

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PRACTICE GUIDE SERIES

Practice Guide 1: Collaborative Leadership

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PRACTICE GUIDE 3: COORDINATION OF INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS & EXPANDED LEARNING

In This Guide:

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- ★ Levers, Recommended Strategies, & Action Steps
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This series highlights key components of the community school strategy, explains the conditions and levers that enable effective practices, and offers strategies and action steps to enhance the work. These guides are designed for school administrators, community school coordinators, community school leadership team members, and local partners. Informed by research-based strategies, the practice guides draw on the experiences and expertise of community school practitioners.

Purpose & Definitions

Community schools seek to transform the school into a community hub. Ideally, community schools offer services, supports, and learning during the school day and extended hours (e.g., before and after school, on weekends), so that students and families have robust access to basic needs and interest-aligned opportunities. **To enact this vision, collaborators must create and sustain systems of integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities**, both of which are considered key pillars of the community schools strategy.

While implementing integrated student supports and developing and offering expanded learning opportunities are different components of the community schools strategy, they both rely on **similar coordination practices and processes**. This guide focuses on shared strategies to **coordinate and strengthen existing systems of programming, resources, and supports**.¹

Integrated student supports is a whole-child approach to supporting students. It focuses on coordinating access to a range of activities, services, and resources, also known as “wraparound supports,” for students and their families to address barriers to learning, provide basics needs, and facilitate well-being.

Expanded learning time and enrichment opportunities include afterschool, summer, and weekend academic and social programs and childcare. Activities aim to support students’ academic and social development through an array of activities that promote play, creativity, teamwork, and experiential and interest-driven learning.



Spotlight | Creating a vision of the school as a community hub in Chicago

“[Our school is] a community hub where [we have] wraparound services for families and [programs] that just give students and their parents a space to be in community and to explore their different interests in a very low-stakes way.”

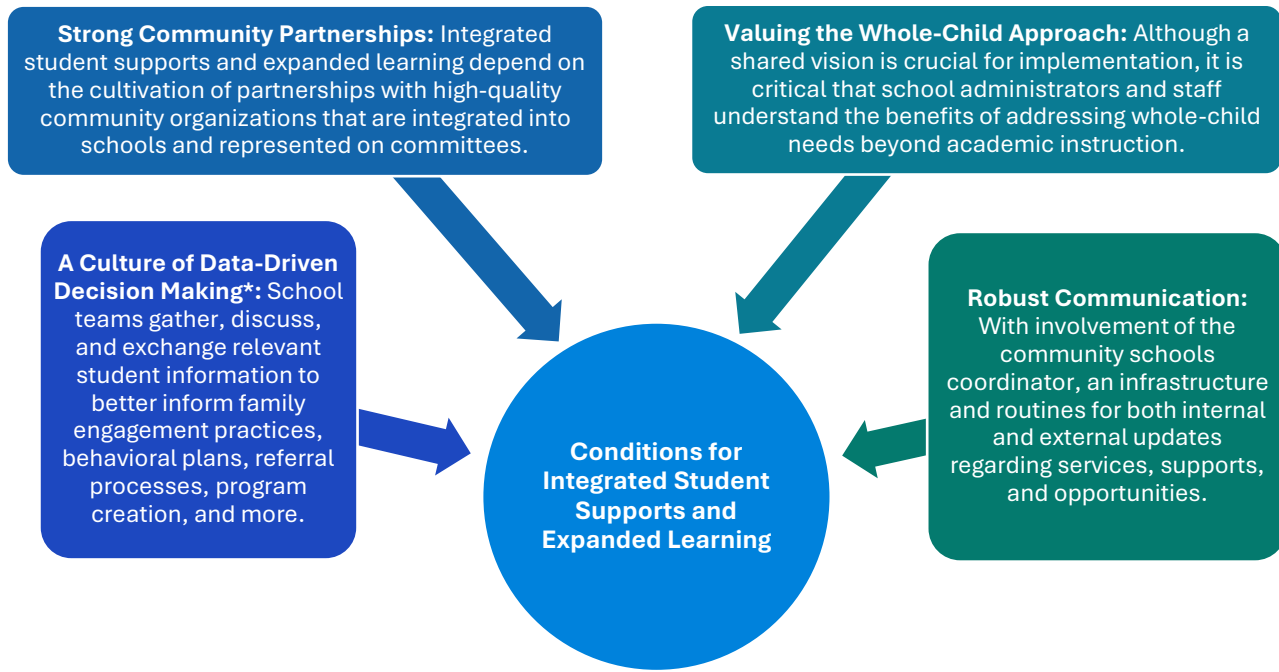
To fulfill the vision of community schools as community hubs, schools must coordinate integrated student supports and expanded learning opportunities. To provide a welcoming place in the neighborhood, one Chicago community school keeps its building open until 7:30 p.m. during both weeknights and weekends. Another community school, with a student body representing over fifty nationalities, prioritizes cultural relevance, connection, and celebration through community partnerships. Chicago community schools offer a variety of supports:

- **Physical health:** Vision and dental exams via mobile care van, visiting physicians, on-site Medicaid enrollment public liaison
- **Mental health:** On-site clinicians and psychologists
- **Food and basic need assistance:** Partnership with local food pantries where parents can pick up groceries
- **Family engagement:** Workshops for newcomer parents to help them build social networks and navigate U.S. school norms
- **Migrant and refugee services:** Support for basic needs, workforce development, medical services, and tutoring
- **Afterschool and summer programming (21st Century Community Learning Centers):** Academic supports and enrichment that provide opportunities for social and emotional engagement, cultural inclusion, and care for working families

¹ This guide is not intended to be a step-by-step manual for developing integrated student supports or expanded learning programming from scratch. For this guidance, we recommend the [Community Schools Playbook](#) as a starting point.

What **conditions** enable effective **integrated student supports** and **expanded learning**?

Successful integration of student supports and expanded learning opportunities into the school rely on (a) shared vision for supporting the whole child, (b) strong community partnerships that can bring in key services and programming, (c) data-driven decision making, and (d) a robust communication infrastructure (both internally and externally) to share information and updates about opportunities, services, and supports.



*What do we mean by **data**?

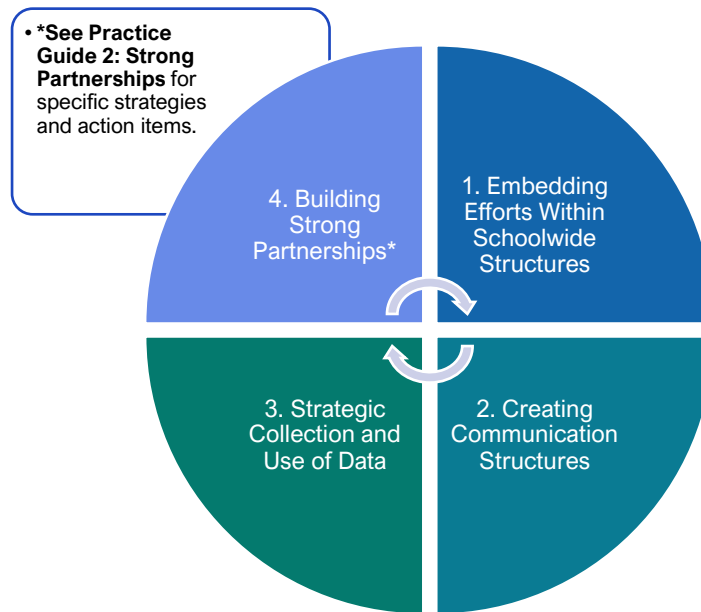
Data, in the context of community schools, consist of information about youth and families that help collaborators identify needs and interests, make informed decisions about gaps in program supports and services, and improve programming. This may include:

- ✓ student school attendance records, course grades, and behavior records
- ✓ district or school data dashboard information (school demographics, e.g., race, languages)
- ✓ service and program enrollment, waitlists, and participation rates
- ✓ needs assessment survey findings
- ✓ feedback from program participants, school staff, or family members
- ✓ program observations (for quality monitoring and continuous improvement efforts)

In Chicago, the Board of Education has specified a series of key performance indicators inclusive of practice and supports (inputs) and information about student performance (outputs) the district has identified as critical to assessing student learning and well-being (see the [District Policy for Continuous Improvement and Data Transparency](#)).

What **levers** promote coordination of integrated student supports and expanded learning?

School administrators, community school coordinators, and leadership teams play an essential role in coordinating the provision of wraparound supports and expanded learning. The following levers help create the conditions to better coordinate integrated student supports and expanded learning:



In the sections that follow, strategies and action steps for operationalizing each lever are provided.

What are **recommended strategies and action steps** to coordinate integrated student supports and expanded learning?

1. Embed supports and expanded learning opportunities within schoolwide structures

Strategies

Engage with existing schoolwide framework (see call out box below) to integrate community school activities, such as expanded learning, into a broader system for identifying student needs and driving school improvement.

Action Steps

- **Ensure that expanded learning activities are included as part of tiered supports**, with the goal of addressing both academic and behavioral/social-emotional needs.
- **Train and engage** diverse committees of school staff, including the community school coordinator, about use of frameworks for student support referrals.

Use existing school structures and committees (e.g., behavioral health teams, grade-level team meetings, professional learning communities) **to identify and connect** needed community school supports and resources.

- **Involve coordinators and community partner staff** in school committees for a fuller understanding of student experiences, needs, and opportunities.
- **Use school committee meetings** as opportunities to share updates on programming, troubleshoot challenges, and collaboratively brainstorm new opportunities, partnerships, and supports.



What are **common schoolwide frameworks and approaches** that can help coordinate efforts?

Student supports and expanded learning opportunities should not operate as isolated endeavors within a school. Instead, these opportunities should ideally connect to existing schoolwide frameworks and systems, thus reducing redundancies in efforts and maximizing schools' abilities to address student, family, and community needs.

Below are examples of common schoolwide frameworks and approaches that both integrated student supports and expanded learning programs can connect to:

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION SYSTEMS (PBIS)

PBIS provides a framework to identify and address behavior within a school setting. Using a tiered approach to identify forms of social intervention for behavior, PBIS aims to promote and reward positive behavior as a reframing of problem-centered or punishment-focused paradigms of behavior management.²

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (MTSS)

The MTSS framework is designed to provide guidance around how to approach academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions for students within a school setting. Organized by level of intensity of engagement and intervention, or tiers, the framework offers a way for school staff to communicate with one another and better support students.³

Tier 1: schoolwide programs and supports designed to meet the needs of all students

Tier 2: small-group interventions targeting academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs

Tier 3: individualized interventions for students to address academic performance, behavior issues, and basic needs

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative practices promote the development of social and emotional learning through encouraging self-reflection and the creation of nonjudgmental spaces for conflict resolution.⁴ Examples of restorative practices include restorative justice, peer mediation, and community-building circles.

² Additional information on positive behavioral interventions and supports can be found at the [Center on PBIS](#).

³ Additional information and resources on MTSS can be found at [AIR's Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#).

⁴ Additional information on restorative practices can be found at the [University of Chicago's Education Lab](#).

2. Develop clear communication structures to inform staff, students, and families about available resources and programming

Strategies

Together, community school administrators, the coordinator, and potential community partners outline **a comprehensive plan of integrated supports and expanded learning opportunities** for students and families.

Increase awareness of available programming and partnerships among school staff, students, and families.

Action Steps

- **Using current data**, community school administrators and coordinators **clearly communicate** the community school's vision and existing resources to partners **to build a shared understanding** of the current state of the school.
- Utilize **community school leadership team meetings** to develop, review, and assess this comprehensive plan to ensure a shared understanding of available supports and existing gaps.

- **Designate clear liaisons or points of contact** for each partner or program who can lead communication efforts.
- **Regularly communicate (by email, print)** information in monthly school newsletters, weekly bulletins.
- **Post** program flyers on school walls, bulletin boards
- **Create specific tools and resources**, such as guidebooks, to help families identify available resources.
- **Ensure accessibility** by publishing materials in different languages, modalities, and formats.
- **Visit classrooms** to share information in person
- **Organize reminders for routine school announcements**



Spotlight: A Community School's Efforts to Integrate Culturally Responsive Supports

One community school in Chicago, where there are more than 50 different home languages spoken, has prioritized cultivating a sense of belonging for its culturally diverse refugee and migrant community by building partnerships with local community-based organizations. At various points during the year, the school welcomes new refugee and migrant students, some of whom may not have participated in formal schooling prior to enrollment. Administrators, teachers, and staff are committed to ensuring holistic supports for students and families to ease the transition into both school and the community for students and their families.

A local community organization partners with the school to provide a variety of culturally responsive social services, serving as a **bridge** for building connections with this school population. For example, a part-time on-site clinician from this organization provides culturally responsive mental health services to a group of students. This organization's staff regularly partners with the school's community schools coordinator to organize events celebrating different cultures. The school has also developed relationships with additional local providers to offer language translation, organize family workshops, and additional social services.

To strengthen coordination and build awareness of student supports and expanded learning opportunities, partner organizations have school-based liaisons who participate in team meetings (e.g., the behavioral health team, the community school leadership team). The community schools coordinator has facilitated communication with community partners through regular check-ins with partner agency staff and compiled a guidebook that lists available community resources for students, families, and school staff.

3. Collect and use data to identify needs and assets, drive decision making, monitor effectiveness, and demonstrate the impact of programs and supports

Strategies

Create structures to support the **regular and frequent** collection and mapping of community needs and assets data.

Collaboratively review data in leadership teams and other groups (e.g., behavioral health teams) to identify emerging needs and **opportunities to add or deepen community partnerships.**

Action Steps

- **Establish frequent data collection cycles** by **distributing tasks** among individuals and teams.
- **Treat data collection as bite-sized and continual.** Create data collection processes that are feasible enough to conduct throughout the year.
- **Gather data from multiple perspectives**, such as students, school staff, administrators, and agencies.
- **Treat everyday conversations as meaningful data.** Coordinators can document feedback gathered from conversations with students, families, and staff.
- **Map out community assets, resources and needs, desired supports simultaneously** to better identify gaps and avoid duplication of efforts.

- Hold **regularly scheduled meetings** (e.g., quarterly) to review updated needs and assets data.
- **Check in with existing partners** to tailor and expand supports and services to respond to emerging needs and strengths.
- **Ensure that decision-making groups have access to needs and assets data** to inform both programmatic decisions and referrals to individual services/supports.

Repeat data collection activities and data-sharing cycles to improve, adjust, and guide data-driven supports and opportunities.

- **Review trends in afterschool program attendance and service participation** to help identify potential program quality or capacity issues and identify gaps in student and family participation.
- **Conduct program observations** using validated tools and **collect informal feedback** regularly from program staff and students.
- **Use leadership team meetings** to collaboratively review data and make informed decisions around expanding, refining, or discontinuing programs or strategies to improve or discontinue partnerships.

Note: When addressing challenges related to partner support or program quality, consult our [Strong Partnerships guide](#).

Build **schoolwide capacity and a positive culture** around data usage.

- **Offer and build time for professional development opportunities** for school staff to understand how to access and use student and community data for decision making.
- **Ensure relevant data access and training** for school and program partner staff.
- **Identify ways to creatively document, acknowledge, and celebrate** outcomes of programming and supports that highlight gathered data.

Note: Showing trends and patterns in student and family data can help build the case for new programs, confirm the success of existing programs or activities, improve or make changes to current programs, and challenge beliefs or assumptions about specific populations.

What are **common challenges** to coordinating integrated student supports and expanded learning? **How can they be addressed?**

Common Challenges	Possible Solutions
Expanded learning, which community school coordinators lead in Chicago, can be treated as disconnected work from schools' integrated student supports efforts	✓ Build understanding among school personnel about community school pillars, which delineates how the community school strategy is not limited to afterschool programs but also includes the implementation of integrated student supports ✓ Invite community school coordinator participation in relevant school meetings focused on integrated student supports (e.g., behavioral health team meetings). ✓ Partner agencies and school leaders should communicate to coordinators that their role goes beyond directing afterschool and includes leadership across community school pillars.
Community school collaborators faces issues in accessing student data that can help inform partnership.	✓ Ensure administrators show coordinators and relevant partner organization staff ways to access student data via portals, etc. ✓ District and schools should provide trainings to coordinators and partner staff on student data portal use and privacy protocols. ✓ Include coordinators in relevant cross-team school meetings (e.g., behavioral health team, student support team) so that they understand how student data informs decision making.
Community school collaborators may feel intimidated by data interpretation; they may also feel wary of how information will be used (e.g., compliance, evaluation).	✓ To build trust, engage in conversations with coordinators and community school collaborators about data collection purposes. Demonstrate how data is used to improve student experiences. ✓ Discuss student data with coordinators and staff in meetings (e.g., administrator–coordinator check-ins, community school leadership team meetings) to help them interpret findings. ✓ Identify learning opportunities that build coordinators' confidence and capacity to use data.
Students and families experience cultural and linguistic barriers in learning about and engaging in supports and opportunities.	✓ Leverage community school leadership teams to identify and build partnerships with local organizations that serve as cultural bridges and language interpreters for community outreach. ✓ Create written outreach materials in home languages. ✓ Advertise programming using descriptors that reduce stigma associated with services, such as those related to mental health, and explain the benefits of such programming.
Administrators and community school coordinators may have limited time or capacity to coordinate integrated student supports.	✓ Develop and leverage strong partnerships to expand the capacity of schools to address needs and facilitate access to supports. ✓ Involve family and students in communication and outreach. ✓ Identify additional school-based and community partner staff to support coordinating meetings and streamline efforts. ✓ Include community member(s) within leadership team who are knowledgeable about existing local resources and needs.
 Call to Action School administrators, coordinators, and current or potential partner organizations should review this practice guide individually and together.	✓ Schedule time during administrator–coordinator and leadership team meetings to discuss this guide: - What aspects of integrated student supports and expanded learning are we implementing well? - What aspects can we strengthen? ✓ Incorporate areas for improvement in your school's action plan. ✓ Prioritize simple steps that build on your strengths and address areas of growth.