COMMUNITY SCHOOL READINESS PLAYBOOK:

DISTRICT READINESS RUBRIC

Whole System Education Consulting LLC

COLORADO Department of Education

OFFICE OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The District Readiness Rubric is a diagnostic tool grounded in the Essentials for Community School Transformation framework.[1] Rather than assessing school districts for compliance, this tool helps Readiness Teams inventory existing assets and identify growth opportunities across two core sections:

1. Enabling Conditions (Self-Reflective Foundation)

Evaluates the relational and cultural readiness of the district: Trusting Relationships, Actionable Data, Shared Vision, and Inclusive Decision-Making.

2. Supportive Infrastructure (Systems Audit)

Examines institutional scaffolding requiring deeper artifact review: Shared Governance Structures, Continuous Improvement, Data Systems, Strategic Partnerships, Professional Learning, and Sustainable Resources.

> 💡 **Benchmarking Guidance:** Descriptive criteria in this rubric represent high-level, exemplar practice. Districts are not expected to meet top-tier performance across every area. Use the descriptions to identify current alignment along the continuum and inform future Exploration activities.

[1] Community Schools Forward. (2023). Framework: Essentials for community school transformation. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/project/community-schools-forward

Enabling Conditions

The four Enabling Conditions—**Trusting Relationships**, **Actionable Data**, **Shared Vision**, and **Inclusive Decision-Making**—form the core ecosystem of the *Essentials for Community School Transformation* framework. Functioning as a self-reinforcing system rather than separate silos, these conditions shift districts from rigid institutions into responsive, collaborative partners.

Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships are formed through social interactions within communities and environments. District-level trusting relationships create systemwide alignment through transparent communication, equity-focused data sharing, and shared governance. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for district-level self-assessment:

- **Equity & Data Transparency:** Disaggregates academic, attendance, and behavioral data by student demographic subgroups to center equity during public goal-setting conversations with families and partners.
- **Proactive Systemic Communication:** Maintains biweekly districtwide family communication channels with direct feedback mechanisms.
- **Inclusive District Governance:** Integrates structured public comment and dialogue into all Board of Education and District Accountability Committee (DAC) meetings to inform policy and programming.
- **Coordinated Family & Staff Capacity Building:** Deploys central office coordinators (CLDE, SPED, Family Engagement) to mentor school teams and establish direct, accessible pathways for families.
- **Shared Leadership & Co-Design:** Funds district leadership academies for families, staff, and partners—equipping them to co-design engagement strategies, serve as community ambassadors, and co-lead DAC initiatives.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***trusting relationships*** across your district?

What are some areas where strong trusting relationships currently exist, and what are the opportunities where trusting relationships can be or need to be built?

Existing Trusting Relationships:

Opportunities for Building Trusting Relationships:

Actionable Data

Districtwide data systems provide transparent, disaggregated, real-time evidence that unifies central office, site leaders, and community partners around equitable, whole-child outcomes. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for district-level self-assessment:

- **Balanced & Frequent Data Collection:** Combines real-time quantitative metrics (attendance, growth data, discipline) with qualitative insights (empathy interviews, home visits, surveys) to drive rapid mid-course adjustments.
- **Accessible & Disaggregated Dashboards:** Displays disaggregated metrics by student demographic characteristics on user-friendly dashboards to target achievement and opportunity gaps.
- **High Family Engagement & Satisfaction Rate:** Captures feedback from at least 70% of district families regarding community needs, district satisfaction, and system climate.
- **Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices:** Evaluates site-level implementation of academic, behavioral, and relational strategies to ensure fidelity and build trust across school communities.
- **Annual Community Asset Mapping:** Conducts annual asset mapping with families and partners to align local health, financial, and whole-child resources with student needs.
- **Policy & Accountability Alignment:** Benchmarks district performance against local, state (Colorado School Performance Framework), and federal (ESSA) standards.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***actionable data*** across your district?

What are some areas where strong actionable data currently exists, and what are the opportunities where strong actionable data is needed?

Existing Actionable Data:

Needed Actionable Data:

Shared Vision

A districtwide shared vision establishes systemwide coherence, embedding collective whole-child priorities into central office policy, site operations, and community communication. It defines the district's core values, long-term goals, and collective aspirations for student success. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for district-level self-assessment:

- **Systemic Decision-Making Anchor:** Aligns all academic, behavioral, and social-emotional programs, site budgets, and interventions across all schools with central strategic goals.
- **Inclusive Co-Creation:** Authentically engages district staff, site leaders, students, families, and community partners in defining long-term whole-child priorities.
- **Collective Accountability:** Cultivates a systemwide culture of shared responsibility for student outcomes across every school site.
- **Policy & Communications Alignment:** Formally embeds the vision into Board of Education policy and the district strategic plan, maintaining consistent messaging across all media and community platforms.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***a shared vision*** across your district?

How was your district's vision created? What are the strengths of your district's vision? What is needed to make it more impactful?

Strengths of the Current Vision:

Needed to Strengthen Impact:

Inclusive Decision-Making

Districtwide inclusive decision-making shifts governance from top-down administrative mandates to collaborative consensus-building with educators, families, youth, and community partners. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for district-level self-assessment:

- **Co-Governance in Resource Allocation:** Authentically engages diverse community stakeholders, especially underrepresented groups, to guide central budget allocations, curriculum choices, and whole-child supports.
- **Site-Level Interdisciplinary Empowerment:** Authorizes and supports multidisciplinary site teams (administrators, teachers, staff, families, students, community partners) to lead schoolwide decision-making.
- **Democratized Data Access:** Shares disaggregated data broadly across all stakeholder groups to collaboratively diagnose and eliminate systemic inequities.
- **Formalized Community Partner Integration:** Establishes formal MOUs and shared governance structures that embed partner and family voices into central office policy and budget development.
- **Consensus-Driven Governance:** Utilizes representative advisory bodies (e.g., DAC, Superintendent Advisory Councils) to co-develop district policy, including the Student Code of Conduct and strategic plans.

Self-Reflection

After reading the above description, what patterns or trends stand out to you regarding ***inclusive decision-making*** across your district?

What are some areas where inclusive decision-making currently exists, and where are the opportunities for integrating stronger inclusive decision-making?

Existing Inclusive-Decision Making:

Opportunities to Integrate Inclusive Decision-Making:

Supportive Infrastructure

The Supportive Infrastructure serves as the stabilizing and scaling foundation of the districtwide community school strategy. By unifying siloed central office departments and school sites, this infrastructure (shared governance, data systems, strategic partnerships, continuous improvement, professional learning opportunities, and sustainable resources) provides the essential scaffolding to sustain the four Enabling Conditions depicted in the *Essentials for Community School Transformation* framework. Together, these six supportive elements drive sustainable, districtwide institutional transformation.

Shared Governance Structures

Shared governance redistributes decision-making authority from central administration to collaborative stakeholder bodies—establishing formal mechanisms for co-leadership across the system. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for district-level self-assessment:

- **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Unifies central office staff, site administrators, educators, youth, families, and community partners to co-develop district goals, align budget priorities, and share accountability for student outcomes.
- **Policy-Codified Infrastructure:** Grounded in formal Board of Education policies that establish, legitimize, and fund the interdisciplinary teams, staffing roles, and operational processes needed to integrate community resources across all school sites.

Self-Reflection

In what ways does the district strategic plan prioritize whole-child metrics - such as mental health, chronic absenteeism, and social-emotional growth - alongside standardized test scores?

In what ways does district policy require annual assets and needs assessments that involve a broad spectrum of the community, or are strategic plans built primarily on internal district data?

District Accountability Committee

All school districts are required by Colorado state law (C.R.S. 22-11-301) to establish a District Accountability Committee (DAC). The DAC provides the system with a formal organizational structure and governance authority to advise on academic programs, district policy, budget allocations, and performance standards, as well as the implementation of evidence-based practices. A collaborative DAC is a prime example of Shared Governance Infrastructure in action.

Audit Instructions

1. **Identify Membership:** Complete the inventory table below to ensure all statutory stakeholder roles are represented.
2. **Evaluate Statutory Compliance:** Assess the extent to which your DAC actively fulfills its state-mandated advisory duties.
3. **Connect with DAC Leadership:** If you do not currently serve on the DAC or need clarification, schedule a brief consultation with your DAC Chairperson.

DAC Membership Roles	Notes
☐ At least three parents of students enrolled in the district; ☐ At least one teacher employed by the district; ☐ At least one school administrator employed by the district; and ☐ At least one person involved in business in the community within the district boundaries.	
DAC Responsibilities	**Notes**
☐ Recommending to its local school board priorities for spending school district moneys; ☐ Submitting recommendations to the local school board concerning preparation of the district's Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan (whichever is applicable); ☐ Reviewing any charter school applications received by the local school board and, if the local school board receives a charter school renewal application and upon request of the district and at the DAC's option, reviewing any renewal application prior to consideration by the local school board; ☐ At least annually, cooperatively determining, with the local school board, the areas and issues, in addition to budget issues, that the DAC shall study and make recommendations upon; ☐ Providing input and recommendations to principals, on an advisory basis, concerning the	

development and use of assessment tools to measure and evaluate student academic growth as it relates to teacher evaluations. ☐ For districts receiving ESEA funds, consulting with all required stakeholders with regard to federally funded activities; ☐ Publicizing opportunities to serve and soliciting parents to serve on the DAC; ☐ Assisting the district in implementing the district's parent engagement policy; and ☐ Assisting school personnel to increase parents' engagement with educators, including parents' engagement in creating students' READ plans, Individual Career and Academic Plans, and plans to address habitual truancy.	

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement embeds iterative, data-informed cycles into district operations—using Colorado's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) framework to drive sustained whole-child growth. Continuous improvement is the ongoing habit of making small, steady changes to do things better over time. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for district-level self-assessment:

> 💡 ***Action Tip:*** *Review your district's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) prior to completing this assessment. If you are not typically involved in the school's improvement planning team, consult with your district administration or District Accountability Committee (DAC) leadership to review current UIP targets.*

- **Systemic Improvement Cycles:** Engages in iterative cycles of continuous improvement to evaluate and optimize district performance, student learning, and overall system effectiveness.
- **Priority Alignment & Target Setting:** Focuses the District Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) on the most pressing challenges facing students and families, establishing clear, measurable growth targets.
- **Evidence-Based Root Cause Mitigation:** Deploys evidence-based major improvement strategies within the UIP to directly address root causes and drive progress across identified priority areas.
- **Actionable Execution & Course Correction:** Outlines a logical operational roadmap in the UIP for plan execution, progress monitoring, and mid-course strategy adjustments.
- **Site-Level Planning Support:** Maintains a robust support infrastructure to guide school teams through site-level UIP development, resource allocation, and implementation.
- **Systemwide Alignment:** Enforces a systematic review process to ensure school-level UIPs align seamlessly with broader district goals and strategic priorities.
- **Collaborative Whole-Child Diagnostic:** Approaches continuous improvement as an inclusive, whole-child diagnostic process co-designed with families, educators, and community partners, rather than a top-down administrative mandate.

Self-Reflection

How were the following stakeholder groups engaged in the improvement planning process?

- ☐ District Accountability Committee:
- ☐ District administration:
- ☐ District staff:
- ☐ Local Board (elected community members):
- ☐ Families:
- ☐ Students:
- ☐ Community members:

What are the strengths of the continuous improvement processes in your district? What opportunities are there to strengthen these processes?

Existing Strengths:

Opportunities to Strengthen:

Data Systems

Data systems establish the digital and operational infrastructure required to capture, analyze, and utilize real-time student and family information safely and effectively. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for site-level self-assessment:

- **Integrated Dashboards:** Deploys accessible visual dashboards combining real-time formative metrics, whole-child indicators, and annual summative outcomes.
- **Referral & Support Tracking:** Operates a districtwide system for managing and tracking student and family support service referrals.
- **Privacy & Partner Protocols:** Executes secure data-sharing MOUs with community partners to protect student privacy while coordinating care.
- **Root Cause Analysis:** Utilizes disaggregated data to thoroughly diagnose systemic challenges and patterns before selecting evidence-based interventions.
- **UIP Alignment:** Integrates needs assessment data directly into district and site-level Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) processes.

Self-Reflection

Refer to your Data Snapshot *(Phase 3)* and review the data systems in place in your district. Consider:

What is not currently being tracked or collected that you feel is important?

To what extent are the data systems in place accessible to key stakeholders beyond district staff?

What processes are in place to communicate district level data to families and the local community?

Professional Learning Opportunities

Professional learning establishes systemic capacity by aligning staff development, relational trust, and collaborative practice with whole-child student success. This learning fosters continuous professional improvement across all school sites. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for site-level self-assessment:

- **Student Outcome Alignment:** Delivers targeted professional learning opportunities that directly link educator, administrator, and staff development to measurable student growth and well-being.
- **Relational Trust & Student Engagement:** Offers specialized professional development focused on building positive, culturally responsive educator-student relationships.
- **Authentic Family Partnerships:** Provides professional learning designed to equip staff with strategies for building proactive, trusting, and collaborative relationships with families.
- **Collaborative Learning Communities:** Protects and structures shared learning time (e.g., districtwide and site-based Professional Learning Communities / PLCs) that demonstrably enhances classroom instructional practices.
- **Retention & Workforce Stability:** Tracks and analyzes systemic data demonstrating that district professional learning opportunities directly contribute to higher educator and staff retention across all school sites.

Self-Reflection

Does the district offer professional learning opportunities focused on:

- ☐ Collaborative leadership:
- ☐ Restorative practices:
- ☐ Trauma-informed teaching practices:
- ☐ Family engagement:
- ☐ Integrating local community into classroom lessons and activities:

If available, provide 2 examples.

Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships establish formal, sustainable structures that integrate community assets, funding, and capacity directly into school operations. Strategic partnerships transition a district from ad-hoc, transactional vendor relationships to sustainable co-governance models that combine expertise, facilities, and funding to support the whole child. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for site-level self-assessment:

- **Formal & Mutually Beneficial Governance:** Establishes long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with community organizations that feature shared decision-making bodies and braided resource models.
- **Co-Created Shared Vision:** Anchors partnerships in a unified vision that both the district and partner entities agree is most effectively realized through collective action.
- **Targeted Needs Responsiveness:** Aligns partner resources and services directly with identified academic, social-emotional, and health needs of district students and families.
- **Formalized Operational Agreements:** Codifies partnerships through detailed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) that specify roles, responsibilities, data-sharing protocols, and dispute-resolution procedures.
- **Resource Braiding & Efficiency:** Strategically braids public and private resources—combining fiscal assets, physical infrastructure, and administrative support—to maximize operational impact.
- **Joint Performance & Outcome Metrics:** Establishes shared evaluation metrics and data-tracking protocols where both parties hold mutual accountability for defined student and family outcomes.
- **Institutional Integration & Co-Responsibility:** Deeply integrates trusted community organizations into central office and school site operations, fostering a systemwide culture of shared responsibility.

Self-Reflection

To what extent do the formal partnerships in place in your district meet the identified needs of students and families? If available, list your strategic partners. Make note of gaps.

Do the forml partnerships in your district include:

- ☐ Family resource center
- ☐ Health providers
  - ☐ Physical
  - ☐ Mental
  - ☐ Vision
  - ☐ Dental
- ☐ Nonprofit agencies
- ☐ Local government agencies
  - ☐ Housing
  - ☐ Nutrition
  - ☐ Social
  - ☐ Legal
- ☐ Local government offices
- ☐ Local chamber of commerce
- ☐ Local businesses

- [ ] Libraries
- [ ] Institutes of higher education
- [ ] Colorado Department of Education offices
- [ ] Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- [ ] Other local public health agencies
- [ ] Foundations
- [ ] Statewide Family Engagement Center(s)
- [ ] Colorado Coalition for Community Schools

Sustainable Resources

Sustainable resources build fiscal, operational, and human capacity to ensure whole-child community school supports endure through leadership turnover and budget shifts. Sustainable resources anchor community school funding, coordination staffing, and program evaluation in central policy and multi-year fiscal strategies—protecting systemic transformation. The descriptive benchmark below illustrates exemplar practice for district-level self-assessment:

- **Braided & Blended Fiscal Strategies:** Routinely leverages braided and blended funding streams alongside long-term partner MOUs to maximize fiscal stability and maximize return on investment.
- **Institutional & Policy Sustainability:** Formally integrates community school structures into Board of Education policy and district strategic plans, ensuring systems and supports endure through executive leadership transitions.
- **Funded District Coordination Team:** Funds and maintains a dedicated district-level coordination team—comprising central office staff, site administrators, educators, family leaders, youth, and community partners—to oversee programming and evaluation.
- **Codified Standard Operating Procedures:** Maintains systemic institutional knowledge, playbooks, and implementation archives (e.g., standard operating procedure guides) to ensure operational continuity across sites.
- **Systemic Program Evaluation:** Conducts routine evaluations of all district practices and interventions to assess impact, refine strategies, and optimize resource allocation.
- **Dedicated Leadership Reflection Time:** Embeds regular agenda time within district leadership and staff meetings to analyze how community school programs directly advance district and site improvement targets.
- **Annual Community Asset Mapping:** Conducts annual community asset mappings with families and partners to align local non-profit, business, and health resources with academic, social-emotional, and financial needs.

Self-Reflection

How are initiatives launched, maintained, and sustained within your district? What common barriers tend to show up?

To what extent does the district have access to the following funding sources?

Federal:

- [ ] 21st CCLC
- [ ] Titles I, II, and IV
- [ ] IDEA

- [ ] Medicaid
- [ ] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
- [ ] Americorps
- [ ] Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act

How are the federal funds designated and utilized?

State:

- [ ] EASI grant funds
- [ ] Colorado Out-of-School Time grant funds (COAPP, NPOST)
- [ ] Public and school-based health funds
- [ ] Health and nutrition programs
- [ ] Early childhood programs
- [ ] College access funds

How are the state funds designated and utilized?

Municipal:

- [ ] Dedicated revenue from city/county
- [ ] District general funds
- [ ] Juvenile justice and crime prevention programs
- [ ] Parks and recreation centers

How are the municipal funds designated and utilized?

Private:

- [ ] Philanthropy
- [ ] Local businesses
- [ ] Chamber of Commerce
- [ ] Local nonprofits

How are the private funds designated and utilized?

How does the district provide staffing for family and/or community engagement staff?

What are some examples of sustainable resources that currently exist in your district, and what opportunities are there to expand and add to the sustainable resources?

Existing Sustainable Resources:

Opportunities to Expand and/or Add Sustainable Resources:

District Readiness Rubric Summary

Consolidate your ratings and reflections from the self-assessment rubrics into the summary matrix below to establish your district's overall readiness baseline.

Enabling Conditions	
Trusting Relationships: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding trusting relationships for your school district?	**How might you elevate trusting relationships to align with the community school strategy?**
Actionable Data: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding actionable data within your school district?	**How might you elevate your school's approach to actionable data to align with the community school strategy?**
Shared Vision: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding shared vision practices for your school district?	**How might you elevate your school's approach to a shared vision to align with the community school strategy?**
Inclusive Decision-Making: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding inclusive decision-making practices within your school district?	**How might you elevate inclusive decision-making practices to align with the community school strategy?**

Supportive Infrastructure	
Shared Governance Structures: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding shared governance structures for your school district?	**How can you elevate your shared governance structures to align with the community school strategy?**
Continuous Improvement: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding continuous improvement practices within your school district?	**How can you elevate your continuous improvement processes to align with the community school strategy?**
Data Systems: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding data systems within your school district?	**How can you elevate your school's data systems to align with the community school strategy?**

Professional Learning Opportunities: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding professional learning opportunities within your school district?	**How can you elevate professional learning opportunities to align with the community school strategy?**
Strategic Partnerships: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding strategic partnership practices for your school district?	**How can you elevate your school's strategic partnerships to align with the community school strategy?**
Sustainable Resources: What patterns or trends stand out to you regarding sustainable resources for your school district?	**How can you elevate your school's sustainable resources to align with the community school strategy?**

Recommendations for Next Steps

Upon finalizing your district readiness rubrics, select the appropriate next steps based on your team's baseline results:

1: Deepening Alignment & Capacity

- **Targeted Learning:** Review Phase 2 of this Playbook to build shared knowledge around foundational community school concepts.
- **Inclusive Re-Assessment:** Re-engage the rubric with expanded stakeholder groups (youth, families, labor, community partners).
- **Technical Assistance:** Engage regional technical assistance partners to build central office capacity and coaching systems.

2: Action Planning & Governance Integration

- **UIP & Strategic Action Plan:** Formulate an action plan targeting rubric-identified gaps, integrating priorities into the District UIP.
- **DAC Governance Sub-Committee:** Establish a dedicated District Accountability Committee (DAC) sub-committee to guide district policy and oversight.
- **Stakeholder Outreach:** Proceed to Phase 5 (*Considering All Stakeholders*) and Phase 6 (*Building Awareness*).

3: Site Scaling & Partnership Expansion

- **Pilot Site Selection:** Identify ready and interested school sites to launch or refine site-level community school strategies.
- **Strategic Partner Mapping:** Identify and cultivate long-term partner relationships to address whole-child health, academic, and social-emotional needs.
- **Data Infrastructure:** Institutionalize disaggregated tracking systems to monitor implementation fidelity and whole-child student outcomes.