

Ward Elementary School Community School Implementation Plan,
2024-2025

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School Overview and Description

Ward is an elementary school serving 576 students (2022-23) grades K-5. Located in southern Downey, Ward serves a largely low-income (81% of households eligible for Free and Reduced Meals) community that is majority Hispanic/Latino (92%), but has concentrations of White (4%), African American (2%), and Asian American and Pacific Islander (1%) students. Ward has relatively large proportions of both Multilingual Learners (26%) and Students with Disabilities (18%). In the recent past, Ward served about 5 foster youth and 10 McKinney-Vento (housing insecure-housing does not meet the physical, emotional, and physiological need) students annually. However, since January 2024 Ward has identified 26 McKinney- Vento Students.

Strategy 1: Shared Understanding and Commitment

Ward's vision is to foster a community where staff, parents, and the school community collaborate to nurture the comprehensive development of every student. We are dedicated to cultivating their social, emotional, academic, and physical well-being. With Community Schools we hope to bridge the gap on the empowerment of students to become expert decision-makers and bold risk-takers. With community partners we will continue to strive for literacy and proficiency in mathematics and technology, equipping students to thrive as lifelong learners in the dynamic landscape of the twenty-first century.

Ward's mission is to cultivate a positive and dynamic learning environment for all students, enabling them to develop into conscientious and impactful individuals with strong character, poised to contribute positively to society. To further impact learning, our hope is to increase parent engagement in collaboration with our community partners.

Ward is at the **Visioning** stage of this process, articulating a common vision and commitment to change – both in practice and mindset – to transform our school-wide community. We believe that the priorities embedded into our Community Schools vision will help us move forward. We have embraced and delved into the Community School Framework, focusing on cultural proficiency along with fostering a positive school culture. Ward Elementary currently does not have a school library. Ward is in desperate need of a school library rich in books that reflect cultures, social emotional learning, a rich selection of genres, and books inclusive of all disabilities to spark and inspire the love of reading. In addition, our hope is that Community School partnership will provide the opportunity to visit the library during the summer to bridge the gap of summer learning loss.

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

Staff from Ward participated in the 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 nearby 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. In addition, Ward sent staff and parents to focus groups where more than 50 family and community members, as well as rank-and-file school employees, were able to elaborate on their interests, desires, and vision for Community Schools.

Across 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 acknowledgement that school in South Downey needed to do much more to involve a larger, and more representative cross-section of students and families into 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, Ward has conducted additional asset mapping and needs assessment to clarify needs, priorities, and direction for Community Schools including:

- Surveys of students in grade 4 (49 student respondents)
- Surveys of families (59 households responding)
- Surveys of school staff (26 staff respondents)
- Site visits to hear directly from teachers, 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:

- School leaders who are bilingual and bicultural (English-Spanish)
- A commitment to cultural relevancy and equity
- A close and respectful relationship with families in the larger community
- A welcoming school environment and positive school culture

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 (0.3 FTE). This classified position will be responsible for advancing and reinforcing the implementation of Community Schools within the Sussman feeder

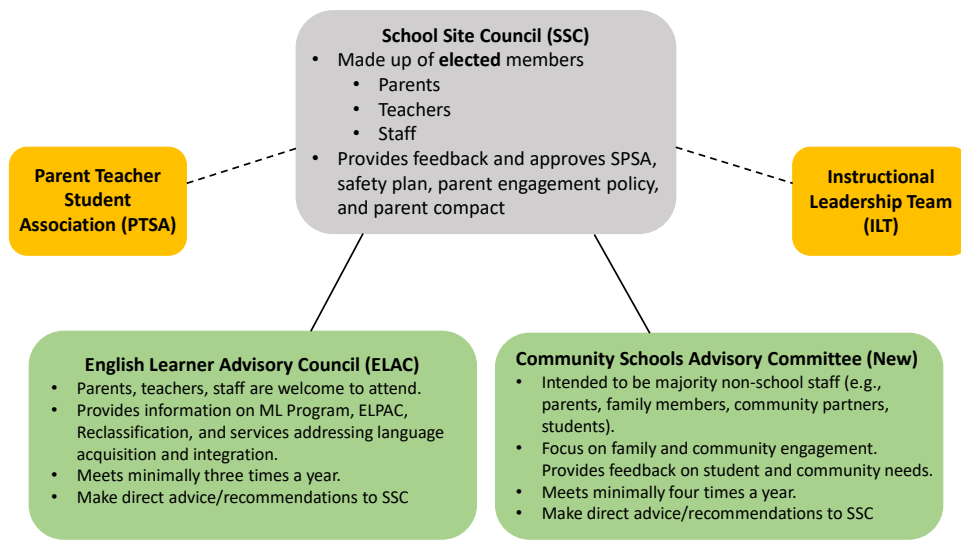
pattern (Sussman Middle with Ward and Alameda elementary schools). They will be responsible for ensuring that Core Commitments, Goals and Actions in Ward's Community School Plan are implemented in an inclusive and coordinative fashion across the multiple stakeholder groups and partners working with Ward. Working closely with school community leaders, the CS Specialist will also serve as the liaison for Ward 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 Ward 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 and other teacher and family 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

School administrators work closely with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to then present to our school's governing board which is our School Site Council (SSC). Our SSC chairperson helps us develop the agenda for the meetings. We always include our English Learner Advisory Council (ELAC), which bring back information from the district (DELAC) to share. We enlist feedback from PTSA as well to help support the entire school. Adding a Community Schools Advisory Committee (CSAC) comprised of a majority of family and community members will help empower voices from our school community to advise and recommend actions tied to implementation of our Community Schools implementation Plan. They will hold us accountable, and help Ward adjust staffing, resource allocation, etc. in line with the Community Schools Framework.



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, Ward is at the **Visioning** level. A campus Wellness Center was only recently established (Fall 2023) but has been well received across the school community. While there are district middle schools that have been working at this for some time, we are developing elementary models for MTSS encompassing Mental Health, SEL, and Wellness. We understand that we have a lot to learn about, and staff and families are eager to receive more training and resources. We are engaged in laying the foundation for a systemic approach that is responsive to community needs, including more flexible hours of operation and service delivery. We are also conscious of the need to integrate MTSS in ways that support the school's instructional foci. Therefore, we are planning to focus on Tier 1 of MTSS with its emphasis on universal approaches grounded in prevention and early identification. In addition, Ward is interested in providing basic needs support to individuals and families experiencing the most poverty-related barriers to success. 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
Clear consensus for deepening school efforts focused on improved access and use of	Address growing levels of student anxiety, stress, grief, and other Mental Health issues that serve as barriers to learning	Augment school capacity to provide Mental Health related MTSS:	On-site Wellness Center staffed by one Clinical School Therapist (CST).

<p>Mental Health, SEL, and Wellness services.</p> <p>Enthusiastic interest in trauma-informed, MH, and SEL resources by school faculty to support the parent and student community.</p> <p>Have provided staff with professional development on SEL and PBIS</p> <p>Partnership with district True Lasting Connections (TLC) which partners multiple Mental Health providers for MTSS Tier 3 services (i.e., the most acute needs).</p>	<p>Expand and organize how families and students will access to MTSS Tier 1 services in an equitable manner</p> <p>Develop in-depth training for school staff on topics like SEL and MTSS Tier 1.</p> <p>Educate and empower families on pervasive mental health and wellness issues, as well as relevant service offerings available on campus.</p> <p>Expand trauma-informed counseling supports for students and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and scale universal preventative and early identification services (MTSS Tier 1) for students and families. • Add clerical staff to campus Wellness Center to ensure greater coordination of services. • Explore how best to provide Wellness Center services before- and after-school. <p>Professional Learning: Provide training and professional development to complement MTSS implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training for faculty and staff on SEL best practices and Tier 1 (Universal and Preventative) components of MTSS. - Parent education to increase family awareness and knowledge of SEL, Mental Health, and Wellness services and supports available through the campus Wellness Center. 	<p>External Tier 3 Mental Health providers Jewish Family Children's Services and Care Solace coordinated through TLC.</p> <p>Access to District SEL Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA)</p> <p>FACE Liaison for family and community outreach, partner coordination, and ongoing communication.</p> <p>CS Specialist for convening and coordinating collective commitments and documenting accountability.</p>
<p>Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and knowledge building of families to better understand MTSS, SEL and MH will help reinforce this district goal. 		
<p>Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking - Measurable Outcomes and Accountability</p>	<p>Develop a MTSS plan that spells out systems and services at each Tier</p> <p>Increase awareness of school-based MTSS services among families by 10%</p> <p>Decrease perceptions of MH stigma among families by 20%</p> <p>Increase number of students/families participating in Tier 1 Wellness Center services by 10%</p>		

Plan for Sustainability	Training all staff in MTSS and Trauma-informed approaches will help to sustain Ward's capacity to provide Tier 1 using existing faculty and staff; we should be better equipped to leverage our campus Wellness Center 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
Staff commitment to equity Positive school culture Open dialogue and candor between families and school staff; high trust in terms of communicating needs Have provided staff with professional development on parent engagement	Expand physical health services to address medical requirements for school and routine health checkups. Ensuring that diagnostic and referral services result in service provision and positive outcomes. Enhance connections to TLC for basic needs support and referrals to wraparound services. Address cost barriers to key basic needs.	Expand student access to campus-based optometry services <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increase frequency of mobile vision clinics- Explore new partnerships Develop a closed loop referral system so that diagnosed vision and other health issues result in follow up and provision of glasses. Organize charity events that mobilize staff and the wider school community in addressing specific basic needs such as clothing, school supplies, etc.	TLC for ongoing basic needs supports, supplies, and linkages to wraparound supports. Care Solace for ongoing counseling services. 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	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. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<p>Set survey baseline and then increase student and family utilization(10%) of and satisfaction (20%) with Basic Need services.</p> <p>Increase student/family referrals to basic needs support by 10%</p>
Plan for Sustainability	Identify private community partners willing to help Ward achieve fundraising goals and/or provide needed in-kind donations.

Pillar 2: Family and Community Engagement

Within the Family and Community Engagement Pillar, Ward is at the **Engaging** level. School-home communication is regular, and interactions are trusting and positive. We can draw on recent joint project that showed the power of collaboration and interdependence between school staff and families in the interests of students. However, we recognize the need for further improvements, especially engaging households that typically remain distant from school activities, events, and opportunities for input. Recent discussions with staff about cultural competency and responsiveness are shaping our ideas and plans for the future. We are informed by the fact that Ward 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 foci at the school and academic 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 engagement with enhanced staff-family interactions and culturally relevant parent educational opportunities.				
Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships	
Established trust, respect, and admiration between parents and staff.	Provide opportunities for more interaction between school staff and families	Pilot school climate projects (e.g., supervision, beautification, etc.) led by parent leaders.	Parent representatives for each classroom (Homeroom Parent),	
High degree of two-way communication between school and families; bilingual school leadership (Spanish & English)	Refine and curate education workshops for parents	Embed cultural relevance and competency into focused educational workshops and family nights on topics such as:	District SEL TOSA to provide parent educational classes on SEL.	
	Develop a cadre of trained parent volunteers and/or promotores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy Home routines for parents How to support and reinforce Math in home settings 	District Behavioral Health Specialist to provide parent education	

<p>Enthusiasm among families for information on SEL, Mental Health, and Wellness topics. Wellness Room hosts parent events on strengthening relationships.</p> <p>Surveys indicate that school priorities are aligned between parents and staff.</p> <p>Multiple community partners who help with food and refreshments for family events including Kona Ice, Mike's Pizza, Taco land, J's Italian Ice, and Cotton Candy lady</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for parent volunteerism and/or promotores roles - Understanding the purpose and benefits of SEL and Wellness 	<p>Community partners who help with food and refreshments for family events including Kona Ice, Mike's Pizza, Taco land, J's Italian Ice, and Cotton Candy lady</p> <p>FACE Liaison for family and community outreach, partner coordination, and ongoing communication.</p> <p>CS Specialist for convening and coordinating collective commitments and documenting accountability.</p>
<p>Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA</p>	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on transparent communication and training of families on school resources, services, and programming, 		
<p>Progress Monitoring and Possibility Thinking - Measurable Outcomes and Accountability</p>	<p>Increase by 10% the number of family participants in workshops and programming</p> <p>Increase by 10% positive perceptions of families to annual school climate and LCAP surveys</p>		
<p>Plan for Sustainability</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Training parent volunteers and promotores will help ensure we have local capacity to be actively engaged with our school community</p>		

Pillar 3: Extended Learning Time

Within the Extended Learning Time Pillar, Ward is at the **Engaging** level. Sussman works closely with the Downey Foundation for Educational Opportunities (DFEO), the district's after-school provider, to provide extended day services to approximately 100 students. In addition, Ward has staffed after-school tutoring and launched weekly lunchtime student enrichment clubs to extend learning. As part of the Community Schools planning process, Ward stakeholders placed the highest priorities on increasing student access to academic support services. There was also a clear interest in getting families off the waitlist and modifying programming slightly. The table below provides a structure for summarizing our intended approach to implementation of Extended Learning Time:

Goal 4: Increase alignment between regular school day and extended day programming with academic support, while also providing additional opportunities for fun extracurricular opportunities.			
Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships
Survey data suggests interest in expanding extended day programming options in key categories.	Increase student access to supervised sports and recreation; lack of access increased discipline and behavioral issues	Expand capacity to provide academic support beyond the regular school day •Add one teacher available after-school to provide language acquisition services to Multilingual Learners (MLs), especially students near to reclassification criteria •Increase staffing so there is academic tutoring available after-school 3x/week	DFEO for after-school staffing Categorical and interventionist staff providing after-school tutoring in group rotations
DFEO; approximately 100 students currently enrolled in after-school programming.	Expand academic tutoring and homework help offerings during after school hours		FACE Liaison for family and community outreach and communication on extended day opportunities.
Once a week, Ward students participate in lunchtime clubs including photography, crafting, music, graphic design.	Provide more students with access to extracurricular activities that are aligned with requests from students and the community - Demonstrate that we are listening and responsive	Work with DFEO to expand student access to extracurricular activities that correspond to student and family interest such as: - Organized (team) sports and recreation - Visual and performing arts - Establish a STEM club, an area not currently provided by DFEO.	CS Specialist for convening and coordinating collective commitments and documenting accountability.
After-school tutoring exists (3 groups of 6 at a time = 18) staffed by categorical and interventionists.			
Strategy 4: Coherence - Alignment to LCAP and SPSA	Linkage to LCAP Goal 1 (Student Success): All students graduate college and career ready, equipped with 21 st Century learning skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and civic responsibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended day programming develops and reinforces these components of student success 		

	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<p>Increased number of students participating in tutoring and other academic support by 10%.</p> <p>Increased extended day enrollments by 10%; reduce the number of families on waitlist for DFEO services.</p>
Plan for Sustainability	<p>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.</p> <p>Leverage Title I and LCFF for staffing of academic tutoring after-school.</p>

Pillar 4: Collaborative and Shared Decision-Making

Within the Collaborative and Shared Decision-Making Pillar, Ward is at the **Visioning** level. While there are a host of traditional school governance forums, we would like to use the Community Schools grant to reimagine school decision making, integrating greater family and community voice and opportunities for input. We also need to show our school community how the different governance bodies and forums work cohesively together to advance an agenda supportive of our vision for increase academic achievement, greater equity and cultural relevance, and a welcoming, safe learning environment where barriers to access have been dismantled. Ward will embed Community Schools into existing governance bodies, as well as provide a new forum focused on oversight and continuous improvement monitoring of Community Schools implementation. 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 in school governance.				
Existing Assets	Critical Needs	Collective Commitments and Strategies	Key Staffing and Partnerships	
Parents are important members of our SSC and ELAC; parents are involved in campus decisions,	Strengthen parent interest and involvement in school governance and parent organizations; Ward has very low PTSA participation relative	<p>Increase opportunities for family voice and learning aligned with cultural proficiency projects and Community School goals.</p> <p>- Monthly Coffee with Principal and ELAC meetings.</p>	SSC, ELAC, and PTSA members School site administrators	

school activities, and budget items. Positive culture at Ward where families collaborate and are informed about our instructional program.	to other DUSD elementary schools. Clarify desired family roles and presence on campus Increase parent and school staff interactions tied to planning and decision-making, ideally on school boards and councils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School Culture team meetings Establish a Community Schools Advisory Council that is at least 60% family and community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on planning and monitoring of the Community Schools Implementation Plan - Operate in parity with ELAC and PTSA as advisory governance bodies that report to the SSC Provide Professional Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide leadership development training for interested school staff and family members on Community Schools governance - Train parents in the promotores model of outreach and advocacy 	School Categorical Advisor and ELD Coordinator (oversee ELAC) FACE Liaison for family and community outreach and training tied to school governance. 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward 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 20 parents in a leadership development cadre. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Involve at least 20 parents in regular ELAC participation	
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.		