

Mapping Assessment to Need: Streamlining the Full Service Community Schools Needs Assessment Process in the West Contra Costa Unified School District

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ISSUE

Since 2012, the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) has been focused on building Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) throughout the district. These schools focus on educating the “whole child” by integrating academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.

In the 2014-15 academic year, the District piloted a comprehensive needs assessment to gauge the implementation status of the community school initiative. **This project builds off the work of the original needs assessment and addresses the following key questions:**



1) How can WCCUSD **streamline** its needs assessment process to **better align** school-level initiatives with **district- and state-level mandates**?

2) How can WCCUSD implement a needs assessment that **balances efficiency and practitioner usability** without **limiting the scope of the assessment**?

METHODS

Streamlined Assessment Tool and Pilot. I converted the prototype (interview-based) needs assessment into an electronic (quantitative) survey that aligned the district’s assessment with the six WCCUSD Community School Areas of Focus. I then conducted a pilot assessment with 36 principals and 16 teachers at Bayview Elementary School.

Needs Assessment “Best Practices” Synthesis. I conducted a qualitative case study of the FSCS needs assessment implementation process in the City of San Pablo. With this information, I mapped the evolution of WCCUSD’s needs assessment from its original form (as a replica of San Pablo’s assessment) to its current form, and identified best practices that carried over from the original assessment.

FINDINGS **Streamlined Assessment and Principal/School Level Pilot.** Feedback from the principal pilot and Bayview pilot revealed the following:

36

WCCUSD principals surveyed from community & non-community schools

47%

Highest rating of any of the six pillars (for strength of Academic Programs and Supports)

2.3

Average rating for strength of programs (on a scale of 1-5) across all six pillars

Assessment Strengths. Greater usability/accessibility and more efficiency in distribution and survey administration.

Areas for Development. Balance greater efficiency with a comprehensive assessment of need and address technology knowledge gap among survey participants.

Takeaways. Assessment needs further streamlining and alignment to standards; the District should consider transitioning to a process assessment.

Needs Assessment “Best Practices” Synthesis. The San Pablo case study and evolution map of WCCUSD’s assessment process revealed two key findings:

1) Depth versus Efficiency. Highly successful needs assessments ask specific and targeted questions and link those questions to overarching FSCS implementation goals. It is difficult to streamline without sacrificing the depth of a needs assessment.

2) Importance of Alignment. Highly successful needs assessments link results to community school metrics and district-level standards. The initial needs assessment provided a broad overview of need in the district and subsequent assessments have built upon that overview.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhancing Efficiency in Assessing Need.

- **Transition from a needs assessment to process and outcome evaluations** to create sustainable systems for monitoring FSCS implementation at the school level.
- **Align needs assessment to district-level community school certification tool** to create a feedback loop for FSCS development and program facilitation at the school level.

Tracking Success.

- **Build out district processes and systems for needs assessment distribution** to standardize guidelines on the frequency of survey distribution, the type of survey taken each cycle (i.e. measuring one indicator or all six indicators), and type of assessment a given FSCS should use at each stage of program development.