

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: Problem-Solving Machines

ROOSEVELT MIDDLE SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

MAY 2017



Coalition
for
Community
Schools

Because Every Child Deserves Every Chance



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The Center for Popular Democracy works to create equity, opportunity, and a dynamic democracy in partnership with high-impact base-building organizations, organizing alliances, and progressive unions. CPD strengthens our collective capacity to envision and win an innovative pro-worker, pro-immigrant, racial and economic justice agenda.

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The **Coalition for Community Schools**, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership, is an alliance of national, state and local organizations as well as national, state and local Community School networks, and is dedicated to the mission to unite school, community and family for young people's success.

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Journey for Justice (J4J) is an alliance of grassroots community, youth, and parent-led organizations in 24 cities across the country. Our members are base-building groups organizing to win community-driven alternatives to the privatization of and dismantling of public school systems. We are organizing in our neighborhoods, cities, and nationally for an equitable and just education system based on a belief in the potential of all children and the rights of parents, youth, and communities to participate in all aspects of planning and decision-making.

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Community Schools: Problem-Solving Machines

Roosevelt Middle School: **A CASE STUDY**

Executive Summary

Community schools implement evidence-based strategy to bring together the resources of school, family, and community in order to make schools stronger and help young people thrive. With a century-long history in the United States,ⁱ Community Schools now serve over 5 million students in approximately 5,000 schools across the country.ⁱⁱ While Community Schools might take different approaches, these schools generally employ whole-child, research-based strategies and elevate innovative and holistic practices in order to achieve results that go beyond test scores.ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, when Community Schools are able to employ the multiple strategies outlined in this report, their results can be *sustainably transformational*: increasing school attendance, decreasing suspensions and expulsions, creating healthy and safe communities, and improving academic outcomes.

This report documents the dramatic school improvement effort ongoing at Roosevelt Middle School (Roosevelt). Since adopting the Community Schools model in 2012, Roosevelt has seen dramatic improvements in test scores, attendance, family engagement, and in many other categories. From 2012 to 2016:

- Roosevelt increased reading proficiency scores by 85 percent from; girls' scores more than doubled, from 21 percent to 44 percent;
- Roosevelt doubled its aggregated math scores from 2014 to 2016;
- The rate at which English Language Learners (ELL) were reclassified as Fluent in English tripled.
- Roosevelt cut its chronic absence rate in half, from 15 to 7.5 percent, and;
- Roosevelt decreased its rate of suspensions even more, from 18 to 6.4 percent.¹

Roosevelt accomplished these results by implementing a version of the Community School strategy that adheres to researched backed best practices. Roosevelt:

- Conducts regular asset and needs **assessments** of and by both school and community;
- Develops strategic **plans** that define how educators and community partners use all available assets to meet specific student needs and get better results;
- Engages **partners** who bring assets and expertise to help implement the building blocks of Community Schools; and

i John S. Rogers (1999). *Community Schools: Lessons from the Past and Present*. Flint, Michigan: C.S. Mott Foundation.

ii Source: <http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/faqs.aspx>

iii *ibid*

- Has a Community School **Coordinator** whose job is to facilitate the development and implementation of the strategic plan in collaboration with school and community members/partners, and to ensure alignment of solutions to needs.

Roosevelt uses six research-based Community School strategies that allow for greater student-centered learning, community investment and engagement, and school environments squarely focused on teaching and learning. The six strategies are aligned with decades of academic research on successful schools:

- 1) Culturally relevant and engaging curricula;
- 2) An emphasis on high-quality teaching, not high-stakes testing;
- 3) Wraparound supports, such as health care and social and emotional services;
- 4) Healthy school climate and positive discipline practices, such as restorative practices;
- 5) Family and community engagement; and
- 6) Inclusive school leadership committed to making the transformational community school strategy integral to the school's mandate and functioning.

This in depth exploration of Roosevelt's implementation of the above strategies can serve as a guide for school community members around the country who are, as is Roosevelt's principal, Cliff Hong, working towards developing their students as "innovative community leaders".

Preface

**“No one is your friend who demands your silence,
or denies your right to grow.”—Alice Walker**

A few days into her new role as Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos visited a public school in DC about whose teachers she had this to say: “I can tell the attitude is more of a ‘receive mode.’ They’re waiting to be told what they have to do, and that’s not going to bring success to an individual child. You have to have teachers who are empowered to facilitate great teaching.”

Our new Education Secretary is the latest in a long string of officials, pundits, and politicians who blame teachers for the failure of a system that has intentionally underfunded and under-resourced schools in poor, black and brown communities.

For the past 20 years, the American public has been sold on the failure of the US public school system, particularly in large cities. Great efforts have been made by philanthropic organizations, the federal government, elected officials, and school districts to convince the American public that the two most damning issues impacting American schools are bad teachers and limited educational options for parents.

As school closings sweep across the country, many school districts are purging their veteran teachers of color. Despite fierce opposition and harsh consequences in communities across America, this approach has forged ahead. In New Orleans an entire school district converted its public schools to charter schools.

The problem with the school choice movement—which is in fact, the school privatization movement—is that it routinely picks the children it wants and discards the ones it does not. It does this while siphoning off funding from the public schools whose democratic mission is to enroll and teach all children.

Yet with all the money poured into charter schools—money that should be redirected to public schools—charter schools still produce largely mediocre, and in many cases shameful, academic results. In fact, an *analysis* from the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance found “on average, charter middle schools that held lotteries were neither more nor less successful than traditional public schools in improving math or reading test scores, attendance, grade promotion, or student conduct within or outside of school.”

Nowhere have the disastrous effects of the privatization of schools been more deeply felt than in Chicago. Despite massive community protests, many of our schools were completely shut down in 2003, in part because of cuts to affordable housing. We did not choose privatization; it was forced upon us.

To save Dyett High School, our last open-enrollment high school in the historic Bronzeville community on the south side of Chicago, I joined 11 other brave parents, grandparents, and organizers in a *34-day hunger strike*. Finally forced to listen to the parents he had routinely ignored, Mayor Rahm Emanuel caved, and today Dyett is thriving as an open-enrollment neighborhood school with \$16 million in new investments.

Dyett is what is referred to as a community school, which stands as a successful, and sustainable, alternative to charter schools. Betsy Devos should take a close look at the community school model, whereby schools use community assets to solve community problems. The school, along with partner organizations, provide critical health care, housing, after-school programs and restorative classroom and justice practices to students as well as the broader community.

Parents, teachers, and students are treated as key aspects of the solution rather than the problem. Stakeholder groups serve on the many committees that govern the school and implement restorative, inclusive, and necessary services and programming.

We know through lived experience and extensive evidence that meaningful parent and community voices are essential to school performance.

Roosevelt Middle School in Oakland, is a shining example of why the community school model is a strong option for many of America's long neglected public schools. Between 2012 and 2016 Roosevelt cut its chronic absence rate in half, from 15 to 7.5 percent, and decreased its rate of suspensions even more, from 18 to 6.4 percent.

Reading and math proficiency for boys and girls have increased steadily since 2012 and the rate at which English Language Learners (ELL) were reclassified as fluent in English tripled.

President Trump campaigned on the belief that Black, Latinx, immigrant and poor communities have nothing to lose because they are so empty of riches, so devoid of assets and so hopeless. He's wrong. We have everything to lose.

We must ensure our students enjoy the best educational opportunities we can provide them from schools like Dyett and Roosevelt. To transform public education in the US, we must be courageous enough to confront the ugliness of systemic racism which creates inequity and meet the needs of our children so they can develop into the types of men and women needed to transform our communities. We choose community schools. We choose real equity, not the illusion of school choice.

Jitu Brown

Journey for Justice Alliance

Introduction

“Give us a problem and we’re happy.”

**—Allen Weeks, the Executive Director of Austin Voices for Education and Youth,
an organization working to develop community schools throughout Austin,
calls community schools “giant problem-solving machines.”**

Community schools implement evidence-based strategy to bring together the resources of school, family, and community in order to make schools stronger and help young people thrive. With a century-long history in the United States,^{iv} Community Schools now serve over 5 million students in approximately 5,000 schools across the country.^v While Community Schools might take different approaches, these schools generally employ whole-child, research-based strategies and elevate innovative and holistic practices in order to achieve results that go beyond test scores.^{vi} In fact, when Community Schools are able to employ the multiple strategies outlined in this report, their results can be sustainably transformational: increasing school attendance, decreasing suspensions and expulsions, creating healthy and safe communities, and improving academic outcomes.

Community schools often work to solve historically intransigent problems at the intersection of high quality education and social and economic issues such as housing, jobs, food insecurity, transportation, mass incarceration, health care and trauma. Community schools bring together teachers, parents, and other community partners to align resources for maximal instructional, social and physical problem-solving impact. The best community schools develop flexible, adaptive processes and structures to identify needs and deploy assets, serving as educational, social, and leadership development hubs for students and families alike. Continuous improvement is key to the success of community schools.

All community schools rely on stakeholder engagement and input; thorough, multi-faceted assessments of needs and assets; and data-driven coordination of carefully-chosen partnerships. A site coordinator works with stakeholders to monitor the effectiveness of these processes and maintain alignment with the entire community. Community schools create adaptive structures, and leaders never forget that they are dealing with complex human beings living in complex environments with complex assets, needs, and aspirations.

This paper will attempt to lay out the processes and structures needed for success (following up on our report, *Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools*,²—see sidebar), examine how one community school, Roosevelt Middle school in Oakland, has used this model to address the “wicked problems” in their community and construct a roadmap for others trying to navigate this problem-strewn terrain with integrity.

iv John S. Rogers (1999). *Community Schools: Lessons from the Past and Present*. Flint, Michigan: C.S. Mott Foundation.

vi Source: <http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/faqs.aspx>

vii *ibid*

Community Schools Pillars

These are the six research-based Community School Pillars that allow for greater student-centered learning; community investment and engagement; and school environments squarely focused on teaching and learning:



Curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging. Schools offer a robust selection of classes and after-school programs in the arts, languages, and ethnic studies, as well as services for English language learners and special education students, GED preparation programs, and job training. Pedagogy is student-centered.



Positive discipline practices. These include a restorative justice approach along with robust social and emotional learning supports. Suspensions and harsh punishments are eliminated or greatly reduced. These practices encourage students to grow and contribute to the school community and beyond, also helping to ensure school safety and achieve a positive school climate.



An emphasis on high-quality teaching over high-stakes testing. Assessments are used to help teachers meet the needs of students. Educators have a real voice in professional development. Professional development is high-quality and ongoing.



Authentic parent and community engagement. Community schools rely on the active participation of the full community in planning and decision-making. This process recognizes the link between the success of the school and the development of the community as a whole.



Wrap-around supports and opportunities. These include health care and eye care as well as social and emotional services that support academics. These services are available before, during, and after school, and are provided year-round to the full community. Community partners are accountable and culturally competent. The supports are aligned to the classroom using thorough and continuous data collection, analysis, and reflection.



Shared school leadership. School leaders are committed to making the community school strategy integral to the school's functioning. Leaders are responsible for ensuring that parents, community partners, school staff, students, and other stakeholders have a voice in planning and implementing the community school strategy.

Mechanisms

Transformational Community Schools achieve success by implementing the six Community School Pillars through the following mechanisms:



Assessing both assets and needs within both school and community; this process includes developing a unique vision and desired outcomes for your school.



Coordination and alignment, including the work of a **community school coordinator** responsible for facilitating the **teams** who develop and implement plans in collaboration with the entire school community.

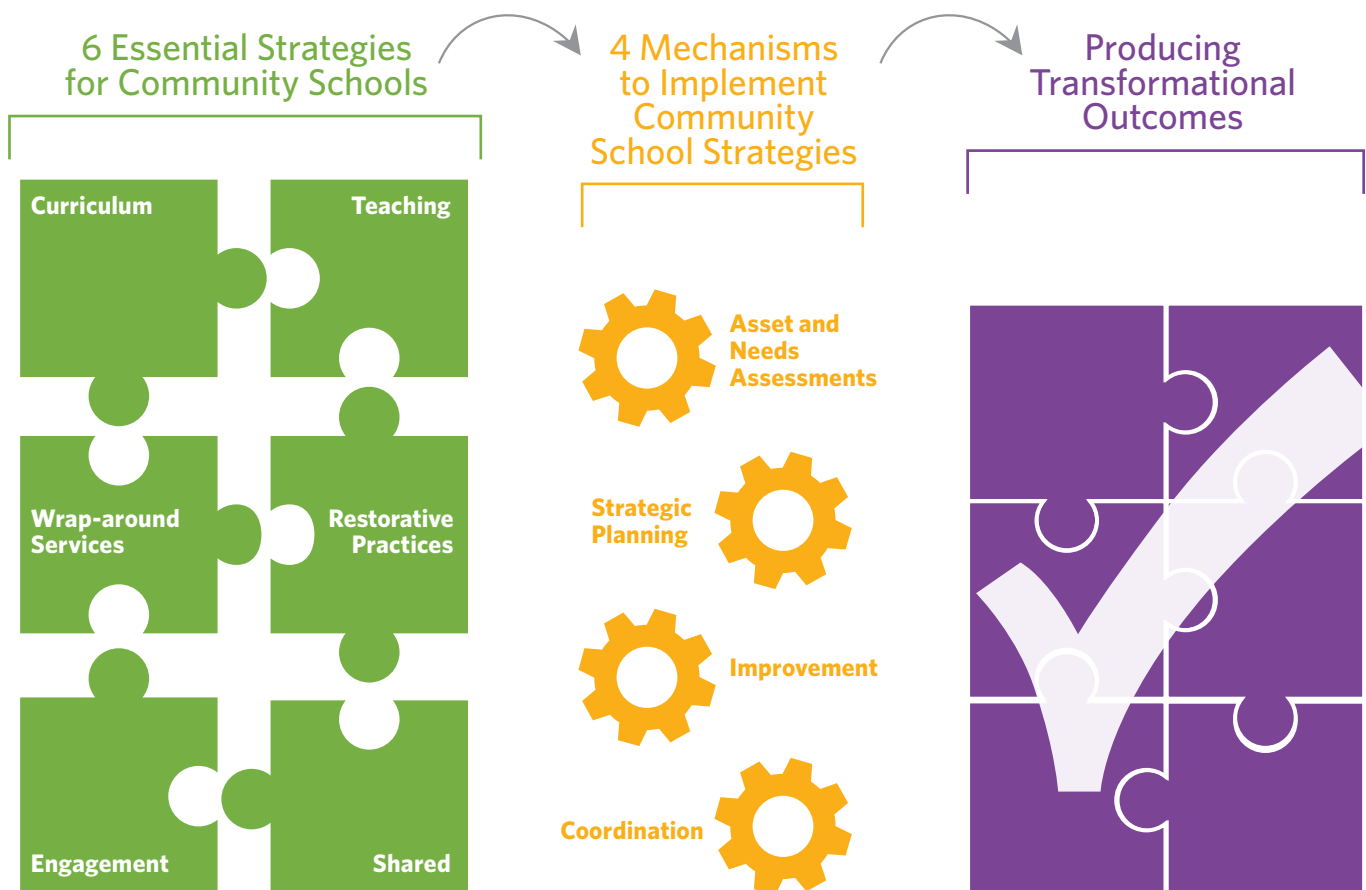


Strategic planning and implementation that uses all available assets to meet specific needs;



Continuous improvement processes, encouraged by leadership, which allow for formal and informal corrective changes throughout the journey.

Community Schools as Continuously Improving Problem Solving Machines



Roosevelt Middle School, Oakland, CA

Since adopting the Community Schools model, Roosevelt Middle School has seen dramatic improvements in test scores and attendance. In just two years, Roosevelt Middle School doubled its aggregated math scores and in four years increased reading proficiency scores by 85 percent. Girls’ scores more than doubled, from 21 percent to 44 percent. The rate at which English Language Learners (ELL) were reclassified as Fluent in English tripled. Between 2012 and 2016 Roosevelt cut its chronic absence rate in half, from 15 to 7.5 percent, and decreased its rate of suspensions even more, from 18 to 6.4 percent.³



Results: Table A

Roosevelt Middle School		
Indicator	2012	2016
Chronic Absence	15%	7.5%
Suspensions	18%	6.4%
Reading Proficiency (whole school)	20%	37%
Reading Proficiency (girls)	21%	44%
8th Grade Math Scores (2011–2013, after which new test implemented)	13%	28%

Roosevelt achieved these dramatic improvements despite a host of challenges faced by students. Nearly half of Roosevelt’s students are English Language Learners; ninety-six percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch; and 17 percent have a physical disability.

Roosevelt’s students live in a community with some of the lowest life expectancies and highest rates of asthma hospitalizations, STI diagnosis, and teen births in the country. ⁴ There is also a history of gang violence in the community.

Students carry these challenges with them into the classroom long before they reach Roosevelt. In the fall of 2015, 58 percent of Roosevelt’s incoming 6th grade students were reading below grade level, and 40 percent were two or more years behind. Fifty-three percent of their incoming 6th graders scored at the 3rd grade level or below in math.⁵

Poor academic outcomes were compounded by chronic absenteeism. Teachers cannot help students catch up if they are not in class. In 2010, when Roosevelt began its program, chronic absenteeism was at almost 15 percent and the rate of out-of-school suspensions was almost 20 percent.⁶

None of this was helped by the opening of charter schools in the neighborhood, which lured away around 500 Roosevelt students, disrupting the school community and cutting funding through diminished per-pupil allotments from the state.

Improving students’ academic outcomes required a holistic, creative approach that built on their assets and addressed the full range of their challenges.

Even before adopting the Community Schools model, Roosevelt reached out to the community for support. Working with East Bay Asian Youth Centers (EBAYC), it participated in a pilot program run by

EBAYC and Kaiser Permanente to provide health centers to schools with high percentages of Asian students. EBAYC also provided after-school programming to Roosevelt students.

With its long history of organizing in the community, EBAYC was a natural partner for Roosevelt. Beginning in the late 1990s, the community group began an ambitious organizing campaign to improve the lives of Oakland youth through parent organizing, youth development, and juvenile justice support. Students and parents were trained in door-to-door canvassing to help bring more of the community into the work. Working with other community groups, such as Oakland Community Organization (OCO, a PICO affiliate), they created a comprehensive asset map of Oakland. Fifty EBAYC youth took San Antonio by storm, learning research, community organizing, and advocacy skills while providing a valuable service to their school and community.

The asset mapping was the start of a larger neighborhood development strategy that would be centered at Roosevelt. EBAYC brought in local Community Development Corporations, and young people to generate ideas about how to improve the community. They decided to establish a “village center” model, using the school as a community hub.

Roosevelt also benefits from strong support from the school district. While EBAYC was organizing the community in the late 90s, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) was creating a community schools task force made up of 25–30 people representing OUSD and community organizations including EBAYC, Oakland Community After School Alliance, and the Oakland Unity Council. The task force met weekly for over seven months. They visited existing Full Service Community School (FSCS) sites to learn best practices and consulted with key local stakeholders to gain an understanding of what they thought a FSCS district should look like. The group also held numerous gatherings in which community members could share their ideas and needs. The Urban Strategies Council, a highly respected community intermediary, facilitated the ongoing development of the FSCS plan.

These efforts culminated in 2010 when Superintendent Tony Smith initiated more extensive community school structures and policies that he had piloted successfully while serving the nearby district of Emeryville. In 2011 the Oakland Board of Supervisors approved a five-year strategic plan for implementing the community school approach.

Today, OUSD houses a number of structures specific to community schools including district-wide organizational partnerships⁷ as well as District Offices on Restorative Justice,¹⁰ Teaching and Learning, Family and Community Engagement, and Community School Contract and Procurement.

How to Create Your Roadmap:

“What I learned through EBAYC is that when you take outcomes and needs and assets assessments and turn them into a strategic plan, that is your roadmap.” —Susan Yee, former EBAYC after-school coordinator and Roosevelt teacher

Defining Success

In 2010, led by Principal Cliff Hong, the staff of Roosevelt Middle School set out to improve outcomes for their students. The first step was defining success. Was it enough to raise test scores or would the school aim to improve more substantive, less quantifiable outcomes as well? This process was a community effort, involving not only school leadership, but teachers, students, parents and other community stakeholders.

Needs Assessment

The team at Roosevelt used a combination of hard, quantitative data like attendance records and test scores and qualitative data from surveys and interviews conducted by both Roosevelt and EBAYC. They also took advantage of the insights and expertise of staff who worked directly with students every day.



This assessment was not a one-time process, but one that would need to be repeated, using the same and similar tools, each year in order to keep track of the school’s changing needs.



Among these tools is a student “happiness” survey, conducted three times per year over several years (See Appendix). This became their guide. Do students feel like they belong and are valued? Do they feel like their struggles are acknowledged and taken into account by school staff? Do their goals feel out of reach? Do they feel heard? By helping staff answer these questions, the survey became an integral part of the school’s continuous improvement cycle.

By compiling data throughout the year, and over the course of multiple years, staff can evaluate their success in setting up conditions for students to be fulfilled. This year students will be given the survey online through their required humanities classes.

Based on surveys given in fall of 2016, Principal Hong and his staff learned that some students felt unsafe coming to and from school. To address this issue they worked through their relationship with the Oakland Police Department, which is responsible for ensuring student safety. The school will evaluate survey responses in the spring to determine whether this intervention was the right one for students.



Surveys have also shown that students are more likely to experience bullying in certain areas of the school or at certain times in the day, especially during lunch and other unstructured periods. The staff responded to this information by ensuring that adults were present to supervise these settings. The uses of survey data are so far entirely internal and pragmatic. However, the school has plans to share certain portions of the survey data with the families of current and prospective students.

Based on the success of the student survey, Roosevelt next introduced a staff satisfaction (or “sense of fulfillment”) survey, asking similar questions of teachers as had been asked of students.⁹ (See Appendix) The goal of this survey is to understand how the leadership team can help create conditions



in which teachers are inspired and empowered to do their best teaching every day. Principal Hong aspires toward a “shared leadership” model and the survey also helps him in this endeavor.



As a result of these efforts, teachers at Roosevelt have a real impact on the direction of the school and take leadership to those ends. Helida Silva, an English teacher, recalls that as a result of her suggestion to create interdisciplinary academic teams, she was encouraged to pilot a Humanities curriculum in collaboration with a colleague who taught Social Studies. This interdisciplinary teaching model is now central to Roosevelt’s School Redesign Blueprint, a strategic plan for transforming the school over the next five years complete with a substantial grant to pay for comprehensive professional development.¹⁰

Strategic Plan



Having identified some of the community’s most pressing needs, the team developed a strategic plan to develop solutions. The plan begins with a list of priorities developed based on the assessment described above.

The top priority identified was the need to improve attendance. Chronic absenteeism not only hampered students’ academic performance, but undermined efforts to create community within the school. The high rate of student suspensions added to the problem, removing students from school physically and emotionally, damaging their sense of belonging.

Regular attendance was necessary but not sufficient for student success. School staff needed to connect with students’ families to address any problems and ensure support at home reinforced support in school (and vice versa).

With both students and parents on board, Roosevelt’s staff also had to do its part, ensuring quality instruction and a well-developed curriculum were offered. Additionally, school leadership needed to ensure that its vision and practices reflected the needs, assets, and insights of staff.

The team at Roosevelt recognized that each of these priorities could not be tackled at once, and so the school would have to determine where to begin. For Principal Hong it was obvious that issues with attendance and school culture needed to be addressed before the school could start working toward comprehensive curricular change. This is not to say that teaching and curricular goals were ignored—the team engaged in consistent thinking and experimentation to this end. However, they realized that the type of dramatic comprehensive changes outlined in the School Redesign Blueprint¹¹ would require a level of staff ownership that could only be achieved later in the process.

PHASE A

Strategic Plans to Address Attendance and Suspension Rates

For the leaders at Roosevelt, this much was certain: if students didn’t come to school they could not become creative community leaders, nor raise their test scores. Above all, the team needed to get students to want to come to school and to eliminate any obstacles to regular attendance.

To effectively address Roosevelt’s needs, the team had to determine the root causes of poor attendance and high suspension rates. Why did students not come to school? What kind of school culture would encourage students to break this cycle? Roosevelt’s team determined that absenteeism

was linked to diverse forms of structural inequality. A broad range of issues were having an effect on attendance and school climate including access to affordable health care, child care, and quality housing; immigration issues; the criminalization and over-policing of students both students and the adults in their lives; language-barriers; and financial difficulty. These issues often kept students from coming to school or led to disciplinary action, bad grades, bullying, and overall disengagement. Insufficient and ineffective communication between home and school only exacerbated these issues.

Structures and Systems for Problem-Solving:

Having identified both a core problem and some of the root causes, Roosevelt looked to community assets for solutions. They sought support from other community agencies, organizations, and funding bodies to address external student needs such as housing, food, mental and physical health, and employment.

This section outlines specific problem-solving structures that Roosevelt's team chose to employ to address attendance and school climate.

Multi-Stakeholder Teams:

Roosevelt created a set of teams to meet regularly and break down problem-solving into manageable pieces. The makeup of each team was based on the set of problems they were attempting to solve, bringing together those most likely to understand the issue and devise and implement a solution. Addressing Roosevelt's attendance problem involved the coordination of activities of several different teams working together.

By identifying both needs and assets, the team at Roosevelt began working to find solutions for the issues that were impacting the students in their community. They sought support from other community agencies, organizations, and funding bodies to address external student needs such as housing, food, mental and physical health, and employment.

This section outlines specific problem-solving structures that Roosevelt's team chose to employ to address attendance and school climate. Icons in margins assist in connecting these structures back to the four mechanisms that support successful community schools: needs and assets assessments, strategic planning, coordination, and continuous improvement.

Attendance Team

Roosevelt has created a team to address the problem of chronic absenteeism. The team is composed of the Community School Manager, who coordinates all the various teams and conducts on-going needs assessments; the attendance clerk; the school nurse; and other key staff.



During its weekly meetings, members of the attendance team assess and address root causes for each chronically absent student (defined as those students out of school the equivalent of a month or more during the school year--initially 15 percent of Roosevelt's students). The team reviews data, shares strategies, practices and updates, and celebrates successes.

When chronic absence was at its height, the team worked with EBAYC to provide case management to 40 students with the most severe records of absenteeism. Roosevelt staff began making home visits and regular calls to parents to identify the causes of absenteeism and develop needed relationships with parents and caregivers.

Coordination of Services Team



Many of the reasons for absenteeism stemmed from students' challenges outside of school. Where the Attendance Team identifies such challenges, it refers the student to the Coordination of Services Team or COST. Every school in the district must have a COST because it is through this team that schools coordinate student referrals to agencies or community organizations that can meet their needs. Referrals are either internal or external and include physical health, mental health, housing assistance, and legal support as needed.



The team meets weekly and is composed of the Community School Manager, a nurse, mental health staff, the attendance officer, various teachers, external organizational partner leads, a parent liaison, special education staff, and after-school staff.

When a student's case is referred to COST either by another team or a staff member, the team evaluates the student's needs and then makes, monitors, and coordinates referrals. The COST reviews the progress of each situation at their weekly meetings. The Community School Manager is in charge of ensuring that recommendations are implemented.



It is important to note that after-school staff also sits on this team, creating overlap between daytime and after-school. This also ensures that the after-school staff's relationships with students and families are acknowledged and incorporated into decision-making.

School Leadership Team

In addition to addressing the issues of students outside of school, the team at Roosevelt needed to improve the school climate so that students would want to attend school. This work falls to the School Leadership Team, responsible for day to day operations including instruction and climate.



This team is composed mainly of teachers and administrators including the CSM, principal, instructional coach, positive school climate manager, and after-school staff.

The team meets every week, switching every other week between a focus on instruction and on school culture and climate. This alternating focus is worth noting. Many Oakland schools have a team that focuses on instruction alone. At Roosevelt, they believe that instruction and school culture/climate are fundamentally linked. The alternating focus approach began last year based on a staff member's suggestion and according to Principal Hong it has been very helpful to consider the interplay between culture/climate and academics/instruction. The Roosevelt team believes that it might be the only OUSD school that employs this unique structure. They also believe that they are one of the few schools whose leadership team meets every week for a full hour and a half.



If the community school is a "problem-solving machine," then Roosevelt's SLT is the engine of that machine. The team uses a problem-solving process called "design thinking." The specific model of design thinking used at Roosevelt was developed at Stanford University as a way to ensure continuous improvement for a range of enterprises from business to nonprofits to schools. A Roosevelt teacher cohort has been trained at Stanford in this problem-solving methodology and it has been incorporated as a primary framework through which the SLT can understand and continuously improve structures and systems at Roosevelt.



The key elements that comprise the Stanford model of design thinking are:

- **Empathize.** Work to fully understand the experience of the user for whom you are designing do this through observation, interaction, and immersing yourself in their experiences.
- **Define.** Process and synthesize the findings from your empathy work in order to form a user point of view that you will address with your design.
- **Ideate.** Explore a wide variety of possible solutions.
- **Prototype:** Transform your ideas into a physical form so that you can experience and interact with them and, in the process, learn and develop more empathy.
- **Test:** Try out high-resolution products and use observations and feedback to refine prototypes, learn more about the user, and refine your original point of view.¹²



A staff cohort is currently working with Stanford to develop a plan to teach design thinking to students. Principal Hong says, “We think it’s a problem-solving process that everyone uses without naming. But to break it apart [in the way we’re doing] turns it into a concrete skill that we can teach our students in order to help them become creative community leaders. Hopefully this design process can start in school and, once they leave us, can be applied to community issues—climate change, pollution, racism, homelessness. We hope the kids will finally make the leap to ‘here’s a problem; let’s solve it using design thinking.’”



The SLT applied this method to three problems identified with chronic absenteeism. The first was noisy hallways. As Principal Hong explained, “The school has high ceilings; sound travels and bounces around and echoes. Students are running, they’re screaming. It creates a sense of agitation in the hallways that could lead to students having conflict and feeling agitated because it’s just too noisy.”



Having worked through the first three of the design thinking steps, the SLT began brainstorming. They discussed how to measure the noise, experimenting with cellphone apps that staff could use to measure decibels. They discovered that the apps were less effective than their intuitive sense of the level of disruption in the halls.

Using their visceral “data” the team created a system of levels, with level 2 classified as acceptable and levels 3 and 4 classified as unacceptable. They trained the students to identify the range of levels and posted signs all over the school that said “Level 2.” Now hall monitors only have to point at signs in hall to get students to lower their noise level.



The second dealt with student’s academic performance, especially writing and reading comprehension. Using the design thinking process, SLT created department-by-department action plans that appropriately target specific barriers to raising reading and writing levels. Each department decides on a practice they think will help move the needle, what data will help measure progress, and a rubric that shows how well they’re implementing that practice. The SLT will monitor progress by evaluating each department’s action plans every two weeks.



Finally, the SLT discovered many students had an overall feeling of “not belonging”. As a result, almost all lockers at Roosevelt are now studded with colorful sticky notes saying things like: “Be your own person,” “Don’t hate,” “You are awesome,” “Everyone needs a friend,” “Be yourself, don’t copy others,” “You are beautiful just the way you are,” and “#LoveYourself.” Morning announcements reiterate how awesome the students at Roosevelt are, what great things they are accomplishing, and the things they can accomplish in the future.



Roosevelt’s teachers have also worked to give students a greater voice in the classroom. “Advisory” periods allow time for “restorative circles”, in which students discuss personal, family and community concerns with their peers; this gives students a chance to feel heard and understood. Initially teachers led these discussions, but since student voice is a major goal at the school, restorative justice (RJ) coaches began to train students to lead the circles themselves, passing the talking stick to one another to encourage active and respectful listening.



The SLT also encourages teachers to learn about and experiment with “student-centered” pedagogies, an approach in which students are given the chance to lead and teach one another and to choose relevant issues to study within the curriculum (the culmination of this practice is explained in the Redesign Blueprint, below). Students are now required to complete five projects over the course of their Roosevelt career that focus on solving community problems.

Because Roosevelt practices a style of shared or “inclusive” leadership, a motivated group of teachers on the SLT were encouraged to pilot an interdisciplinary teaching program. The goal of the pilot was to allow teachers and students to align school work with the kinds of work found in the real world. Full transition to interdisciplinary re-organization of coursework is now a major component of Roosevelt’s Redesign Plan,¹³ the first phases of which were implemented in the 2016–17 school year.

Coordination: Community School Manager

(see “Community School Manager Roles and Functions” chart on page 17 below)



Even the best problem-solving tools can only be effective if they are coordinated and aligned. The CSM is central to pulling all problem-solving mechanisms together and acts as a link between all stakeholders. She also conducts ongoing needs assessments and evaluations; develops, nurtures and assesses relationships with partner organizations; sits on the school leadership team; convenes or participates in teams alongside teachers, parents and administrators (full descriptions of teams in table below in Appendix). The coordinator is in constant daily contact with team members about the progress that they, both as individuals and a community, are making toward their goals and what strategies they are planning to employ next.



Results



By digging deep into the full range of problems faced by students and enlisting the entire community in addressing those problems, Roosevelt cut its chronic absence rate in half. The school’s Academic Performance Index was also raised by 30 points during the first year of the attendance strategy alone—a higher gain than any other school in the district.



Roosevelt staff members have significantly improved school culture by investing in Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), Restorative Justice (RJ), and attendance initiatives. These efforts led to dramatic advancements in school climate and student attendance. During the 2015–16 school year, Roosevelt suspended only three percent of students compared with 18 percent in the 2010–11 school year. Roosevelt also reduced their chronic absence rate from 15 percent in 2010–11 to 5.7 percent in 2015–16.



In 2014, Roosevelt was awarded the Full Service Community School Award by the Oakland Unified School District in recognition of their efforts to integrate instruction with student and family supports, removing barriers to learning, and creating a positive school climate.

Additional Teams

These teams meet once per month but continue to work on tasks between meetings.

Family Resource Center Committee



Function: The function of the Family Resource Center Committee is to help determine how to facilitate families' access to English language development, food, health services, legal and housing services, etc.

Composition: This team is composed of the CSM, a group of parent leaders, the school social worker and external organization partner leads.

Health and Wellness Team (includes Restorative Justice)

Function: The function of the Health and Wellness Team is to help students feel healthy, valued, and safe

Composition: This team is composed of the CSM, head of special education, one teacher from 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes, and the Assistant Principal

Unlike some schools, Roosevelt has no dedicated committee for RJ. RJ sits under the health and wellness committee for both adults and students. The school initially created separate committees for each issue, but soon found this cumbersome and unnecessary since the committees shared a number of members.

To implement RJ work in the school, the CSM began by asking which teachers were interested in practicing RJ in their classrooms. All of the 6th grade teachers expressed interest, so the RJ coordinator trained those teachers first. Now students themselves are being trained and are leading "restorative circles" in the classroom (see above). Since the program began teachers from 7th and 8th grade classes have also signed on making RJ a school-wide practice.



Additionally, two socio-emotional learning coordinators facilitate the implementation of PBIS and other restorative practices, and are vital to the success of tiered interventions that support students' diverse social and emotional needs. These staff members coordinate school-wide initiatives, facilitate staff professional development, collaborate with teachers, and work with students in small groups and one-on-one.



Community School Manager Roles and Functions



Community Schools Champion

Introduce community school model and CSM role to the greater school community.

- Orient site leaders and partners to community schools.
- Develop communication materials that highlight the community schools efforts and successes at schools.
- Share the importance of community schools and their work with school and district stakeholders.



Needs Assessment

Conduct ongoing needs assessment in order to identify gaps in programs and services, as well as capacity and assets.

- Review existing data/information & plan needs assessment process.
- Conduct key stakeholder interviews, surveys, focus groups, community resource mapping, program evaluation, and ongoing quality improvement.
- Actively share information gathered during needs assessment.



Partnership Development

Establish and implement protocols to manage and maintain quality partnerships so the entire school site is working towards common goals for student success and wellness.

- Strengthen existing partnerships.
- Utilize data from needs assessment and cultivate new partnerships that address service gaps.
- Manage site-based Letters of Agreement (LOAs) & Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).



Student & Family Support Service Design/Coordination

Support programs—external and internal—related to student & family support and the core mission and priorities of the school and students.

- Establish or refine Coordination of Services Team (COST).
- Provide strategic support around Community School Core Elements: School Culture and Climate, Health and Wellness, Expanded Learning, Family Engagement, Youth Leadership, Academic, Social Emotional Learning, and School Readiness and Transitions.



Collaborative Leadership Development

Support the integration of youth, family, and school staff engagement and leadership throughout all Oakland Community Schools efforts.

- Deepen personal leadership skills via professional development.
- Participate on school leadership teams & facilitate community and school engagement in developing the SPSA.
- Support the development of parent leadership bodies.

Community Partners at Roosevelt

Roosevelt's success would not be possible without help from members of the community. Below is a list of organizations that are part of the Roosevelt family.

EBAYC

La Clinica Safe Passages

Oakland Unified School District Alameda County

Educate78

Next Generation Learning Challenges/Rogers Foundation

UCSF

Harvard's "Project Zero" Stanford Design School

UC Berkeley School of Sociology (around implicit bias)

PHASE B

Strategic Plans to Address Family-School Communication and Engagement



The next item identified on the list of priorities for Roosevelt was improving communications with families. Principal Hong was clear from the beginning of his tenure that full parent partnerships were necessary for achieving a number of imperative academic changes and would require a sustained and comprehensive effort on the part of school staff. Parent participation clearly contributes to a positive school climate, especially when students can see their parents fully welcomed in both the classroom and the parent resource center. Students at Roosevelt recognize how the school's staff work to meet their families' physical and financial needs, and they see how families can influence school governance, even in setting school budget priorities. Understanding that families bring both assets and needs to the school is critical to successful relationship-building.



About two years ago, however, it became clear to staff that family-school relationships needed to be further developed. The purpose of this section is to show how this need was articulated through existing structures, and to explore how it was addressed, namely through the creation of new structures guided by the CSM.

Structures and Systems for Problem-Solving:

Through their efforts in addressing students' needs and decreasing absenteeism, the teams described above began to build relationships with students' families. The value of these relationships became clear when, rather than wait for an assessment process from the school, parents raised an issue with staff that needed to be solved.

The issues was that, while parents had developed strong relationships with afterschool staff, they did not have an effective way of communicating with Roosevelt's daytime teachers.

The strong relationship with afterschool staff was due in no small part to the work of Brenda Sachaeo, who began in the community school movement as a high school student intern with EBAYC, and had first come to Roosevelt as an after-school coordinator, building strong community partnerships and developing quality afterschool programming.



Now, in her role as CSM, Brenda learned about the lack of communication between daytime staff and parents. The issue was felt on the teachers' side as well, as attendance at back-to-school nights and parent-student conferences was low, and parent participation was limited to a handful of active members.



Brenda was determined to understand exactly what was missing and address this issue. As a member of most school committees, her first step was to listen carefully to parents and caregivers. She initiated a six-month listening campaign. Parents initially met several times in individual language groups; English, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Cantonese-speaking families each met with a facilitator once a month.



Subsequent focus groups composed of parents/caregivers, teachers, and students all met in constituency-based groups to discuss what each thought were the missing links. The conclusion drawn from these groups was unanimous: parents/caregivers needed deeper and more frequent engagement with daytime teachers than they received from the monthly math or reading nights held by the school.



Parent leaders also participated on the SSC (see side bar this page), a team mandated by the district. This team plays a key role in bringing parents/caregivers, students, teachers, and other school staff together to jointly set goals and make important school decisions. Yet the work of this team alone could not improve the parent-teacher communications process across the school.



Based on the information and recommendations gleaned from the listening campaign, a Family Engagement Team (FET) was created composed of five or six parent leaders who had attended the focus groups consistently, assisted by three teachers and a family engagement coordinator.



This team conducted site visits to other schools and invited presenters to Roosevelt to learn new strategies for improving family-school communication. Parents/caregivers and teachers weighed their options.

School Site Council (SSC)

Function: The function of the SSC is to facilitate joint communication and decision-making among stakeholders about school needs, vision, goals, budget, and how best to leverage community partnerships. Members are given training required to carry out the essential functions. If implemented with fidelity, the SSC enables meaningful and authentic parent, student, and community engagement in substantive decision-making. They bring parents and teachers together as peers, giving each group a window into the other's struggles, triumphs, needs, and desires for themselves and for students.

Composition: The SSC is composed of students, parents/caregivers, educators, administration, partners, and the community school manager. The composition of SSCs must meet the parity requirement: half of the SSC membership must be comprised of parents, community members, and students, with a majority of parents/caregivers. The other half must be comprised of school staff with a majority of teachers.

Frequency: The SSC meets monthly.

Oakland Administrative Regulation 3625 on SSC's:

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
[Administrative Regulations](#)

The Advisory Program



Based on the FET's research, the parents and teachers of Roosevelt decided to implement an "advisory" program, which would both provide greater engagement with parents and create an additional space for students to develop both academically and socially.



Under the program each classroom teacher meets regularly with a small group of students. Each of these groups selects a point person who is responsible for reporting student-members' experiences to their parents.



As the FET worked to launch the program, they began meeting monthly, also inviting students to join meetings and give input as the advisory program developed.



Over time, the FET developed the details of the program. Each advisory would be led by two staff members: a daytime teacher who needed to develop a stronger relationship with her students' parents and an afterschool staff member, who already had such a relationship. By working with staff from the after-school programs, teachers could build on their more well-established relationships and open communication with families.

A group of several teachers, in consultation with parents from the FET, built a curriculum for the advisories as a whole. Their focus included community-building activities which sought to address students' perceptions that daytime teachers did not understand them as well as afterschool partner staff. The advisories were created as spaces for students to read and find love for reading.



The advisory curriculum also incorporated goal-setting, organizational skills, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills, and active listening. All teachers implemented the curriculum in their advisories across the board.



The advisories were also designed for students to give teachers feedback on how they were doing academically, and to make teachers aware of their specific instructional needs. This includes needs related to graduation requirements, entrance to other programs, and college preparation. Systems were developed within advisories to decide how every member of a student's team (the student, the advisory, teachers and parents) can help that student succeed.



Each advisory designated a point person for parents, ultimately creating a communication loop between parents, students, teachers, and a staff member from an after-school partner organization.

The relationships developed through the advisories were supported by school programming, which now included back-to-school and end-of-school potlucks for each advisory rather than for the whole school. They created close-knit groups within the larger school community that could act as a bridge between home and school.



The advisory program was the first concrete result of parents, teachers, and students working together to improve and maintain family-school communication. When the advisory program was announced, one year after their formation, the FET continued to meet once a month.

In assessing their gains, the team made a number of other important realizations. For instance, the school had not held parent teacher conferences for the past six years, largely as a result of low levels of parent engagement. The FET responded to this oversight based on best-practices they had discovered in their research. They began planning student-led conferences, an approach intended to encourage full participation in the evaluation process (outcomes of student-led conferences are described in Phase C, below).

Results



A year and a half after initiating the advisory program, the FET held their first student-led conferences. Students came prepared to present assessments of their progress to their parents and teachers, including areas in which they excelled and those in which they needed extra help. Students then worked together with their parents and teachers to create an individualized plan for how each could contribute—academically, socially, and emotionally—to the student’s goals.



School leaders have been adjusting the content of the advisory curriculum since 2014, and evidence confirms that these changes are having a positive impact. They have evaluated the program’s success by tracking attendance for school-wide events, such as back-to-school nights, and comparing it to previous years. They have seen significant improvement in attendance at parent- teacher-student conferences. The student-led conference format has also allowed parents, teachers, and students to share far more authentic and useful information, and for students to develop new metacognitive skills.



In an earlier stage of the project, school leaders tracked the frequency of phone calls from teachers to parents, but later introduced text messaging as an alternative to ensure that regular communication did not become onerous. In 2016, school leaders completely reorganized communication schedules such that teachers were focused primarily on communicating with the families from their advisory. As a result, teachers now have scheduled time each week for contacting families. Teachers are willing to go the extra mile because they have a better understanding of the type of communication that parents want. Teachers are not regularly in touch with the families of all 75 students with whom they interact, but they are able to maintain meaningful and consistent contact with these 15–20 families throughout the year.

PHASE C Strategic Plans to Address Teaching Quality and Leadership



Principal Hong had plans to develop a community-focused, interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum from the very beginning of Roosevelt’s transformation, but determined a need to prioritize other basic changes. Specifically, he recognized that solid progress on attendance, school climate, and parent engagement would help to unify and strengthen the school community, thus providing a more solid foundation for this next phase of work on instruction and pedagogy.

Structures and Systems for Problem-Solving: Visionary Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Leadership

Laying the Groundwork: Inclusive Leadership as Continuous Improvement



Though a thorough, intentional, and sophisticated plan for creating new forms of instruction and pedagogy needed to wait for the right moment, Principal Hong still found ways to encourage innovation and initiative among his staff at Roosevelt. As an alumnus of the Principal Leadership Institute at UC Berkeley, Hong was prepared to listen carefully to his staff and school community as “co-creators” of the school’s vision, curriculum, and pedagogical framework. He is constantly on the lookout for teachers, parents, students, or staff members who are excited about a particular piece of work and willing to share leadership in moving that piece of work forward.

For example, in 2015 he identified a particular staff member who was excited about researching and implementing better reading strategies. She and Hong determined that she would attend the PLI and would take on a role as literacy coach the following year.

As a result of Principal Hong's shared leadership approach, teachers are taking the lead in developing interdisciplinary curricular models. Parents are also taking leadership roles in identifying and addressing the needs of their neighbors, families and students in order to create a school climate rooted in belonging and mutual respect. A culture of active engagement among stakeholders has helped create the structures necessary for meaningful communication around decision-making, and has enabled coordination between and among these structures for smooth implementation.



This shared leadership approach is key to continuous improvement. Principal Hong explains that the three main elements of inclusive leadership are vision, training, and commitment:



Vision: Prior to his work in school leadership, Principal Hong taught middle and high school for six years in the South Bronx, Syracuse, and Oakland. He developed a social justice-based approach to education by witnessing and engaging with the daily struggles of his students and their families. Principal Hong is an ardent advocate for public education, which he sees as being absolutely necessary for a democracy to thrive. The first step in helping to develop a strong democracy is to help develop students as creative agents of change within their communities.

Training: Principal Hong's first school leadership position was as Assistant Principal at Edna Brewer Middle School in the OUSD, where he recognized that in order to succeed at developing students as community change agents, he would need additional training and support. He subsequently received a Master's in Education from the PLI at UC Berkeley. As part of this program he learned how to put his social justice perspective into action as a school leader by including all voices within a school community in analyzing and making decisions about the direction of the school.

Commitment: According to Principal Hong, trust and stability are critical to encouraging buy-in among school staff. Accordingly, he has committed to remaining in his current position at Roosevelt for 10 years (unusual for a school leader). Having completed six of these years, Hong

Principals' Leadership Institute

Curriculum and Pedagogy

The PLI curriculum and pedagogy is firmly rooted in both research and practice. Instructors include both UC Berkeley faculty and practitioners from local districts, and courses are frequently team-taught by both. Over the course of the program, students have multiple opportunities to apply their knowledge of theory in practical settings through problem-based learning. This includes analysis of case studies, assessed role-plays, and the design and implementation of a Master's project—the Leadership Action Research Project. The PLI employs a variety of effective adult learning strategies including whole-class and small group instruction, with a focus on incorporating student voices. To support students in their leadership development, they also complete 225 hours of leadership field experiences under the supervision of a mentor and receive coaching from an experienced school leader throughout the academic year. —from the PLI brochure

“The Principals' Leadership Institute (PLI) at U.C. Berkeley is a leadership preparation and induction program for school leadership. The PLI's focus on supporting equity in schools remains its hallmark... At PLI, we view leadership not as a single person, but as a distributed and shared function in the school. The PLI curriculum has, from its inception, featured community mapping and learning how to be partners with families and caregivers as a central part of the learning. We view the purpose of schooling as balanced: to prepare students with the academic, civic, and social-emotional foundations to be successful not only as college and career ready, but equally important as ready to be family members and citizens.”

—Lynda Tredway, founder of the PLI¹⁴

is already one of longest serving middle school principals in Oakland, though he says he may actually stay in this position beyond his original commitment.

The elements of Hong's leadership have been recognized as aspirational by the district. In 2015, he was selected to be one of a handful of Executive Principals in OUSD.

Reimagining the Curriculum: Student and Staff School Redesign Teams

Principal Hong's commitment to shared leadership necessitated the creation of an inclusive team to move Roosevelt's curriculum design to the next level. Composed of teachers, students and administrators, Student Redesign Teams (SRTs) are an example of evolving protocols based on a process of defining problems and using design thinking to solve them. In this case the problem was having a vision for a new curricular and pedagogical framework without a strategic plan to get there. The job of the SRTs was to develop that strategic plan, or "blueprint," by bringing together the voices of multiple constituencies. A Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) grant gave them tools, resources, and a timeline through which to accomplish this task.

Roosevelt is one of six Oakland public schools to receive a NGLC Launch Grant from the Rogers Family Foundation. Through this grant, awarded in March 2016, the school will receive \$350,000 over two years to support the implementation of its School Redesign Blueprint. The Blueprint is an ambitious exercise aimed at taking the community school concept beyond a service-provision model by applying its central tenets to all aspects of teaching, learning, and planning for the future of Roosevelt's students and the broader school community.

In developing the Blueprint, the SRT focused on the following three areas of innovation:

Real-world applications: A key goal of the Blueprint was to combine Roosevelt's Social Studies and English classes into interdisciplinary Humanities blocks of study, and to combine Math and Science into STEM classes. In the real world, people don't find their tasks broken down into 45-minute periods, or into discrete subject areas like English and Social Studies. They generally work on projects that combine disciplines to solve problems. To help students succeed in the real world, members of the Roosevelt community are especially excited about teachers and students using project-based learning strategies that allow students to go out into the community, investigate problems, and develop solutions in that context using design thinking.

The "whole child" approach: Child development is about more than academics, even if academic learning is engaging and relevant to their lives. Roosevelt strives to nurture the "whole child," which means supplementing traditional academics with aspects of culture like art, music, restorative practices, social-emotional learning, health, and wellness. In addition to shifting in-class curricula, the "whole child" approach encourages enrichment activities, such as field trips, to both supplement and complement classroom learning.

Personalized instruction: Children learn, and are able to demonstrate their learning, at different paces in different arenas. Competency-based learning focuses on building skills and demonstrating competence through presentations, exhibitions, or projects. This approach allows for the inclusion of students with various needs in the same classroom because teachers are trained to differentiate instruction to meet individual needs. Teachers also learn to evaluate progress using authentic assessment tools that give a truer measure of success than, for example, multiple choice exams.





To begin creating the Blueprint, members of the SRT from the Humanities department attended the Deeper Learning Conference at High Tech High School in San Diego, California. They heard inspiring keynote addresses from the leaders and students at the High School for Recording Arts in St. Paul, MN; participated in workshops on equity, project-based learning, authentic assessment, and school leadership; and connected with innovative educators from around the world. By participating in the conference, the Humanities team was able to bring a new understanding of deep, project-based learning back to the Roosevelt community.¹⁵



The SRT also visited a number of community schools, as well as schools using project-based learning and interdisciplinary curricula, throughout the Bay Area. They shared what they learned throughout this process both within the committee and with their peers and colleagues.



On January 20th, 2016, the School Redesign Team presented its Blueprint ideas to community leaders, educators, and the NGLC in Oakland. The presentation focused on the team's school redesign vision and the three overarching learner-centered strategies that will guide efforts to implement the new plan.

Roosevelt has hired two instructional facilitators to support their shift to a personalized learning model by coordinating professional development and supporting teachers as they explore significant changes to their instructional models.¹⁶



See 3-year roadmap here: <http://rooseveltredesigned.weebly.com/3-year-roadmap.html>

See full redesign plan here: <http://rooseveltredesigned.weebly.com/full-school-design-blueprint.html>



See full process website here: <http://rooseveltredesigned.weebly.com/>

You can read the press release here: [\\$2.1 Million Awarded to 6 Oakland Public Schools for Innovation](#)

Results

Thanks to the efforts of the Student Redesign Team, Roosevelt now has:

- a strategic plan to accomplish its mission;
- a curriculum designed to engage and feel relevant to students;
- movement away from teaching methods stuck in traditional pedagogical methods and structures;
- movement away from assessment methods that result in teaching to the test.

Listed below are some of the concrete gains made by the SRT:



Space for greater collaboration among teachers and between teachers, students and parents.

In the 2016–17 academic year, Roosevelt shifted their master schedule to give teachers 45–60 minutes each morning to plan and learn together. This time is organized differently each day. Some mornings teachers meet all together while others are reserved for collaboration within each grade-level or department. Additional time is set aside each morning for teachers to meet with parents and students, or to do individual planning. In addition, teachers have a daily prep period to assess student work and review data.¹⁷



Opportunities for development of student agency

As part of the School Redesign Blueprint, the SRT hopes to build student agency in three ways: student work exhibitions, digital portfolios, and student-led conferences. Using a design thinking approach, students will engage in project-based lessons in which they can design and test innovative solutions to real-world problems. An important part of design thinking is sharing ideas with an authentic audience, so students will periodically present their ideas and work to community members, professionals, and peers for feedback and critique. These exhibitions will give students the opportunity to reflect on their learning while developing communication and presentation skills, both critical to the development of self-efficacy.



Students will work with their advisors (daytime teachers who lead advisories) and their other teachers to curate online digital portfolios. According to the Blueprint, these portfolios “will contain information related to academic progress, personal interests, learning preferences, and character growth, as well as college and career goals. This information will be used by both teachers and students to further personalize instruction. Additionally, online portfolios will encourage students to take greater ownership over their own learning as they track their goals, interests, progress, and achievements over the course of their three years at Roosevelt.”¹⁸



As was originally conceptualized during the FET’s planning phase (See Phase B, above), each year students, parents/caregivers, and advisors will participate in student-led conferences (SLCs). As an alternative to the traditional parent-teacher conference format, “SLCs aim to move the student from a passive recipient of information to an active participant through an open dialogue with their parents and teachers around their academic progress. When implemented in middle schools, SLCs have been shown to encourage students to accept personal responsibility for their academic performance, teach students the process of self-evaluation, increase student self-confidence, and facilitate the development of students’ organizational and oral communication skills.”¹⁹

Conclusion

This has been a story of one community school's endeavor to create problem-solving structures in the face of the "wicked problem" of social and educational inequity.²⁰

"In dealing with wicked problems, people and organizations have to become adaptive. [It is the difference] between throwing a stone and throwing a live bird. The trajectory of the stone can be calculated precisely using the laws of physics. The trajectory of the bird is far less predictable... [Policymakers] need to stop pretending they are throwing stones, and acknowledge that the management of public services is far more akin to throwing birds."²¹

One critical takeaway from this case study is that a successful community school is created not only by putting initial structures in place, but also by ensuring that the transformation is guided by processes of "continuous improvement." These processes allow for the successful 'throwing of birds' by making sure that leaders, staff, partners, families, and students always have their eyes open for the next best thing and can assume their voices will be heard.

Developing this type of dynamic problem-solving model is not a simple task; it is not for the weak of heart, nor the impatient. But the halls and classrooms of Roosevelt reflect a colossal transformation of energy from chaotic to calm, curious, excited, and focused. These spaces radiate mutual respect and aspiration, which translates into an increased and improved learning experience for all students.

They are still "throwing birds," but have learned to do so strategically and, most importantly, together as a community.

Appendix A

Student and Teacher Satisfaction Surveys

Student Satisfaction Survey Questions

Rate answer 1-5:

1. I am happy to be at this school
2. The adults at this school treat students fairly
3. At Roosevelt, there is at least one adult that cares about me and believes I will be successful.
4. I know how to calm down and resolve conflicts with others peacefully
5. At RMS, there is at least one adult that I can talk to about my problems
6. I am excited about my future.
7. I feel safe at this school
8. Yesterday, how many times did you... [eat fast food?] [eat vegetables?] [exercise outside of PE class?]
9. In the last week, have you... [been pushed, slapped, hit or kicked by someone who wasn't just kidding around?] [been afraid of being beaten up?] [had mean rumors or lies spread about you?] [been made fun of because of your looks or the way you talk?] [been made fun of because of your looks or the way you talk?] [missed school because I felt sad?]
10. In the last week, have you been harassed or bullied for any of the following reasons?
[because of your race or culture?] [because of your religion?] [because of your gender?]
[because you are gay or lesbian or someone thought you were?] [because of a physical or mental disability?]
11. Where do you feel SAFEST at school in the/on the (Choose one among choices)
12. Where do you feel the most UNSAFE at school in the/on the (Choose one among choices)

Rate answer 1-5:

13. I felt safe in community circles.
14. I learned things about myself in community circles.
15. I learned things about my classmates in community circles.
16. I learned things in community circles that I can apply to the other parts of my life.
17. I learned things about teachers/adults at RMS in community circles.

continued...

Student Satisfaction Survey Questions continued...

18. What suggestions do you have for community circles?
19. I feel more comfortable now, sharing in community circle, than I did when we started.
20. What grade are you in?
22. What is your race?
21. Which of the following best describes you? (choice of gender-related terms)
23. How many questions on this survey did you answer honestly?

Staff Satisfaction Survey Questions

What is your role at Roosevelt Middle School?

Do you personally feel fulfilled and successful in your work at RMS?

If No, what would help you feel more fulfilled and successful at work?

Do you feel like you have the tools you need to be successful in your work at RMS?

If No, what tools do you feel you need?

Please rate your experiences with the following statements 1-5:

I feel supported to do my best at work at RMS.

I feel acknowledged and recognized for my specific efforts and successes at RMS.

I feel generally valued at RMS.

How could you feel more supported, valued, and recognized by RMS Administration?

How could you feel more supported, valued, and acknowledged by teachers, staff and community partners?

Please rate your experiences with the following statements 1-5:

I have someone to talk to at work when I need emotional support.

I am able to maintain a balance between my work and my personal life that I am comfortable with.

I know how to resolve a conflict with a colleague.

I feel generally valued by my students.

I know how to resolve issues with students that I am challenged by.

RMS is a supportive and inviting place to work.

RMS leadership promotes trust and collegiality among staff.

RMS leadership promotes personnel participation in decision-making that affects school practices and policies.

RMS is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn.

RMS sets high standards of academic performance for all students.

RMS emphasizes helping students academically when they need it.

continued...

Staff Satisfaction Survey Questions continued...

RMS provides adequate counseling and support services for students.

RMS considers it a priority to close the racial/ethnic achievement gap.

RMS is a safe place for students.

What is your typical mood at school?

Restorative Justice

We had three small group RJ PD's this year. Would you like to continue in this format, or have more variety?

Check the two topics you are most interested in focusing on during RJ PD time next year.

Looking toward next year

Place yourself on this scale describing your current relationship to Roosevelt.

Place yourself on this scale describing where you would like your relationship to Roosevelt to be.

What does professional communication mean to you?

What things step outside of professional communication in your view?

Considering disagreements or differences of opinion/approach you had with staff this year,

have you been able to fully resolve them/ move on from them?

Optional: Are there any other comments you would like to add about our School or our Wellness work?

Appendix B

Whole-School Team Structures

COMMITTEE	School Leadership Team	School Design Team	School Site Council	COST Team	Partners Team	Health and Wellness Team (includes Restorative Justice)	Family Resource Cntr Team	Attendance Team	Family Engagement Team
FUNCTION	To deal with day to day operation of the school including both instruction and school climate	To create a School Redesign Blueprint using the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) grant	To facilitate joint communication and decision-making among stakeholders about school needs, vision, goals, budget, and leveraging partnerships.	To coordinate referrals of students with academic or behavioral needs with services that meet those needs	To provide school-wide integration of shared goals and alignment of school partnerships	To help students feel healthy, valued and safe (includes Restorative Justice)	To help determine how to facilitate families' access to English language development, food, health services, legal and housing services, etc.	To assess and address causes for students' chronic absence	To engage families as partners in three key areas: 1. Attendance 2. Instructional support 3. Advocacy
COMPOSITION	Community school manager, teachers, administrators, principal, instructional coach, positive school climate manager	Teachers, administrators, students	Community school manager, parents, educators, administration, partners	Community school manager, nurse, mental health staff, attendance officer, teachers, partners, administration, parent liaison, special education staff, after school staff	Community school manager, External organization partner leads	Community school manager, special education lead, one teacher from 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes, Assistant Principal	Community school manager, parent leaders, school social worker and external organization partner leads	Community school manager, attendance clerk, school nurse and other key staff (as needed)	Community school manager Parent leaders Teacher leaders
FREQUENCY	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly

Notes

- 1 "Roosevelt School Design Blueprint," Roosevelt Redesigned, <http://rooseveltreDesigned.weebly.com/full-school-design-blueprint.html>, p. 6.
- 2 Evie Frankl, Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools (Center for Popular Democracy, 2016), <https://populardemocracy.org/news/publications/community-schools-transforming-struggling-schools-thriving-schools>.
- 3 "Roosevelt School Design Blueprint," Roosevelt Redesigned, <http://rooseveltreDesigned.weebly.com/full-school-design-blueprint.html>, p. 6.
- 4 *ibid*
- 5 *ibid*
- 6 *ibid*
- 7 Oakland Unified School District, "Community Partnerships," <http://www.ousd.org/Domain/3242>.
- 8 Oakland Unified School District, "Restorative Justice," <http://www.ousd.org/Domain/134>.
- 9 Roosevelt Middle School, "Spring 2015-16 Staff Wellness Survey", <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/morgancbuck%40icloud.com/15ad32f2cda808d7?projector=1>
- 10 Interview with Helida Silva, English teacher, Roosevelt Middle School, March 9, 2016
- 11 "Roosevelt School Design Blueprint."
- 12 Joey Aquino, "Crash Course in Stanford's Design Thinking," Joey Aquino (blog) <https://joeyaquino.wordpress.com/2012/05/23/want-a-crash-course-in-stanfords-design-thinking-here-it-is-for-free-pt-1-empathy/>.
- 13 "Roosevelt School Design Blueprint."
- 14 Interview with Lynda Tredway (Principal Leadership Institute), March 9, 2016.
- 15 "Our Progress," Roosevelt Redesigned, <http://rooseveltreDesigned.weebly.com/our-progress>.
- 16 "Roosevelt School Design Blueprint."
- 17 *ibid*
- 18 Expected Outcomes," Roosevelt Redesigned, <http://rooseveltreDesigned.weebly.com/expected-outcomes.html>
- 19 *ibid*
- 20 Sanjiv G. Rao, "Tackling 'Wicked Problems' Through Organizational Hybridity: The Example of Community Schools" (PhD diss., Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University, 2013)
- 21 *ibid*

