

The Promise of University-Assisted Community Schools



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BINGHAMTON
UNIVERSITY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

OVERVIEW

- University-assisted Community Schools (UACS)
- Binghamton University Community Schools
- Toolkit: *Building Successful Partnerships Between Higher Education and Community Schools*



*The fate of universities, their
local communities, and cities
are intertwined.*

Ira Harkavy
Netter Center for Community Partnerships
University of Pennsylvania

Why partner with higher education?

- Universities can make significant contributions to the quality of life in their local communities and cities.
- Universities can enhance their missions of teaching, research, practice and service by striving to improve the quality of life in their local communities and cities.
- Universities can help sustain community schools initiatives
- **Universities train the next generation of school professionals.**

Why Partner with Higher Education?

Benefits to PK-12 schools

- Academic and instructional resources
- Engaged and passionate faculty and students
- Evidence-based strategies for youth, families, communities
- Links to services offered through professional preparation programs
- Support for needs and asset mapping, assessments, school climate surveys, and evaluation
- Innovative learning opportunities for youth, families, communities
- Pathways to higher education

Benefits for Higher Education

- Clinically and/or skill rich professional preparation
- Real-world skills and competencies for post-graduate employment (win-win)
- Students are change agents to benefit the local and global community
- Solutions to complex problems while advancing research, teaching, learning, service, and interdisciplinary collaboration
- Community benefit can be a central component of funding appeals to donors

UNIVERSITY- ASSISTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY | COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



Community schools are democratic institutions. They are built on partnerships. They contribute to improved student learning and development and increased community wellbeing.

Community schools are comprehensive neighborhood centers, serving the educational, social service, health and recreational needs of entire community, as well as students and their families

With principal and teacher leadership, community schools connect teaching and learning to community development and community problem solving

When universities engage as partners with community schools, they can simultaneously advance university research, teaching, learning, and service.

When universities are lead partners in long-term engagement of faculty, staff, students, and institutional resources, they are University-assisted Community Schools (UACS).

Binghamton University Community Schools
envisions a world where students, families, and communities have access to supports, services, and opportunities necessary to thrive; and where university students, faculty, and staff are motivated to engage with Community Schools.

BUCS Technical Assistance and Community Schools - Alignment and Integration Across Initiatives

NYSED C/W Community School Technical Assistance Center

- Outreach and network building
- Conduct regional events
- Webinars and virtual meetings on multiple topics
- Targeted technical assistance to districts
- Support alignment and integration with existing community and statewide initiatives
- Community schools supports across county lines

UACS Regional Training Center

- Assist program development for UACS in 2Y and 4Y higher ed in NY and NJ
- Webinars and virtual meetings topics including developing implementation plans
- Develop communities of practice for related institutions
- Support/host regional and statewide conferences
- Community schools supports across state lines

BUCS Regional Network

- Supports community school professionals in Broome County
- Weekly meetings to support ongoing professional development
- Undergraduate Community Schools class with service learning component
- Community schools supports between districts
- Collaborate with community, regional, and state partners

21st Century Community Learning Centers Technical Assistance Resource Center

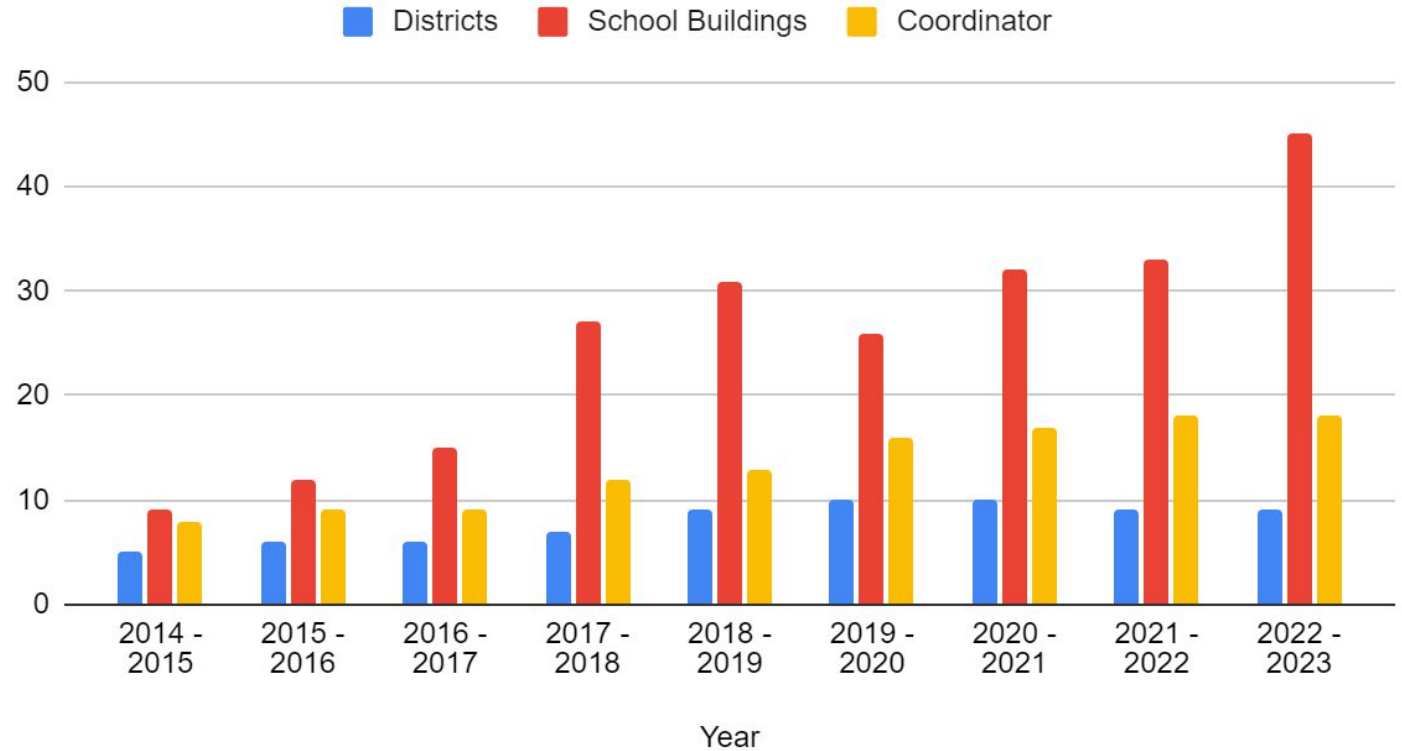
- Serving Rest of State region
- Designed to improve quality of 21st CCLC programs including social and emotional outcomes and the literacy of their families
- 61 partners across NYS
- Monitoring to ensure compliance with state and federal 21st CCLC guidelines
- Technical assistance to address specific barriers

Mental Health Service Professionals Project

- Rural mental health in four schools
- Family engagement in two schools
- Leveraging social work field placement requirements to serve mental health needs within six schools
- Provide training and support to schools around mental health and family engagement

Growth of Regional Network of UACS 2014-2023

Districts, School Buildings and Coordinator



Building Successful Partnerships Between Higher Education & Community Schools



10 Tips



Develop your **VISION**

Partnerships must be grounded in a clear, cohesive vision.

- Discuss the purpose of partnering in terms of mutual benefits and desired outcomes to help guide the shared vision
- Create or analyze a needs assessment together to identify specific youth, family, and community priorities to serve with the partnership
- Record the shared vision in a partnership agreement and renew or update the vision annually
- Example: Chenango Valley and family engagement



Define **VISION** with Root Cause Analysis

- Once you have identified your need - work to figure out what the root cause might be.
- [NIRN Root Cause Analysis Tool](#) can help!



Highlight **MUTUAL BENEFITS**

High-impact, skill-rich environments for learning, equity strategies, and faculty research agendas can serve as a foundation for partnerships.

- Explore service learning or community engaged learning coursework
- Many scholarships require community engaged opportunities
- High-stakes funding often requires community engagement, and funders appreciate public education collaborating with higher education
- Example: Mental Health grants



Emphasize Community Schools as an **EQUITY STRATEGY**

The promise of community schools is in how they prioritize the education and enrichment of vulnerable students and how they integrate services with systems of governance, professional support, and ongoing community-level dialogue.

Christopher Edley, Jr. & Linda Darling-Hammond
(Learning Policy Institute)

Equity is a priority for higher education

- Consider how to leverage groups and programs offered at area institutions – who is already doing work around equity?
- Connect with students who may not have access to insights and information regarding pathways to higher education
- Build relationships with communities that have been historically marginalized, to understand needs and priorities in your area
- Emphasize how community schools elevate voices, assets, and needs of people with diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives



Identify **CHAMPIONS**

There are champions in every organization. Look for motivated colleagues within your network, learn about what energizes people, and connect around common goals.

- Start with relevant and connected departments or colleges: Civic Engagement, Education, Children & Families, and Health
- Find community leaders who also work in higher education (faculty and staff)
- Foster relationships with faculty and staff who have a passion for community work or research
- Example: Community engaged teaching, learning, and research

Service learning courses in partnership with community schools

The simplest, sustainable action step towards building a university-school partnership is to *create a course that connects to the core teaching, research, and service mission of higher education, and link it with community schools*

- Find a faculty member (in any discipline) who might be interested in teaching a course that includes a university-school partnership
- Department heads and deans may provide references for faculty who want to engage in this work



continued...

- Build a course (or courses) in partnership with local schools that integrate service with research, teaching, and learning
- Bridge academic expertise and the expertise of the community, including schools, family, and youth
- Focus on long-term, collaborative local problem-solving to *improve the quality of life and learning in schools and the quality of learning and scholarship in the university*



Community engaged learning Courses and Opportunities connected to BUCS

- *Reimagining Schools*: Combined classroom/civic engagement approach to present the theory and practice of community schools
- *Community Partnerships for Wellbeing*: Explores how the arts are used in education and health settings to promote wellness in people of all ages
- *Asthma Education*: American Lung Association Open Airways education in schools through nursing students
- *Making and Tinkering for Youth*: Teams of students work alongside community partners to develop STEM programs for youth





Identify areas of **ALIGNMENT**

Identify areas within higher education that likely meet a need within a school district.

- Strategize projects with mutually beneficial components such as with social work, teacher, and counselor preparation programs
- Utilize findings from school needs assessments to discover areas where higher education resources may be relevant and helpful
- Review resources to coordinate common language and initiatives (e.g., school strategic plan, comprehensive list of support services)
- Example: Social work/teaching competencies with community school priorities



Use an **EXPANDED TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT** framework

An expanded tiered system of support framework helps educators provide academic and behavioral strategies for students with varying needs.

- “Community schools have the channels in place to accurately identify the needs and hopes of the school community, and then to triage those needs.” (Long, 2020)
- Consider higher education resources that may be adaptable or suitable for each tier (e.g., universal supports, individual services such as tutoring)
- Example: Center for Civic Engagement and linking college students

EXPANDED TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Team-Driven
Shared Leadership



Data Based
Problem Solving
and Decision
Making



Family, School
and Community
Partnerships

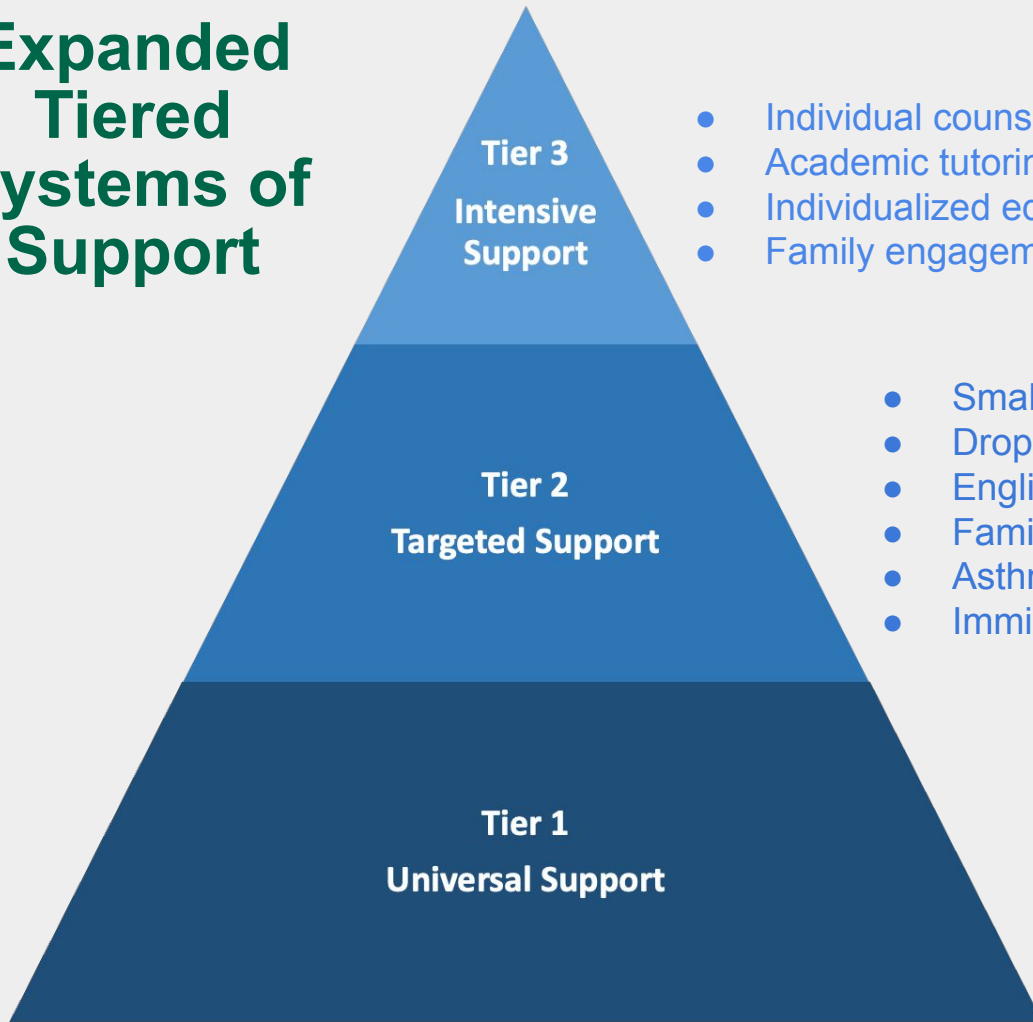


Layered
Continuum of
Supports



Comprehensive
Screening and
Assessment
System

Expanded Tiered Systems of Support



- Individual counseling
- Academic tutoring
- Individualized education program (IEP)
- Family engagement: home visits

- Small group support
- Drop-in rooms
- English language learner support
- Family engagement: Parent Cafes
- Asthma education and support
- Immigration services

- Program wide social skills training
- Trauma-informed practices
- Prevention
- Family engagement and involvement
- Food pantry
- Farm to school programs
- After school (ex., STEM enrichment)



Utilize **IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE**

Focus on building internal capacity, systems, and processes.

- Analyze your own organization to understand strengths and gaps in capacity
- Use existing implementation tools and resources, such as the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)
- Use implementation science to guide sustainability planning
- Example: Initiative Inventory
- Visit <https://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/> for more information



Engage in **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

- There is no one size fits all approach – plan to iterate.
- Work with partners to assess areas of strength and challenges, and revisit the data often
- Implement strong evaluation plans to drive improvement strategies
 - What do you want to learn from the data?
 - Create feedback loops with faculty research findings and your organization
 - Use students for data collection and analysis
- Example: Annual feedback from all partners (coordinators, interns, schools)



Foster **COLLABORATION**

Strong collaboration can build and strengthen social capital including relational trust.

- Set realistic expectations regarding timelines and outcomes
- Clarify roles and opportunities for partnership (e.g., funding streams)
- Develop sustainability plans and identify necessary support
- Establish clear lines of communication; understand partner goals and preferences
- Example: Collaboration around data, MPH program



Seek **LEARNING NETWORKS** and **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Technical assistance helps to build the capacity of individuals, organizations, and institutions to achieve desired outcomes, from universal to individualized methods.

- Co-learn with existing networks around community schools (e.g., UACS National Network; NY/NJ UACS Learning Network; Regional Technical Assistance)
- Connect with local and regional education centers
- Share your projects broadly, no matter where you are in development

Support for Community Schools initiatives

- [UACS Regional Training Center for NY and NJ](#) (Binghamton University)
 - Monthly events (virtual) exploring exemplars and planning strategy
- [UACS National Network](#) (UPenn)
 - Monthly calls
 - UACS national strategy
 - Convene & connect
- [NYSED Technical Assistance Centers](#)
 - Targeted to our region
 - Repository of webinars
 - 50,000 foot, 30,000 foot, “boots on the ground”

Connect with the
UACS National
Network:

*We will pair faculty
with thought
partners who can
help think through
coursework and next
steps.*

Information in this toolkit was supported by the following sources:

- Edley, Jr., C., & Darling-Hammond, L. (n.d.). Education and the path to equity. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/community-schools-powerfulstrategy-disrupt-inequitable-systems>
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Download the toolkit: [Building Successful Partnerships Between Higher Education and Community Schools](#)



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**Your
Feedback is
Important**

**Room
Change
Needs!**

