

Community Schools Costing Tool User Guide

Michael Griffith, Dion Burns, Daniel Espinoza, and Emma García

Acknowledgments

This resource was published as part of the Community Schools Forward project. This project is a collaboration between the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution (CUE), the Children’s Aid National Center for Community Schools (NCCS), the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS) at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI). Funding for this project was provided by the Ballmer Group. We are grateful to them for their generous support.

The Learning Policy Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Core operating support for LPI is provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Raikes Foundation, Sandler Foundation, and MacKenzie Scott. The ideas voiced here are those of the authors and not those of our funders.

Suggested citation: Griffith, M., Burns, D., Espinoza, D., & García, E. (2023). *Community schools costing tool user guide*. Community Schools Forward Project Series. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-costing-tool>

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Overview

The *Community Schools Costing Tool User Guide* (User Guide) provides information on how to use the Community Schools Costing Tool (Tool) to estimate the cost of establishing a community school. The guide outlines what the Tool provides, the elements and costs within the Tool, and some of the assumptions underpinning the costs. It also describes the methodology used to derive the costs along with limitations of the method.

The Community Schools Costing Tool provides estimates of the costs of the additional resources required to transform a traditional school into a community school. The Tool allows the user to specify information about their school district, the resources presently available, the funding contributed toward the community schools initiative, and the additional desired elements for a community school, and then it yields an estimate of the additional funding required.

The elements in the Costing Tool were drawn from interviews with community school leaders and the work of professional judgment panels composed of experts in the field of community schools. Value estimates in the Tool are drawn from national sources, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Education Association, and National Center for Education Statistics, and include adjustments for regional cost variations and inflation for some of the cost components.

What Is a Community School?

A community school strategy transforms a school into a place where educators, local community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. As partners, they organize in-school and out-of-school resources, supports, and opportunities so that young people thrive. Community schools are designed to be responsive to the needs of their local community, and as such, community schools vary in the array of services and supports that are provided. Thus, while no two community schools are necessarily alike, they share several key practices. These include collaborative leadership with shared power; expanded and enriched learning opportunities; rigorous community-connected instruction; a culture of belonging, safety, and care; integrated systems of support; and powerful student and family engagement.¹ Community schools are typically supported by several infrastructure elements, such as shared governance structures, continuous improvement, data systems, professional learning opportunities, strategic partnerships, and sustainable resources. The following schematic shows how these elements fit into a larger picture of school staff, families, and the community working together to support students and their learning. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Essentials for Community School Transformation



Source: Community Schools Forward. (2023).

There are several common models of governance of community schools, including those led by the district and those led by a community-based organization (CBO). In district-led initiatives, the school district takes on the primary responsibility for hiring staff and allocating resources. In CBO-led initiatives, the hiring of staff may be managed by lead partner agencies—other community organizations with which the CBO partners—or the role may be shared between the CBO and school district.²



Why a Community Schools Approach?


Community schools serve as a hub for a range of community-based learning spaces, services, and supports for students and their families, providing a response to addressing in-school and out-of-school barriers to learning arising from poverty and inequality.³ Community schools are thus regarded as an important part of an equity strategy. Their theory of action is grounded in research and deep field experience showing that children—regardless of their race, ethnicity, zip code, or circumstance—thrive in “whole child” environments where their physical, cognitive, academic, and social and emotional development needs are met.⁴ Fully implemented community schools foster collaboration and support among families, educators, and the communities that surround every child, creating an environment best suited for children to thrive both in and out of school.

Research finds that, when well implemented, community schools lead to improvements in student and school outcomes, including for low-achieving students in high-poverty schools. For example, integrated student supports such as physical and mental health care, dental services, counseling, and transportation are associated with improvements in attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. Likewise, expanded and enriched learning opportunities and enhanced family and community engagement are associated with academic and nonacademic benefits, including more positive school climates, reduced absenteeism, and improved academic outcomes.⁵ Moreover, these essential elements of community schools appear to be mutually reinforcing.⁶

A number of research studies also find that well-implemented community schools promote collective social and economic benefits and provide a positive social return on investment.⁷

What Is the Community Schools Costing Tool?

The Community Schools Costing Tool is intended to help users estimate the costs of establishing a community school. Transforming a traditional school into a community school not only requires changing practices and culture but can also involve hiring new staff members and purchasing and leveraging new resources, as well as repurposing existing resources. The Tool is designed to help users think about these resources within the context of the above framework and better understand the cost of each practice and element of supportive infrastructure, breaking the total cost into repurposed resources and new cost. The Tool may also be used to support financial planning for community schools.



Schools and communities differ in terms of their student populations and the types and intensity of need. As community schools are designed to be responsive to the needs of their student populations and leverage local assets, each community school may offer a different array of services and supports. These needs, services, and supports may also change over time with the development of a community school. For this reason, the Tool is designed so that users can select from a list of common elements to estimate the cost of including them in their initiative. Users can select the location and number of schools in their initiative, choose the additional resources they would like to include in their community school(s), and input their available funding. The Tool will then yield estimates of total resources required, the resources that would be repurposed, and the new costs.

For Whom Is the Tool Intended?

This Tool is intended for use primarily by community schools initiative staff—those in both district-led and CBO-led models—who are involved in planning and supporting community schools. The Tool may also be useful to school administrators or community school coordinators to help with initial planning and budgeting to establish or expand a community school. Other individuals with an interest in understanding the composition and finance of community schools are also welcome users of this Tool.


Contents and Data Sources

This section outlines the contents of the Tool—what is, and is not, in the Tool—and describes the primary data sources for the values that underpin its cost estimates. Additionally, this section describes how personnel compensation costs, such as salaries and benefits, are adjusted to account for regional variations.

What Is in the Tool?

The Tool is designed to cost out the elements needed to establish a community school relative to a typical public school, and assumes a cost involved in doing so.

The Tool guides users through several steps to help them estimate the cost of establishing a community school in their jurisdiction. It asks the user for information about their current initiative, number of schools and students, and funding sources available to support the community schools initiative. It then asks for the additional elements the user wishes to add, by each essential component from the framework (for example, a community school coordinator). The user is asked to select between the options “repurposed” or “new,” as appropriate, alongside each component of the included



key practices and supportive infrastructure.⁸ Finally, the user is asked about expanded and enriched learning opportunities—after-school and summer learning programs—both those that are currently available and those that are proposed for the community schools initiative.

With these sets of data, the Tool will estimate the total resources required. The Tool holds a range of costs for various items, such as personnel costs, professional learning, and data system maintenance. The Tool adjusts personnel costs to reflect regional variation in salaries and benefits.

There may be new costs involved in transforming a school into a community school, such as the hiring of a community school coordinator. In practice, community schools initiatives, districts, and schools may also be able to repurpose existing resources to meet a particular need. For example, to enhance collaboration among educators, a school may be able to adjust schedules to facilitate meeting times, reallocate staff to different roles, repurpose classrooms, or more closely align after-school and in-school curricula.⁹ In general, this is a common mode of operation in many schools and does not represent an additional cost unique to a community school.

Because both adding new elements and reallocating resources are important to the functioning of a community school, the Tool displays the total cost and, for comparison, its breakdown by existing and new resources. In addition, the two financial summary tabs display total cost as the sum of repurposed resources—the costs of the selected elements that are already provided in the school—and new cost. The financial summary tabs also display the amount of additional funds needed, which consists of the remaining new costs after accounting for user-determined available funding. Elements and costs are also organized in the Tool to align with the essential elements outlined in the Essentials of Community School Transformation (Figure 1). Note that not all elements of the framework in Figure 1 have corresponding cost items displayed in the Tool, given that some elements do not have clear resources or costs associated with them and that some resources or costs may fall under more than one element of the framework.

What Is Not in the Tool?

Users are advised that successful implementation of community schools requires attention to more than financial costs. It requires a shift in strategy and culture, a supportive infrastructure, and attention to the synergy among the elements outlined in Figure 1.¹⁰ The Tool is intended to complement, rather than replace, this process.




There may also be costs involved in a community schools initiative that are not built into the Tool. This may be due to their variability or highly contextual nature. For example, costs for transportation may depend to a significant extent on the location of the school and district, whether it is in an urban or rural area, and whether new transportation needs align with existing school bus routes or other existing transportation methods. Health care costs (typically paid or reimbursed through federal, county, or state health programs) and food costs (often federally reimbursed) are also not included in the Tool. (See this guide’s companion volume, *Federal Funding Sources for Community Schools*, for a comprehensive list of federal funding sources.) Similarly, facilities costs are not included, as most community school activities take place on existing school premises, although there may be costs for custodial services to keep buildings open later.

Additionally, the Tool does not capture saved resources in the transition from a traditional public school to a community school. Some of these are also highly contextual in nature, and they may be observed in subsequent years after the transition is made. For example, offering health care can increase attendance, which may bring more funding into a school system that is reimbursed based on average daily attendance. Higher attendance is associated with higher achievement, both of which save money that might otherwise have to be spent on grade retention, remediation services, or other costs.

Finally, the Tool is not designed to calculate return on investment—the difference between the equivalent amount of resources that a community school receives through investments, donations, and in-kind services and the original amount invested to leverage these resources—nor to conduct cost-benefit analysis. A growing body of research finds that community schools are able to garner investments, donations, and the volunteering of time and resources from the community, with the level of these resources often growing in the first few years of operation.¹¹ This may obviate the need to purchase additional resources, providing savings to community schools. Several studies find substantial and positive returns on investment in community schools.¹² However, while the Tool allows input of some funding sources, it is not designed to capture the full range of contributed community resources and savings and is thus not appropriate for calculating return on investment.

Where Do the Tool’s Cost Estimates Derive From?

Costs in the Tool are drawn from primary data sources, research, and other literature associated with community schools, as well as from interviews and professional judgment panels composed of experts and other stakeholders in the field of community schools. Interview and panel data were mainly used



to identify the elements of community schools for which costing information was required, while the values were mainly drawn from primary, national-level data sources. An explanation of the methodology can be found in Appendix B.

The three primary data sources were:

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, such as costs for employee compensation for state and local government workers
2. National Education Association data on average salaries for teachers
3. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, including the average enrollment and number of schools

Interview data included those from community schools initiatives in five states. Costing data were further refined through three professional judgment panels composed of experts in the field of community schools. Interviewees and panelists were selected to reflect a variety of district- and CBO-led community schools initiatives ranging from large urban initiatives to small rural ones.

Note that in most cases, costs were sourced from recent data (2021 or later). However, as costs for after-school and summer learning programs were drawn from an earlier source, these have been adjusted for inflation to the beginning of the 2022–23 school year using the Consumer Price Index from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.¹³

How Are Compensation Costs Adjusted?

NCES's Comparable Wage Index for Teachers (CWIFT) is used to adjust costs associated with employee compensation, including wages, salaries, and benefits.¹⁴ The CWIFT works on the basis that compensation for all types of workers tends to be higher in geographic areas where the cost of living is higher. For example, salaries tend to be higher in urban areas compared to rural areas, and the CWIFT provides a basis for adjusting accordingly.

CWIFT adjustments are made when the user enters a district's NCES number within the Step 1 – Your Schools tab of the Tool. Costs associated with subsequent selections are then adjusted automatically.

Note that the CWIFT is not able to account for differences in educator compensation that can exist within a geographic region. For example, even within the same Comparable Wage Index area, educator salaries can vary due to local factors, such as collective bargaining agreements.



Using the Tool to Complement Community Schools Planning

The Tool can be used as a complement to a comprehensive planning process for a community school. It is important to understand what the school needs and what assets are available at the school and in the community. A thoughtful needs and assets assessment is therefore a critical early step in effective implementation of a community school.¹⁵ The Tool does not obviate the need for such an assessment, but rather, it may be used in conjunction with such an assessment to help with cost estimation.


Users should also consider the integration of elements in their approach to community schools planning. As the framework in Figure 1 indicates, the success of community schools comes from attention to all key school practices thoughtfully integrated with a supportive infrastructure as part of a whole child approach.¹⁶ For example, the user may determine the need for an after-school program in their community school, and the Tool will assist with estimating the cost. However, the way in which after-school programming is aligned with daytime learning and communication between staff in each program will play a role in the effectiveness of after-school learning. Users should thus consider both the elements costed out in the Tool and the way in which they will be implemented to support student success.

What Information Is Needed to Get Started?

Detailed knowledge of school finances is not needed to use the Tool. It is set up to guide the user through Steps 1–5. (See Step-by-Step Guide.) Based on the selections made by the user, the Tool draws from existing sources of information and adjusts costs by location to produce the estimated costs displayed in the Financial Overview and Detailed Financial Report tabs. However, it is helpful to have a few key pieces of information to begin.

The Tool asks users to enter three types of information about their school district or initiative:

1. The number of schools in their initiative or district that they wish to transform into community schools, the average number of students per school, and the level of schooling (elementary/middle or high school).
2. Funding sources available to support the development of a community school, such as a federal Full-Service Community Schools program grant or a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, funds from state sources, or locally provided resources.¹⁷

- 
3. Information about the supports and services currently provided. Do the school(s) offer after-school and summer learning programs? What is the approximate proportion of students served by these programs? How many days is each program offered? Do the school(s) already have school nurses, school counselors, social workers, or school psychologists?

If this information is not available, the user can proceed with default settings.

Step-by-Step Guide

Users must complete two main tasks when using the Tool: (1) enter information about their schools and district or initiative; and (2) make selections based on desired elements for the community schools initiative. After entering this information, users can then see the resulting estimated costs. Users enter data in Steps 1 through 5 in the cells highlighted in green, and output cost information is displayed to the right of the green cells and in the yellow tabs titled Financial Overview and Detailed Financial Report.

Note: The Tool provides an estimate of cost based on the selections made. In practice, exact costs may vary from district to district and based on a range of factors. In addition, while the Tool addresses many of the most common costs associated with community schools as identified by research, individual community schools and initiatives may differ in their needed services and supports based on the particular circumstances of the community and needs of students and their families. The Tool should therefore be regarded as one part of a broader approach to planning a community school. Users are encouraged to use their judgment in understanding the costs of any initiative.

Step 1: Enter Information About Your School(s)

Provide responses to as many of the fields highlighted in green as are applicable or for which you have information available.

Your school(s): Click on the Step 1 – Your Schools tab. Begin by entering your district’s NCES number. This can be found in Step 1b – Your NCES Number. Use Ctrl+F (Windows users) or Command+F (Mac users) to search by district name. Return to the Step 1 – Your Schools tab and enter the NCES number into cell C3. Entering the NCES number will allow the Tool to provide regional adjustments to staffing costs.

Next, use the dropdown menu to select either elementary/middle or high schools. As there can be different costs for expanded learning time by level of schooling, these are discrete categories.¹⁸ (For unified districts or initiatives with a mix of elementary/middle and high schools, users may wish to run the Tool twice—once for each level.) Type in values for the number of schools to be developed into community schools and the average number of students per school.

Initiative funding sources: Step 1 of the Tool provides space for users to enter the funds presently available to support the development of community schools. (See Figure 2.) Values entered here will be subtracted from estimated costs in the financial reporting tabs to indicate the additional funds needed. For this reason, users should enter only the proportion of funds in each category (e.g., Title I) that will contribute to new or existing community school development.

For a list of federal funding sources for community schools, see Kostyo, S., & Miller, T. (2023). *Federal funding sources for community schools*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/federal-funding-sources-community-schools>.

Figure 2. Step 1 – Your Schools

Tell Us About Your Community School Initiative				
Information About Your Schools		Enter the proportion of each funding source or grant available for use toward your community school. ^a		
Enter Your District's NCES Number (Go to next tab to find your NCES #)	802490	Federal	Full-Service Community Schools Grant	\$0
Type of School(s)	Elementary/Middle		21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant	\$0
Number of Schools	1		Title I	\$0
Average Number of Students Per School	529		Other Federal Funding	\$0
		State	State Funding	\$0
Your District (Based on the NCES Number You Entered)		Local	County Funding	\$0
District Name	Boulder Valley School District RE-2		Municipal (City, Village, or Township) Funding	\$0
State	Colorado		Other Local Funding	\$0
		Private/Other	Private Grants	\$0
			Non-Profit/Partner Funding	\$0
			District/School Foundation	\$0
			Other	\$0
		Total Community School Funding		\$0

^a Only enter the proportion of funds used to create a new community school or to expand a current initiative.

Source: Griffith, M., Burns, D., Espinoza, D., & García, E. (2023). *Community schools costing tool* [Excel workbook]. Community Schools Forward Project Series. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-costing-tool>

Steps 2–5: Enter Your Choices


In these steps, users must select the elements that they would like to see included in their community school. Across the key practices and the supportive infrastructure, users can select from 25 elements across 11 categories. Each of the elements was identified through interviews and professional judgment panels with experienced educators as a common element in the development of community schools. Elements are grouped to align with common supportive infrastructure and school practices found in the Essentials for Community School Transformation framework shown in Figure 1. To make selections, click on the corresponding tabs: Step 2 – Coordination, Step 3 – Supp. Infrastructure, Step 4 – Key Practices, and Step 5 – Expanded Learning.

Using the dropdown menus, select yes or no for the fields highlighted in green to select the elements to be included in the community schools initiative. For each item for which yes is selected, a cost will be added. Similarly, for each item the user will select “New” or “Repurposed.” For example, if a school already has a restorative coach on staff, this would represent a repurposed cost. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Step 4 – Key Practices

Resources to Enhance the Implementation of Key Practices						
Culture of Belonging, Safety, and Care						
Positions/Resources	Description	Include?	If Yes, Are These New or Repurposed Resources?	Total Cost	Repurposed Resources	New Cost
Restorative Coach	0.5 teachers per school	No	New	\$0	\$0	\$0
Advisory System Training or Coaching	5% of teacher, school counselor, and social worker salaries and benefits	No	New	\$0	\$0	\$0
Powerful Student and Family Engagement						
Student Coordinator – Initiative	One per initiative	No	New	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student Coordinator – School	One per school building	No	New	\$0	\$0	\$0
Family Support Coordinator	One per school building	No	New	\$0	\$0	\$0
Non-Staffing Student Engagement/Family Support Costs	Equal to approximately \$86 per student	No	New	\$0	\$0	\$0
Rigorous, Community-Connected Classroom Instruction						
Professional Development for Classroom Teachers	6.5% of teacher salaries	No	New	\$0	\$0	\$0
Integrated Systems of Support						
Positions/Resources	Recommended	Current Staffing	Proposed Additional Staff	Total Cost	Repurposed Resources	New Cost
School Nurses	One per every 750 students	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
School Counselors	One per every 250 students	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Social Workers	One per every 250 students	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
School Psychologists	One per every 500 students	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Collaborative Leadership, Shared Power and Voice						
This practice is the responsibility of the community school coordinator and/or the initiative-level coordinator, as well as the shared leadership team at the school site.						
Expanded, Enriched Learning Opportunities						
See Step 5 for information about this key practice.						

Source: Griffith, M., Burns, D., Espinoza, D., & García, E. (2023). *Community schools costing tool* [Excel workbook]. Community Schools Forward Project Series. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-costing-tool>



Costs listed in Steps 2–4 in the Tool may appear as initiative-level, school-level, student-level, or hourly costs. Most are school-level costs, such as the cost of a community school coordinator—typically one coordinator per school. Personnel costs, which often represent the largest costs in education initiatives, include salaries and benefits for full-time staff and hourly wages for others.

Costs at the initiative level can include those for one or more community school directors to provide training and oversight to a cohort of community school coordinators. For example, the Tool specifies one full-time, initiative-level director for a cohort of six community school coordinators. For initiatives with more than six schools, this is prorated for each additional school added. The Tool also allows for a maximum of one CEO position for initiatives with six or more schools and is prorated for initiatives with fewer than six schools.

There are other costs that are assessed on a per-student or daily basis and that scale depending on school size and/or number of schools. For example, costs for additional staff to support an after-school program are assessed on an hourly basis and scale with the number of participating students.

A full list of costs and sources can be found in Appendix A.

See Your Estimated Costs: Financial Overview and Detailed Financial Report

Click on the Financial Overview tab to see estimated costs for your community schools initiative. The Financial Overview section provides a summary of the estimated financial impact based on user choices. The top panel of the tab shows three rows: Total Cost, Repurposed Resources, and New Cost. (See Figure 4.)

Total Cost: This represents the sum of the Repurposed Resources and the New Costs from Steps 2–5.

Repurposed Resources: This is the sum of the elements already present in the community schools initiative as selected by users. These resources may include, for example, already present school nurses, school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists as well as the amount already spent on after-school and summer learning programs. Note that the extent of these resources will vary based on the supports, services, and degree of maturity of the community schools initiative.

New Cost: This represents the estimated cost of the new elements that were selected in Steps 2–5.

Each of these three values is displayed as a total, a per-school amount, and a per-student amount. In the case of New Resources Required, this value is further displayed as a Percentage of Spending—a percentage of the corresponding state’s current per-student funding as drawn from U.S. Census data.

The lower panel of the Financial Overview tab depicts the current community school funding as entered by the user in Step 1 and displayed as federal, state, local, and private/other funding. At the bottom is a row titled Additional Funds Needed—showing the difference between the New Cost and the Total Available Funding. The Additional Funds Needed therefore represents the additional funding that a community schools initiative would need to acquire on top of existing funding to provide the elements selected.

Figure 4. Financial Overview

Boulder Valley School District RE-2				
Estimated Financial Impact Based on Your Choices				
Cost	Total	Per School	Per Student	As Percent of Spending ^a
Total Cost	\$1,007,131	\$1,007,131	\$1,904	
Repurposed Resources	\$862,323	\$862,323	\$1,630	
New Cost	\$144,808	\$144,808	\$274	2.4%
Community School Funding	Source	Total	As Percent of New Resources Required	
	Federal	\$0	0.0%	
	State	\$0	0.0%	
	Local	\$0	0.0%	
	Private/Other	\$0	0.0%	
	Total Available Funding	\$0	0.0%	
	Additional Funds Needed	\$144,808	100.0%	

^a Based on 2019–20 per-pupil spending data from the U.S. Census.

Source: Griffith, M., Burns, D., Espinoza, D, & García, E. (2023). *Community schools costing tool* [Excel workbook]. Community Schools Forward Project Series. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-costing-tool>

Note that the Financial Overview shows estimated costs based on values drawn from the primary data sources indicated earlier. (A full list of costs is shown in the Detailed Financial Report tab.)

A more detailed breakdown of costs is shown in the Detailed Financial Report tab, where users can see the estimated costs associated with their selections in the previous steps. Each panel includes the Total Cost, Repurposed Resources, and New Cost, indicating the detailed costs associated with

the community schools initiative and based on selections made in Steps 2–5. These costs are broken apart by categories from within the framework (e.g., Key Practices and Supportive Infrastructure). (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Detailed Financial Report

Estimated Community School Costs For: Boulder Valley School District RE-2			
Key Practices			
Positions/Resources	Total Cost	Repurposed Resources	New Cost
Community School and Initiative Staffing			
Coordinator – School	\$99,141	\$0	\$99,141
Additional Staff or Supports	\$45,667	\$0	\$45,667
CEO – Initiative	\$0	\$0	\$0
Directors – Initiative	\$0	\$0	\$0
Support Position	\$0	\$0	\$0
Culture of Belonging, Safety, and Care			
Restorative Coach	\$0	\$0	\$0
Advisory System Training or Coaching	\$0	\$0	\$0
Powerful Student and Family Engagement			
Student Coordinator – Initiative	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student Coordinator – School	\$0	\$0	\$0
Family Support Coordinator	\$0	\$0	\$0
Non-Staffing Student Engagement/Family Support Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0
Rigorous, Community-Connected Classroom Instruction			
Professional Development/Classroom Teachers	\$0	\$0	\$0
Integrated Systems of Support			
School Nurses	\$0	\$0	\$0
School Counselors	\$0	\$0	\$0
Social Workers	\$0	\$0	\$0
School Psychologists	\$0	\$0	\$0
Expanded, Enriched Learning Opportunities			
After School	\$644,745	\$644,745	\$0
Summer Learning	\$217,578	\$217,578	\$0
Supportive Infrastructure			
Positions/Resources	Total Cost	Repurposed Resources	New Cost
Data Systems			
Annual Maintenance	\$0	\$0	\$0
Data System Coordinator	\$0	\$0	\$0
Continuous Improvement			
Professional and Curriculum Development	\$0	\$0	\$0
Professional Learning Opportunities			
Professional Dev. for Community School Coordinators	\$0	\$0	\$0
Strategic Partnerships			
Community Partnership Coordinator – Initiative	\$0	\$0	\$0
Sustainable Resources			
Community Partnership Coordinator – School	\$0	\$0	\$0
Shared Governance Structures			
This activity would be the responsibility of the community school coordinator and/or the initiative-level coordinator.			
Element	Total Cost	Repurposed Resources	New Cost
Key Practices	\$1,007,131	\$862,323	\$144,808
Supportive Infrastructure	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$1,007,131	\$862,323	\$144,808

Source: Griffith, M., Burns, D., Espinoza, D, & García, E. (2023). *Community schools costing tool* [Excel workbook]. Community Schools Forward Project Series. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-costing-tool>

Appendix A: Table of Costs

Position/Resources	Measure	Salary and Benefits	Unit	Link	Description
Data Used Throughout the Report					
Regional Cost Adjustment	Comparable Wage Index (CWI)		N/A	https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Economic/TeacherWage	The CWI is a measure of regional variations of wages and salaries used to adjust school-level financial data to make comparisons across geographic areas.
Employee Benefits	Employer costs for employee compensation for state and local government workers by occupational and industry group – elementary and secondary schools		Per employee	https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.t03.htm	
Community School Staff – School Level					
Community School Coordinators	Median wage for instructional coordinators	\$99,141	By building	https://www.bls.gov/education-training-and-library/instructional-coordinators.htm#tab-1	Responsible for the implementation, integration, alignment, and coordination of the community school strategy at the site level. ¹⁹
Additional Staff or Supports	Calculated from median wage for teaching assistants, except postsecondary, represented as an average per-student cost	\$86.33	Per student	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes259045.htm#nat	Funds that may be flexibly used for administrative staff or for non-staffing supports, which may include food, child care, or other materials.

Position/Resources	Measure	Salary and Benefits	Unit	Link	Description
Community School Staff – Initiative Level					
CEO – Initiative Level	Median wage for education administrators, kindergarten through secondary	\$153,082	By initiative	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes119032.htm	Responsible for leading a community schools initiative or network. In smaller initiatives, may directly support community school coordinators. In large initiatives, may provide guidance, support, and/or supervision to one or more directors.
Directors – Initiative Level	Average of community school coordinator and CEO – initiative-level positions	\$126,112	One per 6 schools	N/A	May be present in larger initiatives. Responsible for providing guidance, support, and/or supervision to a cohort of community school coordinators.
Support Position	Calculated from median wage for teaching assistants, except postsecondary, represented as a per-school-building cost	\$45,667 per 1 full-time equivalent (FTE)	0.1 FTE per school building	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes259045.htm#nat	Additional funds to provide administrative supports in a community schools initiative or network. These staff may be employed by a district, lead partner, or other agency depending on the governance structure of the initiative.
Data Systems					
Annual Maintenance	Calculated at 10% median word processor and typist position per school building	\$6,848	By building	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes439022.htm	Equivalent to one data entry position for every 10 schools.
Data System Coordinator	Median wage for database administrators	\$150,423 for 1 FTE	By initiative	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes151242.htm	0.1 FTE per school up to 1 FTE per initiative.



Position/Resources	Measure	Salary and Benefits	Unit	Link	Description
Continuous Improvement					
Professional & Curriculum Development (for all community school staff)	Calculated at 5% of salary and benefits for all school-level coordinator positions other than the community school coordinator				
Professional Learning Opportunities					
Professional Development for Community School Coordinators	Calculated at 5% of a community school coordinator salary and benefits				
Strategic Partnerships					
Community Partnership Coordinator – Initiative Level	27.2% above median wage for instructional coordinators	\$58,088	By initiative		Responsible for developing systems-level partnerships between a community schools initiative or district and community organizations, where not undertaken by a community school director or other staff member.
Sustainable Resources					
Community Partnership Coordinator – School Level	Median wage for teaching assistants, except postsecondary	\$45,667	By building	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes259045.htm#nat	Responsible for developing school-level partnerships between a community school and community organizations, where not undertaken by a community school coordinator or other staff member.



Position/Resources	Measure	Salary and Benefits	Unit	Link	Description
Culture of Belonging, Safety, and Care					
Restorative Coach	Average wage for 0.5 FTE teaching position, by state	Varies by state	By building	State teacher salaries drawn from: https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/econ/school-finances/secondary-education-finance.html	Responsible for developing positive school climate, restorative justice, and social and emotional learning and wellness programs, where not undertaken by the community school coordinator or other staff member. Position may be staffed by a veteran teacher or a teacher on special assignment.
Advisory System Training or Coaching	Calculated at 5% of staffing costs for teachers, counselors, and social workers			State teacher salaries drawn from: https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/econ/school-finances/secondary-education-finance.html ; https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/school-and-career-counselors.htm ; https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm#tab-5	Coaching for teachers and related staff on structuring an advisory system and integrating social and emotional learning, restorative practices, and family outreach.

Position/Resources	Measure	Salary and Benefits	Unit	Link	Description
Empowering Student and Family Engagement					
Student Coordinator – Initiative Level	27.2% above median wage for instructional coordinators	\$58,088	By initiative		Responsible at an initiative level for ensuring that students are receiving needed services, where not undertaken by a community school director or other staff member.
Student Coordinator – School Level	Median wage for teaching assistants, except postsecondary	\$45,667	By building	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes259045.htm#nat	Responsible at a school level for student case management and ensuring that students are receiving needed services, where not undertaken by the community school coordinator or other staff member.
Family Support Coordinator	Median wage for teaching assistants, except postsecondary	\$45,667	By building	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes259045.htm#nat	Responsible for conducting outreach, engaging families, and connecting them with school and community resources or family case management, where not undertaken by the community school coordinator or other staff member.
Non-Staffing Student Engagement and Family Support Costs	Calculated from median wage for teaching assistants, except postsecondary, represented as an average per-student cost	\$86.33	Per pupil	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes259045.htm#nat	Funds to provide materials, resources, or other support with student engagement and connecting students with needed services and/or connecting families with school and community resources.

Position/Resources	Measure	Salary and Benefits	Unit	Link	Description
Rigorous, Community-Connected Classroom Instruction					
Professional Development for Classroom Teachers	Calculated at 6.5% of the base salary for a classroom teacher. Number of teachers estimated based on state teacher–student ratios				State teacher salaries drawn from: https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/econ/school-finances/secondary-education-finance.html
Integrated Systems of Supports					
School Nurses	Median wage for a nurse – educational services: state, local, and private	\$96,093	User determined	https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm#tab-5	Recommended ratio of 1 FTE per 750 students.
School Counselors	Median wage for school and career counselors and advisors	\$94,117	User determined	https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/school-and-career-counselors.htm	Recommended ratio of 1 FTE per 250 students.
Social Workers	Median wage for a social worker – child, family, and school	\$76,448	User determined	https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm#tab-5	Recommended ratio of 1 FTE per 250 students.
School Psychologists	Median wage for a school psychologist	\$122,534	User determined	https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes193034.htm	Recommended ratio of 1 FTE per 500 students.

Position/Resources	Measure	Salary and Benefits	Unit	Link	Description
Expanded and Enriched Learning					
After School	Daily out-of-pocket expenditure per-pupil amount, adjusted for inflation	Elementary/middle: \$30.47; high school: \$41.13	Daily rate per pupil	https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-Cost-of-Quality-of-Out-of-School-Time-Programs.pdf	Average daily out-of-pocket expenditure for after-school programs, adjusted for inflation.
Summer Learning	Daily out-of-pocket expenditure per-pupil amount, adjusted for inflation	Elementary/middle: \$41.13; high school: \$56.37	Daily rate per pupil	https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-Cost-of-Quality-of-Out-of-School-Time-Programs.pdf	Average daily out-of-pocket expenditure for summer learning programs, adjusted for inflation.

Note: N/A means not applicable. FTE stands for full-time equivalent.

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Comparable wage index for teachers*; United States Census Bureau. (2020). *2020 public elementary-secondary finance data*; Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *Occupational employment and wage statistics*; Baldwin Grossman, J., Lind, C., Hayes, C., McMaken, J., & Gersick, A. (2009). *The cost of quality out-of-school-time programs*. Public/Private Ventures and The Finance Project.



Appendix B: Methodology

In this appendix, we describe the methodology used to construct the Community Schools Costing Tool.

The Tool is the product of a multistage effort to estimate the school- and initiative-level costs for community schools. We developed a tailored approach, building on existing costing methodologies and incorporating some special features that were needed to adapt existing methods to the project needs.²⁰

The Tool draws upon and is aligned with the Essentials for Community School Transformation framework²¹ and resulted from using a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach; consulting practitioners and leading experts in national community school organizations; and undergoing numerous rounds of consultation, revisions, and testing.²²


A summary of the information collection process and analyses is provided below.

Stages

1. Researchers conducted a series of informational interviews with individuals from successful community schools initiatives.

The informational interviews sample was built after identifying successful community school implementers, and sites were selected following recommendations by national experts in the field (i.e., based on reputational selection). They were also selected to represent diversity in community schools across multiple domains: geographic (locale, state, rural/urban), organizational leadership type (district-led, nonprofit-led, university-assisted), and stage of maturity. We held five interviews with a total of eight participants. Each interview lasted 60 minutes.

In advance of the interviews, participants received informational materials that included sample questions and an Excel spreadsheet aligned with the questions that interviewers would use to capture information during the interviews. During the interviews, the emphasis was put on two aspects. First, the research team aimed to capture the elements that are specific to community schools and essential to the strategy (i.e., above and beyond the components already available and used in traditional public schools). In order to capture the incremental costs of establishing community schools, researchers based survey questions on the premise of whether participants would have this element in a traditional school and whether they had this element prior to adopting a community schools framework.²³ Second, researchers emphasized discussion and data sharing of the categories of resources that typically account for the largest shares of education budgets: personnel and purchased services.²⁴



The interviews were conducted between February and April 2022. They were recorded and transcribed for research purposes exclusively. The information obtained was used to design the different sections in the questionnaire used in Stage 2.


2. Researchers established professional judgment panels to identify the full array of components and areas of cost for a model community school.

Professional judgment panels were used to identify the full array of core elements needed to transition from a traditional public school to a community school.²⁵ A total of 19 experts were interviewed in three professional judgment panels in June and July 2022. Panels were hosted virtually via Zoom and lasted 3 hours each. The panels were recorded, and the responses, both oral and in the web conference chat, were transcribed for analysis purposes.

Panel 1 and Panel 2 sought to build a general consensus among participants on the range of possible components that are included in high-quality community schools initiatives. Panelists were grouped according to whether they represented large urban or small rural initiatives. Participants received a series of preparation materials in advance and were informed in advance about the type of questions they would answer during the panels.

During the panels, researchers solicited each group's professional judgment about the characteristics, qualities, and scale per student, per school, or per initiative for each of the core elements in a high-quality community school over and above what a traditional public school has. While consensus was aimed for, experts' reporting on any variance in any of the components was encouraged, and researchers recorded and used this variation to offer adjustments in the Tool.

Panel 3 included a mix of experts representing an individual district community schools initiative, a statewide initiative, multiple organizations, and experts involved in advancing community schools. Panel facilitators explained to participants the process that was followed for the informational interviews and preceding panels. They were then presented the main findings, areas of consensus, and areas of disagreement learned from the prior panels. While the conversation was also intended to help researchers learn about variation in the use of core elements based on their experiences, the most important goal of the third panel was to review and refine the findings from the prior panels.



3. The information from the three professional judgment panels was used to construct the list of elements to be included in the Tool.

The next stage was to create an interactive tool that would allow users to estimate the costs of establishing a high-quality community school. Information on the quantities and prices are explained in the Contents and Data Sources section in the Tool. The resulting core elements, as well as the categories, are derived from the evidence provided by practitioners and experts in the preceding stages. Researchers also used information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics and the database of educational resource prices from the E\$timator Tool from Teachers College, Columbia University, to develop proxies for positions represented in the Community Schools Costing Tool.²⁶ In addition, researchers supplemented the information with materials received from the participants and from existing research on financial costs of offering summer and after-school learning opportunities.²⁷ Finally, researchers used information and materials supplied by panel participants to check alignment with selected nationwide proxies included in the Tool.


4. Research participants beta-tested the Tool and shared feedback.

The researchers benefited from feedback received from advisors at multiple stages during the development of this project. On three occasions between spring and summer 2022, the work was presented to the Community Schools Forward task force, which was composed of experienced educators, practitioners, researchers, and key decision-makers in education policy. Advice and feedback received from task force members further informed the design of the Tool.

The final stage of our approach included beta-testing the materials produced. In particular, in order to test the accuracy of cost estimation, utility, user-friendliness, and design of the Tool, researchers shared the Tool and this User Guide with research participants from the previous stages during September 2022. The participants were invited to share feedback via a survey or during hosted office hours. In some cases, participants shared the resources with colleagues for additional feedback. Upon reviewing feedback, researchers adjusted the Tool and User Guide to improve its usability and flexibility.

Limitations


Some limitations of the Tool are listed earlier in this guide. (See What Is *Not* in the Tool?) In addition, the methodology (and thus the Tool) has limited capacity to cost out the quality of the core elements, given wide variety in element quality present in different community schools. This detail would matter to users seeking to conduct an evaluation of a particular community schools initiative. The Tool also





has limited capacity to account for total economic costs (which include the cost of donated resources and their opportunity costs), to capture economies of scale and potential saved resources, or to offer a breakdown of the costs by stakeholder (which, as a cross-sector initiative, may be valuable). Other challenges around selection bias—from small samples to energized initiatives participating—would also apply. Finally, researchers advise that the interpretation of results and new costs be made carefully. This is especially applicable if initiatives are compared. The values may be affected by some schools being more likely to adopt the community schools framework or being in districts or states that provide more basic supports and services than others, which would affect both the baseline and additional services required, as well as the New Resources Needed or the Repurposed or Existing Resources net of the resources that are repurposed and already used in the provision of educational services.

Endnotes

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 20. The need to design our own approach is due to the fact that existing methods were not well suited for costing community schools as a strategy. Community schools are, in practice and by design, place-based; unique to their context; and, therefore, different from each other. (A common phrase among community school practitioners and researchers is, “No two community schools are alike.”) However, existing costing methods tend to be applied to well-defined, homogeneous programs, interventions, or policies and seek to cost all components needed to produce an effect, relative to a counterfactual site without the intervention. See, for example, the Ingredients Method in Levin, H. M., & McEwan, P. J. (2000). *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Vol. 4). SAGE and Levin, H. M., McEwan, P. J., Belfield, C., Bowden, A. B., & Shand, R. (2017). *Economic Evaluation in Education: Cost-Effectiveness and Benefit-Cost Analysis*. SAGE. However, community schools do not exclusively operate thinking about the outcomes, do not follow a discrete well-established or model program, and also lack a unique counterfactual. The Community Schools Costing Tool provides a generic, adaptable framework that each community school can adjust to meet its needs and that builds on the common framework underneath this tool. See Community Schools Forward. (2023). *Framework: Essentials for community school transformation*. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/project/community-schools-forward>
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About the Authors

Michael Griffith is a Senior Researcher and Policy Analyst at the Learning Policy Institute (LPI). He is part of LPI's Equitable Resources and Access team, where he focuses on school funding issues. Before joining LPI, Griffith was a school finance expert, first with the Education Commission of the States and then as an independent contractor. Over the past 20 years, he has worked with policymakers in all 50 states to help them reshape and reform their school funding systems, always to improve student achievement and education equity. His research has focused on the condition of state and district budgets, the adequacy and equity of state finance formulas, and promising practices in funding programs for high-need students. Griffith holds a BA in Political Philosophy from Michigan State University, an MA in Public Administration from The Ohio State University, and an MA in Education Management from Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland.

Dion Burns is a Senior Researcher on LPI's Whole Child Education, Educator Quality, and Equitable Resources and Access teams, where he conducts qualitative and quantitative research on issues of educational equity. He is a co-author of the LPI reports *Students Experiencing Homelessness: The Conditions and Outcomes of Homelessness Among California Students* and *Closing the Opportunity Gap: How Positive Outlier Districts in California Are Pursuing Equitable Access to Deeper Learning* and a co-author of the book *Empowered Educators: How High-Performing Systems Shape Teaching Quality Around the World*. He has more than 20 years of experience in education, serving in a variety of roles, including teaching, policy analysis, and international diplomacy. Burns earned an MS from Stanford University in International Comparative Education and an MS from Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand) in International Relations.

Daniel Espinoza is a Researcher and Policy Advisor on the Educator Quality team and the Equitable Resources and Access team at LPI. His research involves quantitative and qualitative methods. He is the lead author of the LPI report *Taking the Long View: State Efforts to Solve Teacher Shortages by Strengthening the Profession*. He is a co-author of *Improving Education the New Mexico Way: An Evidence-Based Approach*; *Students Experiencing Homelessness: The Conditions and Outcomes of Homelessness Among California Students*; and *Supporting Principals' Learning: Key Features of Effective Programs*. Espinoza holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in International Economics and in Political Science from the University of Notre Dame.

Emma García is a Senior Researcher at LPI. She has extensive research experience in the economics of education, education policy, and quantitative methods. Among others, García has held research positions at the Economic Policy Institute, the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education, the



Campaign for Educational Equity, the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, and the Community College Research Center. She has also consulted with national and international organizations, including the National Institute for Early Education Research, MDRC, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank, and she serves as adjunct faculty at the McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University. She has published academic and policy studies on a range of issues, including production of education, impact evaluation, educational equity, teacher labor markets, human development, international comparative education, and cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis. García received a PhD in Economics and Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, an MA in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences from Columbia University, and a BA in Economics from Pompeu Fabra University.