

District Steering Committee Guide

Introduction

This guide is intended to support interest-holder groups (staff, students, families, and community partners) looking to either establish or strengthen a Local Education Agency (LEA) Community School Steering Committee as a crucial part of collaborative systems and structures in support of a Community School strategy. The document first establishes what is meant by collaborative leadership and structures. It then identifies the purpose, key roles, and recommended steps for building a Community School Steering Committee.

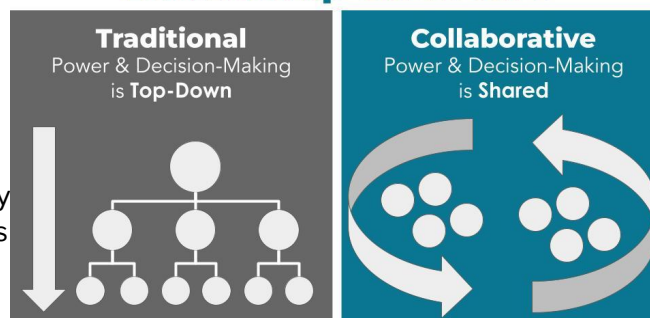
Collaborative Structures

In order for Community Schools to thrive and transform over time, the larger system must establish the necessary conditions allowing for the full expertise, agency, and voice of the community to guide this transformation. States, Local Education Agency (LEA), and school districts can pave the way in disrupting historical practices that have systematically excluded the voice of students, families, and educators. Collaborative systems and structures create opportunities for greater multidirectional communication and a scalable system for the Community School strategy. Collaborative leadership teams may include, but are not limited to, steering committees, site councils, and site-based instructional and student support teams, as well as parent and student leadership groups that share power, have a sense of “shared ownership”, and center the decisions on student and community wellbeing for greater impact and alignment.

What is collaborative leadership?

Transformational Community Schools are places where power is shared and students, families, educators, and community partners are active participants in decision-making. In collaborative leadership, the assets and skillsets of the entire community are uplifted to where all members of the Community School are recognized as having agency and collective expertise to transform their schools. Collaborative leadership in Community Schools is the intentional and systematic shift in power that allows for greater representation and collaboration between all interest holders. The key lever of collaborative leadership at the LEA level is often referred to as the Community School Steering Committee (Steering Committee). See more information on collaborative leadership, structures and teams [here](#).

Leadership Structure



Establishing an LEA Community School Steering Committee

What is a Steering Committee?

The LEA Steering Committee is a team of partners from community organizations, district staff, union leaders, families, educators, and students, that provides strategic direction for the overall Community School strategy and champions its work. Alternative terms for this group include

District Advisory Group, Advisory Council, and Leadership Committees (see [Steering Committee Toolkit](#)).

Purpose of The Steering Committee

In order to drive transformational change, Community Schools need to build systems and structures to ensure collaboration among local voices that are representative of the community. The LEA Steering Committee oversees and supports the district-wide visioning, system development, and implementation of the Community School strategy.

Shared Decision Making

A traditional model of school leadership reflects a hierarchical approach to decision-making, where decisions flow from the “top” or from State/ LEA/District authorities, with little input and ownership from those most impacted by the decisions.

A shared decision-making model has *dynamic teams* that allow more individuals to have a role in leading the efforts of the Community School strategy. The LEA Steering Committee is one of these key collaborative teams supporting the implementation of the district or city/county-wide initiative. Given that the Steering Committee sits within a leveled system of collaborative teams, communication and alignment is essential. This two-way communication system is further explained in steps and considerations below.

Key Roles of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee commonly plays seven equally important key roles:

- A. **Funding:** Works to ensure there is adequate funding to maintain the current Community Schools core infrastructure and to support the growth of Community Schools. Brings together diverse funders of Community School work for high-level decision-making about resource allocation.
- B. **Community School Selection:** Develops and implements the application process for new Community Schools and determines whether to grow the Community School strategy in any given year.
- C. **Support Implementation:** Communicates regularly with Community School coaches and other Community School implementers in order to determine the types of additional support that school and community stakeholders need. The Steering Committee could address needs that are common across sites and help facilitate networked improvement communities. And for issues that require systemic solutions, the Steering Committee convenes cross-sector collective action to address challenges in systems like healthcare, transportation, housing, and higher education.
- D. **Evaluation:** Receives regular reports and analyzes data to assess the quality of Community School implementation and ensure impact. Develops a framework (e.g., Logic Model) for evaluation (implementation/measured impact and growth). The framework could rely on both locally determined measures as well as broader metrics. In addition, the Steering Committee sometimes recruits an external evaluator.
- E. **Awareness:** Develops and implements a plan to share the successes and key learnings of the Community School strategy with all interested parties, such as the school board, city council, the media, and school and community interest-holders.
- F. **Systems Integration:** Ensures the Community School strategy and priorities clearly align with, inform, and actively support both district and site-based goals for improvement and

growth. If there is a district-wide LCAP team, the Community School Steering Committee should ensure alignment and connection with that team.

- G. **Policy:** Advocates for supportive policies at the local, state, and national level that advance Community Schools.

Steps and Considerations for Forming a Steering Committee

1. Consider the composition of the Community School Steering Committee.

- Proactively identify and activate Community School experts as well as enthusiasts. This work needs champions and advocates across all interest-holder groups.
- Populate the Steering Committee with Community School experts, students, parents/caregivers, educators, administrators/principals, key district staff, community members/organizations and businesses that reflect the community
- Decide on chair and member appointment procedures, terms, and roles. The committee should collectively select a chair or co-chairs and nominate members.
- Ensure inter-disciplinary or cross-departmental district-level membership and participation. Limited participation can result in siloed work. Multi-departmental participation increases the level of district-wide alignment.

2. Develop the roles, agendas, and cadence for Steering Committee meetings.

- The facilitator or co-chairs should meet with key implementation staff to co-develop the agenda of each Steering Committee meeting.
 - Once established, a typical Steering Committee meets monthly or quarterly and subgroups meet between those meetings as necessary.
- Develop a calendar of meetings.
- Develop a meeting format including time to hear from sites and district leadership on implementation updates and current needs.
- Establish subcommittees for members to support various needs, and ensure distributed/balanced membership.
- Co-develop steering committee bylaws.
- Consider facilitation both in form and in leadership. Some Steering Committees involve a trusted intermediary in the form of a nonprofit. Others rotate facilitation among sub-committee members. Meetings benefit from facilitation that ensures equity of voice, access to and processing time of pertinent information, and shared leadership structures.

3. Adopt collaborative decision-making procedures.

- Include ample time for discussion and employ protocols that ensure equity of voice.
- When possible, use consensus, but use a majority vote when a consensus cannot be reached.

4. Develop subcommittees to lead, track and sustain the work of the key roles of the Steering Committee: Funding, Community School Selection, Support Implementation, Evaluation, Awareness, and Policy advocacy.

- Establish subcommittees for members to support various needs and goals.
- Develop charters and timelines for each subcommittee.
- Develop a rotating calendar for each sub-committee to report to the larger Steering Committee.

5. Develop and revisit the Community School vision, policy and guidance documents.

- Ensure that all Steering Committee members understand the Community School model's evidence-based practices and research, as well as all district-level evidence of need and impact.

- Update the site and school-level guidance document regularly. Updates to the guidance document should center on key learnings that will improve existing practices.
- Respond to the needs articulated by the stakeholders involved in the Community Schools. While most needs can be met on a school and local level, there are always needs that schools and communities can't meet, as well as needs experienced across sites that may warrant a larger system-level response.

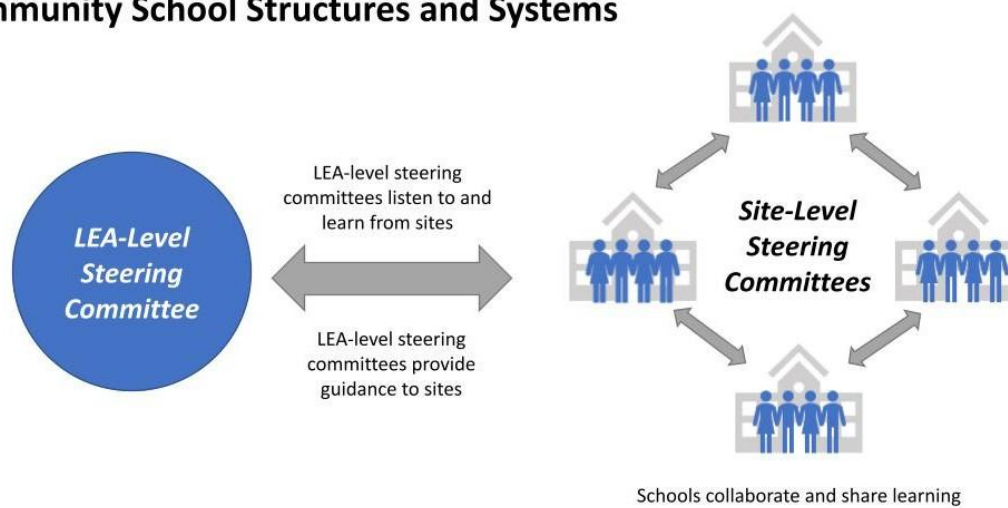
6. Develop a two-way communication cycle between the district, school sites, and the Steering Committee teams, as well as communication with the community at large.

- Plan for quarterly (at a minimum) engagement between the Steering Committee and school sites, focusing on implementation status and exploring what supports are necessary to help schools achieve their vision.
- Ensure a shared community-wide awareness of and commitment to the Community Schools initiative.
- Ensure equitable access and communication related to the Community School strategy messaging across the LEA – including language access, differing abilities and culturally relevant practices.

7. Recognize and address the complexity of both launching and sustaining a Steering Committee.

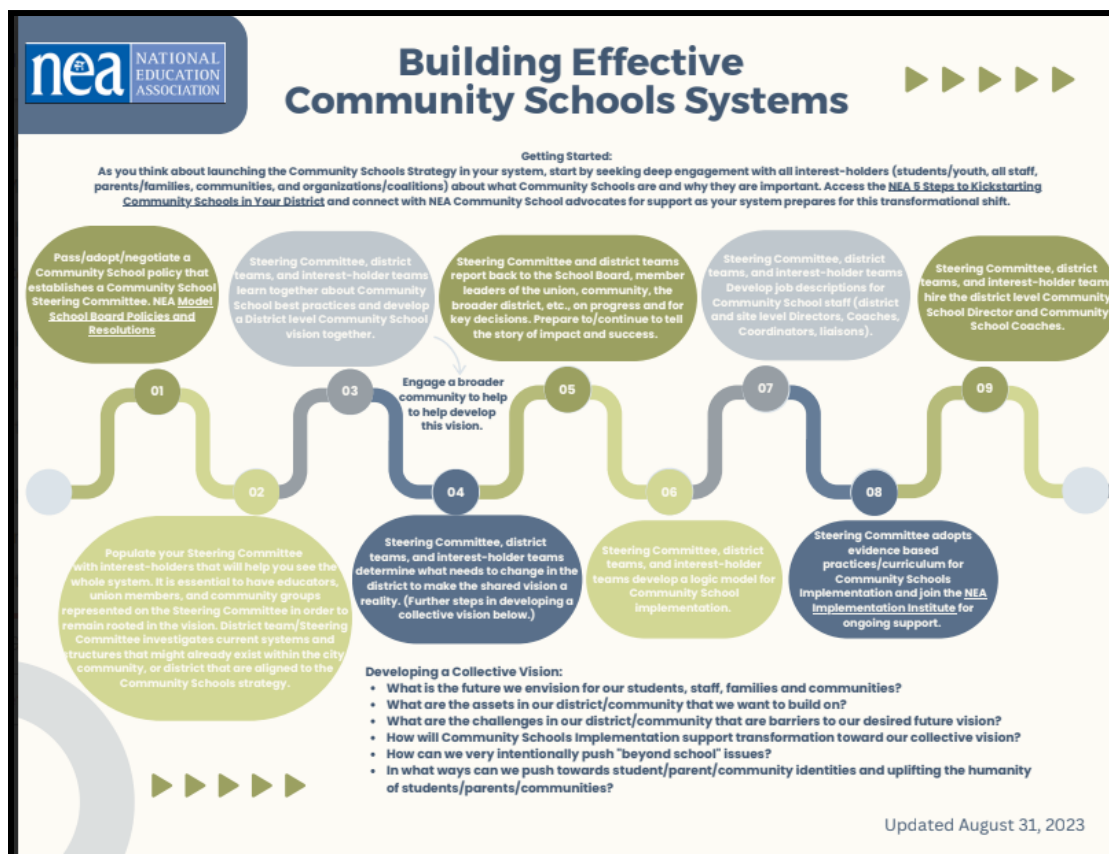
- Ensure understanding of the Community School strategy and ongoing capacity building for all Steering Committee members.
- Support the mindset work necessary to move away from a top-down culture and toward systems of shared leadership.
- Attend to relational trust and power dynamics. Protect time each meeting to build community within the team and to review or recommit to your shared leadership beliefs and practices.
- Sustain the health of the Steering Committee. Plan for reviews of the Committee's function, culture, health, and productivity.
- Articulate succession and onboarding plans to address both exiting and entering committee members, as well as changes in district-level staffing. Identify appropriate onboarding information related to Community Schools and the Steering Committee work.

Community School Structures and Systems



Community Schools: A Capacity Building Strategy

The full implementation of collaborative leadership-based Community Schools requires time and concerted efforts. Steering Committees guide and reflect on implementation and support capacity building over time. [The NEA Building Effective Community Schools Systems Roadmap](#) illustrates and situates the Steering Committee inside of the overall Community Schools Strategy and implementation.



Appendix A: Resources

Topic/Role	Resources
Overall	Community Schools and Co-Governance
Funding	Financing Community Schools
Selection Process	LAUSD Application Process Examples 5 Steps to Kickstarting Community Schools in Your District
Support Implementation	The Six Pillars of Community Schools Toolkit PDF LEA Self-Assessment Tool NEA Community School Strategy School Level Implementation (NEA site-level benchmarks) NEA Community School Benchmarks Self-assessment Building Effective Community School Systems NEA Building Effective Systems Self Assessment MOCHA Framework - MOCHA Chart Template
Evaluation	Building a Community School Systems Measurement Worksheet
Awareness	San Diego Unified Community School Google Site Community Schools Fact Sheet PDF Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence Community Schools: An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement PDF
Policy	Draft BOE resolution San Diego Sample BOE Language and MOUs Strengthening Public Schools for Student Success: School Board Policies and Resolutions
Steering Committee Formation Resources	Sample bylaws for the Las Cruces Partnership for Community Schools Baltimore City Community Schools Steering Committee Baltimore County Public Schools: Community Schools Stakeholder Steering Committee Leading By Convening Collaborative Decision-Making in Community Schools Shared Decision making: First to Five methodology. Sample School vision: Explore Community School Nashville, TN

	Sample District Vision: • San Diego Unified, San Diego , CA • Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, WI
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