

Proposal to the US Department of Education FY23  
Full-Service Community Schools Grant program

# Scaling for Equity

## Toward a Districtwide Community Schools Strategy in Lowell, Massachusetts

Part 4: Application Narrative

Prepared by **Lowell Public Schools**

With **Lowell Community Schools Coalition**



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### **Abstract**

Lowell Community Schools is a coalition of youth- and family-serving organizations convened by Lowell Public Schools to address the holistic strengths and needs of our city. Since 2015, the coalition has sought to address racial and socioeconomic opportunity gaps by sharing power and growing social capital through the Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) model of connecting students, families, and neighbors with a network to thrive. The enclosed proposal requests US Department of Education FSCS funding to scale up from one small alternative high school and additional low-dosage partnerships to eight schools identified by the state education agency as in need of broad support. We propose funding for strategic coordination and direct services via the following: contractual partnerships for direct service and program evaluation, the addition of four additional school-based coordinators in year three, supplies for citywide communication and engagement, and renovation of space at school sites to increase access to place-based agency services. The coalition will leverage these resources to equitably address barriers and measure progress toward holistic outcomes so that every Lowell student is connected with success.

Lowell Public Schools submits this application on behalf of our Lowell Community School consortium under the Absolute Priorities 1) Title 1A schoolwide program eligibility and 3) Capacity building and development.

### **Need for Project**

Lowell Community Schools is a collective-impact solution that brings a responsive support system into schools to disrupt generational educational inequity. Through coordinating services and aligning outcome goals across a rich network of local agencies, we can achieve a broad provision of support, resources, and services for our constituents on a districtwide scale by 2028. While we have made strides in impact and evidence base since the opening of the first community school at a small alternative high school site in 2015, our city continues to face a core problem of practice: stark opportunity gaps between our Latinx student population and peers of other racial/ethnic groups, as shown through disparities in attendance across grade levels and graduation outcomes. To close this gap will require equal partnership with our youth, family, and communities to co-develop a system of leveraging onsite partnerships to respond to the strengths and needs of individuals.

### **Demographics**

Lowell, Massachusetts is a majority-diverse gateway city home to approximately 111,300 residents, though this number is likely understated due to a large immigrant and refugee community with thousands of newcomer families arriving in recent years. According to the 2020 US Census, Lowell's median household income was around \$62,200, which is 26% below the state median of \$84,300. About one in every five people in Lowell live in poverty (US Census)

Lowell Public Schools is a large urban public school district of approximately 14,000 students in twenty-four Title I schools. The eight schools proposed for the scaled up community school footprint educate a cumulative enrollment of 6,653 students. Lowell Public Schools is extremely diverse, with 22.9% White students and 77.1% students of Color. Table 1 below shows the proportion of each race and ethnic group in FY22.

**Table 1**

*Lowell District Enrollment Demographics (DESE, 2022)*

<i>Race</i>	<i>% of District</i>	<i>% of State</i>
Afr. American/Black	7.7	9.3
Asian	27.5	7.2
Hispanic/Latino	37.7	23.1
Amer. Ind. or Alaska	0.1	0.2
White	22.9	55.7
Nat. Haw or Pacific Isl.	0.0	0.1
Multi-race, Non-Hisp/Lat	4.1	4.3

As seen in Table 1, Latinx, identified by the state education agency as “Hispanic”, is the largest represented group (37.7%; though this be understated due to online registration coding ambiguity among newcomer families). The next largest group is Asian (27.5%; primarily Cambodian) followed by White (22.9%). The city is home to diverse refugee and immigrant populations with a recent influx of hundreds of newcomer families arriving from Ecuador, Brazil, and Iraq since 2021. There are nearly 70 different home languages of Lowell Public School students.

The current rate of homelessness among Lowell Public Schools students is 10.5%, up from 5% in 2019. Table 2 provides the proportion of Lowell students who fall into additional “Selected Populations” set by the state education agency.

**Table 2**

*Lowell “Selected Populations” (DESE, 2022)*

<i>Population</i>	<i>% of District</i>	<i>% of State</i>
First Language not English	28.6	21.9
English Language Learner	23.7	10.5
Students with Disabilities	17.3	18.1
High Needs	72.4	47.6
Economically Disadvantaged	53.8	31.2

The city’s diverse population of immigrants and refugees is reflected in Table 2; more than a fourth of the district’s students having a first language that is not English. Additionally, the district has a high concentration of high needs (72.4%) and economically disadvantaged (53.8%) students. A student is high needs if he or she is designated economically disadvantaged ELL or former ELL, or a student with disabilities (DESE, 2019). Nearly three-fourths of Lowell students are high needs compared with the state’s proportion of just under half. It is important to note that the state data represents public schools and excludes private school populations which by nature have lower proportions of economically disadvantaged students.

**The Graduation Gap**

The core problem that Lowell Community Schools seeks to address through Full Service Community School funding is the opportunity gap. Specifically, this is manifested in disparate levels of school engagement throughout grade levels culminating in a stark gap in graduation and postsecondary outcomes between Latinx students and their peers. As seen in Table 3 below, in

the last complete school year prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, one in five Latinx students in the class of 2019 did not graduate with their four-year cohort.

**Table 3:**

*Lowell Class of 2019 Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rate (DESE, 2020)*

<i>Student Group</i>	<i># in cohort</i>	<i>% graduated</i>	<i>% dropped out</i>
All Students	851	78.0	9.4
Afr. American/Black	110	77.3	9.1
Asian	246	90.2	4.9
Hispanic/Latino	223	<b>60.1</b>	15.2
Amer. Ind. or Alaska	-	-	-
White	253	81.4	9.5
Nat. Haw or Pacific Isl.	-	-	-
Multi-race, Non-Hisp/Lat	19	89.5	0.0

*Note that additional outcomes not shown include: “still in school,” “non-grad completers,” and “high school equivalency.”*

In 2019—the last full school year of prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Latinx students’ four-year graduation rate was just 60%—more than twenty percentage points below that of their White peers (80.4%) and thirty percentage points below their Asian peers (90.1%) (MA DESE, 2020). As the largest represented ethnic group in Lowell’s student body, Latinx students’ disproportionately low graduation rate should concern all stakeholders—students, families,

community members, and educators. It is clear that disparities exist in multiple domains for this population of students, and Lowell's success depends upon improving their outcomes.

Moreover, analysis of retrospective longitudinal data of the district's Latinx graduates and non-completers in graduation year cohort 2019 to identify predictive indicators of low persistence in **as early as middle school**. District data suggest that gaps in attendance, behavior, and course performance early warning indicators (Balfanz, 2008) are measurable and apparent by seventh grade. Therefore, root causes are at play prior to entering high school. All five turnaround middle schools in LPS are slated to become community schools in FY23, presenting a pivotal opportunity to leverage the community school model as an early intervention.

### **School Connectedness**

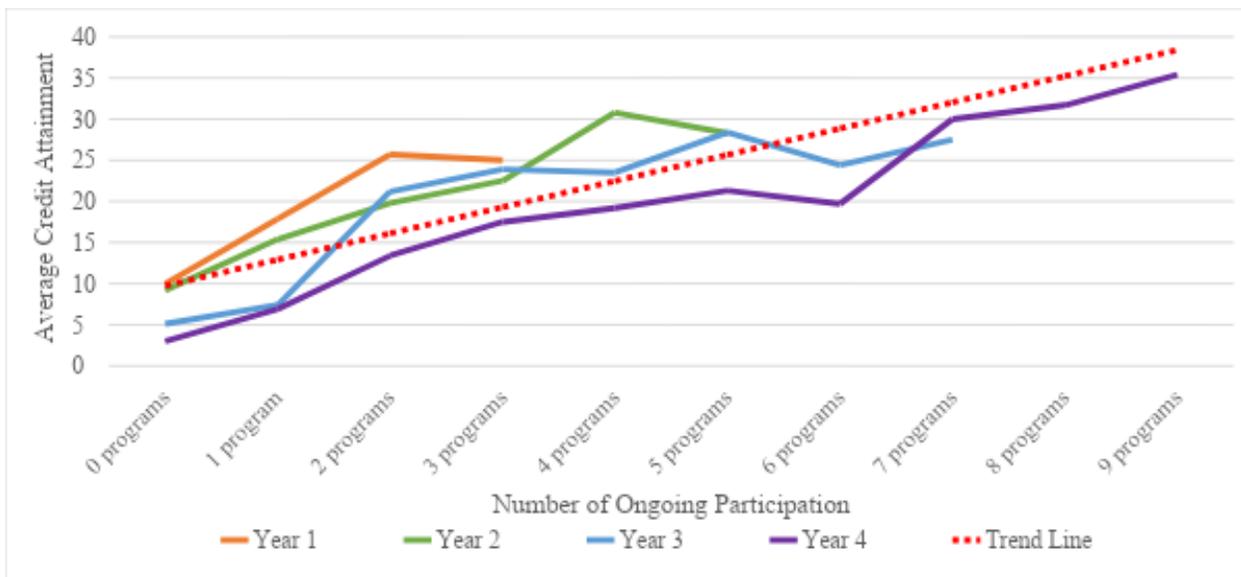
Qualitative evaluation has also yielded insights on levers that the Lowell Community Schools model may address to improve persistence. Out of 250 tenth grade students who took an anonymous online survey administered in 2020, 76% felt they did not matter as much to others at their high school—the largest newly proposed community school serving just under 4000 students. 74% of respondents felt people at school did not understand them as a person, and 79% of students were not overly excited about attending class. Of alumni surveyed, 71% reported their teachers would not be concerned if they walked into class upset, highlighting an absence of the “positive relationship” protective factor of this root cause (Daly, 2010). Together with the evidence of associated persistence indicators of behavioral and attendance data among the cohort of non-completers, these findings show a need for coordinated supports early and often.

To address these root causes of disengagement, Lowell Public Schools has strategically dedicated personnel and contractual partnership resources in a community schools framework. We expect this strategy to positively impact the school experience for students and families of

our seven highest needs schools by helping them make connections to their success beyond classroom walls. Evidence from the pilot full-service community school at the Lowell Career Academy yielded broad improvement in connection to school and outcomes such as credit attainment, seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Ongoing participation in community schools affects credit attainment at the Career Academy*



Specifically, students who had ongoing participation in two or more programs within a school year significantly earned more credits than those who participated in fewer than two. This finding supports the use of the community school model on a broad basis with evidence to its efficacy in closing opportunity gaps, given the test site’s disproportionately large Latinx student population.

Our proposed project “Scaling for equity, toward a districtwide community schools strategy,” would take the community schools initiative from its concentrated presence at one

alternative school and additional broad low-dosage support to a schoolwide model cohort for eight high needs, traditional public schools. This would grow enrolled students served with high-dosage community school supports from 200 to more than 6,000, with a projected 24,000 total individuals served including families and community members. This expansion will support the wraparound needs of not just our students, but their broader communities which face inequitable access to resources like healthcare and postsecondary access. Lowell Community Schools is an investment in the well-being of our City and will enable more Lowellians to access their opportunity to thrive.

### **Quality of Project Design**

The Lowell Community School Model presents a high-impact school improvement strategy in which cross-sector partnerships transform seven additional schools into hubs for essential support services to address the needs of the whole child. The strategy is aligned with district, state, and federal priorities for recovery from a global pandemic that has impacted families across multiple ecological domains.

### **Drivers of High School Persistence**

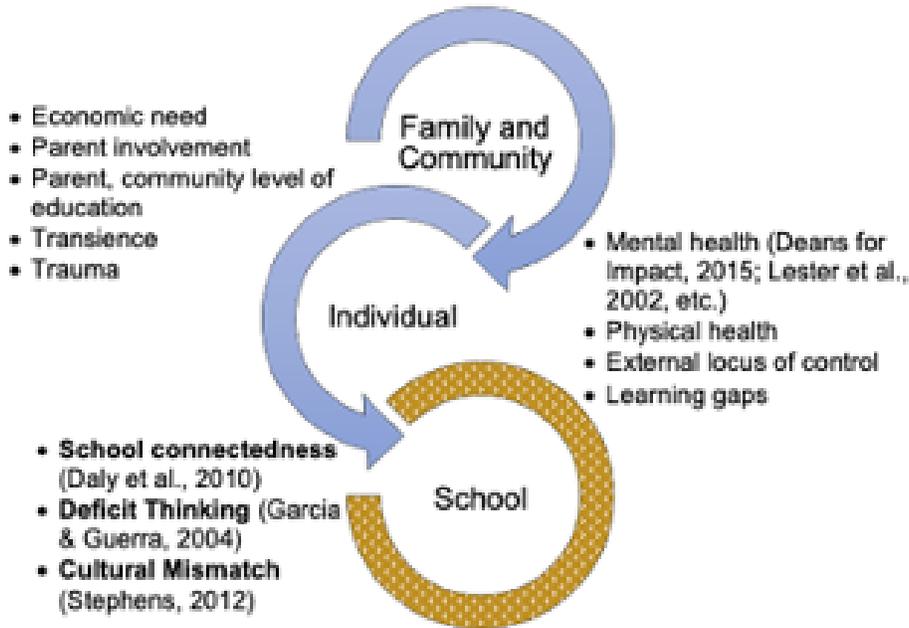
For decades, education and developmental psychology scholars have explored the causal factors as to why students drop out of school instead of persisting to graduation. Contemporary research organizes factors that influence graduation into domains of individual, school, peer, family, and community (Zaff et al., 2017). This model is based on the Ecological Systems theory, a childhood development framework that explains children's behavior as a function of their interaction of layers of their environment, from household to broader society (Spencer, 2006). The body of research on high school completion, graduation rates, and dropping out has yielded various root causes within each domain, outlined in Figure 2. Bolded root causes are those most prominently supported in the existing body of research on high school completion and are further described below.

Figure 2 outlines ecological domains of family and community, individual, and school, with focus on the latter due to the practical basis of this inquiry, which asks what schools can do to improve high school persistence. Scholars have outlined school-based protective factors that improve school connectedness including the interpersonal (e.g., social supports, positive adult and peer relationships) and institutional (e.g., restorative as opposed to punitive discipline, participation in extracurriculars, ethnically diverse/representative teachers) (Nasir et al., 2011).

Intervention therefore should incorporate these protective factors using a whole-child approach—a perfect match for the community school model.

Figure 2

*Factors of High School Persistence by Ecological System Domains*



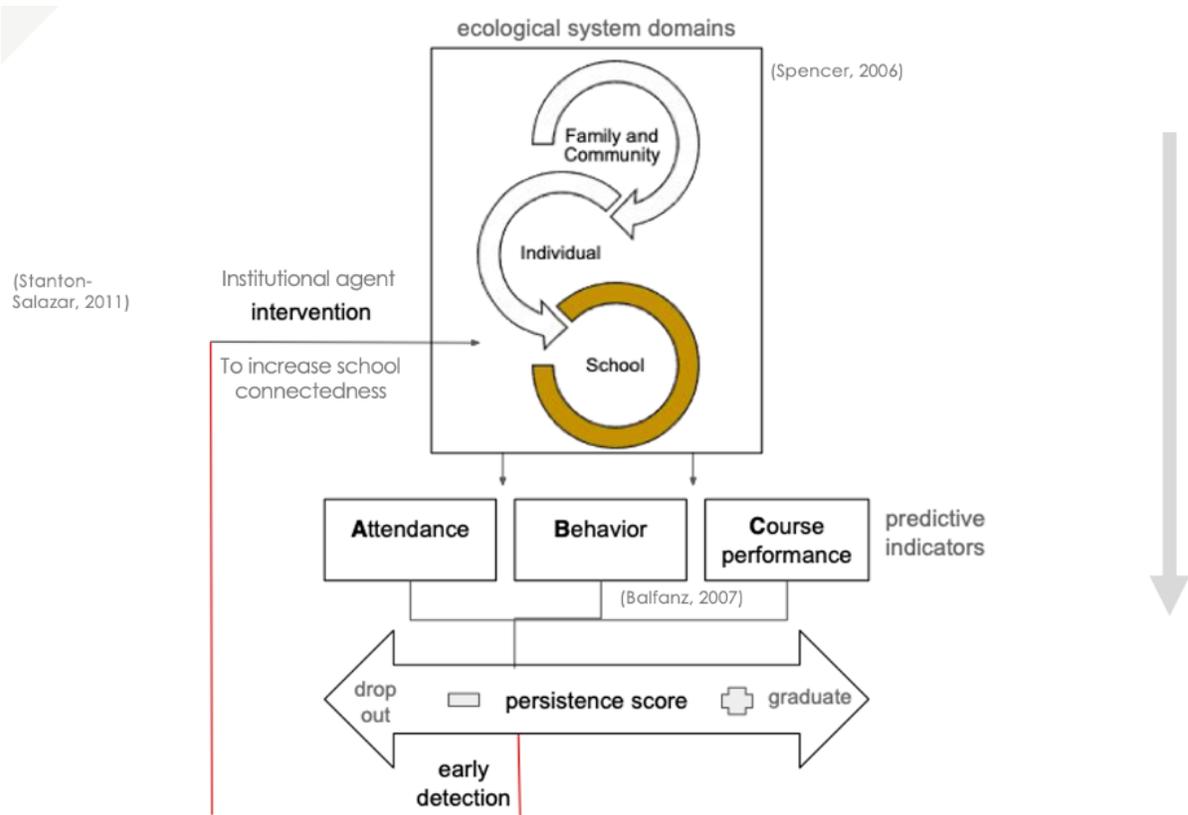
Within each ecological system domain are root causes that interact with one another and produce symptoms that themselves become exacerbating factors impeding high school completion. For example, a transient family’s multiple inter-district moves can cause learning gaps, which in turn can lead to a lack of a sense of control over one’s life outcomes, leading a student to drop out.

The initial analysis of students who dropped out in recent years from Lowell Public Schools implies a predictive relationship of the ABC (Attendance, Behavior, and Course Performance) indicators on school persistence, which can be helpful as a basis for identifying and addressing students who are in-risk during middle school and in need of targeted supports.

While all students in participating schools will receive Tier I opportunities across the four pillars of community schools (see Figure 4), students identified as in need of targeted supports in Tiers II and III will receive case management for high-dosage wraparound support through an “Institutional agent” framework (Stanton-Salazar, 2011) that identifies a positive adult mentor from the school staff or onsite community partner agency to check in weekly with student and ensure equitable and tailored access to services based on their strengths and needs. Figure 3 below demonstrates our theory of change to improve educational outcomes for all students in Lowell Community Schools.

**Figure 3**

*Theory of Change*



### **Community Schools as a Solution**

To address these drivers and create the most supportive, responsive school environments to improve equity, we will use the next five years to radically expand program reach and impact of partnership support through systems building. Nationally, we know Community Schools have measurable impact in improving outcomes including attendance, behavior, credit attainment, grade promotion, graduation, family and school climate indicators (Johnston, 2020). Locally, the model has had evidence of success on student outcomes and school climate in its pilot site at the Lowell Career Academy alternative high school since its conversion to a community school in 2015 (Lohmeier et al., 2020).

Priority areas of partnership identified by students, family, and partner input are health and wellness and postsecondary pathways, described in section III. Onsite Community Schools Managers will convene partners and school staff teams to expand equitable access and identify areas for targeted supports. They will do this through an evidence-based case management system modeled after the evidence-based City Connects program from Boston College. This system will ensure every student in every school will be connected with resources based on their strengths and needs.

For students identified as in need of additional support through an early warning system, we will provide tiered supports through and implement an evidence-based *institutional agent* mentoring framework of connecting students to supportive adults—school staff and onsite community partners—as brokers of the social capital and tangible community school connections. Integration of community school partnerships with the multi-tiered system of support model will ensure equity in access to our vast network of partnership resources.

**School District Administration Support**

In 2021 the Lowell Public Schools district began work to invest Covid-19 relief funds into a community schools strategy for six of the district’s turnaround schools. Building off the success of the 2015-2021 community school pilot at the Career Academy and Engagement Center and low dosage implementation across six Renaissance schools in School Year 21-22, there exists strong interest and capacity for scaling up this model in our highest need schools. Table 4 shows an initial feasibility analysis of current *fiscal* (row 1) and *structural capacity* (row 2).

**Table 4:**

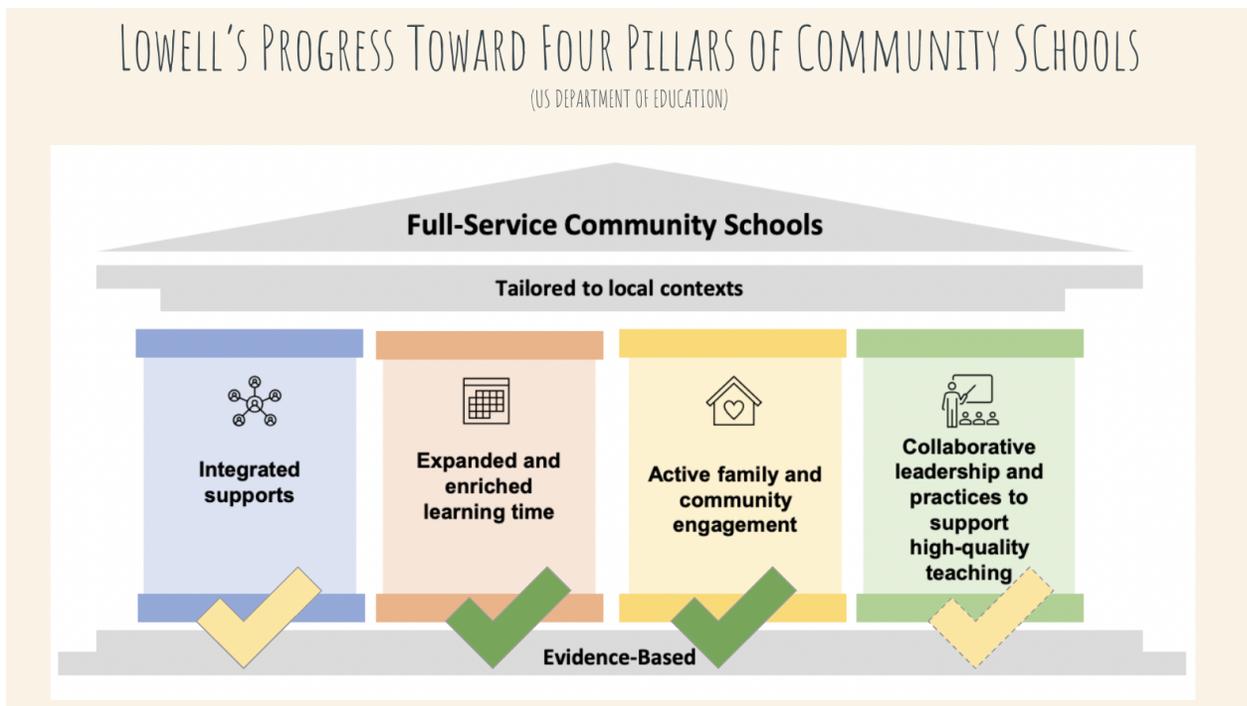
*Existing Capacity to Scale Community School Model*

<p><u>Staff Coordination</u> ✓</p> <p>1 FTE District CS Manager; 7 FTE school-based specialists. (per best practice and school input)</p>	<p><u>Contractual Services</u></p> <p>Existing/upcoming braided funds (source: LPS &amp; partner operational and grant budgets)</p>	<p><u>Transportation</u></p> <p>Busses for summer &amp; after school enrichment (source: existing grant funds)</p>
<p><u>Family and Community Engagement</u> ✓</p> <p>Family &amp; community engagement</p> <p>School staff team ownership</p> <p>Whole-school buy-in</p>	<p><u>Partners</u> ✓</p> <p>Strong established partnerships, LPS/City of Lowell procurement protocol</p>	<p><u>Scheduling</u> ✓</p> <p>21<sup>st</sup> CCLC after/summer school</p> <p>In-school flex time (e.g. WIN)</p> <p>Other structures TBD</p>

Some of these components exist at the Renaissance Schools and throughout the district currently and will be operationalized and expanded to meet priority needs. Initial work with Renaissance School staff has yielded high interest in mentoring, youth leadership and anti-bias programs, mental and physical health, college and career partnerships. However, it is essential that there is a dedicated full-time staff member at each school site to implement the community school model with fidelity and high-dosage impact. Figure 4 below illustrates Lowell’s current capacity toward a districtwide community schools model.

**Figure 4**

*Four Pillars of Community Schools*



Pillar 2, *Expanded and Enriched Learning Time*, is fulfilled thanks to 21st Century Community Learning Centers and additional state and federal programs; all 24 district schools have robust after and summer school programs, including nearly half of these with before-school and vacation week services. Pillar 3, *Active Family and Community Engagement* is fulfilled

through a recently expanded emphasis on equitable family and community engagements through language access for families via district- and school-based bilingual family liaisons, a scaled up family resource center providing case-management for wraparound services including housing, food, and other basic necessities, and the 2019 creation of an office for Educational Equity and Community Empowerment. All 24 schools have active school-site councils that meet monthly, which has built toward capacity of Pillar 4, *Collaborative Leadership and Practices to Support High Quality Teaching and Learning*.

Pillar 1, *Integrated Student Supports* is a primary focus of capacity building over the next two school years (FY23-24). Though our schools implement a multitude of evidence-based interventions—academic, behavioral, social emotional—they currently exist in silos with little cross-coordination of services or holistic understanding of how we address students’ strengths and needs. Educators face “initiative overload” and community partners’ work to improve youth and family help often feels like packaged add ons to schools instead of co-developed programs. The proposed project provides an opportunity to integrate these support services into one systemic, operational framework that all stakeholders live. In this way, Lowell Community Schools is not a discrete *initiative* but rather a holistic strategy.

To first understand the current access and equity of services in our schools, schools will use an Integrated Student Supports tracker led by the onsite Community Schools Manager and accessed by teams of social workers and guidance counselors. The tracker includes the schools roster and a heading “Support Level” which is based on the state’s Early Warning Indicator System that classifies students as “low,” “moderate,” and “high” risk of not achieving benchmark grade level outcomes such as reading proficiency, ninth-grade readiness, and high school graduation. Additionally, it records students’ natural supports and *institutional agents*, a tool for

the mentoring framework proposed for development for students in Tiers II (moderate) and III (high needs). Based on the social capital theory of Stanton-Salazar (2011), students are more connected to school if they can identify a positive adult support within the school—whether it be a district-employed staff member or onsite partner. The identified institutional agent will be responsible for weekly check-ins with their matched student and serve as a connector to targeted wraparound supports tailored to their individual strengths and needs. Management of this framework is a primary duty of the Community Schools Managers, who will track involvement with partnership services and work with staff teams to identify areas and partnerships of need.

**Figure 5**

*Integrated Student Supports Tracker*

Support Level	Natural Support	NS Type	Institutional Agent	IA Type	Home Visit	TAT	21ST CCLC	Heritage Arts	Mentoring	Counseling	Food Pant.
Moderate	Coach Risa	sports	Kevin	community partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High	Pastor Jeremiah	church	Edwin	community partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low	Lily	work	Mr. Cruz	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low	Juan	other	Ms. O	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate	Brother	family	Ms. G	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>						
High	Wilmer	friend	Mentor Jaleen	community partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low	JuanCarlos	communi	Ms. Pelton	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
High	Coach Risa	sports	Kevin	community partner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate	Pastor Jeremiah	church	Edwin	community partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate	Lily	work	Mr. Cruz	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High	Juan	other	Ms. O	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High	Brother	family	Ms. G	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low	Wilmer	friend	Mentor Jaleen	community partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Moderate	JuanCarlos	communi	Ms. Pelton	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>						
High	Coach Risa	sports	Kevin	community partner	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Low	Pastor Jeremiah	church	Edwin	community partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Low	Lily	work	Mr. Cruz	school staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate	Juan	other	Ms. O	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High	Brother	family	Ms. G	school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

These data on service connections will feed into the district’s student dashboard platform, Open Architects, which will give educators a 360 degree view of their student’ real-time indicators such as attendance and behavior in conjunction with their supports and qualitative survey data. This system of data collection and analysis will enable schools to understand the

level of access and impact of the Lowell Community School model. It will allow our external evaluator to measure progress toward key performance measures outlined in Section IV and provide continuous feedback to our coalition partners on how we can adjust our operations to reach higher levels of equity for our students, families, and community.



From this collaborative planning session, the coalition selected the most frequently up-voted indicators and aligned them with the new indicator bank provided by the Full-Service Community Schools program. The finalized project objectives are described in Section V.

### **Youth and Community Design**

In reviewing the opportunity gaps described in Section I., we asked our students, families, and community members what schools can do to improve engagement at all levels. We heard a need to address cultural mismatch (Stephens, 2012) from 14 representatives on the community-district Hispanic Student Success Task Force. This sentiment was echoed at a convening of 119 middle and elementary school student leaders at a youth-led anti racism forum; it is clear we need to get. We also heard from a group of 24 high school aged youth on the Lowell Student Advisory Council as well as over 500 jam-board respondents that mental health was the top concern of students at the start of last school year.

The call for increased diversity in staffing and mental health supports align with the community school model and has helped inform the focal structures of our framework. These two priorities form the *institutional agents* (Stanton-Salazar, 2011) framework to be piloted in FY23 in two middle schools. In this evidence-based model, students identify a trusted adult at the school and have a semi-structured check in with them each week. Those who don't have a trusted adult will connect with a trained and stipended community member of a culturally matching background are scheduled for weekly mentoring at school. This intervention will be piloted with students identified as Tier II, and if successful, will scale up to the eight Community Schools in FY24.

While Educators of Color represent just 9.5% of the districtwide teaching force, 50% of the eight current Community School Manager school-based coordinators are People of Color.

The cultural and linguistic diversity of these staff enhance their ability to connect with students, families, and community members as a broker of resource connections and social capital.

Students will continue to provide monthly advisement via the Lowell Student Advisory Council, co-facilitated by key partner Elevate New England and the District Community School Manager. This group of student leaders will work in partnership with staff to ensure the strategy is addressing its set objectives and aligned with the lived student experience.

### **Alignment with School Improvement Initiatives**

An ongoing community initiative, Portrait of a Graduate, seeks to identify the vision for education in Lowell through identifying the attitudes and aspirations of students, teachers, business owners, and family and community members. An ethnically and professionally diverse team of nonprofit community organizations and students, district teachers and administrators collected stakeholder data for thirteen months from November 2019 – December 2020. They used an iterative process under the Participatory Action Research framework, including focus groups, surveys, and written response to prompts on Google Jamboard, presentations of and community conversations. Stakeholder group participants included 2158 students (via 68 focus group and interviews across the alternative and flagship high schools, 250 alumni survey respondents, 1900 current student survey and written response), 186 teachers via survey, 150 business leaders via focus group and industry surveys, 540 family and community members via focus groups, survey, and written feedback, and 236 educators via focus groups, survey, and written feedback.

The Portrait of a Graduate data collection phase completed in 2021 culminated in an urgent call to improve the connection between the classroom experience and the real world beyond school—a perfect match for the Lowell Community Schools strategy.

**District Alignment**

The Community Schools strategy is championed by the district leadership team as a key school improvement strategy. Per US Department of Education guidelines, the district has invested Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds into school-based coordinator positions that are beginning to build capacity for community school models. The community school model aligns with the district’s strategic goals, as seen in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*Alignment with Lowell Public Schools Strategic Goals*

LPS Strategic Goal	How community school model supports it
Improve <b>academic achievement</b> at every LPS school	Community school partnership programs improve attendance, behavior, and course performance (Rand, 2019; Lohmier et al., 2021)
Improve <b>operational efficiency</b> across LPS	Integrated, evaluated student supports at every school for academic and social-emotional interventions
Ensure that every LPS school enjoys a <b>safe and welcoming culture</b>	Students who participate in community school programming feel more connected to school (Lohmeier et al., 2021)
Increase LPS <b>community engagement and empower families</b> as partners	Families engage in services for themselves and their children and see themselves as decision-makers. Coalition defines and tracks shared measurable outcomes for community success

From its inception in 2015 via initial award of a US Department of Education Full-Service Community School award, Lowell Public Schools has built with its partners a broad coalition of support to expand this model throughout the school district. Our goal is full-scale implementation of this model to follow the lead of other successful localities across the nation who have implemented universal community schools to foster a supportive, top-quality education system for all.

#### **IV. Adequacy of Resources**

The community school initiative is a five-year endeavor that began in October 2015 with seed funding from the US Department of Education awarded to a comprehensive pilot project at the Career Academy, a single alternative high school. Beginning in project Year Three, Lowell FSCS extended its scope to support targeted programming for seven schools and two community agencies with plans to add additional schools to the community school portfolio in fall 2021.

Lowell's Full-Service Community School (FSCS) initiative provided access to holistic wraparound supports for students, their families, and community members in its sixth project year in order to fulfill activities and goals of the original five-year project period that began on a delayed timeframe in project Year One or postponed in Project Year Five due to restrictions from the Covid-19 pandemic. Services spanned three key areas: Health and Wellness, Academic Enrichment, and Postsecondary Pathways.

The initiative has exceeded targets for program reach goals and improved upon performance outcomes. Most notably, graduation class size has increased and students' sense of school connectedness has improved. Additionally, evaluators found a significant link between community school participation and high school credit attainment since the implementation of Full-Service Community Schools in 2015.

#### **Extent to which the expected outcomes and performance measures were achieved:**

From October 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, a total of 1,978 people directly benefited from the Career Academy's service programs: 192 high school students, 484 elementary and middle school students, 572 family members, and 730 community members. Secondary school data analyzed by the CPE team suggest several significant areas of strength, including:

- Program Participation (GPRA). Like Year 5, Year 6 Day Program Students' level of program participation is significantly higher compared to Years 1-4 ( $F(5,515)=28.315$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- Ongoing Program Participation. Like Years 4 and 5, Career Academy Day Program students' level of ongoing participation in Year 6 is significantly higher than in Years 1-3 ( $F(5, 515)=36.028$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- School Connectedness. Year 6's overall school connectedness results were significantly higher than Years 1-4's overall results ( $F(4,164)=7.603$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- Feeling Supported by Others. Year 6's overall feeling supported results were significantly higher than the overall results from Years 1, 3, and 4 ( $F(4,155)=5.294$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- Increased Community Reach. Despite the pandemic, the Career Academy was able to reach family members and community members at similar levels that were much higher than the initial years of the grant.

**Contributions the project has made to research, knowledge, practice, and/or policy:**

*Improved credit attainment:*

The FSCS's contracted evaluation team found a positive association between community school participation and Career Academy students' high school graduation credit attainment. The number of community school programs students participated in, their ongoing participation in them, and their length of enrollment (which has increased at the school level each year since FSCS implementation) all were found to have an effect on the number of credits they earned. This finding—that the community school model is associated with higher credit attainment and, by extension, higher likelihood of graduation—is compelling evidence to support sustained and expanded community school programming in Lowell.

*Replication of services:* In addition to expanding to serve multiple additional school populations through funding for mentoring and health and wellness programming, the FSCS grant has contributed to district practice by providing examples of high-impact programming for replication at other sites. These include the blended learning credit recovery program, the mentoring program, the dual-enrollment one-credit course offerings, the hands-on bike mechanic extended day course, and the use of an academic Roadmap for postsecondary guidance (part of the Pathways Coaching model).

The current **District Community Schools Manager**, Lauren Sumiko Campion, provides leadership and coordination to the Renaissance Network to ensure that partners work together to transform these schools into community hubs which provide students, parents, families and residents of the neighborhood with the resources necessary to improve student outcomes, improve employability (students, parents, neighbors), increase parent knowledge and engagement, increase nutrition and health, and increase access to social service resources.

The Community School Program Manager is a key to the success of the partnerships which are essential for an effective community school, as well as, the coordination and integration of services, programs, supports, and available opportunities. The Community School Program Manager's main responsibility is to work closely and plan jointly with the Renaissance School Principals to drive, develop and implement the community school effort. The Program Manager convenes a cross-section of school staff, parents and representatives of community organizations to develop systems with which to coordinate new and existing programs that respond to the needs of the school and community through ongoing needs assessments. The Program Manager adds capacity to the principals' leadership of the school and is essential to

ensuring that all programs, supports, services, opportunities and the mutually defined results and outcomes are fully aligned.

ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provide coordination and integration of all services, programs and supports—including comprehensive wraparound partnerships at the Renaissance Schools and targeted programing at community partner organizations and participating middle and elementary schools.
- Work closely and plan jointly with the schools’ principals to drive, develop, and implement the community school effort.
- Obtain additional funding through state and local sources to support and sustain the goals of the Full-Service Community School model.
- Support grant writing to increase funding for the community school model as well as grant writing to support other district initiatives.
- Support the coordination of School Site Councils of school staff, family, and community representatives to respond to the needs of the school and community.

In addition to the districtwide community schools manager, each of the eight community schools will have a full-time **School-Based Community School Manager** in partnership with the local teachers union. This cohort of staff has a larger proportion of diversity (50% POC) than the teaching force (8% POC) and are uniquely poised to help Lowell students, families, and community residents with strengths- and needs- based connections. These school-based coordinators report to the principal but receive training, capacity building, resources and alignment support from the District Community School Manager.

Toward the goal of equitable supports for underserved communities, a new position of .6FTE **Re-Engagement Coordinator** will connect students who missed at least  $\frac{1}{5}$  of school year (20% of high school students in FY22) to high dosage community school supports. These are current or former students in either of the two community schools high schools—the alternative Lowell Career Academy or Lowell High School. In addition to student, family, and agency outreach, the Re-Engagement Coordinator will manage a part time evening and remote credit recovery program to support students’ transition back to full time school or to postsecondary pathways. Tutoring and guidance staff for this program have secured funding through after school and Title I sources. The purpose of the new position will be to operationalize a re-engagement support for an increasing proportion of students in high risk of dropping out. With 42% of students chronically absent and 20% of students absent for more than one-fifth of School Year 21-22, it is imperative that we establish structures to case manage and connect these students with resources to re-connect with school.

## V. Quality of the Management Plan

Lowell Community Schools is a broadly representative consortium that reflects the needs of the community and its stakeholders. A description of the roles and responsibilities is below, and further outlined in Attachment A - Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding.

### **Lowell Public Schools**

A district community schools manager employed by Lowell Public Schools will be the primary convener of the Lowell Community Schools coalition. This position is currently funded through federal entitlement grants and is filled by the original school-based community schools manager from the Career Academy site. This role will be responsible for project management of Lowell Community Schools and the proposed scaling project.

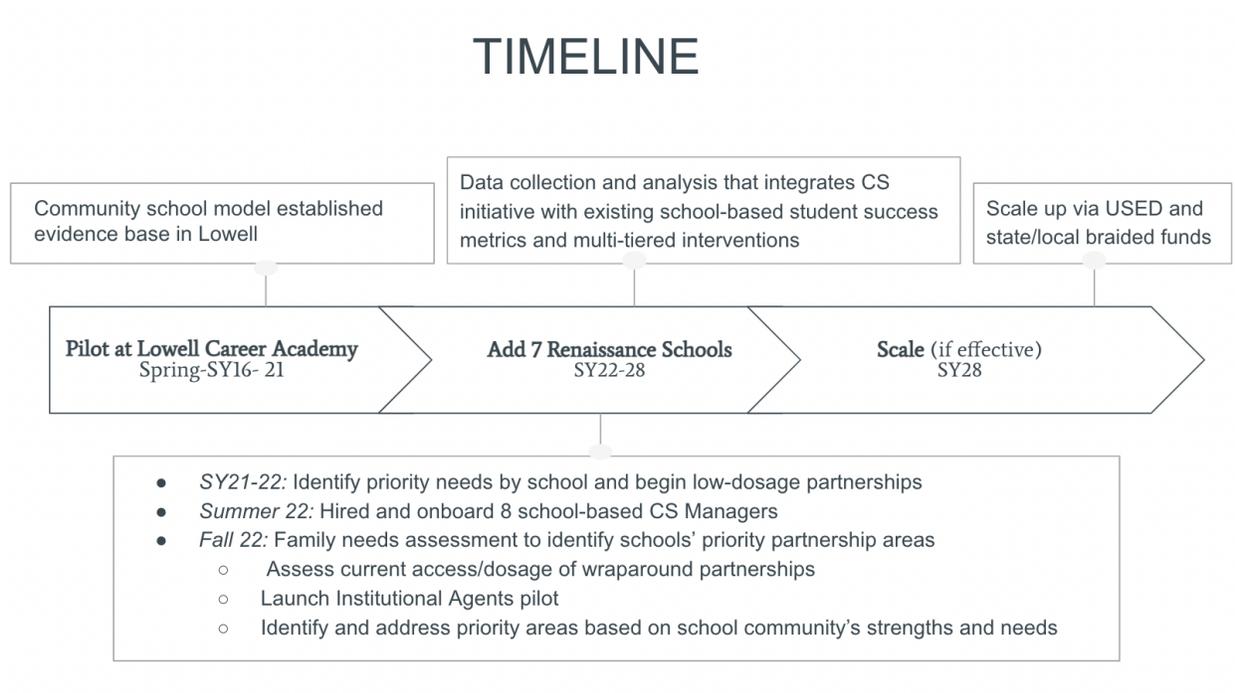
Toward the Lowell Community Schools' mission of connecting students, families, and neighbors with integrated, school-based partnerships that increase success in and beyond the classroom,

**Lowell Public Schools** will:

- Coordinate students, families, and neighbors to connect to school-based Partner Agency activities that promote the Lowell Community School strands 1) health and 2) college and career readiness
- Track student participation in partnerships and progress toward identified outcome goals
- Share aggregate data measuring progress toward above identified goals with partner agencies and disaggregated data per data sharing agreement
- Work with Partner Agency to identify and pursue funding for aligned activities

As one of the few Massachusetts localities leveraging FSCS as a school improvement strategy, Lowell Community Schools has been working since 2015 to establish an evidence base

for the strategic value of this model to impact educational equity. There is early evidence of impact through a preliminary finding that students participating in Lowell Community Schools improved attendance, credit attainment, and connection to school. The below timeline outlines activities required for the move from one to eight community schools over the next five years.



The present year FY23 is pivotal in setting the stage to achieve all four pillars of the community school model. Beginning with a landscape and needs assessment, the school-based Community Schools managers work as the lead for their schools in instituting the four pillars of community schools. Table 7 below outlines benchmarks for the expansion of community schools from one to eight, beginning in FY23.

**Table 7**

*Community Schools Benchmarks for FY23-28*

<b>Activity</b> (Responsible: Community Schools Manager unless otherwise noted)	<b>Timeline</b>
Lowell Public Schools incorporates Lowell Community Schools into strategic plan and invests ESSER dollars into school-based positions and contractual services via Office of Educational Equity and Community Empowerment.	January - June 2022 Superintendent, Chief Equity Officer, District CSM
Lowell Community Schools coalition of District CSM and partners apply to US Department of Education Community Schools Grant	June - September 2022
Seven school-based CSMs hired using short-term Pandemic relief fund	July-August 2022 United Teachers of Lowell and Lowell Public Schools
Identify current catalog and access of wraparound and enrichment partnerships via individual community school’s Systems of Student Support tracker (see Section IV)	March 2022- December 2022
Community <a href="#">Needs Assessment</a> survey to students, families, neighbors	Sept-October 2022

Market Community Schools via creation and engagement of individual school <a href="#">webpage</a> , <a href="#">brochures</a> , etc. Audience: staff, students, families, community	September 2022 - June 2023
Convene School Site Councils (8) and Lowell Community Schools coalition to advise and share decision making on project activities	Quarterly October 2022 - September 2028; Dir of Partnerships
Deepen access to supports with focus on Tier II and Tier III students	January - August 2023; reviewed quarterly through 2028
Analyze student equity in access and outcomes at school level with feedback loop of partner reach and impact for continuous improvement	January 2023 - August 2028; monthly
Analyze progress toward performance measures	Bi-Annual; UMass Lowell CPE

**Partners**

The Lowell Public Schools works with a coalition of partners to achieve the above benchmarks.

These partners are represented in Figure 7.

**Figure 7**

*Current community school partners:*



Lowell Community School partnership activities are categorized into priority needs: Health and Wellness, Postsecondary Pathways as well as Convening, and Evaluation.

**Health and Wellness:**

Convened by teacher-led Community Partners in Health task force and a Mental Health administrator, partners provide onsite healthcare via preventative, clinical, and mentoring supports. Services will be integrated with schools' Multi-Tiered Systems of Support to address physical and mental health as the number one priority need as identified by student SEL screening data, staff, and student advisory council in SY21-22.

Partners in FSCS Proposal:

- **2020 Onsite.** Provides Vision Van onsite with comprehensive eye examinations and glasses free to students identified as in need of vision care. Two visits per Community

School, annual cost of \$20,000 in years 1-2. Coalition will establish corporate partnership to sustain in years 3-5.

- **Bike Connector:** free bikes, safety, and repair education for students, families, and neighbors \$9,900 annual in year 1-2
- **Billy's Barber Shop:** "Time for Change" group mentoring to support high school students in need of Tier 3 support. \$6,400 annual serving 60 opportunity youth (high school students).
- **Elevate New England:** Comprehensive group and individual mentoring for students grades K-12+ serving 1023 Tier II and III elementary, middle, and high school students. \$39,500 annual in year 1-2 (includes College and Career scope) in years 1-2 with sustainable funding plan for years 3-5.
- **Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lowell** provide framework development and mentors to participate as paid mentors in Institutional Agents program \$6,400 annual in years 1-2 with sustainable funding plan for years 3-5
- **Lowell Community Health Center:** onsite clinic provides exams, required school immunizations, reproductive health education workshops to students, families, and community members. Current school-based health centers at two schools with third planned for in Year 2. Cost in years 1-3: \$18,000
- **Mill City Grows:** co-curricular and after-school programs in garden nutrition, urban agriculture for students, family, and community members.  
\$25,000 annual in years 1-2 with sustainable funding plan for years 3-5

- **Additional Partners to Support Integrated Student Supports** to be identified and acquired, tailored to individual school need.: \$20,000 in Years 1-2 in years 1-2 with sustainable funding plan for years 3-5

Additional services via in-kind partnership, state SEL/Mental health grants, 21st CCLC program:

- Behavioral health agency providers of school-based counseling
- Middlesex Community College Dental Hygiene and Commonwealth Oral Health: education, screening, cleaning, and procedures onsite via mobile clinic.
- Numerous after school and summer programs including African Women Immigrant Refugee Care, Angkor Dance Troupe, Green Dragons, Lowell Taekwondo, Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, Lowell Police and Fire
- Food Security: Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Open Table, Greater Boston Food Bank, Christ Jubilee Food Pantry

### **Postsecondary Pathways**

Purpose: To provide students, starting in elementary school and throughout middle and high school, with high-touch college and career connections that increase engagement, attendance, and graduation.

Braided funding with state and foundation grants for Early College, dropout prevention and re-engagement, in-kind partner contributions, federal workforce and higher education grants awarded to partner agencies, district line-item for dual enrollment.

Partners in FSCS Proposal:

- **MassHire Lowell Career Center:** work-based learning, internship experiences, and career counseling \$18,000

Additional services via in-kind partnership, state Early College program, 21st CCLC program:

- Middlesex Community College: dual enrollment and Early College programming
- UMass Lowell: provides student teachers, tutors, and enrichment courses
- Elevate New England: future planning for students via cross-age mentoring, job shadowing, worksite placement, internship

**Convening:**

Partners in FSCS Proposal:

- **Project LEARN.** Will produce a strategic plan for sustainability in project years 3-5 and provide brand building and marketing of Lowell Community Schools. \$9900 in years 1-2.

**Evaluation:**

- **University of Massachusetts Center For Program Evaluation.** Independent evaluator providing comprehensive evaluation of community schools program since 2016. Cost: \$48,100 - \$58,000 annually. Please see Section 4, Part V Project Narrative for evaluation plan overview.

**Detailed Activities of Primary Community Partners**

Below are key contractual partnerships providing targeted high-dosage and full-school services.

Lowell Community Schools has and will continue to follow the procedures for procurement under local City of Lowell procurement law as well as federal law 2 CFR 200.317-200.326.

Toward the mission of Lowell Community Schools, **Boys and Girls Club will:**

- Partner with Lowell Public Schools to develop and implement an institutional agent/mentoring framework aimed at supporting students' connection to school and improving racial equity in Lowell Public Schools

- Pilot after school and/or summer program partnership onsite at a Lowell Community School
- Contribute to the development of inter-agency data sharing agreement for schools and partners
- Work with Lowell Public Schools to identify and pursue funding for aligned activities
- Adhere to Lowell Public Schools policy during school-affiliated activities

**Elevate New England will:**

- Provide social emotional support via high-dosage mentoring, cross-age mentoring, and accredited social emotional courses for up to 1045 Lowell Public Schools students
- Work with Lowell Public Schools to operationalize mentoring framework as an intervention for students identified as in need of social emotional support
- Communicate with school-based teams regarding case-management of students receiving mentoring services per data sharing agreement
- Support with transportation to school activities with parent/guardian consent
- Inform strategic planning of integrated student supports and community schools in Lowell
- Co-facilitate the Lowell Student Advisory Council
- Work with Lowell Public Schools to identify and pursue funding for aligned activities
- Adhere to Lowell Public Schools policy during school-affiliated activities

**Lowell Community Health Center will:**

- Work with FSCS Managers to ensure program staff receive orientation to FSCS goals
- Provide access to onsite clinical services at existing school-based health centers at the Stoklosa Middle School and Lowell High School.
- Co-facilitate project of opening a third school-based health center at Robinson Middle School to address student, family, and community need *contingent on funding availability*
- At the Lowell Career Academy, provide quarterly limited clinical services such as testing, treatment and counseling for STIs, birth control counseling and education and other reproductive healthcare services
- Provide a health educator to facilitate small-group reproductive health workshop via TeenBlock program at Lowell Community Schools sites at mutually agreed upon times
- Provide support, supervision, and coaching of all LCHC program staff at the FSCS
- Provide referrals to LCHC for students requiring additional services
- Provide overall oversight of onsite clinical services

**MassHire Lowell Career Center** will:

- Be on site as the Pathways Coach completing career action plans with students
- Provide internship sites and site management for for-credit school day internships
- Assist students with part time job opportunities and enrollment into post-secondary trainings.
- Work with Lowell Public Schools to identify and pursue funding for aligned activities
- Adhere to Lowell Public Schools policy during school-affiliated activities

**Mill City Grows** will provide:

- **School Programming:** MCG proposes to support schools across the district with programming that is accessible to the entire school community. The goal of program reach is 5300 students, 5300 family members, and 17000 students. Open Houses: In September Mill City Grows will attend Open House events at 6 schools where we will sign up parents and students to receive information about the School Garden distribute produce grown by the students, and educate families about our programming.
- **In School Programming:** MCG proposes offering full day programs (5 hours) at 12 different schools (or 6 schools with a Fall and Spring event at each), over the course of the 2022-23 school year. These events would engage as much of the school community as possible with different classes coming to the garden in sections to engage in harvesting and cooking produce in the Fall, or planting and planning gardens in the Spring. These events will also help tend to school garden maintenance and development while engaging students, teachers and administrators across the school community.
- **Family School Garden Work Days:** MCG proposes offering 6 work days at different middle schools across the district that engage students and families in garden maintenance, planting and planning work. These will be educational experiences for students, family members, and school staff that will also increase engagement and ownership of the garden spaces while doing the important work of making the garden a vibrant and operational growing space.
- **Professional Development Offerings:** MCG proposes a series of tailored professional development opportunities throughout the school year, for the purposes of making gardens more welcoming and accessible to teachers, and to ensure all staff involved in gardens are properly trained.
- **Afterschool Programming and Technical Support** Our work will include nutrition, culinary and garden-based lessons. Programs include technical support, planning, and co-teaching for four

community school sites. Materials for these activities is included, and will provide support for student assisted planning and maintenance activities for 16 gardens, as well as any materials needed for afterschool programming in the 4 schools where this programming is offered.

- Farm to Table Cooking Classes: January: 4 in-person sessions offering recipes that are Harvest of the Month themed. These sessions will be planned and executed in collaboration with LPS Food and Nutrition. February: 4 in-person sessions offering recipes that are School Menu themed. These sessions will be planned and executed in collaboration with LPS Food and Nutrition.

**Project LEARN will:**

- Co-facilitate Lowell Community Schools strategy development aligned with LPS strategic plan
- Provide brand building and marketing for Lowell Community Schools via allotted funding
- Co-develop an annual community engagement event for students and families that involves 300 family and community members
- Work with Lowell Public Schools to identify and pursue funding for aligned activities
- Adhere to Lowell Public Schools policy during school-affiliated activities

**University of Massachusetts, Lowell will:**

- Provide tutoring and student teaching for students at Lowell Community Schools.
- Provide program evaluation for the Full Service Community School grant and broader Lowell Community Schools strategy, per Evaluation Plan detailed in Section VI.

**Additional partnerships will be coordinated at school sites by Community School managers.**

**VI. Quality of the Project Evaluation**

By FY28, Lowell Community Schools will measure progress toward the following objectives and outcomes (performance measures):

**Objective I: Connect students, families, and community members with partner resources, particularly toward community-identified priority of health and wellness**

Outcome 1) Engage 80% of Community School enrolled students, 40% of family members, and 15% of community residents in Community School zones in school-based partner agency services for a total of 27,341 individuals reached in Year 5.

Table: Program Reach (GPRA) Measure

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Students Pop: 6653	3992 (60%)	4324 (65%)	4657 (70%)	4990 (75%)	5322 (80%)
Families Pop: 13,306	2661	3327	3992	4657	5322 (40%)
Community Pop 111,311	5,566	7,792	10,018	13,357	16697(15%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,219</b>	<b>15,443</b>	<b>18,667</b>	<b>23,004</b>	<b>27,341</b>

Families are identified using a 3:1 proxy for enrolled students in eight community schools

Community residents are the Lowell Population in the 2020 Census - 111,311, though this number does not reflect substantial increase in population of recent immigrant and refugee families.

Outcome 2) Increase provision of health services, i.e. 70% of enrolled students in Community Schools receive school-based health services by FY28. Baseline: >10% in FY22

**Objective II: Improve student engagement in a positive school climate**

Outcome 3) Increase students' school connectedness, i.e. 78% of students are connected to school per self-report survey

Outcome 4) Decrease Chronic Absenteeism rate by ten percentage points; 2 percentage points per year. Baseline: 38.5% in FY22

**Objective III: Improve student performance outcomes to strengthen equity in educational opportunity and success**

Outcome 5) Increase overall four-year graduation rate eight percentage points, increasing by 1.6 percentage points annually for five years. Baseline: 80% in FY22

Outcome 6) Increase subgroup four-year graduation rates of Hispanic/Latinx students by ten percentage points each (two percentage points annually) Baseline: 68% in FY22

Outcome 7) Increase percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary education or training by fifteen percentage points. Baseline: 65% in FY22

**Evaluation Plan**

The UMass Lowell Center for Program Evaluation will provide external formative and summative program evaluation services for Years 1-5 of the proposed FY23 Full-Service Community School grant which serves students, families, and community members across eight

district schools. An objectives-based model and an improvement-focus approach will guide the evaluation.

The evaluation team will:

- develop with stakeholders a logic model of the program's theory of action toward above referenced objectives
- Obtain Institutional Review Board approval to conduct research using de-identified student information with quantitative (program reach, attendance, graduation, postsecondary outcomes) and qualitative (school connectedness survey, focus groups)
- monitor and analyze the initiative's data on a bi-annual basis
- meet with the grant staff quarterly to provide formative feedback based on evaluation process, data collection, and findings.
- write two (2) reports, Annual Performance Report and Ad Hoc Report, to be submitted to the Department of Education

### **Purpose**

The aim of the process evaluation will be to not only gauge whether or not different services have reached the target population (i.e., program implementation and monitoring), but also to help program leaders adjust the services as needed. The outcome evaluation aims to assess whether the initiative achieves its intended goals or not, and the sustainability and cost of the services.

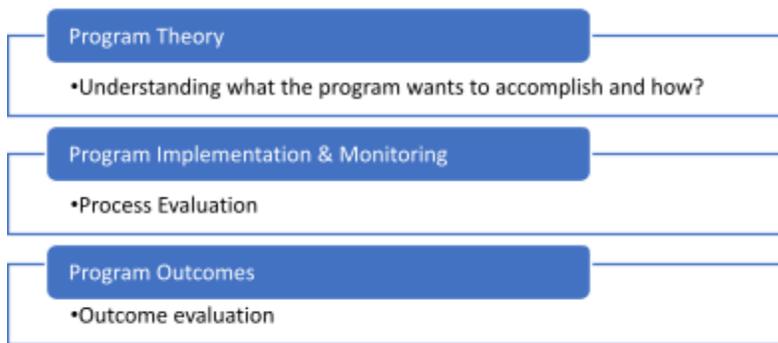
### **Evaluation Approach and Design**

Given the comprehensive nature of this initiative, we will adopt a systematic approach (Rossi et al., 2004) to the evaluation tasks. Under this approach, we see our evaluation work as consisting of assessing three major issues (or components), namely, program theory (understanding what

the program wants to accomplish and how), program implementation and monitoring (i.e., process evaluation), and program outcomes (i.e., outcome evaluation). In this section, we will provide a high-level description of how we would approach each evaluative task under the systematic approach to evaluation framework as outlined by Rossi and his colleagues (2004) (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

*Evaluation Components*



Although our approach is systematic in nature following the social science tradition, the nature of our evaluative inquiry will be highly collaborative in nature because we see project stakeholder groups as an integral partner in the evaluation effort. Moreover, we expect that stakeholders will participate in most if not all aspects of the evaluation tasks (e.g., co-constructing logic model, prioritizing evaluation focus and questions, collecting, and providing data to the evaluation team, sharing feedback on the evaluation products, and implementing changes based on evaluation findings, etc.).

***Understanding the Initiative’s Theory of Action: Logic Model Development***

We first plan to work closely and collaboratively with key stakeholders on a logic model that depicts the theory of action of the initiative. In other words, the logic model will connect the outcome indicators (i.e., the intended goals) with what the program does (i.e., program implementation and process indicator variables) to bring forth change and under what conditions (i.e., contextual variables). The logic model will help to prioritize the evaluation focus and guide the evaluation effort once created and agreed by all stakeholder groups and the evaluation team.

### ***Process Evaluation***

The purpose of the process evaluation will be formative and will focus on two areas: service utilization and program organization. Service utilization evaluation will examine the extent to which the intended target population receives the services, whereas program organization evaluation will assess whether the program service delivery and support functions are consistent with the program design. In addition, we will also look at the types of resources that are needed to deliver the program services according to the plan. The following types of questions will guide the process evaluation (note: The term “program” in the questions can be conceptualized broadly as referring to all aspects of this initiative):

1. How many persons are receiving services?
2. Are those receiving services the intended targets?
3. Are they receiving the proper amount, type, and quality of services?
4. Are there targets who are not receiving services or subgroups within the target population who are underrepresented among those receiving services?
5. Are members of the target population aware of the program services?
6. Are necessary program functions being performed adequately?

7. Is staffing sufficient in numbers and competencies for the functions that must be performed?
8. Is the program well organized? Do staff members work well with each other?
9. Does the program coordinate effectively with other programs and agencies with which it must interact?
10. Are resources, facilities, and funding adequate to support important program functions?
11. Are resources used effectively and efficiently?
12. Are participants satisfied with their interactions with program personnel and procedures?
13. Are participants satisfied with the services they are receiving?

We will work collaboratively with the stakeholders to set the criteria for judging what appropriate, adequate, sufficient, or satisfactory means.

In addition to utilizing data that are routinely collected by stakeholders on program implementation (e.g., on-time and target reached scores, records of services provided, program process, barriers, challenges, and lessons learned), we also plan to collect additional data such as focus group interviews of stakeholders and program participants. In addition, we suggest embedding a client satisfaction survey (for program participants) as part of the service delivery so that program staff can collect data as they are providing services.

We anticipate our data analysis will be mostly descriptive, both quantitatively and qualitatively. For instance, frequency analysis of quantitative indicator variables will provide a broad understanding of service delivery, client satisfaction, and factors that might promote or hinder program implementation. Content analysis of qualitative data such as focus group interviews will generate themes with regard to similar topics (e.g., service delivery, factors promoting or hindering program implementation, etc.).

### ***Outcome Evaluation***

The evaluation design for our outcome evaluation will be quasi-experimental with a mixed-methods approach. When assessing the impact of the program on students, their families, and the community, we will construct comparison groups to the greatest extent possible. For instance, when examining the student outcomes, we could create a comparison group of students similar to program participant students (360) through propensity score matching (if we have a large enough pool of non-program students to match from). Because it is not always easy to create a matching group for families and community, we might consider utilizing interrupted time series design to examine the impact of the program on family and community. The following questions will guide the outcome evaluation:

1. Does the program have an impact on students, their families, and the community?
2. Does the program have a differential impact on students of different demographic backgrounds?
3. Is there any relationship between program implementation quality and program impact?
4. What is the cost of providing services (in particular, we would ask questions related to cost-effectiveness)?

Our outcome indicators will be in the areas of academic, occupational, social, and health. We will take full advantage of the data that are available or routinely collected by the project staff. For instance, credit earning, graduation, and school attendance data, and postsecondary data will be extracted from existing administrative data and de-identified by authorized school staff prior to sharing with CPE. Data on feelings of school connectedness and client satisfaction of students, families, and community members will be gathered from the school/community questionnaires. Qualitative data (e.g., those collected from the process evaluation in order to understand program

implementation) will be utilized to understand the connection between program implementation and program impact.

In addition to gauging the program impact on outcome indicators, we will also assess the program impact against the cost so as to determine the sustainability and cost issues for delivering the program's services. We will implement an ingredient approach when considering the cost and conduct cost-effectiveness analysis if feasible (Levin & McEwan, 2001).

We will conduct both descriptive (e.g., frequency and descriptive statistics) and inferential statistical analysis (e.g., analysis of covariance) of the quantitative data when examining the program impact. Qualitatively, we will conduct content analysis and look for emergent themes. In addition, we will examine the relationship between program implementation and impact by quantifying the implementation measures and running correlation or regression analysis.

### **Capacity of Evaluation Team**

The Center for Program Evaluation (CPE) offers program evaluation services that support UMass Lowell's mission of research, teaching, and service to the community and industry. There are currently 33 faculty, staff, and student affiliates of CPE, all of whom conduct program evaluation in a variety of fields. CPE members have expertise in areas such as K-12 education, higher education, community programs, criminal justice, psychology, sociology, health services, work environment, and business. The collaboration among members allows for strong support and evaluation capacity. Some of the activities conducted by CPE include: providing consultation in program evaluation, including assistance with writing these elements of grant proposals; conducting internal and/or external evaluations for programs and grant funded projects; housing specialized program evaluation staff and resources; serving as a clearinghouse

for matching requests for program evaluation with appropriate university faculty and staff; conducting program evaluation and data analysis workshops; and executing high level research on program evaluation. The CPE affiliates that will be working on this project include [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] *Principal Investigator*

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Ph.D., is an associate professor of Research and Evaluation at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, co-director of UMass Lowell's Center for Program Evaluation, and chair of the School of Education. Her expertise lies in research and evaluation of educational programs. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has been conducting grant funded internal and external program evaluations for over 20 years. She was formally the director of the School Program Evaluation and Research center at the University of Kansas. She has been teaching graduate level program evaluation and data analysis classes for more than 25 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Kansas and a master's degree and doctorate in cognitive psychology from UMass Amherst. She has served as an external evaluator, internal evaluator, co-PI, or PI on over 25 federally and state funded grants. She has evaluated K-12 as well as higher education programs, including the educational components of other NSF grants. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will be primarily responsible will be responsible for overseeing the evaluation of the 5-year program.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] *Center for Program Evaluation Manager*

[REDACTED] Ed.D., is the manager for the Center for Program Evaluation and an adjunct professor for the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. She has been managing and providing support on research grants and interdisciplinary projects since

2008. She has been teaching graduate level education classes (including program evaluation) for more than 10 years. She has evaluated K-12 as well as higher education programs, including the educational components of other NSF grants since 2015. She has been a Board of Trustee for an alternative charter school that serves youth placed at risk of dropping out for more than three years. Prior to working at UMass Lowell, [REDACTED] served as a high school mathematics teacher in alternative schools in San Francisco and New Orleans as well as a Human Resources Coordinator and Manager of Training and Development of a bank in New Orleans. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Art Studio from Tulane University, a Masters of Education from the University of New Orleans, and a Doctorate of Education in Leadership in Schooling from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. [REDACTED] will be responsible for ensuring the successful planning, implementation, collection, and analysis of the evaluation components of the program evaluation. She will also be responsible for managing evaluation logistics and assisting with writing of the evaluation reports.

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