Guiding Questions: Helping Site Leaders and Partners Create Lasting and Meaningful Partnerships, Part 1

Questions to Consider BEFORE Sites and Partners Enter Into a Partnership

Purpose: The following is a list of possible questions that Site Administrators and potential or existing partners should ask themselves before entering into a partnership (or before renewing or expanding an existing partnership, where appropriate). The questions should be reviewed in conjunction with a review of the school's Community School's Strategic Site Plan (CSSSP) and any other data or governing documents deemed important by the site or partner.

SHARED LEADERSHIP
Questions for Site:
- How can the partner agency support your site's goals?

Questions for Partner:
- How can the site support your agency's goals? Examples include:
  - ✓ Educating staff, families and students about the services provided by the partner agency through school meetings, events and marketing materials.
  - ✓ Supporting the development of Coordination of Services Teams (COST), or including partners in existing COST and other coordination structures.
  - ✓ Inclusion in needs assessment and planning.
  - ✓ Including partner agency staff in professional development and capacity-building opportunities.

Questions for Site and Partner:
- What are the Vision and Mission of both the school and the partner agency? Do they align/enhance/support the other?

COLLABORATIVE, RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION
Questions for Site:
- Based on the CSSSP, what are the primary goals and expected outcomes that you have for the school? How do they align with the partner agency's expected outcomes?

Questions for Partner:
- What are the primary goals and expected measurable outcomes of your agency's programs/services? How do they align with the site's goals and expected outcomes?

Questions for Site and Partner:
- What are the shared goals of this partnership? How do the shared goals support the Strategic Priority areas of the CSSSP? Be specific.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SUCCESS
Questions for Partner:
- How do the goals and outcomes of your agency support OUSD's Strategic Questions?

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- ✓ How many more Oakland children are graduating from high school?
- ✓ How many more Oakland children are attending school 95% or more?
- ✓ How many more students have meaningful internships and/or paying jobs?
- ✓ How many more Oakland children have access to, and use, the health services they need?
- What are your agency's strategies to support student achievement? Do they align with the school's strategies? Examples might include:
  - ✓ Delivery of specific services to remove identified barriers to learning
  - ✓ Regular screening for academic/attendance struggles
  - ✓ Avoiding pull-out from core classes or during testing
  - ✓ Academic case management
  - ✓ Alternatives to Suspension programs
  - ✓ Improving school climate

Questions for Site and Partner:
- Will the partner agency be sub-contracting for any services with other providers? If so, what level of accountability will the partner agency have over their staffing and programming? What level of accountability will the site have over subcontractor activities (if any)? How will the partner agency ensure that the services of these subcontracts are high quality and in alignment with the school's goals and culture?

Helpful Tips
✓ We often take for granted that schools and partner agencies are working toward the same end. While schools certainly care about the physical, social and emotional well-being of children and non-academic partner agencies want children to be successful in school, being specific about how each entity can support the goals of the other will help ensure that all are working toward the same end intentionally and effectively.

Guiding Questions: Helping Site Leaders and Partners Create Lasting and Meaningful Partnerships, Part 2

Questions to Consider as Sites and Partners Determine Partnership Terms and Draft the Letter of Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding

Purpose: These questions are intended to help sites and partners define the scale, scope, intent, and extent of any level of partnership, and to establish clear, mutual expectations for the partnership. The questions should inform the Letter of Agreements (LOAs), Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and/or contractual agreements. As key staff of the school or partner agency change, these documents should be used to build and hold the institutional memory and integrity of the nature and logistics of the partnerships. The formalized documents should be revisited at least annually or when there is a change in the leadership of either entity to ensure that they reflect the current needs and expectations of both the partnership and the scope of the work.

Please refer to the attached LOA sample to see how the questions below might be translated into terms of the agreement.

SHARED LEADERSHIP
Questions for Site:
- What kind of training and support can the school provide for partner agency staff?
- Is the partner agency invited to participate in school staff meetings/retreats, mandatory registration, back to school night, etc.?
- Is the partner agency represented in the school site plan, website, newsletter, etc.?
- For which decisions will the partner agency be at the table?

Questions for Partner:
- What kind of training and support will the partner agency provide for school staff and faculty?
- For which decisions will school staff be at the table?

Questions for Site and Partner:
- What kind of decisions will be made collaboratively between school leadership and the partner agency? What kind of decisions will the school and partner agency need to make independently?
- Through what structures does shared decision-making happen? For example, is the school represented on any advisory body convened by the partner agency and is the partner agency represented in any of the school's collaborative leadership structures?
- How will the school and partner agency work together to identify and address school-wide needs that arise (e.g. violence, positive school climate, crisis response, etc.)?
- What is the spirit of how the school and partner agency will work together? How will the school and partner agency anticipate and work through partnership challenges?

COLLABORATIVE, RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION
COMMUNICATION

Questions for Site and Partner:
- What kind of communication structures that include frequency, duration, appropriate point of contact are or will be in place between the partner agency and school administration (e.g. regular meetings/check-ins, phone-calls, emails, etc.)?
- Who is the appropriate point of contact for both the school and the partner agency in relation to: program implementation; administrative support; collaborative support; fiscal solvency; other areas as needed
- Is the school staff oriented annually to the work of the partner agency? Is the partner agency staff oriented annually to the work of the school?
- What are the key factors that make or break collaboration between support service providers who are not employed by the same agency?
  - ✓ Are there referral mechanisms in place?
  - ✓ Is there a Coordination of Services Team, regular partner meetings, or some other mechanism to ensure regular communication between partners?
  - ✓ Have clear roles and responsibilities been outlined/articulated?

Helpful Tips
- ✓ Consider the level of integration that you want to have between the partner agency and school and include language that solidifies and institutionalizes this level of integration.
- ✓ Consider both the things that are working well about the existing collaboration and the challenges that you have experienced or anticipate experiencing.

SERVICES, STAFFING, LOGISTICS, AND FACILITIES

Questions for Site and Partner:
- What hours will the program operate? What is the start and end date of the program?
- What services will be provided, by who and when?
- What kind of background/training do partner staff need to have (classroom management, youth development, etc)?
- What is the agency's policy on absenteeism and providing substitutes, if and when appropriate?
- What is the enrollment process and are there any limitations around eligibility that the school should be aware of (staff/student ratio, # of students, demographic data, attendance data, academic status, etc.)? Will there be a waiting list and how are students prioritized?
- What space will be needed/provided (e.g. classrooms for groups/youth development programs, confidential office space, regular meeting space, etc.)?
- Does the partner agency staff have keys to access the identified spaces? Do they have access to the alarm code if needed?

Helpful Tips
- ✓ As simple as it seems, the day-to-day issues like keys, space and lack of clarity around service hours and eligibility can create frustration and get in the way of collaboration. Use the LOA to set expectation around the big issues in collaboration, as well as the seemingly small logistical issues.

PROBLEM SOLVING
Questions for Site and Partner:
- What is the initial process for addressing concerns and issues? Consider how the issue could be shared (a standing meeting item, component of regular reporting process, shared with site-based lead team member, emailed to Manager, etc) and how the corrective action plan should be implemented and assessed.
- Did either the school or partner agency get the opportunity to address and resolve the issue before further steps were taken?
- What are the next steps, if the resolution doesn't meet the needs of both parties?
- What are the circumstances that mandate outside facilitation and/or conflict resolution from agency leadership and/or District management?
- Are there any specific issues that are grounds for terminating the partnership?

> **Helpful Tips**
> ✓ Have a specific point of contact for conflict resolution as well as a clear chain of command if additional support is needed.
> ✓ Document the process for resolving the issue, including target goals with benchmark assessments, supports necessary for successful resolution, follow-up meeting dates, and who is responsible for what.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SUCCESS

RESOURCES
Questions for Site and Partner:
- What are the costs of this program to the school and to the partner agency?
- What direct or in-kind resources does the school provide to the partner agency (e.g. space, use of equipment, custodial, copy machine, phone, computer, internet, etc.)?
- How can the school and partner agency support each other's fundraising efforts? Does joint fundraising occur and for what and how are the responsibilities divided up (who does the grant reporting etc.)?

> **Helpful Tips**
> ✓ Outline all of the resources that are shared between the school and partner agency, so that each entity is clear on what the other is bringing to the partnership.
> ✓ Fundraising can be essential to sustaining or expanding existing programming, as well as funding new programs to serve students and families. Schools and partner agencies should establish how they can be supportive of each other's fundraising efforts, as well as identify key services and programs that each will be working to fund or sustain.

DATA
Questions for Site and Partner:
- Does the school share aggregate data regularly with the partner agency? Does the partner agency share aggregate evaluation data regularly with the school administration and staff?
- What types of data are shared, and with what frequency?