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# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN WISCONSIN: GUIDEBOOK

A Resource for Starting and Improving Community Schools

**CCNETWORK**  
Comprehensive Center Network



REGION 10  
Wisconsin  
Minnesota

# ABOUT US

## REGION 10 COMPREHENSIVE CENTER (R10CC) FOR WISCONSIN-MINNESOTA

With deep roots in the region, R10CC is made up of three organizations: the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC), the University of Minnesota’s Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), and Education Analytics (EA). Our team has extensive experience working with the Wisconsin Department of Instruction (DPI), Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), regional education support organizations, professional associations, and school districts to translate research into practical applications.

## THE COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK

The U.S. Department of Education’s Comprehensive Centers Program is designed to provide high quality and intensive capacity-building services to help state education agencies and their clients identify, implement and sustain evidencebased practices to support education outcomes pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015.

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# ABOUT THE PROJECT

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# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

The Community Schools model is an evidence-based strategy that centers equity and shared decisionmaking, and enhances educational opportunities for students. The primary purpose of this guidebook is to support a learning community that promotes the growth, quality, and sustainability of Community Schools across Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Coalition for Community Schools (WI CCS), in partnership with the Region 10 Comprehensive Center (R10CC), Institute for Educational Leadership's Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS), National Education Association (NEA), and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), created the Community Schools in Wisconsin Guidebook: A Resource for Starting and Improving Community Schools to uplift the Community Schools model as a strategy for addressing equity, enhancing student and family well-being, and increasing positive student outcomes.

## **According to the Wisconsin Coalition for Community Schools:**

*A Wisconsin Community School is a neighborhood hub that brings together families, educators, and community partners. A Wisconsin Community School provides students, families, and community members with quality academics, enrichment, health and social resources to succeed in school and in life. Equity and social justice are at the core of Wisconsin's Community Schools.*

This document provides an overview of Community School models and supports, including: a list of the current districts implementing Community Schools in Wisconsin; information on how to connect with others who are doing this work across the state; a summary of Community Schools policy examples and opportunities; funding available for Community Schools; and tips on how to get started, or, for those already implementing the Community Schools model, to learn and improve.

This guidebook is intended for district and school leaders who are in earlier stages of Community Schools planning as well as those in implementation stages. In addition, advocates for Community Schools and policy can use this guidebook to get a better sense of the landscape of Community Schools in Wisconsin.



## GUIDEBOOK PARTNERS AND WAYS TO CONNECT

### Partners

#### Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS)

In 2016, Community School advocates from across Wisconsin attended the Institute for Educational Leadership’s Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS) forum in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During the forum, IEL organized state breakout sessions and people from across the state convened in a small room to share their vision for equitable education with Community Schools as a vehicle for transformation. That vision, which was grounded in collaborative learning and advocacy, was the start of the Wisconsin Coalition for Community Schools (WI CCS).

The WI CCS supports relationship-building and support for WI Community Schools leaders, including those at the planning and implementation stages, by promoting a community of practice that identifies key topics and shares best practices. The WI CCS also provides mutual support, knowledge exchanges, and advocacy through occasional site visits and regional convenings. It consists of multiple school districts and partner organizations throughout Wisconsin. Those who are interested in connecting with the WI CCS can go to the [IEL/CCS website](#).

#### Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is the home of the national Coalition for Community Schools (CCS), which acts as the intermediary between the Coalition’s national intermediaries and place-based networks. The IEL/CCS’s mission is to unite schools, families, and communities for all to feel they belong, work together, and thrive. The IEL/CCS focuses on preparing, supporting, and mobilizing leaders of all ages, stages, and contexts to create ecosystems of collaborative leadership and advance Community Schools as a key equity strategy for children, families, and communities. As an alliance, the IEL/CCS works to grow excellent and sustainable Community Schools, and is dedicated to advancing this mission through

a shared set of principles: build on community strengths, invest in trusting relationships, and commit to continuous improvement. More information can be found at the [IEL/CCS website](#).

#### National Education Association (NEA)

According to NEA, “No matter our race, background, or zip code, we all want our neighborhood public schools to inspire imagination, cultivate curiosity and critical thinking, and ensure our children can live fulfilling lives. Every child deserves the opportunity to achieve their dreams, and every neighborhood deserves a public school that opens the door to reach them.”

Consistent with the NEA core values that “public education is the gateway to opportunity,” and that “all students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character,” and recognizing that opportunity gaps in our society have resulted in an uneven and unjust public education system, NEA believes that all schools should use research-backed school improvement strategies designed to support a racially just education system that ensures all students and their families have the support needed to thrive and grow.

The Community Schools model has a strong track record of closing opportunity gaps, supporting culturally relevant and responsive climate, and causing significant and sustained school improvement. According to the NEA, “Every family deserves a strong public education system that serves the needs of their children. Community Schools are the blueprint of a healthy democracy — with the voices of students, parents, educators, administrators, and community members shaping them, supporting them, and improving them.” More information on how and why NEA supports Community Schools can be found on their [NEA Community Schools Website](#).



## Ways to Connect

### Community Schools in Wisconsin

- The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) [Community Schools Website](#) provides definitions, elements, an overview of literature, and resources related to Community Schools.
- A list of Community Schools in Wisconsin is provided in the Appendix.

### Organizations and Conferences

There are several ways for Community School partners, schools, and districts to connect both nationally and locally. The following list provides an overview of conferences and organizations that support Community Schools and foster learning and collaboration.

- Institute for Educational Leadership and the national Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS) [Community Schools Networks](#) and [Community Schools Technical Assistance](#).
- IEL/CCS hosts the largest national Community Schools and Family Engagement

conference annually. More information about this event can be found at the [IEL/CCS Community Schools website](#).

- The [National Center for Community Schools \(NCCS\)](#) has resources and events listed on its website.
- The National Education Association (NEA) has an [Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly](#) where multiple topics are covered.
- Other national organizations that support the Community Schools movement include:
  - [Journey for Justice Alliance](#)
  - [University of Pennsylvania, Netter Center for Community Partnerships, UniversityAssisted Community Schools](#)
  - [American Federation of Teachers \(AFT\)](#)
  - [Learning Policy Institute \(LPI\)](#)

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# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: WHAT AND WHY?



## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY SCHOOL?

According to IEL’s Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS), “The Community Schools model is a local engagement strategy that creates and coordinates opportunities with its public school to accelerate student success. It serves as a vehicle for hyper-local decision-making that responds to the unique needs of each community.” In addition, the U.S. Department of Education offers the following definition: “A fullservice Community School is a public elementary or secondary school that uses established partnerships between schools, families, and community organizations to provide well-rounded educational opportunities and meet the social, emotional, physical, and mental health, and academic needs of students.”

There are multiple models for implementing Community Schools, most of which work together and compliment each other. The primary Community Schools models that the WI Coalition for Community Schools utilizes are: (1) the four pillar model based on research from the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), (2) those promoted by the national Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS), which has ten standards (see the Starting a Community School section of this document and the chart below), and (3) the six pillar model developed by the National Education Association (NEA). Throughout this guide, we primarily reference the four pillar model for Community Schools developed by LPI. This four pillar model and the associated research for this model were used as a foundation for both the IEL/CCS ten standards and NEA six pillar models. The four pillars are (1) integrated student supports, (2) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, (3) active family and community engagement, and (4) collaborative leadership and practices.

### Pillar 1: Integrated Student Supports (ISS)

These integrated student supports or “wraparound services” involve partnering with social and health services as a means of addressing out-of-school barriers and developing the “whole child.” This “whole-child approach” recognizes that a student’s social and emotional development strongly correlates with their academic learning and performance. Examples of ISS include: health support such as medical, dental, and mental health; family support such as nutritional programs, housing assistance, childcare, parent education programs, and job training; and social support such as conflict resolution programs, trauma-informed care, restorative practices, and anti-bullying programs.

### Pillar 2: Expanded and Enriched Learning Opportunities

These include increased instruction in classrooms, after school programs, and partnering with community organizations to provide outside-of-school activities. These can include after school activities and summer programming that are located both in school facilities and other communal/public spaces. Programs are based on the needs of the community and can include examining topics of environmental justice, career goals, and job prospects (i.e., job shadowing), and racial and social justice. Expanded and enriched learning includes school day activities such as service learning, STEM programs, and community arts projects. These activities typically follow the same model of partnering with community organizations.

### Pillar 3: Active Family and Community Engagement

This pillar involves the school acting as a “neighborhood hub,” providing educational opportunities not only to students, but also to adults and other family members. By helping and promoting interaction among families, school personnel, and the broader community, parents feel more welcome, supported, and valued, and ultimately feel and become more involved in their child’s education. It is essential that school communities prioritize meaningful and ongoing engagement with families and community members. PTA meetings, home visits, conducting parent focus groups, actively inviting parents to school meetings (including the development of school improvement plans), job fairs, community story sharing, parenting support, and adult language courses are all examples of active family and community engagement.

### Pillar 4: Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership emphasizes governance structures and processes that foster shared commitment to achieving school improvement goals, broad participation and collaboration in decision-making, and shared accountability for student learning outcomes. Considered the “glue” that reinforces all the pillars, it attempts to mobilize all stakeholders, creating a shared vision that results in a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility. Already common in many schools between teaching faculty, it means expanding and linking participation to the larger community including students, families, and community members. Examples include professional learning communities, site-based teams who work to improve school policy and classroom teaching, and school governance and program planning (including having community members help with assessing school needs and improvement).

## Table 1: Crosswalk of Community Schools Models

Includes The Four Pillars (LPI), Ten Standards (IEL/CCS), and Six Pillar (NEA)

LPI	NEA	IEL/CSS
Pillar 1: Integrated student supports	Community support services Positive behavior practices	Coordinating infrastructure Integrated health and social supports
Pillar 2: Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities	Strong and proven culturally relevant curriculum High-quality teaching and learning	Powerful learning Student-centered data
Pillar 3: Active family and community engagement	Family and community partnerships	Authentic family engagement Authentic community engagement
Pillar 4: Collaborative leadership and practices	Inclusive leadership	Collaborative leadership Planning Continuous improvement Sustainability

## NEA Six Pillar Model for Community Schools

The other model for Community Schools that is widely used in Wisconsin is NEA’s six pillar model for Community Schools. These six pillars are:

1. Strong and proven culturally relevant curriculum
2. High-quality teaching and learning
3. Inclusive leadership
4. Positive behavior practices (including restorative justice)
5. Family and community partnerships, and
6. Coordinated and integrated wraparound supports (community support services).

The four pillar model for Community Schools, the ten standards (used by the Coalition for Community Schools), and the six pillar model (developed by NEA) are aligned in many ways, as outlined in the crosswalk between the models.

## Resources

- **Video:** [What is a Community School?](#)
- **Infographic:** [What the Four Pillars of Community Schools Look Like in Action](#)
- **Guide:** [Community Schools Playbook developed by the Partnership for the Future of Learning](#)
- **Website:** [National Education Association \(NEA\) Community Schools Website](#)
- **Guide:** [The Six Pillars Of Community Schools Toolkit: NEA Resource Guide for Educators, Families & Communities](#)
- **Website:** [WI Department of Public Instruction Community Schools Overview](#)
- **Guide:** [IEL/CCS Community School Standards](#)
- [Essential Resources for Driving Community Schools Forward](#)

## WHY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS?: AN EVIDENCE-BASED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EQUITY STRATEGY

The Community Schools model is an evidence-based school improvement strategy, and there are multiple studies that point to the efficacy of the four pillars of Community Schools and their associated activities. In this section, we provide some key evidence sources that emphasize the importance of the four pillars working together, Community Schools as an equity strategy, and the connection between Community Schools and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In addition, the Wisconsin Department of Instruction (DPI) has also identified Community Schools as an evidence-based school improvement strategy.

One source that highlights the importance of all four pillars working together, especially as they relate to Community Schools as an evidence-based equity strategy, is [Community Schools as an Equitable School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence](#) from The Learning Policy Institute (LPI). According to LPI,

“Strong implementation requires attention to all pillars of the Community Schools model and to the full integration of those components into the core life of the school.” LPI also explains the alignment between Community Schools and ESSA: “Sufficient evidence exists to qualify the Community Schools approach as meeting ESSA’s criteria for evidence-based interventions.” In addition, within LPI’s resource, there is a link to the [Research Compendium](#) with a listing of research studies relevant to the Community Schools model and the ESSA tiers of evidence. For more information about ESSA and tiers of evidence for school improvement strategies, see [ESSA Tiers of Evidence: What You Need to Know](#), which was developed by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest.

Further, as emphasized in the [Community Schools Playbook](#), when implemented with fidelity, the four pillars of Community Schools work as an equity strategy: “Community Schools can address systemic barriers that limit opportunities for students and families—often based on race and class—ensuring fair access to the supports that will prepare students for future success.” The playbook also emphasizes that Community Schools qualify as an evidence-based approach to improving chronically low-performing schools under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

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**VOICES OF PARTNERS:  
SUCCESS STORIES  
OF WISCONSIN  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**



# VOICES OF PARTNERS: SUCCESS STORIES OF WISCONSIN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

This section provides the opportunity to see how Wisconsin Community Schools are putting the four pillars in action. It provides stories and examples from Wisconsin Community Schools and partners, links to Wisconsin Community Schools’ websites, and news stories and videos. These stories highlight the many ways current Wisconsin Community Schools are transforming schools, from ensuring safety for students traveling to and from school to increasing students’ and families’ access to meaningful resources.

## Pillar 1: Integrated Student Supports

Through the Link and Inspire for Tomorrow (LIFT) Community School partnership in Racine, WI, United Way of Racine County, Racine Unified School District, and Children’s Wisconsin have integrated school-based mental health clinics (SBMHC) into the district’s three Community Schools. Each SBMHC is staffed by a clinical therapist whose caseload consists of students who attend that Community School

Community Schools in Madison Metropolitan School District have implemented student supports such as walking school buses, food pantries, supply closets, and parent affinity groups. In addition, Madison holds school-wide restorative justice trainings, as well as attendance teams, to support families with struggling attendance and full-time mental health therapists to support at each school.

## Pillar 2: Extended and Enriched Learning Opportunities

At Westside Elementary in Sun Prairie, “Kids Achieve Together” is an afterschool program where tutors and mentors engage students in creative and enriched learning. Similarly, in Madison Metropolitan School District, each of the four Community Schools has a combination of afterschool programs on different foci including STEM, homework clubs, Disney Musical, Black Girl Magic, First Tee Golf, yoga, mentoring, and social emotional wellness.

## Pillar 3: Active Family and Community Engagement

In Green Bay, as part of Howe Elementary Community School’s needs assessment, surveys were given to families and students. Families most wanted to see an increase in field trips being offered to their students as families viewed them as the best way to be actively involved at the school. Taking this into consideration, Howe has added a goal into their school success plan to increase the field trip offerings and use the field trips as a chance to provide structured volunteering opportunities to families as a first step to becoming more comfortable with the school.

In Racine, prior to a school becoming a Community School, students, families, staff, and community members participated in “community conversations.” These kitchen table-style conversations gave participants the opportunity to share their aspirations, perceived barriers, and proposed solutions. This information was then used to prioritize work in the Community School partnership and to identify quick wins along with long-term goals.



## Pillar 4: Collaborative Leadership and Practice

In 2020-21, 52 volunteers served on one of the five Community School Site Leadership Teams in Sun Prairie. These volunteers represented school staff, parents/ grandparents, students, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, civic organizations, alderpersons, and school board members. Cooperation is further seen in Community School Site Coordinators being active members of the school's leadership team (Guiding Coalition) and the school's Equity Teams and eight volunteers representing nonprofits, civic organizations, local business, City Council, Board of Education, and district administration serving on the city-wide Exec Team supporting and guiding Community Schools.

Howe Elementary Community School in Green Bay has weekly resource meetings between school administrators, school social worker role, Community Schools resource coordinator role and lead community partner agencies. These meetings are used to coordinate around rising school needs. Once a month, a wider school team (including teacher reps and after-school program director) meet to discuss the goals of their Community School and how they are working together towards them. They are building towards the creation of an oversight committee which they hope will have participation from non-profit and school district leaders as well as community agencies.

## Wisconsin School District Community School Websites\*

- [Appleton Area School District Community Schools](#)
- [Madison Metropolitan School District Community Schools](#)
- [Milwaukee Community Schools Partnership](#)
- [Racine Unified School District Community Schools](#)
- [School District of La Crosse Community Schools](#)
- [Sun Prairie Area School District Community Schools](#)

\*For those districts with specific Community Schools website

## Wisconsin Community Schools: Videos and News

- **Green Bay Area Public School District:**  
[Here's how a Green Bay school and resource center are improving student success, connecting families](#)
- [Brown County United Way gives new books to Howe Community School students](#)
- **Madison Metropolitan School District:**  
[Newly-renovated tunnel makes it safer for kids to walk to school](#)
- [Lake View Elementary class for whole family aims to stop bullying](#)
- **Milwaukee Public Schools:**  
[Milwaukee Community Schools Partnership](#)
- ['Walking School Bus' Inspires \\$75,000 Grant to Improve Traffic Infrastructure](#)
- [Milwaukee Community Schools Walking School Bus](#)
- **Racine Unified School District:**  
[LIFT Community Schools](#)
- **School District of La Crosse:**  
[Construction Begins on Hamilton Community School Expansion](#)
- [Gundersen clinic at Hamilton Early Learning Center Opens](#)
- **Sun Prairie Area School District:**  
[Westside Elementary competing for World's Best Schools Prize](#)
- [Federal Lunch Waivers to Expire and Community Schools](#)

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# POLICY AND FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



# POLICY AND FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Sustainability is essential when considering Community Schools as a school transformation strategy and can be approached in a variety of ways. One way school districts and states have worked to ensure Community Schools are supported long-term is by creating policies that lift up and support Community Schools. Below are some examples of local and statewide policies, as well as funding resources.

## Community Schools Policy and Funding Resources

- [NEA’s Community Schools Task Force Report & Policy Statement](#)
- [Wisconsin Policy Forum Report: Community Schools Come to Wisconsin](#)
- [LPI’s Investing in Community Schools: How States and Districts Can Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically](#)
- [Financing Community Schools: A Framework for Growth and Stability](#)
- [Full-Service Community Grant](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions: Using American Rescue Plan Funding to Support Full-Service Community Schools & Related Strategies](#)

## Federal Policy and Funding

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), a full-service Community School is defined as a public elementary or secondary school that: “ (a) Participates in a community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health, and other comprehensive services through community-based organizations and public and private partnerships; and (b) provides access to such services in school to students, families, and the community, such as access during the school year (including before- and after-school hours and weekends), as well as during the summer.” The most recent reauthorization of ESEA, called the Every Student Succeeds Act (or ESSA), required states to submit a plan for school improvement for identified schools. Wisconsin is one of a number of states that included Community Schools in its state ESSA plan as an example of an evidence-based strategy for school improvement.

Federal allocation to the Department of Education’s [Full-Service Community School Grant](#) has been steadily increasing over the last few years. The amount for the 2022 fiscal year was \$75 million, up from \$10 million in 2015. In Wisconsin, both Milwaukee Community Schools Partnership and United Way of Racine County (in support of Racine Unified School District) have received this competitive grant in recent years.

On the federal level, there are two ESEA title programs with the last authorization of ESSA that have provided language to support Community Schools, as well as funding. This includes Title I, Part A, which requires that states set aside 7% of Title I funds for school improvement in identified schools using evidencebased strategies for comprehensive or targeted support. Because Community Schools qualify as an evidencebased strategy, these Title I funds can be used to support development of Community Schools. In addition, Title IV authorizes funding to support [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) (or CLCs) and Full-Service Community Schools. The CLC grant program supports expanded learning time and mentions the role of a coordinator as an allowable use of funds, while the FullService Community Schools program is a competitive grant process open to districts.

## State and Local Policy and Funding

Some state legislatures have adopted policies that focus on or support Community School strategies. Currently in Wisconsin, there is general state support for Community Schools but there is no policy in place specific to Community Schools. Some examples of Community School policies in other states include policies from [Maryland](#) and [Hawaii](#). Grant programs are another potential area for states to specifically support Community Schools. Some states have state grant programs targeting Community Schools, such as in Minnesota, where the Full Service Community Schools program passed in 2015 provides \$150,000 in funding to eligible schools to plan, implement, and improve comprehensive Community Schools.

A potential area where state policy in Wisconsin could support Community Schools is through further clarifying the appropriate use of [Fund 80](#). The primary function of Fund 80 (or “Community Service and Program Funds”) is to support programs serving the community, outside of specific elementary or secondary education school day programming. School districts have expressed a need for the state to explicitly allow Fund 80 to cover the costs of Community School Coordinators.

Although Wisconsin does not currently have a statewide policy for Community Schools, many counties, cities, and school districts have expressed interest in adopting policies that support Community Schools. One example of a local Community School policy is the [Milwaukee School Board Policy](#) on Community Schools. The Community Schools Playbook (the Partnership for the Future of Learning) provides a [Model Legislation City or County Resolution](#). An additional national Community Schools policy example is the [Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners Community Schools Strategy](#).

According to the Learning Policy Institute (LPI):

*Community Schools provide a wide range of well-coordinated supports and services for young people and their families in a trusting and collaborative setting. This approach qualifies as an evidence-based intervention for schools identified as needing support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Research shows that Community Schools contribute to student and school outcomes ranging from improvements in student attitudes and attendance to achievement and attainment, yielding up to \$15 in social benefits for every dollar invested. (2021)*

Local funding can come from a number of sources, including:

- Using Federal Funds for Community Schools
- Combining Funding Streams for Sustainability
- State Support for Community Schools
- Leveraging other funding sources
- Partnerships like United Way, YWCA, etc.
- Example: Leveraging [21st Century Learning Community Centers](#) funds and program as part of a Community Schools model

05

# HOW TO START OR IMPROVE A COMMUNITY SCHOOL



## HOW TO START OR IMPROVE A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

This section is designed for schools that are interested in or actively engaged in the work of Community Schools. It can help schools that are interested in adhering to the four pillars of Community Schools but need assistance with an implementation plan to put the pillars and associated standards into action, or it can be used for reflection and improvement for those already implementing the Community Schools model. Community Schools are intended to support schools, families, and communities. They are not programs, per se, because the way that Community Schools are implemented varies across multiple contexts. Strong implementation of the Community Schools model requires attention to all pillars of the model and to the full integration of those components into the core life of the school.

The Institute for Educational Leadership’s Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS) Community School Standards and National Education Association (NEA) Benchmarks for implementation of the Community School mechanisms and pillars form the foundation for how to start a successful Community School. They both were derived from and informed by the same body of research from the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) that identified the four pillars of Community Schools (mentioned in the What is a Community School section of this guide). This research states, “...our comprehensive review of Community Schools research identified common features that are found in different types of Community Schools” (p. 13). The common features that LPI identified provided the foundation for the four pillars necessary to support effective conditions and practices for Community Schools. Both the Community Schools Standards (IEL/CCS) and NEA Benchmarks were designed to clearly identify these “common features” based on the pillars, ensuring an aligned systems approach which “supports effective conditions and practice.”

The IEL Community Schools Standards have three objectives:

1. To help new Community Schools more effectively develop and implement their Community School plans;
2. To assist existing Community Schools to strengthen the quality of their practice and document outcomes; and
3. To provide a consistent language and framework for advocacy, technical assistance, research, funding, and policy efforts.

## The 10 Community School Standards (IEL/CCS)

### Part 1: Community Schools Structures and Functions

1. Collaborative Leadership: Nurtures shared ownership and shared accountability.
2. Planning: Incorporates the assets and needs of school, family, and community in the School Improvement Plan.
3. Coordinating Infrastructure: Facilitates coordination of school and community resources.
4. Student-centered data: Guides opportunities and support to individual students.
5. Continuous Improvement: Deepens the impact of the Community School.
6. Sustainability: Ensures ongoing operations of the Community School.

### Part 2: Common Opportunities in a Community School

7. Powerful Learning: Engages students as independent learners.
8. Integrated Health and Social Supports: Addressing barriers to learning.
9. Authentic Family Engagement: Embraces families and mobilizes family assets.
10. Authentic Community Engagement: Gathers and galvanizes community and neighborhoods resources.

Standards one through five contain information about getting started, planning, and beginning to implement Community School standards and strategies. Standards six through nine move beyond getting started and move more into sustainability. The Start a Community School webpage by the Coalition for Community Schools (IEL/CCS) is a helpful resource with overviews of how to get started, the Community School Standards, information on financing Community Schools, and additional resources.

Prior to engaging in the standards, step zero is to get commitment from the stakeholders involved in supporting the Community School. Throughout the first year of starting a Community School, an implementation team is formed to lead the development of a unified mission, vision, and values. During the beginning stages, the focus should be on shared ownership and accountability. This is the mindset that shapes everything else and what leads to school transformation. The NEA Benchmarks serve as the content for the NEA Community School Institute, a national network of schools supported through monthly convenings and coaching.

## NEA Implementation Mechanisms

According to NEA, organizations agree on four major implementation mechanisms to support successful Community Schools. These are:

1. **Community School Coordinator (CSC):**  
Every Community School should have a Community School Coordinator who plays a leadership role at the school, is a member of the school leadership team, and works fulltime at one school.
2. **Needs and Assets Assessment:**  
The foundation for the Community Schools model is a school and community-based needs and assets assessment. The needs and assets assessment, facilitated by the CSC, is an inclusive process in which families, students, community members, partners, teachers, ESP, administrators, and other school staff define their needs and assets. Problemsolving teams are established based on the priorities determined in the needs and assets assessment.

3. **Stakeholder Problem-solving Teams:**  
Every Community School should have teams of school staff, families, students, and community members dedicated to solving problems that are identified in the needs and assets assessment. The solutions identified by the stakeholder problem-solving teams change the way things are done in and outside of school hours and, at times, involve partnerships with outside organizations and individuals.
4. **Community School Stakeholder and Partner Coordination:**  
All successful Community Schools coordinate between school staff, partners (organizations, businesses, town and city service providers), and stakeholders to ensure goals are achieved and obstacles are surmounted. The coordination includes families, community partners, school staff, students, and other stakeholders from the school's various constituencies. They work in collaboration with the school leadership team and support coordination across the school and community.

As schools, districts, and partners engage in starting a Community School, there are several best practices to lay the foundation for a successful Community School. The chart below provides an overview of elements for planning and starting a Community School, including resources and templates to support visioning, engagement, and implementation.

## Community Schools Forward Taskforce’s Essential Resources for Driving Community Schools Forward

In January 2023, the Community Schools Forward task force, convened by four national partners — the Center for Universal Education at Brookings, the Children’s Aid National Center for Community Schools, the Institute for Educational Leadership’s Coalition for Community Schools, and the Learning Policy Institute—brought together national and local

Community School practitioners and advocates to identify and create multiple resources to support the implementation of Community Schools. These Essential Resources for Driving Community Schools Forward include a webinar overview, Theory of Action for Community School Transformation, Community Schools Forward Framework (which includes the four pillars of Community Schools), Technical Assistance Needs Assessment, Community Schools Costing Tool, Stages of Development Tool, and Outcomes and Indicators for Community Schools: A Guide for Implementers and Evaluators.





**Table 2: Year 1 Elements for Community Schools: Visioning, Engagement, and Setting Priorities**

Community Schools

Standard (IEL/CCS)	NEA Benchmark	Suggestions for Implementation
1. Collaborative Leadership: Nurtures shared ownership and shared accountability	Grounding in Community School Best Practices Mapping Your School Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a core team (typically led by the community School Coordinator).</li> <li>• Develop a collective understanding of Community Schools in your context.</li> <li>• Learn about the history of Community Schools and the modern Community School space.</li> <li>• Learn about best practice pillars and mechanisms and principles of transformational Community Schools.</li> <li>• Learn about the mapping and the Needs and Asset processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource:</b> <a href="#">Community Schools Toolkit</a> (Center for Popular Democracy and New York City Coalition for Educational Justice)</p>
2. Planning: Incorporates the assets and needs of school, family, and community in the school improvement plan	Deep Engagement & Shared Visioning – Executing the Needs & Assets Assessment Setting & Sharing Priorities; and Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-develop an engagement plan in order to meet 75% engagement in each stakeholder group.</li> <li>• Develop your Needs and Asset questions, timeline, and plan.</li> <li>• Conduct a Needs and Asset process over a 3–6 month period.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource:</b> <a href="#">Strong Collaborative Relationships for Strong Community Schools</a> (National Education Policy Center)</p>
3. Coordinating Infrastructure: Facilitates coordination of school and community resources	Identify and launch a small team to work on improving a priority area for the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move from Needs and Assets Assessment to a common vision and improvement strategy.</li> <li>• Use your findings report or data in a causal analysis cycle (e.g., fishbone or root cause analysis).</li> <li>• Create problem statement(s).</li> </ul>
4. Student-centered Data: Guides opportunities and support to individual students	Investigate a priority area to better understand problems and their causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using causal analysis/fishbone, identify key areas for improvement, and create a strategy visually represented in a driver diagram*.</li> </ul>
5. Continuous Improvement: Deepens the impact of the Community School	Set an aim to focus your improvement journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify at least one measure to provide timely feedback on progress.</li> <li>• Run Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA**) learning cycles to test and reflect upon change ideas.</li> <li>• Craft AIM statements.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">WI DPI Continuous Improvement Process Criteria and Rubric</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Transforming Educational Systems Toward Continuous Improvement</a> (Carnegie Foundation)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Plan-Do-Study-Act Templates</a></li> </ul>

\*A driver diagram visually represents a group’s working theory of practice improvement. It creates a common language and coordinates efforts among many different individuals joined together in solving a shared problem.

\*\*A PDSA cycle is the basic method of inquiry in improvement research. It’s a pragmatic scientific method for iterative testing of changes in complex systems. Each cycle (Plan-Do-Study-Act) is a mini-experiment in which observed outcomes are compared to predictions. Discrepancies between predictions and observed outcomes become a source of learning.

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# APPENDIX



# APPENDIX

## Community Schools in Wisconsin 2023

School District	School Name
Appleton Area School District	Jefferson Elementary School and Fox River Academy
Appleton Area School District	Ronald C. Dunlap Elementary School
Green Bay Area Public Schools	Aldo Leopold Community School
Green Bay Area Public Schools	Howe Elementary Community School
Madison Metropolitan School District	Hawthorne Elementary School
Madison Metropolitan School District	Lake View Elementary School
Madison Metropolitan School District	Leopold Elementary School
Madison Metropolitan School District	Mendota Elementary School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Alexander Mitchell Integrated Arts School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Auer Avenue Elementary School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Bradley Technology and Trade High School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Browning Elementary School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Grantosa Drive Elementary School
Milwaukee Public Schools	H.W. Longfellow Elementary School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Hopkins Lloyd Community School
Milwaukee Public Schools	James Madison Academic Campus
Milwaukee Public Schools	Lincoln Avenue Elementary School
Milwaukee Public Schools	North Divison High School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Oliver Wendell Holmes School

# APPENDIX

## Community Schools in Wisconsin 2023

School District	School Name
Milwaukee Public Schools	South Division High School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Washington High School of Information Technology
Milwaukee Public Schools	Westside Academy Community School
Milwaukee Public Schools	Zablocki Elementary School
Oshkosh Area School District	Oshkosh North High School
Racine Unified School District	Julian Thomas Elementary School
Racine Unified School District	Knapp Elementary School
Racine Unified School District	Mitchell K-8 School
School District of La Crosse	Hamilton Elementary School
School District of La Crosse	Northside Elementary School
Sun Prairie Area School District	CH Bird Elementary School
Sun Prairie Area School District	Creekside Elementary School
Sun Prairie Area School District	Northside Elementary School
Sun Prairie Area School District	Patrick Marsh Middle School
Sun Prairie Area School District	Prairie Phoenix Academy
Sun Prairie Area School District	Westside Elementary School

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