

Form B: Project Abstract

1. Describe the vision for the proposed continuation or expansion of the community schools initiative.

Ravenswood City School District's (RCSD) vision is *to empower every student to fully engage critically and creatively in their education with the skills and mindset necessary to successfully fulfill their unique potential*. Our district's most recent strategic plan calls for us to achieve this vision through the development of community-focused schools. Specifically, we are to "partner with families and the community to support the whole child," language fully aligned with the California Community Schools Partnership. As we discuss in greater detail, in answer to the third question below, we have already made significant progress implementing this vision, although we are not without room for improvement.

2. Describe the LEA consortium (if applicable), participating school sites applying for funds to continue or expand an existing community schools program and any new school sites to be included.

RCSD serves East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park TK-8th grade students who disproportionately face economic and social barriers to learning. Ravenswood is proud of its diversity, with 99% of district students identifying as Latinx, African American, Pacific Islander, and/or multiple races. 53% of our students are English learners, 93% are from low-income families, and 41% of families are homeless or experience housing insecurity. Last year, three elementary schools and one middle school served RCSD's 1,761 students and their families, as well as 300 staff and faculty. Only 18% of Ravenswood third graders are testing at grade level based on ELA and math assessments (2019).

All four RCSD schools are already implementing community school programming. Today, all of our schools have extended days and extended summer programming, family engagement coordinators, and a wide range of mental and behavioral supports. Still, we have room to grow. We will use this grant to expand and extend our already robust programming. Unlocking these funds will accelerate implementation and quality implementation for our programs in the short term while aligning with our aim of facilitating long-term sustainable initiatives.

3. Include information about the programs and services to be added, expanded or provided (via the LEA, the school site(s), a site near or adjacent to the school(s), or virtually).

Below we've categorized many of our high-value programs and services based on the four pillars of community schools. For each pillar, we highlight which services for students already exist and which services we will be expanding or adding as a part of this grant. Today, our schools already utilize a whole-child approach with an integrated focus on community-driven initiatives across academics, health and social services, and community empowerment. Note that the budget provided does not include existing initiatives. For example, much of our extended day programming is funded through the After School Education and Safety (ASES) grant.

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Family and Community Engagement

Our families guide and inform the decisions we make about our curriculum, programs, and practices. All staff are expected to actively bring community voices in, but to support this we have invested in dedicated positions and robust community partnerships to make it easier for us to hear our community. Moving forward, we are creating one primary point of contact for family outreach, and we continue to look for new ways to integrate our schools with our local community.

Existing

- We used stimulus funds to add community outreach coordinators at each school, as well as a districtwide Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator. In addition to the school site admin, every school has a Campus Relations Coordinator who works closely with families on a day-to-day basis.
- In SY21-22 we added a communications position to rework our community and family engagement strategy. As part of this, we revamped our website, expanded our use of the Parent Square platform to connect with families, and built a more robust social media presence. All messages are issued in both English and Spanish.
- Our Superintendent holds regular office hours open to the public, in addition to various regularly scheduled parent groups (at both school and district level).
- Throughout the pandemic we expanded our meal distribution, making hundreds of thousands of free meals available to our community. We supplement this with free meal kits through our longstanding partnership with Second Harvest.

Expanding or Adding

- To oversee this work - especially the enrollment and family outreach portions - we have created a new position, the Chief of People and Strategy. Half of this FTE will focus on supporting this work.
- Our community has only half the green space as our neighboring communities. Over the past five years, we partnered with Canopy to plant 1,000 trees at schools. Moving forward, we are actively working with local city administrations to create more open and accessible green spaces at all our schools.
- We are actively exploring creating two teacher/staff housing sites; if executed, nearly half of our staff would have preferential access to affordable housing allowing them to live in the community they serve.
- We are upgrading our enrollment systems to increase functionality for families to make it easier to enroll in our district.
- This upcoming election cycle, our Belle Haven school will function as a voting booth.

Integrated Support Services, Including for Housing-insecure Students

We have a wide range of existing trauma-informed health, mental health, student supports, and social services partnerships to address the needs of the whole child. Our focus here is not on adding additional supports but rather refining existing supports to: 1) increase the quality of our services; 2) simplify the steps in accessing those services; and 3) aligning the various supports to a unified focus on the whole child.

Existing

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- We invest in significant physical and mental supports for students. We have a districtwide mental health coordinator, PBIS coordinator, and nurse (who also facilitates health partnerships). Each school has at least one CASSY counselor who is focused on providing direct counseling services to students at the site.
- We invest in transportation and other holistic services (e.g. school-site washing machines) to support the 40% of our students who are homeless / housing insecure.
- We have long partnered with Playworks and FoodCorp to provide physical activity school day programming and nutritional advice for students.
- We partner with Panorama for student and family surveys including measuring their mental health, attitudes towards school, and other metrics.
- We partner with Everyday Labs to use behavioral nudges such as calls, texts, and other activities to improve student attendance.
- We provide wide-ranging enrichment and support programming such as art, music, robotics, summer learning, outdoor and physical education.
- We address other families' critical needs through housing insecurity support, COVID-testing, and vaccination outreach.

Expanding or Adding

- We will be adding an “Executive Director of Educational Services” to oversee the district’s multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). This role is intended to streamline the supports offered by staff to students and families by establishing a clear MTSS point person. Further, this position will work closely with outside agencies to identify novel partnerships with other government and non-government child-serving agencies to provide whole child supports to RCSD students.
- In the past few years, it has been difficult to find a sufficient number of qualified CASSY counselors. To address this, we plan on increasing counselors’ school-year pay as well as adding summer work to make them full time employees.

Collaborative Leadership, Practices, and Shared Decision Making

We are constantly furthering a culture of collective trust, and shared responsibility among all students, families, staff, community members, and partner organizations. In recent years we have focused on equity. This has included significant new investments in curriculum and professional development to create culturally responsive classrooms. We seek to build on this by expanding key partners – adding more early childhood seats, creating new community spaces, and providing financial support to encourage students towards a college education.

Existing

- SY22, we partnered with Menlo Park City School District and the County Office of Education (SMCOE) to create an inter-district Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Coordinator. Our DEI Coordinator leads districtwide workshops and affinity groups across the districts to support our anti-racist stance and decolonize our curriculum.
- We have long had a collaborative working relationship with our community’s preschools and community’s families. We currently lease spaces, at heavily discounted rates, to two local early childhood providers - All Five and Family Connections. All Five provides high-quality socioeconomically diverse early

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childhood education and care for 10 hours per day for 50 weeks per year. Family Connections is a community-based, parent-child enrichment program deeply rooted in the Ravenswood community.

- In the summer of 2021 RCSD invested several hundred thousand dollars on staff professional development. Many educators choose opportunities with SMCOE to pursue professional learning opportunities in effective strategies for creating a welcoming environment including home-school communication, developing cultural competency, and ensuring the inclusion of all students and families.
- We have dozens of local community organization partners including Ravenswood Reading Partners, StreetCode, VisiontoLearn, East Palo Alto Tennis & Tutoring (EPATT), and Stanford University. With our partners we align and coordinate programming across organizations for improved access, student and family benefit, and funding efficiencies including facilitating various committees and initiatives to support our shared leadership practices.

Expanding or Adding

- We are partnering with local philanthropy and community organizations to build a \$25m 'community hub' - intended to include access to a health clinic - on surplus lands at our Middle School.
- We are investing significant funds towards revamping all of our outdated curriculum to align with our equity statement which calls for increasing the amount of culturally responsive instructional materials.
- We are planning on partnering with local philanthropy to jump-start college savings accounts for our students, helping them to begin saving for the college experience their teachers are preparing them for.

Extended/Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities

In collaboration with our partners, we provide extended day and year opportunities to all our students. This includes enrichment and real-world-learning activities across all of our schools, as well as robust academic supports (something we seek to expand through the use of intercession programming). Additionally, we want to serve currently unschooled students through expanding our TK programming in the face of significant community need.

Existing

- Through ASES and ELO-P, we currently run, in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula, extended day and extended school year programming that is available for all students. This provides significant support for our students and families to effectively have access to all of our enrichment programming.
- Each of our schools - in particular our Middle School - provide a number of extra-curricular activities. For example, in addition to having an athletic coordinator at our middle school, we also have a world-class robotics program.

Expanding or Adding

- We are planning on expanding our TK programming to include all eligible students in the community starting with the 22-23 school year. As we are now a community

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funded district, we will receive no additional funding for these students. However, it addresses a significant need in our community and is the right thing to do.

- In later years, we will also add a districtwide early childhood coordinator to support integrating ECE across the community.
- We will be launching acceleration academies over the intercession breaks - learning opportunities that are available to all students, but focused on those students who need the most support.
- We hope to partner with an organization like City Year to provide expanded before school programming, making it easier for working parents to drop students off before school starts. This would also increase social emotional and academic supports during the day.

Funding Sustainability

Longer term, we plan on transitioning the expanded programming costs outlined above in several ways. Beyond utilizing one-time funding stimulus sources, Title I funds, and various state grants (e.g. ASES, ELO-P), we plan on paying for these new initiatives in a few ways. First, we plan on using a share of increases in property tax revenue to cover some of these costs. Second, we plan on leasing two underutilized properties, which will begin to bring in significant revenue in 4-6 years. Third, we have increased our ability to fundraise locally, growing fundraising revenue from \$1m annually to over \$5m in recent years. We believe there is a potential for even more. The combination of these three areas will be the sum of resources that will be used to support these activities beyond the life of this grant. Because we are not reliant on just one additional source, we believe that the diversity of these sources provides additional reassurances that these funds will be available in the longer term.

4. Explain how the community(ties) (including students, families, community partners, educators and other school staff) and potential cooperating agencies will be engaged in the process of school transformation through implementation of the community schools initiative.

We value, invest in, and engage with students, families, faculty, staff, and community partners. There are too many types of family engagement to list all of them, but major engagement activities include: regularly scheduled family groups (DAC/DELAC, SSC/ELAC), parent university, “cafecitos” at every site, weekly monday workshops, parent-teacher conferences, staff professional learning and site-based capacity-building to support student academic success, and learning at home.

Our engagement work is driven by the needs of our families. We foster a culture of inclusion, while specifically respecting the diversity of families’ economic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. This work is guided by values shared across the district and our community. We respect the needs of students and families of varying ethnic, cultural, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

5. Detail how this collaborative will also ensure there is ongoing reflection and assessment that supports school-wide continuous improvement through the community schools initiative.

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We regularly execute effective cycles of continuous improvement at both the district and site levels. Some of this is through the required cycles of improvement outlined in the “School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) processes.

We collect information for this continuous improvement cycle in two major ways. First, as part of our community engagement processes for our initiatives (including SPSAs, LCAP, and our multi-year Strategic Plan), we seek to collect ‘street data’ to further evaluate our existing actions and progress. This, often qualitative, community feedback – gathered through a large number of local community meetings, emails, newsletters, social media, our website, small group conversations, school-specific outreach coordinators communications, and feedback from our partners – also becomes the basis for identifying new ways to improve.

This work is supplemented by an internal data team that collects, analyzes, and regularly reports on ‘satellite data’ or ‘map data’ on student achievement and engagement which includes traditional quantitative metrics such as test scores. We also will rely upon, and analyze, family and student survey data.

For major initiatives, we have engaged with local universities (e.g. Stanford) to conduct independent reviews of an initiatives impact. This has the additional benefit of being able to share the ensuing publication with our community about the work happening in our schools. Given the scale of this partnership, we would consider investing in this kind of independent review.

6. Include other factors that demonstrate need that are not included in the Evaluation Criteria listed on page 19.

The following three additional factors underscore our community’s high-needs, especially in relation to surrounding communities. .

1. RCSD is located in, arguably, California’s wealthiest region. That creates unique challenges for us. Many of our neighboring districts have twice as much spending per pupil, leading to an arms race for teacher talent: teachers in neighboring districts can earn over \$150,000 annually. RCSD is unique in the county. Across San Mateo, 40% of students are considered unduplicated - meaning that they are either English Learners, Foster youth, or eligible for reduced price meals. 94% of RCSD students met that criteria. Put another way, all four of our schools have over 85% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRPL). Of the other 150+ schools in the County, only one other school is above 85% FRPL.
2. Many of our students come from undocumented families. Lack of documentation motivates families to not report family circumstances thereby likely understating our community’s overall need.
3. Our health circumstances are far worse than the rest of our county. For example, measures that look at our county’s overall COVID-19 death rate overlook how hard our city has been hit by the pandemic: As of 4/7/22, East Palo Alto had 33.5 cases per 100 people and 30% of Ravenswood students tested COVID-positive in the first 7 weeks of 2022 alone.