OFFICE OF
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH &
STUDENT SAFETY

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Guide to Virginia Community School Implementation

Guide to Virginia Community Schools Implementation (VCSI)

This guide has been prepared by:

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Introduction:
What is a Virginia Community School?

How Does the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation Work?

Schools are an integral part of the community's ecosystem, and reflect their values, priorities, assets, and needs. Virginia community schools are grounded in mutual respect and support, by leveraging the power of partnership between community organizations, agencies, and schools.

When a school identifies a difference in one or more outcome measures between groups of students, the collective wisdom of the community is essential to fully understand how to address the challenge.

Successful community school initiatives are comprehensive, locally managed, and created to address the root causes of systemic needs. Virginia community schools are dedicated to adopting methods that are backed by research, create powerful partnerships, and employ innovative approaches to leadership and collaboration.

Through collaborative participation with community partners, school divisions that use Best Practices for Virginia Community Schools Implementation aim to remove barriers to learning and create opportunities for student success.

These practices facilitate intentional, system-wide efforts to understand gaps in opportunities and maximize the potential of all learners.

This approach extends beyond an intervention for an individual or group of students, and instead works to repair and enhance whole systems of support by offering wrap-around services that address the holistic needs of students and families.

In this way, communities meet students where they are and support students and families through authentic empowerment and collaboration.

The Virginia Community School Implementation (VCSI) is modeled after the ecosystem of support in nature that restores, sustains, and helps all life to thrive: a tree.

The Five Stages of Implementation

Stage 1 | Assessing Needs & Mapping Resources
Complete a needs assessment and a resource map by using a variety of data sources and a root cause analysis technique

Stage 2 | Creating a Strategy
Organize teams and collaborate to leverage community assets by designing school supports that target identified challenges and address four branches of student support

Stage 3 | Delivering Supports
Work with the local community to provide and broker academic and non-academic tiered supports that align to the four branches of student support

Stage 4 | Monitoring, Evaluating & Adjusting Plans
Create systems to evaluate and adjust supports as needed to continuously improve and to meet new needs

Stage 5 | Connecting, Celebrating & Sustaining Community
Recognize progress and setbacks with all stakeholders and plan to continue high impact strategies into the future
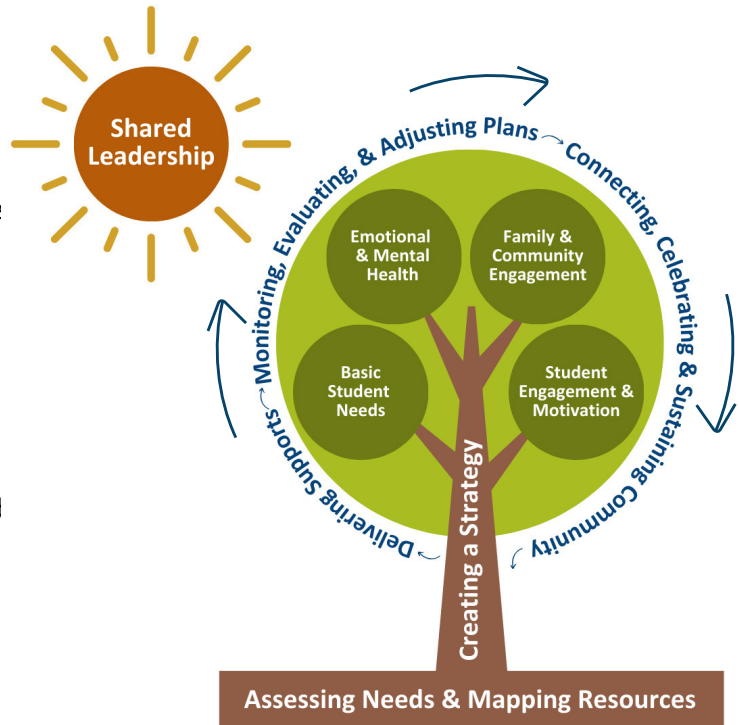
Sun
Just as the sun is a driving force in nature, shared leadership creates the conditions for long-term sustainability and success.

Roots
The deeper your understanding of your community's needs and resources, the better you can create systems that address challenges.

Trunk & Branches
The strength of your action plan lies in the holistic structures of support for your students' needs.

Breeze
Your action plan is sustained by a workflow that delivers, monitors, evaluates, and adjusts supports.

This guide supports community school teams integrating the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation into their school improvement efforts.

As your team plans to adopt the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation, coordinate with stakeholders that support your division's alignment with a variety of statewide priorities and initiatives.

Aligning VCSI implementation with the overarching goals and objectives of your school division and existing initiatives will help you to cultivate sustainable community partnerships that can fortify your resources for student success.

Be intentional about your collaboration. Because each community is unique and your team will function differently based on your current priorities and work already underway, consider how you will need to modify available tools and resources to meet the specific opportunities and needs of your school division.

As you begin to design your school division's community school strategy, your team is encouraged to set SMART goals, which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, to track implementation progress.

Statewide Priorities & Initiatives

Academic & Career Plan

Attendance & School Engagement

Early Childhood Care & Education

Every Student Succeeds Act

Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervention Services

Graduation, Dropout & Postsecondary Reports

Model Guidance for Positive, Preventative Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension

Profile of a Virginia Graduate

Virginia Tiered Systems of Support

How Do Schools Begin the Process of Becoming a Virginia Community School?

The Best Practices for Virginia Community Schools Implementation includes five stages that can be applied to schools and divisions with vastly different student needs, resources, and school climates.

With the understanding that transformation cannot happen in a vacuum, the approach is designed to complement and strengthen current improvement initiatives and tiered systems of support.

Each stage describes a process of implementation and includes a set of best practices that school divisions can utilize to effectively develop and strengthen their community school planning and transformation efforts.

It is important to remember that implementation is not a linear process. It is possible, and even likely, your team will be delivering supports outlined in one area of your action plan while creating a strategy for another. You can expect to revisit and rebuild plans as you monitor your progress and measure impact.

Let's get started!

Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation

Stage 1 | Assessing Needs & Mapping Resources
- Generate a Needs Statement
- Assemble a Community Advisory Board
- Conduct Root Cause Analysis
- Map Community Resources
- Define Challenge & Opportunities

Stage 2 | Creating a Strategy
- Organize a Community School Team
- Develop an Action Plan
- Create Memoranda of Understanding

Stage 3 | Delivering Supports
- Align to Four Branches of Support
- Integrate Tiered Systems of Support
- Facilitate Stakeholder Learning & Engagement

Stage 4 | Monitoring, Evaluating, & Adjusting Plans
- Design Systems to Track & Share Data
- Create Routines to Collect Feedback
- Engage in Ongoing Evaluation

Stage 5 | Connecting, Celebrating, & Sustaining Community
- Honor Shared Values & Vision
- Acknowledge Progress & Efforts
- Plan for Renewal & Sustainability

# How to Use Your Virginia Community Schools Toolkit

The Virginia Community Schools Toolkit is designed to support community school teams as they adopt the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation, integrating the tools and techniques into their school improvement efforts. Included in the toolkit are this Guide to Best Practices and a series of video-based modules that are available on the Virginia Career and Learning Center.

This guide is organized to share an overview of the five stages of strategy development, the best practices for implementation, and the tools and techniques that put the practices into action.

The series of video-based modules introduce you to Mountain Breeze Public Schools, a fictitious school division who uses the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation in their planning. This story is based on real-life strategies that were developed by school divisions across Virginia.

View the modules on the Virginia Career and Learning Center:

Virginia Career & Learning Center
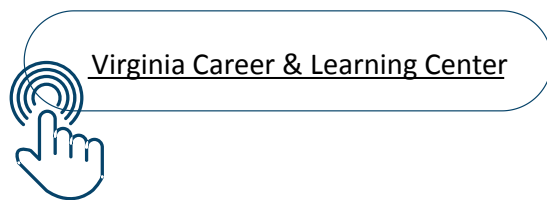
At the end of each module, you will have the opportunity to check your understanding with a brief knowledge check.

All team members can measure progress to adopt the framework using self-assessments found at the end of each stage planners, included in this Guide to VCSI.

Stage 1 Assessing Needs & Mapping Resources

Best Practices for Stage 1 Implementation

1.1 **Generate a Needs Statement**

Technique
- Use student outcome data as an initial indicator of needs in the community

1.2 **Assemble a Community Advisory Board**

Technique
- Include community wisdom in the needs assessment process

1.3 **Conduct a Root Cause Analysis**

Techniques
- Frame the challenge within the system(s) of support
- Identify root causes and contributing factors of the challenge

1.4 **Map Community Resources**

Technique
- Identify resources and support in the school and community

**1.5** **Define Challenges & Opportunities**

Techniques
- Represent multiple data sources that reflect the voices of students and families
- Recommend areas of system support that can be strengthened

In the first stage of strategy development, schools assess the needs of the community and map resources that can address their challenges and strengthen systems of support. Through these best practices, a wide range of information and insights can be gathered to give context to complex issues.

Use the techniques, tools, and tips in this stage to engage with community stakeholders in a process to investigate, discover, and reflect your community's values, strengths, and needs.

Download Your Stage 1 Planner

Stage 1 Planner
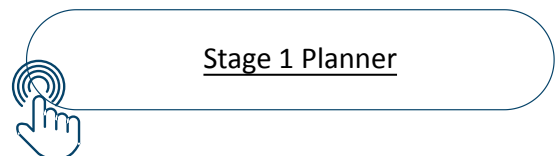
Best Practice 1.1 Generate a Needs Statement

1.1 **Generate a Needs Statement**

Technique
- Use student outcome data as an initial indicator of needs in the community.

A needs statement utilizes student outcomes data as an initial indicator to frame the challenge. Community schools begin this process by identifying the outcome areas where gaps in success or opportunity exist and the groups of students affected by them. Documenting essential information about the observed challenges will launch an effective team who will investigate further and connect to its potential root causes and community needs.

Primary outcome data, such as Virginia's School Quality Profiles, can be used to identify areas of concern. Appropriate supplemental data sources may then be referred to determine what issues contribute to the complexity of the challenge.

Resources can be distributed effectively when the needs are known, and the existing and accessible resources are identified. This guarantees that funding, time, effort, and materials are allocated to areas where they will have the greatest impact.

Leaders at the school or division level should create an initial needs statement to describe this challenge to frame deeper exploration and uncover root causes. This needs statement should describe the impacted student group(s), the outcome area, and the supporting data gathered from multiple sources.

For this community-level investigation to build a shared understanding, carefully consider what information is available and how relevant data points can be analyzed.

Use Your Stage 1 Planner

As you decide what data to share with your community and how best to present your observations of a potential barrier facing students, reflect on the guiding questions included in the tab labeled "Identify the Needs."

The Stage 1 Planner should be completed by a diverse group of stakeholders who represent the community. This builds mutuality and trust amongst community members and sets the stage for interventions that respond to and

Example: Needs Statement

Recently, Mountain Breeze Public Schools has experienced an increase in off-task and disruptive behavior at our middle and high schools. These minor interruptions can have long-term consequences. Students who are frequently off-task or disruptive may miss out on important instructional content, leading to gaps in their understanding and lower academic performance. Whole classrooms can be affected, making it difficult for the class to stay focused, reducing the overall effectiveness of the instruction.

Within Mountain Breeze Public Schools, the two middle schools and high school saw a 14% increase in office referrals based on off-task and disruptive behavior during the last academic year. This contributed to the division's annual rate of 715 office division referrals for behaviors impeding academic progress, which are submitted to the Student Behavior and Administrative Response system, or SBAR.

To respond to off-task and disruptive behavior, administration assigned either detention or in-school suspension for approximately 36% of these incidents last year. Approximately 11% of incidents warranted out-of-school suspension as a consequence.

Over the past two years, the time middle and high school students spent out of the classroom has contributed to a slight decrease in Mountain Breeze's overall attendance and graduation rates.

The needs statement will be used to stage deeper investigation with students, teachers, families, and community members. Therefore, it should be written in language that is easy to read and encourages curiosity and dialogue. It is recommended that this initial needs statement is no longer than three pages.

Best Practice 1.2
Assemble a Community Advisory Board

1.2 Assemble a Community Advisory Board

Technique
- Include community wisdom in the needs assessment process.

Once a statement of the initial needs has been generated, it is time to organize an advisory board who will conduct root cause analysis and identify resources and assets in the community. Through this board, community wisdom can be centered in the needs assessment process.

Select board members who are representative of the community. This may serve as an opportunity to align with existing teams in your school and neighborhood, or you may find it best to create a new group for this purpose.

Should you re-engage an existing stakeholder group, consider the diversity of experience, skills, and perspectives to identify potential new members.

As you decide what data to share with your community and how best to present your observations of a potential barrier facing students, reflect on the guiding questions included in the tab labeled "Identify the Needs."

The Stage 1 Planner should be completed by a diverse group of stakeholders who represent the community. This builds mutuality and trust amongst community members and sets the stage for interventions that respond to and sustain community cultures.

Start by considering the populations that should be represented. Within the school environment, these may include students, families, teachers, counselors, school nurses, and other specialized professionals. Within the community setting, these may include coaches, leaders of religious and nonprofit organizations, and staff at local colleges, healthcare facilities, and government agencies.

The next step is to identify the qualities and skills that the Community Advisory Board will need to complete each step of the assessment. Examples include fluency in languages spoken by students and families, experience in data organization and analysis, and influence within impacted communities.

Now that you have developed a sense of the experience, skills, and perspectives that should be represented on the Community Advisory Board, consider who will serve on this team.

School Staff + Students & Families + Community Representatives → Community Advisory Board

🔑 Use Your Stage 1 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Seek Community Wisdom" to support your planning. This matrix helps to visualize confirmed group members and inventory the strengths they contribute. Use the matrix to document the populations, qualities, and skills identified as important for a highly effective team. Then write the names of stakeholders who may already serve on an existing team or who may have been identified to join the group.

For each team member listed, mark an "x" across the corresponding row to indicate their alignment to the needed experience, skills, and perspectives. To avoid assumptions and implicit bias, ask potential team members to self-identify their strengths using a simple checklist or survey during their recruitment to the Community Advisory Board.
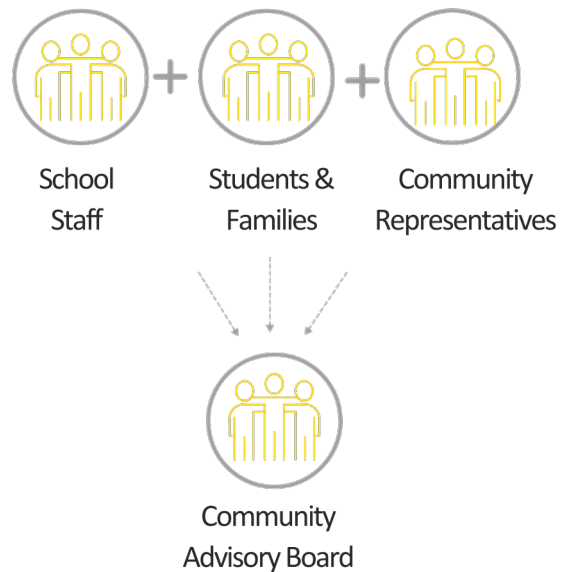
Reflect on the experience, skills, and perspectives that may be missing from the Community Advisory Board. Fill these gaps by asking group members to refer people within their networks who meet these needs.

Balance the need for representation with the capacity to be an engaged and active group member.

It is recommended that no more than 15 members participate in each Community Advisory Board.

Best Practice 1.3 Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

1.3	Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

Techniques
- Frame the challenge within the system(s) of support
- Identify root causes and contributing factors of the challenge

The goal of root cause analysis is to identify approaches that can be implemented within a system of support to prevent an issue from recurring. Strategies that have long-term sustainability and greater impact explore needs beyond individual deficits and instead identify potential actions to correct systems of support.

To seek the root causes of a challenge, you will employ several techniques. First, you will frame the need within the community's systems of support. Then, you will use structured methods, such as the fishbone strategy and 5 whys protocol, to discover underlying causes.

Make sure your advisory meetings include time for data discovery and additional discussion about what the data cannot reveal, such as students' actual experiences or the compounding impact of other disparities.

🔑 Use Your Stage 1 Planner

Use the tabs labeled "Frame the Systems" and "Determine Potential Root Causes" to support your Community Advisory Board's inquiry and planning.

"Frame the System" includes a set of guiding questions to help the board view the challenge within the various systems in school and in the community.

The tab labeled "Determine Potential Root Causes" offers guidance for the Community Advisory Board to utilize two techniques for root cause analysis: the fishbone diagram and the 5 whys protocol.

Offer time for each group member to reflect before and after meetings by sharing the templates for each technique, that are linked in the planner.

Frame the System

Community Advisory Boards begin root cause analysis by expanding the needs statement to frame the challenge within the systems of support. This is an important step that provides a shared understanding within the Community Advisory Board, whose expertise may be on the components of the systems meant to address the challenge.

Share the needs statement with the Community Advisory Board in advance of meetings. This action facilitates better collaboration during the meeting and allows for thoughtful exchange of ideas and points of view. Invite group members to share related data and additional insights from their perspective that may identify contributing factors. It may also be helpful to create a timeline of events or a flowchart to develop a shared understanding of the systems of support.

Organize Potential Causes:
Using the Fishbone Diagram

Creating a fishbone diagram provides a visual representation of the challenge and its causes that can make it easier to understand and communicate the relationships between causes and the overall problem. Use the needs statement to write the problem to be analyzed at the head of the fish. Then, extending from the backbone of the fish, document the major categories of potential causes for the challenge.

For each major category, list all potential causes that might contribute to the issue. Categories may be environmental, social, economic, or behavioral. Then, look for the patterns, repetition, and categories with the most branches.

Uncover Root Causes:
Using the Five Whys Protocol

ecause each stakeholder may have a different perspectives for each layer of the cause, the 5 whys protocol provides a structure for deeper investigation of the categories identified through the fishbone diagram.

Beginning with a simple and concise problem statement, the first "why" helps identify an immediate cause of the problem. The second "why" takes the answer from the first and starts to uncover the deeper layers of the issue. The third "why" further explores the underlying issue revealed in the second layer, and the fourth "why" digs even deeper into the issue that emerged in the third layer. The fifth "why" should reveal the root cause of the problem.

Best Practice 1.4 Map Community Resources

1.4 | **Conduct a Root Cause Analysis**

Technique
- Identify resources and support in the school and community.

There is an abundance of resources that exist within a student's neighborhood network, and a community resource map visualizes those tapped and untapped supports in the area surrounding schools. The knowledge from community resource maps is used to design programs and initiatives that strengthen the connection between existing resources and, where necessary, develop new ones that are community-owned and managed.

Resource mapping is a collaborative process that facilitates effective planning between stakeholders. Before developing new community school resources, this critical action step creates the opportunity to explore why some resources may be underutilized and offers the chance to address inefficiencies in systems of support by strengthening relationships between schools and community partners.

Creating a community school resource map involves identifying and documenting available strengths and resources.

🔑 Use Your Stage 1 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Map Community Resources" to document your Community Advisory Board's planning ideas. You will use the guiding questions to define the map's purpose and scope and develop a plan to engage stakeholders through activities that build trust and seek contributions.

These questions will help you to create a process to gather information on resources and place them on a map. (This may include a combination of tools and software, or it may begin as a physical map with markers and post-it notes.)

Then, consider methods to verify, analyze, and maintain the map before sharing it with the community.

Best Practice 1.5
Define Challenges & Opportunities

<table>
<tr><td>1.5</td><td>Define Challenges & Opportunities</td></tr>
</table>

Technique
- Represent multiple data sources that reflect the voices of students and families.
- Recommend areas of system support that can be strengthened.

The final step is to define the challenge and opportunities. This is a comprehensive report explaining the root causes of a community need and shares opportunities to strengthen support areas so that needs are addressed, and everyone can thrive.

Throughout the needs and resources assessment, the group should respect differences of perspective and experience. In this final step, the group should work to reach a consensus about recommended actions and areas of focus that describe the functional improvements that need to be made rather than solutions to the identified problem.

To build common ground among a diverse group of stakeholders, set expectations for participation. Allow group members to ask questions and seek clarification. Foster an atmosphere where all members feel comfortable expressing their ideas.

Encourage active listening where members pay attention, acknowledge different viewpoints, and avoid interrupting. The group should discuss the pros and cons of areas of focus.

Combine ideas and integrate elements from different ideas to create a recommendation that incorporates diverse perspectives. Increase acceptance by adjusting proposed recommendations based on feedback and concerns in the group.

Use Your Stage 1 Planner

Use the tab in your Stage 1 Planner labeled "Define Challenges & Opportunities" to create an outline for your comprehensive report, detailing the work already completed by the Community Advisory Board.

Stage 1 Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment

The Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment supports community school teams through a structured process for the development of a strategy and an opportunity to self-assess your adoption of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

Utilize this tool to introduce the practices to school-based teams, school and community leadership, and others; and monitor your team's progress toward an effective strategy.

There are five specific purposes of the Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment.

1. Provide the community school team with a structured process for the development of a strategy
2. Provide information to monitor progress toward adoption for each stage of implementation
3. Support a common infrastructure for implementation to achieve desired community school outcomes
4. Serve as a tool to introduce stakeholders to the strengths and needs of the community school
5. Provide division and state leadership with a consistent measure of the capacity for the adoption of best practices

Stage 1 Self-Assessment: Assessing Needs & Mapping Resources

This self-assessment is administered with Stage 1 of implementation in mind. Three primary areas help your team to self-evaluate your planning and action steps during this stage of development:

- How Needs are Assessed
- How Resources as Identified
- How Stakeholders are Engaged

A stage of implementation includes a set of best practices used within a school division to achieve defined outcomes.

It is intended for community school teams to begin with Stage 1 of implementation, and advance through Stage 5 of implementation; however, progress is not linear.

During the year, you may find that your team is planning to launch some activities while others are being monitored and evaluated. You will likely also return to a previous stage of implementation to make adjustments or deepen their impact.

When completing the self-assessment for a specific stage, it is important to reflect and respond with that stage in mind.

To ensure your team is ready to complete the self-assessment, read through each of the best practices on this fidelity checklist below. Mark "yes" for the best practices that your team has implemented, and "no" for the best practices that have not yet been completed. If your team has determined that a practice is not applicable, mark the item with "N/A". If you have implemented all applicable best practices, your community school team is ready to complete the self-assessment.

Stage 1 Fidelity Checklist

Best Practice	Yes	No	N/A
1.1 Generate a Needs Statement	☐	☐	☐
1.2 Assemble a Community Advisory Board	☐	☐	☐
1.3 Conduct a Root Cause Analysis	☐	☐	☐
1.4 Map Community Resources	☐	☐	☐
1.5 Define Challenges & Opportunities	☐	☐	☐

Suggested Protocol to Complete the Self-Asessment

Community school teams should complete a self-assessment at the end of each stage of implementation. They may prepare to complete the tool by choosing a few of the guiding questions (found in the right column) for reflection during meetings in the weeks leading up to the designated evaluation period. They may also become familiar with the statements for each area that will be assessed and consider the artifacts and data tools that should be used to measure progress. The team may use the appropriate columns labeled, "Team Ideas & Reflections" and "Data Sources" to document this information.

The formal administration process includes reading each statement within an area of evaluation aloud and offering any necessary clarification; facilitating the discussion and voting process; recording the score for each item; verifying the concentration of scores; reviewing the concepts and big ideas; and outlining recommended actions and next steps.

In advance of the group process, team members should complete the self-assessment individually to prepare. Before the self-assessment begins, the Community School Coordinator should ensure that all team members have access to the artifacts and data sources used to evaluate progress and understand how to complete the evaluation. Consider the best method for each team member to access and complete the self-assessment. This may require you to create your own paper-based or digital tools.

Guiding Questions to Evaluate Stage 1 of Implementation

- How is preliminary data being used to identify the barriers and needs facing students?
- What data sources are gathered in order to explain, confirm, and challenge what has been learned about the barriers and needs facing students?
- To what extent does the needs assessment make the root causes of barriers and needs visible?
- Who is engaged in the process to identify resources and support in the school and community?
- How is community wisdom valued and integrated into the needs assessment?
- How is student voice valued and integrated into the needs assessment?

Rating Your Progress to Adopt Best Practices for VCSI

Successfully establishing and sustaining a Virginia Community School requires school divisions to commit to a strategy that is comprehensive, cohesive, and collaborative.

The criteria included in the self-assessment for each stage represents the essential elements of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

The rubric describes various levels of adoption along a continuum of implementation of Best Practices, from exploring through maturing. This helps school divisions to self-assess their incremental progress toward developing an effective community school strategy.

First, review the brief descriptors for each level of adoption to grasp what distinguishes the novice levels of exploring and emerging from more advanced levels such as maturing and excelling.

Next, become familiar with the criteria included for each level of adoption to understand what is being evaluated on the self-assessment for each stage of implementation. Adhere to the protocol to complete the self-assessment both individually and as a team. After reviewing each criterion, determine a rating for the overall level of adoption.

Refer to the summaries in this guide for each stage of implementation to learn possible areas of focus to deepen your use of Best Practices for VCSI.

Exploring
School divisions understand that they can not work in isolation to solve the barriers to learning faced by students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by gathering information, large-scale thinking, and an optimistic outlook for change and growth.

Emerging
School divisions are responsive to the needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by initial steps towards building relationships with community partners.

Maturing
School divisions are committed to improving the overall conditions for learning by creating partnerships that respond to the identified needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by a culture of "yes".

Excelling
School divisions have a comprehensive and collaborative system that continuously responds to needs. This self-rating is characterized by a fully realized vision of as a central location of opportunity and civic engagement for students and families.

Take the Stage 1 Self-Assessment

Locate the Stage 1 Self-Assessment on the first tab of the evaluation tool. Complete the assessment individually and as a team.

For each of the three areas of evaluation, read the statement in the corresponding row. Select the statement that most closely aligns to your school division's current practices. Mark an "x" to the right of the statement, describing the degree to which your division has adopted the best practices.

Use the space at the end of each row under the column labeled "Possible Action Steps & Recommendations" to document your team's ideas to further integrate the best practices into your community school strategy.

Exploring

School divisions exploring Stage 1 community school practices recognize the value of data-driven strategy planning and engaging families and community partners in support of student learning and success. Make progress by incorporating multiple data sources and communicating with families and community partners about potential barriers and needs facing students.

Emerging

School divisions whose Stage 1 community school practices are emerging commit to understanding potential barriers facing students. They use student outcome data to identify needs and inform community partners and families about their findings. Make progress by gaining perspective from community partners and families, and by incorporating multiple data sources.

Maturing

School divisions with maturing Stage 1 community school practices generate multiple data points to understand root causes of student needs. They value community resources and make outreach to potential partners after supports are identified through feedback from students and families. Make progress by including community partners, families, and students earlier in the needs assessment process.

Excelling

School divisions with excelling community school practices understand that student needs represent needs in the community. During Stage 1 of implementation, they use school and community-generated data sources and maximize representation, collaboration, and community wisdom in the process to understand root causes. These divisions maintain up-to-date resource maps and share widely with team members and the community.

Stage 2 Creating a Strategy

Best Practices for Stage 2 Implementation

2.1 — **Organize a Community School Team**

Techniques
- Define strategic roles and responsibilities within the team and designate a leader to coordinate and organize efforts.
- Create smaller, working teams around specific needs or projects made of school personnel and community partners

2.2 — **Develop an Action Plan**

Techniques
- Create a vision statement through shared leadership.
- Define action steps and timeframes within assigned roles.
- Include measurable goals that support the shared vision.

2.3 — **Create Memoranda of Understanding**

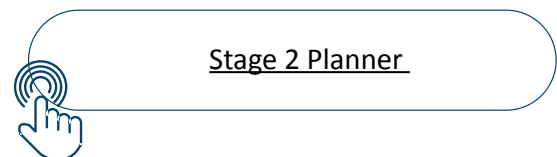*Technique*
- Formalize MOUs for each community partnership

Stage 2 of development in the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation centers on creating a strategy, which is a multi-step process to formally document the goals, objectives, and expected outcomes that will be accomplished over time.

Formalizing an official Community School Team and developing an effective action plan can take several weeks to complete and includes a series of activities.

Use the techniques, tools, and tips in this stage to support planning throughout your process.

Download Your Stage 2 Planner

Stage 2 Planner

Best Practice 2.1 Organize a Community School Team

2.1 | **Organize a Community School Team**

Techniques
- Define strategic roles and responsibilities within the team and designate a leader to coordinate and organize efforts.
- Create smaller, working teams around specific needs or projects made of school personnel and community partners

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The purpose of a community school team is to collaborate on the strategic deployment of resources and to create objectives, outcomes, and progress markers that work toward improved outcomes for students, families, and the community.

Consulting with students, families, and school-involved community groups is too narrow. Instead, the community school team's values should guide choices and influence the allocation of funds for all facets of your community school, from instruction and learning to culture and climate. This calls for the team's full participation and representation on decision-making teams.

Successful teams achieve these goals by practicing shared leadership, which means to having shared power and ability to influence decisions at the school and division level.

🔑 Use Your Stage 2 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Organize Your Community School Team" to document how your community is organizing through a variety of teams, committees, and partnerships in support of student learning and success.

Add or delete rows as needed to reflect the scale and scope of your school division's implementation model.

Each team will look different depending on the scale and scope of implementation, and will include a combination of these collaborations:

Community School Team

When the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation are applied across multiple schools, a central community school team develops a division-wide plan with comprehensive goals and objectives. Some initiatives will be managed across the division, and others will focus on addressing specific school-based needs.

School-Based Teams & Committees

While the central community school team is accountable for overall impact, participating schools will form school-level teams, workgroups, or committees to plan and implement projects, to finalize the details of an implementation timeline, and to support the direct work with students, families, staff, and faculty.

School divisions and community partners may have existing teams who will take on the challenge of supporting a community school strategy. It is important to provide time and scaffolded support to ensure that this team understands the functional responsibilities of their role supporting the strategy, and can incorporate community school practices into their existing meeting routines and practices.

A Community School Team that organizes and manages the school division's action plan is essential to effective implementation. There may be multiple team members who play four key roles:

Community Partners

Community partners represent local and regional agencies, institutions, and organizations that can enhance access to resources for students and families. While there may be several organizations with whom you formalize partnerships to provide resources, the community partners who serve on this team function as an organizing entity. They may be deeply connected to your identified community need or have experience collaborating with other groups.

The following are examples of agencies and institutions that could serve in this role:

- Multi-service nonprofit organizations
- Churches, temples, and mosques
- Hospitals, mental health providers
- Colleges, universities, trade schools
- Environment or cultural organizations
- Local courts & law enforcement

Champions

Champions are administrators with the ability to shape policy as an important strategy to implement change. They may hold positions such as assistant principal, principal, or assistant superintendent. Champions support a process-dependent team dynamic, in which the team can keep community school initiatives moving forward even during a temporary vacancy of a coordinator or collaborator.

Collaborators

Collaborators are essential team members because they facilitate the connections between community partners and the schools. Not only do these community school influencers play a significant role "at the front lines" to promote new initiatives to stakeholders, but they bring insight to the team about the user experience and the short-term and intermediate impact of the initiatives.

Collaborators may be staff who work directly with students and families at each school or at a partner agency, and they may be the family members, coaches, religious leaders, or school-based mental health providers such as counselors and school social workers that help to build bridges and fill communication gaps to promote resources.

Community School Coordinator

The Community School Coordinator (CSC) serves as an essential team member. They are a strategic leader who contributes expertise and works closely with school and division leadership. The CSC may come from an education background, or they may have a background in community services or behavioral health. As part of their work to manage implementation, the CSC may engage in the following tasks:

- Identify, recruit, and engage partners
- Facilitate team meetings to set goals and evaluate progress on the action plan
- Build relationship among stakeholders
- Support integration of community school practices into schools
- Bridge the gap between disparate programs, aligning goals and resources in support of community school outcomes
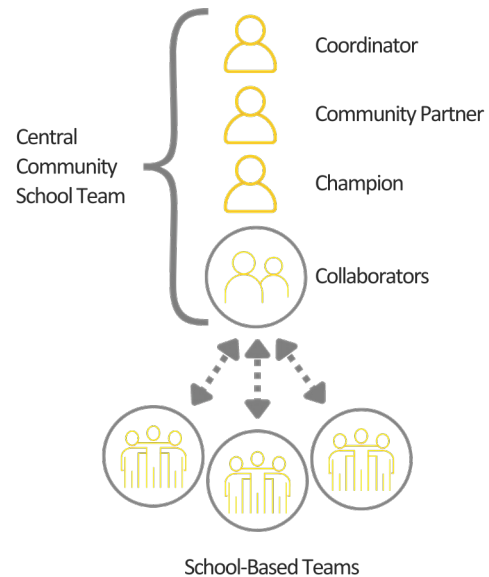
Tips for Community School Coordinators

- Keep your community school team small enough for everyone to be invested and engaged (4-8 people)
- Seek full participation and inclusion of affected communities to promote "Nothing about us without us"

Division-Wide Implementation

When the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation are applied across multiple schools, a central community school team develops a division-wide plan with comprehensive goals and objectives. Some initiatives will be managed across the division, and others will focus on addressing specific school-based needs.

While the central community school team is accountable for overall impact, participating schools will form school-level teams, workgroups, or committees to plan and implement projects; to finalize the details of an implementation timeline; and to support the direct work with students, families, staff, and faculty. Collaborators on the central community team should serve as point-people for school-based teams, with significant support from the Community School Coordinator, Community Partner, and Champion.

Central Community School Team
- Coordinator
- Community Partner
- Champion
- Collaborators

School-Based Teams

School-Wide Implementation

When implementation is designed for only one school, the Community School Coordinator is most effective when they are a school-based staff member. Collaborators may represent staff, external partners, and families. School-wide implementation teams should be prepared to share their learning with other schools in the division.

School-wide Community School Team
- Coordinator
- Community Partner
- Champion
- Collaborators

Best Practice 2.2
Develop an Action Plan

2.2	**Develop an Action Plan**

Techniques
- Create a vision statement through shared leadership.
- Define action steps and timeframes within assigned roles.
- Include measurable goals that support the shared vision.

Once your community school team is organized, it's time to start developing your action plan. During this process, you will identify goals and objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound (SMART).

Practice active listening and flexibility to seek understanding and talk through differences of opinion. From these decisions, your team can organize projects, programs, and initiatives that align to the VCSI four branches of support.

Be a process-dependent team rather than a person-dependent team. In the event of a "person" vacancy, keep the "process" going. Your action plan should allow for each member of the community school team to take active accountability for implementation; which can be guided by expected outcomes, progress markers, and a timeline.
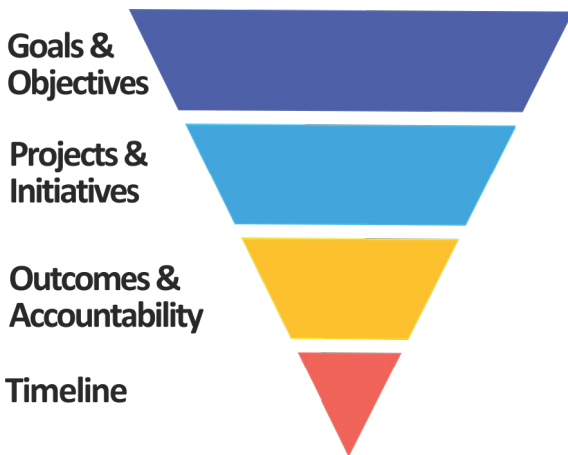
Network with other school divisions using community school practices to problem solve and get ideas as you formulate and revise your plans.

The Community School Coordinator should be responsible for maintaining a current version of your team's action plan and liaising with community partners and other collaborators. It is recommended that the plan be reviewed and updated quarterly.

🔑 Use Your Stage 2 Planner

The tab labeled "Develop an Action Plan" on your Stage 2 Planner will help teams to design and plan SMART goals and objectives, strategies, outcomes, accountability partners, and timeline for implementation.

Goals & Objectives
Projects & Initiatives
Outcomes & Accountability
Timeline

Outcomes & Accountability

In this section of your action plan, you will outline what will be achieved by implementing activities. For each project, program, or initiative, identify who benefits directly. Be sure to describe how this group will benefit using action-focused language. Then, think about how you will determine success and with what frequency you will collect data for review. Finally, consider the stakeholders who can serve as accountability partners to support program implementation and gather data to measure progress.

Timeline

In this section of your action plan, you will chart project, program, and initiative activities on a timeline. Think strategically about the anticipated start and end dates for your initiatives, not all projects will take place for the full year. Some activities may need to be completed before others can begin. And some initiatives could take place at multiple points throughout the year. Start with the end in mind, using your proposed outcomes to plan backwards from your expected date of completion.

SMART Goals & Objectives

Because community schools address system-wide transformation, you are encouraged to have up to 3-4 goals that are easily communicated to stakeholders. For each goal, identify the action-oriented strategies (objectives) that will help you to achieve the goal. It is recommended that you have no more than 4-5 objectives for each goal in your action plan.

Plan Your Initiatives

School divisions and community partners may have existing teams who will take on the challenge of supporting a community school strategy. It is important to provide time and scaffolded support to ensure that this team understands the functional responsibilities of their role supporting the strategy, and can incorporate community school practices into their existing meeting routines and practices. For each program, consider activities that engage support for student basic needs, student mental and emotional health, student motivation and engagement, and family and community engagement.

Shared Leadership & Action Planning

As your community school team begins to create an action plan, deep engagement that empowers all stakeholders with voice and choice is essential. Decision-makers who have historically worked in hierarchical, departmentalized systems may find it difficult to adopt practices for shared power and governance. That's OK! Many of us have not had real opportunities to develop the mindset and practices needed for authentic collaboration, but we are all capable.

The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership is a tool to help teams work collaboratively to create an action plan that is fully community-owned. Here are some questions for reflection that will drive shared leadership in your action planning efforts:

What will it take for impacted communities to have equitable access to information about the issues that directly impact them?

What is needed to move beyond consultation and get genuine involvement of impacted communities?

What is needed to build sustained voice & power?

What culture shift and system changes are needed for authentic collaboration between institutions and impacted communities?

Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

0 - IGNORE "Marginalization"
Message: Your voice & interests do not matter
Resource Allocation Ratios:
100% Systems Admin

1 - INFORM "Placation"
Message: We will keep you informed
Resource Allocation Ratios:
70-90% Systems Admin
10-30% Promotions & Publicity

2 - CONSULT "Tokenization"
Message: Gather input from the community
Resource Allocation Ratios:
60-80% Systems Admin
20-30% Consultation Activities

3 - INVOLVE "Voice"
Message: You are making us think differently
Resource Allocation Ratios:
50-60% Systems Admin
40-50% Community Involvement

4 - COLLABORATE "Delegated Power"
Message: Your leadership & expertise matter
Resource Allocation Ratios:
20-50% Systems Admin
50-70% Community Partners

5 - DEFER TO "Community Ownership"
Message: Our collective power matters
Resource Allocation Ratios: 80-100%
Community partners and
community-driven processes

(Movement Strategy Center, 2019)

Best Practice 2.3 Create a Memorandum of Understanding

2.3	**Create a Memorandum of Understanding**

Technique
- Formalize MOUs for each community partnership

Excerpted from Developing A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): School Telehealth and Community Provider Collaboration for Behavioral Health Services, created by the VDOE Office of Behavioral Health and Wellness

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a written contract outlining how two or more parties will cooperate to achieve a common goal It includes pragmatic elements such as the goals and vision of the collaboration, as well as planning logistics like staffing, procedural terms, and confidentiality needs.

When school divisions partner with community service providers to offer additional supports to students in schools, an MOU is necessary to define the goals and expectations of the partnership. All parties involved must work together to develop shared language and accountability systems that are grounded in a mutual set of goals.

Thinking through the MOU process enables partners to clarify expectations, plan, and set goals.

🔑 Use Your Stage 2 Planner

The tab labeled "Create a Memorandum of Understanding" on the Stage 2 Planner will help teams to design and develop well-written Memoranda of Understanding to guide the provision of services.

This planner is based on the guiding document developed by the Virginia Department of Education in partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS).

Engaging those with a vested interest in the partnership can inform the MOU development regarding the purpose, scope of work, and implementation.

Successful collaboration between community providers and divisions is facilitated through a structured teaming process that leads to developing a partnership agreement or a MOU.

Introduction

This section helps all parties understand the need, the service providers involved, and why it is necessary to coordinate care across organizations. The section should identify the division, school, and the community provider(s) involved in the collaboration. This section can offer the background and needs of the school(s) or division and why the partnership is needed.

Purpose

This section identifies the parties involved and states the purpose of the collaboration. Depending on the project's scope, this section should be detailed about the desired goals and measurable outcomes. If a community provider will offer specific services to students, consideration should be given to how those services align with current school practices. Also, consider practices in place and how the collaboration will enhance service delivery to students.

Roles & Responsibilities

This section defines the objectives and expectations for each participant in the MOU. An understanding of the roles of current school-based resources and services is essential when crafting this section to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure collaboration can occur. Additionally, this section outlines how the division or school will share relevant school policies, regulations, and practices with the community provider and how appropriate school-based staff will be informed about the integration of the community provider.

Communication

This section details how the services offered by the community provider will be communicated to school staff, families, and students. Depending on the scope of the collaboration, this section also defines the coordination and teaming of the community provider and existing school-based resources. Details addressing onboarding, confidentiality, and information shared between provider and school staff are addressed here. For this section, input of the affected school staff is crucial.

Workplace Logistics

This section defines how the community provider will perform their role within the school. Details such as access to the school building, workspace requirements, access to students and student records, equipment allocation, and access to Wi-Fi/division network are defined here. Additionally, if virtual services are being offered, additional logistics should be considered.

Supervision & PD

This section clarifies the community and in-school supervision of the community provider and the need and requirements for professional development. While the community provider may have established supervision within their own agency, school or division-based supervision may also need to be established. This section further defines the community provider's role in their offering of professional development to school staff.

Data Collection

This section defines the role and participation of the community provider in school data collection. Parties should consider current school data collection schedules and processes and additional processes that may emerge as part of the collaboration.

Confidentiality

This section requires an understanding of Federal and State laws relevant to the sharing of information (e.g., FERPA or HIPAA). The section should clarify what specific student information can and will be shared between parties (with and without parent consent), with regard to common circumstances (e.g., team meetings, crisis). Policy and procedures for confidentiality are defined. Various community-based systems are bound by laws and policies that address confidentiality and privacy.

Funding

This section defines the funding agreement between the school or division and the community provider or agency.

Disclaimers & Terms

This section should define the terms of the agreement, local policies that need to be considered, and non-intentions of the collaboration. The time frame and termination parameters of the MOU are defined in this section and how frequently (i.e., monthly, or quarterly) the goals and scope of the MOU will be reviewed.

Final Authorization

Each partner, or their authorized designee, should approve the content included in the MOU. Before the MOU goes into effect, both parties must sign and date the document. A copy of the MOU should be retained by each partner.

Tips for Creating MOUs

- Determine who will lead the process, facilitate the meetings, and participate in discussions to develop the MOU
- Provide training to school and community providers to gain shared understanding and commitment
- Discuss services offered by community organizations to understand what can be provided to schools
- Examine current policies, procedures, and expectations that include communication, collaboration, and confidentiality to establish a shared understanding between partners
- Examine current data systems and processes for identifying student need, tracking interventions, and monitoring progress to ensure that the community provider understands their role
- Based on the provider's scope of work, ethical and professional standards should be agreed upon and applied
- Examine current funding mechanisms to develop shared understanding and necessary action steps

Implementing an Effective MOU

Learn more about the process to develop and implement an MOU through the "Implementing an Effective MOU" module series on the Virginia Career and Learning Center. This series was developed by the Virginia Department of Education in partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

Stage 2 Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment

The Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment supports community school teams through a structured process for the development of a strategy and an opportunity to self-assess your adoption of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

Utilize this tool to introduce the practices to school-based teams, school and community leadership, and others; and monitor your team's progress toward an effective strategy.

There are five specific purposes of the Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment.

1. Provide the community school team with a structured process for the development of a strategy
2. Provide information to monitor progress toward adoption for each stage of implementation
3. Support a common infrastructure for implementation to achieve desired community school outcomes
4. Serve as a tool to introduce stakeholders to the strengths and needs of the community school
5. Provide division and state leadership with a consistent measure of the capacity for the adoption of best practices

Stage 2 Self-Assessment: Creating a Strategy

This self-assessment is administered with Stage 2 of implementation in mind. Five primary areas help your team to self-evaluate your planning and action steps during this stage of development:

- How the Shared Vision is Created
- How Shared Leadership is Organized
- How the Strategy is Coordinated
- How a Plan is Developed
- How Partnerships are Formed

A stage of implementation includes a set of best practices used within a school division to achieve defined outcomes.

It is intended for community school teams to begin with Stage 1 of implementation, and advance through Stage 5 of implementation; however, progress is not linear.

During the year, you may find that your team is planning to launch some activities while others are being monitored and evaluated. You will likely also return to a previous stage of implementation to make adjustments or deepen their impact.

When completing the self-assessment for a specific stage, it is important to reflect and respond with that stage in mind.

To ensure your team is ready to complete the self-assessment, read through each of the best practices on this fidelity checklist below. Mark "yes" for the best practices that your team has implemented, and "no" for the best practices that have not yet been completed. If your team has determined that a practice is not applicable, mark the item with "N/A". If you have implemented all applicable best practices, your community school team is ready to complete the self-assessment.

Stage 2 Fidelity Checklist

Best Practice	Yes	No	N/A
2.1 Organize a Community School Team	☐	☐	☐
2.2 Develop an Action Plan	☐	☐	☐
2.3 Create Memoranda of Understanding	☐	☐	☐

Suggested Protocol to Complete the Self-Asessment

Community school teams should complete a self-assessment at the end of each stage of implementation. They may prepare to complete the tool by choosing a few of the guiding questions (found in the right column) for reflection during meetings in the weeks leading up to the designated evaluation period. They may also become familiar with the statements for each area that will be assessed and consider the artifacts and data tools that should be used to measure progress. The team may use the appropriate columns labeled, "Team Ideas & Reflections" and "Data Sources" to document this information.

The formal administration process includes reading each statement within an area of evaluation aloud and offering any necessary clarification; facilitating the discussion and voting process; recording the score for each item; verifying the concentration of scores; reviewing the concepts and big ideas; and outlining recommended actions and next steps.

In advance of the group process, team members should complete the self-assessment individually to prepare. Before the self-assessment begins, the Community School Coordinator should ensure that all team members have access to the artifacts and data sources used to evaluate progress and understand how to complete the evaluation. Consider the best method for each team member to access and complete the self-assessment. This may require you to create your own paper-based or digital tools.

Guiding Questions to Evaluate Stage 2 of Implementation

- How do the formalized team roles and community school goals represent shared leadership and decision-making?
- How are teams and initiatives organized to focus on specific issues identified during the needs assessment?
- Who is leading the organization and coordination of community school efforts, and how are they supported by school administration and community partners?
- In what ways does the action plan enact the community school vision and address specific needs identified in the needs assessment?
- What is the community school team's process to measure goals and assess outcomes of action steps within a specific timeframe?

Rating Your Progress to Adopt Best Practices for VCSI

Successfully establishing and sustaining a Virginia Community School requires school divisions to commit to a strategy that is comprehensive, cohesive, and collaborative.

The criteria included in the self-assessment for each stage represents the essential elements of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

The rubric describes various levels of adoption along a continuum of implementation of Best Practices, from exploring through maturing. This helps school divisions to self-assess their incremental progress toward developing an effective community school strategy.

First, review the brief descriptors for each level of adoption to grasp what distinguishes the novice levels of exploring and emerging from more advanced levels such as maturing and excelling.

Next, become familiar with the criteria included for each level of adoption to understand what is being evaluated on the self-assessment for each stage of implementation. Adhere to the protocol to complete the self-assessment both individually and as a team. After reviewing each criterion, determine a rating for the overall level of adoption.

Refer to the summaries in this guide for each stage of implementation to learn possible areas of focus to deepen your use of Best Practices for VCSI.

Exploring
School divisions understand that they can not work in isolation to solve the barriers to learning faced by students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by gathering information, large-scale thinking, and an optimistic outlook for change and growth.

Emerging
School divisions are responsive to the needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by initial steps towards building relationships with community partners.

Maturing
School divisions are committed to improving the overall conditions for learning by creating partnerships that respond to the identified needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by a culture of "yes".

Excelling
School divisions have a comprehensive and collaborative system that continuously responds to needs. This self-rating is characterized by a fully realized vision of as a central location of opportunity and civic engagement for students and families.

Take the Stage 2 Self-Assessment

Locate the Stage 2 Self-Assessment on the second tab of the evaluation tool. Complete the assessment individually and as a team.

For each of the three areas of evaluation, read the statement in the corresponding row. Select the statement that most closely aligns to your school division's current practices. Mark an "x" to the right of the statement, describing the degree to which your division has adopted the best practices.

Use the space at the end of each row under the column labeled "Possible Action Steps & Recommendations" to document your team's ideas to further integrate the best practices into your community school strategy.

Exploring

School divisions who are exploring community school practices during Stage 2 of implementation have engaged leaders and school personnel who value community and may have reviewed materials produced during Stage 1 of implementation. Make progress by creating a team that represents the community who will develop a strategy to strengthen systems of support.

Emerging

School divisions whose practices are emerging during Stage 2 of implementation build on the activities of Stage 1 to organize a school-based team to develop an action plan. Make progress by designating a Community School Coordinator to lead strategy development and engage community partners.

Maturing

School divisions whose practices are maturing during Stage 2 of implementation have a Community School Coordinator supports the development of strong relationships with community partners that will enact an action plan made of a schedule of activities that address a need and seek input from families. Make progress by seeking opportunities to deepen collaboration through the strategic placement of activities to impact goals and outcomes.

Excelling

In school divisions whose practices are excelling during Stage 2 of implementation, students, families, community partners, and school personnel share leadership and decision-making. Multiple teams have been formed to develop and implement an organized strategy to address disparities in the community's systems of support.

Stage 3 Delivering Supports

Best Practices for Stage 3 Implementation

| 3.1 | **Align to the Four Branches of Student Support** |

Techniques
- Make basic needs and mental health support and services accessible and available in and outside of school.
- Make student engagement and motivation support accessible and available in and outside of school.
- Make family and community engagement support accessible and available in and outside of school.
- Design supports and services to intentionally address disparities.

| 3.2 | **Integrate Tiered Systems of Support** |

Techniques
- Include tier 1, 2, and 3 services and strategies.
- Utilize practices and programs that are evidence-based.
- Design services and strategies to intentionally address disparities.

| 3.3 | **Facilitate Stakeholder Learning & Engagement** |

Techniques
- Establish systems to share messages and information in multiple ways.
- Engage families, students, and community partners as leaders in community school practices and decision-making.

In Stage 3 of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation, leaders at all levels enact policies and practices that reflect the shared vision and guiding principles of the community school.
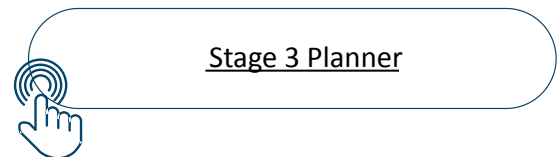
Schools become a central location for students and families to access academic and non-academic tiered supports. This calls for a shift in mindsets, habits, and practices for all stakeholders. Use the techniques, tools, and tips in this stage to deliver services effectively.

Download Your Stage 3 Planner

Stage 3 Planner

Best Practice 3.1 Align to the Four Branches of Student Support
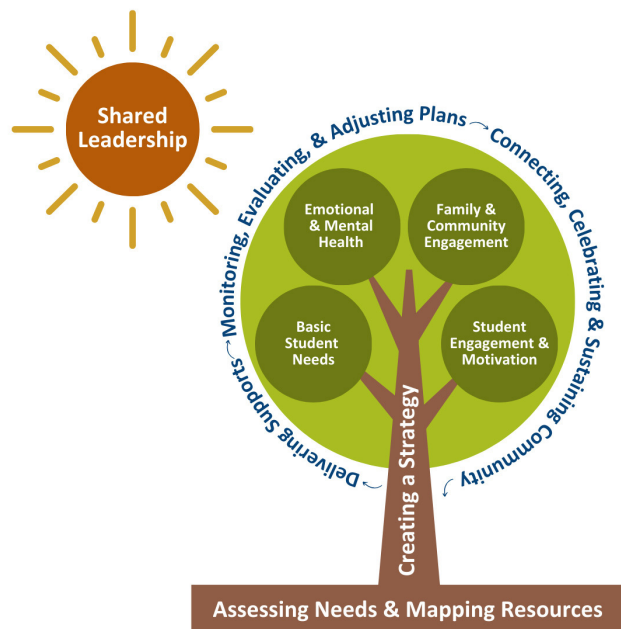

3.1 **Align to the Four Branches of Student Support**

Techniques
- Make basic needs and mental health support and services accessible and available in and outside of school.
- Make student engagement and motivation support accessible and available in and outside of school.
- Make family and community engagement support accessible and available in and outside of school.
- Design supports and services to intentionally address disparities.

Community schools strive to ensure that all students can access the necessary resources or interventions through tiered systems of supports and community partnerships available in and outside school.

Services and strategies should respond to students' basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, personal care, and school supplies. Services and strategies should support students' sense of safety, and their mental and emotional health. These supports should also sustain student motivation and engagement, and authentically engage school-based staff, families, and community stakeholders as empowered partners.

🔑 Use Your Stage 3 Planner

The tab labeled "Align to the Four Branches of Support" on the Stage 3 Planner will help teams to align the delivery of initiatives to the four branches of support.

For each initiative, consider the opportunities to increase access and availability to these core areas. Mark these opportunities with an "x" and document notes and ideas which can be used to deliver services.

Aim to address all four branches through your overall strategy and focus planning to strengthen areas of the system identified in Stage 1 of implementation.

Basic Needs

Students cannot focus on learning if their basic needs are not being met. Schools can address these barriers to learning through community partnerships with local businesses, organizations, social services, and health service agencies.

A community school may not be able to eradicate poverty, but it can increase the accessibility of basic needs such as food and clothing. Schools can remove barriers for students by either bringing services in or connecting students/families to providers in the community.

Mental & Emotional Health

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) estimates that one in every four children will experience a traumatic event before the age of sixteen. Many students face difficult circumstances and adverse childhood experiences daily.

These circumstances can contribute to the presence of chronic or toxic stress, which will diminish learning readiness and academic success. Additionally, over 20 percent of Virginia's students have a documented emotional, behavioral, or developmental condition, and many conditions often go undocumented.

Supports in this area focus on building trust, providing support, and fostering family and community partnerships. Ongoing engagement, communication, and training for faculty staff and families can strengthen the community's ability to support emotional well-being for themselves and for students.

Student Motivation & Engagement

Learning remains a top priority in a community school. This branch looks at supports that expand learning time and opportunity. High expectations for students and strong instructional practices are part of a strong community school plan. Supports in this branch can address issues with student engagement or motivation.

The Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation support Virginia's Standards for Accreditation (SOA) which requires all students to develop an Academic and Career Plan Portfolio in elementary school and an Academic and Career Plan in middle school (8VAC20-131-140.C.2).

When considering ways to increase engagement or opportunity, these plans may be an excellent source of data for determining root cause and/or developing purposeful intervention. Additionally, graduation requirements mandate that all students have the opportunity for work-based experience.

Family & Community Engagement

Forming partnerships that bring families and the community into the schools in authentic and meaningful ways turns a school into a neighborhood hub of support. When schools seek collaboration and open dialogue with stakeholders, they can build the trust and respect that is needed to make meaningful changes.

Community schools prioritize creating a welcoming atmosphere for all families and community members. Effective school teams understand the value of collaborating with families because the learning barriers students face affect them too.

💡 Strategies to Align Programs & Practices with the Four Branches of Support

- Find opportunities to provide meals, snacks, and personal care products for programs that take place before and after school and during lunch.
- Invite family and community members to connect curriculum as guest speakers and collaborators.
- Incorporate social and emotional learning and into programming.
- Consider multiple methods to share information and foster mutual communication to increase accessibility.
- Secure weather-conscious clothing and accessories such as t-shirts and shorts, or wool hats and scarves as promotional merchandise for your programs.

Best Practice 3.2 Integrate Tiered Systems of Supports

3.2 Integrate Tiered Systems of Supports

Techniques
- Include tier 1, 2, and 3 services and strategies.
- Utilize practices and programs that are evidence-based.
- Design services and strategies to intentionally address disparities.

Community school action plans use tiered systems of supports to promote evidence-based practices so that every student can access the resources they need to succeed.

Collaboration between teachers, counselors, and families to provide targeted support based on individual needs, fosters a comprehensive approach to student support that can lead to improved academic performance, reduced behavioral incidents, and enhanced social-emotional development.

It may be appropriate for schools to utilize their current action plan structures or school-improvement plans for their community school planning process.

🔑 Use Your Stage 3 Planner

The tab labeled "Integrate Tiered Systems of Support " on the Stage 3 Planner will help teams to align the delivery of supports to tiered systems to improve outcomes.

For each project or initiative developed as part of your community school action plan, reflect on the different opportunities to deliver tiered interventions.

Rather than aim to have every project offer support at all three levels, look for opportunities to align the three tiers to your overall strategy.

The Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) is a collective of organizations led by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) charged with supporting school divisions with implementing and sustaining on-going implementation of a multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS). The VTSS provides school divisions and their staff with foundational coaching and support in aligned organizational structures, problem solving processes, tiered continuum of supports, systematic implementation, and evaluation in order to create systems that use data to informed decisions for support students, staff, families, and communities.

The VDOE leads implementation and evaluation of the efforts of the VTSS throughout the Commonwealth. The coaches and other staff involved with VTSS at partner organizations support implementation of MTSS with school division leadership teams. Virginia defines MTSS as a systemic, data-driven approach that allows divisions and schools to provide evidence-based practices and interventions to meet the needs of their students. This is done through a clearly defined process that is implemented to fidelity by all stakeholders within the school and/or division.

Tier 1: Universal Supports

High-quality, evidence-based instruction and supports are provided to all students; this includes differentiated instruction and positive behavior supports that promote an inclusive and productive learning environment.

Tier 2: Targeted Supports

More focused strategies are used with students who need extra support; these supports are often delivered in small groups and may address specific academic or behavioral challenges.

Tier 3: Intensive Supports

Individualized interventions and supports are offered to students with significant needs who do not respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions; these includes instruction or resources for students' specific challenges.

Utilizing Evidence-Based Practices

Programs that are grounded in evidence offer a strong foundation for community school transformation and ensure that resources are used effectively across all tiers of support to address complex issues. The strategies associated with evidence-based programs are grounded in rigorous research and data that supports informed decision making. Programs that are evidence-based can often be replicated or scaled up effectively, making it easier to grow and expand success.

Evidence-based methods promote accountability and proven success to funders and influential stakeholders. By utilizing strategies that have been tried, tested, and proven effective, these programs decrease the chance of failure and raise the possibility of reaching desired results. When stakeholders see that a program is based on solid evidence, they are more likely to support and engage with it, leading to greater community involvement and sustainability.

Use the chart in the right column that highlights the National Implementation Research Network's categories of practice to evaluate your community school team programs.

From Emerging Practice to Evidence-Based Practice

Emerging Practice:
- Anecdotal evidence of effectiveness
- Research has not been conducted

Research-Based Practice:
- Some research studies have demonstrated positive effects on student outcomes while other studies have not
- Based on research that may or may not clearly demonstrate that the practice led to improved student outcomes
- Multiple studies have been conducted

Promising Practice:
- Shown to have positive effects on learner outcomes
- The research design does not clearly demonstrate that the practice led to student improvement

Evidence-Based Practice:
- Shown to have a positive effect on student outcomes
- The research design allows one to infer that the practice led to child or student improvement
- Multiple high-quality studies have been conducted
- Reviewed by a reputable organization (i.e., What Works Clearinghouse)

(National Implementation Research Network, 2009)

Best Practice 3.3 Facilitate Stakeholder Learning & Engagement

| 3.3 | **Facilitate Stakeholder Learning & Engagement** |

Techniques
- Establish systems to share messages and information in multiple ways.
- Engage families, students, and community partners as leaders in community school practices and decision-making.

To instill your community school vision into all aspects of the school environment, encourage collaboration between home, school, and community in and out of the classroom.

Be intentional with planning to engage school, family, and community stakeholders as empowered partners whose shared leadership is valued in all the strategies and services offered in the community school action plan. This fosters a cohesive support system that enhances the accountability and commitment of all stakeholders.

Virginia community schools use a wide variety of methods to support a culture of learning and engagement. Staff and leadership can be supported by training and professional development opportunities where they can build specialized knowledge and skills.

Consider developing learning communities. These are peer-based opportunities for teachers and counselors to exchange ideas and develop common practices.

Explore forming community-based learning initiatives such as Family University to provide training for families, and create new opportunities for them to share wisdom and insights. School committees can support authentic leadership and involvement opportunities for families and community members.

Use Your Stage 3 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Facilitate Stakeholder Learning & Engagement" to capture your team's ideas, questions, and challenges related to learning and engaging with stakeholders.

School-Based Faculty & Staff

In this change process, expect to encounter a variety of mindsets, routines, and practices. It is important for community school teams to provide training for staff and faculty and foster mutual communication with families and community partners. Create opportunities for school leadership, educators, and staff to understand community school practices and their expected contributions.

Topics can include the four branches of student support and strategies to align their leadership, teaching methods, and everyday practices with the overall vision. Facilitate opportunities to connect curriculum to real-world and work-based learning experiences, and to demonstrate care for student and staff wellbeing through social and emotional learning and development.

Community-Based Staff

With the goal of making community resources available in schools, community-based staff should be included in professional development and learning that bridges understanding about school culture and student development. Encourage opportunities to learn from and educate community partners about the four branches of student support and the chance to align their operations and everyday practices with the community school action plan. Schedule routine meetings between school and community-based staff to exchange ideas and learn from each other in professional learning communities and networking opportunities. Through this collaboration, a closer connection between the curriculum and life experiences will be developed.

Students & Families

Build relationships based on mutuality and respect with students and families. Value multiple ways to communicate with families and provide a wide variety of resources that empower families to support student learning and success. Consider time, location, and communication needs to ensure inclusion in school activities like family/teacher conferences and before/after-school programs.

Create methods to gather information regularly from families about their own interests, needs, and challenges. Share opportunities for leadership and involvement.

Community School Teams

Not only are effective community school teams responsive to student needs, but they also proactively meet regularly. Community school teams share leadership and accountability for program outcomes and connect regularly with family and community committees and school-based working groups to build a strong network based on two-way communication. Evaluate feedback and implement changes based on active engagement with these stakeholder groups.

Stage 3 Virginia Community School Implementation
Self-Assessment

The Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment supports community school teams through a structured process for the development of a strategy and an opportunity to self-assess your adoption of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

Utilize this tool to introduce the practices to school-based teams, school and community leadership, and others; and monitor your team's progress toward an effective strategy.

There are five specific purposes of the Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment.

1. Provide the community school team with a structured process for the development of a strategy
2. Provide information to monitor progress toward adoption for each stage of implementation
3. Support a common infrastructure for implementation to achieve desired community school outcomes
4. Serve as a tool to introduce stakeholders to the strengths and needs of the community school
5. Provide division and state leadership with a consistent measure of the capacity for the adoption of best practices

Stage 3 Self-Assessment: Delivering Supports

This self-assessment is administered with Stage 3 of implementation in mind. Three primary areas help your team to self-evaluate your planning and action steps during this stage of development:

• How Services & Strategies are Designed 49
• How Community Influences Learning
• How Community Accesses Learning

A stage of implementation includes a set of best practices used within a school division to achieve defined outcomes.

It is intended for community school teams to begin with Stage 1 of implementation, and advance through Stage 5 of implementation; however, progress is not linear.

During the year, you may find that your team is planning to launch some activities while others are being monitored and evaluated. You will likely also return to a previous stage of implementation to make adjustments or deepen their impact.

When completing the self-assessment for a specific stage, it is important to reflect and respond with that stage in mind.

To ensure your team is ready to complete the self-assessment, read through each of the best practices on this fidelity checklist below. Mark "yes" for the best practices that your team has implemented, and "no" for the best practices that have not yet been completed. If your team has determined that a practice is not applicable, mark the item with "N/A". If you have implemented all applicable best practices, your community school team is ready to complete the self-assessment.

Stage 3
Fidelity Checklist

Best Practice	Yes	No	N/A
3.1 Align to the Four Branches of Support	☐	☐	☐
3.2 Integrate Tiered Systems of Support	☐	☐	☐
3.3 Facilitate Stakeholder Learning & Engagement	☐	☐	☐

Suggested Protocol to Complete the Self-Asessment

Community school teams should complete a self-assessment at the end of each stage of implementation. They may prepare to complete the tool by choosing a few of the guiding questions (found in the right column) for reflection during meetings in the weeks leading up to the designated evaluation period. They may also become familiar with the statements for each area that will be assessed and consider the artifacts and data tools that should be used to measure progress. The team may use the appropriate columns labeled, "Team Ideas & Reflections" and "Data Sources" to document this information.

The formal administration process includes reading each statement within an area of evaluation aloud and offering any necessary clarification; facilitating the discussion and voting process; recording the score for each item; verifying the concentration of scores; reviewing the concepts and big ideas; and outlining recommended actions and next steps.

In advance of the group process, team members should complete the self-assessment individually to prepare. Before the self-assessment begins, the Community School Coordinator should ensure that all team members have access to the artifacts and data sources used to evaluate progress and understand how to complete the evaluation. Consider the best method for each team member to access and complete the self-assessment. This may require you to create your own paper-based or digital tools.

Guiding Questions to Evaluate Stage 3 of Implementation

- How do the strategies and services offered as part of the community school action plan address disparities in access and opportunity?
- How do the strategies and services offered as part of the community school action plan respond to students' basic needs, mental health, motivation and engagement?
- How do the strategies and services offered as part of the community school action plan engage family and community stakeholders as empowered partners whose full participation, involvement, and insights are valued?
- How are services and strategies organized to be accessed at Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 levels of support, and available in and outside of school?

Rating Your Progress to Adopt Best Practices for VCSI

Successfully establishing and sustaining a Virginia Community School requires school divisions to commit to a strategy that is comprehensive, cohesive, and collaborative.

The criteria included in the self-assessment for each stage represents the essential elements of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

The rubric describes various levels of adoption along a continuum of implementation of Best Practices, from exploring through maturing. This helps school divisions to self-assess their incremental progress toward developing an effective community school strategy.

First, review the brief descriptors for each level of adoption to grasp what distinguishes the novice levels of exploring and emerging from more advanced levels such as maturing and excelling.

Next, become familiar with the criteria included for each level of adoption to understand what is being evaluated on the self-assessment for each stage of implementation. Adhere to the protocol to complete the self-assessment both individually and as a team. After reviewing each criterion, determine a rating for the overall level of adoption.

Refer to the summaries in this guide for each stage of implementation to learn possible areas of focus to deepen your use of Best Practices for VCSI.

Exploring
School divisions understand that they can not work in isolation to solve the barriers to learning faced by students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by gathering information, large-scale thinking, and an optimistic outlook for change and growth.

Emerging
School divisions are responsive to the needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by initial steps towards building relationships with community partners.

Maturing
School divisions are committed to improving the overall conditions for learning by creating partnerships that respond to the identified needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by a culture of "yes".

Excelling
School divisions have a comprehensive and collaborative system that continuously responds to needs. This self-rating is characterized by a fully realized vision of as a central location of opportunity and civic engagement for students and families.

Take the Stage 3 Self-Assessment

Locate the Stage 3 Self-Assessment on the second tab of the evaluation tool. Complete the assessment individually and as a team.

For each of the three areas of evaluation, read the statement in the corresponding row. Select the statement that most closely aligns to your school division's current practices. Mark an "x" to the right of the statement, describing the degree to which your division has adopted the best practices.

Use the space at the end of each row under the column labeled "Possible Action Steps & Recommendations" to document your team's ideas to further integrate the best practices into your community school strategy.

Exploring

School divisions exploring community school practices during Stage 3 of implementation are aware of supports and services addressing branches of support. Make progress by fostering partnerships within the community, and exploring tiered systems of support.

Emerging

School divisions whose practices are emerging during Stage 3 of implementation have developed a strategy that makes referrals for supports and services. Make progress by considering how to integrate support through tiered systems and generating strategies to meet needs across four branches of support.

Maturing

School divisions whose practices are maturing during Stage 3 of implementation collaborate with partners to deliver supports and services either in the school or in the community. These resources are available through tiered systems and address the four branches of support. Make progress by developing a strategy to expand services both in school and in the community.

Excelling

School divisions whose practices are excelling during Stage 3 of implementation engage in a strategic delivery of their action plan. They utilize tiered systems that align to four branches of support. Resources are available and accessible to students and families in the school and in the community.

Stage 4 Monitoring, Evaluating, & Adjusting Systems

Best Practices for Stage 4 Implementation

4.1 Design Systems to Share & Track Data

Techniques
- Use community school team meetings to analyze data throughout the year to monitor and identify additional student needs or concerns.
- Actively involve administration in monitoring and evaluating efforts.
- Consistently monitor supports and check for fidelity.

4.2 Create Routines to Collect Feedback

Techniques
- Consistently monitor supports and check for fidelity.
- Use surveys and interviews to regularly collect student, teacher, and community feedback.

4.3 Engage in Ongoing Evaluation

Techniques
- Invite impacted students, teachers, and families to evaluate partner programs
- Provide training to school personnel, families, and community partners that enhance program fidelity and promote continuous improvement.

In Stage 4 of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation, teams monitor program progress on the details of the action plan and evaluate its effectiveness.

Data collected during this process informs decision-making to determine whether any adjustments need to be made to existing programs and initiatives, and whether new strategies should be implemented.

Use the techniques, tools, and tips in this stage to keep your community school team engaged and accountable.

Download Your Stage 4 Planner

Stage 4 Planner

Best Practice 4.1 Design Systems to Share & Track Data

(4.1) **Design Systems to Share & Track Data**

Techniques
- Use community school team meetings to analyze data throughout the year to monitor and identify additional student needs or concerns.
- Actively involve administration in monitoring and evaluating efforts.
- Consistently monitor supports and check for fidelity.

At the outset of planning, the team should consider a systematic approach to track the progress of implementation. This establishes an iterative process of planning, doing, evaluating, and adjusting so that there is a continuous process of improvement.

Coordinating efforts across different areas becomes easier when everyone has access to the same data and insights.

Using a comprehensive data tracking tool allows members of the community school team to meet with their respective planning groups to understand successes and challenges of implementation, helping to identify trends and patterns that can inform adjustments.

🔑 Use Your Stage 4 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Design Systems to Track & Share Data" to help your team maintain data-informed planning and decision making.

Review the guiding questions in each section of this tab during your planning meetings to ensure that data tracking and analysis is meaningful and productive. Align collaboration across multiple initiatives taking place in schools and in the community to outcomes, objectives, and goals of the overall strategy.

Having the same information available through shared data systems helps to develop a common understanding across stakeholder groups, saving time in meetings to share and explain data.

At the outset of planning, the team should consider a systematic approach to track the progress of implementation. This establishes an iterative process of planning, doing, evaluating, and adjusting so that there is a continuous process of improvement.

In this way, teams can respond to needs, share feedback, and make informed decisions based on evidence rather than assumptions or anecdotal information. Strong support systems can make all the difference when it comes to implementation. Ask questions to help design systems to collect, track, and share data among your community school tea

How Is Data Used Currently?

Community school initiatives often involve the delivery of services by community partners who don't use the same technology platforms or software as the school or may not have the same data sharing privileges. Additionally, permissions may impact some stakeholders collaborating on division-wide implementation models.

How Will Data Be Used?

This section uses guided questions to help teams create a plan that resolves some challenges visible in the current data environment. It highlights what should be accomplished through monitoring and evaluation, who will be responsible for supporting the data strategy, and what resources will be used.

Data Tracking & Sharing

This section defines the logistics and methods that will be used to manage and share data, including the schedule to provide weekly, monthly, and quarterly information and how information will be shared with stakeholders and with the community.

Best Practice 4.2 Create Routines to Collect Feedback

4.2	**Create Routines to Collect Feedback**

Techniques
- Consistently monitor supports and check for fideli[ty]

- Use surveys and interviews to regularly collect student, teacher, and community feedback.

Feedback from all stakeholders is an essential form of data used to refine processes, policies, and practices. After implementing new programs or initiatives, solicit targeted feedback from participants and supporters to assess effectiveness and areas for improvement. Create a straightforward process for students, teachers, and families to share their ideas and experiences regularly.

Consider the existing platforms, events, and routines that are already used to facilitate communication and explore how you can incorporate feedback methods. Surveys could be incorporated during parent-teacher conferences and suggestion boxes could be promoted for use during events both in the school and the community.

Plan opportunities to explore data trends further. Organize small group discussions with students to gather in-depth feedback on specific topics and invite families to discuss their experiences and suggestions in a collaborative setting, fostering a sense of community.

🔑 Use Your Stage 4 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Create Routines to Collect Feedback" to develop a plan to collect feedback for each community school initiative. Depending on the strategy, you may need to consider privacy and access permissions.

Community School Coordinators should consider implementing brief, structured check-ins with students and families through emails, newsletters, or in-class discussions to gauge their feelings about various aspects of the school experience.

Offer multiple means of sharing feedback to increase participation and enhance accessibility. This includes submitting insights through paper-based and digital formats, making opportunities to share feedback in-person, over the phone, and on video conferencing platforms like Google Meet, Teams, or Zoom.

Use school-specific apps to facilitate communication and gather feedback through polls or forums. In accordance with school policies for social media, teams can create private groups or pages where families can share their feedback and engage in discussions with community school stakeholders.

Using a combination of feedback collection strategies creates a comprehensive system that respects the voices of students, families, and community stakeholders. Regularly analyzing and acting on this feedback can lead to meaningful improvements to your community school action plan.

Both quantitative and qualitative data are crucial for understanding how your programs and initiatives are meeting the needs of your students and families, and working toward the intended outcomes of your community school strategy. Quantitative data offers measurable and generalizable insights, while qualitative data provides depth, context, and meaning. They work together to strengthen data analysis.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data is based in numbers and can be measured and analyzed statistically. This offers objectivity and minimizes bias. Teams can use quantitative data to identify patterns, trends, and correlations that can lead to comparisons between groups and conditions.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data provides rich, detailed insights into stakeholders' thoughts and feelings about their experiences. This offers context and reveals the "why" behind statistics. Teams can use qualitative data to identify themes and concepts that can lead to new areas of understanding and exploration.

Best Practice 4.3 Engage in Ongoing Evaluation

| 4.3 | **Engage in Ongoing Evaluation** |

Techniques
- Invite impacted students, teachers, and families to evaluate partner programs
- Provide training to school personnel, families, and community partners that enhance program fidelity and promote continuous improvement.

Evaluation provides the means to assess, analyze, and enhance the services and programs designed to implement community school goals and anticipated outcomes. It is a method to integrate feedback and data points to help teams to identify what is working well and what areas need improvement. Tracking data and feedback together can act as an early warning system, highlighting potential issues before they become significant challenges that hinder progress.

Incorporate a routine of reviewing data and feedback into your ongoing community school team meetings. This practice allows the team to work collaboratively to monitor and identify additional student needs or concerns.

Schedule more comprehensive reviews each quarter and develop reports on your team's progress toward community school outcomes. This makes establishing baselines a priority so that teams track progress over time and measure the effectiveness of improvement efforts.

Ongoing evaluation ensures that strategies remain relevant and effective in a dynamic and changing environment. This benefits teams and helps them to adapt to expected and unexpected challenges that will inevitably emerge throughout the school year, and in times of transition.

🔑 Use Your Stage 4 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Engage in Ongoing Evaluation" for guiding questions to review the impact of your programs.

Stage 4 Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment

The Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment supports community school teams through a structured process for the development of a strategy and an opportunity to self-assess your adoption of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

Utilize this tool to introduce the practices to school-based teams, school and community leadership, and others; and monitor your team's progress toward an effective strategy.

There are five specific purposes of the Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment.

1. Provide the community school team with a structured process for the development of a strategy
2. Provide information to monitor progress toward adoption for each stage of implementation
3. Support a common infrastructure for implementation to achieve desired community school outcomes
4. Serve as a tool to introduce stakeholders to the strengths and needs of the community school
5. Provide division and state leadership with a consistent measure of the capacity for the adoption of best practices

Stage 4 Self-Assessment: Monitoring, Evaluating, & Adjusting Plans

This self-assessment is administered with Stage 4 of implementation in mind. Three primary areas help your team to self-evaluate your planning and action steps during this stage of development:

• Who Evaluates Programs
• How Programs are Evaluated
• How Programs are Strengthened

A stage of implementation includes a set of best practices used within a school division to achieve defined outcomes.

It is intended for community school teams to begin with Stage 1 of implementation, and advance through Stage 5 of implementation; however, progress is not linear.

During the year, you may find that your team is planning to launch some activities while others are being monitored and evaluated. You will likely also return to a previous stage of implementation to make adjustments or deepen their impact.

When completing the self-assessment for a specific stage, it is important to reflect and respond with that stage in mind.

To ensure your team is ready to complete the self-assessment, read through each of the best practices on this fidelity checklist below. Mark "yes" for the best practices that your team has implemented, and "no" for the best practices that have not yet been completed. If your team has determined that a practice is not applicable, mark the item with "N/A". If you have implemented all applicable best practices, your community school team is ready to complete the self-assessment.

Stage 4 Fidelity Checklist

Best Practice 4.1	Yes	No	N/A
Design Systems to Track & Share Data	☐	☐	☐
4.2 Create Routines to Collect Feedback	☐	☐	☐
4.3 Engage in Ongoing Evaluation	☐	☐	☐

Suggested Protocol to Complete the Self-Asessment

Community school teams should complete a self-assessment at the end of each stage of implementation. They may prepare to complete the tool by choosing a few of the guiding questions (found in the right column) for reflection during meetings in the weeks leading up to the designated evaluation period. They may also become familiar with the statements for each area that will be assessed and consider the artifacts and data tools that should be used to measure progress. The team may use the appropriate columns labeled, "Team Ideas & Reflections" and "Data Sources" to document this information.

The formal administration process includes reading each statement within an area of evaluation aloud and offering any necessary clarification; facilitating the discussion and voting process; recording the score for each item; verifying the concentration of scores; reviewing the concepts and big ideas; and outlining recommended actions and next steps.

In advance of the group process, team members should complete the self-assessment individually to prepare. Before the self-assessment begins, the Community School Coordinator should ensure that all team members have access to the artifacts and data sources used to evaluate progress and understand how to complete the evaluation. Consider the best method for each team member to access and complete the self-assessment. This may require you to create your own paper-based or digital tools.

Guiding Questions to Evaluate Stage 4 of Implementation

- What is the process for students, teachers, and families to evaluate evidence-based school and partner programs?
- How will the community school team use data to monitor and identify additional student needs or concerns?
- How do school personnel and community partners utilize the MOU to monitor and assess the fidelity of planned supports and the effectiveness of their relationship?

Rating Your Progress to Adopt Best Practices for VCSI

Successfully establishing and sustaining a Virginia Community School requires school divisions to commit to a strategy that is comprehensive, cohesive, and collaborative.

The criteria included in the self-assessment for each stage represents the essential elements of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

The rubric describes various levels of adoption along a continuum of implementation of Best Practices, from exploring through maturing. This helps school divisions to self-assess their incremental progress toward developing an effective community school strategy.

First, review the brief descriptors for each level of adoption to grasp what distinguishes the novice levels of exploring and emerging from more advanced levels such as maturing and excelling.

Next, become familiar with the criteria included for each level of adoption to understand what is being evaluated on the self-assessment for each stage of implementation. Adhere to the protocol to complete the self-assessment both individually and as a team. After reviewing each criterion, determine a rating for the overall level of adoption.

Refer to the summaries in this guide for each stage of implementation to learn possible areas of focus to deepen your use of Best Practices for VCSI.

Exploring

School divisions understand that they can not work in isolation to solve the barriers to learning faced by students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by gathering information, large-scale thinking, and an optimistic outlook for change and growth.

Emerging

School divisions are responsive to the needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by initial steps towards building relationships with community partners.

Maturing

School divisions are committed to improving the overall conditions for learning by creating partnerships that respond to the identified needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by a culture of "yes".

Excelling

School divisions have a comprehensive and collaborative system that continuously responds to needs. This self-rating is characterized by a fully realized vision of as a central location of opportunity and civic engagement for students and families.

Take the Stage 4 Self-Assessment

Locate the Stage 4 Self-Assessment on the second tab of the evaluation tool. Complete the assessment individually and as a team.

For each of the three areas of evaluation, read the statement in the corresponding row. Select the statement that most closely aligns to your school division's current practices. Mark an "x" to the right of the statement, describing the degree to which your division has adopted the best practices.

Use the space at the end of each row under the column labeled "Possible Action Steps & Recommendations" to document your team's ideas to further integrate the best practices into your community school strategy.

Exploring

Community school teams who are exploring community school practices during Stage 4 of implementation use primary outcome data for an annual review process to ensure that programs are effective, and that training is available for staff to support fidelity. Make progress by engaging administrators in analysis to monitor progress and impact.

Emerging

Community school teams whose practices are emerging during Stage 4 of implementation consult with administrators to monitor strategy at least once a year and offer training and support to both school personnel and community partners. Make progress by creating a schedule for impact reviews and incorporating feedback in addition to primary outcome data.

Maturing

School divisions whose practices are maturing during Stage 4 of implementation engage in periodic impact reviews and incorporate feedback data in addition to outcome data. They enhance fidelity through training for school and community personnel. Make progress by incorporating students and families into impact review and training opportunities.

Excelling

School divisions whose practices are excelling during Stage 4 of implementation use a variety of data - including primary outcome data and feedback from impacted students, families, and staff - to engage in regular analysis about the effectiveness of programs. All members of the community are involved in training to support fidelity and to measure impact.

Stage 5 Connecting, Celebrating, & Sustaining Community

Best Practices for Stage 5 Implementation

(5.1) Honor Shared Values & Commitments

Technique
- Clearly display the vision statement in the school building in the community.

(5.2) Acknowledge Progress & Efforts

Techniques
- Share results with teachers, families, and community stakeholders.
- Offer public recognition of community stakeholders.
- Acknowledge volunteers for their efforts.

**(5.3) Plan for Renewal & Sustainability**

Techniques
- Engage school personnel and community partners to assess the effectiveness of their partnership.
- Review and refine MOUs with existing partners and establish MOUs for informal agreements.
- Identify opportunities to integrate evidence-based practices and strengthen the fidelity of programs.
- Secure funding to sustain and expand successful practices.

In Stage 5 of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation the community is the focus. The school should act as a central hub or the heart of the community. The school may be used to address community issues and challenges, hold events, and celebrations. When a community is truly invested in the success of the school, everyone benefits.

Use these practices, techniques, and tools to connect with and celebrate community; and to plan for long-term sustainability of partnerships.

Download Your Stage 5 Planner

Stage 5 Planner
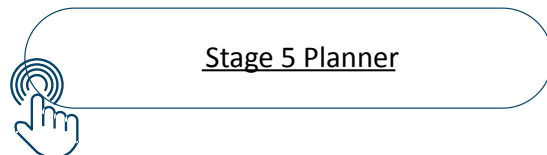
Best Practice 5.1 Honor the Ideals & Values of the Community School

| 5.1 | Honor the Ideals & Values of the Community School |

Technique
- Clearly display the vision statement in the school building in the community.

Nurturing an inclusive mindset of both staff and community members that promotes positive and engaged working relationships is critical. Schools and teams can sometimes create silos when working through tough challenges. Making connections that break down these barriers is vital to healthy collaboration.

Community leaders, local business partners, parents, and residents all have a stake in the future of the school and should be supportive of its goals. Honor the vision of shared leadership and the commitments of the community by clearly displaying the vision statement in school buildings and on websites. These values should be reinforced through daily interactions and activities.

Encourage all community partners who participate in community school initiatives to share this vision in their physical and digital spaces. Some school divisions may represent their partnership through a symbol or logo; which can be displayed prominently around the community.

🔑 Use Your Stage 5 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Honor Shared Values & Commitments" to document the various ways that your community school team promotes a culture that values the community.

There is a myriad of ways that community schools can demonstrate the shared values and ideals between school, families, and community. Multiple methods should be used to increase accessibility and show that community schools are an important value to all stakeholders.

Some methods may be formal, such as developing a community school declaration and including the signatures and titles of all supporting partners. Similarly, a formal tagline or boilerplate message can be incorporated into all official communications from the school.

Other methods may involve visual and digital representation. Examples of these include creating a bulletin board titled: "Thank you to our community partners" that includes photos and company logos; or pinning the vision statement at the top of your social media pages. Some school divisions have designed a window decal for schools, community partners, and volunteers to display around the community.

These displays mean little without demonstrated action. Community school teams should host events that bring families and the community into the school, such as open houses, workshops, and cultural nights. These events provide opportunities to celebrate shared values and foster connections.

Provide professional development for staff that emphasizes the importance of the school's values and how to effectively model and teach these ideals to students.

Reinforce a sense of partnership by creating methods for families and community members to get involved and take on leadership responsibilities in community school events and initiatives.

Curricular projects and classroom discussions should reflect community school values.

Best Practice 5.2
Acknowledge Progress & Efforts

5.2	**Acknowledge Progress & Efforts**

Techniques
- Share results with teachers, families, and community stakeholders.
- Offer public recognition of community stakeholders.
- Acknowledge volunteers for their efforts.

Any time someone dedicates time and effort to the community school's programs and initiatives, that effort deserves special acknowledgement.

Community school teams should share goals and progress updates regularly with teachers, families, and community stakeholders.

Prioritize public recognition that acknowledges the efforts of community stakeholders that place throughout the year; and celebrate student and family achievements that reflect the community school's goals through awards, shout-outs, or displays.

Teams can also share stories in newsletters or on social media that highlight students and families exemplifying the school's values, fostering a sense of pride and community.

Recognize staff collaboration on initiatives that promote community school values and practices to ensure a unified approach that fosters shared leadership and accountability. These collaborations foster an inclusive and respectful community school culture.

Include local media outlets in your communications about events and activities. Virginia community schools have been featured in newspapers and televised news stories, which demonstrates promise and success to potential funders who can support scaling and sustainability.

🔑 Use Your Stage 5 Planner

Use the tab labeled "Acknowledge Progress & Efforts" as a checklist to integrate community school celebrations into your schoolwide activities and events.

Best Practice 5.3
Plan for Renewal & Sustainability

┌───┐
│ **(5.3) Plan for Renewal & Sustainability**
│
│ *Techniques*
│ • Engage school personnel and community partners
│   partnership. [68]
│
│ • Review and refine MOUs with existing
│   partners and establish MOUs for informal
│   agreements.
│ • Identify opportunities to integrate
│   evidence-based practices and strengthen the
│   fidelity of programs.
│ • Secure funding to sustain and expand
│   successful practices.
└───┘

Create opportunities to deepen collaboration with school principals and division leadership on securing new resources and additional funding for programs with demonstrated success. Understand the areas of work that need more support and explore new practices and approaches to address these challenges.

Drawing from all the Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation contributes to the long-term sustainability of your team's strategy and action plans.

It could take many years for these practices to be used at full fidelity and effectiveness. Rather, they should be used as a guide to incrementally grow your team's strategy and action plans.

The word "sustainability" is itself a process. The goal of sustainability is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future of the program or practice.

Consider the processes that you use to evaluate the overall impact of your community school initiatives, and to expand and adjust to your strategic partnerships within the community.

┌───┐
│ 🔑 **Use Your Stage 5 Planner**
│
│ Use the tab labeled "Plan for Renewal &
│ Sustainability" to prepare to adjust, sustain,
│ grow, and expand your community school
│ strategy
└───┘

Review your project descriptions regularly to ensure that they accurately capture how your programs work. Be sure to include the benefits and positive impact. These descriptions will serve as a demonstration of your community school strategy and can be used in presentations, proposals, and press.

For each new idea to continue or expand a program, use multiple means to collect from the stakeholders who implement the work and directly service students, staff, and families. High quality programs are often accompanied by high motivation and a strong morale amongst the staff who manage them. Prioritize their ideas to make improvements and support satisfaction.

There are a variety of potential funding sources that teams can access to grow and develop their initiatives. Community schools are uniquely positioned to secure financial support for the full range of tiered supports that align to the four branches of student support.

The strongest and most effective strategies involve a diverse array of funding sources. Developing strong project descriptions can help schools effectively communicate their needs and the impact of their initiatives, increasing their chances of securing funding through grant applications, fundraising drives, sponsorships, and proposals to collaborate with other organizations and institutions.

Funding Opportunities for Community School Initiatives

School & Community Improvement
Consider the practices and programs your team is implementing to transform learning and living in your communities.
- Promise Neighborhoods
- School Improvement Grants

Supporting Students & Families
Explore opportunities to fund initiatives that serve the basic needs of students and engage families as empowered partners.
- Project HOPE Virginia
- Center for Family Engagement

Mental & Emotional Health Support
Public and private funding is available to school divisions seeking support for mental and emotional health programs and services for students.
- Medicaid and Schools Program
- School Based Healthcare Solutions Grant
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant
- Virginia Partnership for School Mental Health

Stage 5 Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment

The Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment supports community school teams through a structured process for the development of a strategy and an opportunity to self-assess your adoption of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

Utilize this tool to introduce the practices to school-based teams, school and community leadership, and others; and monitor your team's progress toward an effective strategy.

There are five specific purposes of the Virginia Community School Implementation Self-Assessment.

1. Provide the community school team with a structured process for the development of a strategy

2. Provide information to monitor progress toward adoption for each stage of implementation

3. Support a common infrastructure for implementation to achieve desired community school outcomes

4. Serve as a tool to introduce stakeholders to the strengths and needs of the community school

5. Provide division and state leadership with a consistent measure of the capacity for the adoption of best practices

Stage 5 Self-Assessment: Connecting, Celebrating, & Sustaining Community

This self-assessment is administered with Stage 5 of implementation in mind. Three primary areas help your team to self-evaluate your planning and action steps during this stage of development:

- How Goals & Progress are Shared
- How Partnerships are Renewed
- How Partnerships are Strengthened

A stage of implementation includes a set of best practices used within a school division to achieve defined outcomes.

It is intended for community school teams to begin with Stage 1 of implementation, and advance through Stage 5 of implementation; however, progress is not linear.

During the year, you may find that your team is planning to launch some activities while others are being monitored and evaluated. You will likely also return to a previous stage of implementation to make adjustments or deepen their impact.

When completing the self-assessment for a specific stage, it is important to reflect and respond with that stage in mind.

To ensure your team is ready to complete the self-assessment, read through each of the best practices on this fidelity checklist below. Mark "yes" for the best practices that your team has implemented, and "no" for the best practices that have not yet been completed. If your team has determined that a practice is not applicable, mark the item with "N/A". If you have implemented all applicable best practices, your community school team is ready to complete the self-assessment.

Stage 5
Fidelity Checklist

Best Practice	Yes	No	N/A
5.1 Honor Shared Values & Commitments	☐	☐	☐
5.2 Acknowledge Progress & Feedback	☐	☐	☐
5.3 Plan for Renewal & Sustainability	☐	☐	☐

Suggested Protocol to Complete the Self-Asessment

Community school teams should complete a self-assessment at the end of each stage of implementation. They may prepare to complete the tool by choosing a few of the guiding questions (found in the right column) for reflection during meetings in the weeks leading up to the designated evaluation period. They may also become familiar with the statements for each area that will be assessed and consider the artifacts and data tools that should be used to measure progress. The team may use the appropriate columns labeled, "Team Ideas & Reflections" and "Data Sources" to document this information.

The formal administration process includes reading each statement within an area of evaluation aloud and offering any necessary clarification; facilitating the discussion and voting process; recording the score for each item; verifying the concentration of scores; reviewing the concepts and big ideas; and outlining recommended actions and next steps.

In advance of the group process, team members should complete the self-assessment individually to prepare. Before the self-assessment begins, the Community School Coordinator should ensure that all team members have access to the artifacts and data sources used to evaluate progress and understand how to complete the evaluation. Consider the best method for each team member to access and complete the self-assessment. This may require you to create your own paper-based or digital tools.

Guiding Questions to Evaluate Stage 5 of Implementation

- How are community schools goals and progress updates shared with students, teachers, families, and community stakeholders?
- In what ways are the efforts of community stakeholders and volunteers recognized and acknowledged?
- What processes are used to evaluate the overall impact of initiatives on identified barriers and needs facing students?
- What processes are used to review and revise agreements with various partners?
- What methods are used to secure long-term sustainability?

Rating Your Progress to Adopt Best Practices for VCSI

Successfully establishing and sustaining a Virginia Community School requires school divisions to commit to a strategy that is comprehensive, cohesive, and collaborative.

The criteria included in the self-assessment for each stage represents the essential elements of Best Practices for Virginia Community School Implementation.

The rubric describes various levels of adoption along a continuum of implementation of Best Practices, from exploring through maturing. This helps school divisions to self-assess their incremental progress toward developing an effective community school strategy.

First, review the brief descriptors for each level of adoption to grasp what distinguishes the novice levels of exploring and emerging from more advanced levels such as maturing and excelling.

Next, become familiar with the criteria included for each level of adoption to understand what is being evaluated on the self-assessment for each stage of implementation. Adhere to the protocol to complete the self-assessment both individually and as a team. After reviewing each criterion, determine a rating for the overall level of adoption.

Refer to the summaries in this guide for each stage of implementation to learn possible areas of focus to deepen your use of Best Practices for VCSI.

Exploring
School divisions understand that they can not work in isolation to solve the barriers to learning faced by students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by gathering information, large-scale thinking, and an optimistic outlook for change and growth.

Emerging
School divisions are responsive to the needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by initial steps towards building relationships with community partners.

Maturing
School divisions are committed to improving the overall conditions for learning by creating partnerships that respond to the identified needs of students and their families. This self-rating is characterized by a culture of "yes".

Excelling
School divisions have a comprehensive and collaborative system that continuously responds to needs. This self-rating is characterized by a fully realized vision of as a central location of opportunity and civic engagement for students and families.

Take the Stage 5 Self-Assessment

Locate the Stage 5 Self-Assessment on the second tab of the evaluation tool. Complete the assessment individually and as a team.

For each of the three areas of evaluation, read the statement in the corresponding row. Select the statement that most closely aligns to your school division's current practices. Mark an "x" to the right of the statement, describing the degree to which your division has adopted the best practices.

Use the space at the end of each row under the column labeled "Possible Action Steps & Recommendations" to document your team's ideas to further integrate the best practices into your community school strategy.

Exploring

School divisions who are exploring community school practices during Stage 5 of implementation use the beginning or end of the year to share updates and rely on informal relationships to build partnerships. Make progress by showcasing your community school strategy more frequently and to a wide audience. Research opportunities to formalize partnerships and secure funding to have a lasting impact.

Emerging

School divisions whose practices are emerging during Stage 5 of implementation use annual occasions to share their community school strategy and renew partnerships. They have identified one source to sustain their activities. Make progress by investing more time sharing your success with stakeholders. This will generate new leads that will strengthen and grow your community school initiatives.

Maturing

School divisions whose practices are maturing during Stage 5 of implementation celebrate the stakeholders who support activities through public acknowledgements. They renew formal agreements and explore the informal relationships that have helped to strengthen practices. They explore multiple funding sources for their successful initiatives. Make progress by revisiting previous stages to enhance supports for programs with the potential for greater impact.

Excelling

Community schools whose practices are excelling during Stage 5 of implementation have the vision statement on display around the community, and speak often of their progress, setbacks, and lessons learned. They sustain their strategy through a variety of funding sources, and strong relationships with partners formalized through MOUs. They revisit previous stages to ensure that they are continuously improving their practices.

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