Carson Elementary STEAM Magnet School

Community Schools

Needs and Assets Assessment Findings Report

School Year 2024–2025

Prepared by: Cynthia Lopez

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Summary

In the 2024–2025 school year, Carson Elementary took an exciting and meaningful step forward by becoming a Community School. This transformation wasn't just about changing how we operate, it was about embracing a new vision for what a school can be. A place where every student is supported, every family feels welcomed, and everyone works together to create opportunities for success and well-being. This findings report shares the story of our first year. What we set out to do, what we've learned, and where we're headed next.

It also shares the results of our Needs and Assets Assessment, a process where students, families, staff, and community partners all had a chance to share their voices through focus groups and surveys. Thanks to their input, we identified three top priorities for our school community:

- Building stronger family and community engagement/involvement
- Expanding enrichment opportunities, including field trips, clubs, and sports
- Improving how we communicate and stay connected as a school

Purpose and Goals of the Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- Document and reflect on Carson Elementary's first year as a Community School.
- Share progress and accomplishments with students, families, staff, and community partners.
- Highlight key insights and priorities from the Needs and Assets Assessment.

The goals of this report are to:

- Keep our school community informed, engaged, and connected.
- Support collaboration among staff, families, and partners.
- Guide the work of our Community School working groups in Year Two.
- Align Community School strategies with our School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).
- Promote a unified and strategic approach to equity and opportunity for every student.

Methodology

To understand the needs, strengths, and priorities of our school community, we conducted a comprehensive Needs and Assets Assessment. This process included input from all educational partners:

- **Students**: Surveys were administered both digitally and in paper form, depending on the grade level. This allowed for greater accessibility and comfort for students when sharing their thoughts.
- **Families**: Families were invited to complete surveys either online or in paper format, with materials available in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity and encourage broad participation.
- **Staff**: Staff received an online survey distributed through internal communication channels, allowing for flexibility in response time and ensuring wide input across grade levels and roles.
- **Community Partners**: Partners were surveyed online, with invitations shared through collaborative networks and partner communications.

This inclusive, multi-format approach helped us gather diverse perspectives and ensured that each group had a meaningful opportunity to contribute. The data collected was key to identifying the top priorities that now guide our work moving forward.

Demographics

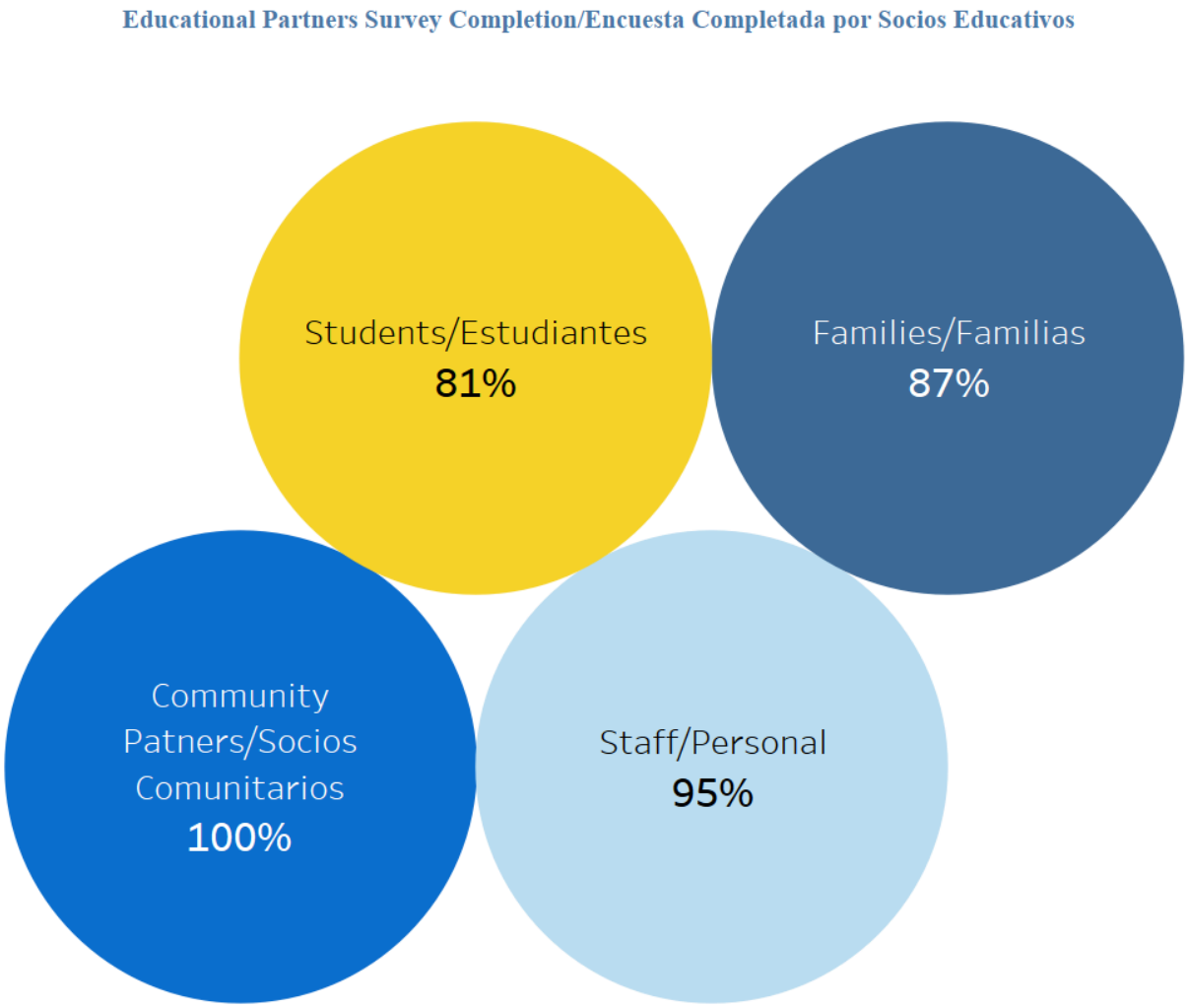
Student Group	Total	Percentage
English Learners	156	45.2%
Homeless	36	10.4%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	310	89.9%
Students with Disabilities	76	22%

Race/Ethnicity	Total	Percentage
African American	19	5.5%
Asian	41	11.9%
Filipino	8	2.3%
Hispanic	229	66.4%
Two or More Races	17	4.9%
Pacific Islander	1	0.3%
White	28	8.1%

Needs, Assets, and Priorities

To make meaningful progress, we needed to start with a strong foundation of understanding. Through our Needs and Assets Assessment, we asked important questions: What are our strengths? Where are the gaps? What do our students and families need most?

We held focus groups with families and students, and together, we created surveys that captured the experiences and ideas of over 75% of our school community, including staff and community partners. What we heard was honest, thoughtful, and clear.



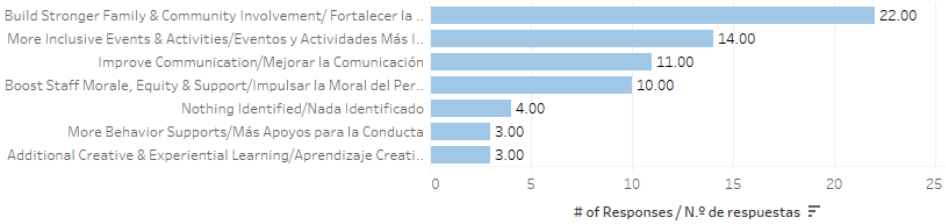
Top 3 Priorities

1. **Family and Community Engagement/Involvement**

Families and staff emphasized the importance of strengthening engagement efforts to ensure that families feel **included, informed, and empowered** to participate in school life.

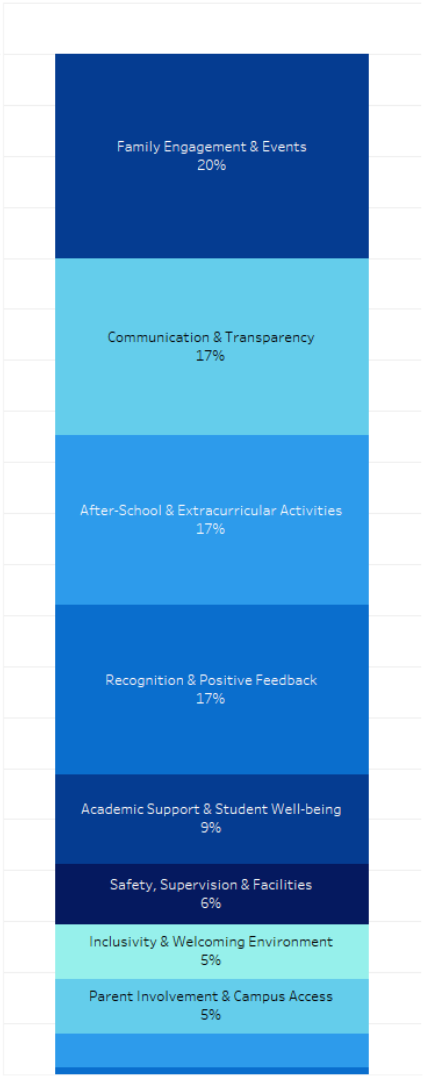
Priority: Building Stronger Family and Community Engagement/Involvement

How can Carson continue to build a sense of community, good relationships, and make school fun for staff, students, and families?/¿Cómo puede Carson seguir fomentando un sentido de comunidad, buenas relaciones y hacer que la escuela sea divertida para el personal, los estudiantes y las familias?
All Staff Survey

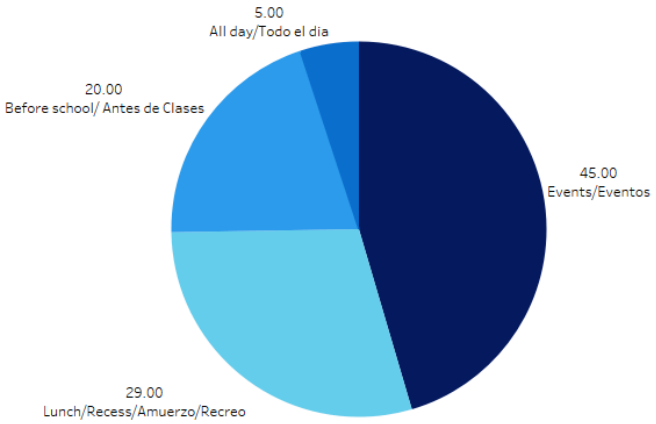


How can Carson continue building a strong sense of community, good relationships, and make school fun for your student and your family?

¿Cómo puede Carson seguir fomentando un fuerte sentido de comunidad, buenas relaciones y hacer que la escuela sea divertida para su estudiante y su familia?
Family Survey



Would you like to see parents on campus?/ ¿Le gustaría ver a los padres en el campus?
All Staff Survey



Family Survey: A total of 239 respondants individuals responded to this question, however the sum of selections exceeds 239 due to multiple responses per person.

All Staff Survey: A total of 49 respondants individuals responded to this question, however the sum of selections exceeds 49 due to multiple responses per person.

Insights from Educational Partners

Family and Community Engagement/Involvement

Family Fridays is a wonderful event that brings families together, allowing us to spend time with the children and learn about their development.
-Parent

Work our community and families and make then feeling welcome come to Carson.
-Staff

Having more events with parents, students, and teachers.
-Parent

More family involvement and participation with on campus activities and events- parents helping at lunch recess, in the library, COLT store, and school events.
-Staff

Have more parents participate in school activities
-Staff

Weekly and monthly community school space. Please invite each grade to paint, dance, or garden, as the health benefits and community organizing potential is needed.
-Parent

Having more events and programs were families can contribute or can be part of...having field days.
-Staff

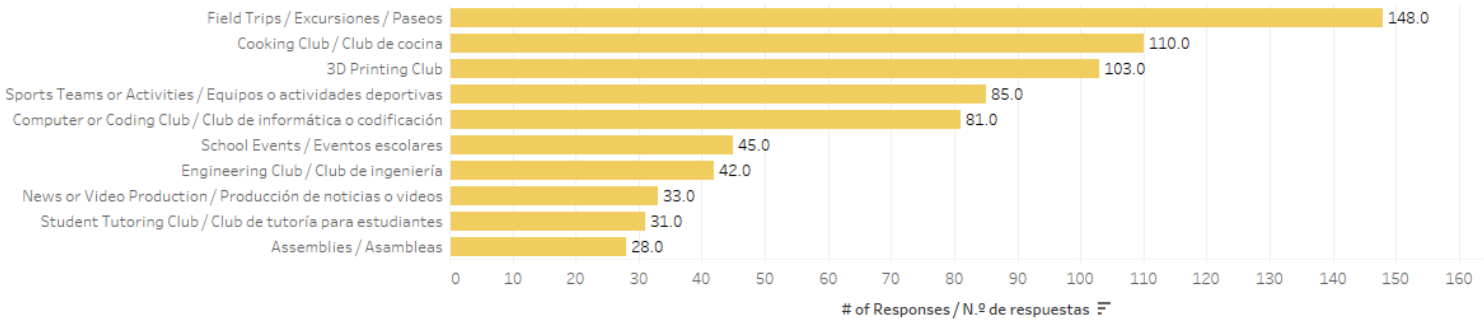
Implement family engagement programs and hold fundraising events to foster greater community.
-Parent

2. **Expanding Enrichment Opportunities**

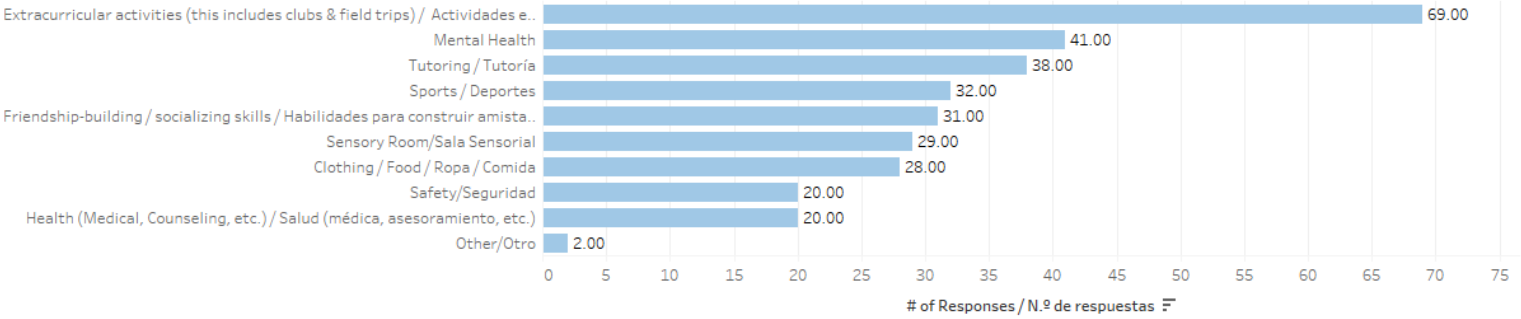
There was a strong call for more enrichment experiences, such as **field trips, clubs, and sports**. Activities that support student learning and growth beyond the classroom.

Priority: Expanding enrichment opportunities, including field trips, clubs, and sports

What kind of activities do you want at Carson? Check all the ones you like. / ¿Qué tipo de actividades te gustaría en Carson? Marque todos que te gustan.
Student Survey (Grades 2nd-5th)

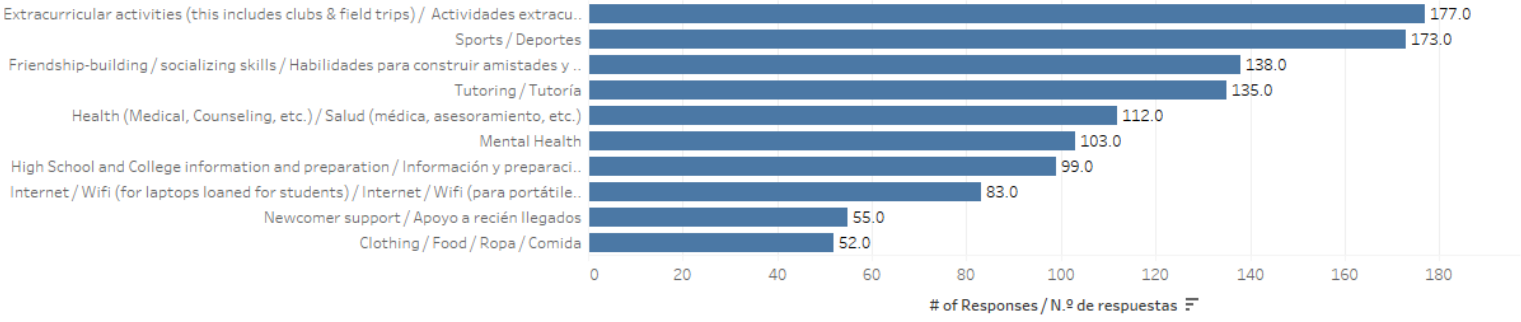


What services would you like to see offered to STUDENTS at Carson? / ¿Qué servicios le gustaría que se ofrecieran a los ESTUDIANTES en Carson?
All Staff Survey



What services would you like to see offered to STUDENTS at Carson? Check all that apply

¿Qué servicios le gustaría que se ofrecieran a los ESTUDIANTES de Carson? Marque todas las opciones que correspondan.
Family Survey



*Respondants were allowed to select more than one category.

Family Survey: A total of 239 respondants individuals responded to this question, however the sum of selections exceeds 239 due to multiple responses per person.

All Staff Survey: A total of 49 respondants individuals responded to this question, however the sum of selections exceeds 49 due to multiple responses per person.

Student Survey: A total of 180 respondants individuals responded to this question, however the sum of selections exceeds 180 due to multiple responses per person...

Insights from Educational Partners

Expanding Enrichment Opportunities

My dream school has art, music, and PE like all the fun school things.
-Student

More sporting events!
-Staff

I think we need more clubs and sports after or before school, such as soccer and math clubs, which parents cannot afford to pay outside of school.
-Parent

I wish to go on more on field trips.
-Student

Have more afterschool activities
-Parent

My dream school has after school activities, more art lessons, more field trips, 3D printing club, cooking club, and more school events.
-Student

Having more school wide activities/assemblies/performances and school traditions.
-Staff

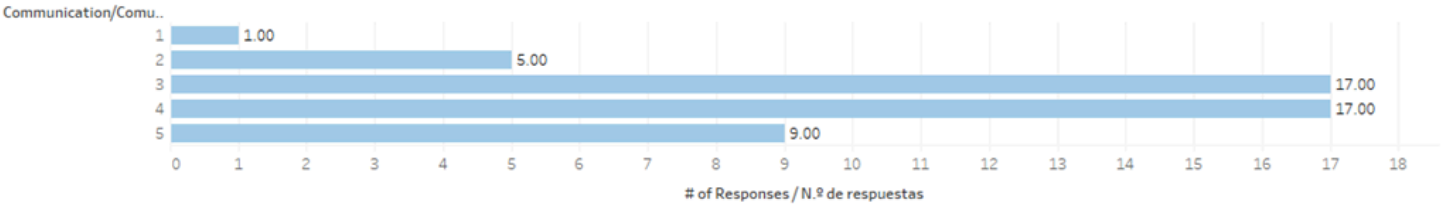
Introduce activities in neighborhood such as the girl scouts, karate and give some free after school activities for students.
-Parent

3. Communication Systems and Structures

Both families and staff highlighted the need for **consistent, transparent, and accessible** communication across the school community.

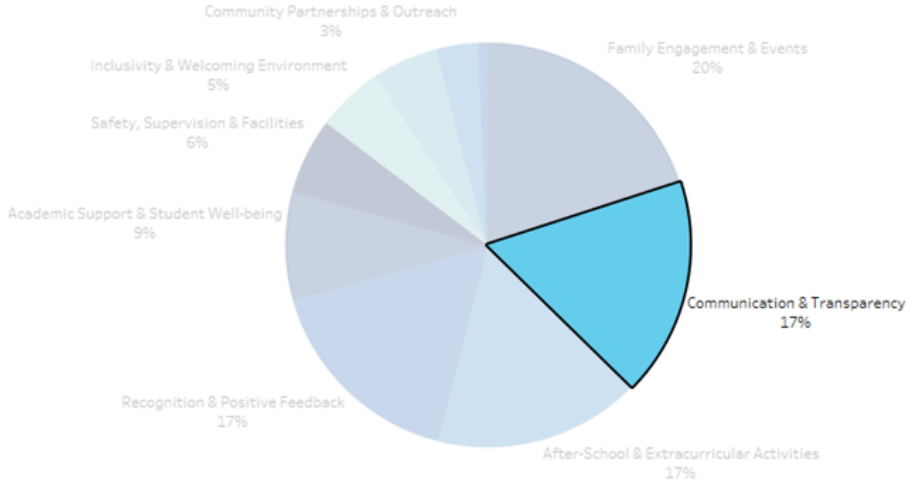
Priority: Communication Systems and Structures

How satisfied are you with the way Carson communicates about important issues and events? / ¿Qué tan satisfecho(a) está con la manera en que Carson comunica sobre temas y eventos importantes? *1 being the lowest, 5 being the highest*
All Staff Survey



How can Carson continue building a strong sense of community, good relationships, and make school fun for your student and your family?

¿Cómo puede Carson seguir fomentando un fuerte sentido de comunidad, buenas relaciones y hacer que la escuela sea divertida para su estudiante y su familia?
Family Survey



How can Carson continue to build a sense of community, good relationships, and make school fun for staff, students, and families?/¿Cómo puede Carson seguir fomentando un sentido de comunidad, buenas relaciones y hacer que la escuela sea divertida para el personal, los estudiantes y las familias?
All Staff Survey



Insights from Educational Partners

Communication Systems and Structures

> Carson can continue building a strong sense of community by keeping up the communication with parents and making school fun for students.
> -Parent

> Improve communication between staff and between parents
> -Staff

> Keeping parents updated on all activities, clubs or any extracurriculars.
> -Parent

> I think its important for the lines of communications to be more open in order for everyone to feel heard and on the same page about certain issues.
> -Staff

> Better communication and more school events
> -Staff

> Better communications to and for all parents no matter the situations
> -Parent

> Communication is key, understanding and friendliness.
> -Parent

> Introduce activities in neighborhood such as the girl scouts, karate and give some free after school activities for students.
> -Parent

Assets

Student Diversity

- Carson serves a culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student population, offering rich opportunities for inclusive learning and community-building.
- A high percentage of English Learners and students from historically underserved backgrounds allows for focused, equity-driven supports.

Dedicated Staff and Leadership

- A committed team of educators and support staff who go beyond academics to foster a safe, engaging, and caring environment.
- School leadership promotes innovation, shared decision-making, and collaboration across teams.

Engaged Families and Caregivers

- Families are eager to engage when provided with accessible communication, language support, and meaningful opportunities.
- Groups like the Carson Parent Organization and Parent Focus Groups demonstrate strong potential for ongoing involvement.

Community Partnerships

- Established partnerships with organizations such as TURN, Bayside, and the University of San Diego bring valuable resources into the school.
- Community organizations are invested in supporting student wellness, mental health, and enrichment.

STEAM Magnet Focus

- Carson's magnet status allows for a curriculum that emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and hands-on learning.
- Project-based learning and STEAM activities enhance student engagement and real-world connections.

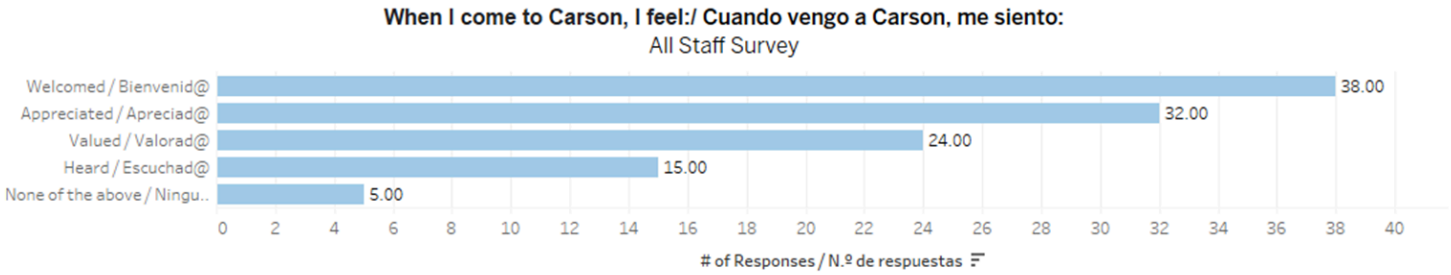
Inclusive Events and School Culture

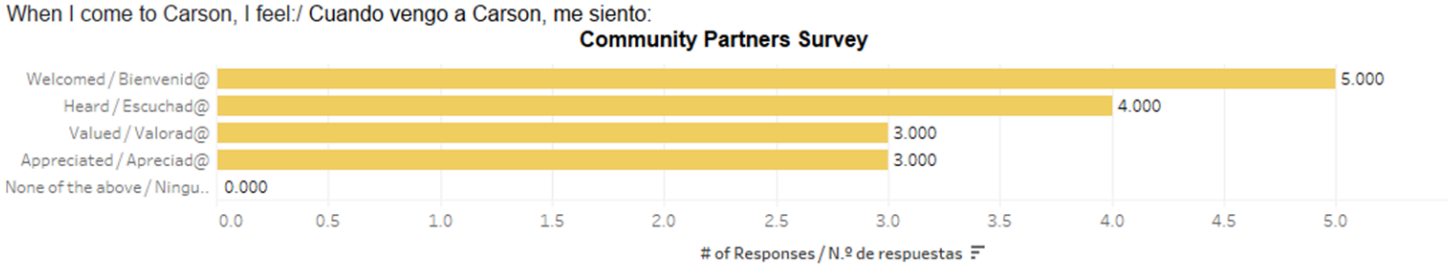
- Events like the Star Party, Spring Fling, and the CAASPP Kickoff Race help create a positive, joyful school culture.
    - These events foster community connections and strengthen a sense of belonging for students and families.

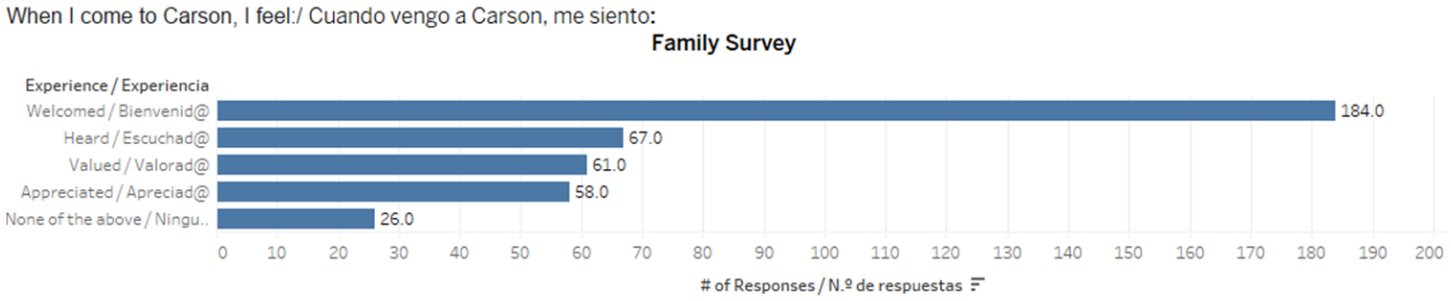
Collaborative Structures

- The Community Schools Subcommittee, Site Governance Team, and Data Diving Team support shared leadership and evidence-based planning.
- These systems enable inclusive dialogue and alignment with the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).

Welcoming Environment

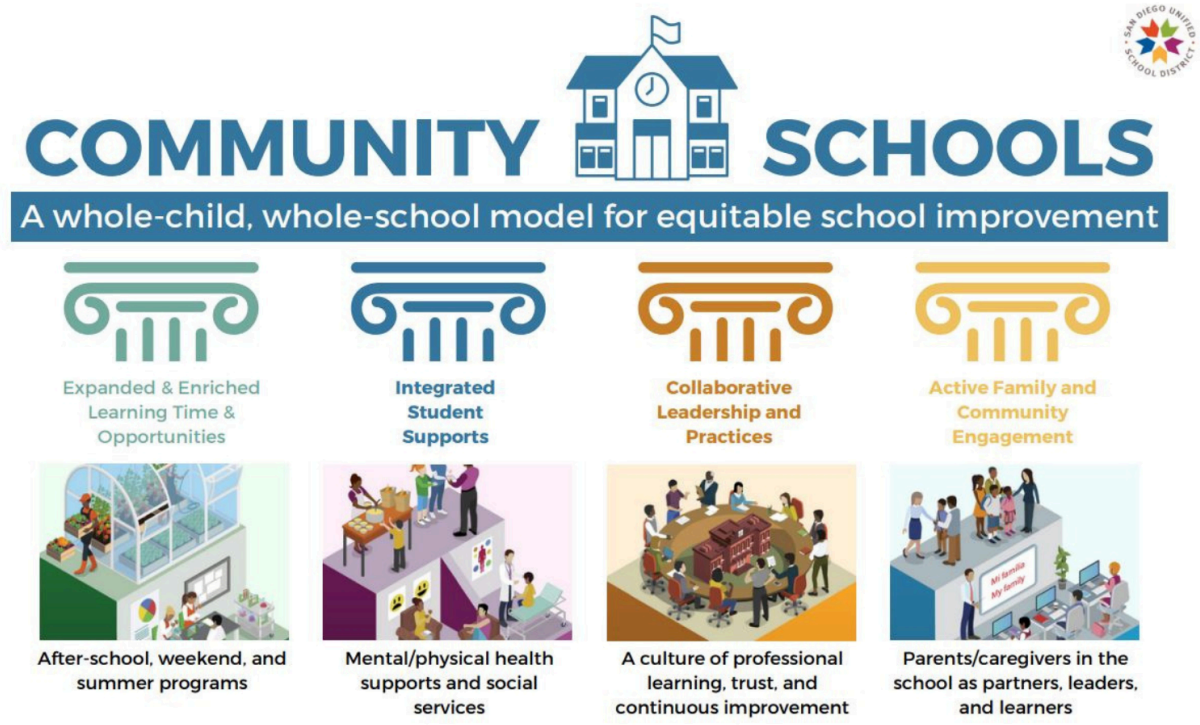






The Four Pillars in Action

At the core of Carson's Community School journey are the Four Pillars. These guiding principles have helped shape our efforts to better support students and build stronger connections throughout our school community.



Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities

We know that learning doesn't stop when the last bell rings. That's why we created more opportunities for students to grow, explore, and thrive outside of regular school hours. Our site coach and our ESA were able to bring CORE Academy to provide attendance recovery on Saturdays. Carson has hosted two successful CORE Academy days where students had the opportunity to learn new STEAM activities. This year we have also offered after school tutoring and it gave students the chance to catch up or get ahead. Enrichment programs like karate during the school day added excitement and confidence building experiences. Our partnership with the University of San Diego led to a soccer clinic that gave students a fun way to stay active and build teamwork. One of the most meaningful parts of our year was giving students opportunities to explore learning in new settings. Field trips played a big role in that. This year, students visited the Natural History Museum, the Living Coast Discovery Center, San Diego State University, SeaWorld, and Santee Lakes. These experiences helped students see their

lessons come to life and connect with science, the environment, and ideas for their futures in ways that classroom instruction alone can't always provide.

We also brought the school community together in a lighter, spirited way through the CAASPP Kickoff Race. Staff, students, and families filled the field with energy and encouragement, celebrating effort and teamwork while building motivation for state testing. It was a moment that reminded us of the strength of our community and our shared commitment to supporting every learner.

Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities



USD Women's Soccer Team Soccer Clinic



SDSU Field Trip



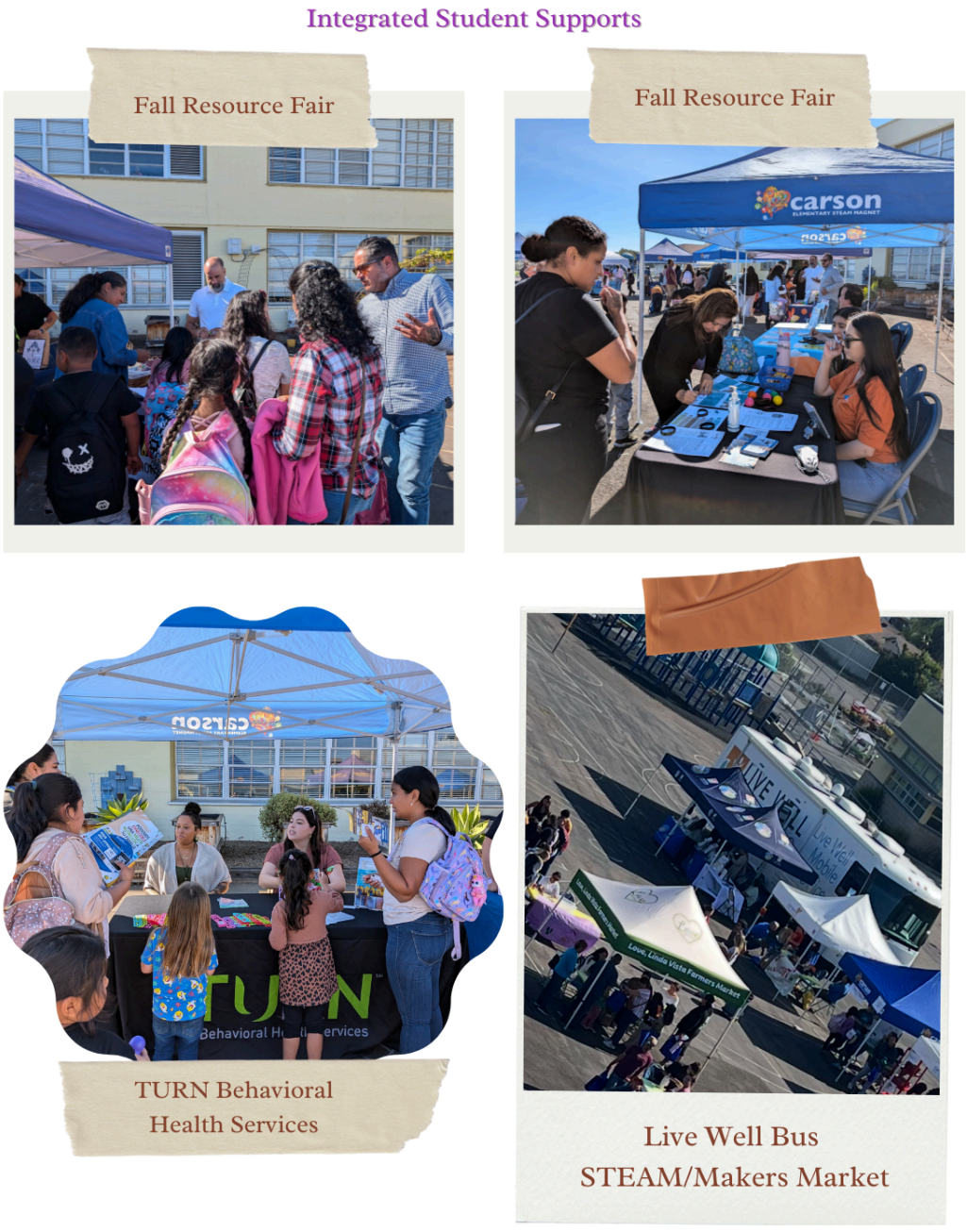
CAASPP Kick-Off Race



Santee Lakes Field Trip

Integrated Student Supports

We started by listening and addressing our low-hanging fruits. Families told us they needed easier access to resources, and students needed more support beyond the classroom. We hosted a resource fair in the fall to bring helpful services straight to our families. We worked with partners like TURN and Bayside to share information about educational rights and mental health. Carson has partnered with TURN for a few years but this year we were able to refer even more students. Now, TURN is helping more than twice as many students as last year. Our school counselor/Community Schools Site Coach, Clayton Ballard, also created fun monthly attendance challenges. These helped encourage students to come to school and feel like part of the community.



Active Family and Community Engagement

This year, we had the chance to bring some new and exciting events to our Carson families. Along with our Community Schools information sessions, we were proud to host and support several activities that had never happened at our school before. One idea came from Ms. Oliver, our fourth grade teacher, who suggested bringing a Star Party to Carson. It turned out to be a fun and engaging night filled with science activities, including telescopes that let families see the stars and planets up close. Our Carson Parent Organization also hosted the school's very first Spring Fling, and it was a big success. Families came together, had fun, and enjoyed being part of the celebration. To wrap up the year, we held our first Needs and Assets Assessment night. Families joined us for a game of Loteria, learned about the feedback we collected, and helped shape the priorities for the year ahead. We also welcomed three community partners who shared how their programs can support our students and families.



Collaborative Leadership Practices

True transformation takes teamwork. This year, we built structures that allowed parents, staff, and partners to help guide our direction. Our Community Schools Subcommittee brought thoughtful planning to life. The Site Governance Team approved funding that brought our ideas into action. The Carson Parent Organization stayed involved, offering input and support. They also brought a new event to Carson, the Spring Fling Dance. A Parent Focus Group helped us create a family survey that truly reflected community needs, and our Data Diving Team carefully reviewed every response. Everyone had a seat at the table and every voice mattered.



Community Partners

University of San Diego
The University of San Diego has been a longtime partner of Carson Elementary, helping bring fun and learning to life. Each year, USD students and staff team up with Carson to host Family STEAM Nights filled with hands-on activities and science experiments. This year, the USD Women's Soccer Team also led an after-school clinic for all grade levels, giving students a chance to play, learn new skills, and connect through sports.

Bayside
Bayside has become a trusted partner in helping our students grow as readers. Their team joins us on campus to work one-on-one and in small groups with students who need a little extra support. Whether it's practicing sight words or diving into a new story, Bayside's reading program helps build confidence and a love for reading. In addition, this year we worked closely with Bayside to bring a variety of workshops that offered helpful resources and support to our families.

Turn Behavioral Health Services
Turn Behavioral Services has also been a valued partner for the past five years. Their clinicians come to campus to support students with social-emotional and behavioral needs. This year, referrals for services grew from 5 students to 13, reflecting the growing need and the trust families place in this important support.

Daybreak Health
Daybreak Health is another valued partner providing virtual health services to Carson students. Referrals are made through the school, offering students access to licensed therapists who help them navigate emotional challenges. This partnership expands the range of care available to students and ensures timely, flexible support.

International Relief Teams
International Relief Teams has been a caring and consistent partner to Carson Elementary, helping ensure that our families have what they need at home. This year, they provided food boxes to 28 Carson families, offering much-needed support during challenging times. Their partnership has made a meaningful difference by helping us meet basic needs and showing our families they are not alone.

New Community Partners

San Diego State University - This year, Carson Elementary partnered with San Diego State University to give our students a fun and inspiring glimpse into college life. SDSU welcomed 64 of our students to campus, where they learned about college, explored the environment, and had a blast bowling at Aztec Lanes. For many, it was their first time visiting a university and it sparked big dreams for the future.

McDonalds- McDonald's has been a thoughtful partner, treating our staff to breakfast, donating cookies for a family event, and giving toys to motivate students. They're excited to keep partnering with us next year, including fun field trips to our local McDonald's.

Funding Summary

Total Granted:**$103,642**

Total Used: **$7,813**

Major Expenses

Category	Amount Spent ($)
Family Events (including food)	$1546.66
Field Trip: Natural History Museum	$468.00
Field Trip: Living Coast Discovery Center	$700.00
Field Trip: SeaWorld	$648.00
CAASPP Kickoff	$648.74
Star Party	$3203.00

Our Impact

Carson's transformation into a Community School has already made a tangible difference:

- Students are engaged in deeper learning.
- Families feel more welcomed and involved.
- Staff, partners, and leadership are united in purpose.
- Every decision is guided by real input and clear priorities.

Year One laid the foundation. Year Two will build on that momentum together.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges Faced

- **Chronic Absenteeism**: Despite progress, attendance remained a key concern, especially for students with disabilities, English learners, and those experiencing homelessness.
- **Communication Gaps**: Families and staff shared that communication wasn't always timely or consistent across channels.
- **Engagement Barriers:** Language, work schedules, and awareness sometimes limited family participation, despite strong interest.

Lessons Learned

- **Start with Listening**: Gathering input from all educational partners: students, families, staff, and partners helped us focus on what matters most.
- **Small Wins Matter**: Celebrating progress, like student field trips or a successful new event, kept momentum and morale high.
- **Relationships Are the Foundation**: Trust and connection are essential for collaboration, problem-solving, and long-term change.

Looking Ahead

As we move into Year Two, we're carrying everything we've learned with us. Our next steps include launching new programs that reflect the priorities of our community, growing partnerships that help us meet student needs, creating more ways for families to lead and contribute, and aligning our goals with the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).

Key Areas of Focus

- **Deepen Family Engagement**
  - Offer more welcoming events, expand volunteer opportunities, and ensure families are part of planning and decision-making.

- **Increase Student Enrichment**
  - Grow afterschool programs, expand clubs and sports, and continue offering field trips that connect learning to the real world.

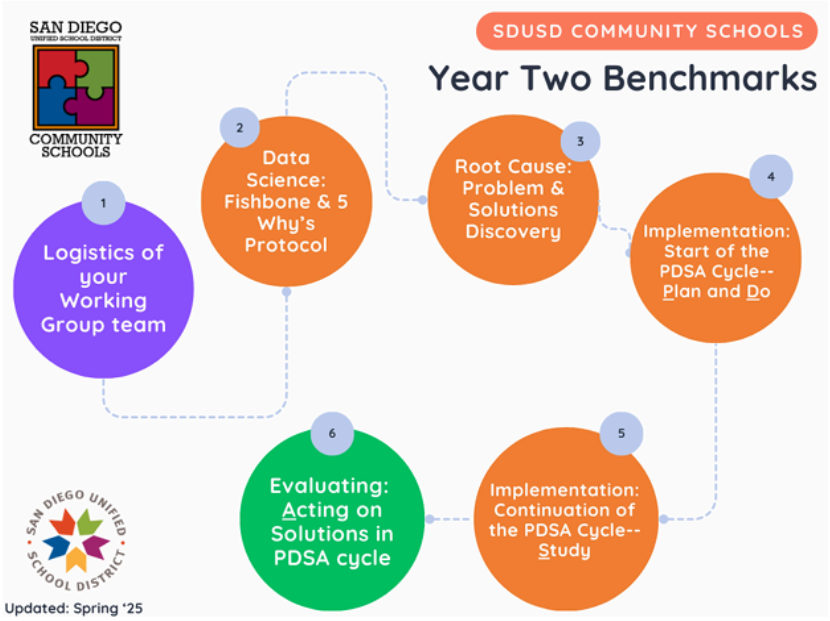
- **Strengthen Communication**
  - Improve tools and systems to make information clear, consistent, and accessible for everyone.

- **Boost Attendance & Belonging**

    - Use targeted supports and community-building strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism and help every student feel connected.

- **Build Stronger Systems**
    - Develop clear structures for collaboration across teams, and align our Community School work with the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).

In Year 2, we will focus on making a bigger impact by forming working groups. These teams will use what we learned in Year 1 to better understand key challenges and help carry out our top priorities. We'll also keep checking our progress throughout the year to make improvements and create lasting, positive transformation in our school community.



Acknowledgements

None of this would have been possible without the heart and hard work of our entire community. Thank you to every student who shared their thoughts, every family who showed up and participated, every staff member who went above and beyond, and every partner who said yes to this journey.

A special thank you goes out to the Community Schools Subcommittee, our Site Governance Team, the Carson Parent Organization, and the Data Diving Team. Your dedication and leadership helped us take real, meaningful steps toward becoming the kind of school our students deserve.

Together, we're creating a Community School where every child is seen, supported, and given every opportunity to thrive.