

Community School Implementation in Rural Vermont

Educational Policy

2025, Vol. 39(3) 572–606

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DOI: 10.1177/08959048241239893

journals.sagepub.com/home/epx

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Abstract

This study highlights the Community Schools (CS) implementation experience of five rural Vermont schools. Principals and CS coordinators participating in a state-funded program aimed at CS establishment were interviewed to understand better their experience with implementing a school/district-wide policy and reform effort. Findings suggest several elements play a critical role in the successful implementation of rural CSs, including leveraging already-present community engagement practices, school leader embodiment of CS values/mentality, as well as collaborative leadership practices that broaden participation and level the field for all parties involved. Implications for community school implementation within rural contexts are discussed.

Keywords

community schools, rural schools, community schools leadership, implementation, school-community partnerships

Community schools represent a promising approach to public education that is seeing increased use and attention across the American educational

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landscape. The central component of this approach is the development of positive relationships between families, schools, and communities in support of student academic, social, and physical health and development (Maier et al., 2017). Through such connections, community schools aim to create ideal environments and provide necessary services that promote the learning and holistic development of all children and their families (Oakes et al., 2017). Versions of the community school approach have been adopted in many large schools and districts (e.g., New York City, Los Angeles, Baltimore) (Valli et al., 2016), alongside smaller urban and suburban communities in places such as Buffalo, New York and Cincinnati, Ohio. Through this approach, these diverse communities have demonstrated increased student and family support and success because of their collective efforts in incorporating full-service, family-school-community partnership structures (Anderson et al., 2019; Galindo et al., 2017). Among these community school implementation contexts, the success of all students and their families remains a central focus and primary motivator. Inherent in the community school ethos is the belief that student, family, and community success is not possible unless basic needs are met and adequate, sustainable support to meet those needs is provided by leveraging community assets and resources. Despite increasing interest in community schools among varying community types, many existing community schools and, subsequently, most community schools scholarship remains centered in urban or suburban contexts, contributing to urbannormative perspectives in educational research (Schafft, 2016; Thomas et al., 2011). Few studies have made purposeful efforts to prioritize rural community school experiences and perspectives. It should be noted that the community schools approach goes beyond the traditional role of a rural school serving as a focal point in a small town or community. While a rural school often and naturally serves as a community hub, the community schools approach involves a deliberate and comprehensive strategy that integrates academic, social, and health services to address the diverse needs of students and their families (Williams, 2010). This approach emphasizes collaboration with various community partners, aiming to create a more extensive support network and enhance the overall well-being of students, making the school not just an educational institution but a holistic center for community development. Concurrently, the existing body of literature focused on community school implementation and scaling methods to meet varying community needs is also limited, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Jenkins & Duffy, 2016; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2017). Thus, school and educator perspectives and experiences in implementing the community school approach *specifically within rural contexts* remain under-investigated.

To address this gap, the current study centered on the unique experiences of administrators and community school coordinators in five rural Vermont communities during their first year of community school implementation. The application of a community schools approach within the Vermont context presents an opportunity for close examination of school/district reform from a variety of rural settings, each with its own emerging needs, priorities, and culture. Further, this study represents one component of the research and evaluation process associated with Vermont Act 67, referred to as the Community Schools Act, which was signed into law in 2021. A 3-year, federally funded grant program, this act was specifically passed to “. . .support Vermont schools and community partners to develop, expand, and sustain a community school model that demonstrates five pillars outlined in the legislation: integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement, collaborative leadership and practices, and safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments” (VT Agency of Education, 2021). Vermont Act 67 is a clear representation of “policy in action” with distinct features of bipartisan support for and investment in Vermont schools. The VT Community Schools Act is the result of collaborative efforts to facilitate education policy implementation, particularly for schools and districts in rural areas that may otherwise be less competitive in federal grant and funding competitions. Through a unique research-practice partnership (RPP) between the VT Agency of Education (AOE) and the University of Vermont’s College of Education and Social Services (UVM-CESS), relationships were fostered with Act 67 grantees and collaborative networks were formed to connect and support the administration of community schools funding, as well as the evaluation of the implementation process.

The State of Vermont is particularly unique in that it is a predominantly rural state working to implement the community school approach in direct partnership with a state agency of education, which is responsible for the management and evaluation of community schools, through the passage of VT Act 67. Across these five rural schools/districts, our analysis uncovered common themes including the centering of collaboration and engaged leadership in community school efforts, the critical nature of advocacy and mindset of rural community school leaders, and alignment or integration of the community school framework with current school priorities, programs, and initiatives. Through this work, we argue that the experiences of these rural VT schools and districts provide insights into ways community schools might be

implemented in settings alternative to urban and suburban contexts. We also believe that the insights and experiences of rural Vermont community schools add alternative and needed perspectives that contribute to diversifying and broadening the larger community school landscape and methods for school policy implementation in the United States. We will briefly review the relevant literature on community schools implementation and community school leadership to situate our current study on the experiences of community school leaders during the initial stages of implementation in a rural state.

Relevant Literature

The Community School Approach

Community schools is an umbrella term describing schools that provide various services to address the comprehensive needs of students, families, and communities, through collaboration with community agencies and local government (Jenkins & Duffy, 2016; Oakes et al., 2017). “Broadly, a community school is a partnership involving the school, students’ families, and the surrounding community that maintains an integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development (Blank et al., 2012). The U.S. Department of Education articulated that the primary purpose of full-service community schools is to “. . . provide comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students, students’ family members, and community members that will result in improved educational outcomes for children” (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). The values and mindsets that center on holistic child development through leveraging family engagement and community resources to advance positive outcomes for youth and community are not new and date back to the foundational thinking of John Dewey who advanced schools as social centers (Dewey, 1902). This perspective was furthered by social activists of the Progressive Era like Jane Adams who pioneered the Hull House in Chicago in 1889 to meet the needs of low-income families and immigrant communities (Quinn, 2017). The current momentum for community schools was catalyzed most recently under the Biden-Harris administration as community schools were identified as an emerging evidence-based practice to support COVID-related learning loss, student social-emotional well-being, and school climate (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). Under the current administration, the federal government has increased investment in community school implementation fivefold, evidenced by sustained and increased funding of the Full Service Community School (FSCS) grant program administered by the United States Department of Education (United State Department

of Education, 2023). Further, the 2023 FSCS competition aligned with \$150 million of federal funding, more than double that of FY2022 (The White House, 2023). This increase in support and recognition has paralleled increased methods for thinking about and facilitating the community schools approach. Currently, there are several effective models to support community schools implementation including (1) district or school-led community schools in which implementation is primarily leveraged internally, (2) community-led models in which implementation is done in partnership with a community-based organization, and (3) a university-assisted community school (UACS) in which a local institution of higher education is the primary partner in community schools implementation and resourcing (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2018).

Nationally, the term “community schools” has coalesced in application and action around four major pillars: (1) integrated student supports, (2) collaborative leadership, (3) active family and community engagement, and (4) expanded learning opportunities (Oakes et al., 2017). As community schools are not a codified or pre-made intervention-to-order, implementation of community schools is meant to be hyper-local and contextualized, in balance with the core tenets of the approach. Recently, several major organizations (Learning Policy Institute, Brookings Institute, National Center for Community Schools, and the Coalition for Community Schools) that have been long-standing champions of the community schools movement, have released a compendium of resources to advance community schools implementation and evaluation efforts (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). The recently updated national conceptual framework for community schools now includes additional “key practices” extending on the four-pillar conceptualization to include a “culture of belonging, safety, and care” and “rigorous, community-connected classroom instruction.” This revised national conceptual model of community schools aligns with Vermont Act 67 and the rural schools implementing the CS approach. The VT Act 67 legislation purposefully conceptualized community schools across five pillars, which include (1) integrated student supports, (2) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, (3) active family and community engagement, (4) collaborative leadership and practices, and (5) safe, inclusive and equitable learning environments. The passage of VT Act 67 marked the beginning of a competitive grant program administered by the Vermont State Agency of Education (VT-AOE), supported by \$3.4 million in ESSER III funds that the Vermont legislature earmarked toward community schools implementation. This legislative and policy implementation process remains an innovative and novel utilization of federal COVID relief funding (Duncombe & Syverson, 2023) which has gone on to support five projects serving 16 schools and over 3,500 PK-12 students, their families, and communities.

There is an expanding literature base on the effectiveness of the community school approach that highlights the multi-domain affordances to student outcomes including lower dropout rates, improved academic performance, increased connection to schools, and reduction in risky behaviors (Heers et al., 2016; Maier et al., 2017). Further, the CS approach has been found to facilitate increased interaction with parents and school staff (Bronstein & Mason, 2016), as well as an increased sense of community safety and connection (Britt et al., 2022). Most recently, the RAND Corporation published results from a quasi-experimental study of the NYC-CS initiative comparing outcomes of students attending CS schools with comparison students in a matched control design. Findings from this study indicate that (1) NYC-CS had a positive impact on student attendance in all types of schools (elementary, middle, and high schools), (2) there were reductions in disciplinary incidents for elementary and middle school students, but not for high school students, (3) positive and significant impacts on elementary and middle students' on-time grade progression were made, and (4) limited evidence could be attributed to NYC-CS supporting improvements in school climate and culture for elementary and middle schools (Johnston et al., 2020). Like the RAND study, the majority of community schools research has been conducted in urban and suburban contexts showcasing a gap in the knowledge base on community school implementation in rural communities in which community resources and assets vary in geographic proximity and density. Local models of community schools in rural communities are just now emerging and have the potential to showcase the transformational power of this model to support rural community resiliency and well-being, when schools may truly be the only community edifice in a small rural community.

Community Schools Leadership

Given that the empirical research base on community schools is nascent and growing rapidly, only a few key studies have begun to specifically examine the experiences and mindset of school leaders (Green, 2015; Mayger & Hochbein, 2021; Mayger & Provinzano, 2022; Ruffin & Brooks, 2010; Sanders, 2016; Sanders et al., 2019) during the development and implementation of community schools. Community school coordinators, specifically, are being advanced as key leadership personnel who are critical to the successful integration and sustained implementation of the community school approach (Min et al., 2017). Community school coordinators often braid and integrate community school implementation processes with existing school efforts and initiatives, while leveraging and managing key community-based

partnerships (FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018, 2019; Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2018; Sanders et al., 2019). This form of collaborative leadership is also a key pillar and core value of the community school approach, as well as the educational policy implementation process (Mitchell & Sackney, 2016). Described by the Partnership for the Future of Learning (2018) as “. . . foundational and critical for the success of a community school strategy,” collaborative mindsets and values among community school leadership are critical to the successful development and implementation of equitable curriculum, expanded learning opportunities, and improved school climate and cultures that positively impact student, family, and community outcomes (Blank et al., 2003). Furthermore, previous scholarship has identified people-centered leadership and quality, positive interactions and collaboration with staff and the broader community as critical elements of successful rural school leadership (Preston & Barnes, 2018). As such, understanding the processes, mindsets, and enablers of developing and enacting collaborative leadership structures and principles during the early implementation phases of community schools will be critical for scalability and sustainability. Additionally, given the dearth of research on rural community school implementation, a cascading implication is a limited understanding of the experiences of community school leadership in setting up a community school model within rural contexts.

Implementation Science and Community Schools

Implementation science has emerged as a critical framework for understanding how to effectively translate education policies, such as the establishment of community schools, into practice (Blase et al., 2015; Damschroder et al., 2009; Ryan Jackson et al., 2018). Community schools, characterized by their blended approach to student academic support and social service provision, have gained prominence as a means to address educational disparities and promote holistic student development (Lewallen et al., 2015). To meet the primary goals and vision of a community school, it is essential to consider the principles of implementation science that lead to effective and sustainable adoption of this approach to education. Implementation science processes emphasize the systematic planning, monitoring, and evaluation of program and policy implementation to ensure both fidelity and sustainability (Meyers et al., 2012). By applying implementation science principles to community schools, policymakers and educators can enhance the likelihood of successful policy execution and desired social and academic outcomes for students, families, and school communities.

In the context of community schools, effective implementation depends on several key factors. First, strong leadership at both the district and school levels is essential for promoting a shared vision and securing necessary resources (Klein et al., 2021). Implementation science underscores the importance of leadership engagement and support as catalysts for successful implementation (Aarons et al., 2011). Second, community engagement and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including parents, community-based organizations, and local agencies, play a key role in aligning resources and support services with the needs of students and families (Bryant et al., 2020). Implementation science frameworks, such as the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR; Damschroder et al., 2009, 2022), offer a comprehensive lens to explore these multifaceted dynamics and identify potential barriers and facilitators to successful community school implementation. Further, equitable and collaborative evaluation and continuous improvement remain central components of both the community school ethos and, subsequently an implementation science approach to transitioning to a community school (Mitchell & Sackney, 2016). Utilizing evidence-based practices and ongoing data collection and analysis, educators and community school leaders can refine their strategies to better serve students, families, and communities (Domitrovich et al., 2010). This iterative process aligns with the principles of implementation science, which prioritize adaptation and learning from real-world implementation experiences (Eccles & Mittman, 2006). The fusion of implementation science and the community schools approach offers a promising avenue for enhancing the effectiveness of this innovative educational model through collaborative leadership, data-based inclusive decision-making, and shared visioning, identified as enabling conditions of community schools (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). Yet, scholarship focused on the implementation process and various factors that are necessary for or facilitate the successful adoption of the community school approach, particularly within rural or less-resourced schools and communities, remains scant.

Research Questions and Methods

Considering these identified research gaps, our aim in this study is to understand the experience of community school leaders in rural schools in Vermont working to implement the community school approach and transition school climates/cultures to a relational, partnership-focused mentality in support of students and families. Through collaborative analysis of qualitative data from rural community school leaders, our goal was to surface both barriers and supports faced by schools in rural contexts in the early stages of community

school implementation. To this end, the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data from community school leaders and school sites were guided by the following questions:

1. *How do rural community school leaders understand and conceptualize community schools?*
2. *What was the experience of rural Vermont Community School leaders in implementing the Community Schools approach during year one?*

Ultimately, we sought to understand how the unique structure and processes in Vermont shaped the implementation and sustainability of the community school approach. We aimed to uncover not only the challenges in implementing community schools but also elements or characteristics of community school leaders that support and enable this innovative approach to education. We utilized data from the five school-district recipients of Vermont Act 67 Community Schools funding, all of which participated in a qualitative multiple-case study evaluating the implementation and impact of the community school approach.

Setting

Contrary to common narrative, rural contexts across the United States are not uniform and monolithic but instead remain diverse and complex in their histories, economies, and cultures (Li et al., 2019). The rural schools and communities in the current study reflect this reality and vary in size, remoteness, and demographic makeup. This diversity further results in differences in immediate needs faced by students and families, subsequently informing and differentiating the focus of each school or district's implementation process.

Additionally, all five cohort members represent a distinct school level at the center of their community school implementation efforts, ranging from a PK-12 school, an elementary school, a middle school, a high school, and a supervisory union. This range of organization size and scope provides further nuance and insight into the community school implementation process among a range of rural education institutions. Further demographic details of participating schools and their communities can be found in Table 1.

Data Collection

Institutional Review Board approval was received to conduct evaluation activities and VT Act 67 recipient and school administrator approval was obtained before conducting interviews and collecting documentation related

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Vermont Act 67 Recipients.

VT act 67 recipient	2021 School demographics
School 1	<i>n</i> = 165 Race/Ethnicity: Black/AA = 1.27% His./Latinx = 0.63% White = 96.2% AIAN = 1.27% Asian = 0.63% FRL = 52.53% IEP/SE Services = 4.16%^a
School 2	<i>n</i> = 326 Race/Ethnicity: Black/AA = 1.81% His./Latinx = 4.52% White = 91.27% AIAN = 0.6% Asian = 1.2% FRL = 27.71% IEP/SE Services = 6.24%^a
School 3	<i>n</i> = 319 Race/Ethnicity: Black/AA = 0.68% His./Latinx = 2.36% White = 92.23% AIAN = 0.34% Asian = 0.34% FRL = 48.99% IEP/SE Services = 8.11%
School 4	<i>n</i> = 2,589 Race/Ethnicity: Black/AA = 0.02% His./Latinx = 0.03% White = 94.9% AIAN = 0.005% Asian = 0.005% FRL = 51.47% IEP/SE Services = 23.52%
School 5	<i>n</i> = 132 Race/Ethnicity: Black/AA = 3.28% His./Latinx = 0.82% White = 95.08% AIAN = 0.82% Asian = 0% FRL = 46.72% IEP/SE Services = n/a

Note. AA = African American, AIAN = American Indian or Alaska Native, FRL = free/reduced-price lunch, IEP/SE = individualized education plan/special education services.

^aOnly SU data is available.

to community school implementation. Our primary data source consisted of five semi-structured interviews held with varying combinations of community school coordinators, school principals, and district superintendents from rural VT Act 67 funding sites. An interview protocol (Appendix A) was developed within the AOE/UVM-CESS RPP and reflected critical elements and goals the RPP had regarding implementation, program facilitation, and alignment with state and federal expectations. Held both online (via Zoom and Microsoft Teams) and in-person, all interviews were administered by AOE employees in Spring 2022 at the end of the first year of a 3-year, federally funded Act 67 grant program. Alongside interview data, various report documents, check-in tools, and logic models were reviewed and contributed added context to the emerging implementation climate within rural Vermont community schools.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection, the iterative process of qualitative data analysis began (Saldaña, 2014). All interviews were transcribed using available software (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Zoom) and subsequently reviewed and organized by RPP research partners for ease of reading and interpretation. Each interview was then coded independently by research partners, with multiple discussions held throughout the coding process to discuss agreements and disagreements around codes, emerging themes, as well as their relevance and applicability (Campbell et al., 2013). This practice was intentionally undertaken to uphold the collaborative values and equitable structure of our research practice partnership, as opposed to establishing interrater reliability and conducting data analysis independently.

Study authors initially coded Act 67 recipient transcripts using a priori codes derived from nationally recognized community school scholarship, codebooks, and protocols. These included integrated student support, expanded learning opportunities, family and community engagement, collaborative leadership, and the Vermont-specific pillar of safe, inclusive, and equitable environments, among others. Next, direct quotes associated with the various a priori codes were compiled and reviewed to garner further emergent themes or patterns (Percy et al., 2015) amongst coded responses that illuminated characteristics, assets, and potential barriers to implementing the community schools approach within rural Vermont schools. This process yielded additional codes including *cohort leadership characteristics*, *community school characteristics*, and *implementation readiness*.

Findings

As previously noted, community school implementation scholarship alongside general national interest in the community school approach is growing (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). Yet, what this looks like in rural, less-resourced communities and schools remains limited (Schafft, 2016). The community school implementation process underway in Vermont represents a unique and timely opportunity to address this gap in scholarship by closely investigating what the early community school implementation process looks like specifically in rural environments. We highlight this rural community school perspective and the distinct experiences of community school leaders in working to incorporate this approach in their schools and districts. Findings are presented as themes that emerged across all study participants, the primary of which included (1) natural embodiment and integration of the CS framework, (2) essential advocates of the CS approach, and (3) collaborative and engaged leadership informing the work. Representative examples and quotes from participants related to their experiences with the community school implementation process are provided to support our findings. Further theme details and examples from participant data can be seen in Table 2.

Natural Embodiment and Integration of Community School Framework

One of the most prevalent themes to emerge across all five Vermont community school sites was defined by *the natural embodiment and integration of the community school framework* within existing school systems and structures. School principals, superintendents, and community school coordinators alike discussed a significant amount of naturally occurring dialog centering on community-based partnerships and various services being offered or needed among their students and families. In many cases, we saw cohort members prioritize the ongoing and anticipated projects and programs with existing community partners. Engaging with the community in authentic ways and focusing on the development of local connections, opportunities, and experiences for students in their schools were clear priorities among all rural Vermont community schools. An example of this theme comes from a school principal at School 1. In discussing the implementation process, this school leader noted the natural synergy that occurs between a community school and its broader context, stating,

[A] Community School is the center of a community that the community has pride in and as the outcomes for the students improve, the community is also

Table 2. VT Act 67 Community Schools—Principal/School Leader Embodied Characteristics.

	Personal characteristics	Attitudes, dispositions	Internal behaviors	External behaviors
School 1	...so it was really already in the works as sort of a long-range plan of how can we sort of legitimize the work that we're already doing? And then when the applications opened up, it just felt like we already had the infrastructure in place. We have the planning process in place. We have the leadership, kind of the teaming structures, in place. We should really like explore this as an option.	I had sort of seen it as like we'll have two years of other funding where we think about recovery and kind of like that work and then the Community School work will start. We'll sort of like bridge into that and it'll be a really natural progression to the work that we're already doing. And we had a strategic plan at that point that we still work from. . .	The work has to continue to be organic in lots of ways. . . whether you draw on the funds of knowledge or it's sort of a cultural responsive kind or social ecology work. . . it is really around these networks of relationships and I think. . . I think about a first step for folks, it would be to map those networks and then think about how you could like sort of think more expansive like help them bloom a little bit. But I think that's really the importance is like every moment of every day when I'm having a conversation with a student or a teacher or a family member or community member I'm trying to put that conversation into this larger network of connectedness.	
School 2		The supports that we're providing for, so the framework, the mindset was already there. But developing a mentoring program was not within our reach without this. . . Just to have the resources available to expand the whole child approach would be one thing that comes to mind. So definitely cohesion and alignment, but also expansion. . .	...while schools play an important institutional role, they are not. . . I think Community Schools at their best start to decenter school and recenter kind of the networks of relationships around young people that help them feel like learners.	...we really were focused on food security. As one of our one of our top priorities came as a direct result of knowing how important that was to our families during the pandemic And thinking about, you know, the things that we had in place being sort of a short-term, fixed in that we had funding that could continue to pay for free meals. You know? So knowing that we needed a longer-term solution for not only providing food but thinking about nutrition in our community, you know more broadly.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Personal characteristics	Attitudes, dispositions	Internal behaviors	External behaviors
School 3	I see one of the opportunities that brought me here was looking at the school. You know, so now schools have the power to have the flexibility and relevance of a tech center, but almost not the tools or expertise to do it. So I thought I could leverage some of my prior experiences here and so far things have been pretty amazing. . . I mean, you know, I keep the five pillars on my wall next to me because, you know, in every conversation, there's a way that a combination of the pillars can be brought to resolve, a concern that comes up, you know.	An important piece of the community that reflects the Community's hopes, dreams and pride, and likewise the Community or the school has to be proud of its community and integrated with it. So that's how I see it.	So what I found here is we're making great strides, student conversations about growth, work based and place based learning and entrepreneurship program, dare to be me program, with a role in fellowship. . . like there's just phenomenal things happening and where we had the most leverage was in coordinating those and seeing them and helping them.	
School 4			I have never seen a grant that appreciated the importance of the connection between providing socially relevant and focused basic needs support alongside all of those things that we say we wanna do all the time about bringing community members in about, you know, having inclusive governance. . . like you cannot do those things in a rural community with such a high level of poverty as we have without providing those basic supports around things like transportation and clothing and food and all of those things that make it possible for people to be fully engaged in, you know, systemic work.	I'll go back to food security again and again. . . it was already an issue, but certainly you know, it has been exacerbated and the program that we're running now that delivers groceries from the food shelf to families' homes has become the focus of a potential basic needs pilot through the food bank. And so, like, there are some ways that this thing that we developed to just make sure that kids had what they needed at home could solve a greater need in the community.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Personal characteristics	Attitudes, dispositions	Internal behaviors	External behaviors
School 5	So that's one piece and that's mindset and I go back to the concept of community building and that we have built communities, but we built them in our own little places and it's really, I've always believed in the PK12 school system. And I think it's a really big asset of Vermont that we have some version of that everywhere. . . . We can know each other and the piece for me. . . . I believe all we really have as humans is each other, is relationships. And what are we without each other? We are isolated and alone and some good things can happen there, but not a lot. And so relationships is key. . . . I used to say, like algebra is an excuse to be in a relationship with 16 kids for an hour a day but algebra is secondary. Be in the relationship and build trust and you will go deeper in teaching and learning than you ever have.	I think overall teachers don't jump for joy to invite people into their classrooms or to leave their classrooms or to be fully transparent with what's hard for them or what their growth areas are in terms of teacher development. There's a piece that Community Schools could really inform as teachers prepare to be teachers, to see the communities as an integral, necessary resource to make learning relevant and to engage with those stakeholders that can not only inform our work, but give extra lift to our work as teachers.		"The Community School is really kind of the pinnacle of where we're at when we're talking about deep learning. I feel like the impact that we can have through a Community School is greater than any other model of education that I've experienced. The only effective way to do school is to do it in partnership and collaboration with community partners in a reciprocal way. So not just we are tapping into our communities to get their resources to benefit us, but the role of schools needs to be in the act of knowing everyone in that community, both our community that supports the school and the school itself. So, I feel the power of the Community School is to transform not just education, but also how we do community and do it together and the reciprocal relationship."

bolstered. And if the community is flourishing and thriving, then the students will. So, a Community School doesn't believe in the artificial separation of their students and a stable learning environment. But the community is a separate entity, so I believe a Community School is a fully integrated, important piece of the community that reflects the Community's hopes, dreams, and pride, and likewise, the community or the school has to be proud of its community and integrated with it.

Many schools and community school leaders were already exemplifying community schoolwork and mentalities. In the description of their schools' operation and focus on bridging systems of support, programs, and services for students, Vermont community school cohort members all identified ways they were using the community school approach as a unifying entity and source of vocabulary to articulate what they were often already doing. Another Vermont community school leader and elementary school principal described this interaction. He said, "It's just helped, I think, to solidify the work that's already happening, so I think it's just giving us an opportunity to work more effectively. . . . So, I think it's just helped us to solidify our efforts and give us a new way of thinking about our work, a broader scope." Collectively, elements of a positive implementation climate surfaced among the community school cohort. Such positive elements and demonstrations of readiness for shifts in how they "do school" aligned with core elements of the community school approach. This seemingly natural fit and alignment with current goals and initiatives in place in the schools contributed to ongoing motivation and clarity for school professionals working to advocate for and implement the community school structure.

Leader Mentality, Values Make the Difference

Another equally prevalent theme that emerged across all participants centered on the qualities and characteristics of community school cohort leaders. We describe this theme as *leader mentality and values making a difference* and understand this to entail the various work processes and leadership styles of school professionals coalescing to drive community school implementation. The advocacy and championing of the community school approach by key cohort leaders (e.g., principals, community school coordinators) emerged in dialog and shaped the methods schools applied to engage with colleagues and community partners to articulate and enact school-wide adoption of the community school approach. In line with community school scholarship, the presence of a "champion" or key individuals who can help explain and motivate others to understand and engage with a whole-school, whole-child

approach to teaching and learning can be the catalyst for the successful uptake of this approach. One community school principal summarized this values-centered perspective, stating,

So, like really narrowing it down and trying to find out, like, A) what's, like, doable and B) what's gonna have the most impact. . .you know mentoring program, access to food, access to healthcare is just. . .that's what we need to do and have that through the lens of MTSS because it can't be an aside because if it becomes an aside, becomes a privilege, you know, and we want to eliminate privilege as a mechanism to access services. We want our services to be ubiquitously available to all members of our community. And that's why I think our communication is going to be key for next year of helping folks to fully understand that and some of that is like making sure our resources are available in multiple languages and making sure that our website is accessible. If you don't think about it, you're marginalizing folks.

The values and community school mindset of these rural school leaders became evident as a driving force behind the implementation of this approach. Often centering relationships and connections with students and their families, cohort members focused on access and equity in services and opportunities above specific learning outcomes or academic metrics. It was a consistent and universal articulation and values-based approach that community school leaders took to implementing, discussing, and supporting school staff in thinking about community schools. This subsequently influenced the experiences cohort schools had over year 1 of implementation and setting the vision and tone for the student and family support that lay ahead. One community school leader touched on this viewpoint, noting,

So, I was really in a position which I appreciate more now than I did at the time of just continuing some of the projects and ideas that were already underway in supporting those ideas and where I could be in direct communication with teachers to develop trust to understand how they came to know the grant. What I could do to help them to see the grant in a new light because their contact with the grant was shaped by the initial brainstorming of all things that could potentially be possible. And I think that made a lasting impact rather than the kind of final strategies and goals. So, I've been having to navigate that a little bit and trying not to be seen as someone who's taking away something that they had anticipated would be basically a free ticket to most anything they could dream of and to try to shape it and dig a little deeper in terms of who are potential community partners and what are potential ideas.

Community school leaders all demonstrated a values-based approach to thinking about, discussing, and enacting community school programing. Guided by their own experiences and passion for comprehensive student, family, and community support, rural school leaders were able to understand the key pillars of community schools and demonstrate how those might be translated into work already underway in their schools. Focusing on connection and holistic positive student development acted as a motivator for many rural Vermont school leaders to engage in dialog around community school implementation and rally others to not just understand it but see how it could benefit their entire school and community.

Collaboration, Engaged Leadership Naturally Rises to the Surface

A third, significant theme to emerge from the data centered on collaborative leadership and the prevalence of shared decision-making and engagement demonstrated by community school leaders. Throughout the implementation process, cohort leaders engaged in frequent and open conversations with school staff, CS coordinators, and community partners to determine what the most pressing student and family needs were and how best to address them. Much of this type of conversation included significant, purposeful dialog around blending existing programs or processes (e.g., MTSS) and how best to include the professionals responsible for administering them. Closely linked to the community school mindset noted above, the consistent and purposeful shared governance methods and equity-focused leadership emerged as essential elements to the successful uptake of the community school approach within these tight-knit communities. One cohort member described this critical process, stating,

We have systems in place that will help. So, we used the global best practices as our self-study tool in the leadership team and then that got distributed through the different departments in grade level teams at the school. So that we understood sort of where we were, how we assessed ourselves, and what concrete steps we might take to improve this. And then we were able to examine which of those steps had. . . which ones we controlled the best lever on to do and it was a way of building consensus and building a shared vision and then being able to move forward.

This community-focused mentality and collective thinking seeped into daily practice and informed the way that cohort members and colleagues interacted with one another and thought about their daily work and responsibilities.

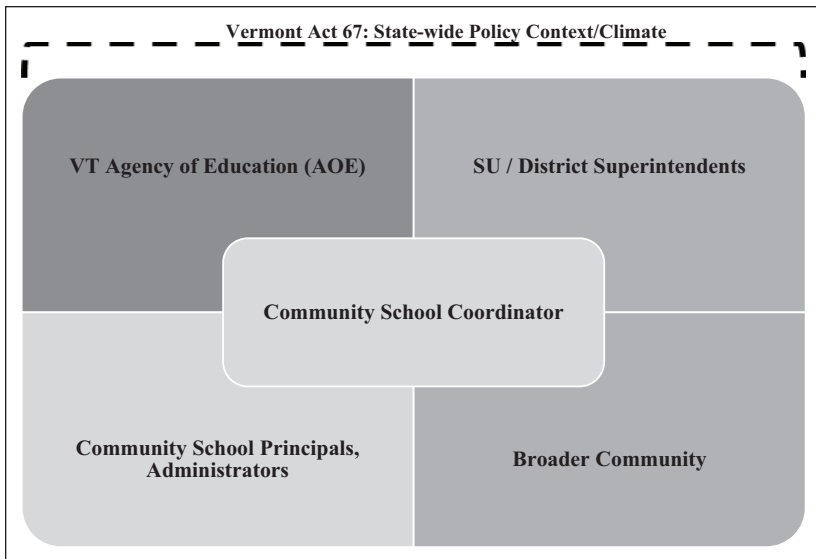


Figure 1. Local context and ecology of community schools implementation in Vermont.

Principals and community school coordinators, in particular, led within-school engagement efforts to provide shared language and understanding around the community school approach. This collaborative approach to evolving school climates was summed up by a community school coordinator who said, “. . . just continuing to make this everybody’s job and you know that it’s all of our responsibility and that they will be heard when they notice things and we want to keep bringing those up and highlighting them. That’s I think huge in all of this.” This positioning of the community school coordinator in collaboration with other school leaders is visualized in Figure 1.

The collaborative, community school mentality and collective mission also impacted the nature of community engagement within the implementation process. Many coordinators and school leaders noted how the inclusion and integration of community members early in the implementation process contributed to not just the successful adoption of the community school approach, but also the developing understanding of community schools and collective buy-in from students, families, and the broader school community. One school principal discussed this, noting,

. . . I keep feeling like so many of our programs and what we're talking about are all these stars lining up with people coming together and just. . . they've been waiting to be invited to the table. They haven't had a chance to do that. And that's gratefully the role I get to be in is to see what everybody really cares about and try to find ways to support everyone and bring everybody together. And then you get an outcome that you could never have otherwise.

This type of community-engaged, collaborative leadership also provided an avenue for community school professionals to think beyond implementation and toward a more sustainable, ongoing model. Such methods and mentality catalyzed a new community identity and understanding of shared needs, which further informed the nature and frequency of community engagement among cohort schools. One coordinator described this, stating,

There's an interest in, you know, finding continued sustainability for this work. There are also . . . other ways that we could think about sustainability through partnerships with some of the programs that fit within the pillars. I believe that our supervisory union will continue to be committed to the work that we have started here in some way, shape, or form. . . I think that anybody in the legislature could go to their Community School with some basic education about how these pillars work and see it happening in their school. And maybe that's what people need to do to understand and commit to sustainability for the work.

This collaborative process and team mentality centered on systemic improvement and the establishment of an evolved method for holistic student support. In line with the previous two themes, the natural embodiment of a collaborative attitude and purposely inclusive among community school principals and coordinators appeared as tangible evidence of the leader mentality and values needed for successful adoption of the community school approach. Community school leaders also surfaced the significant mutual benefit that can occur when interprofessional collaboration begins to go beyond the school walls and include key partners in the broader community.

Discussion

In this paper, we centered the perspectives of rural Vermont schools working to implement the community school approach, highlighting schools and community contexts alongside the nature and mentality of community school leaders. The genesis of the community school approach in Vermont was designed and implemented based on the local context, needs, and the support and scaffolding provided by the unique administrative structure and

collaborative partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education. Made possible by Vermont Act 67, the Community Schools Act, the opportunity to examine the unique experience of rural schools and districts implementing the community school approach and the roles and nature of school leaders in the process adds a necessary and often overlooked perspective on community schools, rural school leaders, and the challenges and opportunities presented through the establishment of this model of education within rural communities. This process was also undertaken in a manner informed and guided by fundamental values and perspectives inherent in community schools, namely equitable and collaborative leadership practices that center on relational partnerships and equitable family and community engagement (Mitchell & Sackney, 2016; Oakes et al., 2017). As such, results from this study add to our limited understanding of the community school implementation process within rural schools, particularly the key attributes and leadership characteristics of school principals and community school coordinators that remain sorely underexamined within existing community schools scholarship (Min et al., 2017).

Innovatively braiding and integrating resources, programs, or opportunities was often identified in the ways existing programs (e.g., MTSS) were reimaged to work within the framework of community schools. Principals and CS coordinators discussed creatively finding ways to not “reinvent the wheel,” but rather capitalize on processes and procedures that remained effective interventions or systems, while simultaneously supporting CS values and structure. This way of identifying opportunities in existing systems or programs and working to expand the ways they might serve students is often identified in contexts that are under-resourced or under-supported (i.e., rural communities) (Preston & Barnes, 2018; Schafft, 2016). As part of the CS implementation process in a rural context, openly partnering with and prioritizing integration with existing programs and student support initiatives also aligns with existing scholarship showing the multi-domain benefits that interprofessional collaboration in community schools can provide, even in small or isolated communities (Bates et al., 2019; Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2019). Further aligned with existing community schools scholarship, VT community school leaders authentically engaged with creative thinking processes and sought new opportunities with community partners, which indicates a natural inclination of rural school leaders to understand integrated student supports in which community voice is valued and incorporated (Lewallen et al., 2015). Our findings suggest that rural community school leaders may view or understand such a whole-school, whole-child approach to “doing school” as a natural fit, utilize it as a unifying language or way of articulating innovative goals for student and family success, and advocate for

strengthened connection and mutual support between rural schools and their broader community (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Preston & Barnes, 2018).

The values and beliefs of school leaders working to implement community schools informed their mentality around adopting this approach, which in turn influenced their advocacy for and prioritization of their transition to a community school. In this study, community school coordinators and administrators shared core values and perspectives on student support and development that contributed to their approach and served as a collective motivator (Carpenter, 2015). CS leaders viewed the implementation of community schooling creatively and purposefully worked to understand how to best meet the specific needs of students and their families, as they were articulated by the students and families themselves. Our findings suggest that within rural schools implementing the community school approach, the purposeful inclusion of student and family voices that inform leader attitudes and mindsets truly matters (Haines et al., 2015). This style of leadership and collaborative management structure contribute to authentic, equitable, relationship-centric approaches to school reform. Pushing back on recent findings from RAND noting no effect on school climates and cultures, our findings suggest that through values-based leaders, community schools can be successfully and sustainably adopted (Warwas, 2015) and see values shifts throughout a whole school. In the context of rural schools implementing community school models, the close-knit and symbiotic relationship often tied between rural schools and their communities, and within rural school communities, may facilitate or contribute to the natural fit for CS in rural education (Casto, 2016; Ticken, 2014).

Lastly, there were several ways that rural community school leaders demonstrated critical collaboration, engaged leadership, and inclusive practices both within their schools as part of the community school implementation process and between new or existing community-based partners. The distinct blending of CS pillars into nearly all school practices, conversations, programs, and engagement opportunities extended the CS perspective beyond school walls and integrated it into aspects of community engagement (Auerbach, 2010; Haines et al., 2015). Naturally linked to community schools pillar four—collaborative leadership and practices—in this study, principals and coordinators working to implement community schools approaches in rural environments seemed to naturally understand that a school community is inclusive of not just students and teachers, but all school staff and all community members. CS leaders broke the mold of traditional, top-down school structures by intentionally including diverse local voices and perspectives in decision-making and leveraging their working

knowledge of local needs and resources to support students and families in ways that were needed and effective (Epstein, 2018; Mayger & Provinzano, 2022). Further, rural school leaders' CS implementation activity that purposefully incorporates such local needs and perspectives demonstrates a deep and intentional understanding of local policy contexts and community culture, in which the school plays an integral role. In seeking to incorporate the pillars in all aspects of school management, rural community school leaders identified areas of overlap or creative ways to sustain community school initiatives by adapting other programs or mandatory systems. Further, this collaborative and inclusive method, present from the onset, enabled schools to extend their connections and relationships beyond the school to support student and family programming (Oakes et al., 2017). This was inclusive of their willingness to engage and cooperate closely with the VT Agency of Education who acted not just as a partner and support structure, but as a model for open, collaborative methods of approaching implementation processes. We contend that this example set through state agency support allowed study participants to feel safe in breaking the mold and begin to think of community schools in longer terms and a platform or medium by which both schools and communities might enable the success and sustainability of the other. Aligned with community school scholarship noting strong leadership at all levels of the education system is essential (Klein et al., 2021; Sanders et al., 2019), our findings suggest that setting the community school vision and tone and transitioning to a sustainable, long-term model or structure requires two-way, collaborative practices across the levels of the education system. VT CS leaders exemplified engaged leadership and consistent support, which facilitates successful implementation (Aarons et al., 2011; Sanders, 2016). In this way, rural community school leaders demonstrate an aptitude for community engagement and collaboration with relevant stakeholders to align or acquire new resources and services that are contextualized and appropriate for their students and families (Bryant et al., 2020).

Collectively, and as supported through emerging research on community schools (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018; Sanders et al., 2019), integration and alignment with existing programs or systems, school leader values and mindset, as well as purposefully collaborative, equitable engagement that extends beyond the school, shape the implementation process within rural, under-resourced schools and communities. One school leader, for example, demonstrated how these key aspects collectively manifest, noting,

...when it comes to reaching consensus on our goals and strategies around the work we're doing, you know, we're pretty nimble and I feel like we do have

really good consensus on what our overarching goals are and then what our strategies are in terms of meeting those goals. So I would say even though it was not great timing-wise, necessarily, to pull us together, it wasn't hard either because the work was largely defined for us already. So as a matter of pulling together people that were already doing a lot of these pieces and saying what you know "how can we complement these things?" and "how can we talk about the things we're already doing and how can we expand on that?"

Another community school principal discussed their experience, exemplifying how they prioritize equitable, integrated, data-informed, inclusive decision-making for students' benefit. They said,

. . . there were these disparate groups, EST being one of them, and I don't mean that in a bad way, but then there were like parents who advocated for their kids through a relationship that they had and now we have systems like we're gathering information about students, you know, social, emotional. . . So how do we use that and you know how do we understand the relationship between how kids self-report on belonging and what happens in the classroom and what happens elsewhere as it relates to those historically marginalized groups, whether it's students of color, whether it's students of poverty, regardless of what kind of what attributes those students have? How do we better support them, and how do we gain? How do we gain and help them feel a deeper sense of belonging?

This testament illustrates the woven nature of the community school pillars, but also the way that rural school leaders working to implement the community school approach often weave and integrate key elements of successful implementation practice. Which of these elements is most prevalent or salient depends on the contextualized needs and parameters unique to each school, its student and family population, and community (Goessling et al., 2024; Oakes et al., 2017). Maier et al. (2017) referred to this concept, noting that the pillars and foundational elements of the community school approach are not static, but dynamic and purposefully adaptable to meet the needs of schools. Thus, we contend that the significance of this study lies in its illumination of the ways that small rural schools might facilitate and implement the community school approach, adding a needed perspective and experience to the larger community school conversation. Further, rural school leaders exemplified several interconnected characteristics and attributes that supported their successful implementation of a school or district-wide reform effort and transition into thinking about ways to sustain and grow such work. We believe that the experience and attributes of rural community schools add value and insight into ways other communities and schools might choose to initiate the community school approach, as well as the critical tenets that need to be in place to make the adoption of community school models successful.

Implications

This study sheds light on several critical implications for the implementation of the community school approach in rural educational settings. Our findings emphasize the pivotal role of rural school leaders' mindset and values, along with the necessity of fostering collaboration among students, families, schools, and state agencies. Findings also underscore the multifaceted nature of community schools, revealing that successful implementation is dependent upon the alignment of the rural school leaders' perspectives with the core values of community schools, an intimate understanding of local policy contexts and community needs/assets, and the ability to navigate multiple, often divergent policy formation processes. Specifically, the significance of a community school mindset among rural school leaders throughout community school implementation became clear. Their belief in the community school model, coupled with a deep understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within rural contexts, is critical to successfully shifting school climate and culture practices. Community school leaders must champion the cause, advocating for the necessary resources, policies, and professional development opportunities to create an environment where community schools can thrive (Bartlett, 2018).

Our study also highlights the pivotal need for interprofessional collaboration in the development of bridging social capital. Implementing the community school approach with fidelity demands active engagement not only from educators but also from students, families, and external stakeholders. Community schools are community hubs, facilitating partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and state agencies. Such collaborations can bridge resource gaps, enhance educational offerings, and provide vital support services that coalesce to enhance the academic, social, and physical development of students. Encouraging this mentality among school administrators, bringing community school coordinators to the table as leaders in implementation, and purposefully flattening traditional, hierarchical structures can facilitate the adoption of the community school approach and cultural shifts within a school. Further, the current study underscores the potential role that state agencies might play in providing strategic guidance and support, as well as emulating the necessary qualities and practices essential in community school implementation. State-level collaboration with local communities and schools can facilitate the development of context-specific initiatives, addressing the nuanced needs of rural schools effectively. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that a holistic and collaborative approach, rooted in the leadership's positive mindset and values, is indispensable for the successful implementation of community schools in rural areas. By embracing these principles,

educators, families, and policymakers can work hand in hand to create nurturing educational environments that support and empower rural students while positively engaging communities.

Conclusion

This exploratory study was undertaken to examine the experiences and perspectives of school leaders and community school coordinators in rural Vermont during the first year of community school implementation. As the community school approach continues to gain national attention as a functional and impactful method for supporting holistic student and family well-being, it becomes essential to center school and educator experiences that fall outside of the typical urban or suburban majority. Particularly for schools and districts that face unique challenges and barriers to school reform and policy implementation efforts, such as those in rural contexts, discerning components of a successful implementation climate may prove helpful in the successful adoption of a contextualized, needs-based policy intervention such as the community schools approach. In this way, we contend that the symbiotic connections between school and community within rural areas, the marked community school mindset exhibited by rural school leaders, and the natural inclination to collaborate and democratically work toward redefining how one “does school” were all present among rural school leaders in Vermont and contributed to successful community schools implementation. This study contributes unique insights into characteristics of rural school leaders necessary for broad school reform efforts and provides a foundation for thinking about ways community school models and methods might be adapted to meet the needs of rural school colleagues.

Appendix A

Background

- How long have you been at the present school and in what capacity? How did you come to this position?
- What prompted you to apply for the CS grant [in a pandemic]? How was the experience of applying for and being awarded the grant?
 - [EXTENSION] How has this grant experience influenced how you have responded to the pandemic and the needs of your community?
- How would you define a community school? Do you believe that your school(s) fit(s) the description? Please Explain
- Since receiving the award, in what ways have you solidified, expanded, or changed the way that you see your school as a community school?

Implementation & Reflection

- [EXPLORATORY] How are you developing or expanding on a vision/identity as a community school? Do you have a vision for your community school's identity and culture?
 - As you work with your staff, families, and partners, are you gaining a sense of what they think that identity and culture need to be? How will you integrate? How are you blending the various perspectives from stakeholders on community school?
- Have you communicated the community school vision to the broader school community (e.g., students and families)? If so, how?
- How has implementation of the community schools affected your school or organization as a whole? [Connection to EXTENSION question above]
- Have you attended to a specific pillar of CS and/or has a specific community school pillar stood out to you as being instrumental in the work that you are doing now to support the development or expansion of the other pillars?
- Share major overview themes and goals of the initial application. . .
 - How has the proposed work been operationalized this year?
 - What were some barriers to implementing year 1 planned CS grant activities/strategies/vision?
 - What were some lessons learned from Y1 implementation and planning efforts?
 - What were the major accomplishments of Y1 CS implementation and planning?
- How has the community school framework created space for new thinking? New collaborations/partnerships? And new initiatives?
- In what ways have you been utilizing other CS grant participants (and the cohort meetings) to support your local implementation of community schools?
- What are some additional and/or unique strategies that your school has adopted to foster stronger collaboration among various groups working in your school (administration, teachers, CBO staff)?

Integration and Forward Planning

- What are key elements of your community school model where implementation appears to be working well?
- In what ways are you integrating community school planning and goals into existing school-based policies, systems, initiatives, or programs that intersect with one or more of the five CS pillars?

- What are your school's goals next year for community school implementation? What would support your efforts to implement your vision of a community school? What resources do you need?

IF TIME/EXTENDED:

- What roles do families play in the Community School work that you have undertaken this year?
- What are some strategies your school has implemented to promote positive relationships and trust between school staff and students?
- What are some strategies your school has implemented to promote positive peer-to-peer relationships among students? Can you describe some of your strategies for providing mentoring, student leadership opportunities, and restorative practices?
- Can you share with us what Expanded Learning Time (ELT) looks like in your school (e.g., curriculum, daily activities)?

Appendix B

**Community Schools RPP
ACT 67 Participant Interviews
Codebook**

Primary Codes

1. Integrated Students Supports

Addressing out-of-school barriers; Social/health service agency involvement; Specific educational strategies or programming (e.g., RP, UDL); MTSS/layered supports (operationalized/execution)

2. Expanded Learning

Afterschool or alt. learning opportunities; Weekend programming or scheduled activities; Experiential learning in community org. or environment; Take home and/or family-inclusive learning/materials.

3. Family Engagement

Distinct communication with caregivers/parents; Incorporation of family into learning activities; Caregiver consultation or meeting with faculty/staff; Familial use of social/health services provided within schools.

4. Community Engagement

Communication practices; Relationship with other community members; Opportunities for interaction; Outreach activity; The school acting as an engager of the community at large—not tied to a specific CBO.

5. Collaborative Leadership

Professional learning opportunities; Interprofessional collaboration; Demonstrated use of MTSS (structure-focused; overlap with other school practice); Shared decision making; Data-informed decision making.

6. Safe, Inclusive, and Equitable Environments

School culture and climate; Inequity identification, acknowledgment, and addressing; Safety and security practices; Linking social capital relationships (connecting students, families, and school administrators through communication, and resource sharing)

7. Community Characteristics

Economic development (barriers and supports); Dominant industries; Demographics; Community size (population); Parent/caregiver employment; Frequency of family engagement; Communication style/frequency.

8. Cohort Leadership Characteristics

Unique characteristics of VT Act 67 grantees that surface unrelated to other codes; Qualities, circumstances of individuals implementing CS model in schools (e.g., educators with kids in schools); Long-game perspective/equitably sustainable/empathy; “Pillar talk.”

9. Community Partner Characteristics

Type and number of CBO; Services offered by CBO; Geographic proximity; CBO size (i.e., is it local? National org? Public or private?); Formal vs. Informal (i.e., is this an individual? Is this an informal group? Is this an established business?)

A. Potential

B. Developing

C. Sustaining

10. Community School Characteristics

Community-based services offered; Comm. Orgs in school; Coordinator duties/responsibilities; Three-year goals/expectations; Training/facilitation; CS messaging/advocacy

11. Student Characteristics

Demographics (i.e., Age, Race, IEPs, FRL); Interaction with legal/justice systems; Lived experiences of student populations; Mental and physical health profiles

12. Educator Qualities/Features

Demographics; Turnover rates; Staffing; Staff buy-in; Workforce experience/longevity; Staff involvement (content areas/school level/etc.)

13. Implementation Readiness

Alignment with key goals/initiatives at school or district; CS coordinator in place.

14. Act 67

Supports: Funding; Technical assistance; Communication with AOE; Expansion of programming.

Concerns: application timeline; timeframe for writing; employee bandwidth; funding sustainability.

15. Integration and Coherence

Overlap and integration between CS pillar and integration with existing school practices and policies.

*Look for language regarding existing policy/regulation (e.g., IDEA funding/regs); CS leaders might be using existing policy/reg language but talking about CS pillars, framework, etc.; Flexible pathways=expanded learning, dual enrollment, CTE.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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