

Project Narrative: Building Fairfield Community Schools

Primary Applicant: United Way of Central Alabama, Inc.

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SECTION 1 - NEED FOR PROJECT

United Way of Central Alabama (UWCA), in partnership with Fairfield City Schools (FCS), and other community partners, is implementing a Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) strategy to address the comprehensive needs and educational proficiency goals of Fairfield students. Through cross-sector collaboration, and in partnership with students and families, Fairfield Community Schools will develop solutions to put youth on a pathway towards academic and career success and will transform schools into community hubs that support and uplift all Fairfield residents.

After several years of community and school leadership engagement, and the addition of numerous pipeline services designed to support students and families, UWCA, Fairfield City Schools, and dozens of community partners have identified the successful implementation of Full-Service Community Schools as a priority within Fairfield. Due to the support of Fairfield leaders and buy-in from community members, UWCA's Board of Directors approved a [REDACTED] investment in July 2023 to continue the momentum in creating Full-Service Community Schools and provide the seed funding to incorporate additional elements of the Pipeline of Services within all four Fairfield City Schools locations. This investment has resulted in the anticipated hiring of two Community School Coordinators in two school locations this fall and establishes the foundation for expanding services to include two additional coordinators, placing a coordinator at all four school locations and allowing for full implementation of the Community Schools strategy across the entire school district.

Fairfield and United Way of Central Alabama: A History of Partnership

The United Way of Central Alabama was founded in 1923 to provide essential services to people in need. Originally based in Birmingham, UWCA expanded its services to include Fairfield in the mid-1930's, and currently supports communities across six counties through a variety of services and programs. The relationship between Fairfield and UWCA has since continued to develop into one of support and mutual trust, as more programs, services and partnerships have emerged over the years.

UWCA provides annual financial support to several partner agencies that operate within Fairfield, including Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of North Central Alabama, and Habitat for Humanity, among others. Through the United Way's Area Agency on Aging, 130 Fairfield residents received 7,600 meals in 2022 at the Fairfield Senior Center. Additionally, 46 Fairfield seniors were served through the United Way's Meals on Wheels program, which provides home delivery of meals to homebound seniors.



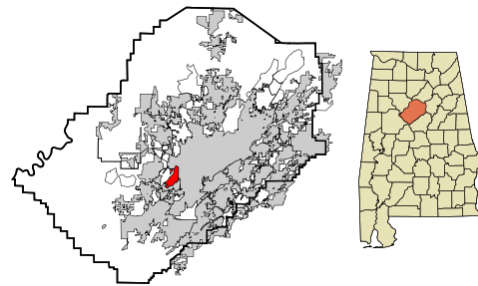
*Community School Partners and UWCA with Fairfield Mayor
Eddie Penny*

In addition to providing direct services to families and financially supporting a network of 80 United Way Agencies, along with hundreds more community-based organizations through grants, UWCA manages the Bold Goals Coalition, which is a regional collective-impact effort that builds cross-sector partnerships to improve health and education

outcomes. Fairfield City Schools Superintendents have been a part of the Coalition's Leadership Team since its beginning, and key district staff have been involved in regional efforts around topics such as mental health and literacy.

Fairfield, Alabama

Located ten minutes west of Birmingham in central Alabama, the city of Fairfield has a population of 9,960 residents (U.S. Census, 2023) and 1,544 K-12 students.



Map showing the location of Fairfield in Jefferson County and in Alabama, from Wikimedia Commons

Fairfield (est. 1910) was originally founded and designed as an industrial town for the Tennessee Coal and Iron (TCI) Company after it was purchased by the United States Steel Company. The town was designed to be both serviceable and beautiful. Close to the rail lines that brought locally mined iron ore into the nearby steel plant, U.S. Steel brought in a landscape designer from Boston to create a master plan of walkable neighborhoods and green parks (Morris & White, 1989). In 1908, TCI granted land to Miles College, a Historically Black College founded ten years earlier, to relocate its campus to Fairfield in exchange for purchasing their existing campus in the nearby village of Docena.

Fairfield was incorporated as a municipality in 1919, and continued to grow alongside the associated steel plant, U.S. Steel Fairfield Works. In 1924, the city built one of the first high



Postcard: "Bird's Eye View of Development in Corey, Alabama" (1910), Wade Hall Postcard Collection, Troy University. [Fair Use]

schools for Black and African American students in the area, Fairfield Industrial High School, and boasted one of the largest industrial hospitals of the time for TCI employees and their families. In the 1960's, U.S. Steel Fairfield Works employed about 15,000 people – as many as the number of citizens

living in Fairfield at the time. However, U.S. Steel encountered several union strikes over subsequent decades that shuttered production. During one such strike in 1982, U.S. Steel failed to

reach an agreement with the local steelworkers' union and laid off 4,000 employees (Chavez, 1982), creating a crisis of food insecurity in the area as many could no longer afford to feed themselves or their families. The dire situation led the United Way of Central Alabama, in conjunction with the Greater Birmingham Foundation, to create the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama. Though the strike eventually ended, and U.S. Steel welcomed back laid-off employees, the partnership with the Community Food Bank continued. Today, the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama supplies millions of meals annually to families across 12 Alabama counties (CFBCA, 2022).

Fairfield continued to be a thriving community that included the second enclosed mall built in Alabama, with premiere stores and a renowned food court, as well as a large shopping center with a large brand-named grocery and home goods store. Unfortunately, as the fortunes of the steel plant began to wane, so did the city that was dependent upon it. From 15,000 employees in the 1960's, Fairfield Works employed less than 2,000 people in 2010.

In 2015, U.S. Steel announced the closure of its Fairfield Works Mill, "a steel mill that ha[d] been at the center of the city's economy and culture for over a century" (Green, 2015), letting go of more than 1,500 of its remaining employees. In 2016, the discount grocery and home goods retailer, Fairfield's largest remaining source of tax revenue and employer of over 260 residents, closed (Poe, 2016). Beset with economic instability and unable to retain their own police department, Fairfield contracted services from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department in 2019, and declared bankruptcy in 2020 (Faulk, 2020). Within the last 15 years, Fairfield had lost its single largest employer, hospital, mall, grocery store, and much of its police force.

Fairfield's current demographics reflect the debilitating economic decline the city has seen over the last decade. As illustrated in Fairfield's socioeconomic demographics in **Table 1**, below, the city is marked by high rates of poverty, violence, unstable housing, and limited access to academic and community resources that have been shown to negatively impact the physical and mental health of families and the academic outcomes of students (Chávez & Aquilar, 2021).

The socioeconomic data shows Fairfield in a worse position than the state in many areas. Fairfield's poverty rate of 19.6% is 3.5 percentage points higher than the 16.1% poverty rate for Alabama. The area's per capita income of [REDACTED] is 26% lower than that of the state, and the median household income of [REDACTED] is 20% lower than the state median. Less than 54% of housing is owner-occupied, a rate significantly lower than the state's rate of nearly 70%. The median value of owner-occupied housing is [REDACTED], 64% lower than the state's median housing value of [REDACTED].

Additionally, a quarter of Fairfield households do not have access to broadband services, creating a barrier to academic success and financial mobility in an increasingly digital economy. In terms of educational attainment, Fairfield's high school diploma attainment rate of almost 95% is higher than the state's rate of 87.4%. However, when looking at post-secondary educational attainment for adults aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree, that rate falls to 22.3% compared to the state's rate of 26.7%, illustrating a breakdown in community transitions from secondary education to post-secondary opportunities. In terms of racial and ethnic demographics, Fairfield's population is primarily comprised of Black or African American persons, making up 92.2% of residents, while White persons make up 5.1%, and Hispanic or Latino persons make up 1%. This demographic makeup is analogous to the city's school system.

TABLE 1: City of Fairfield Socioeconomic Data		
Indicators	Fairfield	Alabama
Population	9,690	5,074,296
% Persons under age 5	5.90%	5.70%
% Persons under age 18	21.50%	21.90%
% Persons Age 65+	15.30%	18%
Median household income (2016-2020)	██████	██████
Per capita income in past 12 months (2016-2020)	██████	██████
% Persons living in poverty	19.60%	16.10%
Total # of Households	3,944	1,902,983
Owner-Occupied Housing Rate	53.20%	69.40%
Median Housing Value of Owner-Occupied Housing	██████	██████
Households with a computer	89.80%	89.70%
Household with broadband	75%	82%
High school diploma or higher (age 25+)	94.60%	87.40%
Bachelor's degree or higher (age 25+)	22.30%	26.70%
% Persons with a disability (under age 65)	11.60%	11.50%
% Persons without health insurance (under age 65)	14.40%	11.80%
% Black	92.20%	26.80%
% White	5.10%	68.90%
% Latino	1%	4.90%
Two or more races	3%	1.90%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Fairfield City Schools

The mounting economic struggles from the loss of industry and the recent COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted, and continues to impact, Fairfield City Schools. All Alabama public schools were ordered closed from March 18 through April 3, 2020 by the Alabama State Department of Education. As the pandemic raged, schools and library closures were extended through the end of the academic school year. Remote learning options continued throughout the 2020-21 school year– a difficult proposition when a quarter of city households have no broadband internet access. However, in spite of these challenges, Fairfield City Schools was the only district of its demographic makeup that continued to offer an in-person learning option throughout the entire 2020-21 school year as an acknowledgement of the barriers to virtual learning that local families faced. This illustrates the commitment of district leadership and staff to ensure academic opportunities and social supports for students and families.

Beginning in 2022 the district underwent a significant reconfiguration to create environments that promote academic success, with students now aggregated into age-appropriate grade bands. While the district previously had K-6th grade students enrolled in three elementary schools and 7th – 12th grade students enrolled at the high school, the district now serves K-2nd grade students at Robinson Primary School, 3rd – 5th grade students at Glen Oaks Intermediate School, 6th –8th grade students at C.J. Donald Middle School, and 9th –12th grade students at Fairfield High Preparatory School. The restructuring was designed to allow for greater collaboration among teachers and school staff and promote age-appropriate learning environments. The recent transition creates an ideal opportunity to design Community School services that meet the unique needs of each school site.

According to the most recent education report card issued by the Alabama State Department of Education for 2021-22, Fairfield City Schools has a total student enrollment of 1,544 students. Within the student population there are indicators of low literacy rates, high incidences of chronic absenteeism, many students experiencing homelessness, and weak college readiness. **Table 2** summarizes the district's demographics and performance.

The district also faces significant resource gaps in addressing academic performance and career readiness. While the school district has a 92.97% graduation rate, only 64% of students are considered to be college and career ready based on Alabama's College and Career Strategic Plan, which requires students to meet certain criteria, such as earning dual-enrollment credit, receiving technical credentials or scoring as college-ready on the ACT. On average, only 24% of all elementary school-aged children were deemed proficient in English Language Arts (ELA), about 5.5 % were proficient in math, and only around 12% were proficient in science.

These academic outcomes occur within community and household environments that make academic success an incredible challenge for students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). For instance, approximately 76.5% of high school students are economically disadvantaged, 19.3% are experiencing homelessness, and nearly 18% have disabilities. Reporting for the three elementary schools, before district restructuring, also had alarming numbers, with nearly 10 -15% of students at the elementary schools experiencing homelessness and between approximately 71-82% of students being economically disadvantaged. Chronic absenteeism ranged from less than one percent to almost a quarter of elementary students, lessening in-school learning time for those students while damaging attendance counts important for FCS to receive per-student state support.

TABLE 2: Fairfield City Schools Student Data				
	Robinson Elementary (K-6)	Glen Oaks Elementary (K-6)	Donald Elementary (K-6)	Fairfield Preparatory High (7-12)
Total Enrollment	210	220	269	745
Chronic Absenteeism	0.41%	35.39%	24.62%	28.18%
Economically Disadvantaged	81.90%	71.82%	80.30%	76.51%
Homeless	10%	12.27%	14.87%	19.33%
Students with Disabilities	18.10%	15%	11.90%	17.99%
Students with Limited English Proficiency	-	2.73%	-	0.94%
English Language Arts Proficiency (ELA)	22.66%	23.74%	26.63%	17.38%
Math Proficiency	3.91%	7.97%	4.73%	1.18%
Science Proficiency	10.81%	13.79%	10.87%	6.87%
Graduation Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	92.97%
College & Career Readiness Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	64%
% Black	95.71%	95%	92.94%	96.73%
% White	-	-	-	1.80%
% American Indian/Alaskan Native	-	-	-	-
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-
% Latino	-	5%	4.83%	2.29%

Source: AL State Dept of Education, 2021-22 Report Card

Facing a range of community challenges and various levels of family instability, students within FCS require school environments that not only provide quality academic instruction, but also provide supports to remove the barriers that make learning possible.

Impending Impact of Alabama Literacy Act, School Choice, and Graduation Requirements

The low rate of English Language Arts Proficiency, as exhibited in **Table 2**, is of further concern to Fairfield City Schools with the anticipated 2024 implementation of The Alabama Literacy Act— legislation passed by the Alabama State legislature in 2019 to promote reading instruction and improved literacy rates among students. While the Act has provided much-needed funding to Fairfield City Schools for improved core curriculum, and additional reading coaches, it also mandates that all 3rd grade students in public schools must meet grade-level reading standards before advancing to 4th grade. Popularized as a statewide effort to improve literacy among all school children, it is anticipated that, once implemented, a massive cohort of children will be retained in 3rd grade, including many within Fairfield. Research has shown that grade retention increases the likelihood that a student will drop out of school before obtaining a high school diploma, disproportionately affecting Black or African American and Latina or Hispanic girls (Hughes, et al., 2018). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state postponed the law's implementation until the 2023-24 school year. However, additional investments are needed to position a large percentage of students towards proficiency. Through the Community School strategy, Fairfield City Schools and partners will work to decrease the number of children that may need to be held back in the 3rd grade for not meeting reading standards by increasing programs dedicated to early reading interventions, as outlined in Section 2.

Additionally, the Alabama Accountability Act (Alabama, 2013), passed in 2013, requires the bottom 6% of schools, as measured by the percentage of students who are proficient on

standardized tests taken the previous spring, to be labeled as “failing”, and allows students and families who attend those schools to be notified and provided with alternative educational options, including remaining in the school, transferring to a neighboring public school district, or enrolling in a private school. Fairfield High Preparatory School was listed on the Alabama Failing Schools List for 2022(Alabama State Department of Education, 2022; Powell Crain, 2022). Families who choose to leave a failing school can receive a tax voucher and become exempt from paying state taxes, an approach that could further reduce tax income for districts with “failing” schools, including Fairfield City Schools.

The Alabama State Department of Education also amended high school graduation requirements in 2022 to mandate a college and career readiness credential, such as advanced placement (AP) or dual-enrollment credit, technical credentials, or acceptance into the military. The law will go into effect during the 2027- 28 school year, requiring additional support across the elementary and secondary pipeline to bridge the gap between the 93% of FCS students currently graduating with adequate credits and the 64% who currently meet the appropriate college and career readiness criteria.

Student Social Services and Support

Fairfield City Schools has been a leader within Alabama schools districts in integrating behavioral health services within academic environments. In 2020, Fairfield City Schools was included in a state-funded pilot program to create a new Mental Health Coordinator position to manage behavioral health programs across all school locations, including in-school individual and group counseling, and referrals to offsite providers. The success of the program within Fairfield and other pilot locations led the Alabama Legislature to approve funding for similar coordinators within every public school district in the state in 2022. While the Mental Health Coordinators are

primarily tasked with developing strategies to address student mental health and managing appropriate staff training, the integration of social services within school districts also supports families and school staff in accessing mental health resources in the community and assisting them in navigating mental health systems. This type of support is vital, as research shows that youth are six times more likely to get mental healthcare in schools than in the community (District Leadership Forum, 2020).

From October 2021 to January 2022, Fairfield City Schools, along with surrounding school districts, proactively sought input from students related to their mental health needs and conducted a Student Voices Survey for Student Mental Health. Of the 188 students who participated from Fairfield, only 67% agreed or strongly agreed that they or their classmates have a teacher or other trusted adult they can talk to if something is bothering them. Simultaneously, 23% reported that fear, worries, or sadness make it hard to concentrate on learning and schoolwork (Birmingham Coalition for Student Mental Health, 2022).

FCS has secured several additional investments to expand services to address students' mental health and social-emotional learning (SEL) needs, including a [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. These investments not only illustrate FCS's leadership within the state on enhancing social supports and behavioral health services for students, but also provide a clear indication of the district's ability to identify and secure funding to grow existing services and expand new initiatives.

Impact of Violence

Pervasive violence is a particularly critical issue that must be addressed within the City of Fairfield and among Fairfield City School students. According to FBI crime statistics, Fairfield's violent crime rate is 2,108 per 100,000 people, ranking as the most violent city in Alabama. The overall crime rate is 310% higher than the national average and 219% higher than the Alabama average. Fairfield's violent crime rate is 475% higher than the national average and 313% higher than the Alabama average. Residents have a 1 in 47 chance of being victims of violent crime and a 1 in 12 chance of being victims of property crime (F.B.I. UCR).

Within a two-day period in May 2023, two teenage girls were killed in Fairfield, with two 20-year old adults and a 15-year old child arrested in connection with the shootings (Robinson, May 2023). Less than three weeks later in June, a 16-year old child was killed in Fairfield (Robinson, June 2023), and two children were shot at the end of July (Robinson, July 2023), illustrating how the community violence can tragically impact youth in the community. According to the Student Voice Survey collected by Fairfield City Schools staff, more than 25% of student respondents felt that they had to deal with tough situations outside of school that they believed that no one else understood. Student quotes reflect this dangerous reality, including:

“I heard the sound of a gunshot last night, but I didn’t know until today that it was my friend that was being shot.”

-3rd grade Fairfield City School Student, Student Voices Survey 2021

“My brother was killed in our backyard a couple of years ago. But ever since then, the rest of my family has never been the same. I don’t know how to describe it, but it’s like my mom and my siblings haven’t been right since then.”

- 7th grade Fairfield City School student, Student Voices Survey 2021

“My auntie was shot, and now I’m the one that needs to protect my family.”

- 1st grade Fairfield City School student, Student Voices Survey 2021

Community-level violence impacts the school climate as well, resulting in behavioral incidents across school locations. During the 2021 - 2022 school year, there were 328 student incidents reported, with fighting and disorderly conduct making up 31% of all cases. In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 289 student incidents reported, with fighting and disorderly conduct making up 27% of all cases.

The information paints a clear picture: while there is improvement in the number of student incidents, students in Fairfield City Schools continue to require social and emotional support, conflict resolution skills, and trauma-informed counseling and coping mechanisms. The students need opportunities to build trusting relationships with adults in their community. Through comprehensive mentoring and restorative practices, as well as increasing the number of students accessing individual and group mental health services, Fairfield City Schools, through the Community School strategy, will ultimately improve health and mental well-being among students

and families, create safer school environments, and improve the factors that influence community violence. The details of these programs can be found in Section 2.

Community Schools as Strategy for Strengthening Families and Communities

Many barriers stand in the way of student success, family stability, and community economic mobility, yet community leadership and investments, strong community partners, and innovative approaches within the school district position the community for positive long-term outcomes. Through investments in a provision of pipeline services for FCS students and their families, and greater collaboration among community-based organizations, school leaders, students and families, academic gaps can be closed, student and family services can be more impactful, existing community assets can be maximized, and effective strategies can be enhanced. A five-year investment from the Full-Service Community Schools Program will build on local momentum and multiply existing resources that are positively impacting Fairfield students, families, and community members. The Fairfield Community School plan to successfully implement the Full-Service Community Schools model is detailed in Section 2.

Building Fairfield Community Schools

Based on strong working relationships and established trust across organizations, UWCA and FCS leaders identified an opportunity to spearhead a broader partnership that utilizes the strengths of various organizations, along with the insight and expertise of students, families, and community members, to enhance support for youth and families to achieve better academic outcomes. Planning among city leaders, school district staff and community members began in 2021, and more direct partner engagement around a Community Schools strategy was launched in 2022 and has continued into 2023, leading up to the project launch in the Fall of 2023.

Fairfield City Schools has been a leading district within Alabama in providing a continuum of services and resources to their students, including offering school-based health clinics, a variety of behavioral health supports, and career development opportunities. Fairfield has embraced the Community Schools approach as a strategy to supplement those efforts by integrating additional community-based organizations and partners to further promote strong families and a safe, thriving community.

In March of 2023, more than ninety community members representing over forty organizations came together to develop a plan for launching Community Schools within the district. City leaders, faith leaders, parents, students, community members, business partners, principals, teachers, and community-based organizations established project priorities and embraced Community Schools as a strategy to improve academic success and community development.



*Building Fairfield Community Schools Luncheon.
Source: United Way of Central Alabama*

Following the partner luncheon, a Fairfield Community School Advisory Committee was established, and partners have been engaged in collaboratively working to advance the goals established by the community.

Fairfield Community School Goals

To address the needs as identified above, Fairfield Community School partners have identified the following goals, the details of which can be found in Section 2:

1. *Students enter kindergarten ready to learn:* Fairfield City Schools will continue to support high-quality early childcare and programs that provide Kindergarten transition support, with

additional coordination from the Community School Coordinator based in Robinson Elementary School.

2. *Students succeed academically:* Fairfield City Schools work together with area organizations to ensure students are meeting, and surpassing, academic benchmarks, with a particular focus on English Language Arts proficiency.
3. *Students receive health and social service support to ensure school engagement:* Healthy and supported students do well, both academically and in life. By working with school-based health clinics, hunger-relief organizations, and family-support organizations, students at Fairfield City Schools will have access to much-needed resources to thrive.
4. *Students are College and Career ready:* With increased opportunities for school-based certification programs and dual-enrollment programs with local colleges, students will be better positioned to graduate high-school with a career or degree plan.
5. *Family members are engaged in student success:* When family members are engaged, so are their children. Through continued and intensive family engagement and decision-making, families have input on what is best for their children.
6. *Schools serve as Community Hubs to support healthy families and a thriving Fairfield:* Supporting families and students support a community. Through housing counseling, financial literacy services, and counseling, Fairfield City Schools will encourage a flourishing and safer city.

By integrating health and social services and academic learning, Fairfield is finding new ways to support students and families and create environments where the community thrives.

SECTION 2 - QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

Design Based on Evidence-Based Findings

United Way of Central Alabama, Fairfield City Schools and other community partners embraced the Community Schools strategy as a means for improving student achievement, enhancing community engagement in academic success, and creating a community hub that serves all residents. Through collaborative planning, partners will launch the Full-Service Community School approach during the Fall 2023 Semester with two coordinators providing services for the district's four schools.

This strategy is built upon a foundation of four evidence-based features, or pillars. They are: 1) integrated support (e.g., social and emotional learning, access to health and nutrition services); 2) expanded and enriched learning time (e.g., after-school enrichment and summer school); 3) active family and community engagement; and 4) collaborative leadership and practices to support high-quality teaching. These four pillars are supported by the Science of Learning and Development Alliance (Science of Learning and Development, 2020) and can be used to address the needs of the whole child, including those children and youth whom schools and community partners determine to be most vulnerable.

According to the report *Community Schools as an Effective School Engagement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence*, sponsored by the Learning Policy Institute and the National Education Policy Center, "Increasing economic inequality and residential segregation have triggered a resurgence of interest in community schools -- a century-old approach to making schools places where children can learn and thrive, even in under-resourced and underserved neighborhoods." The report goes on to state, "Community schools represent a place-based strategy in which schools

partner with community agencies and allocate resources to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement” (Maier, et al., 2017). As an underserved and under-resourced city with a school district led by innovative thinkers and a community committed to returning the area to its past vibrancy, Fairfield stands ready to implement and benefit from the Full-Service Community Schools strategy.

Introduction to Key Program Partners

Fairfield City Schools (FCS) is an independent municipal school district in western Jefferson County, Alabama. It is governed by the Fairfield Board of Education and had an enrolled population of 1,544 K-12 students during the 2021-22 school year. Based upon a new reconfiguration plan implemented with the start of the 2022-23 school year, the district operates four schools: Robinson Primary School (K-2), Glen Oaks Intermediate School (grades 3–5), C.J. Donald Middle School (grades 6–8), and Fairfield High Preparatory School (grades 9–12). This model is a distinct change from previous years when three elementary schools housed K-6 students, and middle and high school students (grades 7-12) were placed together at a single high school.

Fairfield City Schools has implemented several programs and student and family services aligned with the Community School strategy, which will position the district for immediate success in implementing a broader range of services. With local funding in place to hire two Community School Coordinators beginning in the Fall 2023 semester, investments from the Full- Service Community Schools Grant Program will allow the district to expand the program to hire two additional coordinators, which will allow for all four schools to have a full-time, on-site

Coordinator managing a Community School strategy that is unique to the students, families and school staff within each location.

United Way of Central Alabama (UWCA) - UWCA is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, one of the top 15 largest United Ways in the United States, and the largest United Way in Alabama. Established in 1923, UWCA's mission is to increase the organized capacity of people to care for one another and to improve their community. UWCA currently has more than 100 partner agencies and programs, supported by one of the most generous communities in the nation. In 2022, UWCA's annual campaign generated a record [REDACTED] in financial pledges, and federal, state, and local grants to UWCA provided an additional [REDACTED] of services across the six-county Central Alabama area. In 2022, UWCA served 50,777 clients across its various community initiatives.

In addition to providing direct services and annually allocating financial resources to a network of social service organizations, UWCA provides administrative support for the Bold Goals Coalition, a regional collective-impact effort working to address Central Alabama's largest challenges. The Coalition brings together private businesses, non-profit organizations, school districts, municipalities, and philanthropic organizations to collaboratively find long-term solutions that can be scaled across the region. The Coalition is a member of the Strive Together and Coalition for Community School networks, two national leaders in developing cradle-to-career systems.

Over the past six years, the Bold Goals Coalition has built a productive and mutually supportive relationship with Fairfield City Schools educational leadership team, including the previous and current Superintendents. Working with Coalition partners, FCS and UWCA have

created strategies aligned with Community School’s Four Pillars, and engaged community stakeholders to receive their input into both community needs and Community Schools.

The partnership has progressed so positively, that UWCA’s Board of Directors voted in July 2023 to invest [REDACTED] into the Full Service Community School strategy in Fairfield. With this investment, UWCA, FCS and community partners will continue transforming schools into community hubs.

UWCA will serve as the lead applicant and grantee for the FSCS program. Responsibilities will include program administration, fiscal management, hiring and placing site coordinators, serving as the primary liaison to the federal agency, and ensuring all program goals and objectives are met.

Samford University (Samford) – Located in Birmingham, Alabama, Samford is a private institution of higher learning internationally recognized as a globally engaged teaching and research university. The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) and Times for Higher Education both ranked Samford as #1 in the nation for student engagement. The WSJ also ranked the institution as Alabama’s top ranked university. In collaboration with UWCA and FCS, Samford University faculty will lead the program evaluation. Their responsibilities will include helping to establish program goals, objectives, and outcomes, developing an evaluation and data collection plan, aggregating data, reporting outcomes, and making recommendations to refine program operations, efficiency, and effectiveness.

In 2021, Samford University established a cultural partnership with Miles College, a HBCU serving the Fairfield community, with student projects gathering cultural data and feeding into the “Vision of Fairfield” master plan for the city’s economic development (Smith, 2021).

In 2017, Samford University Orlean Beeson School of Education entered a partnership with Fairfield City Schools to improve student learning and performance in mathematics. The partnership served to enhance Fairfield teachers' mathematics content and pedagogy knowledge to strengthen their conceptual framework in mathematics and to equip them with research-based strategies to improve student learning (Samford University, n.d.).

Cahaba Medical Care (CMC) - Cahaba Medical Care is a Community Health Center (FQHC), accredited as a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and Joint Commission. CMC operates four school-based health clinics within all FCS locations, serving students, their families and school staff. A community-wide clinic also operates within the Forest Hills Community Development Center, a school-owned facility, which provides comprehensive primary health and mental health care to members of the community.

Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) -- The *Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI)* is a statewide K-12 initiative within ALSDE that works to support the enhancement of high-quality instruction that will prepare all students with the literacy skills needed to meet or exceed grade-level standards. The goal of ARI is to significantly improve reading instruction and ultimately achieve 100% literacy among school students. ARI is committed to carrying out their mission within Fairfield City Schools by working with Community Schools partners to promote high-quality instruction and academic supports that are aligned with the Science of Reading.

Alabama Multi-Tier System of Supports (AL-MTSS) is an ALSDE initiative that provides districts with a comprehensive and prevention-based framework that encompasses the academic, behavioral, and foundational wellness needs that support the whole child. AL-MTSS uses a proactive, team-driven approach that engages all stakeholders (state, regional, district, school

community, family, and students) to ensure equitable, safe, positive, and personalized support that assists all students along their educational journey. Fairfield City Schools was selected by ALSDE to participate in the pilot cohort with other select districts across the state to receive training and coaching to assess existing supports and to develop an MTSS plan to further support students.

Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) is a statewide initiative through the ALSDE to improve STEM teaching statewide, including offering professional learning to teachers, resources to facilitate evidence-based instruction, and onsite support and coaching through Math Improvement Coordinators. This initiative will begin serving Fairfield City Schools during the 2023-2024 school year through a full-time Math Support Specialist.

Education Development Center (EDC) - Education Development Center (EDC) is a global nonprofit that advances lasting solutions to improve education, promote health, and expand economic opportunity. Since 1958, we have been a leader in designing, implementing, and evaluating powerful and innovative programs in more than 80 countries around the world.

With expertise in areas such as early childhood development and learning, and youth workforce development, EDC collaborates with public and private partners to create, deliver, and evaluate programs, services, and products. [REDACTED]

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Central Six AlabamaWorks! - Central Six AlabamaWorks! is an industry-driven organization that effectively synchronizes the private, public, and nonprofit/philanthropic sectors toward generating clear and contiguous pathways to living-wage employment, while establishing a workforce that is responsive to the existing and evolving needs of the local economy. Central Six AlabamaWorks! is partnering with Fairfield City Schools to launch a new Modern Manufacturing program in the Fall 2023 Semester that will allow students to gain certifications and credentials in high-demand jobs across Alabama.

Better Basics - Better Basics is an independent nonprofit that works to eradicate literacy among children in Central Alabama by providing a comprehensive range of research-based intervention and enrichment programs to children from birth to 12th grade to empower the educationally vulnerable. Better Basics currently manages a 21st Century Learning Program within all Fairfield City School locations and is dedicated to aligning with Community Schools partners to provide additional resources to advance Fairfield City's children reading and mathematics literacy through academic enrichment and mediation opportunities.

Urban Hope Development - Urban Hope Development is a Fairfield-based 501c3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to "Equip students and families with opportunities to learn, grow and be all they were created to be in their community". Urban Hope Development was established in 2013 and has since served over 3,000 clients in the community by providing education, economic development, crisis assistance, and housing opportunities. Urban Hope Development has been working closely with Fairfield City Schools since 2013 to provide summer enrichment services to middle and high school students and has reported that 95% of those enrolled showed progress in reading and math.

Alabama Department of Early Childhood Development (ADECE) - Alabama

Department of Early Childhood Education is a state agency that serves children from birth to age eight and whose mission is to innovate, support, and deliver cohesive, equitable systems of high-quality care and education so that Alabama children and families thrive and learn. ADECE operates many programs such as the nationally recognized First Class Pre-K program, Alabama Pre-K-3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning (P-3), First Teacher Home Visiting, and the Children's Policy Council. ADECE currently provides funding for 8 First Class Pre-K programs within the City of Fairfield.

GEAR UP Jefferson County (GUJC) - GUJC is an effort of the U.S. Department of Education to increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education, increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education, and increase students' and their families' knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing. GUJC was established in 2018 and currently serves five districts, including Fairfield City Schools. GUJC provides mentoring, test preparation, paid internships, summer enrichment and intervention programs, dual enrollment, educational and college trips, tutoring and intervention, financial literacy, and job shadowing. GUJC also serves teachers by providing professional development to increase instructional practices in teaching and learning

Miles College- Founded in 1898, Miles College is a premier liberal arts institution located within the City of Fairfield. The founders of the institution saw educated leadership as the paramount need in the black community. Miles, which is fully accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and accredited by the Commission on Colleges for the awarding of Baccalaureate Degrees, is the only four-year institution in the metro-Birmingham area designated as a member of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

(HBCU). Miles College is a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) higher learning institution, and is one of only 39 HBCUs to have the designation of a United Negro College Fund (UNCF) institution. Miles provides summer programming services for Fairfield City School students, as well as supports mentoring opportunities for its students within FCS locations.

Lawson State Community College (LSCC) - With campuses located in nearby Bessemer and Birmingham, LSCC was first established as a result of the Wallace-Patterson Trade School Act of 1947, which led to the creation of the Wenonah Vocational and Trade School on August 24, 1949, named for the Birmingham community in which it started. The school later merged with Wenonah State Junior College in 1973, and again with Bessemer State Technical College in 2005. LSCC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and currently offers a dual enrolment program for Fairfield City School students.

Community Food Bank of Central Alabama (CFBCA)- CFBCA is a 501c3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to *feed people in need today and foster collaborative solutions to end hunger tomorrow*. CFBCA was established 40 years ago to provide food for the workers and families affected by the U.S. Steel layoffs within Fairfield. It currently serves 12 counties in central Alabama by partnering with over 250 community agencies. CFBCA will be launching a pilot school-based pantry program within Fairfield City Schools during the Fall 2023 Semester.

Fairfield Housing Authority (FHA) - FHA, funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides housing, opportunities, self-sufficiency, and economic independence for public housing residents within Fairfield. FHA serves over 300 students in the Fairfield City School system and provides opportunities beyond housing for residents that include mentoring and support services.

Jefferson County Family Resource Center (JCFRC)- JCFRC provides resources and case management to families in order to build goal-directed, individualized action plans designed to identify and address barriers to success. Established in 2016, and based inside the Jefferson County Family Court, JCFRC has served over 24,000 individuals since their inception. Resources can include coordinated referrals based on an individualized needs assessment and family advocacy.

AlaQuest Collaborative for Education (ACE)- Established in 2015, ACE has served over 18,200 students, schools, families, and clients by providing in-school social-emotional (SEL) programs, community outreach, social justice programming, and professional development. ACE offers Tier 1 Mental Health services at no cost to students Kindergarten through 6th grade through the 9-month Life Skills Education where ACE facilitates an evidence-based monthly social-emotional curriculum designed to give students the tools to develop healthy identities, maintain healthy relationships, resolve conflicts, and manage difficult emotions. ACE is currently working with FCS locations and providing services to students and families.

Nurse Family Partnership (NFP)- Managed through the University of Alabama School of Nursing, NFP is a national model proven to transform at-risk moms' and babies' health, education, and well-being while producing enduring benefits for communities and families through nurses building trusting relationships with at-risk mothers to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes like preterm birth, child development outcomes, and economic self-sufficiency for the entire family.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Birmingham (BBBS)- BBBS is a nonprofit organization that was established in 1973 whose mission is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships to empower and support youth. BBBS is launching a school and community-based partnership with Fairfield City Schools in the Fall 2023 Semester that will match

elementary and middle school students with adult volunteer mentors and pair middle school students with Miles College in their Beyond the Walls mentoring program.

The Good Guys Mentoring- The Good Guys Mentoring Program is a community-based program that provides comprehensive mentoring including mindfulness, restorative justice, conflict resolution, social emotional learning and college and career readiness to students. Currently, the Good Guys Mentoring program is established at four FCS schools to work with students to increase self-awareness, self-control, self-confidence, decrease truancy, decrease negative behavior incidents, decrease alternative school recidivism, and decrease violent crime within the community.

Addiction Prevention Coalition (APC)- APC is a non-profit community resource that aims to eliminate addiction in Central Alabama through their in-school prevention programs, educational events, and collection of support services. APC partnered with FCS to create a mental-health peer support group within FCS locations, and the groups have led many successful events at their school, including hosting mental health assemblies, posting flyers, handing out mental health kits to students, and packing hygiene kits for those in need.

Childcare Resources- Childcare Resources is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide quality care and education of children through providing information, education, and assistance to families, childcare providers, and the community. Childcare Resources has a history of partnering with the Fairfield community by providing 66 learning sessions to 15 different childcare providers and providing financial assistance to a family in the community and will continue to deliver their wide range of support systems to the Fairfield community.

Girls Inc.- Girls Inc. of Central Alabama is a nonprofit whose mission is to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold and has provided programs for thousands of school-age girls from diverse racial and economic backgrounds. Girls Inc. has partnered with Fairfield City Schools on school-based programs on health and wellness, child abuse prevention, pregnancy prevention, stress management, conflict resolution, anti-bullying, and college and career readiness.

Forest Hills Community Development Center Fairfield Pre-K- The Forest Hills Community Development Center hosts the nationally recognized First-Class Pre-K program that provides special education, early intervention services, parenting workshops, and childcare to families with children ages 3 and up in the Fairfield community. Forest Hills Community Development center will continue to provide support to Fairfield City Schools by providing a foundation for children to ensure they are ready for kindergarten.

Junior League of Birmingham- The Junior League of Birmingham is an organization of approximately 2,000 women who are committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women, and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. The Junior League specifically focuses on impact topics centered around supporting initiatives that promote literacy, success in school, and school readiness and additionally work to support initiatives in mental and physical health care education, access, and delivery. The Junior League partners with FCS to manage a school-based essential pantry that provides students with access to clothes and personal hygiene items that allow them to focus on learning.

Helping Families Initiative (HFI)- HFI is a crime prevention effort offered through the Jefferson County District Attorney's office that is designed to improve family functioning, child well-being and educational outcomes through connecting families to resources, providing in-depth

family assessments, and providing statistical results to the public and other stakeholders. HFI works with partners across different sectors to provide resources such as academic support, mentoring, job training, financial stability, and mental health support, and currently partners with FCS to offer those resources to students and families.

Program Priorities

The program will meet the following priorities:

Absolute Priority 1: Title IA Schoolwide Program – The program will exceed the minimum site requirement to serve two schools. The proposed expansion will expand from the two existing Fairfield City School Community School Coordinators to two additional coordinators to ensure that all four schools have a dedicated on-site Community School Coordinator.

Absolute Priority 3: Capacity Building and Development – The program will continue development under the capacity building priority and will meet the requirements to: a) conduct initial development and coordination activities, including extensive community engagement, that leverage the findings of their needs assessment to develop the infrastructure, activities, and partnerships to implement full-service community schools; and b) gather data on performance.

Competitive Preference Priority #1: Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs – Fairfield Community School partners will work to improve the social emotional, academic, and career development of Fairfield City Schools' (FCS) underserved students through the following priority areas:

Priority 1: Creating education settings that are supportive, positive, identity-safe, and inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status, through developing

trusting relationships between students (including underserved students), educators, families, and community partners

Community School partners will create the described settings via the following strategies:

- Hiring two additional full-time school coordinators dedicated to addressing the needs of students at their assigned schools and their families
- Hiring culturally competent and culturally aware staff members whose backgrounds and experiences reflect those of the students they serve
- Coordinating services in collaboration with the district's Multi-Tier Systems of Support Team and School Based Leadership Teams
- Providing teacher training on culturally responsive teaching
- Providing translation and interpretation services, as needed
- Developing culturally diverse program materials that reflect the demographics, identities, and statuses of the student population and their families
- Using a highly participatory community engagement process to conduct the needs assessment and program evaluation
- Engaging and working with an extensive network of state, local, non-profit, and faith-based partners to develop a comprehensive network of programs, services, and resources to address students' needs and the needs of their families.

Priority 2. Providing multi-tiered systems of supports that address learning barriers both in and out of the classroom, that enable healthy development and respond to students' needs and

which may include evidence-based trauma-informed practices and professional development for educators on avoiding deficit-based approaches.

Fairfield City Schools and Community School partners are currently providing Multi-Tier Systems of Supports both in and out of the classroom. Current examples of collaborations that exemplify such supports include:

Deep Partnerships – Fairfield City Schools (FCS) has received recognition and accolades for their consistent commitment to student mental and physical health. FCS has worked individually with faculty from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Center for School Mental Health, utilizing their expertise and feedback to develop evidence-based strategies to serve FCS students.

Fairfield City Schools became part of the first cohort for the Enhancing School Mental Health through TEAMS (Training, Education, Assistance, Mentorship, Support) Program in 2021. FCS, along with nine other districts nationwide, participated in the yearlong cohort through a partnership between National Center for School Mental Health and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Through this cohort, FCS was provided with customized training, faculty expertise, technical assistance, and individualized resources. In further recognition of their efforts, Fairfield City Schools was recently the recipient of ALSDE's Alabama Stronger Connections Grant, one of only 38 local education agencies in Alabama to receive the grant award.

FCS is also concerned with students' and families' physical health as well, with a School Based Health Center in each Fairfield City School, managed by Cahaba Medical Care. Each of these clinics provides care to all FCS students and staff. In addition, CMC

has a community-wide clinic, housed in FCS's Forest Hills Community Development Center. This clinic is designed to serve all members of the Fairfield community.

Strengthening Infrastructure - FCS is part of the GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) Jefferson County grant. The federally funded GEAR UP Jefferson County initiative is designed to improve access, opportunities and outcomes for students from historically marginalized populations and underserved communities. The program supports, strengthens, and expands the existing infrastructure, as well as enhances academic opportunities and tools to plan for and access postsecondary education.

Through the grant, enrichment and professional development opportunities are also provided for teachers to support cohort students. FCS has been a part of this federal initiative since 2018, and the grant will continue to support the cohort of students (current 12th grade students in the 2022-2023 school year) beyond graduation. GEAR UP Jefferson County provides a fulltime GEAR UP Site Facilitator at Fairfield High Preparatory School to implement programming and provide community resources to the cohort students. This year, GEAR UP is also including a full time Reading Interventionist and Math Interventionist for Fairfield City Schools GEAR UP students.

Statewide Collaboration - FCS also supports statewide initiatives and values collaboration with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). In the summer of 2022, FCS applied to participate in the inaugural Alabama Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) cohort. This comprehensive, prevention-based framework is aligned to the Alabama Achieves Strategic Plan and creates comprehensive supports to meet the academic, behavioral, and foundational wellness needs of the whole child. AL-MTSS uses a

proactive, team-driven approach that engages all stakeholders (state, regional, district, school, higher education, community, family, and students) to ensure equitable access to opportunities that will improve outcomes for every child, every chance, every day.

This cohort is designed to provide support and resources for districts to implement and sustain a continuum of evidence-based practices for instruction, support, and intervention to help children find success in school and throughout their lives. The Alabama State Department of Education created AL-MTSS as an innovative approach that can be replicated in districts across Alabama and beyond. Through participating in this eight-year cohort, FCS will receive customized professional development and individualized coaching throughout the implementation process. FCS is honored to be selected for the cohort as one of the initial districts to implement AL-MTSS

Competitive Preference Priority #2: Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change – Fairfield Community School partners will advance systemic change by using evidence-based approaches to improve outcomes for underserved students via sustainable strategies that will extend beyond the life of the grant. By coordinating efforts with Federal, State, or local agencies, and faith- and community-based organizations, cross-agency coordination will be strengthened through the cultivation of a diverse network of partners that will continue to expand as the program progresses.

Through the partners identified above, as well as additional community-based organizations, faith institutions, government agencies, and community leaders who will be engaged in the project development through the Community School Advisory Committee, School Based Leadership Teams, and proactive community outreach, the foundation for greater collaboration within the City of Fairfield is already developed. Through support from the Alabama Department

of Education, the district's Mental Health Coordinator already manages the coordination of mental health services. Existing programs such as GEAR UP Jefferson County, Helping Families Initiative, and Jefferson County Family Resource Center facilitate cross-sector collaboration to benefit their program clients.

Through the Community School strategy, full-time Community School Coordinators will help to bring these individual, isolated programs into alignment, and identify additional stakeholders whose partnership will further strengthen the work of existing partners. Coordinators will also lead community engagement efforts to draw in students, parents, teachers, and all other stakeholders critical to implementing the Community School model, which will bring new insights and ideas into the collaboration. The Logic Model and Pipeline Services Table (**Table 3**) identify all outcomes, evidence-based approaches (pillars) and partners (federal, state, and local) involved in the Community Schools implementation plan and how those efforts will support greater collaboration, enhance community involvement in academic success, and improve community safety for students and families.

Due to Fairfield's high rate of violence and crime, advancing community stability is a primary program goal with specific objectives developed around creating a violence reduction plan, increasing violence prevention efforts, and reducing crime rates in partnership with the city of Fairfield, The Good Guys Mentoring Program (mentoring is recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as an evidence-based practice that increase protective factors), and other programs.

Other partners who will provide services that are designed to improve key factors that drive community violence include the Helping Families Initiative and the Jefferson County Family Resource Center. Both programs are affiliated with the Juvenile Justice System and are designed

to provide services and interventions to support youth and families before, during, and after they have an interaction with the Justice System.

Helping Families Initiative works with school districts to identify and intervene with students who have a history of chronic absenteeism or behavioral referrals. Through home visitations and intensive case management, the program addresses some of the root causes for these issues, such as unstable housing, chronic hunger, or economic challenges within the family. The Jefferson County Family Resource Center's RESTORE program provides support to stabilize families once an individual becomes involved in the Juvenile Justice System, and then works with that youth to facilitate reentry and provide other programs to support their long-term success.

Invitational Priority: Supporting Effective Transition Practices, Continuity of Services and Supports, and Aligned Instruction for Students from Preschool and Other Early Childhood Settings into Kindergarten and from Kindergarten into the Early Grades (K–3).

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The transition to kindergarten is an important developmental milestone for children and their families. It is an exciting and sometimes challenging experience in the life of families and a juncture around which schools and programs should collaborate to promote readiness, alignment, and school success.

Transitions require that children and families make some significant adjustments—psychologically, socially, and academically. Early childhood providers, schools, and community agencies should work together to ease these challenges and create seamless kindergarten transitions by sharing information with families, helping them build relationships of support throughout the transition, and aligning the experiences children and families have before and after the transition. In doing so, communities promote continuity for children and families and ensure that school gets off to a good start. Communities do this work by forming teams to develop and collaboratively implement transition plans. As they carry out their plans, they reinforce an ongoing

cycle of collaboration to improve quality, coordination, and alignment in service of children and families.

Through EDC's content knowledge, Fairfield City Schools' commitment to student success, and partner organizations' excitement to collaborate, building transition approaches for Fairfield students and families will further enhance their pipeline to academic success.

Capacity-Building Activities

As an applicant under the capacity-building priority, Fairfield Community Schools will meet program mandates to: 1) continue initial development and coordination activities, including extensive community engagement, that leverage the findings of their needs assessment to develop the infrastructure, activities, and partnerships to implement FSCS in four schools, and 2) gather data on performance indicators. Activities in year one will build upon the efforts of the past three years by continuing intensive community engagement and developing a more thorough, community-based needs assessment that incorporates school-based assessments with community-level indicators collected through project partners. This work will be managed by the Community School Coordinators, with support and input from project partners, students and families, the Samford University evaluation team, the National Evaluation metrics, FCS administration, and UWCA operations and program staff.

Community engagement strategies have included the administration of surveys, convening focus groups and town hall meetings, and engaging student groups and community-based associations. Instruments will be developed to assess student, family and community needs using a variety of resources. Existing sources include school testing data, attendance data, incident reports, mental health surveys, family engagement surveys, and local health and crime data. Health and

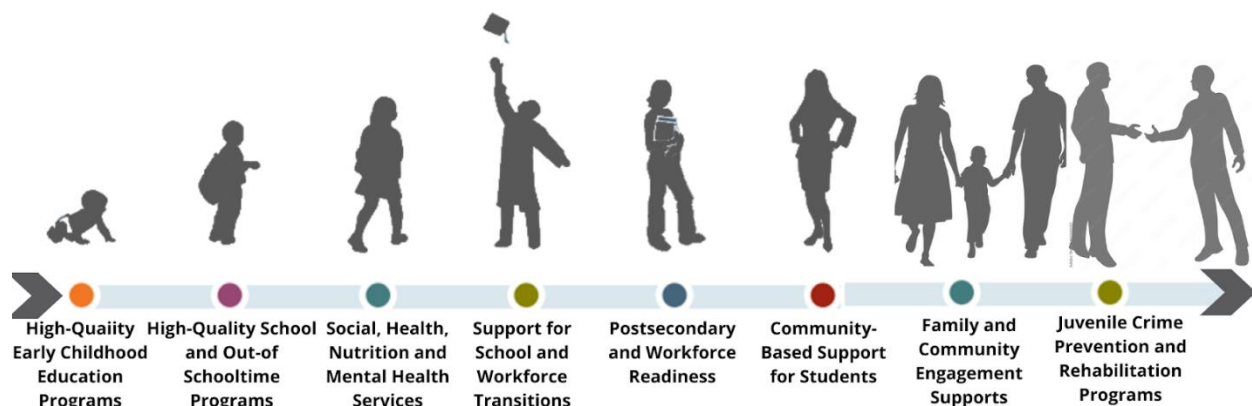
social service availability will also be compiled, and new tools will also be developed to solicit both quantitative and qualitative data from students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and community residents. A highly participatory model will be used to ensure maximum participant engagement, including hiring community members to support evaluation work.

Findings and data will be aggregated to develop a School Action Plan for each school site, which will subsequently inform the coordination and guide the development of pipeline services.

Action plans will be continuously refined using annual performance and outcomes data as a feedback loop for improving program efforts and making course-correction adjustments.

United Way of Central Alabama and Fairfield City Schools currently have a Memorandum of Agreement governing the Fairfield Community School Partnership. The current agreement covers an initial three-year project period but is slated for automatic renewal beyond that period. The agreement will be modified and updated to reflect grant objectives, reporting requirements and other information within one year of the Full-Service Community School grant award.

Additional service agreements will be developed with project partners during the first year of grant-funding being awarded. While all programs, services and activities related to the Fairfield Community School program will adhere to the rules and regulations established in the overall Partnership Agreement, individual agreements are necessary to specify activities, timelines, and reporting metrics related to individual pipeline services offered or coordinated by partner organizations.



Source: United Way of Central Alabama

Description of Pipeline Services

Pipeline services are a continuum of coordinated support, services, and opportunities for children and their families from birth through entry into and success in postsecondary education and career attainment (Ciobanu, 2013). These services focus on the whole child by providing integrated academic support, social and emotional learning, health and wellness, family and

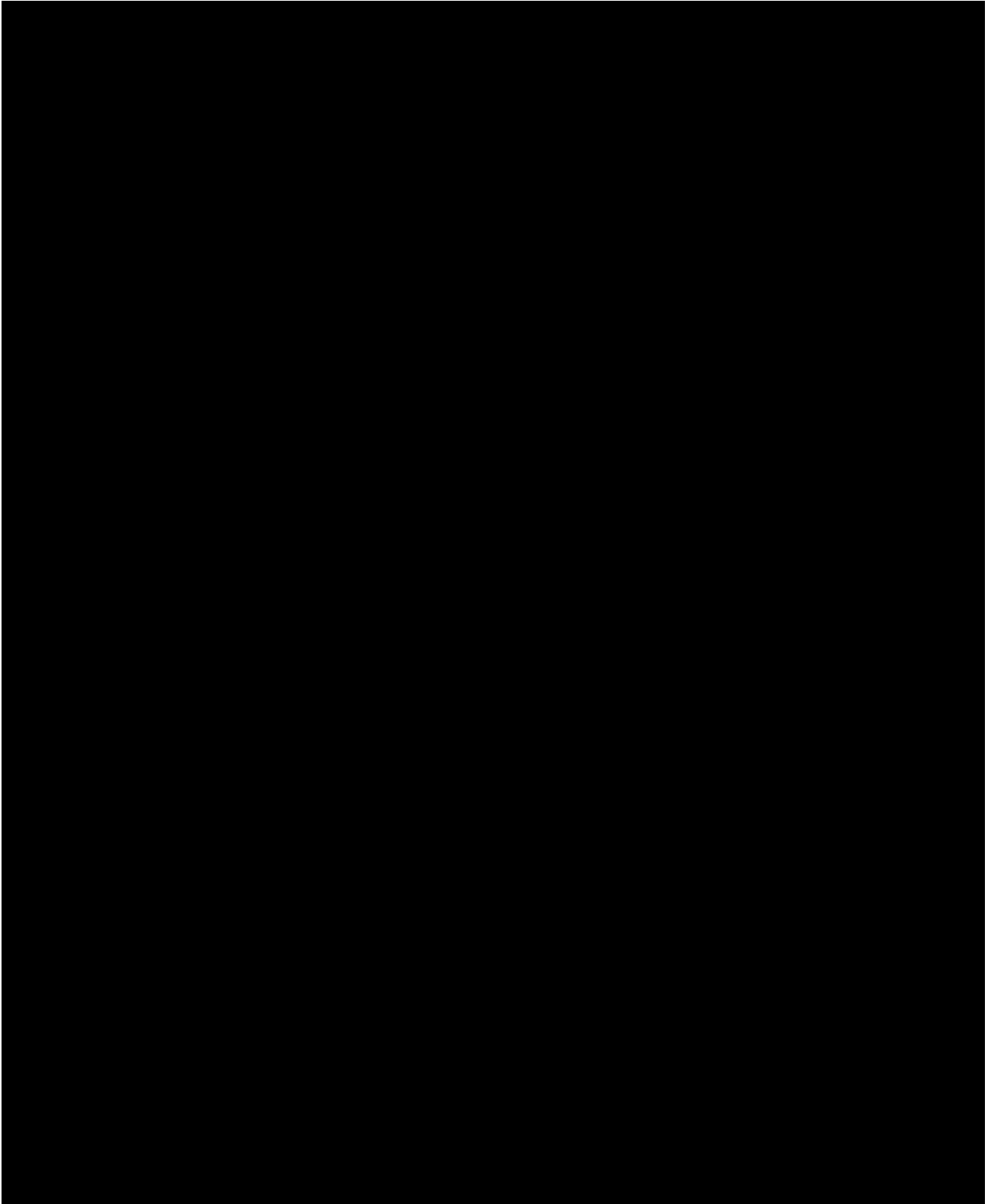
Source: United Way of Central Alabama

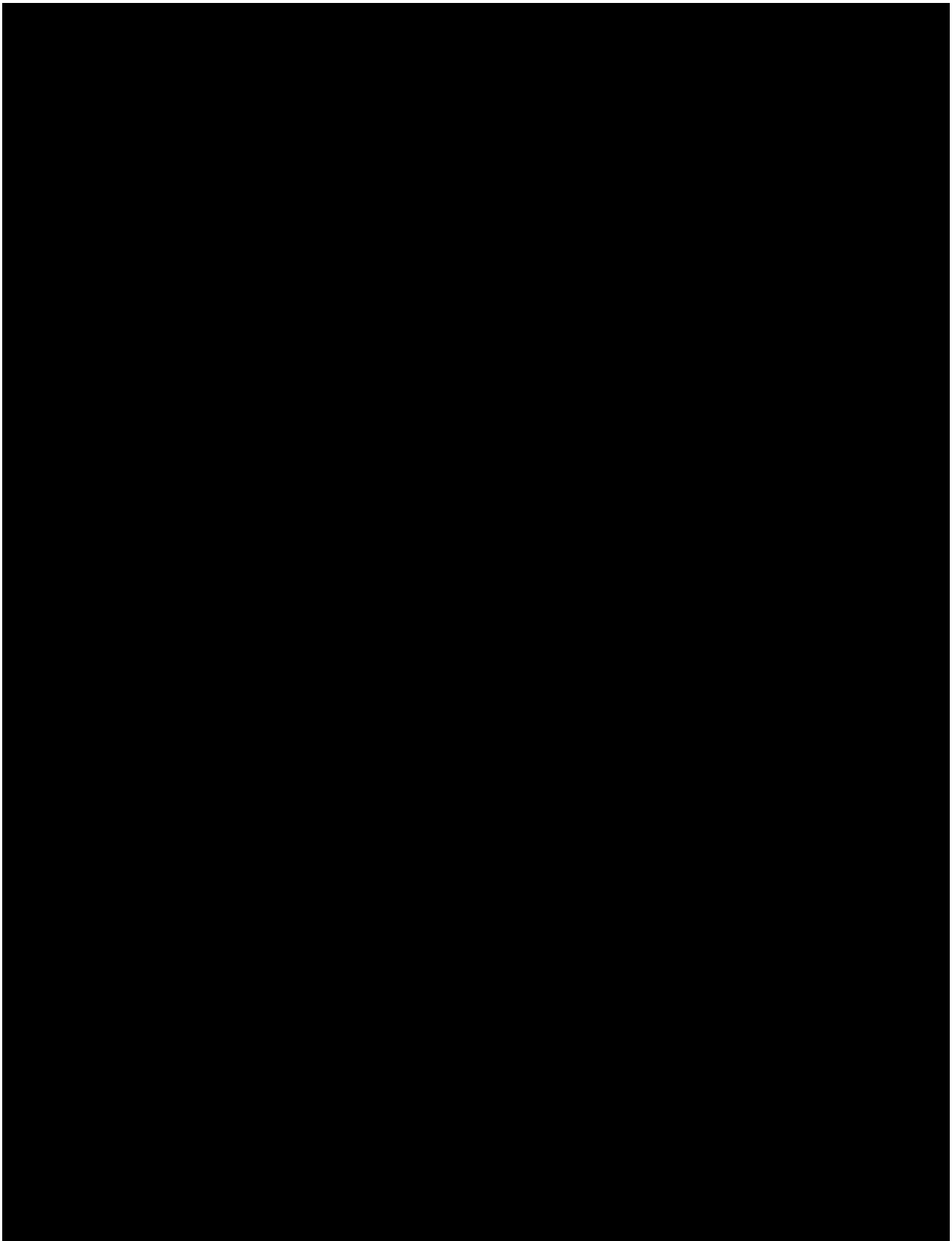
community engagement, and a safe and supportive climate.

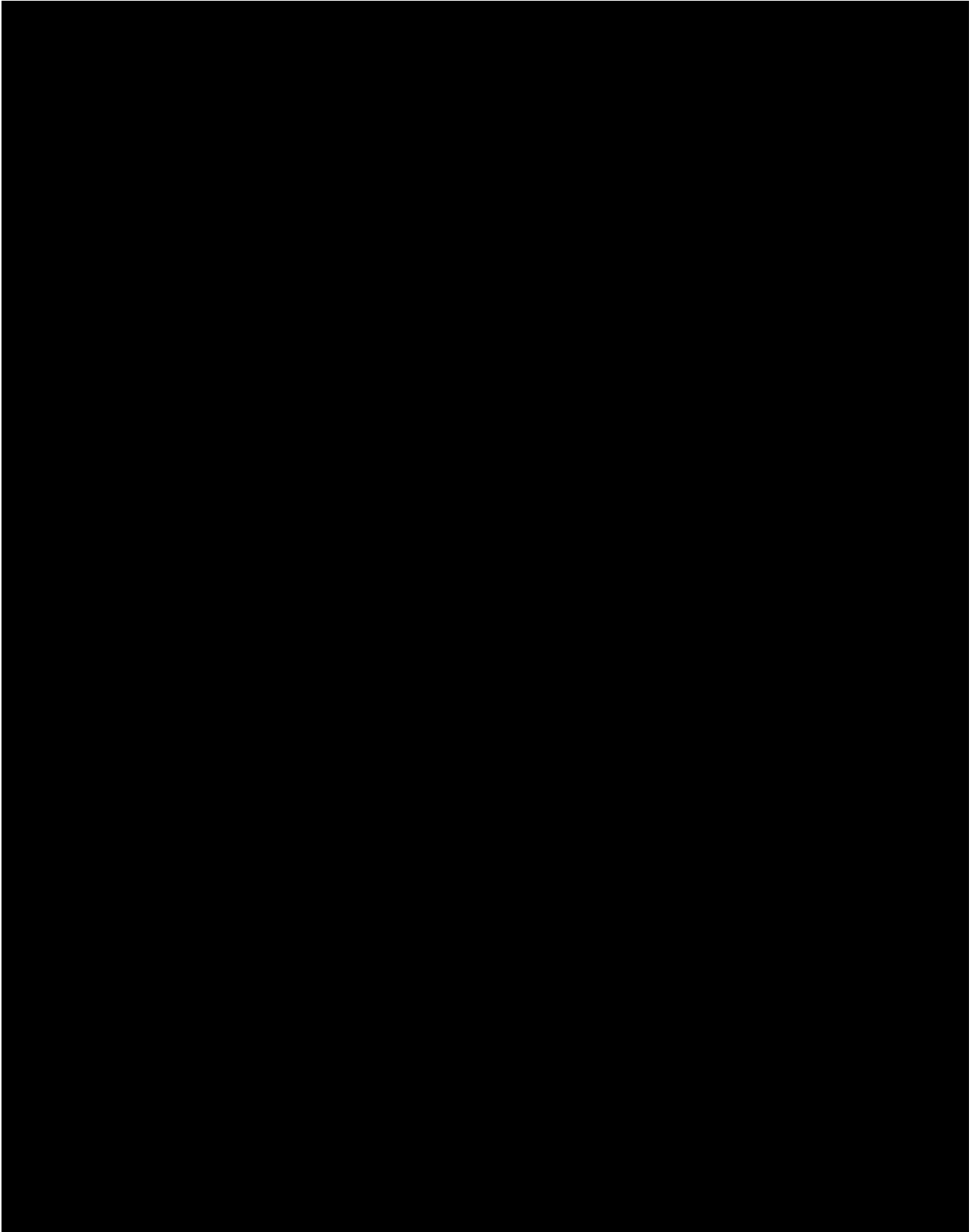
Fairfield Community School partners have developed program goals, activities, and short-term and long-term outcomes that strengthen the pipeline services within Fairfield City Schools and integrate community-based services into the approach in a way that further supports students and families.

Program goals, objective and outcomes are summarized in the attached Logic Model (Appendix B), that is aligned with the Four Community School Pillars: 1. Integrated Student Supports, 2. Expanded and Enriched Learning Time, 3. Active Family and Community Engagement, and 4. Collaborative Leadership and Practices.

Fairfield Community School partners will expand the capacity and reach of four existing pipeline services beginning at the start of the grant period (1. High-quality early childhood education, 2. High-quality in and out-of-school time and programs, 3. Social, health, nutrition, and mental health services, 4. Postsecondary and workforce readiness), while adding three additional pipeline services (1. Support for school and workforce transitions, 2. Family and community engagement support, 3. Juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation programs) over the duration of the grant. These Pipeline Service enhancements and additions are highlighted in **Table 3**.







Goal 1: Students Enter Kindergarten Ready to Learn- Children and Youth in Fairfield

consistently get a strong start and have a solid foundation for success in school, work, and life.

Community School Pillar(s): Integrated Student Services, Expanded and Enriched Learning Time

Pipeline Services: High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs and Supporting School Transitions

Need for Pipeline Service Enhancement: 92-96% of Fairfield elementary-aged students are not proficient in math, 86-89% are not proficient in science, and 73-77% are not proficient in English (Table 1). To help students have a solid foundation for learning and academic success, Fairfield Community School staff will promote high-quality early learning opportunities for families and work with early learning providers to expand the number of children enrolled in high-quality early learning programs.

Activities and Partners:

1.1 Fairfield First Class PreK Program supports kindergarten readiness

1.1.a. **First-Class Pre-K (FCPK)** is a program administered through the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education that aims to ensure that Alabama's 4-year-olds have access to high-quality learning experiences that prepare them for future school success. The FCPK program is nationally recognized and has been awarded the highest quality rating from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for 17 consecutive years (NIEER, 2023). Grants are awarded to local recipients through a competitive grant process, and grantees receive ongoing professional development training to ensure that teachers are providing a quality learning environment, new classroom materials, and financial support for certified teaching staff.

Research of the program has shown that children who participated in a FCPK program were more likely to be proficient in reading and math compared to their peers that did not participate in the program, and that the increased performance continued into later grades.

Fairfield currently has 8 FCPK sites administered by Fairfield City Schools (6 sites) and a community-based organization (2 sites). This cross-sector approach illustrates the commitment at both a community and city level to ensure that children have access to quality childcare that prepares them for kindergarten and beyond. Currently, the Fairfield City sites are collectively at 74% of capacity, which translates to roughly 28 more children that could receive FCPK if the sites were at full capacity. Additionally, the number of kindergarteners in 2022 that were reported by Fairfield to come from a FCPK classroom were 30 out of 85. This translates to 35% of children that could have potentially received a high-quality early learning opportunity that would have further prepared them for kindergarten readiness and potentially lead to higher reading and math scores and higher rates of retention (PARCA, 2019). Through additional community engagement and educational, and family recruitment efforts, more Fairfield children can participate in the program and have a solid foundation for future learning.

1.1.b. United Way Success by 6 program facilitates “best practice” quality early learning standards in Pre-K classrooms throughout Central Alabama. Working closely with the teachers in each classroom, Success By 6 School Readiness Specialists provide technical assistance and resources while sharing best practices to give every child an opportunity to be ready for kindergarten. Success By 6 partners with Pre-K classrooms in public schools, private childcare centers, faith-based childcare centers, and Head Start centers across central Alabama.

Success By 6 also supports partners in participating in the Alabama Quality STARS program, which is a statewide quality rating and improvement system managed by the Alabama

Department of Human Resources and the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. Success by 6 utilizes the same classroom assessment as the Quality STARS program, which recently began offering financial incentives to centers based on the standards they meet and the quality of care they provide. This partnership not only enhances the quality of early learning centers, but supports their financial stability and long-term sustainability, as well.

In addition to providing technical assistance to participating early learning centers, such as program design instruction and staff training, Success By 6 also provides community-focused services, such as hosting health screenings and providing school supplies and books to children and families. Success By 6 works with a wide network of partners who are all committed to improving access to quality early learning and preparing children to succeed in school.

1.1.c. **Childcare Resources** is a non-profit organization serving the Central Alabama region, which includes Fairfield. As the region's only childcare resource and referral agency, Childcare Resources works to improve the early education landscape by providing information, education, and assistance to families, providers of childcare, and the community. Their services include financial assistance for low-to-moderate income working families, quality training and technical assistance for childcare providers (including a free Early Learning Resource Library, mobile Resource Library Van, and Early Learning Demonstration Classroom), research-based parent education resources, and assistance to hundreds of families seeking quality childcare options for their young children. Over the past two years, 15 unique childcare providers within Fairfield benefitted from 66 training and technical assistance sessions and at least one family was enrolled in the financial assistance program.

As an organization, Childcare Resources was created as the outgrowth of a childcare task force convened by United Way of Central Alabama in 1984 to address critical childcare needs

identified in the region, and continues to work in partnership with UWCA and dozens of other local partners to develop a collective-impact approach to improving the availability and accessibility of early learning in the region. This collaborative recently received a [REDACTED] donation from a private donor to support a multi-faceted approach to enhancing the regional capacity of childcare providers through infrastructure investments and small-business startup support, which will be an opportunity available to early learning centers within Fairfield.

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Goal 2: Students are Succeeding Academically: With focused and strategic support, students meet and surpass academic benchmarks and achievements.

Pillar: Expanded and Enriched Learning Time

Pipeline Service: High-Quality School and Out-of-School Time Programs

Need for Pipeline Service Enhancement - As reflected in **Table 2**, students in Fairfield are struggling academically. The trend of non-proficiency in academic standards becomes exacerbated in high school: 82% of Fairfield high school students are not proficient in English Language Arts, 93% are not proficient in science, and 99% are not proficient in math. In order to achieve better academic outcomes at the secondary education level, a strong foundation for learning must be built in earlier grades, and services and support must be available throughout their academic journey to ensure students in all grade levels meet, and exceed, academic benchmarks.

Activities and Partners:

2.1 Evidence-based after-school learning opportunities build on core classroom instruction

2.1.a **Better Basics 21st Century Learning Program** provides out-of-school academic and enrichment activities at every school in the Fairfield School System. Better Basics delivers extended-day programs year-round for kindergarten through twelfth-grade students who participate in a wide variety of activities, including cultural enrichment, ACT prep, physical fitness, homework assistance, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).

Established in Fairfield in 2017, the goal for the 21st Century Learning Program is to advance learning and curiosity in a safe and nurturing environment during out-of-school hours. In 2021-22, the program saw growth in school-day attendance, honor-roll awards, and reading growth in all four Fairfield City Schools. Participants in the program averaged 34.8% fewer absences in the same academic year than non-participants. Over the course of the 2021-22 school year, participants on the school honor roll increased by 31.6%. 77.3% of students enrolled at Robinson Elementary with a “C” grade in reading and language classes the previous semester improved by at least one letter grade. C.J. Donald Elementary and Fairfield High Preparatory School saw significant gains in parental engagement, with 50% and 67.9% parent or guardian participation respectively.

2.2 Summer programming supports academic enrichment and educational experiences for students

2.2.a. **Urban Hope Community Development’s UHope Success Academy** is a Fairfield-based summer program serving rising 7th-9th graders. Participants are provided daily lessons on math and reading, learn problem-solving skills and team building, and participate in field trips that allow them to gain real-world experience that reinforces what they are learning. Students also

learn Latin roots to help them better understand the meanings of words and are also encouraged to read a minimum of 30 minutes at least 2-3 days at home, as evidenced by the reading log that their parents sign off on each week. The students also go through a training of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, and hear and learn from weekly motivational speakers. UHope Success Academy is a part of the Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) collaborative that utilizes the Renaissance Star tools to assess the impact of programs across the State of Alabama. In 2022, 35 Fairfield students participated in the program and collectively achieved 3.3 month gains in reading and 1.6 month gains in math, over the course of a 1-month program.

2.3 Enhanced literacy intervention support through small-group sessions promotes grade-level reading proficiency

2.3.a. Alabama Reading Initiative Literacy Supports: The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) is a statewide K-12 initiative of the Alabama State Department of Education that is committed to supporting the development of high-quality instruction that will prepare all students with the literacy skills needed to meet or exceed grade-level standards. The goal of ARI is for students to be reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade, and ARI staff provide ongoing professional learning and on-site support to administrators and local reading specialists who serve students in K-3 schools.

Through an intensive training utilizing the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), school staff within Fairfield are aligning their instruction to the Science of Reading and receive additional support from ARI Literacy Specialists who work directly with teachers to coach and model classroom instruction, and Leadership Literacy Specialists who work with school principals to ensure the school environment and climate supports academic growth among students. The statewide program is modeled after Mississippi's successful early literacy

initiative, and initial results within Fairfield have shown strong academic gains. In 2022, 2nd grade literacy proficiency rates on the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Plan were 40% and 53%, respectively, among two Fairfield elementary schools (prior to the district's reconfiguration to move all students within grade bands to the same school). In 2023, 63% of those now 3rd-grade students scored proficient on the ACAP Standardized Test, illustrating the impact behind comprehensive literacy supports and interventions.

2.4 Enhanced STEM support intervention programs promote growth in foundational skills

2.4.a. AMSTI Math Supports: Similar to the interventions offered to schools through the Alabama Reading Initiative listed above, the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) is a statewide initiative through the ALSDE to improve STEM teaching statewide, including offering professional learning to teachers, resources to facilitate evidence-based instruction, and onsite support and coaching through Math Improvement Coordinators. Fairfield City Schools will receive math coaches through this program to serve within both Robinson Primary and Glen Oaks Intermediate.

Through high-quality intervention programs, such as the Summer Mathematics Achievement Program, students struggling with mathematics will receive additional supports to promote academic achievement.

Goal 3: Students Receive Health and Social Service Support to Ensure School Engagement:

Students receive physical and mental healthcare to ensure they can focus academically and better succeed.

Pillar: Integrated Student Supports

Pipeline Service: Social, Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health Services

Need for Pipeline Service Enhancement: As evidenced by the poverty levels, community violence statistics, and Student Voice Survey mentioned in Section 1, Fairfield students have an evident need for support systems in physical and mental health.

Activities and Partners:

3.1 School-based pantry programs provide on-site access to nutritious, non-perishable food and other essential items for students and families.

3.1.a. Community Food Bank In-School Pantry: The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama (CFBCA) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to feed people in need today and foster collaborative solutions to end hunger tomorrow. The food bank was established 40 years ago and serves 12 counties in central Alabama.

Currently, the CFBCA provides food distribution programs at four Fairfield locations with regular food distribution ranging from client choice pantries to large monthly distributions. In order to improve the availability and accessibility of their programs, CFBCA is partnering with Fairfield City School to pilot an in-school, client-choice food pantry that would allow for students and families to select options that fit their families' nutritional needs.

3.2.b. Junior League of Birmingham- Essentials Pantry. The Junior League of Birmingham (JLB) is an organization of women whose mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training. With a belief that every individual should have the training, support services, and employment opportunities necessary to be economically secure, JLB supports initiatives that address financial and economic security through personal finance skills training, workforce development and basic needs support.

Through a partnership with FCS, JLB coordinates an essentials pantry that provides clothing, personal hygiene products, and other supplies that remove economic barriers to school attendance and student success.

3.2.c. Central Alabama Children's Fund provides flexible financial support to school districts to pay for unmet student needs that are barriers to their full participation in daily learning or enrichment activities. The funding is distributed from UWCA to area school districts and can be used for any supportive needs that a student might have to ensure they can have a stable, successful, and enriching school year. Eligible expenses include medical and dental copays, personal hygiene supplies, participation in school-based academic clubs, emergency family needs/disaster services, housing/utility support, basic household needs, and more. Fairfield City Schools received a [REDACTED] grant for the 2023-2024 school year, and UWCA has supported Fairfield City Schools with CACF funds annually since 2018.

3.2 On-site medical services provide basic health services to students, families, and staff within each school facility.

3.2.a. Cahaba Medical Care (CMC) is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) whose mission is to provide high quality, comprehensive and compassionate care for everyone, spanning all ages and all medical conditions. CMC provides School-Based Health Clinics in all Fairfield City Schools, providing high quality healthcare to students and staff. CMC's School Based Health Clinics provide pediatric and primary care, urgent care, sick visits, well child checks, routine immunizations, behavioral health counseling, and more.

CMC has a total of four School Based Health Clinics, with one housed in each school in Fairfield City Schools - Robinson Primary, Glen Oaks Intermediate, CJ Donald Middle, and

Fairfield High Preparatory School. Each of these clinics provides care to all FCS students and staff. In addition, CMC has a community-wide clinic, housed in FCS's Forest Hills Community Development Center. This clinic is designed to serve all members of the Fairfield community.

3.3 School-based counselors provide mental health services to students through individual and group sessions.

3.3.a. Fairfield City Schools Alabama Stronger Connections Grant Case Worker:

Fairfield City Schools was recently selected as a recipient of the Alabama Stronger Connections Grant. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) provides federal funding to state education agencies under Title IV, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Alabama State Department of Education used these funds to create the Alabama Stronger Connections Grant Program to distribute funding to local education agencies (LEA) to establish safe, healthy, supportive learning environments.

Fairfield City Schools is committed to bolstering resources and increasing capacity with every opportunity presented. FCS was selected as one of only 38 LEAs across Alabama to receive this grant award. With its grant award of [REDACTED] over three years, Fairfield City Schools plans to continue expanding its comprehensive system of student support. FCS plans to increase capacity through adding a licensed social worker to its team, beginning in the 2023-2024 school year. The Districtwide School Social Worker will be responsible for working to provide crisis prevention, group interventions, chronic absenteeism prevention, and wraparound supports. In addition, Fairfield City Schools will utilize some of the awarded funds to bolster resources, including providing yoga programming to students to help increase skills related to self-management, nervous system regulation, and positive decision-making. FCS will also add sensory spaces and calming corners to each school building and will expand the Positive Behavior Intervention

Support programming in each school. Fairfield City Schools is confident that these resources will continue to expand the comprehensive system of supports for students.

3.4 Comprehensive mentoring and restorative practices support improved school climate and character education.

3.4.a. **AlaQuest Collaborative for Education (ACE)** offers professional development workshops that train teachers and other adults in non-violent crisis prevention and intervention, social and emotional learning foundation, and trauma-informed care. ACE also provides Tier 1 social-emotional learning support for students within Fairfield City Schools.

3.4.b. **The Good Guys Mentoring** program provides comprehensive mentoring to FCS students, including mindfulness, restorative justice, conflict resolution, social emotional learning and college and career readiness to students. Currently, the Good Guys Mentoring program is established at all four FCS schools to work with students to increase self-awareness, self-control, self-confidence, decrease truancy, decrease negative behavior incidents, decrease alternative school recidivism, and decrease violent crime within the community.

Goal 4: Students are College and Career Ready. Students will be better positioned to graduate high school with a career or degree plan.

Pillar: Expanded and Enriched Learning Time

Pipeline Service: Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness/ Support for School and Workforce Transitions

Need for Pipeline Service Enhancement: Fairfield City Schools wants to encourage every student to reach their potential, whether through gainful employment or seeking a degree.

However, only 64% of Fairfield high school students are College and Career Ready. As part of the Every Child Succeeds Act, high school students in Alabama must earn three credits with a grade of “C” or higher in an approved Career and Technical Education Program (Mackey, 2022). Providing options for Career and Technical Education programs, and increasing capacity for those programs, will not only help students graduate, but will also assist them in finding a career.

Activities and Partners:

4.1 Dual enrollment opportunities with local community colleges support college and career transitions.

4.1.a. Dual Enrollment Program with Lawson State: Fairfield City Schools partners with Lawson State Community College to offer a variety of dual enrollment courses for students to take. Students have the opportunity to choose any pathway and courses that they would like to take. Fairfield City Schools offers dual enrollment courses that are facilitated in health science, computer science, and history; however, students have many options beyond these courses as well. Approximately 75 Fairfield High Preparatory School students are enrolled in dual enrollment courses for the 2023-2024 school year.

4.1.b. GEAR UP Jefferson County (GU-JC) programs are designed to improve access, opportunities, and outcomes for students from historically marginalized populations and underserved communities, particularly students of color, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with disabilities. GU-JC works with school districts and community partners to support, strengthen, and expand the existing infrastructure, as well as enhance academic opportunities and rigor, increase exploration of post-secondary options, and equip students and families with information and tools to plan for and access post-secondary education.

Program activities offered through GU-JC to Fairfield staff, students and families include workshops for financing college and career pathways, support for implementing more rigorous secondary school course offerings, STEM and computer science focused camps/activities, ACT boot camps, tutoring programs, guest speakers from statewide colleges and universities, campus visits, summer institutes, academic enrichment summer camps, mentoring programs, and family involvement workshops.

4.2 Modern manufacturing program supports high-demand job credentialing and career preparation.

4.2.a. Modern Manufacturing Program: The Alabama Department of Commerce launched its Modern Manufacturing Program in August 2021 with a goal of preparing students for manufacturing careers in facilities within Alabama in need of skilled employees, including Mercedes-Benz, Honda, Mazda- Toyota, Hyundai, and their suppliers. The program is applied through traditional high school career technical programs, dual enrollment programs, or adult education programs, and participants learn basic employability skills, safety, technical skills, and manufacturing principles needed to be successful in today's manufacturing environment. Students participating in the program will gain in-demand certifications and credentials that will make them eligible and ready for employment once they have completed the program.

Fairfield City Schools is working with Central Six AlabamaWorks!, which is a partnership between the Alabama Department of Commerce and the local Workforce Development Council, to launch the Modern Manufacturing Program within Fairfield High Preparatory School in the Fall of 2023. As the program rolls out, students will have the opportunity to receive credentials that not only help them to meet statewide College and Career Readiness Indicators as required by the State,

but more importantly, will put them on a path to employment and career success upon immediate completion of the program.

4.3 Health sciences program provides certifications to support career transitions in the healthcare field.



Fairfield City Schools Health Science Lab, Source: United Way of Central Alabama

4.3.a. The Health Science Career Path at Fairfield City Schools is a Career Technical Education program designed to expose students to a variety of careers in healthcare, while equipping them with the tools and clinical skills necessary to pursue higher education in healthcare or go directly into the healthcare workforce. Fairfield High

Preparatory School previously had a Health Science Program that was discontinued for several years, but the program returned in the 2020-2021 school year and continues to expand each year. Approximately 90-100 students in grades 10-12 are in the program each year, and the program includes six different subjects. Students in the Health Science Pathway have two different tracks to receive credentials, including taking the Patient Care Technician Exam and becoming a certified CPR/Basic Living Skills Instructor through The American Heart Association. The Health Science program also includes a HOSA: Future Health Professionals club, which currently has about 60 members. Students in HOSA have many opportunities to connect with students from other schools who are also pursuing healthcare professions.

Goal 5: Family Members are engaged in student success: Through continued and intensive family engagement and decision-making, families have input on what is best for their children.

Pillars: Active Family and Community Engagement/ Collaborative Leadership and Practices

Pipeline: Family and Community Engagement Support

Need for Pipeline Service Enhancement: A review of evidence shows that increased family engagement improves student academic achievement, reduces truancy and chronic absenteeism, and increases graduation rates (Castrechini & London, 2012; Biag & Castrechini, 2016)

Activities and Partners:

5.1 School-based Community School Leadership Teams facilitate integration of parents, community members, and students in decision-making processes.

5.1.a. The Community School Coordinators within each school, with support from school leadership, including the principal, will develop **School Leadership Teams** that manage the implementation of the Community Schools strategy. These Leadership Teams may include students, parents and caregivers, community members and school staff, and will provide a new structure for shared leadership in academic design and shared responsibilities for academic success.

5.2.b. Fairfield City Schools will develop and launch a **Parent Academy** program to build family support for student success, and provide caregivers with skills for parenting and individual wellness. Through district-wide events and trainings, the FCS Parent Academy will empower and engage families through educational services such as curriculum workshops, financial literacy coaching, housing counseling, and other opportunities for families to access skills, services, and resources.

5.2 Community Schools Advisory Committee of local, cross-sector leaders provides guidance on priority areas and proposed interventions strategies.

5.2.a. **The Fairfield Community Schools Advisory Committee** currently consists of 15 members, including the presidents of Miles College and Lawson State Community College, the City of Fairfield Mayor, members of Fairfield City Council, representatives from local business, including Alabama Power, and Fairfield community members and parents.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Goal 6: Schools serve as Community Hubs to support healthy families and a thriving Fairfield. Fairfield families have the support, tools, skills, and training to be financially stable and to thrive in a 21st century economy.

Pillars: Active Family and Community Engagement/ Collaborative Leadership and Practices

Pipeline Service: Community-based support and community connectedness/ Juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation programs

Need for Pipeline Service Enhancement: As mentioned in Section I, the city of Fairfield suffers from high rates of poverty, housing instability, and violence. Continuing collaborations with teachers and school staff will make it easier to identify the needs of the community, as well as connect families to resources that assist them with those needs (Sanders, 2016).

Activities and Partners:

6.1 Educational opportunities, such as financial literacy workshops and housing counseling, available on-site for community members.

6.1.a. **Financial Literacy Services** set up families for success. Fairfield's high rate of housing instability creates short-term barriers to academic success for students and long-term challenges for economic mobility for families and the entire community. United Way's Financial Stability Services program serves families with school-aged children experiencing housing instability by providing case management services to improve housing, educational, and economic security. Service coordination may include goal development, information and referrals, financial coaching, employment readiness, housing counseling, and assistance with school-related issues.

6.1.b. **Housing Counseling and Supports** build on efforts to ensure families are financially stable. Efforts to support Fairfield residents to purchase and remain in their own home are needed to further support a thriving community. UWCA became a HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agency in 2011 and offers monthly homebuyer workshops and financial education seminars in partnership with local financial institutions. Each year approximately 500 individuals participate in group educational activities (offered both in-person and virtually) including first-time

homebuyer workshops and seminars covering topics such as identity theft prevention, improving credit, and fair housing. The free classes are promoted to low-income audiences through a variety of outreach methods, including a robust email outreach to 3,000+ low-to-moderate income individuals, social media posts, and occasional television appearances. In addition, UWCA partners with financial institutions and 28 senior centers in Jefferson County, including a senior center located within Fairfield, to provide financial education on topics of interest including fraud prevention and senior money management.

6.2. Conflict resolution and crime prevention strategies are provided to students and their families.

6.2.a. **Helping Families Initiative** is a crime-prevention effort designed to improve family functioning, child well-being and educational outcomes. HFI is a partnership between the District Attorney of Jefferson County, public schools, and community partners and agencies. With real-time access to student data and a program focused on strengthening families by addressing root causes of dangerous behavior, HFI provides support to students and families before they encounter the juvenile justice system.

HFI partners with Fairfield City Schools to recognize warning signs like unexcused absences and suspensions, and then conducts in-home assessments to identify root causes of dangerous behavior. A cross-sector team provides insight and information across multiple public agencies to craft an individualized intervention plan that empowers families with resources to help students attend school consistently and behave in accordance with school policies.

6.2.b. **Jefferson County Family Resource Center RESTORE** program provides support to stabilize families and facilitate reentry and development of individuals within the juvenile justice system. Housed within the Jefferson County Family Court, JCFRC has been empowering

families by providing strength-based support services to improve family and individual quality of life since 2016.

According to information provided by the Jefferson County Family Resource Center, in connection with Jefferson County Family Court, 60 youth in Jefferson County, aged 22 and younger, were charged with murder or attempted murder in 2022, with 83% having prior contact with Family Court. JCFRC's RESTORE (Reduce, Educate, Support, Train, Organize, Realize, Empower) program is designed to support youth involved in the Justice System, and their families, by bringing together partners to provide strength-based support services that develop skills and provide resources to improve a family's quality of life and allow each family to realize success and to support successful reentry for youth. The program currently operates within the City of Birmingham and would be expanded into the City of Fairfield through the Full Service Community School Grant Program.

Pipeline Services: Connecting the Dots

Pipeline 1: High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs

Community School Coordinators will work with staff from Fairfield City Schools, the Fairfield Pre-K program, and other community-based early learning providers to support school readiness and a successful transition to kindergarten. Coordinators, along with other project partners, will enhance outreach to ensure parents of incoming kindergarteners within Fairfield are fully aware of programs and resources to support early learning success. Partners will include the Education Development Center, Fairfield Pre-K, UWCA's Success by Six Program, Childcare Resources, and the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education.

Pipeline 2: High-Quality School and Out-of-School-Time Programs

FCS will align and enhance variety of existing programs, services and systems that promote the holistic development and academic enrichment needs of FCS students and their families. This will include a specific focus on literacy supports, a need common to all FCS locations. This alignment will target three elements:

Academic Instruction: Through the School Leadership Team, each Site Coordinator will work closely with teachers, principals, and curriculum specialists to monitor student-centered data points, including academic performance measures such as standardized test scores. Together, they will identify specific academic challenges, align partnerships and resources, and provide professional support to overcome identified gaps. Added resources will include access to literacy and math coaches, tutoring, and other academic supports. Through partnership with the Alabama Reading Initiative, FCS staff are currently receiving support to ensure high-quality instruction is offered to students at all levels of their education continuum.

Literacy Programs: The Site Coordinators will work with the district's literacy programs to better align them where they exist, or to introduce them to FCS where they are needed. These programs include targeted instruction to improve third grade reading proficiency given the impact of the Alabama Literacy Act, as well as in-school tutoring and academic support offered through community-based organizations. Teachers will also receive additional training on how to teach foundational reading skills, along with in-classroom coaching throughout the year. Professional development support is especially critical now given the state's recent suspension of the requirement for teachers to pass the Praxis content knowledge test. The move was approved as a strategy to increase the available pool of K-12 teachers statewide given critical shortages, but it also presents opportunities for instruction that is not as impactful for students.

Out-of-School Time Programs: Each FCS location offers out-of-school time programming, including a 21st Century Learning program that operates after school and during the summer months at all four FCS locations. These programs are designed to improve student achievement, attendance, and behaviors by providing enriching academic activities for youth during out-of-school hours. Students in these programs also participate in a wide range of youth development activities that may be otherwise unavailable. These supports include tutoring, service learning, arts and music, drug and violence prevention, financial literacy, credit recovery, apprenticeships, environmental literacy, and STEM activities. Identifying and expanding additional out-of-school time opportunities for students is critical to ensuring that all students have the support they need.

Pipeline 3: Social, Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health Services and Supports

Fairfield City Schools and community partners will continue to align the existing social, physical, and mental health resources available within FCS schools, and will actively recruit programs to address service gaps and unmet needs. Building on the ongoing Multi-Tier Systems of Support training and coaching FCS is receiving from the Alabama Department of Education, Community School staff, district staff, community members, students and families will expand effective services that are meeting the academic, behavioral and foundational wellness of students and staff, while also identifying services and programs that will strengthen areas in need of support.

Pipeline 4: School and Workforce Transitions

Fairfield City Schools will provide transitional bridge services to prepare students and their families for key transitions as they enter kindergarten, move among schools, and ultimately move to post-secondary opportunities or into careers. By partnering with the Education Development

Center (EDC), a leader in developing transition strategies that recently worked with nine state agencies to develop the Alabama Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit, Fairfield City Schools is developing environments where all children learn and thrive.

EDC is currently working within Fairfield to support transitions among incoming kindergarteners and will supplement that work with an additional focus on the transition from 2nd to 3rd grade that will take students from Robinson Primary to Glen Oaks Intermediate. This support will help to ease challenges for students and create holistic transition plans that will involve sharing information with families, helping them build relationships of support throughout the transition, and aligning the experiences children and families have before and after the transition. In building this foundation for seamless transitions, Fairfield Community School partners will promote continuity for children and families and ensure that each new school experience gets off to a good start.

Pipeline 5: Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

The High School Community School Coordinator will collaborate with existing high school staff to improve college and career readiness which is currently documented at 64% for Fairfield High School students. College and Career Readiness is measured by one or more of the following criteria: score college-ready in at least one subject on the ACT, score at Silver Level or above on the WorkKeys Assessment, earn a passing score on an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate Exam (college-level courses delivered in high school), successfully earn a Career Technical Education credential, dual-enrollment credit at a college or university, and/or successfully enlist in the military.

Additional support for post-secondary and career transitions will expand to supplement the work currently underway through the GEAR-UP Jefferson County Initiative, which provides current 12th-grade students with support for post-secondary access. Through coordination with the GEAR-Up Facilitator, the Community School Coordinator located within the High School will design programs for all students within the school to improve their transitions beyond the K-12 system. Strategies such as helping coordinate college tours and visits, supporting FAFSA completion, coordinating loan and financial literacy programs, and supporting internship and apprenticeship programs are just a few possible tactics to position students for career success.

Pipeline 6: Family and Community Engagement Supports

Through new organizational structures, such as a Community School Advisory Committee and School Based Leadership Teams, families and community members will have opportunities for greater involvement in shaping and designing academic systems that will provide further support to students and the community. Additionally, new processes, such as an initial community needs assessment, annual reporting of key data points to families and the community, new Parent Academy opportunities, and enhanced community engagement efforts led by the on-site Community School Coordinators, will place a greater emphasis on ensuring involvement from family members at all phases of a child's education.

Pipeline 7: Juvenile Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs

Addressing community violence perpetuated by school-aged juveniles has been identified as a priority by the Fairfield community and school leadership. Fairfield City Schools and Community School partners that specialize in juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation will work together to put systems in place to promote crime prevention and offer effective

rehabilitation programs for youth within the Justice System. Through partnerships with organizations such as the Jefferson County Family Resource Center and Helping Families Initiative, Fairfield City Schools will provide environments that address the dangerous behaviors affecting Fairfield students and families.

SECTION 3 - QUALITY OF THE PROJECT SERVICES

Fairfield City Schools Framework

Fairfield City Schools will use educational best practices aligned with local priorities determined by students, families, school staff, and the broader community to place students at the center and drive school improvement. The following three core values will frame all work:

- 1. Shared Leadership** to transform how schools make decisions by engaging diverse stakeholders to participate in the development and ownership of local strategies;
- 2. Equity** to transform how schools collect and use data; recruit, align and manage partnerships and resources to ensure students, families, and staff have the resources they need to be successful; and
- 3. Cultural Relevance** to transform how schools relate and interact with their students, families, and community in a more culturally relevant and restorative way leading to positive school cultures, strong relational trust, and high-quality teaching.



To achieve programmatic goals and objectives, each FCS school will demonstrate four key features:

1. Full-time Community School Coordinators are fully integrated into each of the four schools within the district. These Coordinators serve as a link between the schools and community-based organizations and families and help to align efforts across organizations and the community to promote student success. To achieve this goal each Coordinator: 1) supports the project evaluation team in developing local needs assessments through a participatory process with school staff and community members; 2) provides UWCA community-based data to the evaluation team related to existing programs and services offered throughout the community 3) works in coordination with principals and assistant principals to establish School Leadership Teams; 4) Supports Fairfield City Schools leadership, including the existing Multi-Tiered System of Support Committee and Fairfield Community Schools Advisory Committee, to develop action plans to create a pipeline of services, and 5) Aligns and recruits community partnerships and pipeline services around the locally-created strategic plan.

2. Shared Leadership Strategies: Families, teachers, and students engaged in decision-making processes enhance student motivation and school participation (Marzano & Waters, 2005). To support the goal of shared leadership, a Fairfield Community School Advisory Committee launched in July, 2023 with 20 community members helping to collaboratively guide and develop a strategy unique to Fairfield. Utilizing different stakeholder skill-sets and experience supports families and communities and leads to a safe and supportive school environment (Jacobson & Blank, 2015; Jacobson et al., 2012).

With that in mind, and with ongoing structured feedback from the Fairfield Community School Advisory Committee, each Fairfield City School location will develop a School Leadership Team consisting of a diverse group of families, students, staff, community partners, and residents. This group will integrate with existing school-based committees, including Multi-Tiered Systems

of Support groups and Problem Solving Teams, to identify strategies unique to each school that can support student and school success. By creating spaces for student-centered and family-centered engagement strategies, the Fairfield Community Schools Advisory Committee and School-Based Leadership Teams will address the needs and priorities of the school community and purposefully align around shared goals.

3. Equity Strategies: When data is used in an ongoing process of program evaluation and improvement, community school implementation is more effective (Harris et al., 2003). Fairfield City Schools school currently uses a data-informed approach to utilize Student-Centered Data to identify priorities, goals, and strategies. This process informs each school's action plan to focus on the following: health and wellness, social and emotional learning, family and community engagement, a safe and supportive climate, and academic achievement. This vision is communicated to all stakeholders within the district, and school's utilize the data to inform their priorities and to recruit and align community partnerships and resources to fully integrate student supports into the school.

4. Cultural Relevance Strategies: Schools will receive professional development, resources, and support to foster Culturally Responsive Practices. These approaches build on community assets, acknowledge personal and institutional biases, and respond to the self-identities of students, families, school staff, and community members. Culturally responsive instruction empower students and tailor the school experience to be mindful of and address social barriers to help students overcome obstacles (Bustamante et al., 2004). Schools promote parent-teacher home visiting, community-based learning, and other relationships between the school and community.

Expanding the Framework

These four key features result from national best practices (Klevan et al., 2023; IEL, 2018) that have been thoughtfully adapted to meet Fairfield’s unique community needs and assets. Program efforts will focus on the following services to create a true cradle-to-career continuum that addresses the unmet needs of FCS students and families.

Services and Supports for Early Childhood: A large body of research demonstrates the importance of kindergarten readiness on academic and life outcomes (Preskitt et al., 2020; Justice et al., 2017). Through the ongoing collaborations with early learning providers, the Fairfield Community School partnership will support opportunities to promote existing programs among Fairfield families, while also recruiting and supporting new and existing program providers to offer high-quality, accessible early learning opportunities across the City of Fairfield.

Fairfield City Schools are engaging students and families before they start school via the Fairfield Pre-K Program, which operates six classrooms through the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education’s First-Class Pre-K (FCPK) program, which is nationally recognized and has been awarded by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) as the highest quality rating nationally for 17 consecutive years. An ongoing longitudinal study of the FCPK program has shown that “students who received First Class Pre-K were more likely to be proficient in reading and math compared to students who did not receive FCPK, and the benefit of FCPK persisted over time and did not fade out.” Specifically, the percentage of points were higher for students receiving FCPK by 1.6 percent in reading and 3.2 percent in math, and both percentage differences persisted through middle school years (Public Research Affairs of Alabama, 2019). Furthermore, a metanalysis of this study was conducted in 2020 that supported the findings that children who participated in FCPK were more likely to be proficient in reading and math

compared to their peers that did not participate in the program and that the increased performance persisted into later grades (Preskitt et al., 2020).

Community partners within the Bold Goals Coalition, and led by Childcare Resources, have come together to collectively work on FCPK expansion across the region, and have assisted local providers in opening 26 new First Class Pre-K classrooms, providing more than 460 slots every year for children in Central Alabama to participate in the country’s highest quality pre-K program (Data Dashboard, 2023).

Fairfield currently has 8 FCPK sites administered by Fairfield City Schools and local community-based organizations, but additional support is needed to ensure every student within Fairfield has access to high-quality PreK to prepare them for kindergarten.

Community School Coordinators will work directly with community providers, Fairfield Pre-K staff, students, and parents to enhance access to early childhood programs and support effective transitions to the K-12 system, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Model programs such the Chicago Child-Parent Centers have demonstrated the longitudinal impact of combining effective teaching and learning in prekindergarten and the early grades of elementary school with strong partnerships with families and comprehensive supports for children and family (Reynolds, et al., 2011). At a larger scale, communities such as Union City, New Jersey, and Montgomery County, Maryland, have greatly reduced achievement gaps while improving outcomes for all by making significant investments in improving teaching and learning and family support in the early grades and sustaining them over a period of years (Kirp, 2013; Marietta, 2010).

Resulting Improvement: The Community School Coordinator at Robinson Primary will work directly with Fairfield Pre-K staff and other community partners to promote a community-wide kindergarten transition strategy for children, families, and staff within Fairfield City Schools. This will connect more families to critical early childhood education programs and improve Kindergarten readiness. The coordinators will also provide Fairfield City Schools with the capacity and formal outreach systems it needs to engage families with preschool-aged children authentically.

The research findings below highlight the importance of investing in the Transition to Kindergarten and undergird Fairfield's commitment to deepening this work:

- Kindergarten teachers report that almost 50% of children have difficulty adjusting to kindergarten.
- Many communities do not have transition to kindergarten plans, and those that do often focus on low-intensity, more superficial activities (Little, et al., 2016).

- The more transition activities prekindergarten teachers implement, the better prepared children are at the beginning of kindergarten (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007).
- The more transition activities kindergarten teachers implement, the higher student achievement by the end of kindergarten (Shulding et al., 2005)
- Transition benefits are strongest for children in low- and middle-income families (Ahtola et al., 2011).

Transition Support from Robinson Primary to Glen Oaks Intermediate: Due to the newly implemented school reconfiguration plan, FCS now has separate schools serving K-2nd grade students and 3rd-5th grade students (Three schools previously served K-6th grade students across the district). Thus, the 2023-24 school year is critical for identifying specific student needs for these grade bands and supporting successful transitions from Robinson Primary and Glen Oaks Intermediate.

[REDACTED]

Services and Supports for High School Students: While elementary and middle school locations feature a variety of strong academic enrichment and youth development programs, services for

high school students must be carefully aligned as they make the transition into adulthood. As documented earlier in the narrative related to school data, programs that support improved literacy and college and career readiness are sorely needed. Student interventions must also integrate resources for career exploration, job readiness, post-secondary enrollment, mental health supports, and other services. Family engagement is especially critical as parents must also be engaged in the process of applying for college admissions and financial aid.

Resulting Improvements: The High School Site coordinator will focus on the unique needs of Fairfield High School students and their families and continue to develop partnerships and programs, such as the existing Health Care Career Path and the recently launched Modern Manufacturing Program, that will support successful transitions into postsecondary and career opportunities. The resulting infusion of resources will better address the holistic needs of students, families, and school staff.

Welcoming School Environments that Promote Family Engagement: Students succeed when they enter a school feeling prepared and fit, but few schools have support in place to help families manage transitions. Supporting and engaging families lead to more supportive family environments, especially where student education is concerned. The more that families are engaged and educated by teachers and school staff about important transitions, events, and follow-ups, especially with low-performing students, the higher reading and mathematic achievement (Westat and Policy Studies Associates, 2001).

The Fairfield Community School partnership strives to create welcoming school environments, while also providing additional supports, such as Parent Academies, that prepare families to navigate transitions and equip them with tools and resources to support students.

Resulting Improvement: Fairfield City Schools will introduce new mechanisms for family engagement and support, including transition supports that include on-site play-and-learn events to help family members prepare for key transitions. A new Parent Academy program will further support parents by giving them information related to student learning, while also providing services such as financial and housing counseling, that will help them create safe, stable environments at home.

Greater Access to Physical, Social, and Mental Health Resources: Several internal and external partners provide health services and resources within FCS schools, however they are rarely aligned with each school's strategic vision or coordinated with similar services to maximize the collective impact. Service providers are accustomed to friendly competition rather than collaborative action. As a result, health service availability can sometimes be misaligned: individual schools make, and service providers respond to, ad hoc needs rather than a coordinated request. This is especially true in high school locations, where students require specialized health services for emerging needs, such as mental and reproductive health.

Resulting Improvements: Through the existing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Committee within Fairfield City Schools, the district is currently identifying existing services in key areas, including student health, and gaps that need to be addressed. This assessment process will equity the School Leadership Teams within each school to know which gaps exist for their students and will provide a path forward for them to develop unmet needs in an equitable way within each school.

SECTION 4 – ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

The attached program budget and budget justification summarize all program expenses, including the assignment of a full-time site coordinator at all four Fairfield City Schools for the five-year program period. Each coordinator will work with staff from FCS, UWCA, and other project partners to develop a plan for integrating and enhancing pipeline services for students and families across the district. Local funding is currently in place for two coordinators within the district, and those coordinators are expected to be hired early in the Fall, 2023 Semester. Funding through the Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program would supplement that local investment to allow for two additional coordinators to be hired, ensuring each FCS location has a dedicated coordinator. A complete job description for the coordinator position is attached.

With [REDACTED] in local investments in the Fairfield Community Schools strategy, in addition to funding supporting complementary services that are enhanced through this partnership, there is clear cross-sector support and commitment to its success. Fairfield City Schools, United Way of Central Alabama, and other project partners will build on these commitments to sustain the positions using the following strategies:

- **Strategy 1 – Leverage UWCA investments and seek additional grant funding to support the continuation of the coordinator positions and pipeline services beyond the grant period.**

United Way of Central Alabama has committed local funding to the launch of the Fairfield Community School strategy, including funding two Community School Coordinator positions within FCS locations, as well as providing funding to support pipeline services. While the pipeline enhancement funding is intended to serve as seed

funding to fill in gaps identified through community needs assessment and Multi-Tier Systems of Support planning processes, UWCA has committed to continue funding the coordinator positions as a long-term, place-based strategy for community change. UWCA, FCS, and other project partners, have a proven track record of securing grant funding to support successful projects, and intend to utilize organizational resources to identify appropriate opportunities and collaboratively apply to local, state and national agencies and organizations to sustain the work.

- **Strategy 2 - Advocate for state funding to sustain supportive services.**

Over the past few years, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) has provided additional state investments to local district in key areas aligned with Community School pipeline services, including offering Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) coaching and technical assistance, funding Mental Health Coordinators and behavioral health services, and investing in staff support and Literacy and Mathematics Specialists to improve student outcomes in key areas. With ALSDE requiring all school districts to adopt an MTSS Framework by 2027, a successful Community Schools partnership in Fairfield would put the district at the forefront of MTSS implementation within Alabama and position the district for continued state investments to support Community Schools as an innovative approach to the state's goal of meeting the needs of every child.

- **Strategy 3 – Integrate the positions into district funding as permanent personnel.**

Ongoing district funding will be a critical piece of long-term sustainability, and FCS has shown that they are willing to integrate positions that bring valuable support to their students and families. When ALSDE offered financial support for a Mental Health

Coordinator position, FCS initially contracted with an external organization to manage that position, but eventually brought the position into the district to ensure that the services were integrated and aligned with other school programs in a way that provides the most support to families. With UWCA committed to funding at least two Coordinator positions beyond the grant period, that provides flexibility for FCS to provide financial support for additional Coordinators and other key issue areas in the future.

With FCS's expertise in acquiring public funding that meets the unique needs of their students and families, such as securing funding for PreK Classrooms and finding resources to support behavioral health and healthcare services, and with UWCA's expertise as a private fundraising institution that raised over [REDACTED] in 2022 (Purveyor, 2023), the partnership is positioned for long-term sustainability and success. With an integrated approach to community change, UWCA, FCS, and other project partners, are uniquely positioned to build on their individual strengths to find ways to sustain the work in the coming days.

As the lead applicant, UWCA is unmatched in its ability to generate community investment and will leverage its expertise as a fundraiser and convener to sustain and scale the program. In 2022, United Way's annual campaign generated approximately [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

UWCA and FCS signed a Community Schools Project MOA (Appendix A) that governs the collaborative and contractual relationship shared by the organizations and to delineate their scope of work and involvement in the partnership. This includes:

- An agreement by UWCA to serve as the grantee, meet grant requirements, serve as financial administrator, comply with reporting requirements, assign a project director, and hire and employ School-Based Coordinators to be placed at the four FCS school sites. Additional commitments may include continuing financial investments (grants) in the programs and services that serve FCS, fundraising, marketing and communications, volunteer recruitment, technical assistance, and coordination with related educational initiatives.
- An agreement by FCS to provide office space for Community School Coordinators and program space for services both during school and during out-of-school times, leading community outreach and engagement efforts, data collection support, technology, and support for the School Coordinators to implement their role effectively.

The MOA confirms that each partner agrees to collaborate through this initiative, work toward the shared vision, goals, objectives, and outcomes, participate in all relevant project meetings, tasks, and activities, and support the project's evaluation.

Additional partners have been engaged in the Fairfield Community School development process through planning sessions, providing insight and guidance on project priorities, sharing of relevant program information and data, and through serving on the recently launched Community Schools Advisory Committee. Partners will remain engaged through various formats, including those listed above, and individual service contract agreements will be developed between UWCA (as the grant recipient and administrator) and organizations providing key pipeline services. Additional letters of support and involvement from project partners may be referenced under the attachments.

SECTION 5 - QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Working with a variety of Fairfield Community School project partners, United Way of Central Alabama will serve as the grant administrator and ensure the program is appropriately managed and that all project elements are achieved on time and on budget. UWCA's organizational experience includes the successful management of numerous community programs which served over 50,000 clients in 2022 alone.

United Way of Central Alabama serves a six-county region that include 21 different school districts. With no functioning Community Schools within the region, UWCA intends to expand the Community School strategy over time to additional school districts and provide a regional approach that allows Community School services and programs to reach children and families in districts of different sizes, demographics, and geographic areas.

While UWCA will manage the grant administration, outcome reporting and financial obligations, the project will be a true collaboration among community partners, students and families. Intentional community engagement has been a central element to the project development, and creating structures to promote leadership from community members, school staff, students and families will remain a priority over the course of the project.

As it relates to quality of organizational management, UWCA has a history of successfully receiving and implementing grant opportunities. In its history, UWCA and its affiliates have managed over 27 federal grants and over [REDACTED] in federal funds with no related audit findings. It has undergone 15 audits in compliance with the rigorous Government Auditing Standards and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR Part 200 (formerly Circular A-133). UWCA posts on its website for

public inspection its audited financial statements and Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax, filed with the IRS.

Specific examples of the UWCA's performance and experience include:

- UWCA was recently awarded its 19th consecutive 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency from Charity Navigator, a top charity evaluator. Only eight charities in all of America (and no other United Ways) have an active streak of at least 19 consecutive 4-star ratings.
- UWCA currently manages over [REDACTED] in assets and has extensive experience managing grants at the federal, state, and local level including:
 - Partnering with the Alabama Department of Senior Services by serving as the Area Agency on Aging for Jefferson County, with over [REDACTED] in state and federal funding, including a Senior Center within Fairfield that served 130 seniors in 2022.
 - Serving as the sole Housing Intermediary approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Alabama, which involves coordinating housing counseling services with agencies in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee, a valuable resource given the high rates of housing instability within Fairfield.
 - Partnering with Birmingham City Schools and the Alabama Department of Education on two separate grants from the U.S. Department of Education implementing programs at after-school learning centers and preparing students for college, both of which are closely aligned with the pipeline services that will be advanced through the Full Service Community Schools Program Grant.

In addition to possessing expertise in coalition-building and program design and implementation, UWCA has a Finance Department with a Grant Controller and Grant Accountants proficient in drawing down and disbursing grant funds to partners. As the Community School project will involve contracting with local organizations to provide services related to project goals and ensuring timely payment to project partners, this capacity is an essential element of program success. Finance personnel routinely review and approve budgets meeting grant requirements, process invoices with a multi-level, automated software requiring escalating levels of approval for increasing invoice amounts and manage overall grant budgets and project surplus or shortfalls.

UWCA's Compliance Division of its Operations Department includes a staff attorney who will support drafting and approving contracts and grant agreements, establishing monitoring guidelines and tools, clarifying grant compliance requirements, and providing training to partners, and preparing reports on activities and compliance.

While UWCA will provide the support to ensure grant compliance, the project involves dozens of partners who are collaboratively working to implement Community Schools within Fairfield. Additional resources and personnel that will support program implementation and achieve the stated goals and objectives include:

Community School Coordinators (2 FTEs, vacant) – A full-time Community School Coordinator will be employed and based within each of the four Fairfield City School locations. Essential job functions for these positions include: 1) Working in coordination with the district's MTSS Team and district leadership to assess services and identify school-specific priorities 2) Developing School Leadership Teams to inform Community School service delivery strategies 3) Developing and managing community partnerships that deliver priority pipeline services 4) Facilitating communication and relationship-building with community partners, key

stakeholders, and families to ensure involvement in planning and leadership structures and 5)
Promoting project services and supports within the community.

United Way of Central Alabama has committed local funding for two Coordinator positions, with anticipated start dates in September 2023. The Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program would provide funding for two additional Coordinators, allowing each school to have a Coordinator based on site. (Job Description attached).

UWCA Senior Vice President of Community Impact (K. Watson, .05 FTE) – UWCA’s Sr. Vice President will provide oversight for the program, ensuring goals, objectives and outcomes are met. (Resume attached)

UWCA Vice President of Community Impact/ Project Director (R. Parker, .25 FTE) - Executive leadership and management of this project will be provided by the UWCA Project Director, who will provide initiative-level management and day-to-day oversight of project activities. Primary tasks include management and supervision of all staff members, oversight, planning, implementation, and management of all project activities. The Project Director will help to facilitate and coordinate various UWCA support for the project to complement the Coordinator’s on-the-ground role. Support offered through other UWCA resources include fundraising through public and private channels for program sustainability, contract development, financial management and marketing and promotion. (Resume attached)

UWCA Director of Data and Evaluation (F. Iriaye, .5 FTE) – UWCA’s Director of Data will support the program’s data collection efforts to meet program measurement and reporting requirements. The Data Director will work in collaboration with the site coordinators, school staff, and the evaluation team to ensure data validity and reliability. (Resume attached)

Fairfield City Schools Mental Health Services Coordinator (E. Herring)– The existing Mental Health Services Coordinator position is funded under a pilot program developed by ALSDE as a direct response to evidence of the increased need for student mental health services stemming from the pandemic. The coordinator has participated in project development and has provided insight and feedback to ensure Community School pipeline services build on the existing services within FCS locations. The Mental Health Coordinator will continue to serve as the lead liaison for FCS to coordinate services and program activities in collaboration with UWCA and the Community School Coordinators. (Resume attached).

Fairfield City Schools District-Wide Social Worker- This position is funded under a ALSDE Building Communities grant and provides additional capacity for the district’s MTSS efforts, including providing group interventions for students in the areas of conflict resolution and grief counseling, assisting with chronic absenteeism prevention efforts, and supporting family and parental engagement efforts. This position will play a complementary role to the Community School Coordinators by enhancing the direct services offered to support students and families and helping to bridge service gaps across school locations. (Job Description attached)

Fairfield City School Leadership- Principals and Assistant Principals have been involved in the formation of the Community Schools strategy by participating in partner planning sessions, providing feedback through FCS staff meetings, participating in project development, and being involved in the recruitment and hiring of the Community School Coordinators. These Leaders will continue to play a supportive role for the project by serving as on-site resources for the Community School Coordinators and integrating them into various school leadership structures. (Resumes attached).

Community Schools Advisory Committee - The Fairfield Community Schools Advisory Committee launched in July 2023 and is designed to bring together city leaders and community stakeholders to guide and inform the operation of a Community Schools strategy within Fairfield City Schools. The Committee's roles and responsibilities include developing key partnerships, providing program feedback and guidance, and promoting Community School programs and services within the community. Consisting of city and civic leaders, presidents from area colleges, city residents and representatives from the business community, the committee will provide external project support, key connections to resources vital to the program success, and public promotion of project success. (Committee Roster and Committee Responsibilities attached)

Teachers and School Staff at each school will serve on issue-specific committees and the School Leadership Teams within each school to help create and implement pipeline services that align with school priorities. Academic and non-academic staff will also participate in technical assistance and professional development opportunities to improve the academic instructions offered to students.

Students, Families, and Community Members will serve on each school's Leadership Team, issue-specific committees, and Community Evaluation Team to infuse their unique perspectives, experiences, and recommendations into continuous improvement and refinement.

Program Partners will provide support by implementing pipeline strategies, participating in all relevant working groups and committees, and supporting all data collection and evaluation activities.

The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits.

As demonstrated in the attached program budget and budget justification, the costs of this project are reasonable in relation to the anticipated number of persons served and the scale, scope, and quality of the provided services. During the project period, UWCA and partners will serve approximately 1,544 students and their families across four schools. With a five-year cost of [REDACTED]

The Department of Education's investment will supplement existing services and will not supplant current funding commitments or resources.

Matching Resources: As documented in the attached program budget, [REDACTED] in cash resources have been identified as matching funds for the project. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Additional resources, including grant funding awarded to Fairfield City Schools to support mental health services, literacy and math supports, case management services for students, and a variety of other services that align with the Full Service Community School Grant Program will support the success of this effort. While these resources have been mentioned in the application to illustrate the FCS's commitment to offering appropriate services and supports to their students and families, those funds are not complementary and not reflected in the local matching resources.

A clear and actionable organizational structure and work plan will be critical to the successful implementation of pipeline services. The program will be implemented according to the following timeline:

FSCS Project Timeline Year 1 and 2 (by Quarter)										
Activity		Year 1				Year 2				Responsible Entities
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Execute grant agreement		X								UWCA
Staffing	Advertise Vacant Positions	X								UWCA
	Hire Staff	X								
Needs Assessment	Development Needs Assessment Tools		X							Samford, FCS, Site Coord., Data Team
	Conduct Needs Assessment/ Asset Mapping		X	X			X	X		FCS, Site Coordinators
School-level decision-making	Develop School Action Plans				X					FCS, Site Coord.
	Organize School Leadership Teams				X	X				
Coordinate Pipeline Services	High-Quality early childhood education programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	High -Quality in and out-of-school programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Social, Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS MH . Coord.
	Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Support for School and Workforce Transitions			X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Family and Community Engagement Support			X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS MH. Coord.
	Juvenile Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs					X	X	X	X	Site Coordinators, FCS MH Coord.
Data collection and Reporting	Collect Data			X	X	X	X	X	X	Samford. Data Team
	Prepare Semi Annual & Annual Report					X		X		Samford. Data Team, FCS
	Disseminate Reports to Community					X		X		Site Coord., FCS

FSCS Project Timeline Year 3 and 4 (by Quarter)										
Activity		Year 3				Year 4				Responsible Entities
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Execute grant agreement										UWCA
Staffing	Advertise Vacant Positions									UWCA
	Hire Staff									
Needs Assessment	Adjust Needs Assessment Tools		X				X			Samford, FCS, Site Coord., Data Team
	Update Needs Assessment/ Asset Mapping		X	X			X	X		FCS, Site Coordinators
School-level decision-making	Utilize Previous Reports to Revisit/adjust Action Plans				X				X	FCS, Site Coord.
Coordinate Pipeline Services	High-Quality early childhood education programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	High -Quality in and out-of-school programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Social, Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS MH . Coord.
	Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Support for School and Workforce Transitions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Family and Community Engagement Support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS MH. Coord.
	Juvenile Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Site Coordinators, FCS MH Coord.
Data collection and Reporting	Collect Data	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Samford. Data Team
	Prepare Semi Annual & Annual Report		X		X		X		X	Samford. Data Team, FCS
	Disseminate Reports to Community		X		X		X		X	Site Coord., FCS

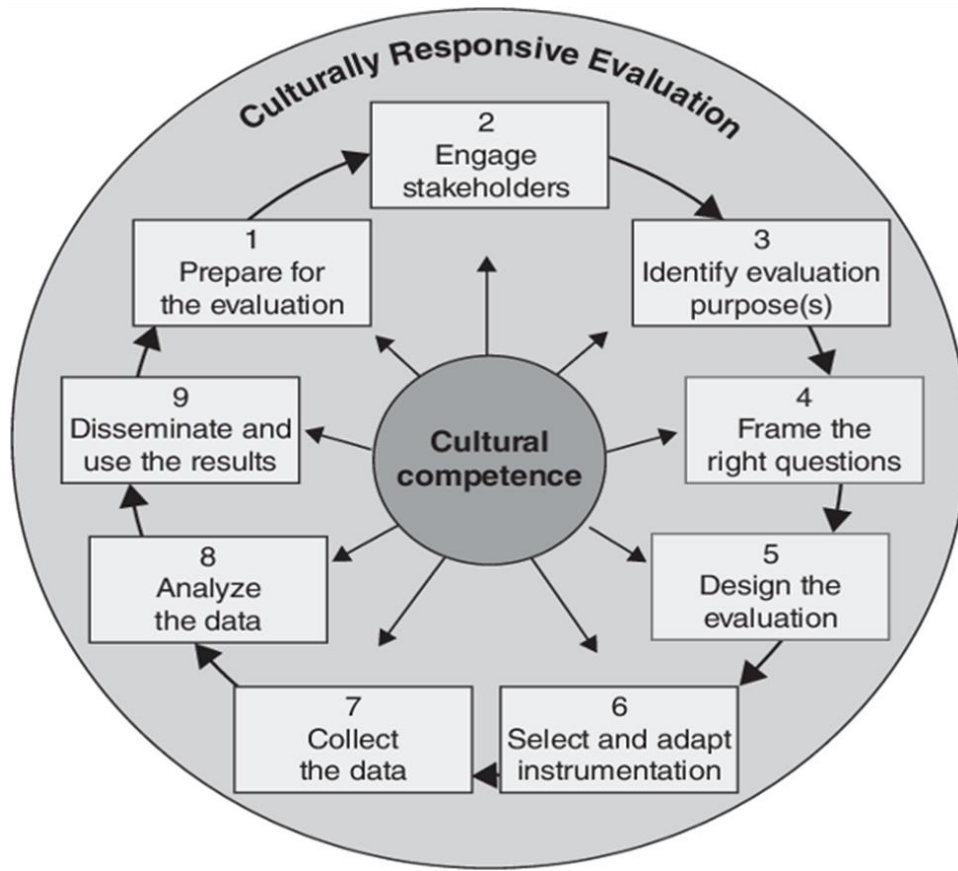
FSCS Project Timeline Year 5 (by Quarter)						
Activity		Year 5				Responsible Entities
		1	2	3	4	
Execute grant agreement						UWCA
Staffing	Advertise Vacant Positions					UWCA
	Hire Staff					
Needs Assessment	Adjust Needs Assessment Tools		X			Samford, FCS, Site Coord., Data Team
	Update Needs Assessment/ Asset Mapping		X	X		FCS, Site Coordinators
School-level decision-making	Utilize Previous Reports to Revisit/adjust Action Plans				X	FCS, Site Coord.
Coordinate Pipeline Services	High-Quality early childhood education programs	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	High -Quality in and out-of-school programs	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Social, Health, Nutrition, and Mental Health Services	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS MH . Coord.
	Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Support for School and Workforce Transitions	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS
	Family and Community Engagement Support	X	X	X	X	Site Coord., FCS MH. Coord.
	Juvenile Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs	X	X	X	X	Site Coordinators, FCS MH Coord.
Data collection and Reporting	Collect Data	X	X	X	X	Samford. Data Team
	Prepare Semi Annual & Annual Report		X		X	Samford. Data Team, FCS
	Disseminate Reports to Community		X		X	Site Coord., FCS

SECTION 6 - QUALITY OF THE PROJECT EVALUATION

An independent evaluation will be conducted by Samford University. The goal of Samford's rigorous, systematic evaluation is to support FCS in (1) measuring progress toward the outcomes, objectives, and goals of the project; (2) continuous improvement of the program, (3) developing and cementing links between FCS and the various community partners, and (4) scaling and replication of the model. The evaluation is based upon a culturally responsive, participatory model while also providing objective, independent assessment of objective and outcome measures using reliable, validated instruments.

Framework for Evaluation

The evaluation will follow a participatory, culturally responsive and equitable evaluation (CREE) framework. CREE is an evaluation approach that considers the factors of culture, diversity, equity, context, socioeconomics, history, gender, social justice, structural issues, ethno-linguistics and inter-sectional considerations in the overall design and implementation of a program's evaluation spectrum (Mathematica 2021, Hood, Hopson, & Kirkhart, 2015). More specifically, CREE is a participatory evaluation design approach that ensures that the beneficiaries of a proposed program (like the current Fairfield Community School Proposal) have a substantial contribution to the different phases of a program. These stages include but are not limited to program strategy, program development, program improvement, theory of change, program decision making, program implementation, policy formation and overall program sustainability. Hood, Hopson & Kirkhart (2015) recommend nine stages of a program evaluation and how CREE can be incorporated into each of the stages as depicted in the spoke wheel below:



Source: Adapted from Hood, S., R. Hopson, and K. Kirkhart. "Culturally Responsive Evaluation: Theory, Practice, and Future Implications." In *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, edited by K.E. Newcomer, H.P. Hatry, and J.S. Wholey. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015, pp. 281–317.

The inquiries and activities that operationalize CREE will be carried out in each of the nine stages of CREE program evaluation paradigm, as shown in Table 6 (below). It is our expectation that this CREE approach will make the overall program evaluation plan culturally sensitive, responsive, and social justice driven, while providing objective measures of the program's processes, outcomes, and impacts.

Table 4 CREE Stages of Evaluation and Corresponding Activities	
CREE Stages of Evaluation	CREE Incorporated Activities
1. Prepare for the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble an evaluation team whose collective lived experience is appropriate to the context of the program being evaluated. See section below on the Evaluation Team. • Engage individuals who can serve as cultural guides to the community. Project stakeholders and community partners have already been engaged in developing the evaluation plan, and additional community members will be recruited as the Community Evaluation Team (CET) during the first quarter of the project. • Compile an inventory of the people participating in the evaluation or the program being evaluated. This is an ongoing process, since additional participants will be recruited throughout the duration of the project.
2. Engage stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble, consult with, and train the advisory panel of stakeholders who represent the communities served by the program, known as the Community Evaluation Team (CET). • Seek to engage multiple voices (for example, marginalized communities and youth). • Pay attention to distributions of power. Power and privilege impact group dynamics. Strive to balance the stakeholder group by including decision makers (for example, program leaders), program participants, and community members.
3. Identify purpose of the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear expectations for goals and use of evaluation. • Examine how well the program's philosophy aligns with the cultural values of the community it serves. • Ask whether program resources are equitably distributed (for example, examine the program's criteria for inclusion and exclusion). • Ask what environmental or contextual factors the evaluation must include to understand outcomes.

4. Frame the right questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include questions that are relevant to stakeholders. • Determine what will be accepted as evidence in seeking answers to questions. • Examine whose voices are heard in the choice of questions and evidence. • Ask whether these choices reflect the lived experiences of stakeholders.
5. Design the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a study design appropriate to both evaluation questions and cultural context. • Seek culturally appropriate methods that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. • Construct control and comparison groups in ways that respect cultural context and values (for example, consider whether the design is appropriate for certain groups such as tribal communities; consider the race and ethnicity of study participants when forming groups).
6. Select and adapt instrumentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage data that programs are already generating (for example, administrative records, meeting minutes, student applications, and student work). • Establish and validate reliable instruments for the community. • Ensure language and content of instruments are culturally sensitive. • Consider using art-based approaches to data collection (for example, Photovoice and poetry)
7. Collect data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use procedures that are responsive to cultural context to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Collaborate with the stakeholder group to ensure methods are culturally appropriate for the community being studied. For example, a telephone survey might not be appropriate for all communities. • Ensure data collectors are carefully trained in technical procedures and cultural contexts. • Hire data collectors with contextually relevant lived experience.

8. Analyze data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaggregate data by subgroups and cross-tabulate by important cultural variables. • Examine outliers, especially successful ones. • Use cultural guides and interpreters to capture nuances in the findings.
9. Disseminate and use results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create stakeholder review panels to help expand and enrich interpretation and dissemination of findings. • Develop deliverables that align with the purpose of the evaluation and the mission of the program being evaluated (for example, create a short data brief of fewer than five pages, a one-page summary of key findings the program can use for marketing, or a short video reel the program can post on its website to showcase findings and program successes).

Adapted from Mathematica (2021). *Using a Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation Approach to Guide Research and Evaluation*. <https://www.mathematica.org/publications/using-a-culturally-responsive-and-equitable-evaluation-approach-to-guide-research-and-evaluation>

This participatory, culturally responsive and community engaged evaluation framework supports Absolute Priority #3 (Capacity Building and Development) and Competitive Preference Priority #2 (Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change), which emphasize extensive community engagement, a systemic, evidence-based approach, and coordination among community partners that support students.

Guiding evaluation questions: This design will incorporate both a process evaluation of the implementation of the initiative itself and a formative evaluation of outcomes. The guiding questions for the evaluation will be:

- 1) How has the Full Service Community School (FSCS) model been adopted and implemented within Fairfield City Schools (FCS), in each of the four constituent schools and in the district and community as a whole?

- 2) How do key stakeholders describe the implementation and impacts of the FSCS model at FCS, in each of the four constituent schools and in the district and community as a whole?
- 3) How has the adoption of the FSCS model and additional services affected outcomes of interest, compared to baseline data, other districts in the state of Alabama, and over time as the project is implemented?
- 4) What improvements could further support and enhance the effectiveness of the FSCS program in FCS?

The Samford team will provide an independent external evaluation of the FSCS portfolio and its impacts, recognizing the same essential involvement of the participants and responsiveness to cultural values that are reflected in the FSCS program. The team will engage with service delivery partners and beneficiaries/service users insofar as possible to participate in the design and implementation of evaluation activities. The evaluation team will use a rigorous, mixed-methods research design that is grounded on the principles of culturally responsive, participatory evaluation research while also using measurement instruments with established reliability and validity. They will systematically engage the FSCS partners and stakeholders in shared decision-making around evaluation design and implementation. This process has already begun through discussions and data sharing between Samford, Fairfield City Schools, and Cahaba Medical Care.

The **process evaluation** will include quantitative and qualitative data on the activities of the pipeline services and the coordination among these services. The **outcome evaluation** will include quantitative aggregate data on academic and social outcomes for each of the schools and for the community, and where possible will also examine individual-level longitudinal outcomes data for pipeline service participants compared with non-participants. In addition to the schools

themselves, families, community members, partner organizations, and other agencies that support the initiative will also be included in the evaluation.

The data sources and evaluation questions will align with each of the goals, outcomes, and objectives presented in Table 3 (see Section 2, above). The plan for the evaluation timeline, strategies, instruments, and alignment is included as an attachment (see attached) which shows the integration of the nine steps of the CREE evaluation framework with the evaluation timeline, strategies, and instruments for process and outcome evaluation data collection as described below.

Participatory Approach to Evaluation Planning

As detailed below, quantitative research will form a baseline for the evaluation. The research will not just be about numbers, but how individuals and communities describe themselves in relation to bringing about change, their goals for the community, and what progress and success would look like to them.

A series of Town Hall planning sessions will be held at the start and then annually throughout the duration of the project, at which stakeholders, parents, and community members will be invited to learn about and contribute to the project evaluation planning. A separate series of focus groups will be held among student representatives. At the Town Hall sessions and student focus groups, a brief presentation of the FSCS model, its goals, and the pipeline services included will be offered. The purpose of evaluation as a tool for accountability, improvement, and ensuring responsiveness to community members' perspectives will be emphasized. Facilitators will work with groups of participants to develop and rank a list of priorities from the project goals and to describe how they would determine progress toward those priorities. These suggestions will be used, as far as possible given available resources and data sources, alongside the evaluation plan

provided in this proposal in order to ensure that the evaluation not only measures progress toward the goals defined by the FSCS partner organizations but is also responsive and accountable to the community itself. The meetings will present progress made during the previous year and elicit recommendations for continuing to improve the services and how they are coordinated.

In addition to the annual Town Hall meetings, updates will be published for each school semester in an accessible format (to be determined in consultation with the CET). Furthermore, widespread venues for providing suggestions for improvement (which may include, for instance, a suggestion box at each of the pipeline services, but the format to be determined in consultation with the Community Evaluation Team) in order to develop a rapid response pathway whereby community and participant feedback is systematically collected and incorporated into the evaluation and recommendations for improvement that are fed back to the implementation team on an ongoing basis. These recommendations will be presented and discussed at regular check-ins with all of the project leaders and partners in order to provide opportunities for continuous quality improvement.

Qualitative Data Sources and Analysis

Potential data sources include (1) Town Hall meeting transcripts and notes; (2) interviews with partners and stakeholders; (3) focus groups with students, families, community members, school administrators, teachers, and staff, partners, and other stakeholders; and (4) participatory data collection methods such as Photovoice, a participatory research method in which community members select and discuss images that represent their experiences (Wang and Burris 1997). These activities will follow a purposive sampling strategy, with focus group participants selected to maximize representation of genders, grade levels or ages, and participation in pipeline services. Given that over 96% of FCS are identified as Black, race will not be used as a sampling parameter

among students and community members, but it will be noted for descriptive purposes. A modified grounded theory approach will be used, in which themes will be identified both as emergent from the data and in response to the *a priori* evaluation questions. Notes and transcripts will be coded for themes by two or more members of the evaluation team using NVIVO qualitative analysis software; relevant passages related to the agreed thematic categories will be identified and read in relation to one another and to their individual contexts, seeking both to confirm and to identify counter-examples for emergent findings; summary findings will be developed through regular meetings of the evaluation team members; and finally conclusions will be discussed with project partners and at the annual Town Halls and focus groups of community members and students will be used to confirm the conclusion validity of qualitative findings from the community's perspective(s). The findings and conclusions will be incorporated into the annual evaluation reports and recommendations for continued improvement of the program.

Quantitative Data Sources and Analysis

Quantitative data sources include existing student academic achievement and engagement data provided by FCS, including student enrolment and demographics, student attendance, high school graduation rates, student disciplinary records (suspensions and referrals), Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) summative assessment scores, and iReady (school-level formative assessment) data. Administrative data from partner organizations providing pipeline services will include records of activities and services provided and numbers of participants served. Surveys measuring participant satisfaction with pipeline services, self-rated improvements in mental health, and other community outcomes will be developed in conjunction with recommendations from the Town Halls and student groups. The "What's Happening In This School?" (WHITS) questionnaire (Aldridge and Ala'l, 2013), which has been validated to elicit

high-school students' perspectives on school Climate and Culture with respect to teacher support, peer connectedness, school connectedness, affirming diversity, rule clarity, and reporting and seeking help, will also be used at the high school level.

REDCap, a secure web application for building and managing online surveys and databases, will be used to compile, store, and organize data for this evaluation. Quantitative analysis will be conducted using SPSS and SAS.

Descriptive statistics for the process evaluation will include numbers of activities provided through the pipeline services and numbers and demographics of participants in these services. The outcome evaluation will provide descriptive statistics for each of the outcomes identified in the Logic Model, broken down by school, for the district as a whole, and/or for the community, depending on the nature of the outcome. For example, reading and mathematics proficiency will be provided per school, while graduation rates will only be provided for the high school and access to financial stability services will be measured at the community level. Process and evaluation outcomes will be measured at least annually, with quarterly measures compiled where available (for instance, the iReady formative assessment data). Where possible, individual-level data for academic, health, financial stability, and community stability outcomes will be compared between pipeline service participants and non-participants. Inferential statistics examining these relationships will be computed where possible, but it is likely that the available sample sizes will lack sufficient power for inferential statistics to demonstrate significant findings.

Reliability and Validity Considerations

Because the project creates a unique cast of partners and services, addressing validity and reliability directly in the evaluation will be vital to ensuring that results have meaning. The

quantitative component of the evaluation will rely heavily on standardized assessments and data which have been collected following statewide procedures. The reliability of the ACAP assessment scores is supported by a report by the Public Action Research Council of Alabama (PARCA), which found that “regardless of where the proficiency bar is set, the relative performance of the state’s various school systems on these standardized tests tends to remain constant. There is a socioeconomic component: the higher the percentage of economic disadvantage in a school, the lower the percentage of students scoring proficient” (PARCA, 2021). There has been debate about the most valid “cut score” to measure proficiency and when it should be implemented post-COVID, but the ACAP remains the only comparable standardized assessment for academic achievement across the state. The evaluation team will work with school data officers to ensure that reporting systems for school data such as detention statistics and graduation rates are as robust as possible. The construct, content, face, and criterion validity of all survey instruments will be ensured by the participatory approach of the evaluation, in which community members will provide feedback on the design, wording, and meaning of questionnaires and on the survey methodology.

Dissemination

Formative feedback based on evaluation learnings will be discussed in monthly check-in calls with the UWCA Project Director and Site Coordinators and Samford evaluation team. Samford will produce an annual evaluation report of both the qualitative and quantitative learnings, discussion and recommendations. The evaluation team will engage in in-person briefings and discussions about the report with project leaders, Site Coordinators, school leadership, and community partners. Samford will work with the Site Coordinators to generate reports that are accessible to all stakeholders, and these will be discussed at the annual Town Hall

meetings and student focus groups. Included in each mid-year and annual report will be a section on recommendations for continued improvement and how the previous year's recommendations were implemented. A final report will be prepared, and key findings will be presented at a community showcase, at which community members will be further engaged in determining their next steps for ensuring the project's sustainability.

Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will be led by evaluators at Samford University, with the support of a Community Evaluation Team (CET) composed of stakeholders, including students, family members, and other community members. The CET will advise on evaluation matters such as survey design and identifying significant stakeholders. In addition, CET members will be trained and paid to act as survey data collectors and focus group facilitators. This will increase community participation and trust in the evaluation, while ensuring that community research assistants are fairly compensated for their contributions. It is anticipated that the CET will also take on increased responsibility for analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of findings over the five-year period, consistent with the culturally responsive, participatory evaluation framework.

The evaluation team will be led by Dr. Rachel Bailey, an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health. Dr. Bailey has led a number of previous evaluations on behalf of UWCA, including a USDA Summer Food Service Program, a recreational park Masterplan, and preliminary development of an evaluation methodology for School-Based Health Clinics (SBHCs) provided by Cahaba Medical Care in FCS and other locations, and previously evaluated a large, multi-agency project on Co-Creating Healthy Change in Cardiff, Wales. The interdisciplinary Samford evaluation team includes faculty from four departments in the College of Health Sciences (public health, social work, healthcare administration and informatics, and nursing) and the Orlean

Beeson School of Education, thus providing a comprehensive and integrated approach to evaluating the complex community, educational, and health goals of the project. The Samford evaluation team has established working relationships with the data officers at FCS and Cahaba Medical Care to secure access and an understanding of data that are already routinely collected and additional inputs that will be needed to evaluate this project. Samford University is a member of the REDCap Consortium and offers use of REDCap, a secure web application for building and managing online surveys and databases, for this project.

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