Columbus High School Community School Implementation Plan, 2024-2025

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School Overview and Description

Columbus is a model continuation high school serving 492 students (2022-23) grades 11-12. Columbus serves a largely low-income (80% of households eligible for Free and Reduced Meals) community that is majority Hispanic/Latino (90%) but has concentrations of African Americans (5%) and White (4%) students. Approximately 18% of students are Multilingual Learners (MLs) and a high percentage (29%) are in Special Education. In the recent past, Columbus served about 4-6 foster youth and 10-15 McKinney-Vento (housing insecure- not meeting the physical, emotional, and physiological need) students annually. However, since January 2024 Columbus has identified 39 McKinney- Vento Students.

Strategy 1: Shared Understanding and Commitment

The mission of Columbus is to provide a safe and positive learning environment that embraces a multiethnic and multicultural educational program directed toward its students' diverse and changing needs. Columbus offers quality and flexible programming that enables students, all of whom are at-promise youth, to overcome challenges and graduate college career-ready, as globally competitive, citizens of strong character.

Columbus is at the Engaging stage of this process. We are devoted to meeting our students' academic and socio-emotional needs while cultivating a growth mindset. We view Community Schools as a powerful way for us to augment and extend our existing mission of innovatively addressing the needs of at-promise youth. The Community Schools Framework is an excellent expression of the whole child and integrated support at the heart of our educational philosophy. We strive to meet students (and their families) where they are, and then help co-design a pathway tailored to meet the unique educational, personal, and college/vocational goals of each student.

At Columbus, we understand all of our at-promise students have experienced hardships or barriers to their academic success, which has led them to be placed in an alternative setting. We recognize that for our at-promise students to succeed we need to strive to address all of their needs. The Community School Framework will enable Columbus to meet the needs of our most vulnerable populations that are experiencing food and housing insecurity, lack of access to health care, complex trauma, undocumented status, addiction, sexual exploitation, and other significant challenges.

Consequently, the Community Schools Framework will support us in adapting and applying trauma-informed approaches to the way we operate and deliver services from a whole-child lens. Moreover, the CSF will allow us to develop a more comprehensive infrastructure to increase equitable access to mental health supports and strengthen psychoeducational approaches that address grief, anger, and anxiety to help students function more effectively in school, the home, and the community. With the CSF, we will be able to help our most vulnerable youth find their voice and avenues of expression that help them define what success means to them, and shape their journey of healing, recovery, and goal achievement. Advancing equity is at the heart of what we do at Columbus, and we are reassured knowing that Community Schools are grounded in this foundational commitment as well.

Strategy 2: Setting Goals and Taking Action (Asset Mapping and Needs Assessment)

Columbus was an active participant in a series of five Community Schools planning meetings for all the schools in South Downey (Fall 2022 and Winter 2023). Bringing together a core group of approximately 40 people comprised of parents, community-based organizations, teachers, counselors, site administrators, and district leaders, these meetings in Sussman Middle School's campus Library provided a forum for active listening to school community needs. We learned together about the Community Schools Framework and discussed how best to prioritize school community needs in each of the four Community Schools Pillars. Columbus staff and families also participated in focus groups on school community interests, desires, and vision for Community Schools in South Downey.

A clear consensus emerged centered on the primacy of two of the four Community Schools Pillars: Integrated Supports and Family/Community Engagement. With district investment in campus Wellness Centers, stakeholders were especially interested in strengthening the systems and integration of Mental Health, Wellness, and SEL available to students and their families. At the same time, there was an acknowledgment that schools in South Downey needed to do much more to involve a larger, and more representative cross-section of students and families in school programs and services, as well as a need for cultivating leadership among students and family members to allow for authentic and renewed participation in ongoing planning and decisions to set and implement school priorities.

These findings were articulated into a Community Schools planning grant for South Downey schools, successfully obtained in Spring 2023. Since then, Columbus has conducted additional asset mapping and needs assessment to clarify needs, priorities, and direction for Community Schools including:

- Surveys of students (30 student respondents)
- Surveys of families (39 households responding)
- Surveys of school staff (49 staff respondents)
- Site visits to hear directly from youth, teachers, counselors, family members, and school leaders on the vision and needs for Community Schools.
- Interviews with district support staff, particularly those involved in Mental Health services and MTSS, basic needs support, and family engagement.
- Interviews with community-based organizations, both nonprofits providing services and community forums of faith-based and business leaders in Downey.

Overall, the school community assets most frequently mentioned included:

- A dedicated staff that embodies and models a growth mindset in demonstration of their commitment to doing "whatever it takes" to support student success
- Active school-wide embrace of DEI principles and staff participation in district cultural proficiency certificate program
- Youth empowerment through the Steps to Success program which enables students to track and measure their progress in real-time toward meeting graduation requirements, educational goals, strengths, and more

- Existing forums that amplify student voices and shared leadership in the life of our school
- A model of instruction that embeds service learning and other hands-on applications
- On-site college and career readiness support staff (e.g. counselor, Cerritos Complete Liaison, interventionist) that provides comprehensive supports to prepare students for post-secondary endeavors
- Strong partnerships with multiple community partners providing support and opportunities to Columbus students

We have documented additional key assets and described the most critical needs below for each of the Four Community School Pillars with our description of the **Plan for each of the 4 Pillars of Community Schools** below.

Core staffing for Community Schools

As detailed in our budget for Community Schools, core staffing in support of Community Schools implementation will be centered on two additional staff positions:

- A Community Schools Specialist (0.5 FTE). This classified position will be responsible for advancing and reinforcing the implementation of Community Schools across two schools (Columbus HS, and Gualdin ES). They will be responsible for ensuring that Core Commitments, Goals and Actions in Columbus' Community School Plan are implemented in an inclusive and coordinated fashion across the multiple stakeholder groups and partners. Working closely with school community leaders, the CS Specialist will also serve as the liaison for Columbus to district-wide Community Schools governance and coordination.
- A Family and Community Engagement (FACE) liaison (1 FTE). This classified position will be responsible for leading family and community outreach and engagement in the Columbus school community. Efforts will focus on enhancing school-home communication, expanding opportunities for families to provide ongoing input and feedback, and providing educational opportunities and training workshops in key areas of community interest and in alignment with school-wide priorities.

These two staff positions will work closely with school administrators, families, and other teacher and youth leaders in the school community to coordinate the implementation of our Community Schools action plan detailed for each of the four Community Schools pillars below.

Strategy 3: Collaborative Leadership

Below is an overview of our school's proposed governance to ensure collaborative leadership as a Community Schools. The specifics of our approach are detailed in Pillar 4 towards the end of our planning document.

Columbus High School
Home of the Lions
Collaborative Leadership

School Site Council

SSC

Composition: Teachers, classified, administrators, parents, students

Focus: School Plan for Student Achievement

Meet 4 times per year

Instructional Leadership Team

ILT

Composition: Teachers and administrators

Focus: instruction, distributed leadership

Meet 2 times per month

English Learner Advisory Committee

ELAC

Composition: Teachers, classified, administrators, parents, students

Focus: Multilingual educational supports

Meet 4 times per year

Community Schools Advisory

CAS

Composition: Teachers, classified, administrators, parents, students, community partners

Focus: decision-making to address student's basic needs, social-emotional needs, and instructional needs

Meet once per month

Plan for each of the 4 Pillars of Community Schools

Below we have provided a plan for implementing Community Schools in each of the 4 Pillars. For each pillar, we provide context and priorities that arose from our Needs Assessment and Asset Mapping process (WHY), a set of goals with concrete activities and strategies (WHAT), and a description of staffing, alignment, measurable outcomes, and plans for sustainability (HOW). In this way, we have embedded key components of the Community Schools Implementation Plan for each pillar including:

- Strategy 4: Coherence: Policy and Initiative Alignment
- Strategy 5: Staffing and Sustainability
- Strategy 6: Strategic Community Partnerships
- Strategy 7: Professional Learning
- Strategy 8: Centering Community-Based Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Strategy 9: Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking

Pillar 1: Integrated Supports

Within the Integrated Supports Pillar, Columbus is at the **Engaging** level. Key infrastructure elements are in place and Columbus has some community partners to receive referrals and offer specialized support. While Columbus partners with community organizations to provide services, such as True Lasting Connections (TLC), for students in crisis, we have found that there is significant gap in regards to equitable access to services for students and families may be the most significant gap in our system. The CSF, specifically Centering Community-Based Curriculum and Pedagogy, will enable us better meet the needs of our most vulnerable students by providing an additional layer of support that is "close to home" and provides wrap-around services that are made available through the local school system.

At Columbus HS, all students have already exhibited risky behaviors and/or experienced significant challenges that adversely affect their academic achievement towards earning their high school diploma and psychosocial functioning. As such, Columbus tends to have a higher concentration of students in need of both Tier 2 (mild-to-moderate) and Tier 3 (acute) issues and needs. With CSF, we are aiming to deepen and strengthen the systems for support, refining our approach and augmenting local capacity to adequately support students and families in need. The table below provides a structure for summarizing our intended approach to implementation of Integrated Supports:

Goal 1: Develop a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) inclusive of both mental health and social emotional learning (SEL). Address key barriers to learning with systems that ensure a safe, welcoming, supportive learning environment for all.

Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships
Wellness Center functions effectively in terms of triage and referrals.	Address growing levels of student anxiety, stress, depression, grief, and other Mental Health issues that serve as barriers to learning.	Expand trauma-informed counseling support and follow up for students and families. • Increase identification of students in need of mental health support	On-site Wellness Center staffed by one Clinical School Therapist (CST) will continue to triage students in need of Tier 3 support.
Across stakeholders, there is enthusiasm for deepening school efforts focused on	Address increased prevalence of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) among students,	• Expand student access to Tier 2 and 3 services, including services for SUD and co-occurring disorders.	External Tier 2 services provided by Jewish Family Children's Services.
On-site Wellness Center staffed by one Clinical School Therapist (CST), and one clerical support person.	especially marijuana, Xanax, fentanyl, Percocet, and meth-amphetamine	• Further develop infrastructure to improve follow up and closed loop referral systems for Tier 3 services.	Dedicated outpatient mental health clinician from a partner agency to address Tier 3 mental health needs and/or SUD.
Safety/threat/risk assessments are managed in-house by CST, School Psychologist, or BCBA Specialist.	Ensuring that Tier 3 external referral services result in service provision and positive outcomes.	Professional Learning:	FACE Liaison for family and community outreach, partner coordination, and ongoing communication.
Mental Health, SEL, and Wellness (in rank order).	Involve families in Mental Health support and reinforcement of therapeutic approaches in home settings	Provide additional training for staff and families on SEL, such as best practices for supporting non-traditional students. • Train students in Mental Health First Aid to expand access to peer support.	CS Specialist for convening and coordinating collective commitments and documenting accountability.
Columbus provides regular workshops on MH topics (grieving, anxiety, depression, coping strategies, access to resources, etc.)		• Train families to support youth in home settings with depression, anxiety, anger management, etc. Expand workshops/group services to address tier 2 early intervention	
Teachers are infusing SEL supports into classroom			

instruction and PBIS has been welcomed to support positive school culture.	
Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA	Clear linkage to LCAP Goal 2 (Safety and Wellness): All students have a sense of safety, school connectedness, and have their social and emotional needs met. Linkage to LCAP Goal 5 (Family/Community Engagement): Involve parents and community in school and district decision- making; provide tools, build connections, and enhance meaningful and transparent communication. ● Training and knowledge building of families to better understand MTSS, SEL and MH will help reinforce this district goal.
Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking - Measurable Outcomes and Accountability	Increased documentation and use of Tier 2 and Tier 3 services. Increased Mental Health and SEL awareness based on an annual survey of staff and students. Increased use/volume of Wellness Center services that are peer-referred.
Plan for Sustainability	Longer term, we aim to work with our district to investigate sustainable funding for school-based and school-linked Behavioral Health (BH) services available through California's Child and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) including: ● Possible hiring of Wellness Coach to provide Tier 1 and Tier 2 MTSS services ● District participation in the Multi-Payer Fee Schedule to allow for reimbursed BH services (provided by Wellness Coaches and existing PPS credentialed staff) when this opens to all LEAs in January 2025

Goal 2: Provide targeted Basic Needs support to students and families in need.

Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships
Partnership with district True Lasting Connections (TLC) which partners with 50+ community- based and faith-based partners for supplementary resources and support.	Assist students with housing; many students are housing insecure or homeless under McKinney-Vento definition.	Provide students with wraparound and basic needs supports, especially McKinney Vento population.	TLC for ongoing basic needs supports, supplies, and linkages to wraparound supports.
Additional district basic need support via Operation School Bell and PTA Helps	Address cost barriers to key basic needs (food, clothing, personal hygiene, etc.).	Establish a free pantry on campus that includes a free food pantry, personal hygiene and school supplies, a technology charging station, and free, on-site laundry services.	External partnerships with Kiwanis, Rotary, PTA HELPS, and Operation School Bell.
Daily student access to free and reduced-price meals (breakfast and lunch)	Support growing number of pregnant and parenting students.	Increase the scope of housing-related services and supports such as transitional housing, homelessness prevention, and rental assistance.	FACE Liaison for family and community outreach, partner coordination, and ongoing communication.
	Lack of adequate coverage for oral and visual health among students.	Identify community partners to provide support to pregnant and parenting teens.	CS Specialist for convening and coordinating collective commitments and documenting accountability.
		Explore ways to provide greater frequency of mobile oral and visual health service providers.	

Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA

Linkage to LCAP Goal 2 (Safety and Wellness): All students have a sense of safety, school connectedness, and have their social and emotional needs met.

- Basic needs support contributes to SEL and sense of belonging and school connectivity

Linkage to LCAP Goal 3 (Foster Youth): Increase positive outcomes for foster youth and close equity gaps in academic achievement, chronic absenteeism, and suspensions.

- Basic needs support removes barriers to learning for foster care youth and other vulnerable students and families

Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking - Measurable Outcomes and Accountability	Increased external, community partners working with CHS to reduce barriers to learning and increase access to wraparound services and supports.
Plan for Sustainability	Identify private community partners willing to help Columbus achieve fundraising goals and/or provide needed in-kind donations. Co-write grants at a local, state and federal level to meet unique needs of Columbus.

Pillar 2: Family and Community Engagement

Within the Family and Community Engagement Pillar, Columbus is at the **Engaging** level. School-home communication is regular and accessible. We can draw on multiple community partners who want to assist our student population and have significantly increased fiscal and in-kind contributions. Our biggest challenge is integrating families who, at least initially, tend to view student placement into Columbus as "failure" on the part of their child or themselves. We are committed to providing services and support that transforms this view. We see a future characterized by more positive framing of opportunities for growth, enhanced and robust school-home communication, and additional training and resources for families to utilize to reinforce student success in home settings. We are informed by the fact that Columbus stakeholders placed the highest priorities on improving school-home communication and providing families with increased opportunities for interactivity with school staff. Another priority was training workshops to help families connect to academic and supplementary support services. The table below provides a structure for summarizing our intended approach to implementation of Family and Community Engagement:

Goal 3: Deepen and strengthen family and community engagement with enhanced school-to-home communication and adult educational opportunities.

Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships
Established trust, respect, and admiration between parents and staff.	New perspectives for families on how to view their child's placement at Columbus.	Increase youth recognition/awards events and student performances/demonstrations of learning that re-engage families in ways that celebrate students.	Cerritos College is a partner for counseling support
High degree of two-way communication between school and home.	More frequent communication and interaction between school staff and families.		Rotary and Kiwanis clubs provide scholarships for student internships, employment, etc.

Teachers are readily accessible and willing to accommodate families Staff commitment to provide support and opportunities that break cycles of family dysfunction. Significant increase of fiscal and in-kind contributions from community partners and philanthropy.	**Refine and curate communication, outreach, and educational workshops to assist with resources and skills relevant to the student population at Columbus.**	Improve school-home communication on adjusting to a continuation high school environment such as: - Student goal setting and post HS planning - College and career readiness supports - Options for transfer back to a comprehensive high school setting; Expand family training and parenting workshops in key areas such as: - Growth mindset and transforming failure into opportunity - SEL supports for parents (modeling, reinforcement, progressive discipline, etc.) - Understanding whole-person and two-generation approaches (breaking the cycle) to healing and recovery.	FACE Liaison for family and community outreach, partner coordination, and ongoing communication. CS Specialist for convening and coordinating collective commitments and documenting accountability.
Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA		Clear linkage to LCAP Goal 5 (Family/Community Engagement): Involve parents and community in school and district decision-making; provide tools, build connections, and enhance meaningful and transparent communication. • Emphasis on transparent communication and training of families on school resources, services, and programming	
Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking - Measurable Outcomes and Accountability		Increase by 10% the number of family participants in workshops and programming Increase positive family perceptions of Columbus by 20% based on an annual survey of Parents/Families	

Plan for Sustainability	Gradually shift funding for FACE liaison from Community Schools funding to Title I, Title III, and LCFF sources so this staff position can be sustained longer-term

Pillar 3: Extended Learning Time

Within the Extended Learning Time Pillar, Columbus is at the **Engaging** level. Columbus provides students with access to a comprehensive set of college and career readiness services. However, students have expressed a desire for more focus on employment and career technical education (CTE). Similarly, Columbus has initiated and encouraged student clubs and extracurricular activities tied to student interests. Youth want more access to enrichment that is youth-driven and youth-led, particularly in the arts and with linkages to the creative economy (Arts, Entertainment, Media). The table below provides a structure for summarizing our intended approach to implementation of Extended Learning Time:

Goal 4: Increase opportunities for adolescents and young adults to explore interests and develop talents.

Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships
Positive working relationships with the Department of Rehabilitation and Cerritos College.	Increase student access to CTE pathways and career readiness resources	Expand student access to career readiness and career preparation services and supports including CTE pathways (e.g., culinary arts, auto technology, welding, cosmetology, etc.), as well as pre-employment coaching, and life skills training.	Cerritos College counselor advises students on postsecondary education and training opportunities during weekly CHS visits.
Increased CHS student involvement in college visits and service-learning projects.	Address need for expanded Positive Youth Development options	Expand clubs and extracurricular activities that correspond to student interest in the arts and the creative economy.	FACE Liaison for family and community outreach and communication on extended day opportunities.
Columbus provides before- and after-school tutoring to 15-20 students per day in need of academic tutoring before or after school, Monday to Friday.	Engage opportunity youth with a message about college-going coupled with college readiness supports	Enhance Saturday enrichment offerings that expose students to college visits and other opportunities and experiences that encourage possibilities outside of Downey.	CS Specialist for convening and coordinating collective commitments and documenting accountability.
Clubs based on student interest (e.g., gaming, sewing, community garden) are thriving.			Two Title I interventionists who provide before- and after-school tutoring.

| Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA | Linkage to LCAP Goal 1 (Student Success): All students graduate college and career ready, equipped with 21st Century learning skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and civic responsibility.

• Extended day programming develops and reinforces these components of student success

Connection to LCAP Goal 2 (Safety and Wellness): All students have a sense of safety, school connectedness, and have their social and emotional needs met.

• Extended day programming helps reinforce SEL and other aspects of school connectivity by providing extracurricular and enrichment options to students. |
| **Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking - Measurable Outcomes and Accountability** | Increased number of students participating in CTE and related employment support services. Increased extended day enrollments (Saturday and after-school enrichment). |
| **Plan for Sustainability** | Work with DFEO and its access to Extended Learning Opportunity Program (ELO-P) funds as longer-term funding for modified and expanded programming before and after-school.

Leverage Title I and LCFF for staffing of academic tutoring after-school. |

Pillar 4: Collaborative and Shared Decision-Making

Within the Collaborative and Shared Decision-Making Pillar, Columbus is at the **Visioning** level. The table below provides a structure for summarizing our intended approach to implementation of Collaborative and Shared Decision-Making:

Goal 5: Provide multi-stakeholder forums for planning, coordination, and shared decisions responsive to Community Schools issues and needs; increase opportunities for gathering input from all school community stakeholders and meaningful engagement of youth in school decisions.

Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships

Strong relationships between school staff, students, and families.	Strengthen family interest and involvement in collaborative school governance bodies.	Expand and encourage more youth involvement in collaboration and shared decision-making through the Community Club.	SSC and ELAC members School Culture Team and Safety Committee
Existing forum (Community Club) for students to develop and articulate youth voice and influence school culture and climate.	Clarify desired areas of family influence and roles in shaping school decisions.	Professional Learning - Provide leadership development training for a joint cadre of faculty/staff and family members interested in shared decision-making	FACE Liaison for family and community outreach and training tied to school governance.
Strong engagement with Instructional Leadership Team, Safety Committee, Human Relations Council, School Culture Team, Associated Student Body, Superintendent Student Advisory Committee, and Community Advisory Committee.	Increase parent and school staff interactions tied to identifying new partnerships, planning and decision-making.	Establish a Community Schools Advisory Council comprised of 5 students, 2 family/community, and 2 school staff members - Focus on planning and monitoring of the Community Schools Implementation Plan - Operate in parity with ELAC as advisory bodies that report to the SSC	CS Specialist for convening stakeholders, coordinating collective commitments, and documenting accountability.

Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA

Clear linkage to LCAP Goal 5 (Family/Community Engagement): Involve parents and community in school and district decision-making; provide tools, build connections, and enhance meaningful and transparent communication.

- The strategies we have outlined above are intended to do precisely this.

Additional linkage to LCAP Goal 4 (Staff Development): Hire the best teachers and ensure a highly effective staff; promote opportunities for shared and distributed leadership.

	• Columbus is developing school staff leaders who can participate in school governance and work effectively with families and the larger school community as representatives and liaisons for shared decision-making.
Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking - Measurable Outcomes and Accountability	Train at least 10 parents in a leadership development cadre. • Recruit and involve at least 2 of these for the new Community Schools Advisory Committee Train at least 20 youth in a leadership development cadre. • Recruit and involve at least 5 of these for the new Community Schools Advisory Committee Recruit at least one community (external) partner to participate in the new Community Schools Advisory Committee. Institute Community Schools as a standing agenda item for School Site Council
Plan for Sustainability	The collective commitments above are not dependent on funding. Rather, these require a change in mindset and renewed energy in service of multi-stakeholder collaboration that is equitable and meaningful.