National Center *for* COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The Four Critical Capacities for Community Schools

The National Center for Community Schools provides support for the development of community schools based on a wide range of models and programs in practice around the country and world. Recognizing that the needs of the child are complex, and the social contexts for their education diverse, planning for community schools is a specifically local and intensive process that demands the support of knowledgeable, experienced guides. The Center's mission is to provide capacity-building consultation to those who choose the community schools strategy to improve the conditions within which children grow and learn. We provide facilitation, coaching and training as schools, their community partners, districts, states and private funders build effective infrastructure.

Through its work with more than 1000 adaptation partners, the Center has developed a capacity-building methodology incorporating the lessons of all of the major models, as well as adaptations of its own prominent New York experience. It has been developed around Four Capacities essential to community schools and the Practices and Activities that each entails.

Comprehensiveness – **Responsiveness to a wide spectrum of identified needs by marshalling the full complement of partnership resources**

Whole Child Developmental Approach
- Enriched learning
- Youth development
- Family strengthening

Needs Assessments & Resource Allocation
- Formal and informal input from stakeholders
- Assessing in-school services, existing partners, community prospects
- Identifying gaps and priorities, selecting strategies

Asset-based, High-quality Program Development
- Child and Youth development (cognitive, social, emotional, physical, moral), OST programming
- Family Support, engagement and empowerment
- Health and mental health services
- Community and economic development

Collaboration – **Structured involvement of all stakeholders: educators, parents, students, funders, community members, providers, policymakers**

Engagement
- Outreach strategies/communications
- Continuing the relationship
- Leadership development

Partnership Development
- Relationship building
- Partner recruitment
- Roles clarification and shared responsibility

Shared Leadership
- Forming coordinating bodies/governance structures
- Power-sharing, roles, structure, oversight
- Integrating CS governance with existing school structures

Coherence – Intentional alignment of resources around shared results: coordinated and integrated systems of management

Program Integration and Oversight
- Facilitating school-provider relationships
- Managing partnerships and accountability

School/Partner Relationships
- Role of Lead Partner, including role of CBO Director
- Partnership agreements, MOUs – managing expectations, accountabilities

Coordination
- Role of Site Coordinator: Partner, planner, broker, logistical manager, outreach
- Recruiting partners
- Initiative level resource and policy coordination
- Agreements - expectations, accountabilities
- Systems of referral, outreach, and communication

Commitment – Sustainability planning and activities that are employed from the start

Shared Vision and Results
- Creating a Results Framework (outcomes, indicators)
- Accountability
- Using data, sharing the results

Building Public Will and Participation
- Individual and organizational outreach
- Connecting to other community efforts
- Growing champions
- Marketing and fundraising

Evaluation
- Effective sharing of relevant data
- Assessment of both processes and outcomes (impact)
- Continuous improvement based on shared data

Capacity-building
- Skill development, facilitation, coaching at all levels
- Institutionalized capacity-building functions