



COMMUNITY SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARDS

How Resource Coordinators Can Engage Community Members in Shared Ownership of their Community Schools

The following report compiles best practices and strategies shared by resource coordinators who have effectively engaged community members in support of their community schools.

WHAT IS AN ADVISORY BOARD, And how can it support your community school?

Shared leadership and community ownership are both crucial to developing and sustaining community schools, and the advisory board is the infrastructure for those practices in a community school. The community school advisory board is a diverse stakeholder group organized to oversee the transition of a traditional school to a community school, thereby supporting its continual improvement and sustainability. The advisory board begins by developing their shared vision for the successful development of children and families. Together they bring their individual capacities to the advisory board meetings to increase their knowledge of student and family needs and community resources that can support these needs. They work together on an ongoing basis to review data and ensure that programs and services offered at the community school are effectively supporting student and family development.

An advisory board can be convened by any number of stakeholders – principals, parents, staff members, local school council or PTA members – but it is most often managed by the resource coordinator. Advisory boards vary in size, but are typically made up of anywhere between five and 20 stakeholders from the school community. Most advisory boards meet monthly, but this is something the group can decide together.

GETTING STARTED

First, you need to identify the types of individuals you would ideally like to serve on your advisory board. Consider a range of people that have knowledge about your school, its students, and your community, have access to resources that can benefit your community school, and can serve as champions for your school.

Use this [Advisory Board Development, Step 1: Identifying Potential Members](#) tool to brainstorm individuals you may want to ask to serve on your advisory board. [Steps 2 and 3: Prioritizing and Identify Strengths of Potential Members](#) will help you identify your priorities and how the individuals you've listed can support the priorities you've identified.

When inviting individuals to serve on your advisory board, be sure to let them know what a community school is and how they will be able to contribute to the developmental process.

- Heidi Dye, Resource Coordinator for Children's Home + Aid at Sumner School suggests considering **a parent with several students in your programs**, as they have a vested interest in helping your community schools succeed.
- Seek nominations for potential board members. Be sure to let those you invite know that **others think they'll be a valuable asset** to your board.
- **Inviting a teacher can help build buy-in** amongst school staff and provide a unique perspective to your collective vision of a community school.
- Marianne Solorio, Resource Coordinator for Metropolitan Family Services at Gallistell School, recommends asking someone to come to one meeting and see if they like it. **They don't have to commit right away!** People often want additional info and to see how they might contribute before signing on.

This tool, [Step 4: Inviting Advisory Board Members](#), will provide you with additional tips, questions potential members may have, and a sample invitation letter.

1st ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

The goal is to create an environment of engagement, reflection, and collaboration for your advisory board. The advisory board meeting is a place to model [Parthenon "foundation practices"](#) that build local buy-in and sustainability.

- Choose a meeting time and location that takes into consideration the schedules of



BENEFITS OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD

The stakeholders you engage to serve on your advisory board become **key ambassadors** for your programs and your school.

As ambassadors for your community school, advisory board members **help with sustainability** by generating additional in-kind or financial support and facilitating new partnerships that support your students and families.

Advisory board members help **ensure program quality** by reviewing program outcomes and school data. They also **lend much needed manpower** to help plan and facilitate community school programs and events.

TOOLS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED

Advisory Board Development Toolkit Steps 1- 4

For help identifying potential advisory board members and inviting them to join.

Creating an Engaging Environment

For help designing & facilitating your advisory board meeting.

Sample Meeting Agenda

Community Needs Assessment

Including sample surveys for students, teachers and parents as well as a list of data points about your school and community to gather.

Community Asset Map

To identify existing resources and gaps that the community school partnerships can help fill.

those you've invited to attend. It is a good idea to set a standing meeting time at the first meeting. If you cannot establish a standing meeting time that works for everyone, always be sure to schedule the next meeting time at the end of each meeting.

- Be prepared to tell the group what a community school is and the role community members – including those on the advisory board – have in supporting its development.
- Kevin McGowan, Resource Coordinator for Urban Gateways at New Sullivan School, often uses the [Federation's video](#) to educate others about what a comprehensive community school can look like.
- Respect everyone by starting the meeting on time. The standard you set in the first meeting will set the tone for subsequent meetings.

The tool [Advisory Board Development: Creating an Engaging Environment](#) provides additional suggestions for facilitating effective advisory board (or other) meetings and establishing group norms. This structure maximizes everyone's strengths and engenders ownership for the success of the advisory board and your community school.

CHARTING THE ADVISORY BOARD COURSE

The advisory board members should have input into what their role will be and what the goals of the group will be. However, you should also be prepared to identify what you envision the goals of the group to be and the types of things you'd like to work with them on. This might include:

- Developing and conducting a [Community Needs Assessment](#) and [Community Asset Map](#) to identify programming goals and resources available to meet these goals
- Reviewing data, including program participation rates and outcomes, on an ongoing basis to consider whether changes need to be made to programs
- Reviewing the prior year's survey results to prioritize programming goals for the upcoming year
- Sharing information about all upcoming parent, student, and community events

As the group identifies things that need to be done, ask someone to volunteer for distinct pieces of that work. For example, if you are planning an event, individual members can take responsibility for fundraising, decorations, clean-up, soliciting parent volunteers, etc. It's good practice to review at the end of each meeting what everyone has agreed to do and to even send an email within the next week reminding members what they committed to do.

Don't shy away from asking advisory board members to help! Receiving additional help with all the things you are trying to accomplish is one of the benefits of having an advisory board. Those on your board will appreciate being able to utilize their special skills and meaningfully contribute to your board – and your community school.