

Form B: Project Abstract

2021–22 California Community Schools Partnership Program

The Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) Alternative Education Division operates year-round public community school programs throughout the county. The Community School program works with other school districts, the probation department, and the courts of Kern County. The program takes an individual approach to helping students by encouraging their academic, personal, and social growth. Alternative Education serves students in grades K-12 who are referred by their district of residence or another agency. Students may enroll into Community School and at certain times, may transfer back to the district during the school year.

The Community School program serves students across Kern County, the third largest county in California, covering nearly 8,200 square miles (slightly larger than the state of New Jersey). In Kern County, 33% of all children live in households with incomes below the federal poverty level. Students and families served by Alternative Education often struggle with poverty, high unemployment, gang and crime involvement, large achievement gaps, high rates of suspension and chronic absenteeism, particularly along socioeconomic and ethnic lines. To address barriers, challenges and inequities, KCSOS Alternative Education, is heavily invested in the school transformation process to create community schools. Through strategic partnerships and a strong MTSS framework, Alternative Education is well-positioned to expand and improve community schools and provide additional services that support students and families.

The Alternative Education Community serves over 691 students each year (2018-19 CBEDS). Community School's population consists of 20.6% English learner (EL) and 93.5% are classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged (96% unduplicated). Typically, Community School students are 1) expelled, 2) referred by the district School Attendance Review Board, 3) Probation referred, or 4) referred by a district with parent approval. The average length of enrollment at Community School varies from year to year. However, over the last seven years, the average length of stay was **70 days**.

The KCSOS Schools Alternative Education program is applying for Cohort 1 of the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) Implementation **Grant to expand, continue and add new services, by establishing *one-stop-shop* hubs at North Kern Community School, East Kern Community School, and the Kelly F. Blanton Student Education Center**, which includes CLC Tech, Blanton Academy, Bridges Academy, and beginning June 2022, Community Learning Center.

To serve more students and families in the wrap-around services provided by the established Community Schools program, Alternative Education will expand and deepen services. Funds will be leveraged to support students and families with the highest needs and provide access to onsite mental and physical health services, as well as other resources.

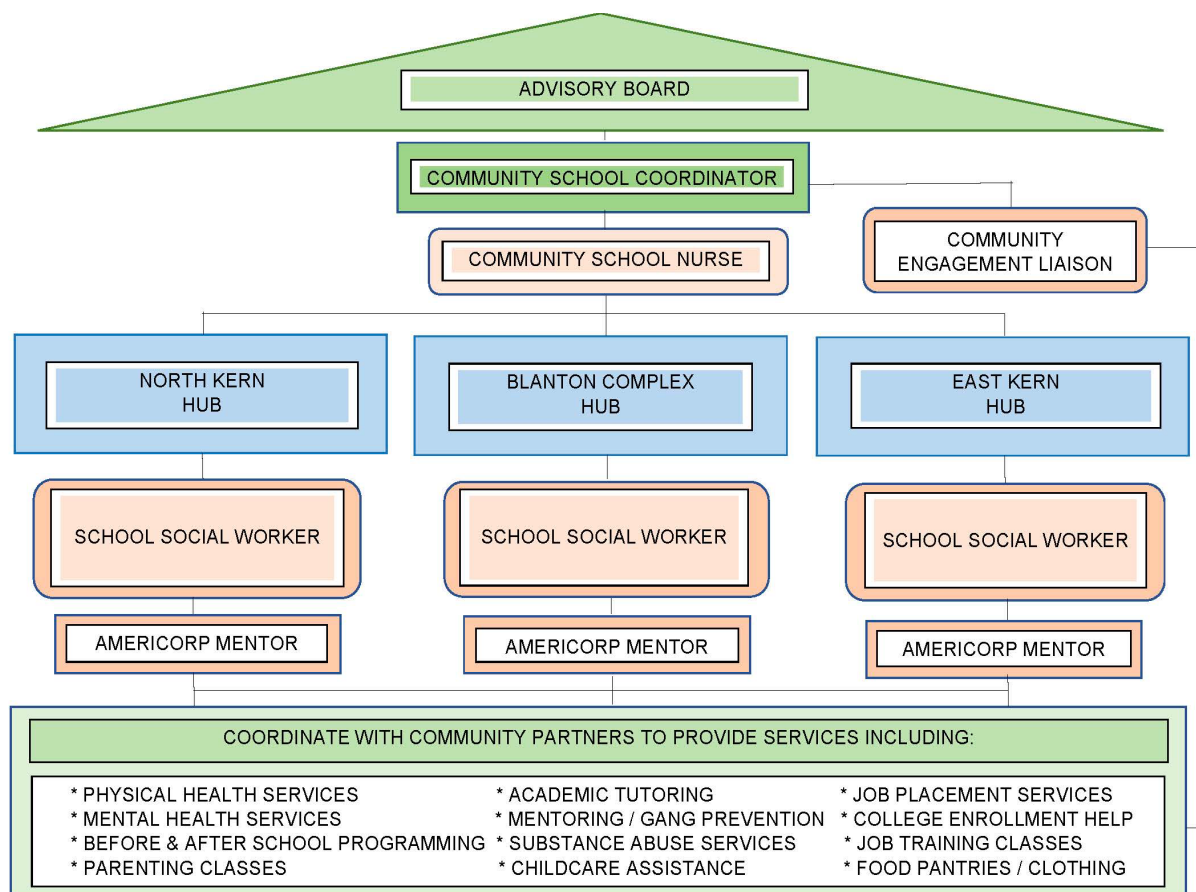
Schools- North Kern Community School is located in the rural community of Delano, CA, 31 miles northwest of Bakersfield, and serves various school districts in the north end of the county. Delano is an agricultural community known for growing table grapes. Educational options at North Kern include daily classroom instruction as well as independent study. **East Kern Community School** is located in the remote western region of the Mojave Desert, nearly 50 miles from Bakersfield. East Kern serves various school districts in the far eastern portion of Kern County. This site provides educational opportunities for students in grades K-12 through independent study or classroom instruction. **Community Learning Center**, located in Bakersfield, provides daily classroom instruction for students in grades K-8 and independent study for students in all grades. As of June 2022, the Community Learning Center facility will be closing and the program will move to the Kelly F. Blanton Student Education Center. The **Kelly F. Blanton Student Education Center**, located in Bakersfield, houses three different instructional programs including CLC Tech, Blanton Academy, and Bridges Academy, which is a non-residential Court School. In June of 2022, Blanton Academy and Bridges Academy will merge together.

Impacts of COVID-19- The COVID-19 pandemic caused both academic and social emotional challenges for students. Many Community School students are referred to Alternative Education for truancy issues. Given that the typical high school student enrolls in Alternative Education deficient 50 credits and reading at the 5th grade level, it is a logical assumption that many students fell further behind academically. The pressures of a pandemic can increase the mental health needs of those who have previously experienced trauma, as many Community School students have.

Vision-KCSOS Alternative School Education's vision is to create hubs of service designed to serve some of the most at-risk students and families in Kern County by expanding collaborative partnerships and increasing the capacity and services at schools. Alternative Education provides multi-tiered supports designed to serve the "whole child" working to close equity gaps and improve outcomes for students and families. KCSOS will establish *one-stop-shops* leveraging existing infrastructure and partnerships between schools and multiple community resources. Alternative Education will continue to implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) as an evidence-based framework to improve and integrate tiered services for students and families.

The Alternative Education program will conduct a systematic needs assessment that will identify gaps, assets and strategies for expanded services. This will include stakeholder engagement, climate surveys, focus groups, and data analysis. The Community School Coordinator will engage students, families, staff, and community members to assess local needs and assets. The needs assessment will be led by the Community School Coordinator (with external support) administered and analyzed on a regular and consistent basis and under the direction of the Community School's Advisory Council. The needs assessment will include the following domains: **Health and Wellness-Physical** and mental health, access to health insurance, **Youth Development and Enrichment**-After school programs, mentoring, **Family Support**-Housing, immigration, child care, food, and **College and Career Readiness**-College access, career exploration and **Academic Support-Tutoring**, access to technology. Needs are ever changing and a continuous assessment of family needs will be required.

Figure 1 Alternative Education Community School Implementation Plan



Programs and services to be added, expanded or provided

Programs and services will be modeled after the Four Pillars of a Successful Community School.

The school sites listed above are committed to creating *one-stop-shops* aligned with the four pillars of a successful community school. As a planning tool the development team outlined services, strategies **programs and services to be added, expanded or provided.**

Pillar One: Integrated Support Services
Multi-Tiered System of Supports Expand to all three hub sites and fully integrate the Community Schools strategy within an MTSS framework, all sites should receive extended services for students and families. MTSS serves as comprehensive framework that focuses on the alignment of systems necessary for all students' academic, behavioral, and social success. When fully implemented at all sites an MTSS framework will provide the structure for hubs and sites to identify struggling students early and intervene quickly, by focusing on the "whole child" (provide additional training and support)
Trauma-Informed Trauma-informed practices professional learning was established during the 2021-22 school year. School staff were trained in 21-22. Will expand and provide training to parents/families, community partners and students
Health and Wellness Add additional School Social Workers to each hub to provide outreach, case management and counseling services to families. Improve referral system and continuum of care. Work more closely with community and government agencies to streamline referrals. Provide community partners with a space at each hub to provide additional mental health services for families including: Garden Pathways (community-based nonprofit) will provide diverse mentoring and education programs for families to gain educational advancement, employment, family stability, self-sufficiency, healthy living, and improved quality of life. Work with Kern Behavioral Health & Recovery Services to provide additional mental health (including telehealth) services to families at hub sites, including drug and alcohol counseling resources. To meet health needs of students, the three hubs will be served by a school nurse. This is a new service and addresses health and wellness needs of students. Partner with Kern County Public Health to provide a mobile health clinic for monthly medical services each hub. This is a sustainable approach and shared costs will allow more families to receive care (completed a pilot program in 2017-2018 with KCPHD).

Mentoring and Tutoring

AmeriCorps mentoring program will be expanded to hub sites with an additional mentor added to each hub.

Stay Focused After-School Mentoring and Gang Prevention/Intervention- will expand their mentoring services to all three hubs. Offering evidence-based Healthy Relationship classes that equip students with skills in Conflict Resolution (Anger Control), Communication, Personal Development, identifying personality strengths and weaknesses as well as college and career workshops.

Afterschool tutoring support expanded to support additional students

College and Career Readiness

Continue to offer FAFSA and **College Registration Assistance**

Provide EPIC **job ready and placement services on all sites**. Connect to ENCORE, Kern Community College District and Valley Build job training.

Offer Industry Certifications (OSHA, ServSafe, CPR, etc) at additional sites.

Expand career and technical education providing job training, industry certifications and job exploration (highly successfully in the court school program).

Pillar Two: Expanded Learning & Enriched Learning Opportunities

School Wellness Program R12 currently operates a **fitness afterschool program, expand to more sites and offer a before school option** that includes a healthy food preparation component.

Expand project-based learning afterschool projects and clubs including: Bike Bakersfield Building, Culinary and Garden Club, Electric Vehicle Build (w/KCSOS transportation), HVAC classes (North Kern).

Pillar Three: Family & Community Engagement

Identify areas of interest and concern to parents and families and **expand offerings of ongoing workshops and trainings at hubs** (Parent Project, Mental Health Awareness, Trauma-informed, career support, etc.).

A **Community Engagement Liaison** will provide outreach and coordinate family and community engagement at each hub.

Offer family engagement events and resource nights with community partners.

Provide onsite health services and case management for families.

Hubs will serve as a *one-stop-shop* for families that need to connect to community resources for housing, childcare, immigration etc.

Implement food pantries at hubs with support from Community Action Partnership (CAPK) and Stay Focused. **Expand clothes closet** to offer families additional assistance.

Pillar Four: Collaborative Leadership and Practices

Establish an Advisory Council that includes a diverse group of stakeholders made up of school personnel and leadership, students, families, and community partners.

Provide PD for Advisory Council and hub staff to build their capacity for practicing shared leadership.

Advisory Council will be **trained on the KCSOS continuous improvement process**

One of the greatest strengths of the KCSOS Alternative Education Community Schools is the connection and engagement with various partners, particularly those established with Kern County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Kern County Probation, Kern County Public Health, Bakersfield College (Career and Technical Education), Stay Focused, and Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK). Additionally, Alternative Education court schools have strong career and technical education programs. Relationships with Bakersfield College and industry partners provide opportunities for youth.

Alternative Education faces challenges engaging parents/caregivers. Some students are only with Alternative Education for a short time, thus making it difficult to connect with parents/caregivers. With expansion funding the Community School Coordinator, School Social Workers, and Community Engagement Liaison will work directly with families to build trusting relationships. Additional staffing support is a critical element in engaging students, families, community partners, and educators/school staff.

A key strategy designed to engage students, families, and community partners will be to establish a formal Alternative Education Community School Advisory Council. Alternative Education will create a collaborative of diverse members that will include students, teachers/school staff, parents/caregivers, and community partners. By including diverse representation that understand the needs of communities in poverty, and having stakeholders engaged in the transition process, the hubs will build effective services that truly meet the needs of families.

The Community School Coordinator will be tasked with regular assessment and ongoing reflection in order to support continuous improvement in this initiative. The Community School Advisory Council, on an ongoing basis, will review data and ensure that programs and services offered at the hub sites are effectively supporting student and family development, ultimately supporting its continual improvement and sustainability. Each meeting will have a data review session that will include implementation progress, participation rates and outcomes etc. The advisory council will work with the Community School Coordinator to determine whether changes need to be made to programs.