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Formalizing a Collective Purpose: Building on Collaborative Leadership for Shared Success

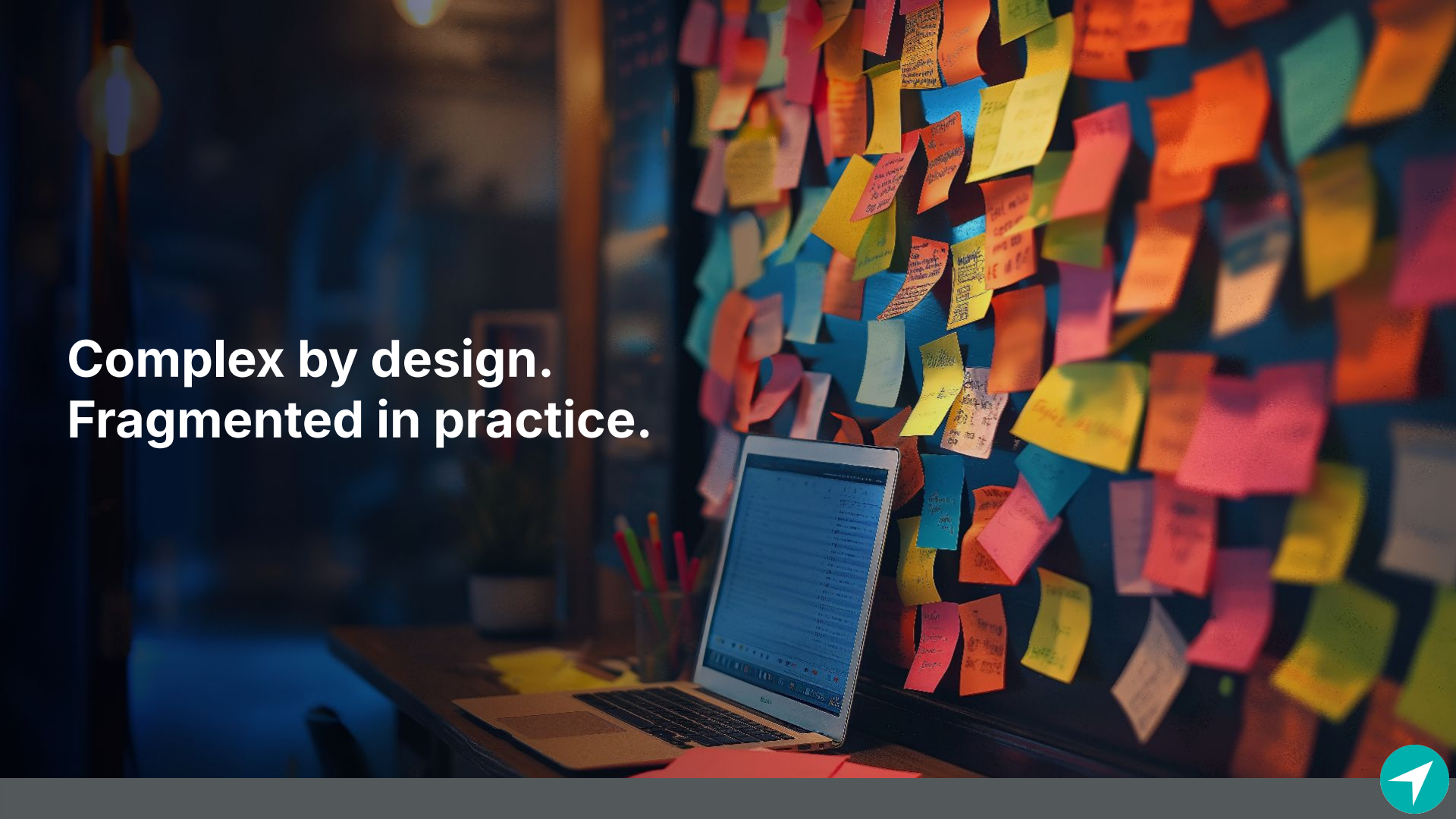
Objectives

By the end of this workshop you will:

- Examine your school site's shared purpose and identity
- Explore asset driven strength based practices to engage students and families.
- Reflect on instructional practices.
- Define shared commitments and collective priorities.

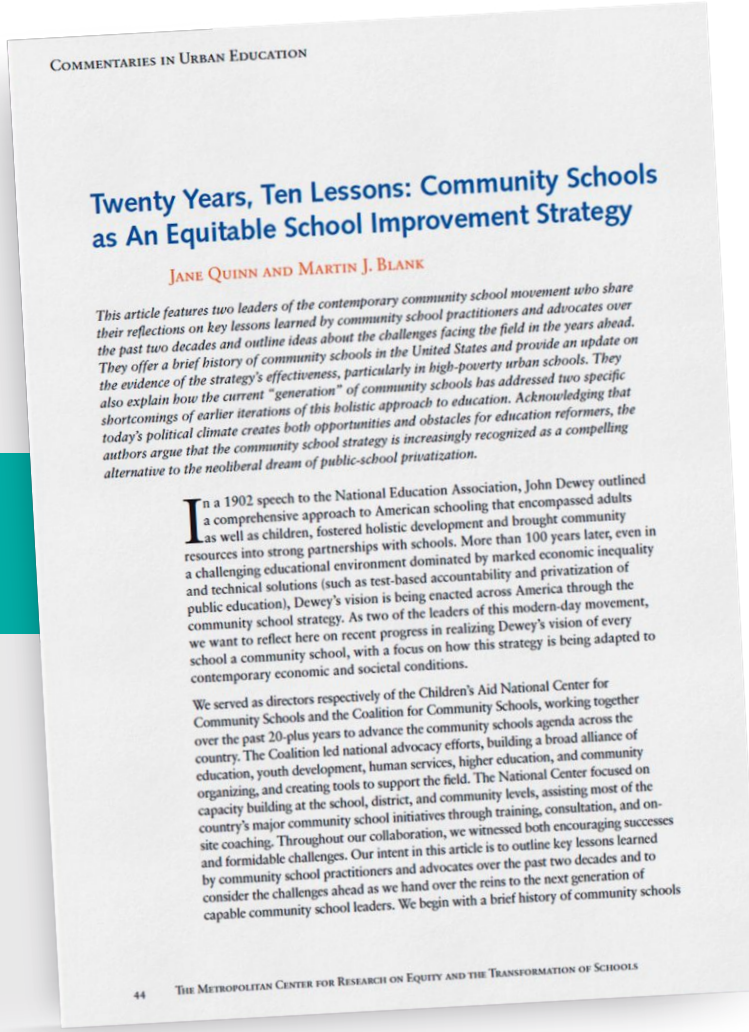



A community school is not
a set of programs. It's a system.


Complex by design.
Fragmented in practice.

Let’s take a deep dive into What have we learned…

Take a moment to review the reading [Twenty Years, Ten Lessons](#).



Commentaries in Urban Education

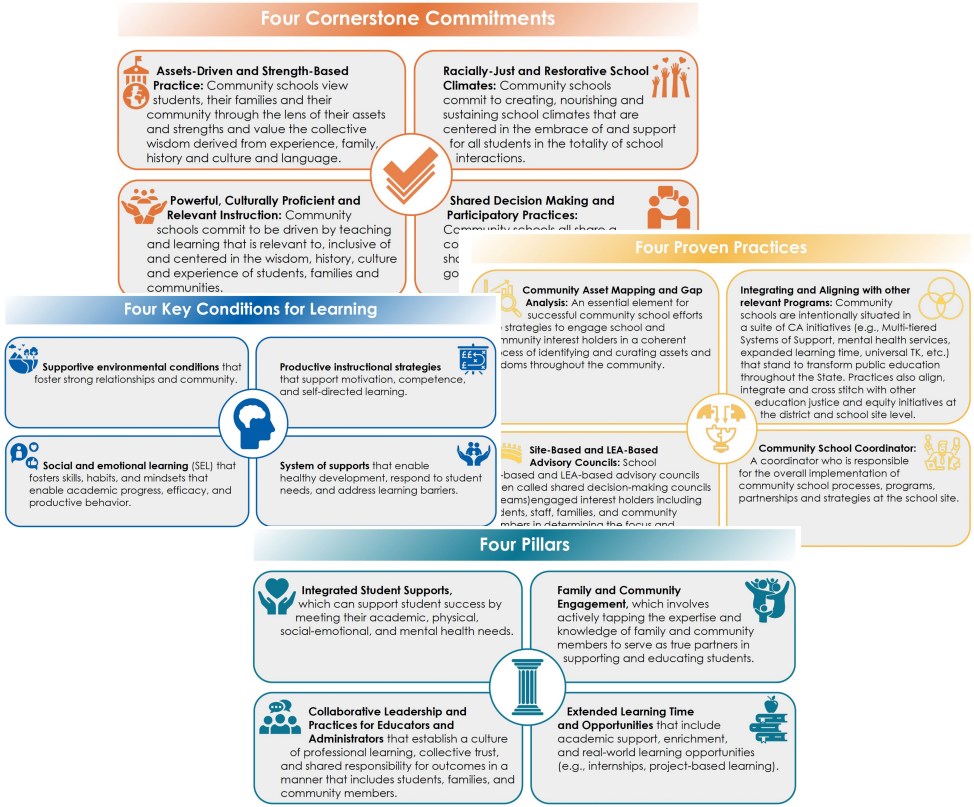
Twenty Years, Ten Lessons: Community Schools as An Equitable School Improvement Strategy

Jane Quinn and Martin J. Blank

This article features two leaders of the contemporary community school movement who share their reflections on key lessons learned by community school practitioners and advocates over the past two decades and outline ideas about the challenges facing the field in the years ahead. They offer a brief history of community schools in the United States and provide an update on the evidence of the strategy's effectiveness, particularly in high-poverty urban schools. They also explain how the current "generation" of community schools has addressed two specific shortcomings of earlier iterations of this holistic approach to education. Acknowledging that today's political climate creates both opportunities and obstacles for education reformers, the authors argue that the community school strategy is increasingly recognized as a compelling alternative to the neoliberal dream of public-school privatization.

In a 1902 speech to the National Education Association, John Dewey outlined a comprehensive approach to American schooling that encompassed adults as well as children, fostered holistic development and brought community resources into strong partnerships with schools. More than 100 years later, even in a challenging educational environment dominated by marked economic inequality and technical solutions (such as test-based accountability and privatization of public education), Dewey's vision is being enacted across America through the community school strategy. As two of the leaders of this modern-day movement, we want to reflect here on recent progress in realizing Dewey's vision of every school a community school, with a focus on how this strategy is being adapted to contemporary economic and societal conditions.

We served as directors respectively of the Children's Aid National Center for Community Schools and the Coalition for Community Schools, working together over the past 20-plus years to advance the community schools agenda across the country. The Coalition led national advocacy efforts, building a broad alliance of education, youth development, human services, higher education, and community organizing, and creating tools to support the field. The National Center focused on capacity building at the school, district, and community levels, assisting most of the country's major community school initiatives through training, consultation, and on-site coaching. Throughout our collaboration, we witnessed both encouraging successes and formidable challenges. Our intent in this article is to outline key lessons learned by community school practitioners and advocates over the past two decades and to consider the challenges ahead as we hand over the reins to the next generation of capable community school leaders. We begin with a brief history of community schools



Multiple Frameworks

Multiple Initiatives

One School.

What are we trying to accomplish?

"The long-term measure of success for the CCSPP is the establishment and expansion of learning supports, learning opportunities, community-rooted and culturally relevant instructional practices, positive and nurturing school climates, and strong partnerships that better serve the needs of students and families, resulting in improved student outcomes."

2023-24 California Community Schools Partnership program: Implementation Grant

The Overarching Values of Community Schools

Value 1: Racially-Just, Relationship-Centered Spaces



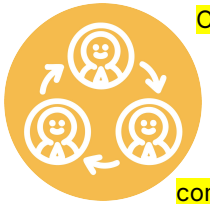
Community schools aim to build trust by bringing people together and authentically valuing diverse cultures, perspectives and strengths. A focus on relationships builds a positive school climate and culture that is racially-just, caring, identity safe and nurtures a sense of belonging. Racially-just, relationship- centered spaces also focus on establishing and sustaining positive and trusting relationships among students, families, educators, and community partners to build collaborative, supportive and sustainable spaces where everyone learns and grows together.

Value 2: Shared Power



Community schools are grounded in the belief that schools belong to all of us—students, families, school staff and the community. They are democratic spaces. Recognizing and building towards shared ownership and deep engagement, through shared decision-making and collaborative strategies, is vital to building a democratic, inclusive and empowering environment where all interest-holders feel that their expertise and commitment to the community is recognized and valued.

Value 3: Classroom-Community Connections



Community schools are continuously linking classroom instruction to the broader community. Instruction is engaging, providing real-world and project-based learning opportunities. It is interdisciplinary in nature and rooted in the assets of students, families, educators, and local community members. Curriculum is responsive to local history, knowledge, values, language, literature, institutions, culture, and environments. Community schools ground student learning in civic engagement and address real-world issues.

Value 4: A Focus on Continuous Improvement



Working together, community schools participate in an ongoing cycle of reflection, analysis, shared learning, and revision with a focus on student learning conditions, well-being and outcomes, and to ensure students, families, school staff and the community are valued, engaged and empowered. Community schools think beyond traditional metrics of educational success to reinvent systems of measurement rooted in asset-based, community-driven, and actionable data. Data becomes a tool for improvement that students, staff, families and community members can access, an instrument for reflection instead of an instrument of accountability – a flashlight, not a hammer.

"To meet the current moment, it is important not to view community schools as one initiative among many that are currently being funded in California districts, but rather as an equity-enhancing strategy that aligns with and can help coordinate and extend a wide range of state, school, and district initiatives."

California Community Schools Framework 2022

GREAT SCHOOLS

Every student deserves one



Collaborative Leadership and Practices



Family and Community Partnership



Expanded and Enhanced Learning Time



Integrated Student Supports

Goal: College, Career, and Life Success



Ultimately, it doesn't matter how great an educational idea or intervention is on paper...

What really matters is how it manifests itself in the day-to-day lived reality of schools.

-Sir Kevan Collins


HOW?

Setting the Stage



Consider this you are given have big rocks, little pebbles and sand. If you try to shove it in at the same time it’s not going to work. When you think about CS it’s similar. Take it a step at a time. Big rocks first, small pebbles, and sand... and look it fits!

This same concept applies to Community Schools! it is about being strategic and intentional about how you do the work.



Think about how to build the plan toward sustainability. The state gives you 5 years to build your system to transform your schools. But implementation takes more than 5 years. These steps will support you in making Community Schools sustainable.

If you'd like more information on The Five Steps check out this presentation.

The following slides dive deeply into the Foundations of Community Schools or Step One



Establish a shared understanding and purpose, a why, and a collective identity. Create momentum and accountability for the school's purpose that is shared by all. This allows school leaders to look at systems and structures through the lens of what we are trying to accomplish for all students, and tap into the collective wisdom and energy of the entire school community.

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STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
Collaborative Leadership	Shared Vision for Readiness	Universal Practices (Me to We)	School Performance Framework	Additional Supports
Shared Identity	Family & Community Engagement	Student Empowerment	Continuous Improvement Practices	Intentional Professional Learning
Shared Purpose	Effective Communication Process	Elevated Student Voice	Equitable Access (Individual)	Evaluation Processes
			Equitable Access (Programmatic)	Onboarding Practices
			Relationship Supporting Structures	Quality Hiring Practices
			Shared Mental Models	

Undeveloped | Visioning | Engaging | Transforming

Reflect on the statements of the ideal on the following slide.

Consider how you would rate your school community on a scale of 1-4 (1= low, 4= high).

What is going well? Where can you improve?

Shared Identity

The school community knows who they are and what they collectively value and believe.
Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **The identity reflects the values, beliefs, and mental models of the entire community.**
- **The identity includes a clear sense of purpose and a holistic set of outcomes for all students.**
- **The identity is well-known and embraced by all students, families, staff, and the community.**
- **The identity informs classroom and schoolwide structures and practices.**

Shared Purpose

The school community is united in preparing each and every student for life.
Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **The school community has a collective mindset that each and every student will be served well.**
- **Systemic decisions are made in alignment with the shared purpose.**
- **The shared purpose is embraced and advanced by all.**
- **The school community shares a commitment to ensuring everyone in the community has a sense of belonging, connection, and engagement.**

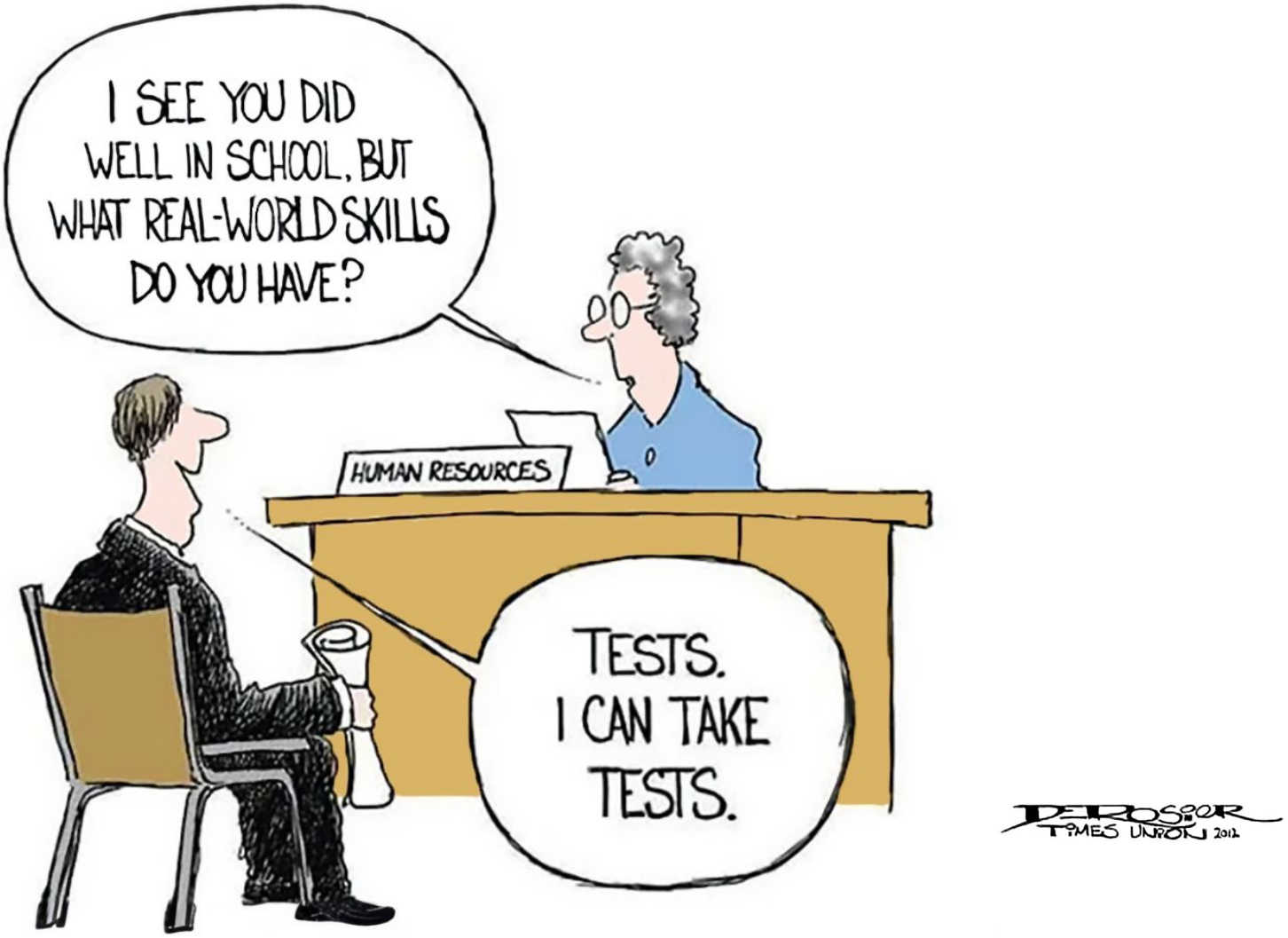
Collaborative Leadership

Decision making power is shared among key influencers throughout the school community.

Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **Decision-making practices are well-known, utilized, and involve consensus-building processes.**
- **All community members (students, families, staff, and the wider community) contribute to crucial decisions.**
- **Decision making includes students and families who are socially disadvantaged as well as those whose voices are typically not heard.**
- **Priority is given to students facing opportunity disparities in all schoolwide decisions.**
- **The leadership team is a collection of key influencers within and throughout the school community.**

The following slides dive deeply into Setting Goals and Taking Action or Step Two.


I SEE YOU DID WELL IN SCHOOL, BUT WHAT REAL-WORLD SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?
HUMAN RESOURCES
TESTS. I CAN TAKE TESTS.
DEROSIER
TIMES UNION 2012

Slope of the Curve | Working Nation





THE FOUR KEYS:
WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO THRIVE IN SCHOOL, CAREER, AND LIFE

Students today are growing up in a rapidly changing, interconnected, and often uncertain world. To thrive in this environment, they need more than academic knowledge. They need the mindsets, skills, and confidence to think critically, manage their learning, navigate life's transitions, and take meaningful action. The **Four Keys to College and Career Readiness (Four Keys)** framework provides a practical, research-grounded approach to support these competencies, helping educators and schools focus on what matters most: preparing students not just for graduation, but for life.

What are the Four Keys?

The **Four Keys** is a holistic framework that defines the broad range of knowledge, skills, and mindsets everyone needs to be successful in life. Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement and test scores, the **Four Keys** emphasize how students think, learn, act, and plan for their futures. By offering a common language and practical structure, it is designed to help educators support students in becoming self-directed learners who are equipped to adapt, contribute, and thrive.

Each Key represents a critical dimension of readiness:

- **Think** develops students' capacity to explore ideas, analyze information, solve unfamiliar problems, and engage deeply with complex questions and perspectives.
- **Know** builds strong academic foundations while helping students connect learning across disciplines, understand why knowledge matters, and recognize how identity and culture shape what is taught and learned.
- **Act** cultivates habits, strategies, and self-management skills students need to stay organized, motivated, and resilient, especially in environments where expectations are high and support is less structured.
- **Go** fosters a clear sense of identity, purpose, and direction, enabling students to navigate transitions, make informed decisions, and pursue meaningful goals with confidence and agency.

Why is this important?

For too long, readiness has been narrowly defined by test scores, GPA, or seat time. But these measures don't tell the full story of whether a student is prepared to succeed after high school. Readiness is multifaceted and includes how students think, learn, see themselves, and engage with the world. The **Four Keys** shift the conversation from what students know right now to what they'll need to continue learning, growing, and contributing in the future.

The framework also promotes equity by surfacing the hidden curriculum—the unspoken skills, mindsets, and systems knowledge that many students are expected to figure out on their own. By making these expectations explicit and teachable, the **Four Keys** help ensure that every student has the tools to navigate postsecondary opportunities, advocate for themselves, and shape their own future.

Take a moment to read the first two pages of The Four Keys Research Brief.

As you read note what stands out to you and consider the ways in which it emphasizes elements of the video we watched.

think

- critical thinking
- problem solving
- computational thinking
- curiosity
- creativity
- systems thinking
- metacognition



know

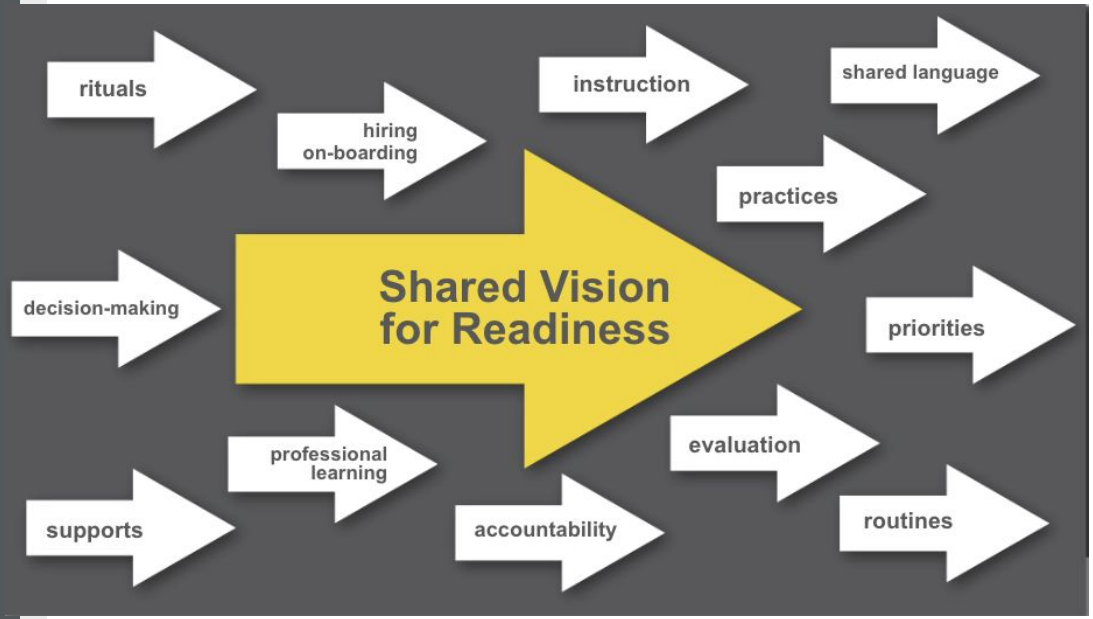
- content knowledge and skills
- foundational academic skills (reading, writing, math)
- AI, data, information and digital literacy
- growth/effort-based mindset
- cultural awareness

act

- self-direction
- goal setting
- collaboration
- persistence
- organizational skills
- time management
- autonomy

go

- post-secondary awareness
- cultural wealth
- compassion
- advocacy skills
- self awareness
- purpose / fulfillment
- well being - self-care



Your North Star for community school implementation is having a shared vision for readiness.

When your school community has a strong shared vision for readiness then we can align systems, such as community schools, to it.



Co-create a vision of the skills, dispositions, and behavior that you are trying to achieve for all students. Find a north star, and backwards map from that vision to create the goals and identify the actions that will get you there. School leaders strengthen bidirectional communication with the entire school community, including families, to partner in supporting students.

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Consider how you would rate your school community on a scale of 1-4 (1= low, 4= high).

What is going well? Where can you improve?

Shared Vision for Readiness

The outcomes the school community prioritizes for each and every student.

Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **The vision for readiness is holistic, balancing skills, dispositions, and knowledge.**
- **The vision for readiness influences both systemic decisions and instructional rituals and routines.**
- **Students can see the connection between their learning and their future plans.**
- **The vision for readiness reinforces the strengths of students who are furthest from opportunity.**

Effective Communication Processes

Communication structures are simple, clear and well known throughout the school community.
Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **The Communication is bi-directional, encompassing both formal and informal structures.**
- **Communication structures prioritize meeting the needs of and reaching those furthest from opportunity.**
- **Intentional listening emphasizes what is good and positive.**
- **Communication structures strengthen the school's identity and reinforce the shared vision for readiness.**

Family and Community Engagement

The school community purposefully works together to ensure all students get what they need.
Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **The school has implemented robust systems and processes to cultivate family/parent partnerships.**
- **Resources are allocated to prioritize family and community engagement, supporting the vision for readiness.**
- **The school has established effective systems to foster partnerships with community-based organizations, ensuring all students attain outcomes aligned with the vision for readiness.**
- **Existing partnerships are supported to recognize the value of family and community-based collaborations, serving all students effectively.**
- **Teaching staff leverage relationships with families and community-based partnerships and incorporate them into their instructional practice.**

The following slides dive deeply into Student Centered Learning Focus or Step Three.

An Invitation to Dream…

1. **Read** and annotate an excerpt from “Radical Dreaming for Education Now” by Jamila Dugan.
2. **Reflect** on your radical dream in the writing space provided.
3. **Share** your reflection with your table and the greater group!



"As a critical part of the evolution of community schools, today's community schools are taking to heart an essential lesson learned-a good student support system cannot compensate for a weak core instructional program that is not responsive to individual student development and learning needs (including social, emotional, and cognitive)."

California Community Schools Framework 2022



Understand what needs to happen in the classroom to make the shared vision for students a reality. Start with classroom practices and community based and asset based learning to create understanding and relevance, so students can learn what they are supposed to learn and develop the skills they need to be successful. Share strategies that enable students to see the relevance of what they are learning, and empower students to have voice and choice and reflect on their learning.

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Universal Practices

Consistent approaches or strategies implemented across all classrooms and settings.

Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **Universal practices are designed to foster a sense of belonging, connection, and engagement for each and every student.**
- **Universal practices align with the shared vision for readiness.**
- **Classrooms have a common language and shared rituals, reinforcing the shared vision for readiness.**
- **The talent pipeline (hiring, onboarding, professional learning, and evaluation) embraces a shared set of universal practices.**

Student Empowerment

Each and every student has agency and autonomy in their learning journey.

Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **The student experience is guided by student goals and interests and emphasizes self-knowledge and student agency.**
- **Approaches to learning (universal practices and student supports) are shaped by student voice, choice, and purpose.**
- **Each and every student engages in an empowering and inclusive learning environment.**
- **The student learning experience includes regular self-reflection and connects learning to their short and long term goals.**

Elevated Student Voice

Students' ideas, experiences, and identities are centered in decisions that shape what and how they learn.

Scale: 1- 4 (1= low, 4= high)

- **Feedback about the student experience in school is systematically gathered, disaggregated by demographics, and used at various points throughout the school year.**
- **Learning experiences prioritize student voice and choice, putting students at the center.**
- **Students actively participate in shaping the individual and programmatic decisions that impact their learning journey.**
- **Each and every student voice is represented in classroom and schoolwide decisions, fostering inclusivity and active engagement.**

What are we trying to accomplish?

"The long-term measure of success for the CCSPP is the establishment and expansion of learning supports, learning opportunities, community-rooted and culturally relevant instructional practices, positive and nurturing school climates, and strong partnerships that better serve the needs of students and families, resulting in improved student outcomes."

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