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# Canyons Community Schools: Universities and Colleges as Key Partners

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Community schools respond to a variety of risk factors that impede student learning and development. School and community leaders in Canyons School District (CSD) have created community schools across one highly impacted feeder pattern to strengthen academic learning efforts, school climate and youth development opportunities, parent and family engagement efforts, health and social services, and community partnerships. Over the past decade, school improvement processes and practices have been supported through key partnerships with colleges and universities. This article describes how universities and colleges assisted five community schools in CSD and illustrates outcomes associated with ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement efforts. The myriad of ways higher education institutions can assist community schools in highly impacted school communities are described, highlighting the various ways schools can leverage university expertise, time, personnel, and capital to help implement expanded models of schooling.

KEY WORDS: *community schools; partnerships; school climate; school improvement; university assistance*

Traditional, walled-in approaches to schooling focusing mainly on academic learning have limitations, especially in school communities serving students from socially vulnerable circumstances. Innovative and expanded approaches to supporting academic achievement, healthy development, and overall school success are needed (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018). Community schools are one such framework, whereby district and school leaders, parents and caregivers, and community partners work together to get the conditions right for student learning and development. Specifically, community schools strengthen the educational system by leveraging both school and community-based resources to support teaching and instruction, provide student interventions, support classroom management practices and school climate strategies, improve communication channels, and engage families and the community (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018; Maier et al., 2017; Oakes et al., 2017).

Beyond strengthening school infrastructure, community schools facilitate the colocation of multiple services and supports to address poverty and its correlates, factors such as food insecurity, lack of and access to health and mental health

services, limited affordable housing, neighborhood violence and gangs, cultural and linguistic differences, underemployment, and family instabilities stemming from other causes (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2020; Johnston et al., 2020). Community schools also serve as hubs in neighborhoods and places where students, families, and community members can access services and supports during the school day and out-of-school time (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2016; Harkavy et al., 2013). The most effective models combine school-based and school-linked services and strive to maximize family, school, and community resources to support children, youth, and families (Bronstein & Mason, 2016; Bronstein et al., 2019). Research on community schools and other partnership models is promising and demonstrates improved academic success, enhanced school climate, improved behavior, and strengthened system-level capacities such as improved linkage and referral processes (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2003; Johnston et al., 2020; Leone & Bartolotta, 2010; Maier et al., 2017; Moore & Emig, 2014).

Higher education institutions can be critical partners in supporting community schools, given

their role as anchor institutions in communities across the country. In fact, university-assisted community schools (UACS) involve formalized partnerships that leverage higher education institutions' expertise and capital in support of school improvement and community engagement efforts (Benson & Harkavy, 1994; Harkavy et al., 2013). Essentially, the university's outreach and engagement efforts can mobilize faculty, staff, and students; leverage educational and supportive service programs; enhance professional development opportunities; and allocate funding, resources, and infrastructure to support community schools. Universities and colleges also benefit by connecting in positive ways with neighborhoods and advancing community-engaged research, teaching, learning, and service initiatives (Harkavy et al., 2013).

This article highlights how leaders at Canyons School District (CSD) have leveraged practice, research, and policy expertise and personnel and resources situated within several colleges, universities, and policy centers to assist five community schools in one highly impacted feeder pattern. We describe five CSD community schools and then provide examples of how key partnerships among CSD with colleges, universities, and policy centers have assisted the community schools over time. We demonstrate how colleges and universities can serve as key partners in strengthening educational infrastructure, improving school climate, and closing equity gaps in schools.

### **CANYONS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

In 2012, district and community leaders in CSD struggled to ensure that all youth succeeded academically in its Title 1 elementary schools. In response, the decision was made to transition these schools to community schools. Community schools are characterized by integrating community resources in the school building, active involvement of parents/caregivers, and utilization of extracurriculars to address environmental inequities while simultaneously focusing on academic learning and achievement (Heers et al., 2016). Today, a network of five community schools, recognized as Canyons Community Schools, serves over 5,000 students annually in five school buildings across one feeder pattern. The buildings include Hillcrest High School, Midvale Middle School, Midvale Elementary School, East Midvale Elementary School, and Copperview Elementary School.

Investments in the success of students enrolled in these five community schools are evident. Three of the five schools have been completely rebuilt during the past decade, now inclusive of state-of-the-art classrooms, multipurpose rooms, environmental-friendly learning spaces, and athletic facilities. Hillcrest High School is the magnet school for one of Utah's two International Baccalaureate programs. Additionally, each elementary school has a Family Learning Center focused on engaging parents and caregivers and providing life-long educational opportunities. The schools are in Midvale City, a community 12 miles south of Salt Lake City, Utah, which has experienced vast economic growth in recent years.

While school investments and economic growth in the region are encouraging, students in this CSD feeder pattern experience multiple barriers to learning. In 2021, districtwide data indicated that 18 percent of students in these community schools experienced homelessness, 25 percent were chronically absent from school, 40 percent lived in single-parent homes, and 24 percent left CSD each school year. Most students in the feeder pattern identify as racial or ethnic minorities (56 percent total; 39 percent Hispanic/Latino) and live at or below the poverty line (69 percent). Another 11 percent of students receive special education services, and 25 percent are English language learners (ELLs). Students' social and demographic risks leave many falling behind academically. For instance, 45 percent of kindergarten students did not demonstrate prerequisite knowledge, and one-third of third-graders were not proficient in math and reading (Anderson-Butcher, 2022).

Since 2012, school and district leaders have gone above and beyond to address the social, demographic, and academic risks facing students and families in this highly impacted feeder pattern. One strategy has been leveraging assistance from several notable universities, colleges, and policy centers to help these once traditional public schools become community schools.

### **UNIVERSITY ASSISTANCE TO THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

Multiple universities and colleges, including the University of Utah (U of U), The Ohio State University (OSU), Salt Lake Community College, Utah Valley University, Westminster College, and San Diego State University (SDSU), have played

an integral role in assisting Canyons Community Schools over time. The director of student advocacy and supports at the district level led efforts to partner with universities and colleges related to community school operations. This person served as the single point of contact for community school partnerships and was essential for ensuring the alignment of policies and practices across the network of community schools. In fact, research on community schools highlights the importance of identifying a key person within the district to serve as lead, as well as the value of single points of contact with partners to leverage resources and expertise within community schools (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010; Mendenhall et al., 2013).

Key to this role were efforts to ensure vertical alignment within the feeder to facilitate collaboration across district departments in support of community schools (i.e., special education, curriculum, instruction, etc.) and push down efforts strategically into the schools and ultimately improve classrooms. This person also streamlined efforts, oversaw the planning and implementation processes, solved problems as they arose, found partners in higher education institutions with expertise or resources aligned with the district and schools' needs, and navigated relationships among all the stakeholders, including faculty, consultants, principals, community-school facilitators (CSFs), and student support personnel (i.e., school social workers). This is just one of the many ways leaders in CSD have worked to improve these schools over time. School-family-community partnerships have also strengthened the learning support system across the feeder and helped enhance perceptions of school climate among numerous stakeholder groups, including students, parents/caregivers, and teachers/school staff (Anderson-Butcher, 2022).

A summary of the partnership strategies leveraged to engage colleges and universities is described in this article, providing a comprehensive overview of how institutions can partner to support the community schools' evolution and assist students, families, teachers, and school staff. We aim to describe how universities and colleges supported Canyons Community Schools through planning and evaluating school improvement processes; providing technical assistance to support learning; enhancing professional development; identifying and implementing evidence-based practices; building strong community partnerships; hiring or deploying addi-

tional support staff and personnel; strengthening data management systems; facilitating resource development and collaborative grant writing; and engaging in policy, advocacy, and problem solving.

### **Planning and Evaluating School Improvement Processes**

Several institutions have been instrumental in supporting the school improvement processes at these community schools. Foremost, the Community and Youth Collaborative Institute at OSU (CAYCI-OSU) has provided ongoing consultation around implementing the Canyons Community School Model. The Canyons Community Schools Model is an approach to school improvement that builds from the community collaboration model (CCM; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008), an evidence-based school improvement framework shown to improve academic learning, behaviors, school climate, access to care, and parent/caregiver engagement (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2016; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018). Consultation provided by leaders at CAYCI-OSU helped with the adoption and implementation of the CCM, inclusive of mapping school- and community-level resources across the five CCM pillars: (1) academic learning, (2) school climate and positive youth development, (3) parent/family engagement and support, (4) health and human services, and (5) community partnerships. Using CCM processes as a guide, each year school and district leaders have looked systematically at resources and needs and identified school- and community-based resources necessary to address gaps. Table 1 provides an example of how consultation and mapping using the CCM can serve as a guide to help schools examine and analyze gaps among existing services, programs, and supports.

The partnership with CAYCI-OSU also has led to the community schools annually capturing schoolwide data using the CAYCI School Experience Surveys (SES; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2013; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018). CAYCI-SES identifies needs, informs planning, and evaluates progress related to school climate. CAYCI-OSU supports data collection and analyzes and monitors student- and school-level outcomes over time to support the district. Both forms of support have been critical, especially in making a case for expanding the community schools model across the feeder pattern. Findings from ongoing evalua-

**Table 1: Mapping of Services, Programs, and Supports**

CCM Pathway	Examples of Services, Programs, and Supports
Academic learning	Standardized academic instructional strategies, curriculum alignment efforts, Check-In/Check-Out, attendance monitoring, tutoring, preschool programs, ELL interventions, academic–parent team conferences, credit recovery, and career internships
School climate and positive youth development	MTSS, PBIS, classroom management strategies, afterschool programs, Play Works!, Latinos in Action, community gardens, social skill groups, student clubs, and sports programs
Parent/family engagement and support	Family Learning Centers, home visiting, parent education classes, GED classes, 1–2–3 Magic parenting class, Parents as Teachers, financial literacy classes, computer classes for adults, and ParentSquare (i.e., a communication tool to translate languages)
Health and social services	School counseling and social work services, medical/dental/vision services, school-based mental health services, expanded care teams that provide wraparound supports, emergency assistance services, food assistance, and technology assistance during COVID-19
Community partnerships	Adopt-a-school business partnerships, beautification activities at the schools, community-wide celebrations (i.e., Cinco de Mayo, Harvest Days), crime prevention efforts, neighborhood associations, and faith-based programming

Notes: CCM = community collaboration model; ELL = English language learners; MTSS = multitiered systems of supports; PBIS = positive behavioral intervention supports.

tion efforts demonstrate improved perceptions of school climate and other factors. Since 2018, elementary school students have reported favorably on their sense of belonging at school and perceptions of school and community safety (see [Anderson-Butcher, 2022](#)).

Moreover, some of the most impressive are trends found when exploring parent and caregiver responses on various indicators of school and community supports and engagement. For instance, in 2021, CAYCI-SES collected from 1,470 parents/caregivers across the feeder pattern demonstrated that 70.8 percent reported the “school is a place where families can go to get help when needed” (up from 58 percent in 2018). Likewise, 84.8 percent reported they felt “welcome at the school” (up from 72 percent in 2018), and 81.5 percent said that “the school cares about families” (up from 70 percent in 2018). These are just a few examples of how university expertise can help facilitate and inform continuous improvement efforts in schools. Data also showcase outcomes from expanded school improvement efforts at community schools.

### Providing Technical Assistance to Support Learning

Experts at universities and colleges also can help provide technical assistance to community schools. In CSD specifically, the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) in the College of Education at the

U of U has been key in providing technical assistance and coaching related to traditional academic interventions essential for school turnaround. Leaders at UEPC have helped with embedding [Hattie’s \(2012\)](#) academic strategies for learning; adopting effective classroom management and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) strategies; and building effective strategies focused on leadership, communication, and staff development and transitions. Together, the technical assistance provided by the U of U has helped to strengthen traditional school improvement strategies focused on academics, built out additional learning resources and supports, and maximized internal systems and processes to monitor progress over time.

In the past few years, efforts to enhance academic instruction were matched by promising outcomes. Data on Canyons Community Schools demonstrate improvements in academic performance, attendance, and behavior among students ([Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018](#); [Anderson-Butcher et al., 2020](#)). Two schools (Hillcrest High and Midvale Elementary) in the network were honored as State Schools of Excellence due to their progress in serving students that identify as ELLs. Further, schools have demonstrated improvement in closing equity gaps through graduation rates and improved perceptions of college and career readiness. For in-

stance, graduation rates at Hillcrest High School went up 10 percent in the last three years.

### **Enhancing Professional Development**

Additionally, CAYCI-OSU and UEPC have provided professional development opportunities aligned with their technical assistance and consultation efforts. A few examples are noteworthy. CAYCI-OSU organized extensive retreats for building leadership teams to develop new competencies among principals, teacher leaders, CSFs, and student support staff. UEPC provided Friday afternoon workshops for teachers, enhancing their strengths in evidence-based instruction, classroom management practices, and using data to inform instruction. UEPC also instituted continuing education offerings for principals focused on instructional leadership. Finally, the National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University also supported ongoing professional development with principals and teachers on turnaround strategies, school climate interventions, and transformative academic instruction. Strategies focused on building different stakeholders' knowledge and skills in evidence-based practices were essential in fostering change and innovations across the community schools. Professional development for principals, in particular, was crucial in helping to develop a deeper understanding of what community schools were and to build their capacity to think (and act) more broadly about educating the whole child. These investments have assisted teachers/school staff in responding to student and family needs while also strengthening academic instruction and curriculum alignment.

### **Identifying and Implementing Evidence-Based Practices**

Institutions also have assisted the community schools with identifying evidence-based practices to use in classrooms and schoolwide. Examples include adopting key community school interventions such as Check-In/Check-Out, PBIS, multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). However, the most notable support has come through ensuring the community schools were not operationalized as simply an add-on social service delivery model, and efforts were truly connected back to classrooms in support of teachers. In response, school leaders and CAYCI-OSU consultants worked collaboratively with school leaders to implement Care

Teams to provide intensive wraparound and case management services for the most highly impacted students. Experts at CAYCI-OSU leveraged research on best practices shown to help school-based teams meet the needs of students. The Care Teams, in turn, have improved outcomes for students served, as found through research demonstrating improved attendance, decreased behavioral incidences and enhanced access to continuity of care (Bates et al., 2019). Once created, the Care Teams allowed for the comprehensive assessment of needs and examination of root causes of student challenges (including issues such as trauma, mental health concerns, food insecurity, and unemployment). Care Teams also worked collaboratively with principals, CSFs, student support staff (i.e., school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists), intervention coaches, community mental health providers, teachers, and others to provide seamless academic, social-emotional, and health/mental health services to students and families. Intentional supports were put in place as students moved from school to school (i.e., preschool to kindergarten, elementary to middle, middle to high, etc.), as well as when there were transitions to more/less restrictive placements (i.e., day treatment and residential programs). Over the years, evidence-based strategies developed through the Care Teams are now integrated across CSD within Student Support Teams and have informed similar practices in other New York and Ohio schools.

### **Building Strong Community Partnerships**

Another way universities and colleges have assisted the community schools is by helping to build strong community partnerships. When community schools were originally inceptioned at the Title 1 elementary schools, school leaders utilized consultant expertise to develop specific community partnerships to support emergent needs at each school. Early on, most of the partnership work focused on isolated programs, such as afterschool programs and school-based mental health). As a case in point, leaders from both U of U and OSU-CAYCI and the Utah State Office of Education and Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health helped the district cultivate partnerships initially with local community mental health providers. A school-based mental health pilot project was instituted, allowing students with behavioral mental health needs to receive care at community school sites. Research on

this initial pilot demonstrated outcomes such as increased access to and continuity of care and reduced symptomology (Bates et al., 2019; Iachini et al., 2013). These findings have informed Utah's current statewide agenda focused on school mental health.

Community school partnerships have evolved to connect families to community and regional education and workforce development supports. For instance, leaders at the U of U, Westminster College, Salt Lake Community College, and Utah Valley University now provide dual enrollment opportunities, workforce development activities, academic enrichment and interventions, and college/career readiness programming to students and families in Canyons Community Schools. Several institutional programs target their resources toward supporting students and socially vulnerable families and therefore aim to address access and equity issues in the local community.

Since 2018, a more comprehensive group of partners began meeting regularly to create a shared vision for the entire feeder pattern. An average of 40 people attend strategic planning meetings, representing schools, government, nonprofits, businesses, funders, local foundations, faith-based institutions, and parents/families. Through consultation with CAYCI-OSU, the schools initiated Formal Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) to solidify several community partnerships and outline expectations for working together. The MOUs have helped to strengthen the commitment of partners. Quarterly meetings are held to allow for sharing of information on community resources and professional development offerings on topics such as trauma-informed schools. Needs across the entire feeder pattern are regularly discussed at these meetings, and comprehensive, intentional strategies are implemented to support the feeder pattern more holistically. Table 2 provides an overview of the outputs that have continued to evolve through ongoing and emergent community partnerships in this highly impacted feeder pattern.

### **Hiring or Deploying Additional Support Staff and Personnel**

Early in transitioning schools in the feeder pattern into community schools, district leaders and partner institutions recognized a need for additional personnel and internal teaming structures to help reduce service duplication and maximize existing school- and community-based resources. In re-

sponse, CAYCI-OSU helped school leaders write job descriptions to hire CSFs for the community schools. CSFs were then hired to work with the district and school administrators, and to facilitate meetings with leadership teams, key stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents/caregivers, student support staff, etc.), and community partners to maximize school- and community-based resources. CSFs also facilitate collaborative efforts among community partners working on behalf of CSD students and families. Universities also have provided critical student support services and academic programming as part of the community school efforts. Several colleges and departments at the U of U have strategically placed student interns at the schools. For instance, graduate-level psychology interns have conducted behavioral mental health groups targeting students with extensive social and emotional disturbances. Social work interns also are placed in each building, leading individual, group, classroom, parent/caregiver, and schoolwide interventions. Having additional personnel in the buildings helped respond to students' nonacademic needs, support parents and families, and address underlying symptoms of trauma in the schools. These additional supports have expanded the student support system at the community schools and complemented the PBIS/MTSS and special education system already in place.

### **Strengthening Data Management Supports**

Another way universities and colleges have assisted is by strengthening the data management system. Specific to the community school agenda, CAYCI-OSU has been instrumental in developing a data dashboard used by Care Teams to monitor student-level progress concerning attendance, behavior, and basic needs. The data dashboard is now seen as a case management tool, mainly by school personnel and Care Team members who use it to systematically track interventions and align supports based on students' needs. Research on utilizing the data management system has been associated with decreased absenteeism and number of behavioral incidents among students served (Anderson-Butcher, 2022; Bates et al., 2019; Iachini et al., 2013). Due to these successes, the data dashboard for progress monitoring has now informed a broader districtwide data dashboard, another success indicator of the innovations

**Table 2: Services Provided at Canyons Community Schools since 2018**

Service Provided	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021 (with COVID-19 Restrictions)
Students receiving care team services	530	822	578
Students receiving student services supports (i.e., school social workers and interns, school counselor, etc.)	682	1,246	966
Students receiving school-based mental health services	103	216	143
Families served through mobile food pantry (monthly average)	286	250	257
Students receiving weekend food bags (weekly average)	331	376	294
Students receiving winter and spring school break food bags	1,973	1,711	640
Students receiving vision services through mobile vision clinic	209	177	235
Students receiving dental, vision, or medical supports, referrals, or vouchers	348	516	347
Immunization and flu shot clinics offered	14	16	14
Volunteer hours completed by community volunteers, and parents/caregivers	14,581	8,339	3,363
Parent and family engagement classes (average 10–40 participants)	76	27	29
Recipients of onetime supports/resources (i.e., clothing, shoes, transportation, jackets, hygiene kits, school supplies, emergency food, translation services, etc.)	2,000	950	2,441
Supports to families			
Meals	59	175	294
Holiday donations (Sub for Santa; Operation Santa)	247	700	383
Gift cards (Walmart, Old Navy)	73	62	91
Shoes (Warm the Soles, etc.)	414	331	343
Book, toy, or blanket distributions	596	N/A	150

resulting from university partnerships and assistance.

### Facilitating Resource Development and Collaborative Grant Writing

Another way universities have assisted the community schools is through resource development and grant writing efforts. CSD and its partners have written grants to support community school efforts, such as 21st Century Learning Center grants, United Way of Salt Lake proposals, a multi-year Intergenerational Poverty Grant to support pathways toward self-sufficiency, and a McKinney–Vento grant to support students experiencing homelessness. University consultants have also played a role in funding school-based mental health services, leveraging traditional funding streams such as Title 1, land trust money, Teacher and Student Success Act (TSSA) dollars, and creating solutions to leverage the fiscal resources of partner organizations. As a result of these efforts, Midvale

Elementary School, the school serving the most highly impacted student population in CSD, was named a Utah School of Excellence in 2021 due to significant improvements in academic achievement among students over the past two years. Midvale benefited from these collaborative efforts and exited the “school improvement and turnaround status”; it has now become a “targeted support and improvement school.”

### Engaging in Policy, Advocacy, and Problem Solving

Universities, especially the U of U, have assisted the school district in advocating for key educational policies important for expanded school improvement efforts and community schools. University faculty and staff have lobbied the state legislature about policies for serving breakfast and lunch in schools serving students living in poverty, advocated at school board meetings so that recess, physical education, and play are not stripped from

the school day, and testified on the importance of standard planning time for teachers. In particular, the UEPC developed effective protocols for PLCs to ensure time was maximized during grade-level team meetings. CAYCI-OSU also has assisted in advocacy efforts with funders and partners, helping problem-solve conflicts and challenging situations. Steps simulate coalition-building efforts as they support system change, policy reform, and resource distributions and amplify the diverse needs and voices of students, families, and teachers in the school community.

## IMPLICATIONS

As demonstrated here, higher education institutions' opportunities to collaborate with schools are vast and often in alignment with the strategic goals of universities and colleges that focus on community outreach, engagement, and service. Canyons Community Schools have leveraged meaningful forms of assistance from multiple colleges and universities to inform their school improvement plans, engage in ongoing evaluation, and work collaboratively to bring new partners and funders. Evidence-based practices in numerous areas, including community school approaches, evidence-based academic instruction, PBIS, PLCs, wraparound teams, school-based mental health, and more, have also been put in place and made a difference for students, their families, and the schools. The outcomes associated with these efforts support the utilization of the UACS model and the continuation of critical partnerships with colleges and universities. Evaluation findings integrated throughout this article and published elsewhere (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2020; Bates et al., 2019; Iachini et al., 2013; Mendenhall et al., 2013) ultimately showcase the broader benefits of these collaborative partnerships.

We would be remiss to say that the community schools in CSD were the only beneficiaries of these partnerships. Through relationships with Canyons Community Schools, faculty/staff have found meaningful opportunities for outreach and engagement, participated in meaningful practice experiences resulting in community impact, tested their research and evidence-based practices in real-life settings, and learned strategies from schools that help inform teaching and instruction at the university. Students attending partnering universities and colleges benefit, as well, by engaging in innovative internships,

research projects, and field practicum experiences that operate on the cusp of school turnaround innovations. Using Jones and colleagues' (2016) typology, what were connective partnerships among schools and universities evolved to generative and now transformative partnerships, ones characterized by the active involvement of the schools and institutions of higher education in the planning, delivery, and continuous improvement system.

Importantly, we also recognize that universities and colleges also have opportunities to do much more, especially when institutions tout global ideas but often fail to act on them locally. Colleges and universities can use the UACS model to continue to advocate for expanding access to higher education to redistribute resources and engage in processes and practices that are equity-minded and social justice-oriented. Universities and colleges have an important role in the future of our children, and community-engaged research, teaching, and service need to be transformative and not merely performative. Sustainability and long-term commitments to strengthening infrastructure, providing evidence-based programs and services, allocating resources, and evaluating inputs and outcomes must remain priorities for both schools and universities when implementing UACS approaches.

Last, through this collaborative work, we have identified primary barriers and facilitators that either hindered or boosted the work of these community schools. Past research and evaluation projects conducted in Canyons shed light on these factors (Anderson-Butcher, 2022; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010; Anderson-Butcher & Paluta, 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2013). Barriers relevant to partnerships with higher education institutions include having limited time for joint decision making, planning, and problem solving. A lack of vision, malalignment of vision, and limited buy-in among leaders at districts, schools, and universities also often hinder this collaborative work. Other barriers include high turnover among faculty, staff, principals, and CSFs; challenges accessing data (and sometimes the desired data university's wanted); and limited funding to support university involvement, expertise, and research activities.

One additional barrier is related to matching research needs with community school needs. Tensions sometimes emerged when university partners had standardized programs they wanted to implement,

which weren't what the community schools needed. The most effective partners first looked at what was going on in the community schools and then individualized their supports and adapted their interventions to better align with priorities and practices. Community stakeholders, university partners, and school leaders also realized one size does not fit all, and one program is not necessarily the answer to everything. Advocacy and interprofessional decision making were vital given school-level differences in needs and how schools were adopting the community schools frameworks at varying levels. Many of these barriers were similar to other research exploring the adoption of other school policies, practices, and innovations (Schuler et al., 2018).

Key facilitators included onsite consultation and facilitation; professional development; technical assistance; and training to guide high-quality implementation, access to faculty/staff to serve as consultants with the specific expertise needed, and leadership at the district level to set the stage for partnerships and engagement. On-site consultation and facilitation proved to be a key facilitator, and the proximity of the U of U, Salt Lake Community College, and Westminster College was helpful. University partners located further away (such as OSU and SDSU) were less available for consultation. Partners at all higher education institutions served as critical friends, allowing district and school leaders to reflect on integrating research into practice (which is often challenging, especially given the needs of these highly impacted schools and limited innovation expertise usually found in district offices). The reach of the university partners was elevated as faculty/staff were in close proximity and had the ability and availability to be on-site more regularly. Challenges with distance and, most recently, COVID-19 made it difficult for the community schools and their leaders to benefit from the expertise of their higher education partners, given volunteers and critical partners were not allowed to visit schools or interact with school staff.

## CONCLUSION

Canyons Community Schools are the hubs of the Midvale City community and a place where students and their families feel welcome and can access services and support when in need. What is unique to Canyons Community Schools is that multiple higher education institutions have remained engaged over

time and helped in different ways. Canyons Community Schools would not be as successful without the contributions of their multiple partners and their vision for drawing on the expertise and capital of institutions to support students, families, teachers, and the school community overall. There has not been just one partner in CSD, but many have helped the network of community schools engage in school turnaround efforts, improve school climate and culture, and close equity gaps. Lessons learned from these community schools can help to catalyze the next generation of engaged researchers and advance knowledge to make a collective impact, focusing on ensuring all children can attend safe, supportive, and well-resourced schools. **CS**

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