the nature of relationships with school administrators and staff. Friendly relationships with administrators and staff enhanced the implementation of CSI programming and access to vital information about students and families. For more strategies on building relational trust between resource coordinators and principals, refer to our [practice guide](#) on collaborative leadership.

Resource coordinators and school personnel often struggled to access and interpret data. Without training, many school-based staff found data use to be intimidating. Previous AIR evaluations of CSI highlighted challenges within the needs assessment process, including resource coordinators having limited access to school or community data due to administrative gatekeeping or data literacy issues, resource coordinators often relying on their lead partner agencies to provide generic needs assessment findings across schools, and resource coordinators viewing the process as compliance driven rather than insightful or meaningful for their work. Likewise, we found that discomfort with interpreting and applying data to decision making was a common sentiment among resource coordinators.

The resource coordinators at Merrit and Galarza, along with school counselors, shared similar experiences of finding data use intimidating or inaccessible. However, a counselor at Galarza shared that her perspectives around data shifted once she began to consider conversations, student and parent feedback, and behavioral observation, as meaningful forms of data:

I'm still learning and growing with data....I'm always learning about different ways of collecting data.... And I think sometimes I easily forget, too, that data doesn't always have to be numbers. It could be conversations, it can be observations, seeing things change over time. So just trying to understand too, that data can look different.

– Galarza counselor

Resource coordinators and partner staff also shared linguistic and cultural barriers to providing supports and programming. Although the number of students from refugee backgrounds is increasing, Galarza's resource coordinator noted that most of these new students have not been recruited into afterschool programs due to a lack of staff who could provide language interpretation and support. Likewise, the resource coordinator at Merrit identified challenges related to ensuring the accessibility of programming or services for non-English-speaking students and families given the high number of languages spoken at their school. To address this issue, Merrit's resource coordinator and administrators worked closely with their community partners to hire expanded learning and social service staff directly from the community.

Although Merrit found success with community-based hiring, the Merrit resource coordinator and partner agency staff still confronted other kinds of cultural barriers in implementing specific programs. For instance, the director at Summit noted a pervasive stigma among some families around receiving mental health supports, which sometimes impeded service delivery:

I think sometimes it's hard to get the parents on board because they see [schools as] academics [focused], and there's a stigma and overall unawareness of mental health. [To address this stigma] we call it emotional wellness.... It's taken over a decade to get people to buy into SEL, and then understanding SEL isn't just counseling, it's relationships, it's connections, it's everything.

– Director of behavioral health, Summit

Both the resource coordinator and the Summit director described efforts to address these challenges in creative and culturally responsive ways. For example, they rebranded specific programming using different descriptors about services to reduce cultural stigma and offer information about the benefits of programs to increase awareness. As the director of Summit explained, integrated student supports encompassed more than just mental health services and often resulted in positive academic outcomes, which many parents prioritized. We explore the need for parental buy-in and the connections between integrated student supports, expanded learning, and family engagement in the next section.

Connecting Integrated Student Supports and Expanded Learning to Other Community School Pillars

The key practices of effective community schools, including integrated student supports and expanded learning, do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, our findings shed light on how these key practices interrelate and can reinforce each other through similar mindsets, strategies, and structures.

Embedding expanded learning opportunities within an existing integrated student supports framework required buy-in to the community schools initiative and a shared vision among administrators, resource coordinators, and school staff. Similar to findings on community school collaborative leadership practices, successful implementation of both integrated student supports and expanded learning depended on school leaders who valued these initiatives and promoted their integration through deliberate actions. For example, the principals at both Galarza and Merrit communicated visions of their schools as community hubs, which Galarza's principal reaffirmed to all new staff that he hired. Ensuring that decisions around integrated student supports and expanded learning were informed and tailored to specific needs also required administrators and partner agency staff to leverage collaborative decision-making groups, such as the behavioral health team and CSI Leadership Teams, to incorporate input from various voices and perspectives. Finally, implementing

the community schools initiative as a whole-school strategy depended on relational trust between the resource coordinator and administrators, which we elaborate on in the “Lead Together” section of this memo.

Strong partnerships not only expanded the capacity of schools to address immediate needs of students and families, but also provided unique structures and processes to facilitate access to services and support. At both Merrit and Galarza, strong partnerships with community-based organizations enabled the schools to provide expanded learning and wraparound services aligned with the academic and social-emotional needs of students and families while affirming each school’s vision for cultural inclusivity. For instance, Merrit’s resource coordinator described leveraging her network of community partners to organize events and develop programs celebrating different cultural heritages and creating opportunities for their school’s growing population of newcomers and refugees to feel recognized. Galarza similarly relied on Catholic Outreach Services to provide an on-site Spanish-speaking psychologist who delivered one-on-one and group counseling for Spanish-speaking students.

A successful system of integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities also required **partner organizations to adapt their work based on emerging needs.** For example, with the rising number of refugee and newcomer students enrolling in Merrit, Summit’s onsite clinician increased the number of days spent at the school from once a week to three times a week. Similarly, the SARI Center expanded their work from offering adult education and workforce programs to include leading the Parent Mentor Program, which better aligned with the evolving demographics and needs of the school.

Finally, strong partnerships intentionally structured for efficiency facilitated access to supports by encouraging the creation of school-based partner liaisons who helped school administrators manage various partnerships. We observed the benefits of this approach, as both Merrit’s resource coordinator and the CIS of Chicago student supports manager leveraged the trust they had developed with students and families to refer them to external services and opportunities.

Providing holistic integrated student supports and expanded learning involved understanding the essential role of family engagement. At both schools, staff actively engaged parents and family members through workshops or programming focused on the importance of SEL. Merrit’s resource coordinator acknowledged that although the primary focus of the behavioral health team was addressing student behavior and mental health, the team also recognized the importance of supporting caregivers given their role in promoting well-being at home.

Galarza’s counselors highlighted the importance of inviting parents into the behavioral health team process early, so that educators can gain a fuller picture of the student’s home life, particularly when addressing attendance and chronic absenteeism. To communicate effectively with parents, Galarza counselors recognized the importance of building trust through transparency, such as by sharing

student data or giving parents space to reflect on their children and soliciting ample input from parents when making decisions around needed interventions or supports. One counselor elaborated:

So, we meet with the parents and we meet with the student, and we have them both reflect on that. If there's a struggle of what's going on, like, who's at home helping the child get to school, if they need additional support? Then we figure out what are the setbacks to getting the student to school or what is going on? What is the thing that we don't see that stops you from getting to school?

– Galarza counselor

Both schools also aimed to build trust with caregivers by offering opportunities for engagement and leadership. Galarza partnered with their neighborhood council to provide English classes and other programs for parents; the resource coordinator shared plans to use 21st CCLC funds to provide additional school-based enrichment opportunities for parents.

At Merrit, the SARI Center sought to empower parents to play a larger role in their children's education. Through SARI's Parent Mentor Program, for instance, parents (often first-generation immigrant mothers with limited prior employment experience in the United States) received stipends for assisting in classrooms, organizing events, and gaining insight into the school's culture. The parent mentor coordinator also streamlined parents' interactions with the school, assisted with job applications, and offered skill and resume-writing workshops as needed.

Conclusion

This case study highlights the importance of considering integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities as interrelated and mutually reinforcing pillars of an effective community school strategy. Both featured schools illustrated the need for a shared vision among administrators and school staff, systems to support clear communication, continual assessment of needs and assets, and data-informed decision making. Through intentional alignment, expanded learning opportunities can function as holistic interventions within a framework of integrated student supports that address a range of social-emotional and academic needs. Ultimately, treating expanded learning as a tiered support, reinforced by continual needs assessment and regular progress monitoring, enhances the capacity of integrated student supports to meet needs and fulfill the community school vision.

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Appendix

As part of our case study development, we conducted a series of interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. At each school, data collection began with interviews of coordinators and school administrators involved in Community Schools Initiative (CSI) implementation. At Merrit, both the principal and the assistant principal participated in a joint interview. We also conducted a focus group with a select group of four Merrit staff (a school counselor, a librarian, an art teacher, and a math teacher) based on recommendations from Merrit’s administrators. We conducted a focus group with three staff members from two partner organizations: the director of behavioral health from Summit, and the Education Department manager and Parent Mentor Program coordinator from the South Asian Resource Center for Immigrants. At Galarza, we conducted a focus group with two school counselors, following the resource coordinator’s recommendation. Finally, we conducted a review of relevant documents (e.g., school websites, each school’s CSI service plan) to provide additional context on interview findings.

Exhibit A1 provides a summary of these efforts.

Exhibit A1. Case Study Data Collection

	Galarza Center for Excellence	Merrit Elementary School	Totals
Interviews			
<i>Resource coordinator</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	
<i>Principal</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	
<i>Assistant principal</i>	<i>n = 0</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	
			5 interviews
Focus groups			
<i>Partner agency staff</i>	<i>n = 0</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	
<i>School staff</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	<i>n = 1</i>	
			4 focus groups
Document review	- CSI service plan - School website	- CSI service plan - School website	