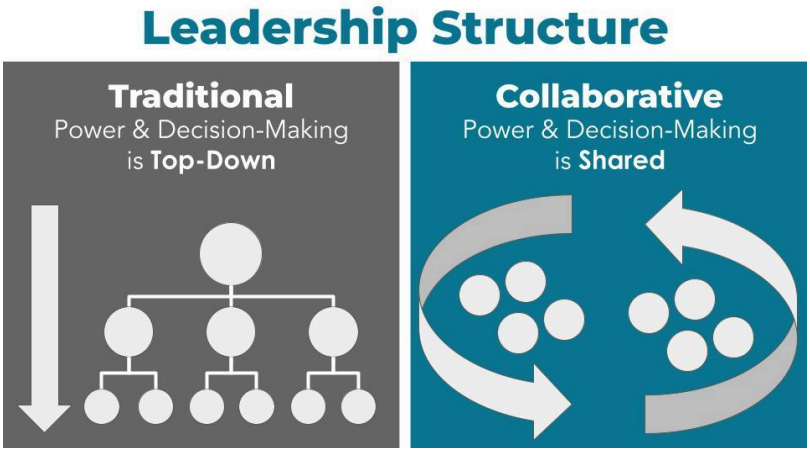
STATE TRANSFORMATIONAL ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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, as a cornerstone commitment in California's Community Schools and as a key capacity-building strategy, seeks to disrupt the longstanding power imbalance occurring in communities where young people and families have been historically marginalized and underserved. With a commitment towards relationship-centered and racially-just schools, collaborative leadership becomes the mechanism that helps move and sustain the community schools strategy towards transformation.

Collaborative leadership in community schools is the intentional and systematic shift in power that allows for greater representation and collaboration between all interest holders. A traditional model of school leadership demonstrates 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 greatly impacted by the decisions. A shared decision-making model, distributed in leadership, has dynamic teams that allows more individuals to have a role in leading the efforts of the community school strategy. The shared leadership teams can 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 are sharing in power, have a sense of ownership and center the decisions on student and community wellbeing for greater impact and alignment.



What is the purpose of collaborative leadership?

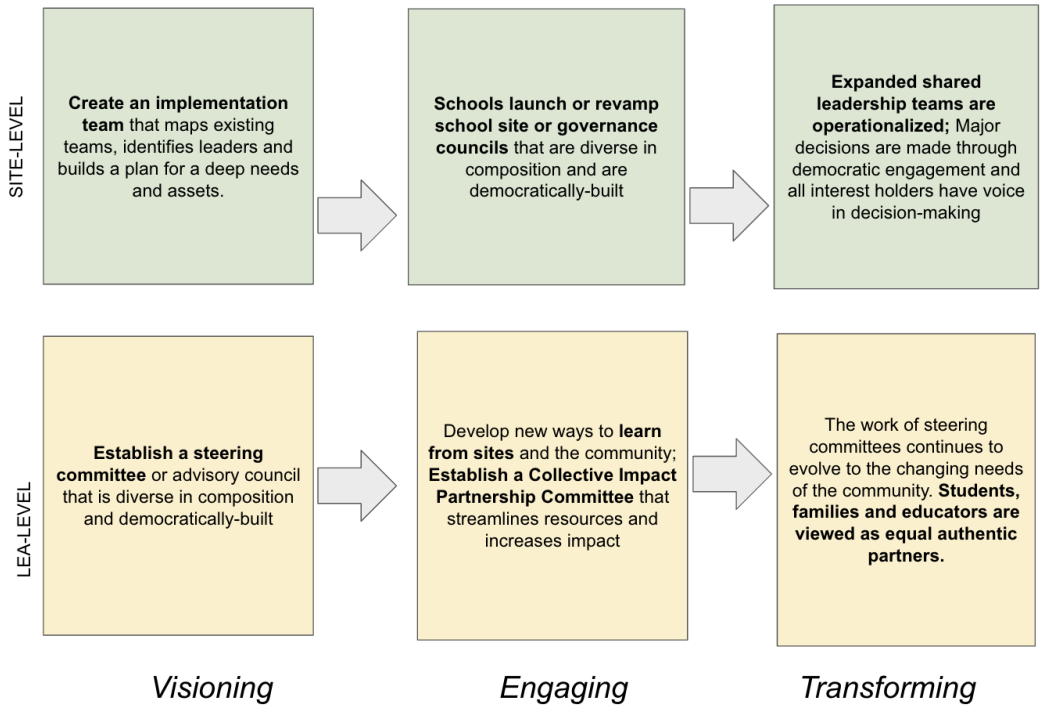
When decisions are aligned to the goals of the community, community schools can set the stage for transformation. When done with intentionality, collaborative leadership can improve the outcomes for young people and build a system that ensures alignment and coherence between all interest-holders. Collaborative leadership can:

- Provide the necessary system for **integration and access of resources** that are needed by students and families in community schools.
- Create spaces for **collective problem-solving and possibility-thinking** to meet the pressing needs of students and the community. This allows schools to develop innovative learning programs and support systems that are aligned to the needs and assets of the community. Collaborative leadership has a demonstrated impact on student achievement.
- **Uplift the expertise of educators and the impact** they have as change-makers. Schools with shared leadership models, have greater educator retention and overall work-place satisfaction as compared to traditional models, thus allowing for greater consistency and stable learning environments for young people.
- **Strengthen the commitment** of all interest-holders to envision-racially-just and relationship-centered schools that disrupt historical and societal inequities.
- **Establish coherence and alignment across site and LEA system-level operations** that increases commitment and improves the impact of initiatives.

For community schools to be supported to fully thrive and transform over time, the larger system must establish the necessary conditions to allow for the full expertise, agency and voice of the community to guide school transformation. States, LEA's and school districts can pave the way in disrupting the historical inequities that have systematically excluded the voice of students, families and educators; alongside with schools, the larger system must simultaneously transform itself. Collaborative leadership creates opportunities for greater multidirectional communication and the scalable system for the community school strategy.

Collaborative Leadership: A Capacity Building Strategy Across the Stages

The full implementation of collaborative leadership, requires time and concerted efforts. In California Community Schools, The Capacity Building Strategies envision collaborative leadership as evolving across the stages of *visioning*, *engaging* and *transforming*. The following are ways schools and LEA's can establish shared leadership bodies that share in decision-making authority and are interwoven for increased impact.



Mindsets of Community School Leaders: Successful collaborative leadership requires a major mindset shift to be established for full implementation of the community school strategy. A collaborative leadership mindset is one where all interest-holders, across LEA's, sites and partner organizations have a reflective habit of understanding their own positionality, individual and institutional power. Community school leadership shares a commitment in distributing power to uplift the voices of groups who have historically been excluded from power and is especially set to flourish in spaces where:

- Relationship-building is at the center
- Deep listening is a practice
- Trust is cultivated
- Self-reflection is ongoing

Collaborative leadership is the intentional practice of creating various spaces where listening is prioritized and where students, families and educators have a say in the vision, goals and outcomes for their school community. Leaders of community schools allow others to also lead and cultivate spaces for possibility-thinking.

Mindsets of Community School Leaders Questions for Reflections	
Relationship-building	How can I create relationships that build trust instead of transactional experiences?
Deep listening	What can I learn from listening to those closest to the pain?
Cultivating Trust	How might an individual's or community experiences affect the level of trust between us? What is my role in building trust?
Self-Reflection	How might my identity or positionality impact collaborative spaces and processes? What individual or institutional power do I have to transform systems that disrupt inequities?

Building Participatory Teams

Prior to decision-making and deep collaboration, the following practices are foundational in a transformational community school.

1. Center relationship-building and trust
2. Allocate ample time for meaningful collaboration, problem-solving and possibility-thinking.
3. Ensure access in language, time and actively recruit and support the participation of interest-holders who have been historically marginalized and underserved in schools.
4. Engage in courageous conversations about power, racism and the various forms of oppression that impact school communities. Reflect on leadership's role dismantling inequalities inherent in school systems.
5. Establish clear norms, processes and outcomes in shared leadership teams. Successful teams rotate roles, facilitation and have ways to communicate their progress with a larger community.

The Role of Community School LEA's in Collaborative Leadership

LEA's can increase the access and coordination of resources by removing barriers that allow for meaningful partnerships to be established in ways that increase resources for whole child support. By operationalizing decision-making bodies such as steering committees and codifying shared commitments such as bylaws and memorandums of understandings, LEA's can set the foundation for collaborative leadership that is sustained over time. LEA's can develop the infrastructure necessary for increased alignment, cohesion and practices of deep listening that center the voices of students, families and educators.

Create an LEA Steering Committee - A Step by Step Process

- Step 1: Establish a policy that establishes a Community School Steering Committee.
- Step 2: Ensure the membership of the steering committee is democratically built and includes all interest-holders including students, caregivers, educators and community partners that will help you see the whole system.
- Step 3: Learn together about community school best practices and mindset shifts
- Step 4: Co-create a vision for the steering committee and the overall community school strategy.
    - Ensure your vision is grounded in the listening of the broader community
- Step 5: Determine the changes needed in your district to make the vision a reality
- Step 6: Establish agreements and possible autonomies between schools and LEA's that outline greater areas of decision-making to improve impact of the community school strategy. See example flexibilities in the chart below.
- Step 7: Develop processes for team reflection and assessment of impact. Engage in a process of continuous improvement

Create a Collective Impact Partnership Committee:

In addition to establishing steering committees that are representative of various interest-holders, LEA's create a Collective Impact Partnership that convenes various community partnerships that focus on improving resources and to streamline collaborative efforts. The committee utilizes data to assess efforts and improve outcomes that benefit students and the wellbeing of the community.

Areas of Autonomies

Steering committees determine potential areas of site autonomies to improve the impact and ownership of the community school strategy. In schools with distributed models, autonomies are determined and agreed upon by schools and their LEA's to help improve student learning. School autonomies can create the foundation for innovative programs that best meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Example autonomies for shared decision-making

Program and Policies	Personnel	Operational
• School-level policies • Learning Programs • Professional Development • Determining Assessments • Broadening Assessment	• Selecting colleagues • Selecting leaders • Evaluation Processes • Transferring or Termination of colleagues • Work agreements	• Budget • Compensation • Work hours • School schedules • Staffing

Seeing The Systems: Mapping Current Systems and Existing Teams

To build the capacity of collaborative leadership at school sites, the following exercises can help begin the process of analyzing the existing teams and systems at school sites.

Exercise 1: Map Existing Teams

The process of mapping helps teams to understand the community and the context in which the current leadership teams are operating. Mapping teams can support the needs and assets assessment. The process is ideally grounded in a team and facilitated by the community school coordinator. The goal of mapping is to gather information on the ways various teams operate and identify the goals and priorities of the teams. In order to successfully map the school leadership teams, the facilitator at first initiates contact as an observer and listener to assess the health of the group, norms and the work plan of the group. The coordinator builds opportunities to build relationships with the group and can ultimately use the information to provide recommendations for improvement of the leadership teams.

Exercise 2: Map Potential Staff, Student, Parent/Caregiver Leaders

The community school coordinator and the existing implementation team begins the process of identifying potential leaders and allies in the community school strategy. The coordinator creates opportunities for 1:1 conversations to gauge individual interest, excitement towards the community school strategy. The strategy of individual conversations is key in building a shared commitment while also building trust. Leadership identification provides an entry point in expanding leadership opportunities for various interest-holders.

Exercise 3: Map Existing Staff's Commitment and Capacity

Prior to implementing a transformational shared leadership team, a community school coordinator and implementation team might also engage in the process of mapping the current staff. This practice will allow the coordinator and implementation team to identify the level of influence, commitment and individual capacity towards the community school strategy. This may also support the coordinator and implementation team in identifying potential entry points in school transformation efforts and value.

Exercise 4: Map Current Initiatives, Projects, and Program Goals

Schools map all initiatives, projects and programs currently in place at school sites. Mapping the goals and progress of the existing initiatives can help in identifying potential areas of improvement or ways to streamline efforts for greater impact.

Establishing Site-Level Teams:

In true collaborative leadership teams, all staff members of the school are engaged in meaningful decision-making through representative systems and are part of learning communities that foster their ability to impact learning and improve school climate. Students, families and committed partners are also in various shared decision-making bodies and area thriving part of the school community. . Though not an extensive list, the following are possible ways shared decision-making can be operationalized in community schools.

Step 1: Build a Community School Initial Implementation Team (CSIT)

At the site-level, in the initial community schools planning and implementation stages, schools should designate a site-based team with various interest-holders to support the efforts of school transformation. The membership of the initial Implementation team may include the community-school coordinator, an administrator, counselors, teachers and any other interested members. This team is responsible for developing a plan for a deep needs and assets assessment and supporting the coordinator in facilitating the mapping of the existing shared leadership teams. As schools move through the stages of implementation, the initial implementation team's needs may evolve and may become part of a greater decision-making body as determined by the needs and assets assessment.

Step 2: Establish a School Site Council (SSC)/ School Governance Council:

The school-site council or school governance council is a decision-making body composed of diverse members who are elected by interest-holders that include students, families, teachers, administrators and partners. SSC's are responsible for determining bylaws and outlining areas that support the advancement of the vision of the school. They may develop decision-making processes in areas such as budget, staffing and sustainability, and principal evaluation and election. The SSC/SGC's help determine the priorities from the needs and assets. They may also operationalize various advisory committees that include, but are not limited to partnership committees, parent advisory groups such as English Language Advisory Councils, Restorative Justice Steering committees and student groups.

Step 3: Create goal teams

A goal team is a group that comes together to focus on collective problem-solving and improvement science methodology to address challenges raised by the needs and assets assessment. Goal teams for example can focus on specific tasks, such as restorative practices, family engagement and school attendance.

Expanded Site-Based Leadership Teams:

At the site-level, in the *transforming* stage of collaborative leadership, major decisions are fully democratic, where processes are made clear and transparent. In addition to School Site and Governance Councils, expanded shared leadership teams are established as informed by the needs and assets of the community and are fully operationalized.

The expanded leadership teams may include but are not limited to parent advisory teams, student leadership groups and instructional teams. The expanded teams have clear purviews and shared agreements and a clear focus of continuous improvement. Transformational leadership teams align their goals, measures and outcomes to the vision and mission of the community school. Decision-making bodies are provided adequate collaboration time including during the school day to focus on possibility-thinking and collective problem-solving.

The following are ways in which distributive leadership can be further operationalized at site-levels, though they are not limited to the following teams:

- **Instructional Leadership Team:** Guide the school's instructional focus, they support the implementation and development of community-based-pedagogy to ensure teaching and learning is culturally-sustaining and centered on the needs of students. They advance the school's vision in the areas of teaching and learning at their community school. The membership of this team can include lead teachers, instructional coaches and administrators and they make collective decisions about curricular materials, instructional strategies and professional development in ways that are aligned to the vision and goals of the school.
- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Teams**: Are site teams that coordinate student and family supports. They identify needs of students across various tiers and subgroups, while ensuring a strong foundational support base for all students. Membership can include school site coordinator, Title 1 Coordinators, counselors, school social workers, psychologist and behavioral support staff and administrators. The team develops clear problem-solving protocols to measure impact and outcomes. Coordination and collaboration can be facilitated by a school-site coordinator, and the team makes decisions about student interventions, supports and coordination of services.
- **Professional Learning Communities or Grade-Level Teams:** May span across grades vertically or horizontally, with a specific learning focus. Collaboration can be interdisciplinary or multi-aged, where goals, measures and outcomes are clearly established by the teams. Lead teachers support in facilitating collective problem-solving methods such as plan-do study-act cycles and create the space for possibility thinking and collective problem-solving and improvement. The entire teaching staff is a part of a decision-making team that leads on socio-emotional learning, advisory programs, curriculum and assessment as aligned to the vision and goals of the school.

- **Operations Teams:** Are site teams that facilitate school-based operational decisions. The membership of this team can include, but is not limited to support staff, cafeteria workers, grounds and maintenance workers, supervision staff, office workers and administrators. They may facilitate decisions that include scheduling, staffing, supervision and school safety.
- **Parent/Caregiver Advisory Teams**: Are facilitated by parent leaders of the community school. Parent advisory groups lead on recommendations of instructional programs and school climate and they are composed of parents, caregivers, community representatives, administrators and school coordinators. They can include groups such as English Language Learner Advisory Councils and Student Achievement Plan Advisory Councils etc.
- **Student Advisory Councils:** Are student leadership groups that provide recommendations on all areas that impact students. Areas of recommendation include but are not limited to school climate, curriculum and learning and access to resources.

Expanded Site-Based Shared Leadership Teams are established or revamped as informed by a deep needs and assets assessment. In the transforming stage, teams are guided by the collective vision of the school.

Site-Based Leadership Team	Membership Composition	Potential Areas of Impact
School Site Councils School Governance Council Site Steering/Advisory Council	Parents/Caregivers, Students, Teachers, Staff, Community Partners	• Parent Advisory Groups • Community Partnerships • Elect to work agreements, MOU's • Student Groups • Principal selection • Budget Decisions
Instructional Leadership Team	Lead Teachers Instructional coaches Administrators	• School instructional focus • Professional development • Instructional strategies and curriculum • Multiple modes of learning and assessment • Course offerings
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Teams	School site coordinators, counselors, social workers, psychologists,	• Student supports and interventions • Resource integration and alignment

	School health-workers Administrators, Advisory and Restorative Justice Leads, Administrators	• Advisory programs • Restorative justice practices • Parent/family engagement
Professional Learning Communities or Grade Level Teams	Teacher Teams, Paraeducators, Administrators	• Instructional strategies and curriculum • Community-based pedagogy implementation • Multiple modes of learning and assessment • Inclusion programs and supports for students with disabilities • Socio-emotional learning and advisory programs • Positive behavioral supports and restorative justice practices • Parent/family engagement
Parent Advisory Councils	Diverse parent/caregiver groups Administrators Coordinators	• Provide recommendations in focus areas of the community school such as English Language Learners and Student Achievement Plans
Student Advisory Councils	Diverse groups of students that advise the school on any areas that impact students.	• School climate • Access to resources • Learning programs • School policies
Operations Team	Support staff, cafeteria workers, grounds and maintenance workers, supervision staff, teachers, counselors, office workers, administrators	• Scheduling • Staffing • School climate

Team Mapping Template

Composition (Who is on the Team)	**How often they meet** (Time Frame)	**Where they meet**	**Goals/ Purpose**	**How are decisions made? Who makes them? What is the process?**	**How information is shared with the larger school community?**

Additional Resources

STAC Webinars on Collaborative Leadership
STATE TRANSFORMATIONAL ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
	• The following STAC webinars demonstrate the ways in which shared leadership can be operationalized across LEA'as and sites. Each webinar provides examples and voices from the field.
	  ○ April 6 STAC Webinar on Advancing Shared Leadership & Highlights from the Field - The slide deck can be found here.
	  ○ Feb. 9- STAC Webinar on Student Voice: The Heart of the Work The slide deck can be found here
	  ○ Sept 29 2022 STAC Webinar on the CCSPP Framework, Steering Committees and Distributive Leadership. The slide deck can be found here

LEA-Level Structures
NEA NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE of LEARNING CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STATE OF CALIFORNIA
UCLA Center for Community Schooling
	The NEA has created a practical guide for implementing shared leadership at district or systems level. In System-Level Structures for Effective Community Schools, leaders can find tips for a successful implementation of steering-committees and shared decision-making processes.
	
	In the Community Schools Playbook: Collaborative Leadership Practices, The Partnership for the Future of Learning has developed a set of policies to support LEA's in implementing shared leadership that is built on trust and shared responsibility. The California Partnership for the Future of Learning offers multilingual resources on Staffing for School Transformation: The Role of the Community School Coordinator in English, Spanish and Arabic.
	
	A Community School Case Study from the UCLA Center for Community Schools - Collaborative Leadership as the Cornerstone of Community Schools: Policy, Structures and Practice
	
	Field Examples of LEA structures:
	
	• Steering committee bylaws
	  ○ Los Angeles Unified
	  ○ San Diego Unified
	• Community Schools Contract Language
	• CTA Bargaining Language
	• Hoover High
	
	CCSPP Framework states, "The LEA can also assist in aligning initiatives and building systems to support continuous improvement." The following document discusses practices supportive of effective transformational leadership.

	Transforming Educational Systems Toward Continuous Improvement
School-Level Resources	The National Educators Association has created practical guides on developing and implementing site leadership teams. NEA resources on collaborative leadership can be found here. - CS Shared Leadership Structures. - Checklist for High Functioning Leadership Team - Decision Making in Community Schools - Organizational structure - Collaborative Leadership as the Cornerstone of Community Schools - NEA webinar on developing shared leadership - Course on Collaboration The guide Strategies for Creating Effective Leadership Teams identifies tools for implementing effective practices in site level teams. Partnership for the Future of Learning: SSC Self-assessment Creating Racially Just Indicators
The Roles and Voices of Interest-holders	*Administrators:* Teacher-Powered Schools is an organization that has documented diverse schools in shared leadership structures. The following resources can support leaders who are reimagining the role of the principal in a community school. - A guide on Collaborative Leadership for Thriving Teams: A Guide for Administrators - A webinar recording on The Role of Administrators at UCLA Community School *Families* The San Francisco Unified Website offers a variety of tools and best practices that can support districts in establishing shared leadership structures with families. • Share Power and Decision-Making • Building authentic relationships • Self-Assessment Checklist: How well is your school sharing power and practicing democracy? *Partnerships* The Education Development Center has developed a resource for district leaders to identify indicators of effective partnerships.The Partnership Effectiveness Continuum offers tools and practices that advance shared decision-making with partners.

Institute for Educational Leadership Innovation. Equity. Leadership.	NEA's Collaborating for Student Success Guidebook: https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Collaborating%20for%20Student%20Success%20Guidebook%202022.pdf *Teachers and Educators* • *Identifying complicated problems vs complex challenges* • Steps to creating a teacher-powered school through team-development stages • Collaborative Management Discussion Guide • Equity in Student-Centered Learning Guide • Improvement Team Roster Template *Young People* The Institute for Educational Leadership has developed a resource for schools looking to advance student voice, engagement and leadership. The practical guide, Youth voice in Community Schools offers a framework and case studies to help advance youth voice, engagement and leadership. Caliornians for Justice has a wide range of resources to support practitioners in ensuring authentic collaboration with students and to advance racially-just schools. Interest-holders should consider utilizing following tools: • Student Voice Continuum • Empathy Interview Guide • "Nothing About Us Without Us: Youth Voice, Power and Participation in East Side Union HIgh School District" • Local Control Funding https://caljustice.egnyte.com/dl/eaxUYNvVPr
Additional Resources	*Building and Supporting Effective Team Development and Collaboration* Elena Aguilar's has a range of team-development resources for building collaborative cultures. • Book*: The Art of Coaching Teams: Building Resilient Communities that Transform Teams* • Tools and courses can be found here An updated version on the Stages of Team Development through an Equity Lens can be found here Scarf Summary and a self-assessment tool - can help teams approach belonging from a neuroscience perspective.

	Evidence for Shared Leadership The following links are resources and literature that support a foundation for shared leadership. - Educational outcomes and civic participation for youth https://caljustice.egnyte.com/dl/fg5i1hSi69 - School Climate and Shared Leadership by the National School Climate Center - Strong Collaborative Relationships for Strong Community Schools by the National Education Policy Center - Building a community school system guide by IEL and the Coalition for Community Schools - SCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating and influencing others by Neuroleadership Journal Strategies for Creating Effective School Leadership Teams by William and Mary School of Education Technical Assistance - Evidence for Teacher-Powered Schools - Documented Practices of Teacher-Powered Schools - Quick facts on teacher-powered schools