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## - Lessons from the Field -

# Blending and Braiding Funding for Full-Service Community Schools

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*Wednesday, April 26, 2023 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET*  
*Transcript*

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**Greta Colombi:**

Good afternoon and welcome to today's webinar, Blending and Braiding Funding for Full-Service Community Schools. On behalf of the US Department of Education, we are pleased to have you with us. In fact, there are over 700 folks registered for this webinar. Thank you so much for being here today. This webinar is part of our Lessons from the Field webinar series. The series highlights the latest developments, data and resources from federal partners, and effective tools, techniques and strategies employed by everyday practitioners to address hot topics that are on the top of educators' minds. You can access archived webinars from the series on the webpage, now being posted in the chat. And know that our work is stronger together and we all benefit from sharing effective practices. So, if you have additional resources or strategies that are working for your community, please reach out to the Best Practices Clearinghouse@ed.gov to share.

Please note as we proceed that the content of this presentation does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the US Department of Education, nor does it imply endorsement by the Department of Education. So, my name is Greta Colombi. In addition to being the host of today's webinar, I am the director of the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, or NCSSLE for short. NCSSLE is funded by the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the US Department of Education. In partnership with the department, we build the capacity of state education agencies, districts, and schools to make school climate improvements, foster school safety and maintain supportive, engaging and healthy learning environments to empower the success of all students.

To learn more about NCSSLE and to access a range of resources that address school climate and conditions for learning, we encourage you to visit our website. To give you a sense of what the website looks like and the content it

contains, here we share an image of our homepage on the right, along with some of our most popular products on the left. We also share the latest resources and events coming out from the field via social media. So, please follow us.

This webinar is being recorded. All materials that you will see today, including the slides, reference resources, including those links posted in the chat, and the recorded version of this webinar will be available on the event webpage dedicated to this topic within our website. So, some items like the slides and speaker bios have already been posted to the site. You can access, as a reminder, the previous Lessons from the Field sessions by visiting the webinar series webpage too, which is also listed here and is also being posted in the chat. So, what do we have planned for today? Well, after we finish up this introduction in a moment, we will have a formal welcome from Bernadine Futrell, deputy assistant secretary for Equity and Discretionary Grants and Support services within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, or OESE, at the US Department of Education. Next, Mario Cardona, senior advisor, Early Childhood Development and Education from the White House Domestic Policy Council will help set the context.

Then we will launch into a discussion via two panels. The first will focus on using federal funding for community schools. The second will focus on blending and braiding for sustainability. The moderators and panelists will be introduced at the start of each of those panel discussions. Though please note that the bios for all the speakers are already available on the event webpage, and you can access the bios via the link here and the event webpage. You can see it on the side as well as in the chat. And to wrap up the event we will do a quick closing, and then respond to questions you posted via registration or during the event in the final 10, 15 minutes. So, please remember to use the Zoom Q&A to post questions over the course of today's event. So, with that, let's get started, and we're going to start with that welcome from Bernadine Futrell. Bernadine.

**Bernadine Futrell:**

Thank you so much, Greta. Hello everybody. Welcome. Welcome to the webinar. Thank you for being here. Thank you for being a part of today's conversation. As mentioned, I'm Bernadine Futrell. I'm the deputy assistant secretary here at the Department of Education, working on our equity and discretionary grants. One of the things that I'm thinking about right now in all of my roles and my work is my job as a mom. This week I had the opportunity to go to my daughter and my son's school for the awards lunch. And when I got to the school, there was no parking so I had to park down the street, walk all the way up and make my way in. When we got to the cafeteria, it was full of parents and proud young children who were on the honor roll or received some type of an award.

And I remember sitting in that moment and I'm thinking about that moment as we open up this webinar and start thinking about how we can come together to use different resources to really advance what we know to be good for children. Our community school model is how that school, working with all of their partners in their community, continues to engage parents in a way that there's

standing room only when it's a school lunch in the middle of the week. I commend my local elementary school and I commend all of you for the work that you're doing, and I thank you again for being on this webinar to learn and engage with us. Also want to thank our partners who are helping to organize as well as the Department of Education staff and the wonderful district leaders that you will be hearing from today about the great work that they've done.

Today's webinar is about how we pull together, or I like to say lock elbows, with resources, information, grants to really advance community schools across the nation. We're also going to hear from our partners at the White House around a White House toolkit that was developed to help identify additional federal resources for community schools. And we're going to spend a little time also talking about how Title I funds and other federal funding can be used to support the different elements of a community school and work in partnership with the Full-Service Community Schools Grant. We are proud that President Biden was able to secure over \$150 million for the Full-Service Community Schools Program. We are proud that our '22 competition received the highest application rate in years. We're proud of the 42 grants that we were able to award in January to local education agencies, nonprofit institutions, state education agencies, and others, including community schools in more than 20 states.

We are proud that this competition represented the priorities and the work across the nation when it comes to community schools. However, we know from that experience that the demand is there and the opportunities to continue to scale and have more community schools continue. That's why we're thankful for the continued investment of the Biden/Harris administration in community schools and keeping it a priority and keeping it a top goal to ensure that more students, more communities, more schools are able to benefit from it. Community schools is a core part of the work that we do at the Department of Education. Our secretary has given us a call to action through Raise the Bar: Lead the World, which is the Department of Education commitment from preschool all the way through college that really says, "We have what it takes when we come together and we put children and families center of our approach that when our work is effective, we can unite together and we can lead the world."

Raise the bar essentially, this is how I break it down. It means as a parent who drops your child off at school and sees the great things that school is doing, as a community member who's able to partner and volunteer at their local elementary school, it means that it's the tip of the iceberg that we get to see through those experiences. We know that there is great things happening in our schools across our nation. And Raise the Bar is a commitment from the department to amplify, to support, to encourage and to really partner with you to ensure that the work that is children and family-centered is happening across the nation. Raise the Bar has three key focus areas that directly align with the community school's model that we're going to talk about today. The first is achieving academic excellence for every student. What does that mean?

It means knowing that we are doing amazing things in our schools and when we center our efforts, our resources federally as well as other funding streams around this core principle that every child should have equitable access to the highest quality education, that we are able to raise the bar on what we expect for our children and our families. So, when full-service community school programs engage in activities such as high-quality early learning programs and services and accelerating learning aligned with academic supports, you are raising the bar. You are being a part of this commitment. We're going to talk about, again, how federal funding can be used to leverage some of these components of the community school model. We've already made significant investments in this work through the American Rescue Plan dollars, through the funding that was secured for community schools mentioned earlier, but also by making it easier to use the funding in a way that districts, communities and states know works for children and families.

And that's the partnership. That's the extension that we offer, especially in webinars like this where you're going to hear from districts and they're going to talk about how they've been able to use different funding, different models to really amplify the good work that they're doing. And then our hope is, we'll take that and apply it to your setting, apply it to what you're working on, and connect it with what works best in your setting to ensure that children and families can have more access to the different elements of a community school model. The next area we can raise the bar is making sure that we boldly improve our learning conditions. And this is where community schools, in my opinion, excel. Community schools really focus in. I had the pleasure of visiting a school in Maryland when I first joined the Department of Education.

And during that visit I was able to see how students, with pride and with just feeling so connected to their school, connected to their community, connected to who they are because of the experiences that they were able to get by working with a partner organization to go on a field trip to rediscover their history and to make those connections. And so as we think about the work to improve learning conditions, we're talking about really addressing the educator shortage. Our secretary calls it... He says, "We don't have an educator shortage. We actually have an educator respect issue." We have working conditions that we need to address. We have opportunities to improve on this area, to give pride for the profession and to ensure that the profession is worthy of those who serve in it. And so that's what we're committed to do. We're investing resources, investing and prioritizing, through our grant programs, our educator workforce. And we're also continuing to make investments around student mental health and wellbeing, all things that are very close to the work that you all do as a part of a community schools community.

I believe our community schools are a catalyst for the type of change that we want to see in education. When I first came to the department, I came here by way of the Office of Head Start. If you know have any experience with Head Start, you know that Head Start is about having comprehensive services for children and families and making connections to communities. When I joined the department, the first thing I said was, "Wow, this sounds just like Head

Start." This full-service community school movement, this idea that we as a community have a responsibility to be connected to, to support, to pour into our schools, and our schools have a responsibility and a partnership that the children are in the center of what we do, where we are. Be it our hospitals, our universities, our colleges, our nonprofits, we're all working and in this together.

And when we're able to do that, we have stronger students, stronger communities, stronger schools, stronger states, and a stronger nation. And that's a part of what we mean when we say we're trying to raise the bar. We're not saying we want to raise the bar to go to a level that's not achievable. It's raising the bar to get to the place where we know all of our children deserve, and many children and communities are ready and willing to be a part of. And the third pillar if we raise the bar, I just want to close with that one, is this idea of creating pathways for global engagement. I started my career as a Head Start teacher and I would sometimes say, "Oh, I just would keep you at four forever." But no, our children grow up. Our communities grow up. And our commitment, our responsibility, is to ensure that we create a pathway for global engagement.

We create a pathway and provide those supports for college and career readiness. And that's what community schools do also. Community schools are bookends all the way around. And that's why it's important to not only invest that we're doing through our discretionary grant program and we're excited about that, but also to figure out ways to really respond to the demand that we've received and that we continue to hear around community schools. Again, the purpose of this webinar is to do that, is to talk about, "Okay, we are all..." I'm assuming, and I'm pretty sure we're all on the community schools' home team. We know it works. We know that it's important. And now the question is, how do we get it to more students? How do we use what we have already to create these pathways to really support, to really ensure that we're focused on the academic rigor for every student, that we're focused on working conditions with giving our educators the respect and the working conditions they deserve, with thinking about pathways to global engagement?

All of that is a vehicle to really move and change and lead the world. And that I truly believe is what is core in the center of what community schools. So, as you all have raised your hand today to say you want to be a part, you want to learn more about how to engage, how to learn and how to even use what you have, and we hope you also give us some feedback either through the chat or the Q&A about questions you have or things that you've discovered has been effective. So, again, welcome to the webinar. I'm super excited you're here. We're very happy to have this webinar. We've been planning it and really wanted to have an opportunity not only to just talk about what community schools is, but really to have an engaging conversation with you around what you're doing and how we can amplify it and support it at the department. Again, I welcome you to the webinar. Look forward to learning and connecting with you all today. Thank you all for joining. And with that, Greta, I'm going to turn it back over to you. Thank you.

**Greta Colombi:**

Wonderful. Thank you so, so much, Bernadine, for your helpful overview of the Raise the Bar initiative. I really, really appreciated how you highlighted how community schools can really help raise the bar, and your obvious energy and commitment to our nation's children. And just the motivation is just palpable. So, thank you. With that, we are going to transition to Mario Cardona, who will be setting the context for community schools. And Mario Cardona, as I mentioned before, is the senior advisor for early childhood development and education on the White House Domestic Policy Council. Mario.

**Mario Cardona:**

It's good to be with you all. As Greta mentioned, I'm Mario Cardona, senior advisor for early childhood development and education, and I have the pleasure of working with so many of my colleagues in the Department of Education on issues related to full-service community schools. So, I'll just provide some top-line notes with respect to how this administration views full-service community schools and some of the work that we've done to date. So, the president believes that we can't improve student learning if we have students coming to school with unaddressed health needs or if they're hungry because the last meal they had was the school lunch from the day before. That's why he and the vice president have demonstrated such a commitment to community schools. The president knows that schools serve as anchors in their communities and that they are the ideal place for students and families to get the help they need when it comes to nutrition, health and other needs that impact student learning.

At the federal level, the president has championed historic increases to the Full-Service Community Schools Program. Today, that program has \$150 million, which is five times as much funding than when the president came into office. And those investments make a big difference. Before the president entered office, the Full-Service Community Schools Program impacted 170 schools and approximately 87,000 students. Now, with the most recent set of grantees, and support of that program reaches nearly 1700 schools and helps almost 800,000 students.

I'll talk about the toolkit in particular that the White House recently released on full-service community schools. Last March, the White House Domestic Policy Council convened community schools stakeholders including non-profits, local departments of education, higher education institutions and unions to discuss federal support for community schools. These stakeholders recommended that the White House and federal agencies revisit their funding guidelines and requirements to proactively meet community schools' needs, clearly communicate information on all possible federal funding streams, support state and local leaders' ability to coordinate and collaborate on their use of federal funds, and continue emphasizing the importance of community schools through administration messaging.

So, in response, a few months ago, the White House released a first of its kind toolkit to help community school advocates, coordinators, and directors, as well as other community school stakeholders, identify funding sources and grant programs that can be used to support these schools and meet the unique needs

of their communities. The toolkit lists relevant grant programs by federal agency and explains how those grants can be used to provide student services at community schools. And we're hopeful that you all are using that toolkit as the model gets scaled up in communities across the country. That was all I was hoping to speak about with you all and I wanted to keep it brief so that we can engage in discussion later on. So, I appreciate the opportunity to be with you all. I'll turn it back over to Greta. Thank you so much.

**Greta Colombi:** Excellent. Thank you so much, Mario, for that helpful context and the information on the toolkit. With that, we are ready for the first panel discussion, which will focus on using federal funding for community schools. Our moderator for this panel discussion is Jane Hodgdon. She's a supervisory education program specialist in OESE at the US Department of Education. She will introduce the panelists and engage them in discussion. Jane.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Great. Thank you so much, Great. Hi, folks. My name is Jane Hodgdon. I am the lead for the department's Full-Service Community Schools Program. I'm really excited to be with you today and I'm really honored to lead the department's work on full-service community schools. It has been and always will remain a journey, and we're really grateful to take this journey together as a team, but also with all of you. So, with that, I'd like to introduce my colleagues from the department. With us we have Elson Nash. He's the director for School Choice and Improvement Programs in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Elson's division, School Choice and Improvement Programs, is where the Full-Service Community School Program sits. We're also joined with a couple of our partners from the formula side of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. We have Patrick Rooney. He's the director of School Support and Accountability. And we also have Mary Frances Street. She's an education program specialist with OESE and part of the Title I team. So, thank you very much for joining me, colleagues.

So, I want to get started with a really basic question and Elson, I'm going to direct this and a few of the following ones to you. Can you start off by telling us, what is a community school?

**Elson Nash:** Sure, Jane. Thank you for that question. A full-service community school, and this really is the federal definition based on our stature. As you see on the screen in front of you, it is a school, elementary or secondary school, that participates in the community-based effort to coordinate and integrate a number of services, ranging from family health to comprehensive services through community-based organizations and public-private partnerships. Those schools provide the access to services. Those services are based on the needs assessment for students and families, and those services occur during the school year, sometimes before school, after school, weekends and during the summer.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Great, thank you. One of the big changes from fiscal year 2022 in the program was the inclusion of the four pillars of community schools. Can you tell us what they are and maybe a little bit about them?

**Elson Nash:**

Yeah. Thank you, Jane. This was an important change to the program or enhancement of the program as a result of rulemaking. And so in 2022, we incorporated the four pillars of community schools to really highlight high quality implementation of these elements to the program. Those elements included integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices. Now I'm going to go back and explain a little bit more about what those things mean. So integrated student supports, that is where student supports at the community score provided in and out of school. These help to address the wellbeing out of school barriers to learning through partnerships, and that is a critical element of community schools, those partnerships with social and health service agencies, including mental and behavioral health agencies, and they're coordinated by the community school coordinator, which is a critical element of Full-Service Community Schools. Those services may include medical, dental, vision, mental and behavioral health services, and those services could be for the students and staff and they could incorporate trauma informed services to help mitigate against adverse child experiences.

They could also include things like housing, transportation, nutrition, and other criminal justice issues that are addressed with young people. Pillar two is expanded and enriched learning time. Sounds familiar. It's the opportunity to provide those evidence-based strategies including before school, after school, weekend and summer programs. This is that enhanced opportunity to provide that additional academic support. This is one of the reasons why the secretary and others really look at Full-Service Community Schools to help bring our young people back on target, particularly post-COVID. These provide the real world project-based learning where students can apply their learning to the context in which they live. It may include the arts, music, drama, creative writing, or what I like to think of is experience or education, incorporating STEM-based career and technical education where young people can be truly engaged into their curriculum.

Pillar three, active family and community engagement. I also like to point out that this is an important opportunity for all families to bring parents, caregivers into the school where they are active in the decision making and really involved in what we call the hub of services for students. So during the pandemic, this is where family and community members really came to the school. They may have come to the school for vaccinations. They may have come to the school for their meals. This is that opportunity where community as John Dewey and others would think of those beacon schools. This is where the family and community is truly engaged. It's the opportunity to be involved in English as a second language classes, citizenship preparation, community and computer skills, housing assistance, a number of those opportunities to bring the family and community into the schools.

Our last pillar, collaborative leadership practices. This is that opportunity for the professional development elements to come in. This is where principals and teachers can be engaged in those leadership practices to be involved. It's the opportunity to have those school-based leaders represent students and parents



and community voice, and really it's that opportunity for that community school coordinator to act as that central hub to bring those practices into the school. It may include other leadership or governance teams, but it's the opportunity for the community school steering committees, the community coalitions, the educating learning communities to be involved in the joint work that make this school as powerful as it is.

**Jane Hodgdon:**

Thank you. And last year, we also had a number of different priorities that were part of the 2022 notice inviting applications. And if we could make sure that we can still see that slide, that'd be helpful for just a moment. So there were a number of different priorities and there were a couple that were for competitive preference priorities and then a number that were absolute priorities, meaning that applicants needed to select one or more of them in order to be eligible for applying. Could you just run through those with us really quickly, Elson?

**Elson Nash:**

Sure, absolutely. So we had these priorities last year, meeting students, their social-emotional and academic needs is pretty obvious, but really important because this is the essence of what community schools need, what they do, they provide that type of support for students. Strengthening cross-agency coordination and community engagement. That's that opportunity where partners are really engaged and involved and that cross-agency coordination, engaging state and local leaders to really look at how they're delivering services for those children at the schools. We also looked at small and rural and low income. So how do we make sure that small and rural communities are engaged in community schools? And we've seen a significant growth in that area and the involvement of those small and rural schools to really compete with others. And then we look at the emerging of capacity building for those folks who are just starting out.

One of the things that we felt was really important to scale up this program is to have multi-tiered grants. We started out with these capacity building grants to really look at those communities who were just starting out multi-local education agency grants so that we can get more districts involved. And then last but not least, if we could catalyze states, and there are many states that are now looking at community schools as a way to statewide support a whole network of schools that are involved. We felt that those three ways were ways to scale up this program.

**Jane Hodgdon:**

Thank you. All right. Now, you've mentioned partnerships a few times and they are really critical to community schools. Can you tell us a little bit more about the kinds of partnerships that community schools need?

**Elson Nash:**

Absolutely. So earlier I talked about the services that are provided for children and families. And we all know that we cannot and should not expect the schools to do everything by themselves. And so this opportunity to bring other resources into the school, local partners, whether they be non-profit or government agencies, it could be private entities, but this idea of partnering with other organizations, particularly through a memorandum of understanding,

so organizations understand their roles on how they will be involved. And oftentimes we also think these are the organizations that we hold accountable to providing those services for children and families. And so, those partnerships are critically important for Full-Service Community Schools. And you will note throughout a lot of the literature that partnerships are critical to the success. The other piece that a lot of folks will talk about a little bit later, as we're saying blending and braiding funds, those partners are critical to the sustainability of this initiative. Our dollars, even though it's for five years, that really ends up being catalytic dollars. And to sustain this beyond those five years, those partnerships need to be strong.

**Jane Hodgdon:**

You brought up blending and braiding, and we have in our audience a lot of folks from school districts or local education agencies, we also have folks that represent some of those other types of partners and organizations that you mentioned. Now, in the space of local education agencies or school districts, what do we mean by blending and braiding? And I'm going to add in the next piece which is, what are some things that local education agencies or school districts should keep in mind as they're blending and braiding funds?

**Elson Nash:**

Yeah, that's a excellent question, and we'll hear a little bit more later on with tangible examples from our district partners. But blending funds really combines funds into a single pot that has its own requirements. Those funds do not maintain their own identity in this broader pot. I like to think of blending oftentimes as those private funding sources, those unrestricted funding sources that you can bring in, and they may not have those particular restrictions, if you will. And so you can bring those things in, bring those fundings in, and they do not maintain their own identity. I think the more typical ways that we think about funding is around braiding that occurs when districts coordinate funds from different sources for one purpose, in this case, the one purpose being Full-Service Community Schools. But each of these funds maintains its own requirements.

That is a critically important point, because as we talk about bringing all these funds in, and this is where it gets a little tricky, you need to maintain and understand what those requirements are of those dollars. And so, that's where we recognize that partnerships are not free. It is important to understand how to coordinate funds and the requirements in what those funds mean. If you look in the toolkit that Mario talked about earlier, there was a lot of wonderful support from agencies across the federal government. And if you look closer in that toolkit, it will have funding broken down by the pillars, incredible resource just for you all to look at and review. But I think the story behind that is understanding that each agency, each subagency has requirements. And so, one important thing for you to do is to talk to those program officers and understand what those requirements are as you're bringing those funds together.

**Jane Hodgdon:**

Well, you could not have set up a better transition to bring Mary Frances into this conversation. As I mentioned, Mary Frances is on our Title 1 team in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. I know she contributed to the

White House toolkit you mentioned. And so Mary Frances, can you tell us a little bit about how Title 1 can be used to support those four pillars of community schools that Elson addressed?

**Mary Frances Street:** Yeah. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for having me. So first of all, the purpose of Title 1 is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable and high quality education and to close educational achievement gaps. Title 1 is ED's largest grant program. It provides funds to state educational agencies via a formula that is primarily based on census's poverty data. States in turn provide those funds to districts, again, primarily based on census poverty data and districts provide funds to schools based on the school's poverty level. Districts have some discretion in how they may provide Title 1 funds to schools, but generally a school is able to participate in Title 1 if it's poverty level is at least as high as the district's poverty or it is at least 35%. There are two types of Title 1 programs, title targeted assistance, which provides supplemental funds for eligible students and school-wide, which provides funds to upgrade the entire educational system for all students. School-wide programs are much more common generally to operate a school-wide program, a school needs to have a poverty level of 40% or higher.

Title 1 has a very broad use of funds authority. A school conducts a needs assessment and then develops a plan for how it will use Title 1 funds to improve its academic program consistent with that needs assessment. So if a community school receives Title 1 funds, activities that are associated with the four pillars can be incorporated in a school's Title 1 school-wide program. For example, activities related to analyzing achievement data and allowing activities supported with Title 1 funds to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps such as providing for instructional coaches. Also, activities related to increasing parent family engagement, which is a requirement for schools that do receive Title 1 funds. Another example is activities designed to increase access and prepare students for advanced coursework. And there are many more examples in the White House toolkit. And so I will pass it back to you.

**Jane Hodgdon:** All right, thank you. It's so nice to have this time to present together because Title 1 schools are so critical to the Full-Service Community Schools program. One of the requirements of the program from statute is that our grantees are serving at least two Title 1 school-wide eligible schools. And so there's so much connection between the two programs. Thank you. There's also a lot of connection with Title IV programs. And so, Patrick, I was hoping you could share a little bit about how Title IV funding can be used to support community schools.

**Patrick Rooney:** Yeah. Thanks, Jane, and really appreciate the opportunity to be here. And as Elson was talking, it actually occurred to me, there's another piece that we didn't mention in Title 1, but that just occurred to me as building on what he said, which is the ability to consolidate funds if you're a Title 1 school-wide program and you can consolidate funds from essentially all federal grants that you get, particularly ones from the U.S. Department Education and those funds

then entirely lose their individual, meaning you don't need to account for them separately and you can put them all towards improving your academic program. And the pillars in the Full-Service Community School model fit in really nicely with the individual purpose for a lot of our programs. So it's definitely something that's underutilized but is available.

I know districts in Georgia have been doing a lot of work on consolidation of funds, and we have some guidance, I'm happy to put the link into the chat after this of where you can get a little bit more information if you want on how to consolidate funds and what the benefits might be if folks want to think about that. But I do want to take a minute to talk about the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which is Title IV, Part B, which is \$1.3 billion annually to states, and its purpose is specifically to fund before and afterschool programs and summer learning activities for low income students in particular, and also families of those kids. So I think that particular lines up really nicely with the pillars that Elson was describing earlier. It is a program formula program to states and then states run a competition.

Districts are often the sub-grantees in 21st Century, but not always, and this gets into the point of it's a community. We have a lot of YMCAs and boys and girls clubs that are 21st Century Centers and are receiving funds to provide services. They do partner with schools to make sure that they're working together. And I think that coordination is really important to make sure the activities being provided by the 21st Century Learning Center are in collaboration or working in coordination with what's happening during the school day. So you're providing academic enrichment activities, but also other experiential learning activities or experiential education activities. I like that phrase that Elson used. That is definitely at the heart of the 21st Century program. So there's a ton of activities. Essentially anything you can do in 21st Century, I think, fits in nicely with the Full-Service Community model.

And as you think about blending and braiding funds, 21st Century is really a natural fit for the kinds of things that folks want to do under Full-Service Community Schools. And in particular, I think it's important to point out that when they submit their applications, they need to submit how they're going to provide opportunities for kids, but also how they're going to provide opportunities for families of students. For example, 21st Century programs might provide lessons on family financial literacy, health and wellness programs, strategy workshops to support students in completing homework assignments. Those are all the kinds of things that we would have seen in 21st Century Community Learning Centers of how they're helping support families in addition to the particular students that they're serving. They do have a broader reach that's very much baked into the program. I stop there. I think I could go on more, but I think that's gives you an overview of the connection, which I think are strong.

**Jane Hodgdon:**

That is wonderful, Patrick. I did see a celebration reaction going on with the idea of consolidating funds, and I think that really is very much aligned with the idea of the blending that Elson mentioned too. So thank you, Patrick, Mary Frances,

and Elson. I know we'll have some questions for you a little bit later in the program, but now I'm going to invite my colleague Stephen to join us. Stephen Kostyo is our fellow and he is with us from the Federation of American Scientists, that is the fellowship program. We're thrilled to have Stephen with us. He has already been really instrumental in driving a lot of innovation in the Full-Service Community Schools program. So Stephen.

**Stephen Kostyo:**

Awesome. Well, thank you very much for that, Jane. I'm excited to be a part of this webinar to introduce our two panelists for this section of the webinar on blending and braiding funding for Full-Service Community Schools. First up, we have Jay Roscup, the community schools director for Sodus Central School District in New York. And next, we have Kim McWilliams, the chief officer of Family, School, and Community Partnerships for Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation in Indiana. Welcome to you both and thanks for joining us today.

But before we jump in here, since we're talking about blending and braiding funding, I thought it'd be helpful to call back to the definitions of those two terms that Elson mentioned earlier, emphasizing that blending and braiding that those mean different things, that blending combines funds into a single pot that has its own requirements, that the funds, as Elson mentions, do not maintain their own identity in this broader pot. And then braiding occurs when districts coordinate funds from different sources for one purpose, but each of these funds maintains its own requirements. And I start with these definitions to keep in mind to constraints to consider, such as those match requirements or restrictions as folks think about blending and braiding. And so, we'll get more into depth about these terms in a second. But before we do, want to start, Kim, with you on telling us a little bit more about your program and what you're doing to implement community schools.

**Kim McWilliams:**

Thank you, Stephen. It's great to be here. Really, before I start, I'd like to talk a little bit about our district. So in Evansville, we're one of the third-largest school districts with over 22,000 students and have approximately about 58% free or reduced lunch. So we're made up of 40 different schools, and you mentioned all the different varieties, so K-5, K-6, a K-8, junior highs, and then certainly our 9 through 12 high schools. We talk about our rapidly expanding early childhood learning program, and that includes our pre-kindergarten and then all the way up as you think about from the cradle to the career, our seven innovative high school models. Finding the one that's just right for our students, not just a traditional 9-12 high school model. Then we're providing certainly the out of school programming in the afternoon and in the summertime.

We have extended day centers where we're providing morning and afternoon care for at our elementary and K-8 schools. Our entire district really, Steven, incorporates the pillars of the Community Schools and we're fortunate to be able to do that. In 22 schools, we receive some sort of funding and we talked about this blended and braided funding sources. We have 22 of our 40 that are receiving funding that leads to out-of-school time learning, consisting of, like the panel before talked about, 21st Century Community Learning Center funding. We are currently holding two full service Community School grants, title funding

for sure. Most recently we're very happy to announce our community received a Promise Neighborhood Grant, one of three in 2023 that's been awarded so far, so we're very excited about that and what's to come.

But you can also see then we cover the whole gambit if you will. We're both urban and rural. We have county and city. We have multiple needs within our schools. We're fortunate to be in a community where the collaboration and supports are extraordinary.

**Stephen Kostyo:** That that's really great to hear, especially those cradle to career set of services that are supported by a lot of the funding sources that we just heard about in the first panel. Jay, same question to you. Can you share more about your program in New York?

**Jay Roscup:** Well, yeah, a lot of our programming really got started more than a decade ago now. I keep wanting to say a decade ago and a heaps getting farther and farther in the rear view mirror, but it was actually a Safe Schools Healthy Students grant that the federal government released. At that time it was a partnership between DOJ, SAMSA, and US Department of Education. At the highest levels of government, then, there was a modeling of how do we work together really to improve school climate, to improve school safety? It was a response to Columbine, I believe.

Anyway, we learned then that we were able to do so much more together. Then New York State really started driving on the Community Schools model with a competitive grant that one of the schools in our county won and followed up by making Community Schools part of our formula funding for schools in New York State and providing three technical assistance centers for us to draw information from.

The movement here has been one that we've really been able to take advantage of locally, and it's important for us, as small schools, that we look to each other as partners too. We actually in our county have 11 different school districts ranging in size from about 600 students up to over 2000 students, K-12. All the programs that Ken mentioned we are doing, but often we have to work together not only with community partners, but with one another because our districts are so small, to achieve the economy of scale, to achieve the sustainability, we really apply as consortiums. This most recent full service Community Schools grant that encouraged districts to work together was right up our alley and it certainly fueled our progress in all those arenas that Ken detailed.

**Stephen Kostyo:** I really love that about Community Schools learning from each other. I know that's definitely been my experience working in this space. I know a lot of folks in the audience might be thinking, "How do I get a Community School off the ground?" Or, "How can I approach something as complex as implementing a Community School?" Jay, I want to go back to you. You talked a little bit about how you all got started working with those different agencies, working with

some of the state supports. Can you share a little bit more about the thought process of getting started with implementation?

**Jay Roscup:**

Well, we pulled from, believe it or not, Leslie University. They have a safe and supportive schools model, a trauma-informed learning model, and they ask a question there that has been a guiding one for us in our work, which is, "What is your urgency?" Then we really just start somewhere. I think that's the most important thing is to start somewhere. Sometimes we talk about resource mapping as a start, and it sure is, but resource mapping is dynamic. It is not Google Maps. Things don't stay where you put them. There are ebbs and flows of resources.

For us back then, our urgency really was school climate. I think attendance has been a common starting point for a lot of folks but we were really addressing the urgencies of school climate and school safety and that rallied partners together from mental health, from Office of Victim Services, from the local law enforcement, from Child Protective Services, and so on. I think that I would be, what I would tell folks is really to see what is compelling? What is compelling to folks? Don't say, "Hey, we've got one more initiative that we want to do and it's called Community Schools," but ask, "What is compelling to you? What is the need here?" I can guarantee you that Community Schools will be a strategy that will address that need.

**Stephen Kostyo:**

Yeah, I really like that idea of starting somewhere, the fact that you mentioned a university. I know there are a whole network of university connected Community Schools, some of which have gotten federal full service Community School grants, and many of which are doing really great work. You mentioned a lot of great partners in that work as well, which I think shows the dynamic process of working in a Community School.

Kim, want to hear the same from you about what advice would you give to folks who are trying to get a Community School off the ground? How was that process for you all?

**Kim McWilliams:**

Yeah, so our Community School model really started at one school of our 40. We talked about starting small and building those relationships to connect with their students and their families within the community. We started out simple and listened to our stakeholders. We listened to our community, our family members, our students, what did they want? Really what it came down to initially, almost 30 years ago now, they wanted to beautify their community. It started with planting tulips in the boulevard out across from the school. I tell you, it's funny how somehow being on your hands and knees in the dirt, and I was part of that with the families and those kids right next to you, what you find out, the things that you find out when you're planting the tulips to beautify the school. You find out their needs and where the gaps are, what they're looking for from their community, not asking them to meet us where we are, but really kind of meeting them where they are.

We connected with our local community partners, one of them being our hospital and responded like Jay said, providing outreach in the form of a mobile dental and mental clinic. 20 years later, that mobile dental clinic really has access to all of our schools and all of our students every day, which then provides that dental care that's necessary, which might help out with their absenteeism, get them more engaged in school. We found that they were more engaged, that they were happier, better attendance. The grades certainly rose. Our district knew that it had to scale up, that too many great things were happening at that one school, so we scaled up from the one school to all of our schools really, while all don't receive funding, but all have that Community School, those pillars, mindset if you will. The buy-in was there from our district and the table then thus began the development of our partnerships.

**Stephen Kostyo:**

Yeah, that's really helpful. I like the combining the idea of you got to start somewhere and having one Community School that becomes present across the district. I know that's similar in places like Cincinnati that start out using 21st Century Community Learning Center funds and now about 20 years later, all the schools in that district are also Community Schools. You all mentioned listening to the community, I imagine, well, once you hear those needs, you're thinking about how do we blend and braid funds to meet those. I'm curious, we'll go back to you, Kim, about how your program has thought about the blending and braiding funding.

**Kim McWilliams:**

Yeah, I think one of the things we talked about even developing those partners, making sure they're at the table. When I say table, really we're talking about a big table and we call it a big table because that's what it is. It's a really, really big table with over 80 agencies sitting around who share information but also collaborate with us as well. It starts at that big table and that includes parents, because who knows more about their students and about the community than their parents. That led to an afterschool coalition, which is funded with our 21st Century schools as well. Not only that provide programming at our buildings, but then also at the local organizations, perhaps like the YMCA Boys and Girls Clubs have been mentioned here before. Those things are continuing to go on. Before we had to blend and braid the funding, we had to develop the partners to blend and braid them with.

Even while we were creating those relationships, the only thing that we stressed from all of our partners is to take off their individual agency hat and put on their community hat. How can we thrive as a community? I tell you, our superintendent says this all the time, that a thriving school system leads to a thriving community and vice versa. A thriving community leads to a thriving school system. They certainly go hand in hand. The blending and braiding, the panel before us spoke about that, and the way I think about the braiding, of course, is a large barge rope. If a piece of the rope is frayed the rope still maintains that strength and effectiveness and that's happened to us.

Gosh, COVID was a great example of that coming through. Because we had that blended and braided funding sources, we were fortunate to be able to continue with our before and afterschool care, our programs, and bringing in other



additional partners that might have funding sources. If we were had lost a funding source or if they had lost a funding source due to whatever or the capacity needs that we all dealt with through COVID, we were able to step in and help each other out. In fact, over last summer, we were able to increase and have even a more vibrant summer school program serving over 2000 students in the summer providing both breakfast and lunch and in those academic enrichment needs to the families that those sources.

I don't want to go on too far, but with the blending of funds, a great example is working with our families and providing the care that they might need providing books so we can teach them the academics of what we're doing during the school day and in that summertime, there's a partner that's local in our community that's providing books to our families so they can have that at-home library that is continuing on.

It really is that long-standing relationship is a two-way street. From that big table where we've had all those conversations and digging those and planting those tulips, we understand that we may not always have those funds available to us, we may not always have the capacity available to us. We might be able to provide just the school and the students and then have the outside agencies come into our schools to provide that programming that is necessary. I think about that a lot and just continue to go back to putting on their community hat.

**Stephen Kostyo:**

That that's really helpful and I think that really speaks to, Jay, what you mentioned around ebbing and flowing, of the more folks you have at the table, the more you can help each other out as you mentioned there, Kim. I think really your response illustrated the importance of partnerships and forming those in the lead up to blending and braiding.

Jay, I want to hear more from you as well as you thought about blending and braiding funds. How have you all approached that process?

**Jay Roscup:**

Well, I think that there is an internal braiding, right? There's an internal braiding that we can manage ourselves, which is knowing that how does my 21st Century funding connect with My Brother's Keeper funding, connect with my full service Community Schools grant funding? That's the internal work. But then there's also, as Kim was saying, the external work of how does the OVS funding, that Family Counseling Service of the Finger Lakes, braid into that? How does the Medicaid funding that keeps our satellite mental health clinics going braid into that?

Then it really requires trust, and a lot of times, Steven, to be honest, you just kind of have to ask people, "How do you get paid? How does your agency maintain solvency?" You have to develop enough trust that you can have those discussions because then when you're operating in the exact same space or when you're operating and when there there's room to maneuver and work with one another, when you have an actual competition or when you have chances to share and collaborate.

A great example of that is our Family Counseling Service of the Finger Lakes and our mental health services. Mental health receives their funding from Medicaid reimbursement, Family Counseling Service of the Finger Lakes is funded primarily through Office of Victim Services and they really come into play when there's been some type of crime or something as simple even as bullying or harassment can activate the dollars for that funding. It's, "What can you do? What turns on your money flow?"

When we help those two agencies sit next to each other and they realize that they can help the same family and the same young person and both be drawing still their dollars that they need to maintain their services, then they're much more willing to navigate in the same space, if that makes sense. A lot of times what the school is able to do is be that honest broker, "We just want the most services for our kids, none of your funding streams are our funding streams," and we can encourage you to sit around that big table that Kim was mentioning.

**Stephen Kostyo:**

Yeah, I really like that, especially you mentioned the trust, which is a nice segue to the next question I wanted to ask both of you, which is about sustainability. I think that we have grantees that are thinking, "How do we get this off the ground?" but also thinking of the attendees in the audience who are thinking about, "How do we sustain this work? How do we move forward?" I imagine trust is a big part of that process, but want to turn it back to you, Jay. How are you all planning on sustaining funding sort of thinking ahead?

**Jay Roscup:**

Well, I keep just a basic Gantt chart so I know when one funding stream is going to end and another may start for one. We try and build capacity, but we really try and move quickly past the concept of funding being completely tied to that of sustainability. It's really a lot about function. What does this program do? What good comes from this? I'm sure Kim could speak to this. We found now with dollars sometimes we realize that there's so much we can do even without those dollars. Sometimes it's really just asking yourself, "What can you do right now regardless?" When we're thinking about sustainability, it certainly is about diversification of funding, but it's very much too about really looking at mission, vision, and it's an honest grind to really get to what is making the difference? What are the components that are really changing the environment for our young people?

If you think about that beautiful example of the tulip planting, how much does that really cost? I would just encourage people too, that while you're thinking about sustainability, don't let it scare you. Be aware that the good you are doing is something that can be sustained without necessarily all the dollars that you have. Really look at function. I know that's scary to say, and we've lived it. We've had big funding streams drop out from beneath us. I think it's those deep-rooted community champions and those powerful stories and starts that allow you to hold, and that trust and to really focus, again, like I say, what is it that's making the most difference for these young people? How do we keep these essential functions going?

**Stephen Kostyo:** Yeah, and I appreciate both of you have mentioned things like chronic absenteeism of getting students to school, that rooting these things in metrics that make a difference for students and families. Kim, I want to ask you again about sustainability. You've gone from that one tool of planning now to a whole set of schools that are Community Schools, so curious what advice you have for our audience about how they can go about sustaining their implementation?

**Kim McWilliams:** Yeah, lots of great things and I'm loving learning some things right now as well. One of the things, and there's multiple, we love writing letters of supports for our community-based organizations to help them receive funding that we can support through a letter that says that we're collaborating. We have honest and trusting relationships, like Jay talked about, leveraging our community assets, so building on their current efforts to collaborate within and leveraging the engagement from our families, from our communities. They'll speak and when they speak perhaps then there's local funding sources that come up because they're constituents. We want to ensure that every student's success is led by a trusting relationship, the community success leads that also. We all have time, talent, and treasure, and how do we resource all three of those out?

The tulips didn't cost a whole lot, but then those large funding sources do and when they go away, how can we bring something else in to help support what's going on because the Community School work is implemented at different levels and at different times. We have the 40 schools that we talked about. Not all 40 schools are implemented at the highest level. The 22 or so that are receiving funding are all different in their own makeup and have different partners, so we have to be careful in our community not to stretch our partners too thin as well because they're at a certain capacity. It does change with leadership, but it's ever more important are the blended and braided funding sources. You have to be creative to be sustainable, leverage the work with the community partners and the parents to help see that it continues because we all know that the Community School work does have a return on investment that is just, I don't know if you can put a dollar on it there, people have done it, but I love seeing the communities and as I drive by that school now, those tulips are still there.

**Stephen Kostyo:** That's a great place to wrap it up but I know we could chat for a long time, but as you all mentioned, it's great to learn from folks who are doing this work, so thank you all very much to the both of you for joining us here today and sharing some of those lessons. I'm sure folks want to know where they can go next. I know we have a slide of different resources that folks can use, including the White House toolkit and some resources from other partners on that include examples and recommendations on how to blend, braid, and sustain funding. With that, I'll turn it back to you, Greta.

**Greta Colombi:** Excellent. I just want to thank you all so much again, Jay, Kim, for really bringing it to life, seeing how it's made, right? So thank you so very much. I want to thank each of our presenters and panelists for the excellent information and strategies you have shared today. As the needs are so great, especially now, Community Schools provide an opportunity to partnership and coordination that can really help raise the bar, improving the outcomes for our students.

With that, this officially marks the official conclusion to the webinar. Before going into the optional Q &A, we also want to thank over 700 of you who had registered to participate today and for your active engagement and questions and comments during the webinar. We hope this webinar made you hungry for more. To find resources and other information, please remember to visit the Nestle and Best Practices Clearinghouse websites and please keep an eye out for announcements for the next several webinars. You can see here that we have three on the books right now. On May 10, we'll be talking about substance use among first year college students, May 24th, we'll be talking about school mental health, and on June 14 we'll be talking about early learning. To help plan for future webinars, here we present the link to the feedback form on screen. I encourage everyone who attended today to take just a few minutes to provide us feedback on today's session and share what topics and format you prefer for upcoming sessions of the series. Finally, please visit our event webpage where today's presentation will be posted and you can listen to the archived version of the presentation or share it with your colleagues who may have an interest in this topic. You can also see all the slides that the speaker shared along with the links to all the resources referenced during the session, and as a reminder, we will be capturing all questions posted in the Q&A box so that we can make sure the information is shared with the US Department of Education to inform upcoming events in the lessons from the field webinar series.

At that, we are now ready for the Q&A, which will be moderated by Jane Hodgdon, who you had met earlier as our moderator for panel one. We encourage you to stay with us until 4:30 to hear the speakers' responses to questions submitted by you, our audience. Jane.

- Jane Hodgdon:** All right. Thank you very much, Greta. All right. We received some questions during the registration process and others have come in during the course of the panels, so we'll get to as many of these as we can in the time that we have left. The first question I want to start with though is a particular one. Mary Frances, this question, it was directed toward you because it was asking about the distinction around if a school is able to participate in Title 1A, about the poverty level of the school being at least as high as the school district, or at least 35%. There was a little bit of confusion about what the threshold was for it to be a Title 1A school-wide program.
- Mary Frances Street:** It's either. The school can either be at the same level of the district or the LEA, or it can be at least 35%.
- Jane Hodgdon:** Is that distinction or decision made at the district level or it can be either one, and it really doesn't matter how a school or a district determines it?
- Mary Frances Street:** It's typically determined based on census data, whatever the school's population make up based off of census data.
- Jane Hodgdon:** Great. Thank you. Another question that came in is about coalitions for community schools. How can a school district get started with the Community Schools Coalition? It's an urban district that would really benefit from embracing

the whole community and engaging the whole child. I think Stephen or Elson, maybe one of you could speak to how folks can get involved in existing coalitions.

**Elson Nash:** Jane, sorry about that. That's an excellent question and I just want to make sure that I'm answering it correctly, and that is how could they become involved in their own coalitions? Is that the question?

**Jane Hodgdon:** Well, the way it is worded is how can it get started with the Community Schools Coalition? I was reading that to mean how can they get involved with some of the existing coalitions that are out there for community schools?

**Elson Nash:** Got it. Totally got it now. I would definitely go to the Coalition for Community Schools's website. There is some connection around ... they have regional coordinators and through those regional coordinators, those coordinators usually have connections to folks in their regions and that becomes a great opportunity to engage with other folks within their regions around community schools. I would also say they can always look at our awards page for those grantees that perhaps are in their state or near their district. As an example, we had a board member from a district in California that came to the Department of Ed today. I ended up realizing that one of our funded grants was a next door neighbor of hers, and so being able to connect that board president to one of our local grantees was just a huge opportunity because she did not even know the type of work that was being done around full service community schools in the district that was next door.

You never know when those opportunities are readily available and I think our website, the Coalition for Community Schools website, the National Center, really Community Schools Forward has a lot of linkages across the nation that those of you who are interested in could learn more.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Great. Thank you. Stephen, were there any additional resources that you wanted us to also flag?

**Stephen Kostyo:** I think Elson covered the main ones. I know states have their own community school initiatives as well, and so I think looking at some of maybe the technical assistance centers, similar to those that Jay mentioned, could also be helpful, that those are wide networks of technical assistance in states like New York and California as well.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Great, thank you. A couple of questions that came in that are really for Jay and for Kim. Are your community schools overseen by someone in the district or is it someone at one of the community organizations, one of the partner organizations?

**Kim McWilliams:** Jay, I'll jump in there first. For us at in Evansville-Vanderburg School Corporation, I actually am employed by the school district. I'm a former teacher, counselor, administrator and like I said, I started as a teacher at that first community school, so I saw it from one side and now I'm seeing things from

another side. While we have funding for myself and some of our coordinators and directors that lead this work, we also blend and braid the funding sources with our local organizations as well, and certainly partner up with them and have those discussions and those big table, if you will, talks to make sure that we are all in collaboration, have that honest, open, trusting relationship and know what each other are doing and trying to meet what goals.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Great. Thank you.

**Jay Roscup:** Kim, that to me is the right answer because if you were like, "Is it this or is it that?," my answer would've been yes. I'm a central school district employee, but our community school coordinators are employed through partners, yet we have community school directors and individual districts as school employees, and so it really is a shared initiative and that shared ownership, shared accountability is really important. I think that the idea that we really are hoping to get more and more back to on this side of COVID too is that the real ownership of our schools is that of our families and our students, that we really are getting center place based. A community school, oversee is a tough word. I think that there has to be that sharing that Kim was talking about and so we try and share the burden, I guess. I know that's probably not a very clean answer, but I found if you're providing really clean answers, you may not be doing community schools work.

**Jane Hodgdon:** I have a follow-up question. I'll start this one with you, Jay. Do you have any thoughts about any benefits of whether that community schools coordinator is someone from the district or someone from outside the district? The wording of this question was really is it run within or outside of the house? I did want to give credit to the language and the question, but I think it gets to your point, are there benefits that you see from one way different from the other way?

**Jay Roscup:** Well, we have criteria for employment in a school district. I'm a New York State certified administrator, and I'm also a New York State certified teacher, so I can be hired as a certified employee. Otherwise, folks have to be hired as civil service employees when we come under civil servants guidance, whereas our nonprofit partners can hire. Then when we're really talking about equity and we're really wanting to talk about hiring, we have to be honest about the systemic inequities that for a long time have kept everybody that needs to be at the table maybe from making it to the table. I think being really honest about who's the best agency to hire this champion for our young people is what we do. It's that table, it sounds like community, I hope, but we really can sit around and go, "All right, who's the best person for this? Who's the best agency to house this?", and it can really depend on the initiative.

For example, over my shoulder here is our study work program, some of the workforce stuff that Kim was talking about. Could our school district employ these young people in the internships? Sure. Then they have to be board approved. I don't want them all to be board approved because that adds layers and layers of stuff, fingerprint clearance and things of that nature. We're sometimes engaging young people that have encounters with the juvenile

justice system. Our school insurance company's going to flag it, our nonprofit partner can hire them. It depends, but who authorizes the payroll for those nonprofit partners? That's me. I sign off that they did the work. So we share the lift and you have to figure out how that fits in your community, and gosh, I could do that with someone. I could talk them through maybe and ask them questions. But it is really hard in a blank slate to really say, "Definitely do this or definitely do that. You have to ask what works best in your place."

**Jane Hodgdon:** Always coming back to the context. Kim, was there anything that you wanted to add to that?

**Kim McWilliams:** No, Jay said it great. I think it goes back to the vision. Do we all have that same vision? What outcomes are we looking for? Taking that community hat on and taking that individual hat off. In our schools, we certainly have a mix of coordinators, local school coordinators, some funded from the district, some that we're partnering with and blending and grading the funding with others. I would say, and Jane you kind of mentioned, both need to know the code or the key to make sure they can get in the house. Can't have one on the outside, one on the inside, because that's not community school. Everybody's got to be together. Like Jay said, sometimes it's not easy, but as long as we get to Z from A, that's the main thing.

**Jane Hodgdon:** That's great. Couple of other questions that I think you guys are well positioned to answer. As time has gone on, have the partners begun pursuing new funding sources together?

**Jay Roscup:** Yes is the short answer for that. Sometimes we'll even email, "Hey, I think this would be a good one for you", or someone will say, "Oh, maybe you could do that." Or we work to help support each other. Kim, it sounds like going for 30 years and having a Promised Neighborhoods grant, you've got to be neck deep in that.

**Kim McWilliams:** Jay, perfect lead in. We certainly have partners with our pool of service community schools. We probably have four, five, seven partners that we can count on. You touched on Evansville Promise ... or I said Evansville ... that's what we're calling it, the Promised Neighborhood, that is exactly what that question is, Jane. We have 23 partners. We're one of the 23 partners that are included in this. That didn't just happen overnight. That was a combination, I think, of the support within our community coming together and we really kind of focused to go deep. We didn't try to do it throughout our whole community. Going back to that one school, planting those tulips, we wanted to go and have those resources available to that family, those communities and those students. But like I said, there's 23 partners in that one grant right there.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Thank you. I'm going to pivot to ask a question about funding with McKinney-Vento, the Homeless Assistance Act and Community Schools. Patrick, I think you might be best positioned to answer this. Could funding from McKinney-Vento be used to support community schools? The question specifically asked about the salary of the community school coordinator.

**Patrick Rooney:** That's a very strong, maybe. I think we might need to know more information about that. If this is your particular question, I might encourage you to reach out to our email address at [homelessed@ed.gov](mailto:homelessed@ed.gov). In particular, the McKinney-Vento funding is designed specifically for supporting children experiencing homelessness, so I think you'd want to make sure that that is a direct overlap of what the full service community coordinator is doing. I'm hesitant to give a direct answer without a bit more context.

**Jane Hodgdon:** All right. That is understandable. Absolutely. All right. We at our time. I do want to open it up in case any of our panelists have one last comment or thought that they wanted to share. I'll start with Elson. If there's anything that you would like to share, then Patrick and others, we can kind of follow on to see if there's any last thoughts or comments that anybody wanted to share.

**Elson Nash:** Once again, this is Elson. I would just say that often the things that you all are trying to do at the local level around systems change and collaboration, those are the things that we are attempting to do at the federal level. We are really trying to increase our collaboration internally, hence we have Patrick and others that are here. We are working across our technical assistance centers and so I think this idea of making sure that we're kind of walking the walk is something that we take seriously. The creation of the toolkit was us walking the walk, and our hope is that you really utilize that toolkit in a way that is beneficial for your communities.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Thanks, Patrick and Mary Frances, any last thoughts that you guys wanted to add?

**Patrick Rooney:** Well, I appreciate the opportunity to be here and a lot of our Federal Formula grant programs are pretty flexible in how they can be used. I think Title I is a great example. If you can make a case that it is ... what you are doing is designed to improve the academic program, particularly for those who are low income and low achieving, Title I can be used pretty broadly at the local level and the pillars for full service community schools align really well with that concept. I do think there's always the question of is it necessary and reasonable for the purposes of what you're trying to use it? But within that, there's a lot of flexibility and we definitely appreciate the opportunity to partner with Jane and Elson and all of you on the call today. So thanks.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Thank you. Stephen ... Oh, I'm sorry.

**Mary Frances Street:** I was just going to say ditto what Patrick said.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Okay. Thanks, Mary Frances. Stephen, any last thoughts?

**Stephen Kostyo:** I just want to underline the importance of American Rescue Plan Act funds that are still out there to fund full service community schools. I know as part of the resources, the department's put together some frequently asked questions about how to use those funds and give some great examples of what states are



already doing to utilize those to support states in implementing community schools.

**Jane Hodgdon:** Great note. Thank you. Then to Kim and to Jay, are there any final comments you'd like to leave the audience with?

**Kim McWilliams:** First of all, thanks for allowing me to learn many things today as well, and to be a part of the conversation. Similar to what Elson said, we have those silos that we're bringing together so everyone knows what everyone's doing, and that starts at a local level as well and I'm glad to follow the lead of what's happening at a federal level. Thank you again.

**Jay Roscup:** I guess for me, I would say plant some tulips, get started. I wouldn't wait until you have it all figured out because you're going to find out that figuring it out is what you're going to keep doing. I would just get started. Find a reason to come together and come together.

**Jane Hodgdon:** I can't think of a better way to end then with the direction to folks to go plant some tool tulips. It's perfect timing for the end of April too. Thanks to everyone, to our audience, to all of the folks behind the scenes that helped bring this together. Can't say enough about how much we appreciate you. Greta, I'll turn it back to you.

**Greta Colombi:** Thank you so much, Jane, and to all of our speakers again and to all of our participants. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to be with us here today. Thank you for all you do to provide students with a safe and supportive learning environment. We hope we'll see you on future lessons from the field webinars. With that, we hope that you have a wonderful rest of the day. Take care.