



Eligibility Determination & Threshold for Evaluation (Part 1)

Executive Summary

Provide a two to four page overview of your school or network, including:

- (1) Explain the mission and vision of your school. What will your school set out to achieve in the long term, what will success look like, and how will your school get there?
- (2) Include information on what success will look like for students while attending your school, and after they leave your school (The outcomes you will achieve);
- (3) How does your school align with the district's charter authorizing priorities?
- (4) What are the elements of your educational model that will meet the needs of your target student population?
- (5) Explain why your school would be important to the community in which you are proposing to locate.
- (6) Who will your school collaborate with? What community support has the school generated? Who will your school work with to be well positioned within the city and community?

TYPE YOUR RESPONSE IN THE BOX BELOW, IT WILL EXPAND AS NEEDED.

The Coalition for Community Schools (2017) defines a community school as a public school – the hub of its neighborhood, uniting families, educators and community partners to provide all students with top-quality academics, enrichment, health and social services, and opportunities to succeed in school and in life (www.communityschools.org). The Coalition describes a community school as a school with a strategy that makes explicit that in order to significantly improve the academic and developmental outcomes of children, schools and community partners – e.g. families, community and faith-based organizations, local government, institutes of higher learning, public agencies, law enforcement, United Ways and others – must work together to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to succeed in school (p. 2). When describing a community school, the Coalition asserts that, “Community schools are built on the simple logic that schools and communities are mutually dependent and that strong and purposeful partnerships between them are essential to students’ academic success. [...] hunger, safety, health and other issues spill into the classroom, affect learning, and create challenges well beyond what schools should be expected to handle alone. Inside community schools, [there is]an intentional leveraging of federal, state, and local funding streams – public and private- to provide supports and opportunities that students need to thrive academically, emotionally, physically and socially. When students and their families experience a closer connection to their community and benefit from more support, more opportunities, and more time for learning, they succeed. Their success is the community’s success.” Through partnerships, community schools align and integrate strategies to support students, strengthen schools, engage families and help build entire communities where learning happens.

“Reimagine” alternative education. Data collected from the Department of Health and Human Services states that more than 70,000 children in Louisiana received mental or behavioral health services through Medicaid in 2014 (<http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/2094>) . The Louisiana Department of Education’s 2015-2016 Special Education Data Profile reports that as of February 1, 2016, 58% of the special education population in the disability category Emotional Disturbances were identified as Black or African American. This data further suggests that at least 60% of the school aged children in the greater New Orleans area present with behavioral and mental health needs consistent with post-traumatic stress or similar conditions. Socioeconomic data for the greater New Orleans area suggest that more than 95% of these students qualify to receive free or reduced lunch. This is very often the population of students served by alternative education programs. Socioeconomically disadvantaged communities typically find an indirect route to receiving the behavioral and mental health services they need to be successful in



their educational and post-secondary pursuits. In most cases, this route is through the court system and not the school system.

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL is designed specifically to address the needs of the New Orleans community found in the report, *No Longer Invisible: Opportunity Youth in New Orleans* (Babineau, Kate & Rossmeier, Vincent & Hand, Dave, 2016). This new report outlines the challenges facing 16-24 year olds in New Orleans who are disconnected from employment and education. These young people are often referred to as opportunity youth. The report found that there are 6,820 opportunity youth in New Orleans, which was 14 percent of all 16-24 year olds in the city during the time of the study. Those youth faced significant economic barriers: a third lived below the poverty line and these young people also received food stamps and were uninsured at high rates. To address a challenge as complex as youth disconnection, the report recommends expanded efforts to leverage the educational experiences of the city's opportunity youth to link them to employment. This report, coupled with data that suggests that this same population of youth disproportionately experiences behavioral and mental health needs, is why we believe that The Community School must exist.

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL operates as three autonomous units working together under one roof to meet the needs of the city's "opportunity youth" who experience mental and behavioral health concerns: (1) an open enrollment day treatment and therapeutic day school, (2) suspension abatement and incarceration diversion programs, and (3) a community based behavioral and mental health clinic for adolescents and young adults. Each unit makes intentional efforts to leverage school district revenue with revenue generated through partnerships from the business community, other non-profits, social service agencies, the state and federal government. The purpose of THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL is fueled by the passion of those who are aware of the need for mental and behavioral health services in our city and the importance of a high quality education for every child in the city. THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL is a living commitment to community well-being and the help children and families need to develop the skills and connections necessary to participate and contribute to community health. THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL is uniquely situated to provide services for students until the age of 25. Services are designed to support students as they matriculate towards meeting post-secondary educational goals and/or transitioning to a career. Our aim is to ensure that all THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL scholars are well prepared to be productive, independent community members ready to thrive in the city of New Orleans or wherever they decide to make their home.

The seven guiding principles of Community Schools, as outlined by the Coalition of Community Schools, are firmly rooted in the seven domains of Trauma Informed Care. This synergy makes the Community School's academic model ideal to serve a community in need of behavioral and mental health services.

The seven guiding principles of Community Schools are :

1. Pursue Equity – Educational excellence and equity are inseparable. Community schools work actively to identify and confront policies, practices and cultures that keep students of different backgrounds and races from achieving equitable outcomes. Community schools proactively and intentionally empower those typically disempowered by barriers to participation.
2. Invest in a whole-child approach to education – Meaningful teaching and learning embraces but goes beyond mastery of core academic subjects to include youth development principles, holding high expectations for children, youth, and adults; and developing their social-emotional, health, critical thinking, and problem solving skills.



3. Build on community strengths to ensure conditions – Community schools utilize the assets of the entire community – including the gifts of people who live and work there, parents, families, residents and community partners to create the optimal learning conditions for each student.
4. Use data and community wisdom to guide partnerships, programs and progress - Reliable and community specific data, coupled with the wisdom of youth, families and residents, guides how education and community partners work together to achieve measurable results.
5. Commit to interdependence and shared accountability – Student success requires explicit investment in collaborative planning and implementation between educators and community partners and across program areas and disciplines. Mutually agreed upon results and related indicators, as well as written agreements enable educators and community partners to hold each other accountable.
6. Invest in building trusting relationships – Deep collaboration takes dedicated effort and time, and becomes evident in the daily formal and informal social exchanges within a school community and between the school and the broader community. Trusting relationships fuel school transformation by helping to create a nurturing, safe, respectful climate where caring adults, families and students come to rely on each other as part of a shared approach to student success.
7. Foster a learning organization – Improved student learning depends on a school community where educators and community partners work together towards continuous improvement. Time and support are available for individual and collective reflection and adjustment as well as shared learning and professional development, to facilitate responsiveness to student needs.

The domains of Trauma Informed Care and THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL'S commitments:

1. Early screening and comprehensive assessment – with the support of community partners, THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city's leader in early screening and comprehensive assessment of school aged children for behavioral and mental health needs.
2. Consumer driven care and services – with the support of community partners, THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city's leader in community based interventions for school aged children with behavior and mental health needs by providing a full complement of wrap around services that support the child in all environments including the child's home.
3. Trauma-informed, responsive and educated workforce – with the support of community partners, THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city's leader in providing professional development and training for educational practitioners and clinicians who provide services for children with behavioral and mental health needs. THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city's leader in developing more educational practitioners and clinicians to do this work and to serve as advocates for this underserved population.
4. Emerging and evidence-informed best practices (EBP) – THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city's leader in providing high quality services to this population of children through research driven, evidence informed best practices and sharing these practices throughout the city.
5. Safe and secure environments – THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city's leader in providing rich, high quality environments for practitioners to learn and grow as they support this population of children.



6. Create trauma-informed community partnerships – THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city’s leader in advocacy for this population of children and will serve as a vessel to funnel support directly to this population of children where there has traditionally been very little support.
7. Develop a performance monitoring system – THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL will be the city’s repository for data demonstrating the impact of our work on the city’s significant problem of educating this population of children and providing for their needs.

Research indicates that, in combination, and when guided by a coherent and rigorous vision of how students, schools, and communities can thrive, these principles provide a strong foundation for the successful pursuit of the community school strategy.

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL does not employ the use of traditional school disciplinary measures and actions. Students are never “suspended” and are never without services. The staff evaluates the progress of each student based on the goals placed in their progression plan. If at any point the progression plan no longer meets the needs of the student, the progression plan can be revisited to adjust the goals to better meet the student’s needs. Individual student progress is assessed based on the success that the individual student experiences along the continuum of progression towards being fully integrated into a less restrictive educational environment with little to no support from THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL’s staff and resources.

Students participate in engaging community-based learning that is integrated into the school curriculum. They benefit from preventative health and social services and an expanded network of adult support. When they experience academic, health, emotional or family needs, they can find help at THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL. Parents and community residents support their children’s learning while developing their own skills – in literacy, parenting, employability, and leadership. Shared resources, relationships and expertise create activities that enhance the school’s mission and lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings, weekends and during the summer (p. 4).

Students are integrated on a “level system”. This system begins at “0” (Center based self-contained for all services) and ends at “5” (5 or fewer hours of center based services per week). This system is tailored to meet the individual programming needs of each student.

All students begin at “Level 0”. At this level, 100% of his or her services are provided by THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL staff and resources. Level 0 is also known as “intake”. Students receive diagnostic assessments and the multidisciplinary intake team works to build a progress plan with measurable benchmarks to determine how well each student is progressing towards being prepared for a less restrictive environment. At Level 0 students receive their services at THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL central location or a satellite center. These students have not demonstrated a consistent reduction of frequency, intensity and duration of the behaviors that impede his or her academic progress. Every week, THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL’s staff meets to analyze student data to determine when it is appropriate to advance a student to a higher level and what that level will look like for that individual student. All aspects of the student’s environment are considered. This includes the student’s academic performance, therapy and clinical progress and a student interview. A justification to move a student to a higher level must be made by the Dean of Students and must be supported by valid and reliable data. Conversely, after four weeks at level 0, if a student is not recommended to move to a higher level, the Dean of Students must present



a justification for the student to remain at level 0 supported by valid and reliable data. Each recommendation includes a risk assessment and is evaluated before being recommended for approval.

Returning Applicant Groups

Applicant groups that have submitted unsuccessful charter applications to OPSB previously are required to complete this section

Describe the activities that your founding team has conducted since your last application to improve your readiness to start a charter school.

TYPE YOUR RESPONSE IN THE BOX BELOW, IT WILL EXPAND AS NEEDED.

N/A

Academic Model

- (1) Describe the academic needs of the student population you propose to serve. Explain how you will set, and measure progress towards, performance goals that put your students on a path towards achieving your vision. Include your plan to gather baseline data necessary to establish goals.
- (2) Describe the concrete structures, policies, and practices that will differentiate your school from options already available to the community you propose to serve.

TYPE YOUR RESPONSE IN THE BOX BELOW, IT WILL EXPAND AS NEEDED.

The academic model of THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL provides comprehensive educational and therapeutic support services to students who might otherwise require residential or other more restrictive placements due to the severity of one or more of the characteristics of the disability category of emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). The goal of THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL is to integrate every child into the least restrictive education environment with the skills needed to meet each child's educational, social, behavioral and emotional goals to support their post-secondary educational and career goals. To this end, THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL is committed to the following conditions for learning as a part of its academic model:

- * A core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.
- * Students are motivated and engaged in learning – both in school and in community settings, during and after school.
- * The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.