



STATE TRANSFORMATIONAL ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

About this document: *This resource highlights examples from county offices of education across the state to demonstrate how they are working to develop county-level systems to support and sustain the work of community schools. We highlight innovative and exciting efforts that are advancing responsive and relational leadership, developing county-wide community school networks as a strategy for coherence and sustainability, and deepening opportunities to advance responsive community-based learning. Organized into five sections, we describe the vision and intended purpose of COE coordination grants. We then provide questions for reflection that aim to guide COEs in considering how best to direct their coordination grants to build the capacity of county partners and grantees to build, implement, and sustain the work of community schools. These questions aim to move beyond “what” funds will be spent on, but “why” and “how” those funds can be strategically used to fill gaps, align resources, and accelerate learning in order to maximize impact. Subsequent sections outline how current COEs are deepening their understanding and commitment to community schooling and building the capacity of county-level organizations and agencies, COE partners, and CCSPP grantees.*

County Coordination Grant Guidance

Introduction:

In 2022, in a landmark move fueled by the efforts of advocacy and community organizing, the California Legislature ushered in a new era of educational transformation with the passage of the [California Community Schools Partnership Program](#) (CCSPP). With an allocation of \$4.1 billion, this historic initiative aims to establish, strengthen, and expand community schools across the state, with a focus on schools and communities with demonstrated need. This investment underscores the state’s unwavering dedication to the principles of community schools—an age-old concept that serves as a vital bridge between schools and the communities they serve. By embracing a holistic approach that prioritizes academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement, the CCSPP, as outlined in the [California Community Schools Framework](#), seeks to reimagine and transform schools into inclusive, racially just, and relationship-centered environments that prepare all youth for positive social and emotional development, engaged citizenship, and deep learning.

The CCSPP, in addition to providing support to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and schools, through planning and implementation grants, County Offices of Education (COEs) with two or more grantees in their county, receive CCSPP funds “to support county local educational agencies (LEAs) by centralizing grant communications with county-level governmental partners and funding sources; and to support LEA planning and use of data for integrating state-funded



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initiatives integral to the four pillars of a community school approach and the California Community Schools Framework” (California Department of Education, n.d.). Because community schooling requires a collaborative approach, aiming to bring together critical interest-holders who are tasked with leading a range of initiatives—teachers, service providers, school and community leaders, and partners—coherence and coordination are key. Highlighting examples from across the state, this resource demonstrates how COEs are working to support and sustain the work of community schools. We highlight innovative and exciting efforts, COEs are leading to advance responsive and relational leadership at all levels of the system, convene county-wide community school networks as a strategy for coherence and sustainability, and deepen opportunities to advance responsive community-based learning. Organized into five main sections, we describe the vision and intended purpose of COE coordination grants and then provide questions for reflection that aim to guide COEs in considering how best to direct their coordination grants to build the capacity of county partners and grantees to build, implement, and sustain the work of community schools. These questions move beyond “what” funds will be spent on, to “why” and “how” those funds can be strategically used to fill gaps, align resources, and accelerate learning in order to maximize impact. The subsequent sections of the guide outline how current COEs are deepening their understanding and commitment to community schooling and building the capacity of county-level organizations and agencies, COE partners, and CCSPP grantees.

Background and purpose:

Fifty-two COEs have received Coordination grants through the CCSPP. The grants are awarded annually for a minimum of seven years and range from \$200,000 to \$500,000 per COE.¹ Coordination grant recipients are tasked with supporting community school grantees that are diverse in composition and at different stages of implementation. As such, the priorities and key focus areas of support will look different across regions and counties.

According to the [legislation](#), funding shall be allocated to COEs to:

- Coordinate county-level governmental, nonprofit community-based organizations, and other external partnerships to **support community school implementation with grant recipients in their county**. This shall include **designating a county-level community schools liaison** to coordinate with the department and technical assistance centers in capacity building, resource connection, and continuous improvement activities consistent with supporting grant recipients in their county in the implementation of community schools.

¹ In the first year of the program (2022–2023), 41 counties received grants totaling almost \$14 million, with an average of \$340,000 per county. In the following year, 11 more COEs received a total of \$17 million, averaging \$330,000 per county.



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- Support centralized **grant recipient communications with county-level governmental partners** and funding sources, which may include, but not be limited to, pupil support and health care service billing and billing practices technical assistance.
- Support **local educational agency planning** and use of pupil and campus data for integrating community school, expanded learning, early childhood education, county behavioral health, educator professional development, and other state-funded initiatives integral to the four pillars of community schools.

Coordination allocations are designed to align with existing initiatives that also foster collaboration between local government agencies and nonprofits at the county level (e.g., [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative](#), [California Child Welfare Council](#)) and should support, integrate into, and build upon these current efforts.

COEs as Capacity-Builders:

CCSPP legislation provides only broad and general directives on how the coordination allocations should be spent. As such, the CDE provided [additional guidance](#) as to the required activities of Coordination grantees.

Further, with an understanding that transformation necessitates that COEs and their supporting RTACs consider not just “what” funds will be spent on, but “why” and “how” those funds can be strategically used to fill gaps, align resources, and accelerate learning in order to maximize impact, the State Transformational Assistance Center (S-TAC) has aimed to provide guidance that supports how and why funds are allocated. Coordination grantees have the rare opportunity to imagine and build—*with, by and for diverse communities*—a coherent capacity-building structure that enables them to achieve their shared vision for transformational community schools. Because this work is ongoing and evolving, we offer the following questions for COEs and their interest-holders to reflect upon and guide their work across the developmental phases:

Visioning

- What does a transformational vision for community schools in our county look like, and how might we work collaboratively to develop and align around such a vision? What actions can we take to build shared understanding and strengthen the commitment of our LEAs, community members, and partners to this vision?
- What processes could help us gain the deepest understanding of our community’s needs and assets, and how might we make these processes more inclusive and representative of all voices?
- Where do we see the largest gaps in achieving our vision, and how might we prioritize efforts to address them effectively?



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- What existing county-wide initiatives, programs, or resources align with the principles of community schooling, and how might we engage others to create a coherent plan that maximizes their impact?

Engaging

- How can we collaborate with internal and external partners to align our efforts and provide coordinated support to community school grantees? What structures and practices do we have—or need to establish—to break down silos and operationalize our partnerships more effectively?
- What kind of support structure can we design for LEAs and grantees that is responsive to their needs as well as accelerates their learning and adoption of effective practices?
- Who serves as our designated staff lead (e.g., COE Community School Lead), and how might we define their role in supporting LEAs and fostering program alignment within the COE? What strategies can we use to build the capacity of this designated staff to assess grantee needs and ensure program coherence and alignment?

Transforming

- How might we develop a system for sharing and tracking data across organizations and agencies to monitor progress on key county-wide priorities?
- What steps can we take to ensure the sustainability of county-level services, supports, and ongoing capacity-building for LEAs and community school sites?
- How can we best support LEAs in their planning and implementation of community school strategies? What strengths do our LEAs bring to community schooling, and how might we help them address their areas for growth?

The provided guidance affords COEs great flexibility in how they leverage coordination funds. The S-TAC team reached out to COE community school administrators in the Summer of 2024 to gain a greater understanding of what this may look like in practice. As anticipated, COEs shared a wide range of priorities and strategies, yet common themes were identified. In particular, Coordination grantees prioritized building the capacity and understanding of other county agencies, within-county office of education partners, school and LEA staff through cross-agency collaborations, and professional learning opportunities; developed strategies to continuously learn about and respond to evolving local needs; deepened relationships and built trust across and within agencies; and focused on long-term sustainability. We share the stories of Coordination grantees to illuminate various aspects of these efforts.

I. Building the Capacity of County Partners through Inter-agency Coordination

To disrupt inequities in resource allocation and distribution across the state, COEs activated local ecosystems in developing a shared commitment to the community schools strategy. COEs engaged in the work of leveraging county resources such as housing and health care while building the necessary infrastructure to enhance access such as developing Memoranda of



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Understanding and convening local champions. While cross-sector coordination took many forms, COEs led efforts to help create coherent county-wide systems that shaped local commitments to an equity-enhancing strategy. For example:

- At the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), administrators and grantees are building cross-sector collaborations to address the needs of youth and families. Without these collaborations, “schools are swimming upstream and we’re putting a band-aid on the neighborhood issues” according to the OCDE Community Schools Administrator. By joining a number of statewide collaboratives, OCDE is creating county-level partnerships around issues such as access to housing, health care, and early childhood. OCDE has formed a county-wide collaborative that explores specific issues but maintains a focus on “the bigger picture.” Through grant funding, OCDE has engaged an external facilitator to support this collaborative work.
- Riverside County Office of Education has established a cross-sector collaboration that includes the local university (see text box for more information).

Riverside County Office of Education: Engaging Universities in a County-Wide Commitment Towards Community Schools

The Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) serves 7 LEAs and 59 schools across Riverside County. With a key goal of building trust, awareness, and public access to the community school strategy, RCOE developed a multi-strand approach with clear goals of integrating services and enhancing sustainability. They are leveraging university-assisted partnerships to develop stable partnerships that ultimately extend beyond grant initiatives and towards a shared commitment towards community schools.

As stable anchor institutions, local universities play a key role in sustaining the strategy of community schools through broad, comprehensive, and sustained support. The development of [University-Assisted Community Schools](#) within Riverside County leverages the opportunity to develop mutually beneficial partnerships that enhance community schools through human and material resources, while simultaneously advancing the goals of universities in research, learning, and service. Charged with building the foundational systems and relational work, the Riverside University-Assisted Community Schools Committee (RUACS) is creating the infrastructure to launch more formalized agreements and commitments between LEAs and the University of California, Riverside. In convening university deans, faculty and district staff, RCOE built relationships and trust to help create processes for shared decision-making amongst interest-holders. By building on existing university programs in schools, the promising partnership establishes a coherent vision that supports and enhances services for students, and develops teacher preparation pipelines and principal leadership development to allow TK-20 students to thrive.



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II. Building the Capacity of the COE through County-Level Integration

In addition to working alongside other county-level organizations and institutions such as local universities, COEs are also using grant funds to de-silo the work happening within their county offices of education to provide holistic support to students and families. For example:

- OCDE is working to disrupt existing internal silos to ensure directors and coordinators from each division or team—career technical education, STEM, mental health, early childhood, data and evaluation, etcetera—come together to support a vision of whole child education.
- Sacramento's County Office of Education is providing inter-departmental funding transfers to tap into the expertise of others in the office around areas such as expanding learning; family and community engagement; Universal Pre-Kindergarten; foster youth, and those experiencing homelessness; student mental health and wellness; curriculum and instruction; socio-emotional learning, and more.
- The Shasta County Office of Education (SCOE) detailed how they are providing a centralized service to all LEAs through its [Community Connect Program](#) (see text box for more information).

Shasta County Office of Education: Centralizing and Streamlining Health Supports

The Shasta County Office of Education (SCOE) supports 91 schools within 24 LEAs across Shasta County. Of these, 29 schools are CCSP grantees and make up the SCOE Community Schools Consortium.

SCOE made a strategic decision to invest county coordination funds in a targeted initiative to support student and family well-being through a comprehensive approach to healthcare access. Recognizing the challenges many families face in navigating community services, particularly in coordinating health care in a largely rural area, SCOE envisioned a plan centered around their largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), which serves the majority of students with Medi-Cal. The plan involved placing a dedicated Community Health Worker (CHW) at the FQHC to work directly with the existing [Community Connect program](#), a county-wide initiative aimed at linking families to essential services. The CHW plays a critical role in coordinating care, ensuring that students and their families receive necessary health, mental health, and dental services, thereby addressing one of the significant barriers to consistent school attendance and academic success.

With the goal of improving educational outcomes by improving overall health outcomes for students (i.e., healthier students are more likely to attend school regularly, participate actively in class, and achieve higher academic performance), the work of Community Connect has permeated the work of the entire COE. To ensure the success of this initiative, SCOE has



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taken a collaborative approach, engaging other COE divisions in the work. The plan strengthens the COE support system.

III. Building the Capacity of CCSPG Grantees

A critical facet of the County Coordination grant program is providing direct support to LEAs within the county as they implement the community school strategy. In this workstream, COEs play a critical role in bridging the regional support of the RTAC with LEAs, often working hand-in-hand with the RTACs in this endeavor. For example:

- Alameda County (ACOE) partners with the Bay Area RTAC to provide coaching and partnership opportunities to LEAs. An RTAC representative is essentially embedded within the COE County Coordination support team as they canvas the county's LEAs, providing systematic support to Alameda's 18 districts and charters. A strategic, multi-tiered approach is used to ensure all LEAs are receiving support that addresses their needs and supplements their internal capacity. ACOE has also developed data-sharing agreements with 12 of the 18 LEAs in the County to build the county-wide capacity for continuous improvement.
- In Riverside County, coordination grants helped support the funding of the "[findhelp database](#)" that allows the local community to search for specific needs by typing in a zip code. A quick search for services such as housing, health, legal and medical care directs searchers to a nearby resource, clinic or office. Moreover, the data provided in this search provides LEAs, COEs and community partners with data to identify high areas of needs and thus allow partner organizations and LEA's to design strategic support as surfaced by the data. Districts within the country are supported to embed "findhelp" on their own websites.
- OCDE provides a range of supports including the development of professional learning spaces that build the capacity of grantees across the county (see text box for more information).

Orange County Department of Education: Providing Direct Support to Grantees

The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) supports 20 LEAs with implementation grants, serving a total 128 schools that are in the community school transformation process. Responding to the needs of CCSPG grantees, OCDE has created a number of different professional learning spaces to build capacity among practitioners across the county.



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From the outset, according to OCDE's Community Schools Administrator, speaking with and learning from districts made it clear that "what was really needed was district coaches and professional development." They identified community and family engagement as well as deepening the understanding and use of context-specific insights and "street data" to tailor programs, services, and supports as key focal areas. Using Dr. Karen Mapp's Dual Capacity-Building Framework, OCDE leaders coordinated with an educational consulting firm to organize and deliver a professional learning opportunity for OCDE grantees and others within the Southern Coast Region that was designed to help educators more effectively partner with families. Additionally, OCDE partnered with other counties in the region to offer a one-day professional learning opportunity with the authors of *Street Data*, attracting more than 300 grantees across the R-TAC. Over time, these opportunities have become more customized to meet the specific needs of OCDE grantees. For example, OCDE has offered a principal leadership series to build the capacity of their community school principals to lead and work alongside interest-holders, including teachers, students, families, agencies, and providers, and to use a range of data (including street data) to understand the assets and needs of their students and community. In 2024-25, OCDE also developed a Community of Practice for site-based coordinators and principals to support and build their practice, and is supporting a network of practitioners for collective learning.

CONCLUSION

COEs are utilizing their coordination grants in diverse and innovative ways to support the implementation and sustainability of community schools across California. By fostering partnerships, enhancing professional development, and creating cross-agency collaborations, COEs are playing a vital role in building capacity for LEAs and aligning efforts with broader county-wide systems. The examples above demonstrate the power of coordinated, responsive, and community-driven approaches. As COEs continue to lead, learn, and adapt, they are paving the way for a more holistic and integrated support system for students, families, and educators, ensuring that community schools thrive and grow. This collaborative work, supported by the CCSPP, is a testament to the state's commitment to reimagining schools as centers of equity, opportunity, and comprehensive support.

References:

California Department of Education (n.d.). 2023-2024 2023-24 California Community Schools Partnership Program: Coordination Grant

Available at:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=6078#:~:text=The%202023%2D24%20California%20Community,use%20of%20data%20for%20integrating>

Available at: