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A Union of Professionals

Is My School a Community School?
A Checklist for Teachers and School Staff

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OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

This checklist outlines the essential components of a community school. It is important to note that not all community schools will have all of these elements from the beginning! Building a community school is a process that requires patience, trust and collaborative partnerships among teachers, school staff, students, families, community partners, and administrators.

The purpose of this checklist is to help you conduct an inventory of what your school has set in place and what may need to be addressed based on your school community needs assessment. If your school isn't a community school yet, this inventory will help you identify areas you need to develop.

Once completed, share and discuss the findings with your community school resource coordinator (if one exists), colleagues and school administration.

Scoring Key

Circle the symbol that best describes the extent to which your school meets each area or component.

○ **Not at all**
◐ **Minimally**
⊖ **Partially**
◕ **Mostly**
● **Completely**

Structure: School-Site Level Community School Strategy

My school has a community school site coordinator who:

Facilitates communications among the principal, school staff and community partners through a site-level advisory team ○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ●	Recruits and coordinates individuals and community organizations willing to offer programs/services ○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ●
Works with the building union representative/steward to ensure open communication with all teachers and school staff ○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ●	Recruits community partners to support/enhance student academics and the whole child in collaboration with teachers and school staff ○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ●
Maintains a list of community partners and shares it with students, families, teachers and school staff ○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ●	Participates in a variety of school teams (e.g., instructional leadership team, student attendance team, wellness council, etc.) ○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ●

○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ● My school has a collaborative school-site advisory team that contributes to planning and implementation.

○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ● My school's collaborative school-site advisory team includes the principal, teachers and school staff, school health and mental health professionals, parents, students and community partners.

○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ● My school convenes school leaders and staff to assess results.

○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ● My school convenes families and community members to monitor, revise, and prioritize action steps and needs.

What We Have	What We Need

Partners: Academic & Nonacademic

My school has a lead partner that:

Supports the goals, mission and vision of the school	Coordinates a variety of resources, from funding to programming
○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ●	○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ●
Participates in the decision-making process	Works closely with the site coordinator to ensure that students' needs are being met academically, socially, mentally, and behaviorially
○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ●	○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ●

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school has a variety of public and private partners that work toward our mission and objectives. Examples include:

Nonprofit Organizations	Faith-based organizations
Unions	Philanthropies
Businesses	Universities and colleges
Public agencies	Community-based organizations
Local government	Hospitals and managed care organizations

○ ◑ ⊖ ◕ ● My school provides services and programs that are co-ordinated and results-focused for our students and their families and communities. Examples include:
(this is not an exhaustive list and should be based on your needs assessments.)

Adult education/GED/literacy courses for parents and families/ job training	Parenting education for teen parents and pregnant teens
Health education for all students	Healthcare (e.g., vision, school-based health center or mobile clinic)
Early care and education/ prekindergarten and child care/ Early Head Start and Head Start	Career and technical education
Substance abuse prevention	Violence prevention/ trauma services
Mental health services for homeless students, other students in need, and families	Family centers
Mobility/housing/ homelessness assistance	Insurance enrollment assistance

What We Have	What We Need

Instruction & Programming

○ ◑ ◑ ◑ ● My school offers expanded learning opportunities and out-of-school-time programming. Examples include:

After-school and enrichment programs	Summer and weekend programs
Project-based learning	Field trips
Mentoring initiatives	Service learning opportunities

○ ◑ ◑ ◑ ● My school has highly qualified and experienced teachers and paraprofessionals who are supported through relevant professional development.

○ ◑ ◑ ◑ ● My school provides scheduled time and resources for teachers and paraprofessionals to understand and respond to their students' social and emotional needs—developmentally, cognitively and physically.

○ ◑ ◑ ◑ ● My school makes engaging, high-quality academic programs available and a priority.

○ ◑ ◑ ◑ ● My school ensures that after-school programs have a curriculum with content that is connected to the school learning objectives.

○ ◑ ◑ ◑ ● My school has after-school staff who reinforce school-day skills and learning through engaging academic and recreational activities.

○ ◑ ◑ ◑ ● My school considers the cultural and social backgrounds of all students when planning for instruction.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● Students are given opportunities to self-reflect and explore important community/world issues through service and project based learning.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school ensures students are made aware of their school-day and out-of-school-time progress.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school provides/receives an assessment for after-school program effectiveness from students, families and staff.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● Teachers and school staff communicate with after-school program staff about learning goals and expectations.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school has a dedicated staff member, this may be the site coordinator, who assists with school and after-school staff communication and maintains data on effectiveness.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school communicates with students and parents about after-school, weekend and summer enrichment programs.

What We Have	What We Need

School Culture & Climate

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school has a strong culture of trust among school administrators, teachers, school staff, families and the community.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school environment promotes transparent communications, interactions and relationship building among staff, parents, students and the community.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school implements a strong vision and mission statement that reflect the school's values.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school promotes values, ethical behavior and character building.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school has a college, career and/or service focus.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school meets the needs of young peoples' developmental, physical, mental and emotional health.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school is safe, welcoming and conducive to teaching and learning.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem for students and staff.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school acknowledges and addresses bullying among students and staff.

○ ◐ ◓ ◑ ● My school welcomes and promotes diversity (i.e. ethnicity, disability status, nativity/documentation origin, language proficiency, race, gender identity, religion, age, etc.)

What We Have	What We Need

Family Engagement

- Our teachers and school staff utilize and share Colorin Colorado with families. www.colorincolorado.org/teaching-english-language-learners

- Our school is implementing the Parent Teacher Home Visit relationship building model. www.pthvp.org

- Our school has a community-based Family Resource Centers (FRCs). www.sedl.org/pubs/framework/FE-Cap-Building.pdf

- Our school has a "Lending Library," which is a collection of books and games for families to borrow and engage in together. www.knoxschools.org/Page/2059

- Our school hosts Family Fun Night, which is a way to engage parents and make learning about their child's curriculum fun. Parents are more likely to show up when it was fun. www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network-of-educators/member-insights/why-and-how-do-you-link-family-engagement-practices-to-learning

- Our school uses TIPS Interactive Homework, which connects parents to student work which increased positive feelings around homework as well as family engagement. www.cde.state.co.us/uip/tips_interactive_homework

- Our school has a school-based Family-Community Outreach Coordinator, that helps build relationships between parents and between parents and teachers; builds the capacity of parents to support their children's learning, and helps create a more welcoming school environment for families. www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib07/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/187/guide_14_english_for_web_0.pdf

○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ● Parents regularly participate on our School Site Leadership Team and/or participate in school governance and decision making. www.adi.org/journal/ss03/Mapp%2035-64.pdf

○ ◐ ◑ ◕ ● Our school conducts "user friendly" parent-teacher conferences by making them accessible through technology such as Skype to meet, having the conferences be student-led, and discussing students' social-emotional skills. https://www.nais.org/learn/independent-ideas/october-2016/how-schools-are-modernizing-the-parent-teacher-con/

What We Have	What We Need

Health & Wellness

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school provides highly qualified and experienced health professionals/partners to students, families, and staff.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school provides time and resources for staff to seek and manage their own health and wellness.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school routinely examines the role of health, well-being and development in school climate and student performance.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school has a collaborative health and wellness advisory group composed of students, families, health professionals, cafeteria staff, custodians, teachers, para-professionals and administrators, which plans, develops, implements, monitors and evaluates opportunities to better assure health equity and well-being for all.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school's advisory group aligns initiatives with federal requirements, such as the district's Local School Wellness Policy and best practices, such as the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model and farm-to-school strategies.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school nutrition service provides meals that meet or exceed federal nutrition standards.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school offers free, clean and safe drinking water to all students throughout the school day.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school coordinates daily vigorous physical activity and play for all students.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school offers formal, structured health education for all students on a variety of topics to build health literacy, healthy behaviors and health equity.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school adopts a trauma-informed, restorative justice approach for both students, staff and families helping to heal from past adversity, prevent harm and repair relationships when new challenges arise.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school's policies, programs and culture lay a supportive foundation for staff to manage their time, stress, workload and overall well-being.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school building promotes safety by minimizing exposure to toxins and threats and by maximizing the conditions for learning, such as optimal lighting, temperature, noise and ventilation.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school coordinates comprehensive student health services for early identification, diagnosis and intervention for challenges to learning and healthy development.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school facilitates meaningful data-sharing among staff and partners to support informed decision-making and health service coordination.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school's approach to paid school meals (if relevant) does not punish students when account balances are past due.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school leverages different financing strategies, including insurance reimbursement, to sustain equitable access to health services.

○ ◔ ◑ ◕ ● My school differentiates health and wellness efforts, with attention to factors that impact health equity such as age, developmental stage, ability, language skills, gender, sexuality, religion, race, ethnicity, documentation status, insurance status and family income.

What We Have	What We Need

Additional Resources

American Federation of Teachers, "What Is a Community School?," www.aft.org/sites/default/files/commschools_1014.pdf.

ASCD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child," www.ascd.org/programs/learning-and-health/wscc-model.aspx

Coalition for Community Schools, "Community Schools: A Results-Based Logic Model," www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/RMLM.pdf.

Coalition for Community Schools, "Community Schools: Promoting Student Success," www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CS_Results_Framework.pdf.

Coalition for Community Schools, "Your Leadership Role: A Collaborative Leadership Structure for Community Schools," www.communityschools.org/leadership/default.aspx.

National Center for Community Schools, "Community School Climate Self-Assessment Tool," www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/L6_Chu-Zhu_Community%20School%20Climate%20Self-Assessment%20Tool.pdf.