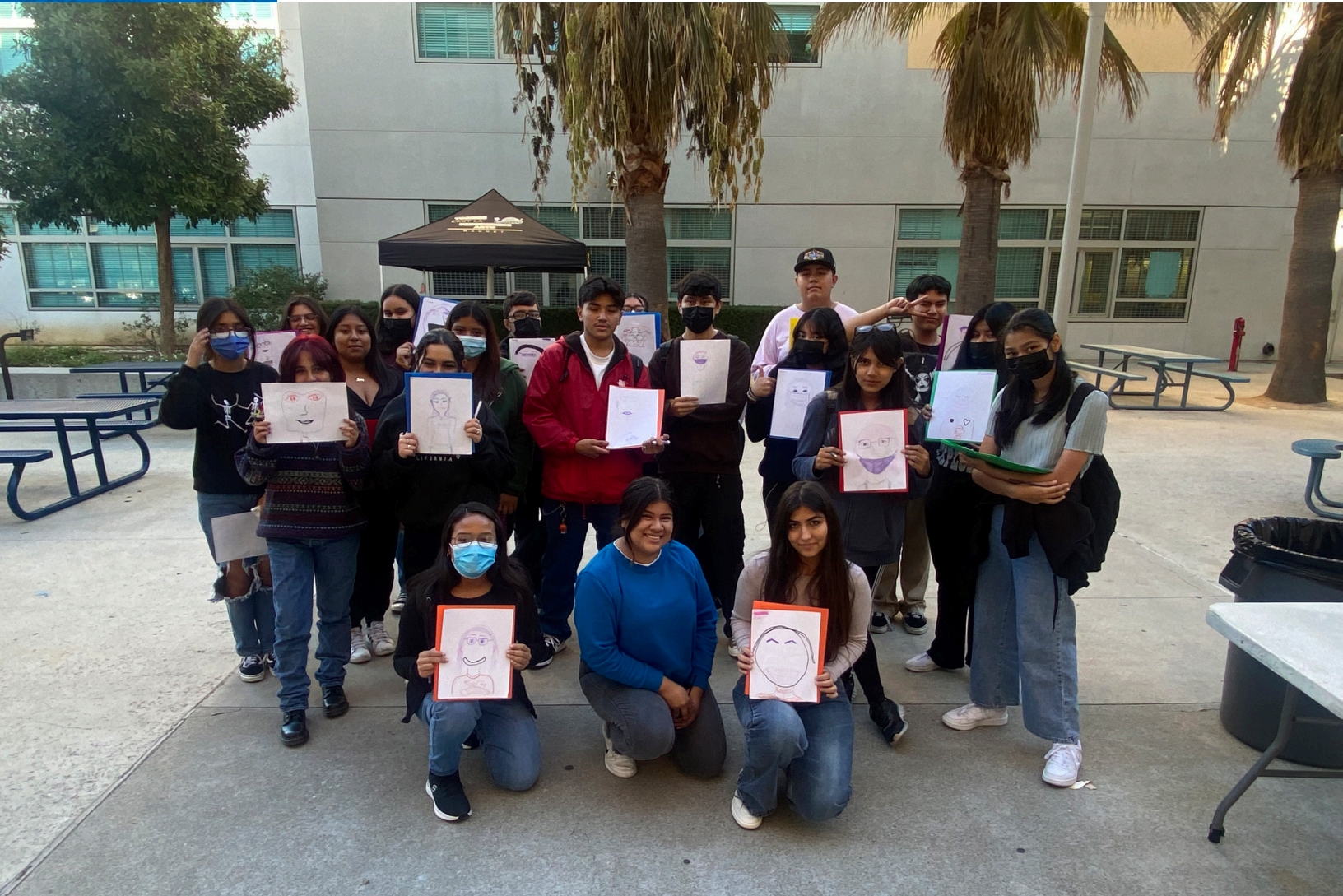




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Evaluation of the LAEP East Los Angeles Full-Service Community Schools Program

AUGUST 2024

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APPRECIATIONS

The Full-Service Community Schools initiative would not have been possible without the esteemed community school sites that generously opened their doors to facilitate the implementation of this work within their vibrant school communities. Thank you to the following school sites whose unwavering support and collaboration have been instrumental in fostering educational excellence and enriching the lives of students and families.

- Belvedere Elementary
- Ford Elementary
- Belvedere Middle School
- Griffith STEAM Middle School
- Esteban E. Torres High School, which serves as a campus for the following five smaller high schools: East Los Angeles Performing Arts Magnet, East Los Angeles Renaissance Arts Magnet, Engineering & Technology Academy, Humanitas Academy of Art and Technology, Social Justice Leadership Academy

The evaluators would like to thank the students, parents, and school staff who participated in the qualitative evaluation activities and bravely uplifted their voices to speak about the impact of this transforming initiative. Lastly, the evaluation team would like to recognize the Community Schools Coordinators and Family Engagement Coordinators, whose unwavering dedication enabled them to implement the Community Schools initiative and provide safe environments for students, parents, and the broader school community.



This evaluation brief highlights key impacts of LAEP's federally funded Full-Service Community Schools grant, as reported by participants in focus groups and interviews conducted during the final year of this program. We offer the following insights to organizational leaders, schools, and funders who plan to implement a community schools model.

- Collaborating on accountability practices from the outset of the initiative, including comprehensive goals, metrics, and benchmarks, supports the success of the program.
- Cultivating the leadership skills of the school coordinators facilitates establishing strong, lasting relationships between coordinators and site administrators.
- Schools should create policies that foster appropriate daily operations, develop and implement capacity-building and steering groups, and build strategies to facilitate systemic change at the onset of the initiative and sustain these efforts throughout its duration.
- The lead agency and school administration staff should work together to develop a strategic plan that details how the work will be sustained beyond the period of funding and how and to what degree it will be replicated. Both groups should work together throughout the grant period to ensure that school improvement planning guides expand on how improvements will be accomplished.
- Funding for the sustainability of key positions beyond grant funding is key.




BACKGROUND

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education awarded LAEP a five-year, \$2.5 million grant to implement a Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) program. Drawing on their decades-long experience in championing equity and implementing the community schools model, LAEP designed the East Los Angeles Community Schools Project to strengthen the internal supports available in schools, improve student educational outcomes, and over time, to improve the overall performance of local schools. As Table 1 shows, LAEP partnered with nine Title 1 K-12 public schools from 2018 to 2023 in East Los Angeles that would form a feeder pattern of coordinated, integrated services to address the highest unmet needs in the school communities.



LAEP staffed each FSCS site with a Community Schools Coordinator and a Family Engagement Coordinator, who were embedded in the school. The Community Schools Coordinator supported their schools by enhancing existing and developing new systems, resources, and partnerships that provided academic and non-academic support to meet each school's unique needs. Additionally, Community Schools Coordinators were responsible for the overall implementation of FSCS programming at each school site as well as facilitating community partnerships, developing strategies to support students, staff members, parents, and the school administrators. To ensure families were integrated into the school culture and FSCS programming, the Family Engagement Coordinator strengthened parent engagement and created structures to sustain parent involvement in the short-term and long-term. Both roles were vital to the implementation of the FSCS grant during the five-year funding period.¹

As a lead implementer of the FSCS, LAEP engaged in a collaborative journey with the nine schools to bring a plethora of supports to schools so that educational settings became beacons of connections, resources, and support for students, their families, and their communities. More specifically, the work of LAEP during the five-year grant was driven by the following goals:

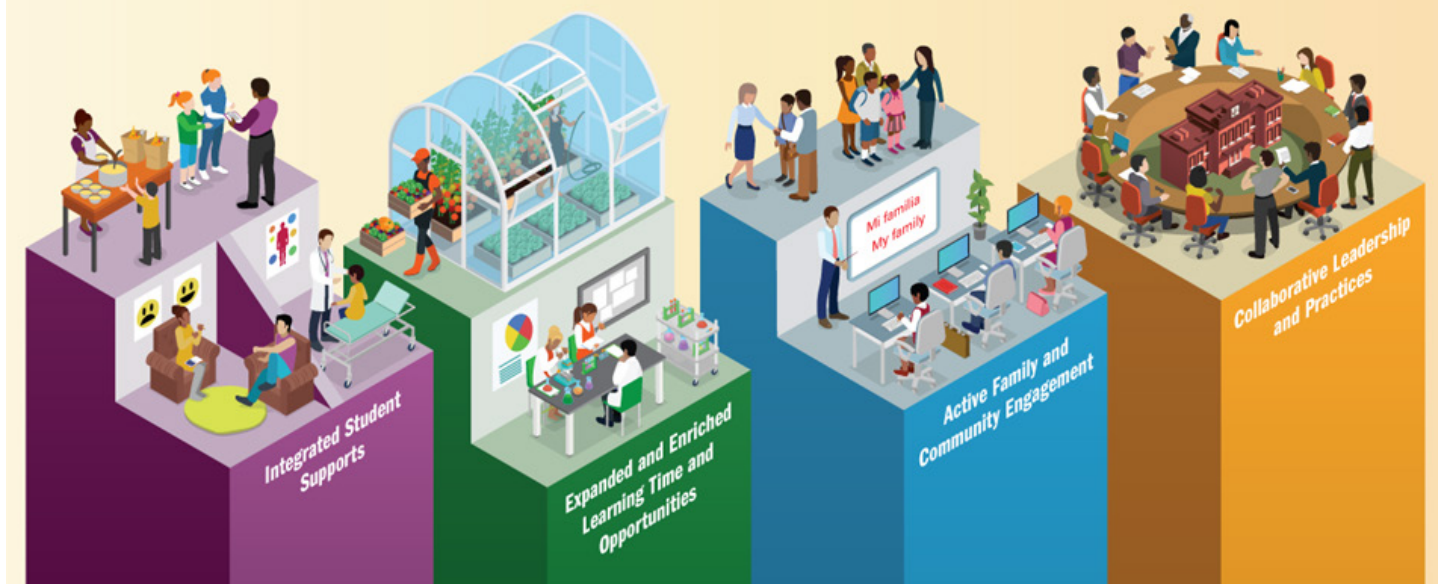
 Students succeed academically	 Sustainable Community Schools improve coordination, integration, and accessibility of services	 Children in target schools are safe, healthy, and supported by engaged parents
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LAEP's community schools model emphasized collaborative leadership, family engagement, community partnership building, school-based resource hubs, college and career readiness and supports, and engaging in systems change efforts to ensure sustainability. LAEP also anchored its work around four core pillars:

- 1 Integrated Student Supports**
- 2 Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities**
- 3 Active Family and Community Engagement**
- 4 Collaborative Leadership and Practices**

¹ In the remainder of this report, the Family Engagement Coordinator and Community Schools Coordinator are referred to collectively as Coordinator.

Four Pillars of Community Schools



METHODS

This evaluation relied on data collected during each year of the program by LAEP program staff and on new data collected by the authors of this report during the final year. Guided by the following questions, we analyzed existing program implementation data (e.g., numbers of activities, partnerships, challenges, and successes) and new data collected in the spring of 2023 through individual and focus group interviews.

Evaluation Questions

1. *What services were provided and to what extent?*
2. *How well did the program accomplish its goals?*
3. *What were major setbacks?*
4. *What were important successes?*
5. *What system changes were brought about, and how likely are they to be sustained?*
6. *What structures were built? What sources of support exist for continuation of services and supports?*
7. *What are key recommendations for future implementation of this program?*



LAEP staff used purposive sampling to select participants for this study who frequently engaged in FSCS services. This approach would provide insight into the impact of the program on those who participated meaningfully. We used qualitative approaches to collect data to complement the quantitative data that had been collected by program staff for grant reporting.

Table 1 summarizes the numbers of participants we engaged in focus groups and individual interviews. Parent focus groups were conducted in Spanish because all parents were monolingual Spanish speakers. All parents reported having multiple children in the school. Parents had participated in the program for four years on average. All students who took part in the focus groups identified as Hispanic/Latino. School staff we interviewed included principals, academic counselors, members of the Instructional Leadership Team, librarians and lead teachers.

Table 1. Data Collection at Full-Service Community School Sites

FSCS Sites	Parent Focus Groups	Student Focus Groups	Staff Interviews
Belvedere Elementary	7		1
Ford Elementary			1
Belvedere Middle School	5	8	3
Griffith STEAM Middle School		3	
Esteban E. Torres High School, including... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ East Los Angeles Performing Arts Magnet ▪ East Los Angeles Renaissance Arts Magnet ▪ Engineering & Technology Academy ▪ Humanitas Academy of Art & Technology ▪ Social Justice Leadership Academy 	8	8	15
TOTAL	20	19	20

FINDINGS

The first part of this section summarizes data that was gathered during each year of implementation by LAEP program teams, focusing on activities offered and numbers of participants served. The second part presents findings from a qualitative study carried out in the last year of the program, including the data shown in Table 1.



Through the FSCS initiative, between 2019 and 2023, LAEP served nearly 30,000 participants, including 21,829 students, 3,515 community members, and 4,611 parents. As illustrated in Table 2, at the outset of the initiative, LAEP set ambitious goals for the number of beneficiaries projected to be served over the five years of the grant. While it met the student targets and surpassed the community member targets, reaching the targeted 22,205 parents remained a challenge. COVID-19 restrictions, particularly within LAUSD, made it difficult to outreach to and serve parents since they were not allowed on campus, and many parents and families faced difficulties accessing online learning platforms, communicating with teachers and school staff, and balancing work and home responsibilities. However, as described in the focus group findings, parents and staff still reported an increase in parent engagement and family partnerships at the school sites, demonstrating that the FSCS initiative made great strides in ensuring that parents, families, and caregivers remained strong partners at community school sites.

Table 2. Participants Served by LAEP FSCS (2018-2023)

N Parents		N Students		N Community Members	
Targeted	Actual	Targeted	Actual	Targeted	Actual
22,205	4,611	21,083	21,829	1,500	3,515

Community School staff delivered comprehensive support to students, addressing their holistic needs and nurturing their personal and academic success.

- **College access supports** included career exploration events, mock college interviews, FAFSA and college application workshops, support with college applications, college field trips, career days, workshops on specific college transition activities, and micro-scholarship for expenses as students transitioned into college.
- **Remedial education and academic enrichment activities**, the most frequently requested support by schools, targeted English Language Learner (ELL) assistance, reading clubs, math interventions, extracurricular clubs, and other activities to enhance academic learning opportunities for students.
- **Mentoring and other youth development programs** consisted of after-school programming, such as youth advisory councils, school beautification projects, and workshops on Social Emotional Learning that emphasized skills like goal setting and cultivating a growth mindset.
- **Job training and career counseling services** included Career Day, Career Fair, College 101, Financial Aid, Resume-Building, Mock Interviews, College Applications, Campus Tours, Mentorship Opportunities, and Summer Bridge. Coordinators also partnered with vendors throughout Southern California to provide work-based, paid internships to students.
- **Social and health services** addressed students' social, physical, and mental well-being through services social skills training, promoting healthy eating habits, tackling food insecurity, supporting financial health, and mindfulness practices. Coordinators collaborated closely with school staff to leverage partnerships and resources, ensuring that these services and supports were integrated seamlessly into classroom instruction and provided during both in- and out-of-school time.
- **Community service and service-learning opportunities** included Resource Fairs, Health Fairs, and multiple school beautification projects. In addition, FSCS staff established relationships with County elected officials including Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis, to enhance access to community services and service-learning opportunities..

Community School staff carried out critical programming to enhance parent engagement, foster parent leadership, and link parents to concrete supports.

- **Parent and adult education** workshops built capacity and awareness primarily around parenting and youth development. Examples of workshop topics are nutrition, child development, financial literacy, anger management, and English Learner (EL) reclassification. Reading clubs were also implemented at school sites to increase parent literacy and to expose parents via literature about the experiences their children may be facing in schools. Additionally, adult English classes were also implemented in partnership with East Los Angeles College, so that parents could build their English language skills and feel empowered to communicate with their students' teachers and support their children's education.
- **Leadership development** activities included hosting ongoing parent leadership groups and community circles on a weekly basis where parents and families were able to participate and connect with school staff and fellow parents, including Coffee with the Principal.

→ **Access to concrete supports** was offered through external partnerships with various community organizations, local businesses, and institutions. These partnerships were vital during COVID-19 when families were in dire need of accessing basic necessities for their children and loved ones. Families had access to food pantries, food distribution, backpack, shoe, and school supplies giveaways. Community school staff worked closely with key school staff to ensure that interventions, resources, and supports were differentiated to meet the unique needs of families.

→ **Social and health services** included workshops on nutrition, anger management, domestic violence, physical health, and various mental topics. Some community school sites also offered cervical cancer and breast cancer screenings, as well as workshops around diabetes management. During COVID-19, several sites mobilized to establish a help telephone line to ensure parents and families were able to access the COVID-19 vaccine and other pandemic related resources.

FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOL GOAL: STUDENTS SUCCEED ACADEMICALLY

Middle and high school students enumerated the following impacts that mentoring activities, college access programming, youth development, and academic support had on their academic trajectories at FSCS sites.

- ◎ **Students gained a deeper understanding of the college application process.** High School students reported that they felt better prepared to navigate the complex college application process because LAEP's guidance, specifically citing the college application process, financial aid options, applying to several universities, and emotional and psychologically safe environments to address college application concerns. One student explained, "[The school coordinator] guided me in the process of getting into college and overall making me feel better prepared for my future...I had questions, and they would always help." Another student stated, "[The school coordinator] motivated me [to apply to college] and said that it was okay not to know what I want to [study] and that a lot of people don't know what they want to do until they are actually in college and not to feel ashamed and that I will always have support and not to be afraid to ask questions."
- ◎ **Students had greater knowledge of diverse careers and expanded their connections to professional networking opportunities.** Middle School and High School students reported that activities like Career Week, Career Exploration Workshops, Career Panels, Mock Interviews and Resume-Building Workshops, allowed them to learn about diverse career options and how to obtain internships in a safe, fun, and supportive environment. One student expressed, "The Mock Interviews and resume building were fun and helped me learn how to do that for my future. The Mock Interview was helpful because I managed to get an internship." Recalling how Career Week increased her knowledge of different career pathways, one student shared, "Career Week was pretty fun because we learned what a scientist actually does, and we learned how to do experiments."
- ◎ **Students learned new skills.** Through the various content-specific clubs and school wide activities, students were able to learn new skills like gardening, mindfulness, coding, and leadership skills. A middle school student expressed, "[FSCS] helped me become a better leader and be more mindful because [I participated in Mindful Gardeners]. We would go into the garden and see what we had grown and we learned [to be more mindful] by planting and gardening." Another student recalled learning how to do robotics and coding, which boosted his confidence and exposed him to a new skill he wouldn't be able to access on his own. He explained, "I learned new things like coding and working with a Lego robot. [The instructor] was right there teaching me new things and teaching me all these [new] lessons."

FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOL GOAL: CHILDREN IN TARGET SCHOOLS ARE SAFE, HEALTHY, AND SUPPORTED BY ENGAGED PARENTS

- ◎ **Students gained a greater sense of safety and joy on school campuses.** Middle and High School students who expressed that FSCS programming provided a safe space for students on campus. Middle school students who were transitioning from elementary school were particularly vocal about feeling welcomed and safe in clubs like the LGBTQ club, Hello 7th Grade, and 6th Grade Rocks. One student who was apprehensive to transition sixth grade described: “I was nervous to go to Middle School since my mom and dad had shared [negative] experiences about going [to middle school]...the club was a space for me, and it made me feel more relaxed [and the club] made me feel safe and to be more talkative with students in higher grades.” Another student described his experience at the LGBTQ club, “It was just nice to have a social and safe space for people who support LGBTQ students, and it was a space for students to just hang out and make cool stuff.”
- ◎ **Students increased positive interactions with peers.** Students described how they had numerous opportunities to interact with their peers in positive ways. For example, students were able to make new friendships, overcome anxiety about meeting new people, and build confidence in socializing with new peers and adults. When asked how FSCS programs helped them, several students shared the following: “I became more social.” “It made me feel safe and more talkative with other people at higher grades.” “I used to have problems socializing with people, and now I don’t. Every time I wanted to talk to someone, I didn’t have the guts to talk to them and I would just stay quiet,” and “For me [FSC programming] boosted my confidence especially when it came to talking with students in other academies.”
- ◎ **Students had access to trusted adults on campus with whom they could build positive relationships.** Students recalled feeling supported and encouraged by their Coordinators. They praised and spoke highly of the help and encouragement they received from FSCS staff. Additionally, students trusted adults on campus who were respectful, knowledgeable, and friendly and who heard their needs and interests. In describing her Coordinator, one student said, “She would make me feel more safe and relaxed, and whenever we would get stuck on something she would help us out.”
- ◎ **Parents experienced increased wellness and mental health.** Parents shared the benefits of mental health workshops, parent engagement workshops, Book Clubs, and community mental health partnerships. They shared that they had a network of support within their school communities, felt less isolated, and had structured opportunities to make new friendships, share their challenges, and obtain advice and resources. Parents also felt that through the FSCS, they had dedicated time and space for themselves away from their daily routines which allowed them to socialize and connect with parents and staff at the school. One parent shared, “[FSCS] has helped me because I have felt stressed, and I don’t have a family here or anyone else. I found a family here and part of me loves them, I love them all. The mental health therapy we have received here has helped me. FSCS has helped me a lot to face my fear and not feel alone because I have someone to count on.”

Student Voices from East Los Angeles Performing Arts Academy Magnet



I didn’t know what my senior year was going to look like. When I joined the Toro Way, it helped me learn how to talk to others, how to take care of my mental health, and how to have fun. It was my break from school and work. The college workshops provided by LAEP gave me an idea of what college might be like for me. I remember the Career Day event made me realize that there are so many other paths you can take. I thought college was something I couldn’t achieve, because my grades were there, but I didn’t know how to get there or who would help me. These programs molded me into this way of thinking that life can be scary, but it’s doable.”

- Student

- ◎ **Parents increased their awareness of and connection to community resources**, through which they accessed critical support like legal aid for rental assistance, financial training, mental health services, training, and health-related workshops. Amid the COVID-19 crisis, parents were also linked to critical services such as vaccine clinics and food pantries. For instance, at one school, FSCS staff restarted a food pantry program: Twice per month, parents had access to canned goods, fresh produce, dairy, snacks, and, when possible, poultry. Across all the FSCS sites, parents learned about community partners, including Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles, East Los Angeles Community College, Parent Institute for Quality Education, Latino Family Literacy Project, VISTA, UCLA Community Education, CalFresh Healthy Living, CHASE Bank, Enki Mental Health, Supervisor Hilda Solis Office, New Economics Women, and the University of California.
- ◎ **Parents strengthened their relationship with their children**. Several parents shared that participating in FSCS activities such as mental health workshops and book clubs strengthened their relationship with their children. Recalling one mental health workshop about depression, one parent shared, “When I heard the lady speak about [depression], it was like she was talking about my daughter when it came to the issues she was facing. That’s when I learned what my daughter was going through and that she needed help. That’s when I learned to look for resources so that my daughter can come to me and trust me to tell me [what she is going through].” Other parents shared that they have learned to be patient with their children and to treat them better.
- ◎ **Parents learned about literacy practices and college access**. A few parents mentioned that they acquired important literacy skills through Book Clubs and other literacy workshops, which they endeavored to model and teach their children at home. Additionally, several parents also described increasing their knowledge on application requirements for higher education institutions and financial aid options available to students. Parents emphasized that learning about the college application process was pivotal and provided them with the tools to support their children’s goal of obtaining a college degree.

Family Voices

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[Through FSCS] I learned that there are many ways to get ahead in life. It feels good to come here and talk to someone, to get support, to feel uplifted and to get out of the daily routine. [FSCS] allows us to spend time on ourselves because if we are not well, our families are not well.”

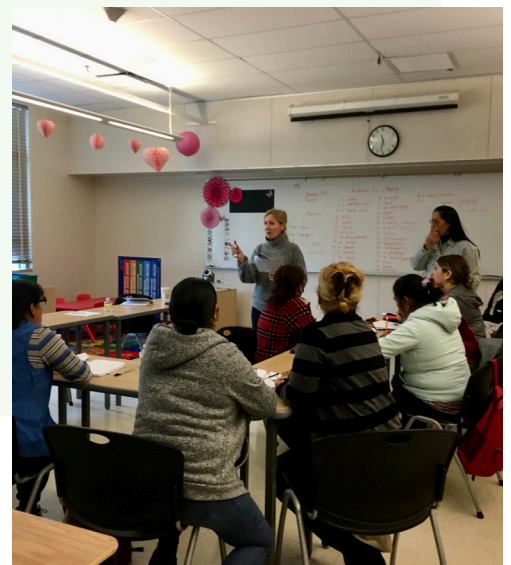
- Parent

Family Voices

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[FSCS has taught me to] change my perspective and relationships with my children. We learned to treat [our children] better.”

- Parent



FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOL GOAL: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IMPROVE COORDINATION, INTEGRATION, AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

- ◎ **A team care approach between LAEP and school administration resulted in more interaction with and support for students.** LAEP staff and school staff were able to create trusting relationships with students. Team members created individualized college plans for each student, and students felt safe seeking academic and social-emotional support from LAEP staff and school site administrators. One administrator described “[The LAEP staff] met weekly or every other week with a counseling team to plan the curriculum for all four grades involved in planning. They go to the classroom to make presentations to work with advisory workshops. They were planning the curriculum throughout the school year, Summer Melt – activities to keep kids focused.” Another school staff member stated, “[The Coordinator] just wasn’t an LAEP staff member. She was part of the school. She knew the students and knew them by name and knew the parents picking the right staff. Picking the right people is so crucial because even though she was an LAEP staff, she was part of our meetings. She was a huge success, and she was seen as a resource person.” Another administrator commented, “[The Coordinator] is amazing at organizing! I don’t know how he keeps up. He remembers everyone’s schedules. He is punctual and doesn’t miss any details. Every meeting he has is important, and he is well prepared.”
- ◎ **Schools increased college application and college financial aid coordination for students.** The leaders we interviewed consistently shared that their Coordinators supported students in learning about college requirements and completing college and FAFSA applications. One school site administrator emphasized, “Most students submitted a FAFSA, and the grant played a role in that. A lot of students submitted college applications. We don’t have time or energy to coordinate those activities, and having LAEP to support that work has been a godsend.” Another school administrator stated, “The biggest success is the transition to high school and supporting students and families through the welcome 9th graders program to help them to prepare for college.”
- ◎ **Coordinators were essential in building schools’ partnership with neighboring CBOs, which was critical during COVID-19.** Coordinators were essential in fostering partnerships between the schools and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The CBOs provided resources, such as mental health services, dental clinics, food banks, and other health and wellness support. This collaboration contributed to the economic growth at the neighborhood level by employing community residents, supporting local businesses, local financial institutions building families’ financial literacy, and offering entrepreneurial classes for parents and other adults. Schools partnered with Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis to stage a resource fair, held a Health Fair, and relied on the community for multiple school beautification projects. Throughout these efforts, Coordinators played an essential role in connecting schools with community resources. One school staff member shared, “[My Coordinators] were very eager to bring in partnerships. They took the initiative and talked to me and said, “I’m thinking this for the school, what do you

School Staff Voices



Coordination across all schools and work was led with LAEP figuring out what resources were at the table. If we wanted a specific presentation at any grade level, they were always open to suggestions and needs and always listening and bringing whatever the school needed.

On the student side, they coordinated celebrations on decision day to celebrate and honor that college decision making process. [We were] pooling our resources and bringing representatives from different academies to support filling out financial aid applications etc. They were open to come on Saturdays to support our process.”

think? They absolutely leveraged that. Just to mention a few - AltaMed, City Year, they were closely working with the Coordinator....so yes [bringing community resources to the school] was a big part of the position."

Coordinators were instrumental in offering basic support to families during the pandemic. Among the most important of these were food pantries and dental clinics on school sites. One leader explained, "One of the resources that was helpful was the dental clinic. A lot of parents do not drive. Parents don't have to wait or take a day off to get dental care."

- ③ **Needs Assessments and COST monthly meetings increased collaboration among school staff.** Annual needs assessments and monthly Coordination of Services Team (COST) meetings were collaborative structures that remained consistent throughout the 5 years of the grant. Needs assessment surveys were developed in partnership with key school staff members, including administrators, academic counselors and psychiatric social workers. The assessments measured academic, family, mental health, physical health, and extracurricular needs across the school. The Coordinator was responsible for collecting, analyzing, and presenting needs assessment data to each school to collectively identify priorities for the school year. COST Team meetings allowed staff across campus to collaborate and brainstorm solutions to issues and needs that surfaced. During the meetings, team members generated and planned ideas for campus-wide events, including the Torres Loves You Fair, Denim Day, Suicide Prevention Awareness. These collaborative systems resulted in students receiving mental health services on demand, dental clinics being coordinated where students were seen regardless of insurance, and 100% of students completing college financial aid applications.

- ③ **Schools increased mental health and social emotional support for students and family members.** School staff stated that mental health services were instrumental for students and their families, especially during the pandemic. One staff member explained, "LAEP conducted an annual needs survey on the needs of the kids and mental health was the number one need." Additionally, the Coordinator provided substance abuse support services, mobile and virtual mental health therapy, and other mental health resources. A school staff member shared, "[The Coordinators helped us] coordinate the gap in services. Students were going months without mental health services. Now we have four mental health resources on campus."

School Staff Voices

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We had various challenges, but [because of the COST Team] we had a collection of resources that provided support. For example, during the pandemic, the Community Schools team put together a website which they were updating constantly with the resources that were available around rent assistance, around food assistance, COVID testing, vaccines, all [those resources]."

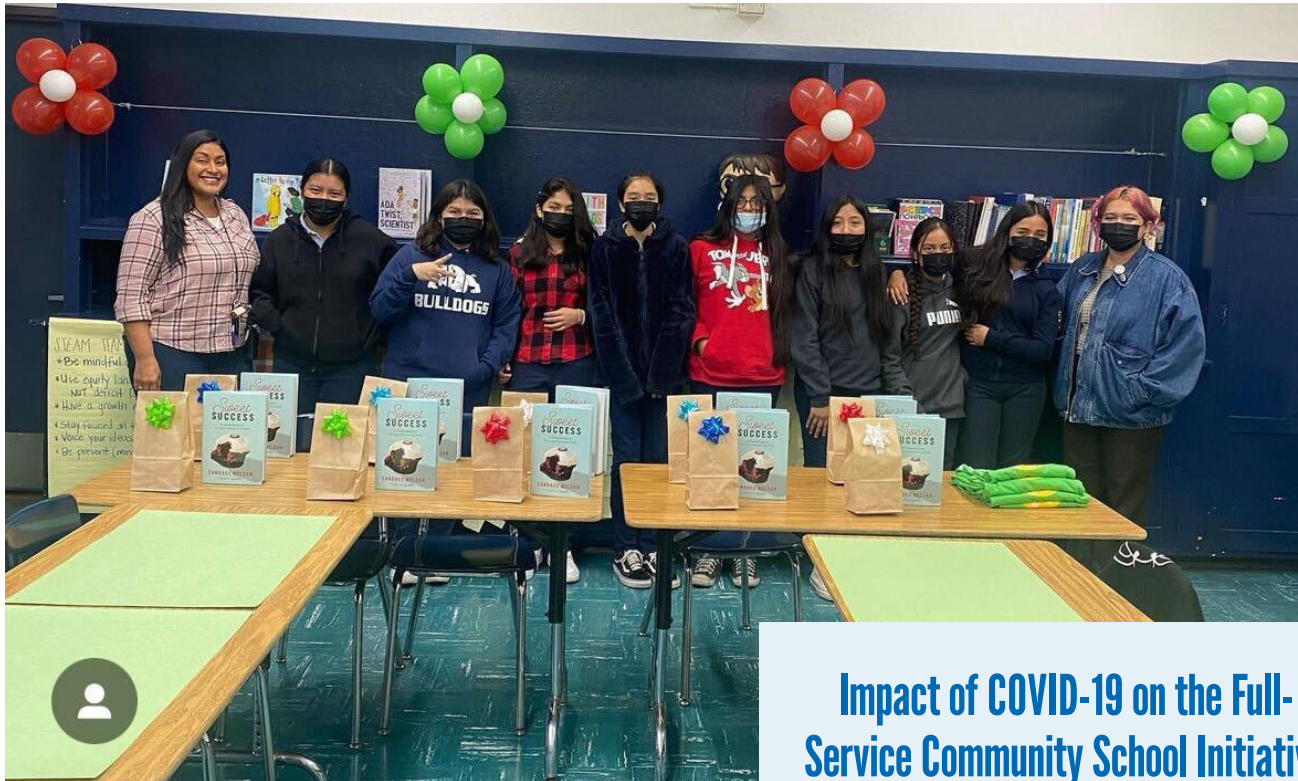
-School Staff Member



School Staff Voices

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After the pandemic we were dealing with a lot of mental health issues. Community School Coordinators were very helpful in trying to find resources. They went out of the way to find more resources for us and for these students."



Impact of COVID-19 on the Full-Service Community School Initiative

COVID-19 and other challenges impeded lasting change.

The pandemic's disruption limited the development of strong relationships and resulted in fewer activities being implemented and services pivoting to prioritize the immediate needs of students and their families. The move to a virtual platform limited access for students and families as many did not have computers or access to the Internet. Beyond these immediate negative effects, it was nearly impossible to create enduring improvements because the in-person interactions necessary for trust-building and authentic relationships were forbidden during lockdown. Additionally, the following setbacks diminished the potential of this program to bring about lasting improvements:

- **During the first two years of the grant, data was not collected in a standardized way, nor were metrics identified.** Schools' system of assessing students and reporting their data was thrown into disarray by the pandemic and there was no way to track progress through these measures. "Any kind of data is skewed by extraordinary challenges due to COVID-19," commented one administrator. Another administrator said similarly, "All data since March 2020 is not worthwhile unless [it's a] measure of continuing need." Even if data had been gathered as before, it would have been negatively impacted by pandemic-related factors. For example, many students had to work due to the pandemic. "Homelessness, job disruption, kids working to put food on table because the providers can't provide - disruption in so many ways."

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, community schools were increasingly recognized in communities as an essential means to address barriers to learning, teaching, and to promote the healthy development of children. However, LAEP and schools faced critical challenges to implementing the FSCS model during this health crisis. While Coordinators were able to sustain student participation in virtual workshops during school hours, student and family engagement during after school hours was challenging. During the height of the pandemic, college office hours, after-school workshops, and family engagement events saw notably diminished attendance. Coordinators adeptly pivoted by assessing the needs of students and families, reimagining their approaches to ensure the continued provision of essential support and services throughout the pandemic, all while adhering to strict LAUSD and Public Health guidelines. In August 2021, LAEP staff were able to return to school campuses to resume their roles in-person. However, the impacts of COVID-19 were keenly felt, particularly in terms of student motivation, socialization, and learning loss. As Coordinators returned to schools, they acknowledged that significant time and concrete supports were needed to address these needs in intentional and meaningful ways.

- **LAEP's roles and capacity were not adequately transitioned to school staff.** LAEP staff's work in brokering connections between schools and community resources, for example, was not sustainable. An administrator observed, "there would have to be a transition plan for us in order to do that." Another administrator recommended, "Sit down with the organization and share information because LAEP has all the contacts, who are the point of contact at these organizations to make sure we hand off points of contact between schools. A lot of those partnerships are based on personal relationships we hope they hand those off to us."
- **Shifts in school leadership hampered continuous progress toward Community School goals.** High turnover of administrative staff made it difficult for LAEP staff to create and nurture strong relationships with school leaders. This turnover also affected the continuity of activities implemented at the schools. An administrator said, "[There were] various changes due to staff and program - things can be better. In the last two years there has been no consistency."
- **Transition plans were not co-created prior to the beginning of the program.** There was lack of clarity about what would happen once the grant sunset. COVID-19 disruption and shifts added to confusion related to staffing, community partnerships, school structures for engaging families, etc., and there was little time toward the end of the grant to create a transition plan. One school administrator suggested, "Involve schools prior to implementation of the grant - that was a big component. We're getting this grant. So, what is our mission for this grant? I don't know if the transitional position is being funded... That's the only thing I remember being unclear about - getting more structure around that position."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



LAEP's Full-Service Community Schools grant had a significant positive impact on the lives of students, parents, and community. Students gained a deeper understanding of the college application process, diverse careers, and professional networking opportunities. They gained a greater sense of joy and safety on school campuses, increased their positive interactions with peers, and came to rely on trusted adults on campus with whom they built positive relationships. Parents improved their wellness and mental health, increased their awareness of and connection to community resources, strengthened their relationship with their children, and increased their awareness of literacy practices and college access. School administrators used a team care approach with LAEP to increase student interaction and support. They increased college access and college financial aid application services for students, partnerships with Community Based Organizations, collaboration among school staff through monthly COST Team meetings, and mental health and social emotional support for students and family members.

Table 3 summarizes pivotal recommendations drawn from discussions with various interest holders including parents, administrators, and students, as well as historical documents, summaries, and research literature. These recommendations are specifically tailored to address operational, systemic, and policy levels.

Table 3. Recommendations at Different Levels of a Community School System

Operational Level	Establish collaborative accountability practices from the outset of the initiative involving all school sites and the lead implementation organization to develop comprehensive goals, metrics, and benchmarks.	School administrators and staff emphasized the importance of collaborating with COORDINATORS and LAEP. Research shows that the FSCS model struggles in the management and assignment of responsibilities to multiple (and often changing) players (Adelman & Taylor, 2007). Administrators in our study highlighted the necessity of establishing shared comprehensive goals, metrics, and benchmarks across all school sites at the onset of the grant to ensure alignment and awareness among all stakeholders involved in the initiative’s overarching objectives.
	Cultivate the leadership skills of school coordinators to facilitate strong, lasting relationships with site administrators.	Our focus group participants emphasized the vital role of the coordinators. The School Coordinators are the “community organizer” of the school and community. They create, strengthen, and maintain the bridge between the school and community. They facilitate and provide leadership for the collaborative process and development of a continuum of services within a school neighborhood. Coordinators function as peers to principals, foster community involvement, and engage with community partners directly. (Dryfoos, 2005; Holtzman, 1997).
Systems Level	Modify infrastructure through policies that foster appropriate daily operations.	In some participating schools, teams struggled to collaborate and operate without clear structure. Operationalizing and implementing a vision for systemic change requires coordination around resources (dollars, school space, equipment, human and social capital, etc.) (Adelman & Taylor, 2007). Schools must create a framework for lead agency and school administrators to coordinate daily routines and expectations.
	Form and rely on capacity building and steering groups.	A steering group formed of members between lead agency and schools would help maintain a big picture perspective, monitor progress toward long-term goals, and ensure long-term systems change.
	Create strategies that facilitate systemic change at the onset of the initiative and sustain these efforts throughout the years.	After collaborating to articulate a clear, shared vision of goals, the lead agency and school administrators should discuss the feasibility, addressing questions like what changes must take place when, who will lead, what mechanisms will steer and underwrite the change process. Roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities should be negotiated and committed to.
Policy Level	Provide expectations and models for developing school improvement planning guides.	A school’s collaboratively developed planning guide would outline specifications on how to design and monitor activities for program participants, identify resources, and create community partnerships.
	Funders should require and support implementing partners to plan for legacy period beyond large grant funding.	This would encourage the lead agency and school administration to collectively develop a strategic plan that details how the work will be sustained beyond the period of guaranteed funding. For example, the plan could indicate which elements of the grant will be sustained through which means, and what gaps in funding will exist.
	Specifically, funding for key positions must be strategically planned in advance.	A portion of funds allocated for school improvement should be reallocated to the costs of development of staff, parent workshops and student initiatives in a sustainable way.

Key considerations for those committed to developing comprehensive and equitable community schools include:

- 1** Outreaching to a wide range of community resource partners
- 2** Adopting shared governance and functions
- 3** Establishing an effective and sustainable collaborative infrastructure
- 4** Connecting “families” of community schools to address common concerns and achieve economies of scale



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