

East EPO
Community School
Needs Assessment Report
Fall 2018

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Introduction

Community schools are a *strategy* for organizing school and community resources around student success. Community schools define student success *holistically*, meaning not only through academics but social-emotional development, extracurricular involvement, and college, career, and civic readiness. Community schools value input from school and community members *inclusively*, meaning coalitions are built that include students, parents/families, neighbors, businesses and organizations, and school staff and faculty. In doing so, the community school strategy creates partnerships, policies, and programs that support students success.

A community school's strategy is informed by a "needs assessment." A needs assessment is a systematized process that determines which strengths/assets and needs/barriers exist in a school community. The process often includes reviewing archival data, administering surveys, holding focus groups, and conducting interviews. The needs assessment findings inform which partnerships, policies, and programs a community school will pursue in order to support student success.

The following report outlines the needs assessment conducted in the Fall of 2018 for East EPO Upper and Lower Schools in Rochester, New York. The needs assessment team strove to solicit input from as many stakeholders as possible, including scholars, parents/families, staff, faculty, community partners, and neighbors. Each of these partners provided valuable insight on the quality of and direction for East's community school strategy. Based on the findings of the needs assessment, we present recommendations on the future direction of the community school strategy at East EPO. This report is transparent and public, meant to collectively guide the community school work by sharing leadership and accountability for results. This report is organized in six major parts: 1.) Background of East, 2.) Background of Community Schools, 3.) Methods, 4.) Findings, 5.) Recommendations, and 6.) Conclusion.

Managing the Work

East's Community Coordinator, led a team of fifteen people made up of East parents/families, staff, faculty, community partners, and neighbors through the facilitation of the needs assessment. This team formed the Community School Needs Assessment (CSNA) team responsible for conducting a needs assessment based on the framework from the National Center for Community Schools needs assessment toolkit. The team met biweekly at 4:00 p.m. at East between July and December 2018. During meetings, the CSNA team collaboratively made decisions on the implementation of the needs assessment, analyzed archival and focus group data, and drafted findings and recommendations.

Throughout the process, the CSNA team analyzed three year's worth of archival data, conducted 25 focus groups with 216 stakeholders, and made around 150 phone calls that connected with 33 East parents/families for phone interviews. Analysis of focus archival, focus group, and interview data occurred during biweekly CSNA team meetings, in addition to qualitative analysis and coding of focus group notes by Jason Taylor and Dr. Joanne Larson and Dr. Nahoko Kawakyu O'Connor from the University of Rochester's Warner School of Education. Recommendations based upon the findings were collaboratively created with the CSNA team and different stakeholders.

This report was written by Jason Taylor with assistance from Dr. Nahoko Kawakyu O'Connor and through an iterative process of review and feedback provided by the CSNA team. In addition to this full written report, a shorter executive summary version will be made transparent and public to East decision-making bodies, East staff and faculty, East parents/families, and the wider community. The purpose of this report is to advance East's community school strategy by leveraging shared leadership and accountability for the organization of resources that support scholar learning and development.

All protocols and materials are included in the appendix section of this report.

Background about East

East EPO Upper and Lower Schools is the full name for “East EPO,” also known as “East.” East is an urban school located in Rochester, NY, in the Rochester City School District. East serves scholars grade 6 through 8 in the East Lower School (LS) and scholars grade 9 through 12 in the East Upper School (US). Also, East is in partnership with the University of Rochester which serves as its Educational Partnership Organization (EPO). The partnership with the University of Rochester started in 2014, the result of years of persistently struggling performance at East as determined by the New York State Education Department. The purpose of the EPO is to create comprehensive and sustainable urban education reform that leads to East's scholars' success and creates a model of urban reform for other schools to follow. Therefore, East is uniquely positioned as a 6-12th grade urban public school in Rochester, NY, whose leadership and guidance is provided by the University of Rochester.

Currently, during the 2017-2018 academic year, East serves approximately 1000 scholars and has roughly 170 staff members. The student body is racially and ethnically diverse, yet it is more economically homogeneous, with nearly 80% of scholars identified as economically disadvantaged. East's scholars all have different skills, abilities, and backgrounds, but each scholar is capable of success.

East EPO Programmatic Elements

Determining how to serve such a student body was a major focus of the design of the EPO between East and the University of Rochester. When the EPO started, a comprehensive needs assessment was conducted in order to determine the strengths and challenges existing in the East community. This process was also meant to engage the East community in designing and structuring the new East. Scholars, parents/families, East staff and faculty, neighbors, community members, and University of Rochester staff and faculty all contributed to the design and structure of the new East. The full list of changes can be found in the [East EPO Plan](#); however, some changes, which still continue, are outlined below:

School structure - Organizing East around the Lower School (grades 6-8), the Freshman Academy (grade 9), and the Upper School (grade 9-12) in order to focus developmentally appropriate resources and coordinate school leadership and governance

Extended school day - Extending the instructional day by 30 minutes in order to engage scholars in more instructional time

Table 1: East Demographic Information

2017-2018 Enrollment Data					
	Lower School	Upper School	East EPO (total)	RCSD	NYS
# of Students	362	667	1029	27,500	2,650,000
Grade Level					
6 th	17.1%	-	17.1%	6.9%	7.4%
7 th	42.3%	-	42.3%	6.3%	7.4%
8 th	40.3%	-	40.3%	6.3%	7.5%
9 th	-	34.5%	34.5%	9.8%	8.1%
10 th	-	23.7%	23.7%	7.2%	7.9%
11 th	-	17.5%	17.5%	4.9%	7.3%
12 th	-	24.3%	24.3%	5.9%	7.2%
Sex					
Male	56.9%	51.7%	53.4%	51%	51.3%
Female	43.1%	48.3%	46.5%	49%	48.7%
Race & Ethnicity					
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.7%
Asian	3%	3.9%	3.6%	3.7%	9.4%
Black	55.3%	55.5%	55.4%	55.8%	17.3%
Hispanic or Latinx	33.4%	30.9%	31.9%	27.6%	26.5%
White	9.1%	8.8%	8.9%	9.6%	44%
Additional Demographic Information					
English Language Learners	10.8%	17.1%	14.9%	15%	9%
Students with Disabilities	14.6%	14.2%	14.4%	20.1%	17%
Economically Disadvantaged	78.2*	78.6%*	78.5%*	83.9%*	55%

*East has higher economically disadvantaged rates than shown because these rates do not include incomplete paperwork

Sources: Rochester City School District (2018). Powerschool Database., New York State Department of Education (2018). <https://data.nysed.gov>

Curricular rigor and relevance - Designing a rigorous curriculum that holds scholars to high standards, that is inquiry-based to encourage scholars to drive their own learning, and is culturally relevant with respect to scholars' backgrounds

Focus on math and literacy - Mandatory literacy classes for scholars grade 6-9 and doubling math and ELA for most grades in order to support the development of crucial math and reading skills

Professional development - Offering ongoing professional development on best teaching practices, many of which are designed and led by East teachers

Credit recovery - Offering multiple pathways for credit recovery, including compressed classes and online learning, in order to catch scholars back up to grade level

Expanded social emotional support - Adoption of restorative practices, trauma-informed teaching, and at least one full time on-site counselor and social worker per grade level

Family group - Establishing a daily "family group" with at least ten scholars and two adults to support the sense of belonging, the building of positive relationships, development of healthy habits, and empowerment of all to have a voice

English language learner support - Creating a continuum of supports for English language learners, such as an enhanced dual language program and professional development for teachers serving English language-learning students

Family engagement - Redefining families as assets by valuing the multiple means through which families engage in their child's education and creating opportunities for shared decision making

Community school - Creating intentional partnerships between school and community resources in order to meet identified scholars needs, in addition to reconceptualizing the school as a neighborhood and community hub

East EPO Key Indicator Improvements

As a result of these programmatic changes, East has made several improvements. For example, there have been promising improvements in the key indicators of graduation rate, freshman performance, Regents exam scores, attendance, scholar behavior, and more.

Graduation rate.

The four-year graduation rate is a commonly cited educational statistic, and it measures the percent of a cohort of students who successfully graduate “on time,” meaning within four years of the start of their freshman year. In order to graduate in New York State, scholars must earn 22 credits and pass five regents exams throughout their high school career. A “cohort” is a group of students identified by the year in which they began their freshman year. A “class of” is a group of students identified by the “on time” year in which they are expected to graduate, which is four years after their cohort year. Therefore, the 2010 cohort is the same thing as the class of 2014. If a scholar does not graduate on time, meaning with the rest of their cohort, then the four-year graduation rate goes down. If a scholar does not graduate on time it does not mean that they will never graduate. Instead, the scholar can continue to complete academic requirements in subsequent semesters, or the scholar can find alternative pathways and programs. For example, the five-year graduation rate measures the percentage of students from a cohort who graduated within five years of starting their freshman year. The trend of East’s graduation rate over the past four years shows promise as seen in Table 2 and represented in Figure 1:

Table 2: Graduation Rate by Cohort

Cohort	Graduation Year	Graduation Rate
2011 (prior to EPO)	2015 (prior to EPO)	33.3%
2012 (prior to EPO)	2016	40.2%
2013 (prior to EPO)	2017	45.3%
2014 (prior to EPO)	2018	60.6%

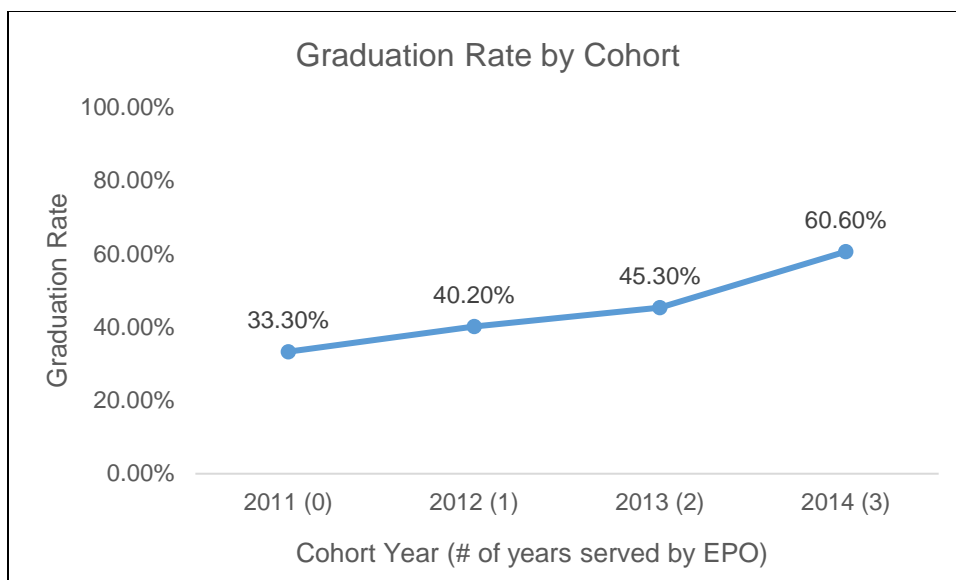


Figure 1: Graduation Rate by Cohort and # of Years served by EPO

The 2011 cohort, which graduated in 2015 before the start of the EPO, had a graduation rate of 33.3%. The 2014 cohort, which graduated in 2018, had a graduation rate of 60.6%, showing remarkable improvement. Indeed, the four-year graduation rate for the 2014 cohort is *higher* than the six-year graduation rate for the 2011 cohort. As of the authorship of this report, the [Rochester City School District's](#) four-year graduation rate is around 52%. The graduate rate across the entire [State of New York](#) is around 80%.

Freshman Academy performance.

East's improved graduation rate correlates with other improvements. The freshman year is a crucial year for high school success as it is the first year most scholars start to earn credits towards graduation. A scholar who successfully completes their freshman year will commonly have earned around five credits. Off-track completion of the freshman year is highly correlated with scholars ultimately not graduating from high school. The trend of scholar performance in the Freshman Academy shows promise as seen in Table 3 and Figure 2:

Table 3: Freshman Year Academic Progress Performance Indicators

	Cohort (years with EPO)			
	2014 (0)	2015 (1)	2016 (2)	2017 (3)
5+ Credits Earned	48.8%	80.2%	77.4%	73.3%
Passing Algebra Regents	26.5%	45.2%	45.3%	55.1%
Passing Science Regents	30.0%	35.5%	24.8%	47.3%

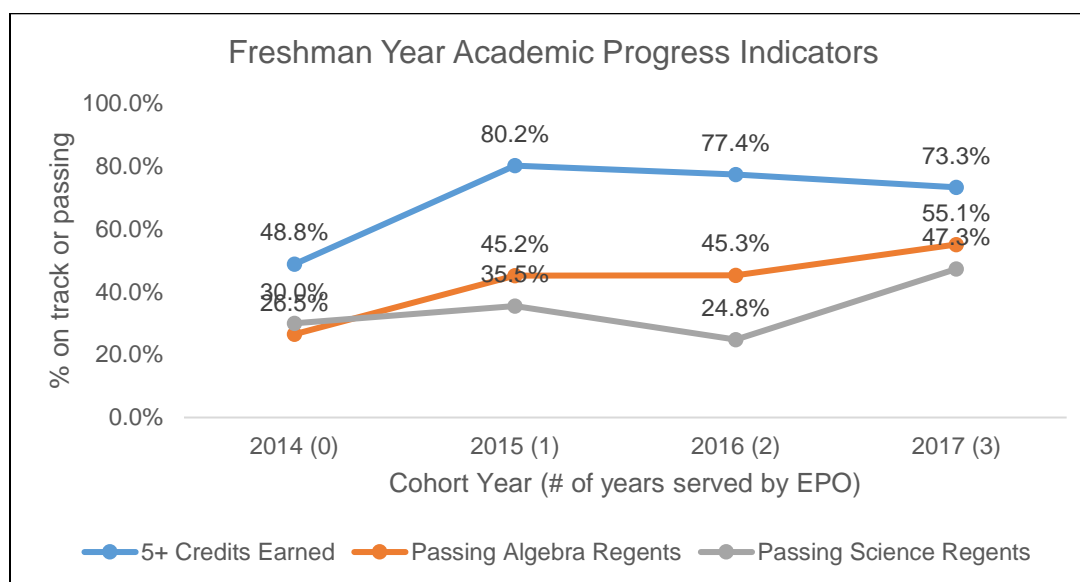


Figure 2: Freshman Year Academic Progress Indicators

To put things into perspective, the aforementioned 2014 cohort graduated with a four-year rate of 60.6%, while only 48.8% of that cohort advanced from their freshman year on-track. The most recent 2017 cohort had 73.3% of its members advance on-track from their freshman year, and had nearly 1.5-to-2 times as many of its members pass the algebra and science regents exams. Both of these are promising indicators for future graduation rates.

Regents exams.

In order to graduate from high school, scholars must pass at least five regents exams with a score of 65 or higher. Scholars must pass at least one exam from the following academic subject areas: math, science, social studies, and ELA. Regents exams are administered three times each year, and the intended timing of when scholars take a particular exam depends upon when scholars complete their corresponding course throughout the semester. For example, scholars often take the U.S. history exam in their junior year, upon completion of the U.S. history course. By senior year, most scholars will have taken at least one regents exam in each of the four aforementioned fields. The trend of scholar regents passing rate at the start of their senior years shows promise as seen in Table 4 and Figure 3:

Table 4: Regents Exam Passing Rate for Seniors at Beginning of Senior Year

	Cohort (years with EPO)			
	2012 (1)	2013 (2)	2014 (3)	2015 (4)
Math	48.7%	47.1%	56.3%	70.5%
Science	36.4%	44.1%	49.5%	55.7%
ELA	30.9%	32.1%	35.6%	55.1%
Global History	16.7%	25.6%	29.8%	36.7%
American History	30.9%	23.2%	33.7%	38.6%
Graduation Rate	40.2%	45.3%	60.6%	-

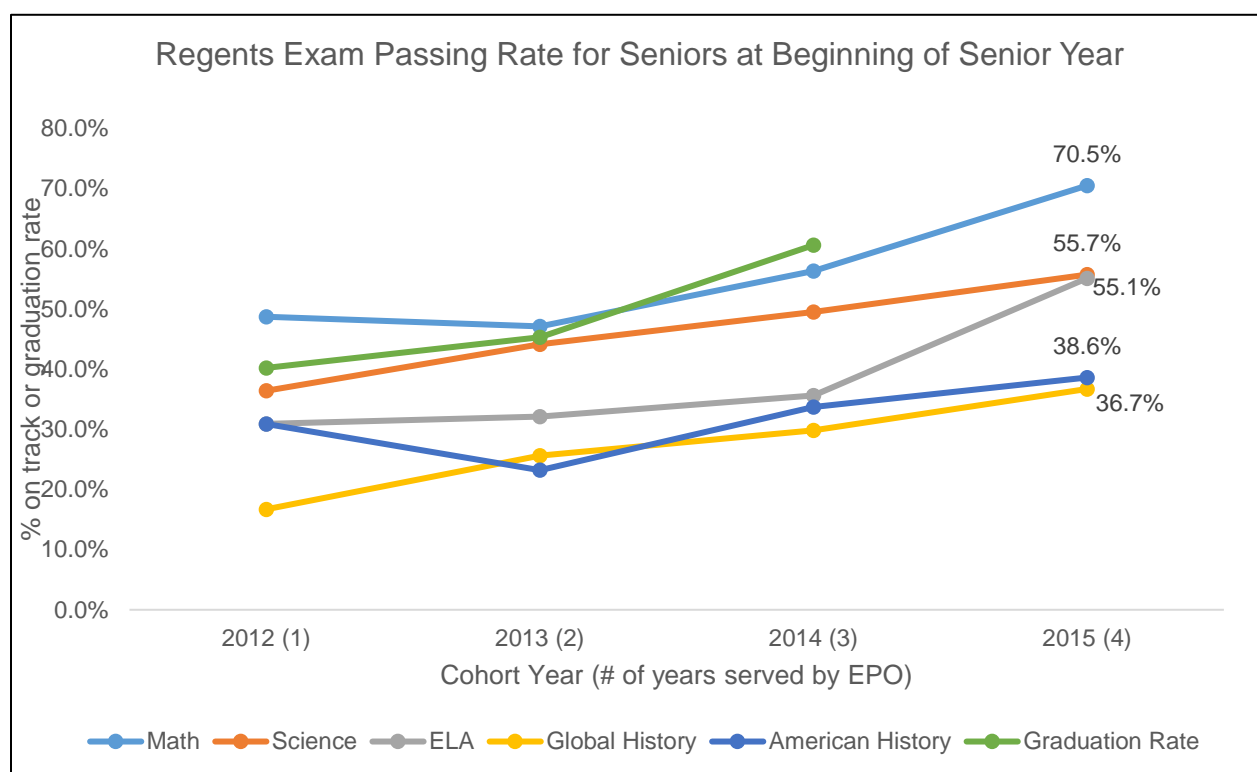


Figure 3: Regents Exam Passing Rate for Seniors at Beginning of Senior Year

While there continues to be room for improvement, particularly in social studies, the majority of the 2015 cohort entered their senior year with over half of their Regents exam requirements completed and current trend is positively associated with the number of years served in partnership with the EPO.

Attendance.

Attendance is one of the most important determinants of educational success. Attendance is often measured in terms of Average Daily Attendance (ADA), or the percent of the student body that is in attendance for the school day. Attendance is highly correlated with graduation, as each day of missed instruction adds up: missing just two school days a month is equivalent to missing 10% of the entire year. There are any number of factors that cause scholars not to attend school, more of which will be discussed in the findings section of this report. The trend of East's overall attendance rate shows promise:

Table 5: Attendance Rate by Academic Year (# of Years with EPO)

	2013-2014 (pre EPO)	2014-2015 (pre EPO)	2015-2016 (Y1 of EPO)	2016-2017 (Y2 of EPO)	2017-2018 (Y3 of EPO)
Lower School	77.6%	77.0%	89.4%	89.6%	90.0%
Upper School			78.3%	78.3%	82.2%

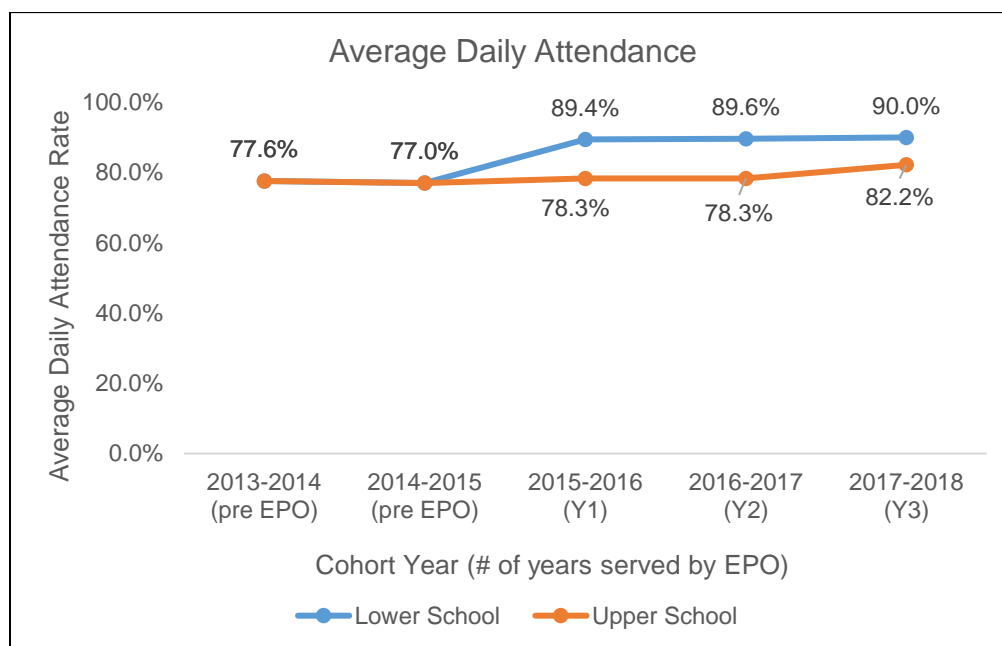


Figure 4: Average Daily Attendance by School Year (# of Years with EPO)

Behavior and discipline.

There are many factors that make a school's culture and climate one that is healthy for learning and development. In the event that scholar behavior disrupts the learning environment, the scholar may be removed from class or school. A school's Code of Conduct is what is used when a disruptive incident occurs in order to determine the proper response to restoring learning

and addressing misconduct. In some instances, it may be appropriate to remove a scholar from a classroom or the school entirely. In doing so, scholars may be removed for a short term (a period of one to five days) or for a long term (a period of six days to a year). Scholars may be removed to an in-school location, an out-of-school location, or to an alternative program. While holding scholars accountable for their actions and ensuring a safe learning environment for all scholars is a priority, high suspension rates also means scholars are missing instructional time, which in turn has implications for their success in school.

The trend in East's disciplinary data shows a dramatic decrease in the number of incidents and suspensions, showing promise in all areas of disciplinary actions over the years:

Table 6: Behavioral Incidents by School Year

	School Year (# of years with EPO)			
	2014-2015 (0)	2015-2016 (Y1)	2016-2017 (Y2)	2017-2018 (Y3)
Incidents	1629	681	323	294
Short Term	2374	817	425	349
Long Term	94	39	22	20
In School	1423	660	371	326
Out of School	968	167	54	23
In Alt. Program	77	29	22	20
Total Suspensions	2468	856	447	369

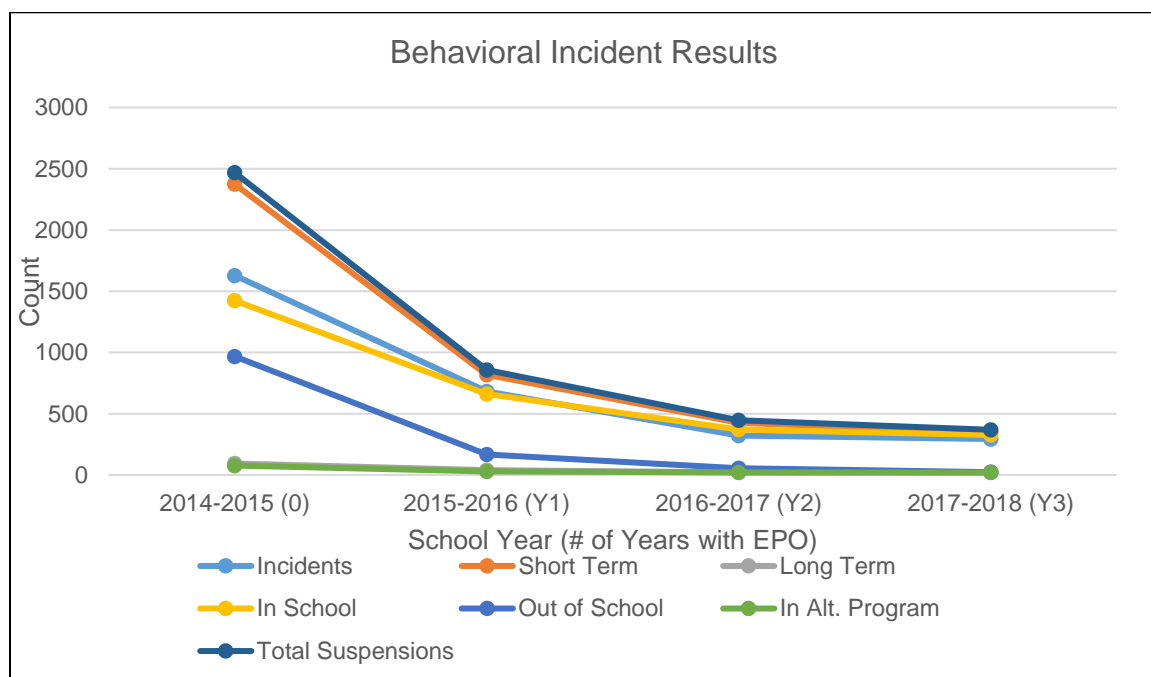


Figure 5: Behavioral Incidents by School Year

Overall, there was an 85% reduction in suspensions in the 2017-2018 school year as compared to the year before the EPO began. The less suspensions that occur, the more scholars can remain engaged in the learning process. Restorative practices have helped to create a culture shift at East, one that builds relationships and proactively prevents problems from occurring in the first place.

Collaborative partnerships and agencies

One of the central tenets of community schooling is to create partnerships that align school and community resources around student success. However, these partnerships should be based on identified needs, not out of habit or convenience; effective scholar supports are based on quality, not quantity. Truly effective partnerships share leadership and accountability for scholar success. East has been intentional with which partnerships it pursues with community agencies and organizations. Some partnerships are informal and short term while others are long term and involve a substantial exchange of resources and information. A number of East's on-site and long-term partnerships are highlighted below:

Table 7: Collaborative Partnerships and Agencies by Area of Support

Area of Support	Partner	Description
Academic support	Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection, Monroe Community College Liberty Partnerships Program, Urban League GEAR UP, University of Rochester David T. Kearns Center Pre-College Programs	Tutoring, academic assistance, college preparation, expanded learning opportunities
Dental health	University of Rochester Dental Center SmileMobile	Free and comprehensive dental care
Family engagement	Ibero-American Action League Family Service Assistant Program	Family support and adult education
Holistic scholar support	Center for Youth Student Support Center	Holistic scholar support and drop-in center
Mental health	Villa of Hope	Therapeutic mental health support
Mentoring	Champion Academy Extreme Mentoring and Empowerment Initiative	Mentoring, checkups, motivation, and support
Nutrition	Food and Resource Pantry (with assistance from Foodlink)	Emergency food and resource assistance
Physical and mental health	University of Rochester School of Nursing School-based Health Center	Free and comprehensive physical and mental health care

The findings and recommendations section of this report highlight other areas and organizations through which East scholars and the surrounding community may benefit through partnerships.

Conclusion of East's Background

East is a dynamic urban public school in Rochester, NY, going through a number of changes as a result of the partnership with the University of Rochester as its EPO. East's scholars are many and diverse. A comprehensive needs assessment was conducted at the start of the EPO in order to determine how to best serve East's scholars and families and also in order to solicit community feedback on structuring the new East. A number of strategies and programs were put in place to support scholars. After three full years of the EPO, data indicates that things are moving in the right direction in a number of key areas, more of which were not covered in the previous few pages.

While there is positive momentum, there is still much work to be done. Educational results take time, consistency, and commitment. Especially when such changes are cultural and institutional, they require the trust and collaboration from many different stakeholders in order for positive results to come to fruition. Continuing to leverage the community school strategy is one area where positive growth can continue at East. According to the best practices of community schooling, the needs assessment process is re-conducted every three years to assess current needs and strengths. The purpose of the report is to present the results of the most recent needs assessment findings, conducted during the Fall of 2018.

Background about Community Schools

East is a community school designed to support the *holistic* needs of its scholars. Community schools are a *strategy* for organizing school and community resources around student success. The premise behind community schooling is simple: students do not enter school buildings as blank slates. Instead, students come to school with their own backgrounds, strengths, and challenges. Therefore, in order to achieve their mission of providing an academic education that meets students' individual needs, schools often must provide resources that go beyond their own capacity. These resources are in partnership with parents/families, neighbors, and community members, all of whom are stakeholders in the educational process and can positively support student learning and development. The philosophy behind community schooling is that shared leadership, decision-making, accountability, and decision-making between schools and communities creates better student outcomes. Especially where social inequalities are re-created if not exacerbated, the community school strategy can be an equalizing force in society, one that challenges inequalities by building collaborative coalitions that share resources and responsibility for the welfare of youth.

The community school strategy has been variously adopted throughout the history of American schooling. For example, in the early 1900s educational reformer John Dewey thought of "schools as social centers," places where school-community partnerships could support students for success and provide families resources which they could not access elsewhere. Yet it is common for the history of modern community schooling to begin in the mid-1990s with the Children's Aid Society and their establishment of community schools in Washington Heights, New York City. Urban planners identified substantial and systemic unmet needs in the lives of students in Washington Heights. As a result, the Children's Aid Society, in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education and other community organizations, decided to use existing school buildings as full-service assets, establishing within them the resources to properly support student needs and the needs of the surrounding community. Following the success of this approach, the Children's Aid Society launched the National Center for Community Schools (NCCS) in 1994. Today, the NCCS offers resources and guides to promote the community school strategy across the country.

Community schools are becoming increasingly popular as a strategy for addressing significant economic and social realities which are counterproductive to healthy student learning and development. Poverty, segregation and all the concomitant barriers that come with them are harmful to student academic performance. By reinvesting in communities and in sharing leadership and accountability for student success, the NCCS posits that community schools can achieve the following key results:

- Children are ready to enter school
- Students succeed academically
- Students are actively involved in learning and the community
- Students are healthy physically, socially, and emotionally

- Students live and learn in stable and supportive environments
- Families are actively involved in children's education
- Communities are desirable places to live

In order to achieve these results, community schools can adopt a variety of strategies and partnerships tailored to their individual needs. In general, community schools follow four strategies: (1) provide integrated student supports that meet students' holistic academic, social emotional, health and wellness, and civic needs, (2) offer expanded learning time and opportunities through multiple pathways and culturally and developmentally appropriate resources, (3) engage families and community members as assets in the educational process, and (4) build collaborative leadership and practice as a core feature of community schooling (Maier, Daniel, Oakes, & Lam, 2017). However, it is important to note that there is no official certificate or honorarium granted to a school that "becomes" a community school. A school "becomes" a community school when it adopts the aforementioned general tenets and philosophies of community schooling, yet tailors them to meet the specific needs of their own community. No community school is exactly the same. Community schools are meant to be different because they are meant to meet the unique needs of their students by leveraging the unique assets of their community.

The Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is a systematized process used to understand and create a profile of a community school's needs. As mentioned, a comprehensive need assessment was conducted at the start of the East EPO. For East's second needs assessment, the NCCS needs assessment toolkit (Appendix A) was used to guide the process. The NCCS' toolkit outlines several key steps for conducting a needs assessment:

- Assemble the team
- Review archival data
- Perform an initial data analysis
- Administer surveys
- Conduct key informant interviews
- Hold focus groups
- Perform a final analysis of the data
- Report the results

The results of a needs assessment are meant to guide a school's community school strategy for a number of years. The guide can change overtime to reflect unforeseen circumstances, but, in general, the rigorous process used to produce the needs assessment should be respected. In many ways, a needs assessment is seen as a "constitution" that guides a school's community school strategy.

Needs assessments produce two results: findings and recommendations. Findings are based directly from the analysis of archival data, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Recommendations are collaboratively made with stakeholders based upon the findings with the goal of improving student outcomes. Needs assessments are meant to be transparent and public. They are meant for stakeholders to learn from in order to understand and support the community school strategy. Ultimately, they are meant to promote key tenets of community schooling: shared leadership, decision making, and accountability for student success.

Methods

This needs assessment was conducted between July - December 2018. A team of people were assembled to join the East Community School Needs Assessment (CSNA) team. This team was responsible for implementing the needs assessment using the National Center for Community Schools (NCCS) needs assessment toolkit framework (Appendix A). Team members were approached due to their knowledge of the school and the community, because their work was related to community schooling, and, for most, because they did not already sit on the school's Community Engagement Team (i.e. FACE Committee).

The East EPO CSNA team used a combination of data sources to inform this assessment, including archival data review and new focus group data captured during the Fall of 2018. Using a participatory process, the project was led by East's Community Coordinator, Jason Taylor, and the rest of CSNA team (see Key Participants section below). The CSNA team met bi-weekly at East for a total of eleven meetings between July and December. Each meeting was at least one hour long, and team members planned logistics, analyzed data, and drafted findings and recommendations. This section describes the methods used to collect data and the key participants involved in the process.

Data Collection Design

Following the key steps outlined in the NCCS needs assessment toolkit (Appendix A), the CSNA team used a sequential data collection method. First, archival data was reviewed by the CSNA team. This informed what information was already known and which further information should be gathered. Based on experience of survey fatigue and the importance of hearing from community members directly, the team decided that focus groups were the best method for further data collection. Collaboratively, a focus group protocol was developed to ask stakeholders about the assets and needs of East and the assets and needs of the community.

Archival data review.

Archival data is data that schools already possess about their students, policies, and programs. Schools handle lots of data from a variety of sources. Therefore, intentionality must drive which data are analyzed and what inferences are drawn, otherwise key data points may go unnoticed, or the sheer volume of information may make analysis incomprehensible. Data-driven decision-making is widely seen as the gold standard in today's educational environment.

The CSNA team began the archival data collection process by using the NCCS' archival data collection table (Appendix B). The data collection table is organized around nine different categories (e.g. "Schools are engaged with families and communities") with several data points for each category (e.g. "Percentage of parents who agreed that the school considered communication with them to be an essential part of their student's education"). The archival data collection table is meant to offer a framework for analyzing archival data around some of the

main tenets of community schooling. Schools are encouraged to supplement the table with other data points and indicators according to their needs.

The CSNA team completed the archival data collection table using a variety of sources. One primary source was SPA (SQL Performance Analyzer), an Oracle-powered database used throughout the Rochester City School District which houses data, including student demographics, attendance, suspension rates, grade-to-grade mobility rates, and more. SPA is seen as the school's most reliable internal data source. The second primary data source was three year's worth of climate survey data. In each Spring since 2016, East has administered distinct school climate surveys to teachers, administrators/staff, scholars, and parents/families. The surveys have been adapted with permission from the climate surveys from the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research. Following survey distribution, University of Rochester Warner School of Education faculty analyze the results for statistical significance. Each of the surveys have more than 65 questions, most of which follow a four point Likert scale, that provide data points around several themes (e.g. "To what extent do teachers try to understand your family's concerns about your child(ren)'s experiences"). The CSNA team primarily analyzed three year's worth of longitudinal data from the scholar and parent/family surveys.

The first few CSNA team meetings were spent analyzing the data from the archival data table and climate surveys. From the analysis, the CSNA team determined that the following areas warranted further attention:

- parent/family engagement
- scholar academic perceptions of themselves and others
- safety/bullying
- attendance
- sense of belonging
- work readiness
- out-of-school programming
- special education transitional support
- nutritional services

These initial focus areas served as the first iteration of "needs," areas the team thought the community school strategy could be leveraged in order to support scholar learning and development, or, at the least, areas that warranted further investigation as a result of the archival data analysis. The team decided that further investigation could be accomplished through conducting focus groups.

Focus groups.

The NCCS needs assessment toolkit outlines surveys, focus groups, and interviews as methods through which to collect further needs assessment data. Because most of the CSNA team's archival data came from surveys, and because of the team's identification of survey fatigue as a potential barrier, focus groups were chosen as the primary method through which to

collect new data. Another main reason focus groups were chosen was because of their alignment with the larger philosophy of community schooling, which is authentically hearing the voices of stakeholders and building partnerships with them. Therefore, when designing and conducting focus groups, the CSNA used a deliberative democratic dialogue model (House & Howe, 2000) for authentically capturing participants' perceptions and responses.

Early on, the CSNA team identified a list of stakeholders to participate in the focus groups. Stakeholders are individuals with an interest in something's success. Arguably, everyone is a stakeholder in public education. However, due to limited time and resources, key stakeholder groups with valuable experiences and perspectives able to provide the CSNA team with important input, feedback, and guidance were identified. The stakeholder groups identified by the CSNA team included parents/families; scholars; neighborhood residents and associations; collaborative and community partners; school staff including administrative assistants, school safety officers, custodial staff, social workers, and counselors; teachers; and administrators. It was the intent to hear from as many individuals in these groups as possible in order to inform the development of East's community school strategy.

Focus group question design.

On this note, it can be said 'the means define the ends.' In other words, the process influences the outcomes. For the CSNA team, this meant that the protocol for conducting focus groups (Appendix C) was designed with much consideration, and the team spent the meetings after the archival data review crafting focus group questions. One initial idea was to craft questions based upon the nine goals of community schooling as defined by the NCCS, the same goals that structure the archival data collection table. (e.g. "To what extent do you think scholars live and learn in stable environments?"). Another idea was to craft questions based upon the CSNA team's initial findings from the archival data analysis (e.g. "Do you think East is a safe learning environment? Why or why not?"). Ultimately, the team decided on a focus group protocol with two main components: (1) participants were asked to broadly define what they see as strengths/assets or barriers/challenges to scholar learning and development at both East and in the surrounding community, and (2) participants were asked to respond to focused questions based on the findings from the archival data analysis through a "gallery walk protocol," where participants rotated through writing responses to questions on different posters. This protocol balanced participants' ability to broadly define their own experiences while focusing on already identified areas of need. The protocol was also flexible enough to adapt to the specific needs of the focus group, such as age-appropriate language, group size, and time constraints. For example, when administered to scholars, the language of "assets/barriers" was changed to "best," and when administered to very small groups, the gallery walk protocol was abandoned in favor of dialogic responses. Despite these changes, the collected data was still based on the same fundamental set of questions.

Focus group facilitation.

Focus groups were conducted by members of the CSNA team, each team member was trained in how to conduct a focus group, and each team member was given a focus group protocol to ensure fidelity in implementation. In most cases, focus groups were conducted by two team members, one facilitator and one note taker. Focus groups lasted for a target time of 60 minutes. Most focus groups started with a brief five minute PowerPoint overview about community schools, the needs assessment, and proceeding norms and expectations. Following the introduction, the facilitator solicited discussion around the focus group questions or gallery walk posters. Around half of focus groups were audio recorded with permission.

Table 8: Focus Groups by Stakeholders and Number of Participants

Focus Group #	Stakeholder Group	# of Participants
1	Custodial (#1)	6
2	Clerical (#1)	6
3	Custodial (#2)	5
4	Clerical (#2)	5
5	School Safety Officer	10
6	Center for Youth	6
7	EMMA Neighborhood Association	17
8	East Collaborative Partners/Agencies	6
9	Upper School Administrators	3
10	Social Workers	8
11	Lower School Administrators	3
12	Lower School Counselors	3
13	Beechwood Neighborhood Association	1
14	Upper School Counselors	7
15	Lower School Scholars (#1)	13
16	Lower School Scholars (#2)	14

17	Lower School Scholars (#3)	12
18	Lower School Teachers (#1)	14
19	Open Session for Parents/Community	11
20	Lower School Teachers (#2)	11
21	Upper School Teachers (#1)	4
22	Upper School Scholars (#1)	13
23	FACE Committee (i.e. CET Team)	22
24	Upper School Teachers (#2)	5
25	Upper School Scholars (#2)	11
(26)	Parent/Families (Phone interviews)	33

A total of 25 focus groups were conducted with a total of 216 participants. Focus groups were conducted based upon the aforementioned identified stakeholder groups. Phone interview calls (discussed below) were also made to parents/family members, with a total of 150 calls and conversations with 33 families.

Family phone interviews.

At any given time, there are multiple competing demands placed upon stakeholders in education, particularly for parents/families. In order to respond to competing time commitments of stakeholders, and to be culturally responsive to the needs and demands of parents/families, the CSNA team implemented a strategy of individual phone calls to solicit input from East parents/families. The CSNA team decided that this process would be easier on families' time while also enabling more total family input. However, parents/families did also participate in the Focus Group #19 and #23 (see table above).

The Community Coordinator developed a system for randomizing family phone numbers based upon grade, so all grades 6-12 received equal representation and a random assortment of families called. Responses from the calls were recorded anonymously, unless the parent/family member volunteered their identity. Phone interviews were conducted by most members of the CSNA team following a similar protocol used for in-person focus groups (Appendix D). A total of 150 phone calls were made, 33 of which were successfully completed as feedback and included as part of the analysis of this needs assessment.

Data Analysis

Each focus group and interview was analyzed and coded by the Community Coordinator, with additional assistance provided by University of Rochester Warner School of Education faculty and CSNA team members Dr. Nahoko Kawakyu O'Connor and Dr. Joanne Larson. A Google Document shared with the CSNA team housed emerging themes and trends from the data. A "first sweep" of data coded the focus groups nearly line-by-line. A "second sweep" organized specific data points around emergent themes. For example, a theme of "collaborative partners, programs, and supports" was identified as a commonly cited strength/asset of East. Within that theme lay specific data from focus groups, such as "East offers lots of wrap-around support for scholars (Focus Group 16)" or "East has lots of on-site programs (Focus Group 12)." These themes (explored later in the findings sections) became the conceptual frameworks through which the CSNA team considered the findings.

However, the entire CSNA team contributed to the data analysis as well. The largest agenda item for most meetings was for CSNA team members to share relevant findings from the notes recorded during focus groups and parent/family phone calls. The findings CSNA team members shared were recorded in meeting minutes and used to inform both this report and the Google Document housing the thematic data analysis.

Strengths and Limitations

There were several strengths and limitations throughout the needs assessment process. Some of these strengths and limitations were anticipated and, therefore, able to be leveraged or mitigated while others were only apparent during later stages of the process. This section should be used to assist in the planning of future needs assessments, whether at East or elsewhere.

The first major strength of this process was the use of multiple data sources, including qualitative and quantitative data that were collected and analyzed. Quantitative data allowed for investigation into trends and included a wider sample, while qualitative data allowed for stakeholders to provide a more in-depth account of their experiences and perceptions to be shared. In particular, focus groups allowed the inclusion of participants whose voice may often not be heard, and they provided a space for reflection and dialogue within a small group. Efforts at developing relationships with different stakeholders increased participation in the needs assessment process and further strengthened coalition building among different constituents. The result of this mixed-methods, participatory approach that emphasized inclusion was a comprehensive attempt to authentically understand strengths and needs from a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

A second major strength of the process was that all CSNA team members were responsible for reviewing the focus group notes and providing analysis at bi-weekly meetings. The notes from these meetings were further included in the analysis and identification of major findings and recommendations. This process was a collective process where CSNA team members were involved in forming needs assessment questions, identifying stakeholders, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting results, and identifying related recommendations.

A third strength of the needs assessment process were the members of the CSNA team. In particular, the leadership of the Community Coordinator, who kept all the documents, protocols, and notes organized and accessible to all members of the CSNA team, also kept the team accountable for keeping to the timeline and coordinating the schedules for all the focus groups and bi-weekly meetings. In addition, CSNA team's parent/family and community representatives were highly passionate about the project, consistently attending meetings and being prepared with materials.

Lastly, a strength of the process was the types of relationships and structures East already had in place that allowed for data collection with certain stakeholder groups to occur. For example, East's inter- and intradepartmental planning meetings made it simple to solicit feedback from Lower School teachers. Additionally, relationships with neighborhood associations and collaborative partners and agencies made it relatively simple to solicit feedback about East's performance because participants seemed used to being approached for input.

However, there were also a number of limitations. While the needs assessment process followed a rigorous schedule and succeeded in including many new perspectives and increased participation from different stakeholders, the process could have been strengthened with even further participation from parents, scholars, and Upper School teachers. All three constituent groups are large, diverse, and important, and the stakeholders who participated in the needs assessment were largely represented by school staff. For a number of reasons, including the time constraints of teachers and an imperfect contact system with parents/families, the aforementioned three constituent groups were the most difficult to schedule focus groups with. On a similar note, the CSNA team would have been enhanced with greater scholar and teacher representation. While parent/family and community representation was excellent, there were times when more scholar and teacher voice on the team would have been valuable.

Another limitation could be the design of the out-of-school/community strengths/assets and barriers/challenges questions asked during focus groups and phone interviews. While the intent of the focus group design was to not overwhelm participants with too many questions and was to provide participants with a genuine platform for sharing their perspective, the general nature of the focus group questions also resulted in some general responses of strengths and barriers that were at times challenging to interpret. Participants' responses to the aforementioned questions about out-of-school/community strengths and barriers were often vague and required considerable prompting.

Lastly, while the flexibility of the focus group protocol was seen as a strength, time and logistical constraints also prevented the poster protocol from being implemented in every focus group. Focus groups are useful for creating a safe space for participants to authentically share their voice. However, they do not work as well when rushed for time or with too many or too few participants. Given the time constraints of this entire needs assessment process, it was not always possible to reschedule a focus group in order to facilitate the focus group under optimal circumstances.

Despite these limitations, the CSNA team balanced considerations of the stakeholders' time, input, and feasibility of completing the study. A potential approach to increase participation by families and scholars may be to recruit more family groups to participate, or attend sporting events where parents are present and potentially willing to provide input through informal conversations.

Key Participants

The CSNA team consisted of people responsible for implementing the NCCS needs assessment toolkit and for working collaboratively throughout the needs assessment process. Team members were approached due to their knowledge of the school and the community, and because their work is related to community schooling. In addition, most team members were approached for their unique voice, meaning they did not already sit on East's Community Engagement Team (i.e. FACE Committee). The CSNA team met eleven times at East between July and December for at least one hour per meeting.

After approaching several stakeholders, the following people agreed to be a member of East's Community School Needs Assessment team.

Table 9: Community School Needs Assessment Team Members

Name	Role
Jason Taylor	Community Coordinator, Chair
Angel Alicea	Home-School Assistant
Maya Crane	Connected Communities
Sarah Dickinson	Center for Youth, Agency Coordinator
Shaquana Divers	Parent
Julie Garcia	Parent
Christine Gervais	Parent
Natasha Green	Parent
Daniel Hart	Upper School Teacher
Nahoko Kawakyu-O'Connor	University of Rochester
Joanne Larson	University of Rochester
Marsha Peone	Community Member
Vanessa Santiago	Connected Communities
Tammy Tuttobene	Senior School Secretary
Lorna Washington	Special Assistant to East EPO Superintendent
Catherine Wilson	Parent

Project Management

At the start of the project, a timeline was set to guide the needs assessment process. The timeline was then presented to the CSNA team for feedback before coming to a consensus on the feasibility and commitment to the project. This timeline guided the needs assessment process and kept the CSNA team accountable towards deadlines.

Timeline

Table 9: Timeline for Needs Assessment Fall 2018

July 2018	Assemble Needs Assessment data and materials Organize Needs Assessment Team
July 2018 August 2018	Kick Off Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What is a community school · Purpose of the needs assessment · Operational clarity · Overview of timeline · Review data · Input for focus group, interviews, and recruitment · Who else is missing from team?
August 2018	Focus Group: Clerical Staff (2) Focus Group: Custodial Staff (2) Focus Group: School Resource Officers (2)
	Analyze FG data
September 2018	Focus Group: Parents (as many as possible) Focus Group: Neighborhood Residents (2) Focus Group: Community Partners (2) Focus Group: Administration (1)
	Analyze FG data
October 2018	Focus Group: Parents (as many as possible) Focus Group: Scholars (2 LS + 2 US) Focus Group: Teachers (2 LS + 2 US) Focus Group: Teacher Leaders (1)
	Analyze FG data

November 2018	Analyze Data Conduct key informant interviews
December 11, 2018	Draft report Due
December 14, 2018	Report Due · Presentation with Executive Team

Findings

The findings from this needs assessment are based on a combination of the Community School Needs Assessment (CSNA) team’s archival data analysis as well participant responses in focus groups and phone interviews. A list of findings is located in the appendix (Appendix E), but key findings are outlined below. Findings are primarily organized around the main questions asked during focus groups: (1) what strengths/assets exist at East, (2) what barriers/challenges exist at East and what can we do about them, (3) what strengths/assets exist in the surrounding community, (4) what barriers/challenges exist in the surrounding community and what can we do about them? Findings are presented in four ways: the top three key findings from each category, thematic findings from each category, additional findings that fell outside of each of the categories, “big picture” conceptual tensions that arose from participants.

Key Findings

These key findings are the most salient findings from this needs assessment. The key findings are organized around the main four categorical questions asked during focus groups and phone interviews. These findings were the ones brought up the most often, by sheer quantity, by participants.

Finding 1: What strengths/assets exist at East?

Collaborative partners, programs, and supports

- Almost 100% of focus groups cited as assets the opportunities East provides through different collaborative partners, programs. Responses included “wrap-around support,” “service providers/collaborative partners,” “CTE programs,” and “support staff.” Specifically, responses cited such supports as the dental and health clinic, social workers, and culinary and optics pathways.

Staff is strong and supportive

- Over half of focus groups cited as assets staff at East. Responses included that “staff are ‘all in,’” that “staff go above and beyond,” that “staff are loving and caring,” and that “staff go out of their way” for scholars. Specifically, responses indicated that staff genuinely care about and do their best to support scholars and that staff work well with each other as an “East family.”

Focus on relationships

- A little less than half of focus groups cited as an asset East’s focus on relationship building. Responses included that East is “more trauma focused,” has an “emphasis on relationship building,” follows “restorative practices,” and that “family groups helps to get to know one another.” Specifically, responses indicated that the focus on relationship building helped support scholars’ social-emotional needs and that it positively contributes to East’s culture and climate.

Finding 2: What challenges/barriers exist at East?

Internal and external communication

- Over half of focus groups cited communication as a barrier or challenge at East. Responses included that there's a "lack of understanding of services provided," that it's "difficult to communicate all Upper and Lower School opportunities," that "a better communication system with parents is needed," and that "there's a need to share stories." Specifically, responses indicated broadly that communication could be improved, pointing both to potential systemic improvements in light of extraordinary amount of information, and to improving understandings of the realities of scholars' lives and the work of teaching and learning.

School-family relations

- Over half of focus groups cited school-family relations as an area of improvement at East. Responses included a "need to get more parents involved," a "need to hear more parent voice," that "contacting parents is difficult," and that more can be done to "help families navigate the school system." Specifically, responses varied between seeing parents as an asset, as a deficit, or some combination of both. Responses straddled between the school needing to do more to involve parents/families who seemingly don't want to be involved, and the school needing to do more to enable parents who seemingly do want to be involved to be able to share their voice. Ultimately, all responses agreed that more parent participation is beneficial because "everything starts at home."

Restorative practice refinement

- Almost half of focus groups cited the need to refine restorative practices. Responses indicated a need to "close the loop on the restorative process," to have more "trauma informed education," to have "better follow through on discipline," and to have a "better disciplinary structure." As mentioned, responses indicated that restorative practices and the focus on relationship building at East are assets. However, responses also indicated a need to refine restorative practices, particularly for making everyone aware of what it means to be in a restorative school and for teachers to have proper closure over scholar misbehavior.

Finding 3: What strengths/assets exist in the surrounding community?

Local neighborhood

- Around half of focus groups cited local neighborhood associations, businesses, and organizations as community assets. Responses included that "neighborhood associations support the community," that "local businesses want to help East," that "the local community supports East," and that "local neighborhoods are

safe.” Specifically, responses indicated strong positivity in the surrounding communities local to East.

Recreation Centers

- Around half of focus groups cited recreation centers as an asset in the surrounding community. Responses included that “recreation centers are a safe space” and that recreation centers support “engaging after school programming.” Specifically, responses indicated that recreation centers are a safe space for students.

Interest and Positivity around East’s success

- Almost half of focus groups cited a renewed interest, positivity, or optimism in wanting East to succeed as a community asset. Responses included that “people want East to succeed,” that there is “pride in East,” and that there is “renewed positivity and solidarity” surrounding East. Specifically, responses indicated that East has a history of negative stereotypes but that things have turned around since the start of the EPO.

Finding 4: What challenges/barriers exist in the surrounding community?

Poverty, violence, trauma, access to affordable housing, incarceration, substance abuse

- 100% of focus groups cited some combination of negative or unhealthy systemic, communal, or individual issues as a barrier to healthy scholar learning and development. The CSNA team made the decision to combine all of these individual examples into a larger category, one that is correlative if not causative with deep segments of poverty and segregation in Rochester. Responses included “scholars having to work to support family,” “parents having to work multiple jobs,” “violence, gangs, and safety,” and “poverty and underemployment.” Specifically, one focus group participant succinctly noted that, “our scholars are tackling the challenges of the city.”

Transportation

- Around half of focus groups cited transportation as a community barrier to East scholars and families. Responses included that “transportation to and from school takes too long,” that “it’s hard for scholars who live too close or too far to get home,” that transportation is “inflexible,” and that “transportation can be scary,” for scholars. Specifically, responses indicated that transportation to and from school for scholars who live far from East and, ironically, too close to East (because students who live less than a mile and a half from school are not provided a bus) can be a barrier, in addition to lack of access to reliable transportation for families who do not have a car.

Need for more community connections

- Around half of focus groups cited a need for more connections and opportunities between East and the community. Responses included “East needs better community connections,” “more community connections are needed for scholar

service opportunities,” “East needs to be more of a community gathering place,” and “there needs to be more work-based learning or employment opportunities for scholars.” As mentioned, the number of collaborative partners, programs, and supports that East has was identified as an asset, in addition to the local community being cited as an asset. However, these responses urging for more community connections indicate a need for East’s presence in the community to be more visible, and for specific work-based and service-based opportunities to be created.

Thematic Findings

The thematic findings are the full list of findings organized around the four main categorical questions asked during focus groups and phone interviews. These themes emerged from the coding portion of the data analysis. The findings are organized in order from most commonly cited to least commonly cited.

Table 11: East Strength, Assets, Barriers, and Challenges

East Strengths and Assets	East Barriers and Challenges
Collaborative partners, programs and supports	Internal & external communication
Staff is strong and supportive	School-family relationships
Focus on relationships	Restorative practice refinement
Athletics	Students who are disruptive
Family group	Low academic rigor/preparedness
Low student-to-staff ratio	Need to understand scholar’s out-of-school lives
University of Rochester partnership	Bad school food

Table 12: Community Strengths, Assets, Barriers, and Challenges

Community Strengths and Assets	Community Barriers and Challenges
Local and surrounding community	Poverty, violence, trauma, access to affordable housing, incarceration, substance abuse

Recreation centers	Transportation
Interest and positivity around East's success	Need for increased community connections
East alumni	Low neighborhood enrollment at East

Additional Findings

In addition to the strengths/assets and barriers/challenges identified above, several other findings emerged that did not fit neatly into one of the aforementioned categories, including:

Benefit and need of sharing stories

- The desire to increase sharing stories about people's lives was included in around a third of focus groups. These stories were specific to stories about people, with the suggestion to provide a rich description of different daily lives to increase understanding for a wider audience. For example, some of the stories that were suggested included stories about scholars' resiliency, daily life stories, stories behind scholars' absenteeism, stories about families supporting their scholars, and stories about the different things that East staff do to support scholars' success.

Need for rigorous curriculum, academic preparedness, and high expectations

- About a third of focus groups mentioned the need for a rigorous curriculum to help prepare scholars beyond high school, but experiences and level of exposure to the current curriculum varied. Among the comments related to curriculum included the need to hold scholars to high expectations and high standards, holding scholars accountable for their work, understanding the process of learning from mistakes scholars make, and reviewing and receiving feedback on homework assignments. While participants did cite that East's curriculum has gotten more rigorous over time, there was still an expressed need to have scholars prepared not just for meeting minimum graduation requirements but actually being prepared for college or the world of work.

Alternative paths for scholars

- Several focus groups also identified the need for more trade/vocational training programs and robust alternative pathways for scholar success. While an increased college-going culture at East was seen as a benefit, some stakeholders believed that, for some scholars, having more alternative options could be hugely useful, particularly with the high demand for skilled trades.

Mentoring

- Mentoring was another theme that emerged from the focus groups. Stakeholders who identified mentoring as a need indicated that scholars could benefit from more mentoring to support school-to-home and home-to-school transitions, and

some inquired about the potential for engaging alumni and local elders in mentoring scholars.

Conceptual Tensions

Several notable conceptual tensions also arose from the focus groups. These tensions highlight various large and complex systems of thinking. These tensions do not necessarily prove right or wrong but instead prove the existence of perspectival differences. School leaders and decision makers should note these tensions when making policy decisions.

Tension between “kids who don’t care” and “kids who can’t care”

- A number of focus groups brought up the notion of there being scholars who, for whatever reason, are simply disaffected by and uninterested in the educational system--in other words, these scholars “don’t care” about school. However, this group of scholars was different than another group which “cannot afford to care” about school because of more pressing, immediate needs (e.g. poverty, housing, trauma, etc.). It was interpreted that the latter group may become the former if their needs go unmet for a prolonged period of time. Participants struggled to articulate the ways in which resources are or should be distributed to both of these perceived groups of scholars.

Tension between holding scholars accountable and supporting scholars

- Related to the previous tension, a number of focus groups brought up a tension between the amount of “hand-holding” or support offered to and needed by scholars. Participants simultaneously suggested that East’s scholars need a variety of supports to succeed so that they can overcome systemic barriers, yet participants also cited a need to hold scholars accountable so that they do not become reliant upon others. This tension came up in respect to access of East’s programs and services in addition to restorative practices and the disciplinary process. It was unclear where the line should be drawn between support and accountability.

Tension between family involvement as deficit vs. family involvement as asset

- Family involvement was mentioned in almost every focus group. All focus groups agreed that family involvement was important, but a tension existed in the perception of family involvement. Some focus groups viewed family involvement at East as a deficit, such as “parents are uninvolved in school” or “parents are uninvolved in their child’s education.” Other focus groups viewed family involvement at East more expansively, such as wondering how the successes at East could have been made without the involvement of families. It was interpreted that a tension exists with how family involvement is conceived, and that a “chicken vs. egg” scenario exists between whether families are not involved because they do not care or because East does not offer the right vehicles through

which families can make their involvement noticeable. Additionally, participants noted a tension between when families should be held accountable versus East being held accountable.

Tension between in-school messages vs. out-of-school messages

- Several focus groups brought up a tension between the messages scholars receive in school as compared to out of school. Focus groups noted that scholars are receiving the right messages in school, such as with restorative practices and healthy studying and living habits. However, these messages may contradict what scholars receive outside of school, such messages that reinforce revenge or retribution as an appropriate response to disagreement, or communities reinforcing violence and drugs as opposed to studying.

The above sections highlighted the major findings from the diverse and wide-ranging stakeholder engagement in the needs assessment focus groups. These findings emerged from thematic coding and recurrences in the data. Not every data point was referenced, although there is high confidence that the above findings reflect the most salient and frequent perspectives of focus group participants. The next section of this report presents recommendations related to the key findings.

Recommendations

The needs assessment process brought to light many possible recommendations for improving East by leveraging the community school strategy. Sometimes recommendations were explicitly made by participants during focus groups (e.g. “I think transportation’s a barrier for scholars. I think there should be a designated late bus that scholars can ride to school if they miss their first bus”). Other times, recommendations were intuited by the needs assessment team through the data analysis (e.g. “Transportation has come up as a barrier a number of times. Maybe a partnership with University of Rochester shuttles can be forged to transport scholars in need”).

As noted in the methods and findings sections, the research was conducted and analyzed along four main questions: (1) what strengths/assets exist at East, (2) what barriers/challenges exist at East and what can we do about them, (3) what strengths/assets exist in the surrounding community, (4) what barriers/challenges exist in the surrounding community and what can we do about them? In making recommendations, the CSNA team chose to focus attention on the most cited barriers/challenges, either at East or in the community, by focus group participants. This resulted in the following most salient categories that focus group participants cited as challenges, and, therefore, opportunities for improvement:

- Improve communication and sharing stories
- Build school-family relations
- Expand community connections
- Refine restorative practices
- Increase academic rigor and accountability
- Explore transportation alternatives
- Acknowledge systemic barriers and social inequalities

The following sections expand on these categories and propose recommendations for them. Recommendations are just that; they are not meant as prescriptive fix-alls but opportunities to pursue collaborative leadership and accountability around a specific, shared purpose in order to help remove barriers to scholar learning and development.

Recommendation 1: Improve Communication and Sharing Stories

Communication was cited as a barrier or area of improvement in the majority of focus groups. It was broadly defined as an issue. At times participants cited miscommunication or a lack of communication within East regarding which programs and services are offered and which person leads which initiatives. Other times it was cited as a barrier the school’s ability to contact parents/family members through phone numbers, emails, and addresses that are often not working or incorrect. There was a sense by most focus group participants that there were many

services, resources, and supports that scholars and families could tap into, but staff, scholars, and parents/families may be unsure of what the resources are and how to access them.

The difficulty with this category is knowing when some suggestions are themselves the result of communication issues or whether some suggestions highlight real needs. For example, some focus group participants suggested that East needs more vocational training opportunities for scholars. Yet East has long-standing and unique career pathway programs, including training in culinary arts, information technology, biomedical & laboratory sciences, optics, vision care, and teaching and learning. It was sometimes difficult to determine whether focus group participants were unaware of existing resources or whether they thought additional resources were needed on top of what is already in place.

Another noteworthy component of improving communication was the desired need to “share stories.” In several focus groups participants commonly cited a need to share stories albeit for different reasons, including “share stories of everything East does to support scholars,” “share stories of scholar resiliency,” “share stories to show various reasons for non-attendance,” “share stories about what everyday life is like,” and, ultimately, to “share stories for understanding.” The needs assessment team made the decision to link these two general categories together with the idea that sharing stories would improve communication.

What follows are recommendations for improving communication and the sharing of stories:

A.) Establish a central clearing house of information for each stakeholder group.

There lacks one central and mutually recognized “clearing house” for scholars, staff, families, and community members to access information. Appropriate and timely access to information is so broad and circumstantial that there is no simple solution, but there could be recognized “clearing houses” for each group to reference. The purpose of these clearing houses would be to establish the mentality that if an individual has a question, they would reliably go to the same first spot to get an answer. For example, the following clearing houses could be established for their respective stakeholders:

- Scholars - teacher webpages
- Staff - Shared “team drive” in Google Drive
- Families - East webpage
- Community - East webpage

It is easy for communication breakdowns to become a “catch-22.” For example, teachers may not use their webpages because they feel like no one checks them, and scholars may not check their teachers’ webpages because they feel like they do not update them. It is important to re-establish trust to break these catch-22 scenarios, and that can start by the “gate-keepers” of the aforementioned “clearing houses” keeping them up to date, and by leaders creating expectations for stakeholder groups to use said clearing houses.

B.) More fully leverage existing internal communication assets.

East has useful means of internal communication through morning announcements, the Eagle Eye (i.e. the school's weekly morning show that is commonly shown in family group), and the Eagle Express (i.e. the school's monthly newspaper published by scholars in Journalism class). However, these systems could be improved.

- **Announcements.** Announcements are used to deliver important school-wide information for a common audience. However, the morning announcements are difficult to hear because of both technical and social reasons. Some classroom and hallway speakers do not play the announcements loud enough to hear. Also, perhaps because of this, many students and classrooms do not pay attention to the announcements, especially in the hallways. When the announcements come on they should be audible and there should exist a common and serious expectation to listen to them.
- **Eagle Eye.** The Eagle Eye report is a weekly news-style report currently filmed with Upper School scholars for an Upper School audience. The report is commonly shown in Upper School family groups, but all reports are also publicly archived on East's YouTube channel. However, it is unclear whether all family groups watch the report to learn important school information. There should exist a common expectation for faculty, staff, scholars, and parents/families to watch to the Eagle Eye once a week. There's also room for improvement on expanding the Eagle Eye to the Lower School and including parent/family and community voice.
- **Eagle Express.** The Eagle Express is a monthly newspaper published by scholars in Journalism class. These scholars act as journalists, interviewing and writing about important happenings at East. There's room to improve promotion of the Eagle Express' physical and electronic copies to everyone, in addition to encouraging scholar-writers to interview parents/families and local community members, too.

All three of these internal assets have promise but could be improved. If morning announcements are listened to, the Eagle Eye is watched, and the Eagle Express is read, then internal communication should increase.

C.) More fully leverage existing external communication assets.

East also has useful means of external communication through its calendar, social media, and ParentCONNECT. However, these systems could be improved.

- **Calendar(s).** East has several calendars on its website. There is a general calendar linked through the main page. Then there is a calendar specific to parents/community members linked through the parents webpages. Then there is an upcoming events calendar on the sidebar of the main page. All three of these systems should be in communication with each other when possible, showing the same information. If possible, these calendars should be able to be filtered by

event type, such as athletics, parent workshop, or holiday break. In addition, these calendars should have the option of synchronizing with East's social media sites to blast an upcoming event reminder. Currently, there is no public "master calendar" that acts as a reliable "clearing house" of information through the East website.

- ***Social Media.*** East has a YouTube account called "East Upper and Lower Schools," a Facebook account called "East High School" and a Twitter account called "@EastEPO." All of these sites are updated frequently, but it is unclear how often they are accessed. If possible, the handles of each of these accounts should be the same. In addition, the handles of these sites should be printed on school information, and they should be linked with other forms of electronic communication, such as the calendar, and advertised through internal communication like the Eagle Eye and Eagle Express.
- ***ParentCONNECTxp.*** ParentCONNECTxp is a web-based application from Pearson that allows parents/families to access timely school information about their scholar's academic progress, such as attendance, grades, and upcoming assignments. The Rochester City School District uses the application, in addition to a suite of other Pearson applications that link information. However, parents/families have cited inaccuracies within the system, such as scholars appearing absent when they are present, and inconsistencies within the system, such as some teachers updating grades and assignments more than others. A team should be organized to work collaboratively with the Rochester City School District in understanding exactly how ParentCONNECT operates and which systems can be tweaked within it. If working well, ParentCONNECT can act as an aforementioned "clearing house" of information for parents/families. Yet as it stands, it may be the case that ParentCONNECT is a system that school staff tell families to sign up for with flippancy without truly understanding the ways in which the information that ParentCONNECT communicates to parents/families is useful or not.

D.) Designate a communications point person or committee.

Given the dynamic nature in which East is situated (e.g. a Lower School, an Upper School, an EPO, within the RCSD, part of the NYSED, etc.), given the breadth of services and supports provided by East (e.g. social workers, agencies, regents preparation, athletics, community events, etc.), and given the varied means through which information must be transmitted in culturally responsive, accessible, and relevant ways (e.g. translations, social media, automated calls, newsletters, webpages, etc.) it would be advantageous to designate at least a temporary communications point person or, preferably, establish a communications committee. The communications committee would be responsible for reviewing East's communications assets and policies, making

recommendations to improve communication and align systems, and “propagandizing” services and events.

E.) Break down silos of internal misunderstanding.

A common theme during focus groups was specific stakeholder groups showing confusion--or interest--about what other groups of stakeholders do. East should host departmental showcases, produce “a day in the life videos,” or create cross departmental support teams, similar to adult family groups. These should be inclusive of all departments, not just academic teaching departments. For example, the custodial team should know what collaborative partners and service providers exist in the building, clerical staff should know what kinds of teaching and learning are happening in the classrooms they support, and teachers should know what a daily routine is like for the school safety officers they rely on. The CSNA team got the impression that each stakeholder group only knew a specific highlight of other stakeholder groups’ roles and responsibilities within the East community. Given East’s focus on relationship building, each staff or faculty member acts as an important conduit of information for each scholar. Gaining understanding of what other colleagues do would increase communication and be an effort at sharing stories.

F.) Refine method to collect and store parent/family contact information.

Several focus groups cited difficulty in contacting parents/families via phone, email, or even at physical addresses. The CSNA encountered this difficulty too when attempting to connect with families for phone-based interviews. Currently, updated family contact information is housed in PowerSchool, a district application. When parents/families give school personnel their contact information, that information should be correlated with the information in PowerSchool and updated as necessary. Also, parents/families should be incentivized, ideally eventually out of habit, to inform the school whenever their contact information changes.

G.) Bring back the “Purple Locker.”

East has a conspicuous and unused purple locker outside of D132. The locker was once used to anonymously submit accusations of bullying. In an effort to share stories, the locker could be revitalized as an anonymous way for staff, scholars, or families to share stories to be read on the announcements, performed on the Eagle Eye, or published in the Eagle Express.

H.) Explore collaboration with UR CUES for “Story Telling.”

As part of exchanging information and communicating with one another, oral storytelling was considered a useful medium to increase understanding of resources available in and around school, and to increase access to programs and services for families and scholars.

Recruiting scholars, families, and community partners to be part of the storytelling while respecting individuals' privacies can be powerful ways of sharing information with peers. The University of Rochester's Center for Urban Education Success may be an appropriate partner for developing high quality story-driven content that communicates the realities of teaching, learning, and living in urban education.

Recommendation 2: Build School-Family Relations

Multiple focus groups noted the important role parents/families play in their scholars' successes. Interestingly, the perspective on family engagement ranged from very positive by administrators, teachers, scholars, and parents, to some negative perceptions that families are uninvolved, whether due to competing commitments or due to lack of knowledge on how to be involved. Some attributed East's trend towards success mentioned earlier in Section 1 of this report to families supporting their scholars and reinforcing the values of effort and learning at home. Teachers mentioned positive relationships and open communication with families while others felt that some teachers and staff needed a better understanding of scholars' and families' cultural backgrounds, out-of-school, and work lives.

While this category emphasizes the continued development of relationships between families and school with a focus on students' academic success, themes around providing services to family also emerged from the data. Some of the recommendations listed in increased communication (recommendation 1) and increased awareness of rigorous academic curriculum, instruction, and learning (recommendation 5) overlap with building school-family relations.

A.) Expand the definition of family engagement, and create mechanisms to support engagement.

Family engagement is traditionally assessed through event-based engagement, such as the number of parents/families in attendance at scholar-family-teacher conferences; however, there are many other ways in which families can demonstrate engagement with the school. In addition to staying abreast of their scholars' academic progress, an expanded definition of family engagement recognizes the support that families with competing time commitments can provide to scholars at home. Suggestions for expanding the definition of engagement and creating mechanisms to support engagement may look like this:

- Encourage conversations about what scholars learn at school through provided question prompts
- Refine school-family communication, including sharing data
- Raise awareness of programs and services
- Continue to solicit family input through volunteering
- Provide easy mechanisms for parent volunteers including "one and done" volunteer opportunities
- Involving families to participate in restorative practices
- Recognize family engagement at athletic events, award ceremonies, IEP meetings, standing committees, and even when picking up a scholar for early dismissal

B.) Increase social events that bring families together, such as family fun nights.

While many parents and family members attend events at school related to their scholars' school life, such as scholar-family-teacher conferences, scholar performances, and athletic events, suggestions were made to host family fun nights during which families can enjoy each other and socialize with other families who have scholars at East. Several participants cited events East held in the past, which were similar to open houses and had on-site music, barbers, and games. Further event ideas can be generated from parents/families and scholars. Events that are not directly related to scholars' academic, musical, or athletic performances can then increase the reach to invite families to come to the school building for academic events and can be a catalyst for developing new, and progress existing, relationships.

C.) Provide and increase access to services for adults.

Focus group data showed that there may be a need for similar services to adults and family members that scholars have access to through East. Some examples of increased access and services included adult education, workforce development, social-emotional learning, 7 Habits, restorative practices, mental health counseling, physical and other health care needs, and CPR and basic first aid training. Effort should be made to determine which of the aforementioned services can be made accessible to families.

Recommendation 3: Expand Community Connections

Around half of focus groups cited a need for East to have more connections with the community. Some groups cited a desire for more local scholar service and employment opportunities. Others cited a need to improve the perception of East's community involvement, with one participant noting that "I can see where the community's come into East, but I don't see where East's gone into the community." Others noted a need for East to serve as a fully realized community gathering place. Still others noted a need for East to leverage connections with alumni.

A.) Increase scholar community service opportunities and a service-going culture.

Civic engagement is an important educational output. Not only do all scholars have to complete 20 community service hours as a condition of graduation in 12th grade Participation in Government class, but volunteering offers scholars another way to network, learn, and grow through exposure and engagement. Several focus groups lamented a societal shift towards a decrease in sense of and respect for community. Currently, there is no systematized mechanism for scholars to engage in community service. There may be opportunity for East to create a service-going culture by hosting biannual days of service around Homecoming Week in the Fall and the city's Clean Sweep in the Spring. Additionally, an asset mapping of the geographic area surrounding

the school could be created in collaboration with neighborhood associations, scholars, and parents/families to highlight local volunteer and employment opportunities. Lastly, partnerships could be established with local elementary schools, such as School #33, and the EMMA, Beechwood, and North Winton Village neighborhood associations to create service opportunities for East scholars.

B.) Connect with local employers.

A number of focus groups, notably from Upper School scholars, cited a need for more employment opportunities. A handbook could be made by East's work-based learning team that highlights partnerships with employers. A job board could be created in an accessible location with updated postings of employment opportunities. Lastly, new partnerships could be established with local organizations, such as Browncroft Garage or Habitat for Humanity, in an effort to get scholars employment or work-based learning opportunities.

C.) Designate an alumni coordinator or committee to connect with alumni.

Several focus groups cited a desire for more connections with East alumni, which has also been an ongoing archival suggestion. As an old school with a rich history, East has over 50 years worth of alumni groups. These alumni groups are mostly self-directed on social media and have no formal connection with East. An individual or a committee should be charged with creating an East alumni portal/program that solicits alumni contact information, spreads information about current happenings at East, and invites alumni to donate or volunteer in support of East. Once this programmatic infrastructure is in place, alumni can be invited to and recognized at school events such as homecoming and holiday concerts, they can be video interviewed for five minutes to create an encouraging video for scholars to watch on the weekly Eagle Eye, they can be mobilized to mentor scholars, and the resultant social capital from relationships with alumni would trickle down to more employment opportunities to scholars.

D.) Establish East as a true community center.

The desire for East's facility to be made more accessible to parent/family and community member use came up in a number of focus groups. Related to this, several parents/families and community members cited calling East to inquire when and if they could use some of its facilities (e.g. the pool), but the staff members they talked with reportedly did not have the answers. Indeed, in some staff focus groups staff corroborated this information. First, the hours of and processes for using East facilities should be understood by all staff, and that information should be posted accessibly on the East webpage. Second, those hours and processes should be reviewed to determine if they should be expanded. Policies should be set forth for at least each of the following areas: pool, gym, weight room, track, tennis courts, auditorium, and computer lab. Also, as cited

in building school-family relations (recommendation 2), East's services, such as the health center and vision care program, should be reviewed to determine if those services can be provided to East parents/families and community members.

E.) Report neighborhood events back to FACE committee.

In order to continue to develop and nurture the relationship between East and the neighborhood associations, it's important that this connection be institutionalized through designating an East staff member responsible for attending monthly meetings at the neighborhood associations, and having that individual briefly share information to and from the association meetings. The goal of this connection is to increase communication and also look for opportunities to collaborate. In addition to attending neighborhood associations, the individual or individuals as part of the community school initiative should have a presence in the neighborhood, including with local businesses.

F.) Develop scholar mentorship opportunities.

Several suggestions for East scholars to act as mentors were brought up as part of the conversation to increase connection in the community. While mentoring has many different components, scholars who are at East EPO can learn how to share best practices for inclusion, mentoring, self-advocacy, and Leader in Me principles to incoming and new scholars at East. In addition to mentoring incoming and new scholars, focus group participants mentioned increasing constructive and healthy social interactions between Lower School scholars and Upper School scholars with the intention to contribute to a stronger community fabric where sense of belonging is increased through healthy social interactions.

Recommendation 4: Refine Restorative Practices

Restorative practices were much discussed in focus groups, but in different ways. As noted in the findings section, participants identified restorative practices as a strength which have built relationships and improved East's culture and climate. On the other hand, participants noted a need to refine restorative practices. Teaching staff in particular noted feeling left out of the restorative process, either because the restorative/disciplinary loop is failing to be closed for them, or because their emotional and relational needs are not being resolved with disruptive scholars. Additionally, there were recommendations to increase understandings of the restorative and disciplinary process both for staff and parents/families.

A.) Increase communication and closure loop on restorative practices.

East has a number of assets that support restorative practices, including professional development, a Code of Conduct linked with restorative justice, parent/family workshops on restorative practices, more on-site social workers and counselors, use of the ACEs

survey, group therapists, and collaborative partners that provide mental health support. All of these examples are foregrounded by a larger effort to reshape the way scholar-scholar and staff-scholar interactions occur. However, it is unclear how all of these systems interact with one another, particularly when the disciplinary/referral process occurs. Participants noted that the “restorative loop isn’t being closed,” including not being invited to participate in restorative circles with disruptive scholars, or even being informed of the result of a disciplinary/referral action. More clarification is needed around what the “restorative loop” is, and policies should be examined to see if they are being fully carried to completion.

B.) Increase support of teaching staff through the restorative process.

Teachers overwhelmingly noted feeling left out of being restoratively supported themselves. Teachers reported sending scholars out of their classrooms for being disruptive only to be sent back to class within the same period, supposedly because scholars had a “restorative conversation” with another staff member. Teachers noted that this process does not consider their needs and the damaged relationship between them and the disruptive scholar. Indeed, many said that they have had to go out of their way to schedule a restorative circle with a scholar and moderating staff member, feeling as if they should not have to advocate out of their way for basic relational needs. Teachers also reported difficulty with the accumulated stresses of the job, including having to try to teach recidivistically misbehaving scholars. Related to this point and East’s “all in...all the time culture,” the 7 Habits phrase “sharpen the saw” is often used pejoratively, as if participants had adapted to a reality where sharpening the saw is collectively understood to be useful but also collectively understood to be unattainable given the stresses of the job.

C.) Increase understanding of restorative practice for all stakeholders.

All stakeholder groups continue to express confusion over what restorative practices at East specifically look like, including the differences or overlaps between restorative practices, restorative justice, and the disciplinary process. There continues to be debate and confusion over the definitions of restoration, punishment, and consequences. Simple and accessible propagandistic posters or infographics detailing East’s restorative processes should be displayed. Families should be informed about the restorative processes at East and how they can use restorative practices at home. Clear expectations should be made to all staff and scholars about what it means to be in a restorative school. There still exists a notion that staff think about scholars, or that scholars think themselves, that scholars can get away with misbehavior because there are no consequences.

Recommendation 5: Increase academic rigor, relevance, and accountability

Several focus groups, particularly teachers and administrators, cited a possibility to increase academic rigor and raise expectations to more effectively prepare scholars for adulthood. Participants noted that much effort goes into making sure scholars graduate from high school by reaching the minimum graduation requirements, however, participants also commented that the minimum requirements for graduation is literally the minimum, and expectations and preparation for scholars should be higher than that. While participants noted that the curriculum has gotten more rigorous and scholars are being held to higher expectations, there is still a long way to go to ensure that scholars are actually prepared to do college-level work, will be marketable when seeking gainful employment, and are behaving in an appropriate and respectful manner.

A.) Articulate and make transparent what East's curriculum entails.

Schools naturally face a tension in the myriad ways through which instruction and learning can manifest themselves in different ways for different people. Schools also face a tension in how transparent “everyday” classroom learning is made for parents/families and community members. Everyone has an opinion about education and these opinions are often informed from people's own schooling experiences. It is not clear that participants know what an “average” day in a classroom is like at East, and what kind of instruction and learning happens there. This is further complicated by the prevalence of educational jargon. Effort should be made to make transparent and understandable to non-career educators the theories and practices of the teaching and learning happening at East. This should help educators reflect on their own practices and help non-educators understand the realities and needs of teaching and learning at East, which is also related to the need of sharing stories (recommendation 1). Stories should be shared about what it is that teachers actually do to teach. This is particularly important with parents/families and community members who may have been out of school for some time because teaching and learning today may be very different from their own experiences.

B.) Promote a culture that values learning.

Several focus groups cited a perceived deterioration of the value for learning and education at East and throughout society, speculating a general lack of confidence in future career trajectories with a high school diploma. Participants in the focus groups expressed a desire for the school culture to not only focus on social-emotional development but also emphasize the importance of education, learning, and knowledge as powerful tools for increased opportunity. While the achievement goals of grades, passing the Regents, and high school graduation are essential indicators, there is an opportunity for leadership, including instructional staff, families, and community partners, to emphasize the purpose of education and effort beyond these markers and highlight learning itself is inherently relevant and valued.

C.) Hold scholars accountable to higher standards.

Several focus groups across different stakeholder populations expressed a need to raise scholar accountability for higher standards. In particular, one teacher noted that “the single biggest thing we need to do at East is hold scholars accountable to higher standards.” One of the examples included changing the expectation of learning from learning only during school hours to studying and learning after school, and having a shared understanding that homework assignments are expected to be completed. Not only does this continue the learning process at home, but it prepares college-going scholars for the types of habits and dispositions required for success in college. Another example is teaching scholars what it means to study, teaching study skills and habits, and expecting scholars to review academic material outside of class in preparation for major tests and assignments. In addition to raising academic standards, participants expressed a desire for higher standards related to refining restorative practices (recommendation 4); participants desired scholars being held accountable for their behavior, including consistency and transparency, keeping in mind the tension between supporting scholars and coddling scholars.

D.) Reflect on scholar identification of the effects of “disruptive” scholars.

In every scholar focus group scholar participants clearly noted the frustrating and detrimental effects of some of their “disruptive” peers. Archival scholar climate survey data also supports this claim. Without having a clear recommendation, it is worth at least reflecting on this scholar claim and the extent to which the learning environment for some scholars may be lessened by the actions of others. There may be an opportunity to proactively use restorative principles and relationship building to help scholars take accountability over their own actions by seeing how their actions affect others, even if there actions are not specifically physically or verbally targeted towards their peers. Behavior data should be used to identify targeted intervention for scholars who can benefit from preventative and restorative practices in order to support their success while simultaneously creating a conducive learning environment for their peers.

Recommendation 6: Explore transportation alternatives

Interestingly, focus group participants cited transportation as either an asset or a challenge, indicating that the relative merits of transportation is highly situational. However, a theme did emerge with participants across all stakeholder groups as citing transportation difficulties for scholars and parents/families who live far from East and, ironically, very close to East. The Rochester City School District has a school choice policy, meaning students from around the district may enroll in the school of their choice, space willing. The district also has a policy where students who live within a mile and a half of school are not provided a bus and, therefore, are expected to provide personal transportation to school. As a result, students who live very far and very close to school may have either long or unsafe or uncomfortable

commutes. School staff spoke about the difficulties of having scholars stay after because of transportation issues, particularly Lower School scholars who would be forced to take a potentially intimidating city bus back home as opposed to their normal yellow school bus. Some participants also indicated that some parents choose for their child to attend a school farther from their home so that they can use the transportation system provided by the RCSD rather than having their child walk through potentially unsafe neighborhoods.

It may be worth looking into alternative transportation options for students who miss their first bus or have to stay after for school. Alternative options should be explored through a partnership with Uber or Lyft. Vetted parents/families or community members could be employed and tasked with transporting scholars. Alternatively, a partnership could be explored with the University of Rochester's shuttle service.

For scholars who live close to the school, there should exist an on-site scooter or bike program. R Community Bikes is a local nonprofit that receives, fixes, and distributes used bikes to the community, mostly for free. The organization also has several satellite locations, notably at 441 Ministries in the Beechwood neighborhood. A partnership could be established with this satellite location to secure transportation options for scholars who live local to the school. Alternatively, this satellite location could be relocated to East, where space would allow the bikes to be serviced year round, since the satellite location does not service throughout the Winter months. Scholars could be taught how to care for the bikes, and they could hire them out to cycle to and from school. This service could also be open to the general community, increasing East's presence as a community gathering place (recommendation 3).

Recommendation 7: Acknowledge systemic barriers and social inequality

When asked “what barriers/challenges exist in the surrounding community,” nearly all focus groups overwhelming and unequivocally cited a variety of societal/systemic barriers, including poverty, violence, trauma, lack of affordable housing, parents having to work multiple jobs, scholars having to work to support their family or baby sit younger siblings, family incarceration, substance abuse, and unsafe neighborhoods. Indeed, when one focus group participant was pushed for more details in response to this question, the participant succinctly stated, “I thought these problems were self-evident in our community.” Another focus group participant noted, “Our scholars are tackling the problems of the city.”

It is the opinion of the authors of this report, and the CSNA team, that those two lines capture the essence of the challenges and problems that exist in so many urban educational environments: Students must take on a disproportionate amount of overwhelming challenges that they did not create, and society at large has become complacent with the existence of those challenges. Without the recognition of the systematic and systemic inequities that exist through creating conditions of poverty and dehumanization, this study would not effectively constitute an authentic needs assessment.

Schools are placed under pressure and myriad of demands; they exist in a constant need to prioritize. In this context, one response to this is to say ‘it is not the job of a school to solve

problems for students such as unemployment, homelessness, and neighborhood violence.’ It may not necessarily be *the* job of a school, but schools, whether they want to respond to those issues or not, inevitably are affected because the students affected by those issues enter the school building, walk through the hallways, sit in the classrooms everyday, and are part of the fabric of a community of learners. The goal of schools to educate students to be life-long learners and to prepare for the future assumes that students’ basic needs are presently met. By not acknowledging and taking efforts to mitigate societal barriers that affect students currently, schools reinforce inequality and hamstring student performance.

A second response is to say ‘schools do not have the capacity to solve problems for students such as unemployment, homeless, and neighborhood violence.’ The authors of this report do not disagree with that statement, but schools are in a unique position to make a difference. Schools are and can be the central hub through which students’ quality of life can improve through acknowledging and taking steps to mitigate societal barriers. *This is one of the fundamental premises of community schooling, to share resources for overcoming societal barriers and to share accountability for tackling challenges collaboratively, inclusively, which no singular party may have created.*

These societal barriers/challenges that were brought up in nearly every focus group does not have a clear related recommendation for the school. However, recognition of these societal barriers and sharing accountability to address these inequities is a first step. As a school, addressing the needs of the students through intentional partnerships, as has been done with programs like an on-site food and resource pantry is a necessity. Implementing and further refining restorative practices and trauma-informed practices is a start to recognition of the challenges that students may face. In addition to direct support to students, all stakeholders interested in the success of East and its scholars need to call out social inequalities and systemic barriers when they see them restrict opportunities for student learning and development.

In addition to providing direct services to meet the basic needs of the students and recognizing the societal barriers, school curriculum should strongly consider examining and teaching the underlying forces that lead to systems of inequity and conditions of poverty. This does not need to be mutually exclusive from preparing students for the future, instead, arming students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills that is relevant to current events will create a strong foundation for future success.

We recognize that a student is not wholly defined by the conditions of their upbringing and not all scholars at East face the trauma of poverty or violence. East believes every East scholar is capable of success, and together as a school, neighborhood, and community, we must recognize and break down the societal barriers that inhibit student learning and development.

Conclusion

This report serves as East EPO's second community school needs assessment. The first needs assessment was conducted in 2014 during the establishment of the East EPO with the University of Rochester. This second needs assessment was conducted between July - December of 2018. The assessment followed the National Center for Community Schools needs assessment toolkit. Findings include the results of an archival data analysis, 25 focus groups with 216 participants, and phone interviews with 33 East parents/families.

Recommendations are provided collaboratively from the insights of the Community School Needs Assessment team that acted as the stewards of this entire process and from specific recommendations made by focus group participants. Recommendations are meant with the best intentions, not as a prescriptive fix-all. It is the hope of the CSNA team that the recommendations will be seriously considered and, where relevant, plans of action will be put in place in order to leverage East's assets and to remove barriers to scholar learning and development. These actions plans should be led and implemented by a team that shares leadership and accountability of results—one of the key tenets of the community school strategy.

This report also serves an auxiliary function. This report is meant to communicate to a general audience at least one version of the successes and difficulties, merits and challenges, possibilities and disappointments, and, ultimately, complexities of teaching and learning in an urban educational environment in 21st century America. We hope the reader recognizes that there is no magic or fast solution that is implementable by one sole group to help students learn and develop. Educational success is not only the teacher's job, or administrator's job, or parent's/families' job, or scholar's job--it is the entire community's job. The community school strategy of organizing school and community resources around student success is the closest framework for what exists as a strategy to tackle the challenges in education, strengthen community and neighborhoods, and lift up all students to reach their potential.

Appendix A: NCCS Needs Assessment Toolkit



Needs Assessment Toolkit

Why a Needs Assessment?

A needs assessment is a systematic process used to understand and create a profile of a community school's needs. Without a current and comprehensive needs assessment, a community school is less likely to provide offerings or foster partnerships that effectively address risks and promote opportunities for all of its students and families. The purpose of the needs assessment is NOT to rigorously or scientifically evaluate the impact of individual programs, strategies and curricula, but instead to gather a wide range of information that will inform and drive decisions about the community school's programming and operations.

How was the Needs Assessment Toolkit developed?

This Toolkit was developed by the Children's Aid Society National Center for Community Schools in partnership with the leadership and staff of the Chicago Public Schools Community School Initiative (CSI), an advisory group comprised of representatives from key CSI Lead Agencies and the New York-based research firm ActKnowledge. The Toolkit builds on the collective strengths and experiences of all of the aforementioned and includes adaptations of the Plus 50 Needs Assessment Toolkit developed by the American Association of Community Colleges.

What's included in the Toolkit?

The Toolkit was designed to be user-friendly and as brief as possible. It is organized around the key steps of the needs assessment process, which are listed below and best completed in sequence:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Getting Started | 5. Key Informant Interviews |
| 2. Archival Data Review | 6. Focus Groups |
| 3. Initial Analysis | 7. Final Analysis |
| 4. Surveys | 8. Reporting |

Depending on your community school's practice, you may already have some of the above steps in place, in which case it is entirely appropriate to include those existing resources into this process. Each step is described in the same format. You will see the following under each:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tasks: | Key activities or strategies that should be taken |
| Tips: | Best practice suggestions to consider and pitfalls to avoid |
| Tools: | Worksheets or sample instruments that can be used to support the process |

The Needs Assessment Toolkit is available in electronic (.pdf) format. Additionally, all of the tools are available in editable electronic format (.docx) and can be easily adapted to meet your particular needs.



Step 1: Getting Started

Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Convene the Advisory Council <input type="checkbox"/> Revisit the Advisory Council’s mission/purpose and consider whether to add members <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a Readiness Self-Assessment
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should not need to create a new team to take on the data gathering and analysis responsibilities. Conducting needs assessments should be one of the core functions of the community school’s Advisory Council. The process described in this Toolkit may serve as an opportunity to reengage key stakeholders in your school and neighborhood and activate your Advisory Council. • Consider the existing diversity of experience, skills and perspectives of the Advisory Council to help you identify which potential new members you need. • One person should act as the project manager to keep track of the overall process and keep team members accountable.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Your Team Worksheet • Readiness Self-Assessment Worksheet

Step 2: Archival Data Review

Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather and record key information from existing data sources (such as school suspension rates, after-school attendance, community health statistics, etc.) • Manipulate existing data sources to deepen your understanding (determining the chronic absence rates of English Language Learners, for example, will require some reworking of existing data sets) • Complete the Archival Data Collection Worksheet
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make full use of the School Profile and Early Warning Indicator reports provided by Chicago Public Schools • As you collect and record each datum, new questions will likely come to mind, as might concerns about the accuracy of the data. Record those questions, concerns and other thoughts on the Worksheet. • Add Need Indicators to the worksheet as needed and appropriate. Blank rows have been inserted for this purpose.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archival Data Collection Worksheet

Step 3: Initial Analysis

Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Convene Advisory Council to review the Archival Data <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the top five high priority needs that emerge from the review <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorm particular questions that should be considered for the survey, interview and focus group steps <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the key informants to be interviewed in Step 5
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that this is an <i>initial</i> analysis and that you are not expected to have findings at this point. The purpose, instead, is to collectively identify patterns, see connections between the need indicators and begin to narrow the focus of your needs assessment.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archival Data Collection Worksheet

Step 4: Surveys

Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop surveys for key constituent groups. Surveys of students, parents and teachers are required, but others may be added. <input type="checkbox"/> Administer the surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Compile survey results
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions should be mostly closed-ended (multiple choice, true/false, Likert Scales, etc.) and limited in number. • Paper vs. Online (using the method or combination of methods most likely to ensure a high response rate) • Use vocabulary and language that is appropriate for each audience. In all cases, avoid using technical language and terminology. • Particularly for youth surveys, you might consider offerings incentives. • Decide whether to use a paper-based or web-based survey (or both). Each has its advantages and disadvantages, but web-based surveys are especially convenient because they can tally up and graphically present responses automatically. There are free and low-cost solutions out there. When using paper, it may make sense to record the responses on an electronic spreadsheet . • Timing the administration of surveys to coincide with, for example, faculty meetings, parent-teacher conferences, after-school special events may increase the yield of responses
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archival Data Collection Worksheet (completed, from Step 3) • Sample Surveys

Step 5: Key Informant Interviews

Tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Key Informant Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Summarize findings
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep interviews to 30-45 minutes long • Decide whether you want the same person conducting all of the interviews for the sake of consistency. • Do your best to frame questions in a way that elicits the key informants' interpretation of the data and perhaps some suggestions for addressing the needs • Avoid making the informant feel defensive; keep the conversation focused on the ways in which students may require supports and opportunities, and away from what they themselves have or have not done to address those needs
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interview Worksheet • Sample Interview Questions

Step 6: Focus Groups

Tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Focus Groups. Groups including students, parents and teachers are required, but others may be added. <input type="checkbox"/> Summarize findings
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups are generally most lively and effective when composed of 6 to 12 people • They should last between 45 to 60 minutes. Consider your audience when scheduling the focus groups (i.e., evenings or weekends for working parents, in-school hours for teachers if possible) • You will need a facilitator and a note taker. Do not combine these roles as it is exceedingly difficult to do both simultaneously. • Prepare a scripted introduction and 8 to 12 questions in advance (samples are provided for you). Unlike with the surveys, questions in focus groups should be open-ended and should encourage participants to elaborate. Ask participants to follow up on and react to each others' responses. Stay away from yes/no questions.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Focus Group scripts and questions

Step 7: Final Analysis

Tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Convene Advisory Council to review summaries of surveys, interviews and focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Determine three priority need areas for the next 12 months <input type="checkbox"/> Review and brainstorm additional recommendations for how to address the needs
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Council members should receive – in advance of the final analysis convening – summaries of the survey, interview and focus group results • Schedule enough time to have a thorough reflection and discussion. If needed, schedule a second session to ensure completion.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs Assessment Analysis Worksheet

Step 8: Reporting

Tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Write Need Assessment Report <input type="checkbox"/> Disseminate Report
Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist the urge to over think, over format or over produce this report. Bulleted lists are more readable – and therefore more actionable – than narrative descriptions • Include completed worksheets from the toolkit as supporting material in an appendix. The report itself should focus on your identified findings, priorities and recommendations.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs Assessment Analysis Worksheet (completed, from Step 7) • Needs Assessment Report Outline

Appendix B: NCCS Archival Data Collection Table

Archival Data Collection Table



1. Children are Ready to Enter School				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Percentage of Students who Needed Immunizations, Physical Exams, or Both				
Percentage of K Students who attended Early Childhood Programs				
Chronic Absence Rates of K Students				

2. Students Attend School Consistently				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
School Average Daily Attendance Rates				
Percentage of Students who were Chronically Absent				
Student Mobility Rates				
School Chronic Absence Rates				
ELL Subgroup				
FRPL Subgroup				
Grade Level Subgroups				
Race/Ethnicity Subgroups				



3. Students are Actively Involved in Learning and in the Community				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Percentage of Students Involved in At Least One Extracurricular Activity				
Student Response Rates for the Student Connection Survey				
Availability of OST Programming (number of slots)				
Utilization Rates of OST Programming				
Percentage of Students with Early Warning Indicators in OST Programming				
1 EWI Indicator Subgroup				
2 EWI Indicators Subgroup				
3 EWI Indicators Subgroup				

4. Schools are Engaged with Families and Communities				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Percentage of Parents who Agreed that When their Families Experienced Crisis, the School Helped Them Through it				
Percentage of Parents who Agreed that the School Considered Communication with Them to be an Essential Part of Their Student's Education				
Availability of Adult Education/Enrichment Programming (offerings & number of slots)				
Utilization Rates of Adult Education/Enrichment Programming				

5. Families are Actively Involved in Children's Education				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Percentage of Parents who were Adequately or More Satisfied with Their Children's School				
Percentage of Parents who Felt there were Adequate or Better Opportunities for Involvement				
Percentage of Parents who Felt Schools Provided Adequate or Better Support for Home-based Learning				
Parent Response Rates for the Parent Survey				
Parent/Teacher Conference Participation Rates				
Participation Rates of Families in School Advisory/Governance Structures				
Participation Rates of Families in Partner Advisory/Governance Structures				
Participation Rates of Families in PTA (or equivalent)				

6. Students Succeed Academically				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding State Standards in Mathematics				
ELL Subgroup				
FRPL Subgroup				
Grade Level Subgroups				
Race/Ethnicity Subgroups				
Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding State Standards in Reading				
ELL Subgroup				
FRPL Subgroup				
Grade Level Subgroups				
Race/Ethnicity Subgroups				
Percentage of Students who Felt the Rigor of their Coursework was Adequate or Better				
Percentage of Students Reading at or above Grade-Level in Third Grade				

7. Students are Healthy Physically, Socially and Emotionally				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Percentage of Students who Felt Support from Adults in their School was Adequate or Better				
Percentage of Students who Felt Support from Peers in their School was Adequate or Better				
Percentage of students with health insurance				
Access to health care services				

8. Students Live and Learn in Stable and Supportive Environments				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Number of Students with at Least One Level 4-6 Misconduct				
Percentage of Students who felt the Safety at their School was Adequate or Better				
Suspension Rates				
Teacher attendance rates				
Teacher turnover rates				
Percentage of New (<2 years) Teachers				

9. Communities are Desirable Places to Live				
Need Indicator	Collected Data (Include Time Frame)	Source of Data	Notes, Comments & Questions	Priority? (H/M/L)
Average Housing Stability Rates in the Surrounding Communities				
Access to Healthy Food in School and Neighborhood				
Neighborhood Homelessness rates				
Neighborhood Juvenile Crime rates				
Neighborhood Asthma rates				

Based on the data collected here, what are the top five high priority needs that emerge?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List some key questions or findings that require interpretation and/or explanation. Your responses may inform questions on the surveys and in the focus groups.

Appendix C: East Needs Assessment Focus Group Protocol



Community School Needs Assessment Focus Group Protocol

Recruitment

1. Focus groups will be held by constituent group (e.g. families, Lower School teachers)
2. There will be at least two focus groups per constituent group
3. Appropriate members of the Needs Assessment team will work with the Community Coordinator to schedule and recruit for focus groups. All team members will assist in recruitment for family and community focus groups.
4. The ideal focus group size is 6-8 people. Unless there's guaranteed attendance, it's ideal to invite up to 10 to 12 people to get 6 to 8 attend.
5. Have participants sign-in and note how many people are in the focus group. Consider including notes about demographic information (sex, race, role, and relationship to East).

Facilitators

- Two members from the Needs Assessment team will facilitate each focus group. One will lead the discussion and the other will lead recording information.

Focus Group Best Practices

1. Thank everyone for coming
2. Explain the purpose of the focus group. Community schools is a strategy to support the holistic needs of students. We are conducting a Needs Assessment to find out what stakeholders see as our strengths, needs, and ways to improve scholar learning and development.
3. Set grounds rules.
 - Participants will do the talking
 - We want to hear from everyone
 - One person will speak at a time
 - We may gently call on you if you haven't spoken in a while
 - There are no right or wrong answers.
 - Everyone's ideas and experiences are valuable
 - It's important to hear all sides - including the positive and negative
 - It's okay to disagree; it's useful to hear alternative opinions
 - Even if we don't agree, it's important to show respect for one another
 - What is shared in the room stays in the room
 - Please keep what you hear in the focus group confidential
 - We will summarize the focus group findings without identifying people by name
4. Ask if there are any questions before starting

Protocol

1. 5 minutes – Introduction
2. 25 minutes – Open discussion on focus group questions
3. 20 minutes – Rotation through poster questions (4 minutes per question)
4. 10 minutes – Final questions and thoughts

Focus Group Questions

1. What is your name and relationship to East?
2. What do you think the greatest strengths or most valuable assets of East are?

What do you think are the greatest challenges or barriers scholars face at East?

What do you think would help scholars overcome these barriers?

3. What do you think are the greatest strengths or most valuable assets of the surrounding community?

What do you think are the greatest challenges or barriers in the surrounding community that prevent scholars from achieving success?

What do you think would help scholars overcome these barriers?

4. Do you think scholars and their families feel a sense of belonging to East? Why or why not?

Poster Questions

1. What can we do to better support family involvement at East?
2. What can we do to improve scholar attendance at East?
3. To what extent is safety and/or bullying an issue at East? What can we do to create a safer school or prevent bullying?
4. How confident are you in knowing what restorative practices are and how they're implemented at East? In what ways can restorative practices be better implemented?
5. What kinds of additional programs or services should East provide in order to help scholars succeed?

Appendix D: East Parent/Family Phone Interview Protocol



Community School Needs Assessment Family Phone-Based Interview Protocol

Purpose

We are conducting these phone-based interviews in order to hear from East parents/family members what strengths/assets and needs/barriers they think exist at East and in the surrounding community. Parent and family input is crucial, so we are conducting these in addition to hosting a parent/family focus group on Wednesday, October 24th from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. at the Thomas P. Ryan Recreation Center.

Best Practices

1. Follow the protocol on the next page! Be sure to introduce yourself to the parent/family member using your title and that you're on a team at East trying to hear from others how we can make the school better. Let participants know that there are no right or wrong answers, and that you simply want to hear what they have to think.
2. Many people perceive getting a phone call from an unfamiliar number as an invasion of privacy. Also, many families perceive getting a phone call from school as bad news about their child. Please keep these considerations in mind, and do your best to be calm, welcoming, and hospitable. The first 20 seconds of a phone call are important for not making the recipient feel defensive.
3. Gently probe participants in giving detailed answers: we want the “why” and “how” in addition to the “what.” If a family member specifies teachers as an asset (that's great!), but see if you can get them to explain in what context East teachers are an asset to them or their scholars. The same goes for the barriers they mention.
4. Your questions can vary from the protocol depending on how talkative and explanative your participant is. Use your best judgement on which threads to pursue. Remember, we're doing this work to refine our Community School strategy.
5. Connect participants with other opportunities for involvement. If the participant is very engaged and wants to share more, invite them to the in-person focus group on Wednesday, October 24th from 6:00- 7:30 p.m. at the Thomas P. Ryan Recreation Center. If you're unsure how to respond to a question or if they want to talk more over the phone, feel free to connect them with Jason.Taylor@rcsdk12.org or (585) 288-3130 ext. 2178.

Transcript Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a _____ at 'East High School.' I'm on a team of people trying to hear from others how we can make East an even better school. I have a few questions to ask. There are no right or wrong answers, and I simply want to hear what you think. Is this an okay time to talk?

Great, my first question is:

1. What do you think are the greatest strengths of or best things about East?

Thank you. My second question is:

2. What do you think are the greatest challenges or barriers your scholar faces at East?

We talked a lot about East. Now I'd like to ask you about the broader community:

3. What do you think are the greatest strengths or best things about the surrounding community?

My last big question is:

4. What do you think are the greatest challenges or barriers your scholar faces in the surrounding community?

Thank you taking the time to talk with me. If you'd like to share more in-person, we're holding a focus group from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. at the Thomas P. Ryan Recreation Center on Wednesday, October 24th. Goodbye.

Appendix E: List of Findings

1. East Strengths

Collaborative Partners, Programs, and Supports
Lots of support and resources for students
support staff
lots of programs and services
lots of resources and services
CTE programs
lots of programs and services
lots of service providers and partners
support from partners and service providers
lots of programs and collaborative partners
lots of counselors, social workers, programs (that are on-site)
CTE programs
CTE, Quest, Partners/service providers
Support
lots of support for students
wrap-around support
lots of support, social emotional, health resources
CTE programs and collaborative partners
Electives and CTE programs and partnerships
CTE programs and support
Lots of opportunities and service providers
Staff are the Right People
Family aspect among staff
staff genuinely care
staff members are supportive
staff have the right mindset
Administration is doing well

Staff has more teamwork and shared plan
teachers are highly accredited and skilled
staff has family feel and "all in" approach
administrative flexibility
staff are loving and caring
teachers care
teachers push students to full potential
staff are dedicated and go above and beyond
staff care and go out of their way
teachers and supportive and nice
Staff are excellent, supportive, helpful, trusting, on the same page
Staff work hard to make East scholar-centered
Staff are flexible and supportive of scholars

Focus on Relationships

relationships
more trauma focused (RP)
deep seeded relationships
social-emotional support
restorative practices
restorative practices
social-emotional support
social-emotional support and restorative practices
emphasis on relationships building

Athletics

Sports
Sports
athletics
athletic opportunities
sports
Athletics keeps students on track
Athletics

Family Group

Family Group

Family groups helps know each other

family group

family group good and bad

Lots of staff

low student-teacher ratio

low counselor-student ratio

low counselor-student ratio

lots of staff

University of Rochester

UR

UR

UR

UR

2. East Challenges

Communication Internal + External

internal miscommunication of what we have

communication from school to families

communication from school to community

communicating service provision

Getting family contact info

communication late or unclear for advertising

lack of understanding of services

not taking advantage of services because no understanding

communication barriers and confidentiality require

ensuring communication, even when uncomfortable
Placement process is broken + bad communication
Difficult to get family contact and documentation
hard to communicate all opportunities and US-LS
need better communication system with parents
Communication good and bad to families
Difficult to get accurate family contact information

Transportation Cost, Time, Scary

transportation
transportation scary and length
transportation time (and for adults)
transportation length and poor communication
transportation inflexibility
transportation long or no personal transport
scholars have to walk if live too close
hard to get students too far or too close home
transportation access and time
transportation takes too long
Need better afterschool transportation options

School-Family Relations

Uninvolved parents
parent disinvolvement
contacting parents is hard
need to get parents involved more
low parental involvement
more parent engagement needed
need to hear parent voice more
help families navigate school system
families help
families help

families help, but need better communication w/

families are an asset - everything starts at home

need better communication system with parents

families are an asset

Families feel involved and not involved

Need more family fun nights

Families are supportive

Restorative Practice Refinement

close loop on restorative practices

clarification on restorative practices

more trauma-informed education

close loop on restorative practices

have people understand their restorative work

difference between discipline and consequences

teachers aren't being taken care of restoratively

close loop on restorative practices

need better enforceable boundaries and close restorative loop

better follow through on discipline

need better disciplinary structure

need better support for teachers to deal with problems

Need to close restorative loop with teachers

Students who are disruptive

Some students are disruptive

distracting students

distracting students

disruptive students

disruptive students

distracting scholars

Distracting and disruptive students

Students are disruptive

Need to Increase Academic Rigor/Preparedness

scholars not being prepared for high level work

increase academic rigor

scholars come to us academically below grade

need higher academic rigor

need higher academic rigor

need to make academic rigor more challenging

Disconnect of Understanding Scholar's Lives

staff don't understand students' lives

teachers don't know student backgrounds

teachers need better relationships with students

Food

Food is bad

Food is jail food

Food is wasted and bad

Food is bad

Food is bad

Parts of school are unclean

Parts of school are unclean

parts of school are unclean (bathrooms)

Parts of school are unclean

3. Community Strengths

Recreation Centers

recreation centers

recreation centers

recreation centers
recreation centers
recreation centers
recreation centers
recreation centers
recreation centers
recreation centers
recreation centers
recreation centers

Local Community

Neighborhood associations
Beechwood
Beechwood/EMMA
Beechwood/ #33
local businesses
neighborhood associations
Beechwood neighborhood
local businesses want to help
local businesses want to help
Local community supports East
Local community has a lot of assets

Interest and Positivity

people want east to succeed
People want East's success
Pride and positive energy
pride in East
pride in East
Solidarity in wanting East to succeed

4. Community Challenges

Violence
violence
gang violence
violence
safety and violence
violence
violence
safety
fighting
<i>violence, fighting, criminality</i>
crime
violence, gangs, safety
scary neighborhood, violence
Violence and safety
Fighting, violence, and unsafe neighborhoods

Economic Inequality/Poverty
Economic inequality
poverty
poverty
poverty
poverty
elementary school inequality
poverty
poverty
poverty, parents working many jobs
underemployment

Affordable Housing

affordable housing

homelessness

housing

transiency

homelessness

housing help

housing insecurity

homelessness

Adequate housing

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

Scholars Having to Support Family

scholars having to support family

scholars having to support family

scholars having to support family

Family Incarceration

incarceration

incarceration

incarceration

Substance abuse

Intoxication

Drugs

Substance abuse

Drugs

More East Connections with Community

community connections for scholar service

East needs to be more involved in community

East needs more community connections

push more community connections

more work-based learning/connections to local employers

community connections for scholar service

connections with local community

<i>expand East connections with community</i>

East needs to be community center/gathering place

East needs to have better community connections

East needs to be a true community center

School-Community Message Difference

Community teaches retribution

East teaches restorative, not punitive

different expectations home-school

Community doesn't support learning, school, education

Neighborhood Attendance

Low % of local kids attend East

kids coming from all over city

Need more neighborhood students to attend East

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