



Collaborative Leadership

Shared decision-making ensures that all interest-holders have a voice in the transformation process. Collaborative leadership helps to flip the traditional hierarchical structure of schools and fosters supportive relationships between interest-holders, resulting in decisions that are widely accepted and implemented, improved coordination and alignment of programs and strategies, out-of-the box thinking to address complex problems, and increased sustainability of the effort.

Visioning

- Map and assess current teams and decision-making spaces with the goal of establishing a coherent and aligned democratic governance structure. With interest-holders, reflect on and re-tool existing structures to identify areas where shared power and alignment can be strengthened.
- Build relationships to identify current and potential student, staff, family and community leaders who could serve on emerging or evolving community school leadership teams. Ensure diverse representation reflective of the school community when identifying and recruiting leaders.
- Utilize an asset-based lens towards families, students, and the community, and take steps to deepen relational trust between those interest-holders and staff. Shift away from one-directional engagement of families towards a model where families feel like they have a voice in the direction of the school.
- Establish regular, transparent, and open communication between site administrators, educators, family and student leaders, key community partners, and the community schools coordinator to nurture collaborative leadership. Build an equal community school coordinator-principal partnership, through trust and dedicated check-ins, that maximizes respective roles and strengths to act on and operationalize the changes that interest-holders wish to see.
- Increase the knowledge and capacity of principals and assistant principals to build a culture of shared leadership through high-quality learning opportunities (for example, those provided by 21CSLA).

Engaging

- Launch or revise site-level shared leadership structure(s) to facilitate democratic participation and decision-making among students, staff, families, community members, leaders of community organizations, local government agencies, and higher education partners. Create a new site-level steering committee/advisory council, or revamp an existing team, such as the School Site Council or governance councils. If a shared leadership structure spans multiple teams, create a coordination and communication structure to frame how communication and decisions are made across teams.
- Provide continuous leadership development opportunities for students, educators, families, and community members that are asset-based and inclusive of multiple languages so that they grow their skills to thrive in leadership positions.
- Provide interpretation, translation, childcare, and other accommodations (e.g., for deaf/blind students, parents, community) to ensure participation from diverse interest-holders and to create an environment where team members feel valued and respected. Democratically decide upon the time and location of meetings to accommodate schedules of various interest-holders.
- Create opportunities in shared leadership spaces to vision and uplift locally-determined measures-data that matters to the community. Ensure that data being collected aligns with its community-based vision emerging from interest-holder engagement.

Transforming

- Make major decisions at the school, including curricular, operational, personnel, budgetary, and strategic decisions, through democratic engagement with representative systems, such as a site-level steering committee/advisory council. Ensure that students, staff, families, and community members have a voice in shaping decisions impacting the school and community.
- Actively seek to foster democratic decision-making whenever possible, and constantly strive towards a culture where all interest-holder voices are valued. Clearly and routinely communicate how and why decisions are made and by whom.
- Expand and operationalize shared leadership spaces beyond steering committees and site governance councils. Regularly engage students, families, educators, and community partners in conversations about how to improve decision-making and implementation processes to strengthen the impact of the community school strategy. Deepening a sense of connection in this way leads to a more relationship-centered, racially-just school climate.
- Encourage innovation and possibility thinking by continuously harnessing diverse perspectives and expertise to address complex issues.

Visioning

- Establish an LEA-level steering committee/advisory council to enact shared decision-making at the systems-level; engage in shared visioning and learning about the community school strategy; and map and assess current areas of shared decision-making policies across the LEA and identify areas to strengthen.
- Provide coaching, peer-to-peer dialogue, and other learning opportunities for site and LEA administrators related to collaborative leadership. Model collaborative leadership and provide guidance and support to schools in analyzing their current collaborative leadership structures.
- Foster collaborative leadership practices by providing all community school sites with professional learning opportunities that focus on adopting asset-based mindsets and acknowledging families and community members as essential decision-making partners.

Engaging

- Provide crucial guidance to school-level implementers as well as create opportunities for them to share their expertise and input with the LEA-level steering committee/advisory council as co-creators of the LEA-level strategy and supportive structures.
- Collaborate with LEA leaders who represent allied programs and initiatives to integrate and align efforts to support a strong foundation for the community schools strategy including a focus on teaching and learning, active family and community engagement, professional learning, interagency collaboration and shared decision-making.

Transforming

- Establish areas of flexibility (such as with scheduling, curriculum and assessments, hiring) and site-based decision-making to support site goals that lead to transformational outcomes for students, families, and educators.
- Adapt and evolve alongside the steering committee/advisory council in ways that are continuously shaped by educators, students, families, and community members who are engaged as equal, authentic and respected partners.
- Elevate the steering committee as a key decision-making partner to the superintendent and school board.

Progress Monitoring Measures

Results of school climate surveys and interviews/focus groups that document students', families', and educators' sense of voice and agency in decision-making, feelings of connection, and engagement; shared decision-making team self-assessments; surveys that document increased reports of educator efficacy; teacher and staff retention rates.

RESOURCES

- [Collaborative Leadership Guide](#)
- [Collaborative Leadership Module](#)