Community Needs Assessment: Overview

Data plays a key role in effective community school development. Community school leaders use data to understand the success they are having in supporting student and family development. Early on, community school leaders create a shared leadership team, sometimes referred to as an Advisory Board.

The shared leadership team should include stakeholders who can help the team form a deeper understanding of the strengths and needs of students and families, as well as the "internal" and "external" barriers to student success, and the resources that already available in the community.

Assessment plays a key role providing data to help feed that understanding.   Community school development happens most effectively when stakeholders work toward a shared vision for student and family success. The assessment process should be driven by that shared vision. The data that is gathered should help to inform their understanding of issues that will alleviate barriers and facilitate movement toward the vision.

Because of this, a one-size fits all needs assessment is not always the best way to proceed with the assessment process. Each community school should examine assessment tools and consider which questions they need to ask to better inform their understanding of the stakeholders and resources of the school community.

There are multiple kinds of assessments that help inform their work. These include but are not limited to:
- Student needs assessment
- Parent needs assessment (focused on students; focused on parents)
- Teacher assessment (of students & teachers needs)
- Community Resource Assessment
- Community Eco Map (to illustrate community relationships & connections)
- Community Assessment (to identify community issues that affect families)