

California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) Implementation Grant Project Abstract Vista Unified-3768452 FormB

Vista Unified School District (VUSD) is located 40 miles north of the city of San Diego and is home to a thriving, diverse community of 19,843 students in transitional kindergarten through grade twelve. Encompassing approximately 39 square miles, the district serves the Vista community, as well as parts of Oceanside, Carlsbad, and San Marcos across fifteen elementary schools, five middle schools, three comprehensive high schools, two alternative high schools, one K-12 independent study school, an adult education school, an adult transition center, and a special education preschool. Our K-12 ethnically diverse community includes Hispanic/Latino (65.5%), white (22.5%), African American (2.2%), Asian (2.0%), Filipino (1.4%), Pacific Islander (0.6%) and Other (5.8%). As a district, 65.5% of enrolled students are unduplicated, 18% are classified as English language learners and 18% are enrolled in special education programs.

Community Schools as an Equity Strategy: Our Governing Board believes that educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential. As recommended by the Superintendent's Council for Equity and Anti-Racism, consistent steps have been taken toward actualizing this belief, including the adoption of an [Equity Board Policy](#) and district-wide training for all staff in Anti-Bias, Equity, and Building Trauma Sensitive Schools. Scaling up Community Schools is a critical action step to recognize and respond to the structural inequities that exist in our highest need schools.

Launching VUSD Community Schools has been methodical and intentional, building internal momentum and capacity across diverse groups. Our Community School Design Team included the Superintendent, two Governing Board members, staff representatives (administrator, social worker, counselor, teacher, family/community liaison), Educational Enrichment Systems (EES) preschool staff, community organization representatives from Universidad Popular and Vista Community Clinic, as well as public officials Judy Ritter (Mayor), Patrick Johnson (City of Vista), Tasha Boerner Horvath (Assembly Member), and Mike Levin (Congressmember). With the support and guidance of Tauheedah Jackson, the Director of Place Based Strategy and Community School Initiatives, the committee established a common understanding of the purpose and intent of Community Schools, drafted a common definition and charge for VUSD Community Schools, and set a timeline and plan for identifying and establishing the schools.

Community School Definition: A family-centered, equity-driven hub that serves every child and strengthens our community through partnerships that provide comprehensive wraparound services in health, wellness, and education. **Community School Charge:** To see and embrace each student with a comprehensive community support system of integrated services that are equity-driven, inclusive, and impactful.

The Governing Board and school administration built awareness and capacity to lead Community Schools and then school administrators engaged multiple groups in [parallel presentations](#) to introduce Community Schools and identify local assets and barriers/needs related to each of The Four Pillars of Community Schools (pillars). Each school then developed and submitted a [proposal](#) that included a brief review of their efforts to engage their community, a summary of their assets and needs for each pillar, and an evaluation of their overall readiness level to become a Community School.

Three elementary schools were selected to move forward for the 2021-22 school year, based on their readiness and level of need:

Foothill Oak Elementary School (FHO) total enrollment 476 students: 93% Free/Reduced Lunch, 94% Hispanic, 55% English Learners, 15.4% Special Education, 6% Homeless, and 8% Migrant. Dr. Anna Lozano, in her first year as Principal at FHO reports that their school community is highly informed and highly motivated to move forward to become a Community School after the comprehensive assets and needs evaluation she conducted for their proposal.

Bobier Elementary School total enrollment 504 students: 88% Free/Reduced Lunch, 96% Hispanic, 53% English Learners, 14.8% Special Education, 6% Homeless, and 9% Migrant. Melanie Paloti, in her third year as Principal at Bobier reports that their school community is also highly informed and highly motivated to move forward to become a Community School after the comprehensive assets and needs evaluation she conducted for their proposal.

Maryland Elementary School total enrollment 526 students: 90% Free/Reduced Lunch, 93% Hispanic, 46% English Learners, 13.3% Special Education, 11% Homeless, and 2% Migrant. Francisco Leivera, in his second year as Principal at Maryland reports that their school community was reasonably informed and motivated to move forward to become a Community School after the assets and needs evaluation he conducted for their proposal.

Three alternative schools were also selected to move forward, based on their readiness and level of need. Principal Francisco Leivara, in his first year as Principal overseeing our alternative schools, reports that these school communities are reasonably informed and motivated to move forward to become Community Schools after the assets and needs evaluation he conducted for their proposals.

Major General Raymond Murray (MGM) High School: total enrollment 218 students: 86% Free/Reduced Lunch, 88% Hispanic, 10% English Learners, 19.4% Special Education, 6% Homeless, and 2% Migrant. MGM is one of our alternative high schools, serving students who need to accelerate academic credits and are typically in need of intensive mental health and counseling support.

Alta Vista High School: total enrollment 140 students: 76% Free/Reduced Lunch, 86% Hispanic, 16% English Learners, 14.3% Special Education, 8% Homeless, and 4% Migrant. Alta Vista is one of our alternative high schools, serving students who need to accelerate academic credits and are typically in need of intensive mental health and counseling support.

Vista Visions Academy (VVA K-12): total enrollment 407 students: 71% Free/Reduced Lunch, 70% Hispanic, 16% English Learners, 13% Special Education, 2% Homeless, and 2% Migrant. Enrollment increased from 56 students in grades 6-12 last year, as VVA this independent studies program expanded K-12 to support families most impacted with physical and mental health needs related to COVID-19. Students at VVA have remained consistent in their efforts to stay engaged and make progress, despite the challenges of remaining in distance learning and disconnected from a school

community experience. Through this plan, an increase of effort to create a sense of community and unity through innovative strategies and enrichment opportunities, both in-person and online.

Preparing for this request for application, Community School administrators shared their proposals and collaboratively identified common assets, needs and priorities related to each pillar. They identified ongoing collaborative structures within and across schools that would yield coherence and result in outcomes. As a result, our plan is aligned to the four pillars of community schools, the four key conditions for learning, the four cornerstone commitments, and the four proven practices.

Leveraging The Four Pillars in Vista Unified: To ensure a coherent and effective implementation of our plan, district matching funds will support a Community Schools Coordinator. The Coordinator will engage Community Schools and their educational partners in the process of school transformation in a variety of ways, including facilitating a district level Community School Steering Committee and supporting facilitation of school-level Community School Advisory Councils.

Coordinated and collaborative leadership is key to leading this transformation process. The Community School Steering Committee, including district, school and community partners, will engage in asset mapping, gap analysis, professional learning and action planning to ensure a coherent implementation of our plan. School-level Community School Advisory Councils (CS Advisory Council), including administration, school counselors, teachers, students, parents, community liaisons and community partners, will oversee the transition of the site from a traditional school to a Community School. Their key functions will include a comprehensive assets and needs assessment and to identify services in the areas of health and wellness, student development and enrichment, family support, college and career readiness, and academic support.

A continuous quality improvement plan through monitoring of services, using data to improve outcomes, will be implemented at each school. Multiple strategies will be used to assess program quality and progress, including a *Community School Self-Assessment*, review of program policies and manuals, interviews and surveys conducted with staff, students, and other educational partners, and observation of program activities. Assessment of program quality will be aligned with Community School Standards, adapted from the *Coalition of Community Schools Standards, 2018*, which are grouped by the pillars on a continuum: Exploring, Emerging, Maturing and Excelling. Each school will reflect on program data to generate and implement a [Community Schools Quality Improvement Plan](#). Each will implement their action plan, reflect on progress, reassess and update the action plan accordingly in a continuous improvement cycle.

Integrated Student Support Services: Our Community Schools will amplify the strengths, interests and values of each individual and address the needs of the whole child, including academic, social emotional, behavioral, physical health, and mental health. Across the pillars, an assets-based approach will inform plans and services. Committed to knowing and leveraging the strengths, interests, and values of each individual, schools will continue use of tools such as the Clifton Strengths Finder with adults and resources including Thrively and Leader in Me with students. Each school has

identified assets and barriers to addressing the academic, social-emotional, behavioral, physical health, and mental health needs of their students and will match school resources and work collaboratively within and across schools to reduce barriers and increase student achievement.

Elementary student's academic levels, language development and social-emotional development were heavily impacted by the pandemic and this plan seeks to reverse this trend. Collective assets include the district P-3 systems, including intensive professional learning in the Science of Reading for administrators and teachers in our P-3 Teacher Think-Tank. The schools also value the district contribution of an ELD Resource Teacher and two Learning Support Teachers this year to help differentiate instruction and accelerate learning. The highest priority needs include diagnostic assessment systems for literacy, mathematics and language development and embedded time for data analysis, professional development, goal setting and progress monitoring. Simultaneously, students in these communities voice interest in a variety of enrichment opportunities, including visual/performing arts, music, physical activities, and STEM, which were even less available over the past two years. Each school currently has one district funded enrichment/intervention teacher, allowing about 30 minutes a week of one of these areas for the whole school year.

Our alternative schools serve students who have faced challenges in staying engaged and successful in comprehensive school settings and school leadership recognize the individual determination of these students to enroll and stay committed to their learning, despite the additional toll taken by the pandemic. Making school relevant, preparing students for lifelong success, and providing outcomes-based interventions are the chief barriers identified by school leadership. Building upon a new partnership with Big Picture Learning, these schools seek to enhance and accelerate their school transformation through this grant by increasing internships, specific learning opportunities, such as robotics, that can translate into real-world application, and intensive coaching and support to align strengths, interests and values with college and career pathways.

In this plan, we propose to add an Enrichment/Intervention teacher at each school, which will achieve multiple objectives, as these individuals will be deployed on a consistent schedule to each of the schools. Joining with existing staff, all students will benefit from a variety of enrichment activities on a rotating basis across the school year, during the instructional day. This system will also release grade level or department teachers for professional learning, data analysis, goal setting and progress monitoring. With significant populations of multilingual learners at each school, they will embed ongoing professional learning, data analysis and progress monitoring of English language development. Our Special Education population has increased by 2-5% across our Community Schools since the 2018-19 school year and through this plan, we will work collaboratively to refine our multi-tiered system of supports to ensure high quality first teaching, as well as specific and responsive interventions. The schedule for these additional teachers will also provide additional embedded assessment and intervention support. Our alternative schools will also augment College/Career technician staffing by 1 FTE and will utilize hourly certificated funds to support existing staff to develop learning and enrichment opportunities aligned to their strengths and passions.

We recognize the barriers that students in these communities face in social-emotional development, behavioral regulation, as well as physical and mental health, which inhibit academic access and progress. Each school has programs and services to support social-emotional learning and development (SEL), each has a district-funded full time School Counselor who supports implementation of SEL and provides some measure of small group and individual behavioral and SEL instruction and support, and each has a part or full time, district-funded school psychologist. District funds also provide a full time Assistant Principal or Dean to support tiered behavior and social-emotional development interventions. Each school administers a wide range of culture and climate surveys, including an annual culture/climate survey conducted by UCSD, California Healthy Kids Survey, and the Measurable Results Assessment from Leader in Me.

The primary needs identified include a comprehensive multi-tiered system of instruction and intervention (MTSS), staffing to provide enrichment and interventions, and time to analyze data, set goals and develop action plans. Professional learning regarding the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework and the California Department of Education's (CDE) California SEL Competencies and will inform development of well-rounded MTSS for SEL. This will build upon current work in Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools and Hatching Results to develop multi-dimensional MTSS. This plan will double the current allocation of School Counselors for each school to meet the level of service needs. Coordinated Care Teams will analyze academic, SEL and behavioral data monthly, identify needs and align services to meet the needs to reduce office referrals and improve outcomes and reduce Special Education referrals.

Expanded & Enriched Learning Time & Opportunities: While the budget of this proposal primarily funds staffing to provide embedded enrichment and intervention support, our Community Schools will continue and expand before and after school, as well as summer, enrichment and intervention opportunities, through use of existing ASES and new Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) funding. Current before and after school programs at the elementary schools do not include options for children in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten (K), however incoming TK/K students are offered a "Jumpstart" summer program to support school transition. With our preschool partners, Educational Enrichment Systems (EES), our schools will braid ELO-P and California State Preschool Program (CSPP) funds to implement a developmentally appropriate program for our youngest learners. ELO-P funds will also expand programs for students in grades 1-5 as well as in our alternative high schools.

Community Schools will engage in analysis of existing ASES programs and create a collaborative structure to ensure that each program provides high-quality enrichment, aligned to the interests of the students, and academic intervention that yields measurable outcomes. Hourly certificated and classified funds will support enrichment activities, including clubs, student leadership opportunities and specific classes, as well as intensive tutorials. Contracted services will provide specialized enrichment and professional learning opportunities that exceed internal capacity to provide.

Active Family & Community Engagement: Our Family And Community Engagement (FACE) Network, include a full or part time Community Liaison who provides support and resources, including workshops and coordination of wrap-around supports such as clothing, nutrition and transportation at each school. FACE promotes culturally relevant

practices, recognition of parent assets, multiple methods of communication, and workshops for parents on a variety of topics (e.g. literacy, nutrition, cyber citizenship), to promote authentic school engagement and opportunities for parents/guardians to learn, and develop confidence with civic engagement in school leadership and committees.

Through active parent/guardian voice on Community Schools Advisory Teams, the level of support will better match the identified community needs. District matching funds will double the current allocation of school Community Liaisons to extend parent/guardian learning opportunities and services for families, on flexible schedules. All schools plan to provide professional development to improve two-way communication and active parent involvement, including support for parents to engage in civic engagement and leadership opportunities at the school and in the community.

Collaborative Leadership and Practices

The needs of our Community Schools are great and our success will depend on expanding and developing new partnerships with community partners.

Our partnership with Educational Enrichment Systems (EES) provides birth - age 5 preschool throughout the district. In tandem with this plan, we will expand birth-age 2 services open for parenting alternative school students and community members. We will also expand age 3-5 preschool programs and TK programs on our elementary campuses.

Community Schools will expand contracts for intensive mental health services with existing and new partners including North County Crisis Intervention and Response Team, North County Lifeline, Rady Children's Outpatient Psychiatry Intake (EPSDT), Palomar Counseling Service, Union of Pan Asian Communities, and Therapeutic Behavioral Services. School-based medical and dental services will expand in partnership with Vista Community Clinic (VCC)..

Trauma-informed, restorative behavior and discipline system, beginning with professional learning with our partners from Student Support Services Solutions, Inc. (S4) was launched this year. Schools will update discipline handbooks to embed these values through MTSS, including other means of correction. While many have participated in Restorative Practices workshops, we will contract with the National Conflict Resolution Center for comprehensive professional development and resources to ensure a coherent implementation of Restorative Practices within and across our schools. The results of this work will be measured and monitored by a reduction in behavior referrals, suspensions and expulsions.

In closing, VUSD is committed to the success of our Community Schools, as an essential element of our equity strategy, by recognizing and responding to the structural inequities that exist in our highest need schools. Through comprehensive and coordinated integration of site, district and grant resources, we believe that each child will receive what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential in a family-centered, equity-driven hub, strengthened by community partnerships and comprehensive wraparound services in health, wellness, and education.