Providence Full Service Community Schools

Qualitative Baseline Study:

Stakeholder Perceptions of the Foundation, Implementation, and Vision of Providence Full Service Community Schools

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Qualitative Baseline Study:
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This report describes results from the baseline study of a comprehensive program evaluation of the Providence Full Service Community Schools (PFSCS) initiative. The purpose of this study was to understand how key stakeholders in Providence's children's services systems view the strengths and barriers facing the establishment of a FSCS model in their community. Data were collected during fall 2009, primarily through semi-structured interviews designed to gather stakeholder perspectives about the current operations of Providence FSCS, as well as the expected impact of the project. Stakeholders were asked to describe the benefits, challenges, goals, and outcomes of the Providence FSCS initiative and how it differs from other local education improvement efforts. They also were asked about the various partners in the initiative and the desired/anticipated short and long term outcomes. Interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed. Analyses were based on grounded theory, using both analytic induction and the constant comparison method to identify, describe, and decompose categories of findings into themes and, in some cases, sub-themes. The findings highlight the initial context of the PFSCS initiative. Additionally, the findings contributed to the development of a theory that will continue to evolve as PFSCS matures. The executive summary provides an outline of the findings from this initial study.

Analyses uncovered nine primary categories of findings, each with several themes. These are listed below. The most pervasive finding from this study was the importance that participants placed on communication. Broadly, they reported that open, clear, and ongoing communication will help this project develop, flourish, and sustain.

Categories and Themes

MISSION OF THE PFSCS: Integration of Services, Community Focus / Community Hub, Family
    Focus / Family Engagement, Student Success, and Comprehensive System of Service Delivery.

STRENGTHS OF THE COMMUNITY: Collaborations, Families, Leadership, Nonprofit Community,
    Providers/Teachers/Organizations, and Openness to Educational Improvement.

FACTORS LEADING TO THE CREATION OF THE PFSCS INITIATIVE: Funding, Sense of Purpose,
    Leadership, Immense Need, An Established Foundation, and Partnerships.

DIFFERENCES/ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER LOCAL INITIATIVES: Casey/Making Connections,
    Children Opportunity Zones and Community Schools Rhode Island, Providence After-School

Alliance, Collaboration – Integration, and Comprehensiveness. Some respondents were not sure or said 'none'.

CHALLENGES FACING THE CREATION OF THE PFSCS: Capacity – Ambitious, Communication, Continued Collaboration, The Economy, Integration, Family Engagement, Politics, School Culture, Territoriality, Transience, and The System as a Barrier.

ADVICE FOR OVERCOMING CHALLENGES: Communication and Working with Partners.

BENEFITS OF A HAVING A PFSCS INITIATIVE: Collaboration, Comprehensive System of Supports for Families, Student Success, School Functioning, School Culture (Community Hub), and Evaluation and Accountability.

DESIRED/ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES FOR THE PFSCS INITIATIVE: Access to Support Services, Family Engagement, Partnerships, School Climate, Student Success, School Attendance, Engagement in Learning, Evaluation, Systems Building, Higher Education, and Sustainability.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: Sustainability and Replication, Culture Change, Comprehensive System of Service Delivery, Evaluation, Student Success, and Social Equity.

Four primary recommendations emerged from this study. The primary recommendation is multifaceted and has to do with communications.

<u>Recommendations</u>

1. *Clear communication must be pervasive and occur at multiple levels, among and between all partners and, most importantly, <u>with</u> families.* Respondents were clear that communication is and will continue to be the single most important contributing factor for PFSCS functioning and reaching positive outcomes.

2. *Continue to integrate FSCS programs with educational objectives.* Respondents noted that a core feature of the PFSCS model that differentiates it from other educational initiatives in Providence is its deliberate connection to academic outcomes. While respondents were quick to point out that academic outcomes should not be the only goal for Providence FSCS, it was clear that they felt achievement must be one of the primary goals.

3. *Place a core focus on the quality of the climate in each FSCS school.* Schools are core to the PFSCS initiative and each participating school must have a welcoming and family-centered focus.

4. *Focus on sustaining the Providence Full Service Community Schools initiative now.* Too often, comprehensive grant funded initiatives fail to last beyond the life of the grant because stakeholders wait too long to plan for sustainability.

Providence Full Service Community Schools

Qualitative Baseline Study:
Stakeholder Perceptions of the Foundation, Implementation, and Vision of Providence Full Service Community Schools

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to describe the results of a qualitative baseline study of system-level stakeholder perceptions of the foundations, implementation, and vision of the Providence Full Service Community Schools (PFSCS) Initiative. Funded by a grant from the United States Department of Education to Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center, the mission of the Providence Full Service Community Schools initiative is to improve learning for Providence children through school-based family supports.

The FSCS Model

In general, Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) are concerned with the whole child, recognizing that all families and communities have strengths and assets, which can be leveraged through partnerships. Moreover, FSCS recognize that non-school challenges and barriers (e.g., health, mental, social and economic issues) can reduce school effectiveness. Providing services and supports within a school or closely connected to a school creates a "hub," often referred to as a community school. FSCS also increase the likelihood that services will be readily accessible when needed (Dryfoos, 2003). Additionally, coordination, collocation, and integration of family support services fosters relationships between social service agencies, schools, and, most importantly, families.

FSCS seek to meet the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001, which called for public schools to have more local control, greater parental choice, and increased use of evidence-based pedagogical approaches. To meet the NCLB goal of improved student outcomes, educators increasingly partner with families and communities (Dryfoos, 2005; Mastro, Jolloh, & Watson, 2006; Tagle, 2005).

PFSCS Overview

The Providence FSCS initiative targets five elementary schools: Robert L. Bailey, Charles N. Fortes, Charlotte Woods, Sgt. Cornel Young and Alfred Lima. In the 2008-09 school year, Robert L. Bailey became the first Providence FSCS. Charles N. Fortes and Alfred Lima began full implementation in Fall 2009. Sgt. Cornel Young and Charlotte Woods schools are anticipating full implementation in Spring 2010. All of the schools are located within one to two miles in the three Providence neighborhoods of South Providence, the West End, and Elmwood. This geographic proximity means the five targeted schools are part of a small community with a pre-existing network of neighborhood-based partners.
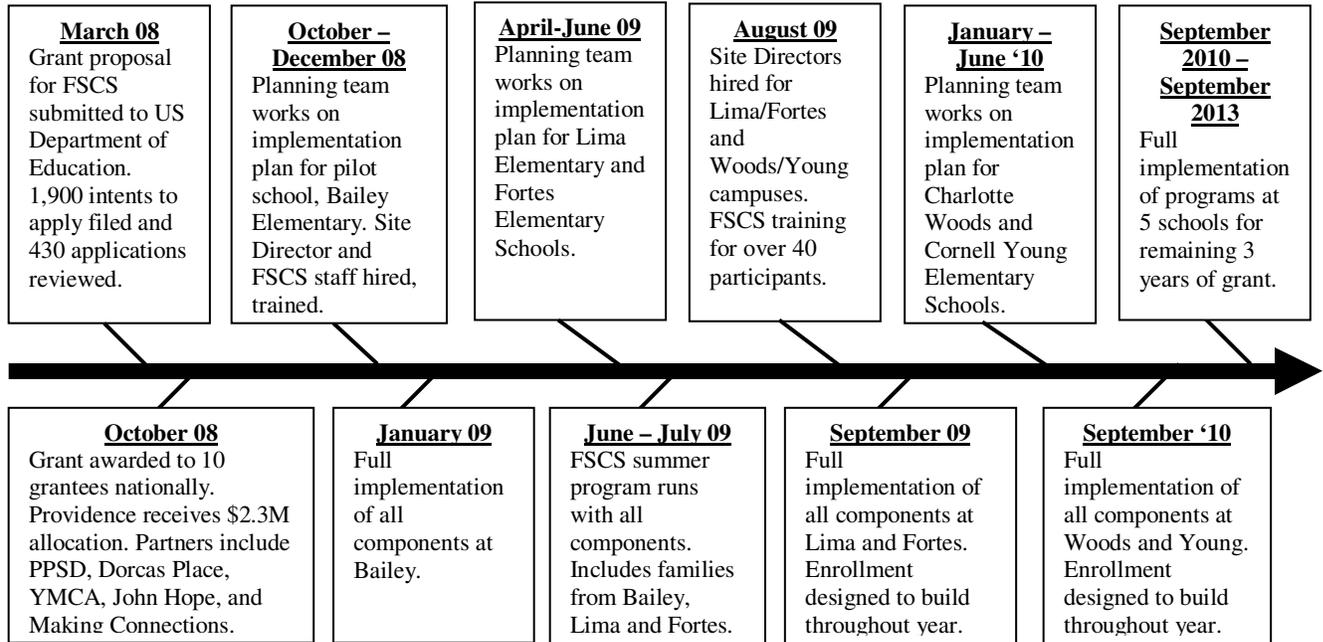
There are currently five integral components in the PFSCS model.
1.) School-based, year round *out of school time* programming
2.) School-based *family literacy* classes and case management
3.) *Parent engagement* activities

4.) Wraparound *case management* for families, and

5.) *Health strategies*, including physical fitness activities and nutrition services for families.

In accordance with the general FSCS model, the five components are integrated and aligned with the school day.

Full Service Community Schools Timeline

March 08 Grant proposal for FSCS submitted to US Department of Education. 1,900 intents to apply filed and 430 applications reviewed.	**October – December 08** Planning team works on implementation plan for pilot school, Bailey Elementary. Site Director and FSCS staff hired, trained.	**April-June 09** Planning team works on implementation plan for Lima Elementary and Fortes Elementary Schools.	**August 09** Site Directors hired for Lima/Fortes and Woods/Young campuses. FSCS training for over 40 participants.	**January – June '10** Planning team works on implementation plan for Charlotte Woods and Cornell Young Elementary Schools.	**September 2010 – September 2013** Full implementation of programs at 5 schools for remaining 3 years of grant.

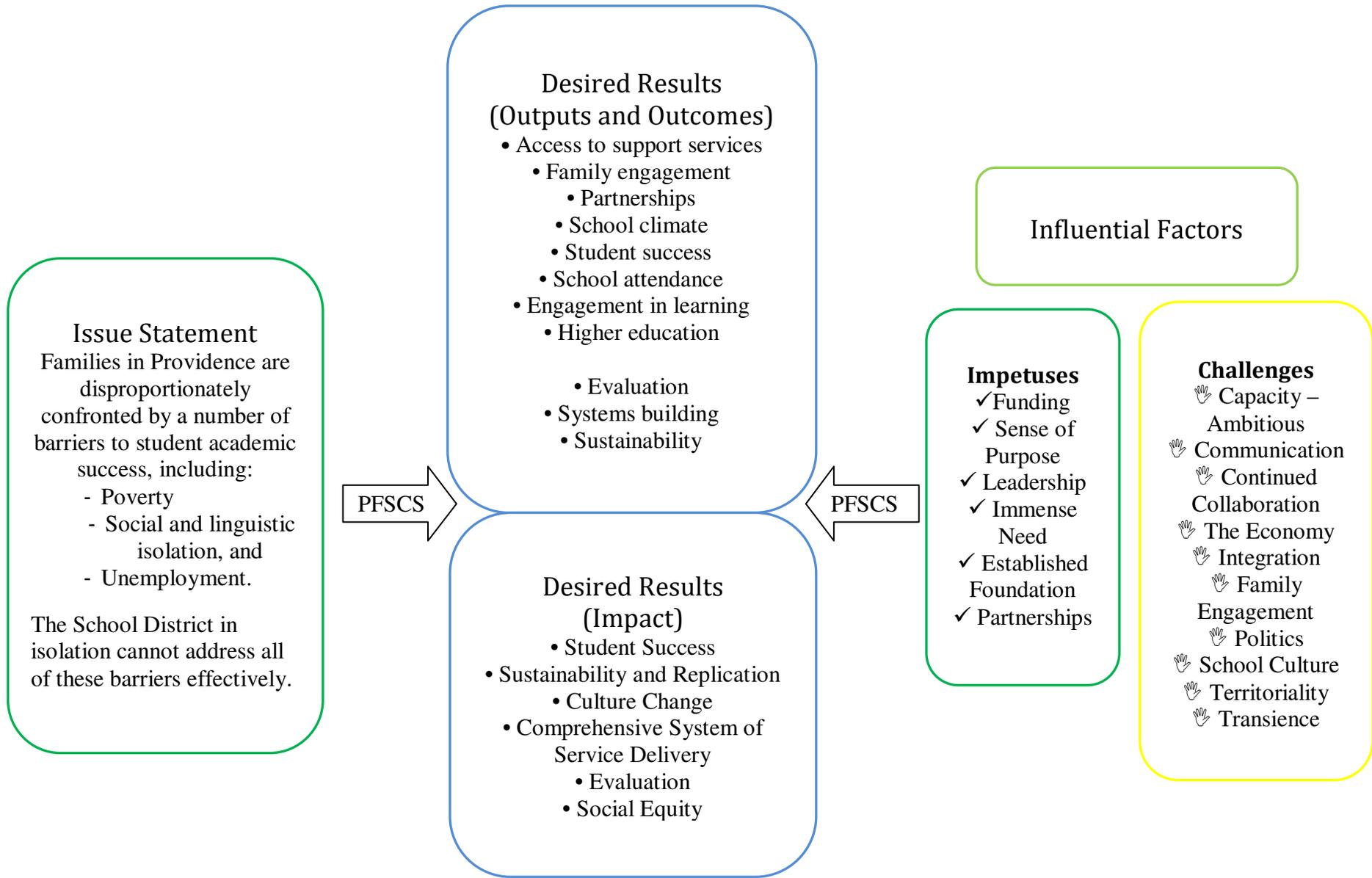| **October 08** Grant awarded to 10 grantees nationally. Providence receives $2.3M allocation. Partners include PPSD, Dorcas Place, YMCA, John Hope, and Making Connections.	**January 09** Full implementation of all components at Bailey.	**June – July 09** FSCS summer program runs with all components. Includes families from Bailey, Lima and Fortes.	**September 09** Full implementation of all components at Lima and Fortes. Enrollment designed to build throughout year.	**September '10** Full implementation of all components at Woods and Young. Enrollment designed to build throughout year.

Internal evaluation results from the 2008-09 school year at Bailey, the first PFSCS school, indicate that:

- 127 adults participated in at least one of the following PFSCS components: family literacy, wraparound case management, and family engagement.
- 134 children participated in at least one of the following PFSCS components: family literacy, wraparound case management, and out of school time programming.
- 116 parents participated in three or more school based family engagement events.
- There were 55% fewer incidences of chronic absenteeism among participants than in the general school population.
- Children with parents in family literacy had a school attendance rate of 97.3%
- 46% of parents in family literacy classes increased the equivalent of two grade levels in reading.

Stakeholder View of the PFSCS Initiative

Based on integrated stakeholder feedback discussed in more detail throughout this report, Figure 1 is a preliminary visualization of the foundation and vision of the Providence FSCS initiative.

Figure 1. Foundation and Vision of the Providence FSCS Initiative

Issue Statement

Families in Providence are disproportionately confronted by a number of barriers to student academic success, including:
- Poverty
- Social and linguistic isolation, and
- Unemployment.

The School District in isolation cannot address all of these barriers effectively.

PFSCS →

Desired Results (Outputs and Outcomes)
- Access to support services
- Family engagement
- Partnerships
- School climate
- Student success
- School attendance
- Engagement in learning
- Higher education

- Evaluation
- Systems building
- Sustainability

← PFSCS

Desired Results (Impact)
- Student Success
- Sustainability and Replication
- Culture Change
- Comprehensive System of Service Delivery
- Evaluation
- Social Equity

Influential Factors

Impetuses
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Sense of Purpose
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Immense Need
- ✓ Established Foundation
- ✓ Partnerships

Challenges
- ✋ Capacity – Ambitious
- ✋ Communication
- ✋ Continued Collaboration
- ✋ The Economy
- ✋ Integration
- ✋ Family Engagement
- ✋ Politics
- ✋ School Culture
- ✋ Territoriality
- ✋ Transience

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Year 1: Baseline Study of the Providence FSCS

The complexities of developing and implementing well-functioning Full Service Community Schools make it challenging to understand how such projects operate within their respective communities. Thus, the purpose of this baseline study was to understand how key stakeholders in Providence children's services systems view the strengths and barriers facing the establishment of a FSCS model in their community. Exploring the perceptions of stakeholders allowed the research team to better understand the complexities inherent in creating multifaceted initiatives, such as PFSCS, as well as both the process and outcomes of implementing a FSCS. This study also was intended to create a baseline of information to inform the long-term vision of the PFSCS initiative.

Data for this study were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews designed to gather stakeholder perspectives about the current operations of the PFSCS as well as the expected impact of the project. Stakeholders interviewed for this study included system and agency leaders and staff who were involved with and/or knowledgeable about PFSCS. Grounded theory was the primary analytic approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Methods

Data Collection
        Sampling. Data collection occurred during fall 2009. Purposive sampling was used. A list of potential interviewees was generated by the Evaluation Advisory Board (EAB) of PFSCS. The most important criterion for being nominated and invited to participate in the study was involvement in children's social services relative to the implementation of the PFSCS Initiative.

The list of nominees was examined for completeness by the EAB and administrative staff from PFSCS. Potential interviewees were sent an invitation letter describing the study and inviting them to be interviewed. To ensure the sample converged on a widely shared stakeholder model of FSCS in Providence, each interviewee was asked to nominate additional stakeholders for interviews. This prompt came after the formal interview questions had been completed and provided confirmation that the group of respondents selected for this study was appropriate. Ultimately, 18 out of 20 targeted nominees participated in phase one of the study and 6 out of 7 targeted nominees participated in phase two, providing an overall response rate of 89%. Phase two interviews included individuals nominated by interviewees with additional prioritization by the EAB. EAB members were blind to the nomination and prioritization exercises of others. The phase two interviews served to check for the degree of data saturation or the degree to which the same themes were repeated with minimal new information. Even though it was a relatively small group, as confirmed by the interviews, there is a finite set of individuals actively shaping policy and practice, even in a city as large as Providence.

Study participants. Participants were employed by city and state education departments, partnering community based organizations, local institutions of higher education, and PFSCS. Interviewees were typically administrators from agencies and systems involved

with children's social services in Providence, including representatives of education, child welfare, advocacy, family support groups, health, and juvenile justice. They were chosen because they had a sense of the history of the project and could provide knowledgeable insight from a variety of perspectives. Due to the small sample size and to maintain confidentiality, neither the identities nor specific roles of respondents are described further.

Interviews. To maximize comfort and convenience for participants, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the participant's office or another mutually convenient location, such as a coffee shop. Two interviews were conducted over the phone. The interview protocol is included in the appendices of this report. In brief, respondents were asked to describe the benefits, goals, and challenges of the PFSCS and how it differs from other local education improvement initiatives. They were also asked about the partners in the initiative and ideal short and long term outcomes.   Last, respondents were asked to discuss their five year vision for the PFSCS.

Interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, using an outside transcriber for reliable quality and efficient turnaround. The interviewer then checked the transcription with the tape. Transcripts were cleaned for coding by eliminating proper names and other identifying information as possible, without changing meaning. The content of the transcripts was not otherwise altered. Audio-records were securely stored and will be destroyed after data analyses are completed. All procedures were approved by Indiana University's Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis
Interview transcriptions were analyzed broadly based on the interview questions. Thus, by design, thematic codes tended to be constrained by the interview questions. However, grounded theory allows the researcher to move beyond this confinement and develop a cumulative understanding of stakeholder perceptions by systematically examining the data. Consistent with grounded theory approach, both analytic induction and the constant comparison method were employed (Krathwohl, 1998). Specifically, categories were identified, described, and then broken down into themes and in some cases sub-themes. These categories and themes were then linked to other concepts to develop a theory or explanation. This theory, which will continue to be developed as the PFSCS initiative matures, is constantly compared with new data from the field. Discrepancies require modifications or additions that in turn increase the understanding of the data. This process is participatory, iterative, and continues until all discrepancies are resolved and no further new information is forthcoming (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

In essence, these findings represent the thoughts, ideas, concerns, and vision for the PFSCS initiative by this group of study participants. The goal for this section of the paper is to describe shared themes and to give voice to this group of key systems-level stakeholders.

Our findings focus on nine primary categories:

1.) Mission,
2.) Strengths,
3.) Ingredients or Factors Leading to the Creation of the Initiative in Providence,
4.) Differences and/or Alignment with Other Educational Initiatives,
5.) Challenges Facing the Creation of the Providence FSCS
6.) Advice for Overcoming Challenges,
7.) Benefits of Having a FSCS Project,
8.) Desired Outcomes for Providence FSCS, and
9.) Vision for the Future.

The relationships between these categories are depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Relationships Between Thematic Categories
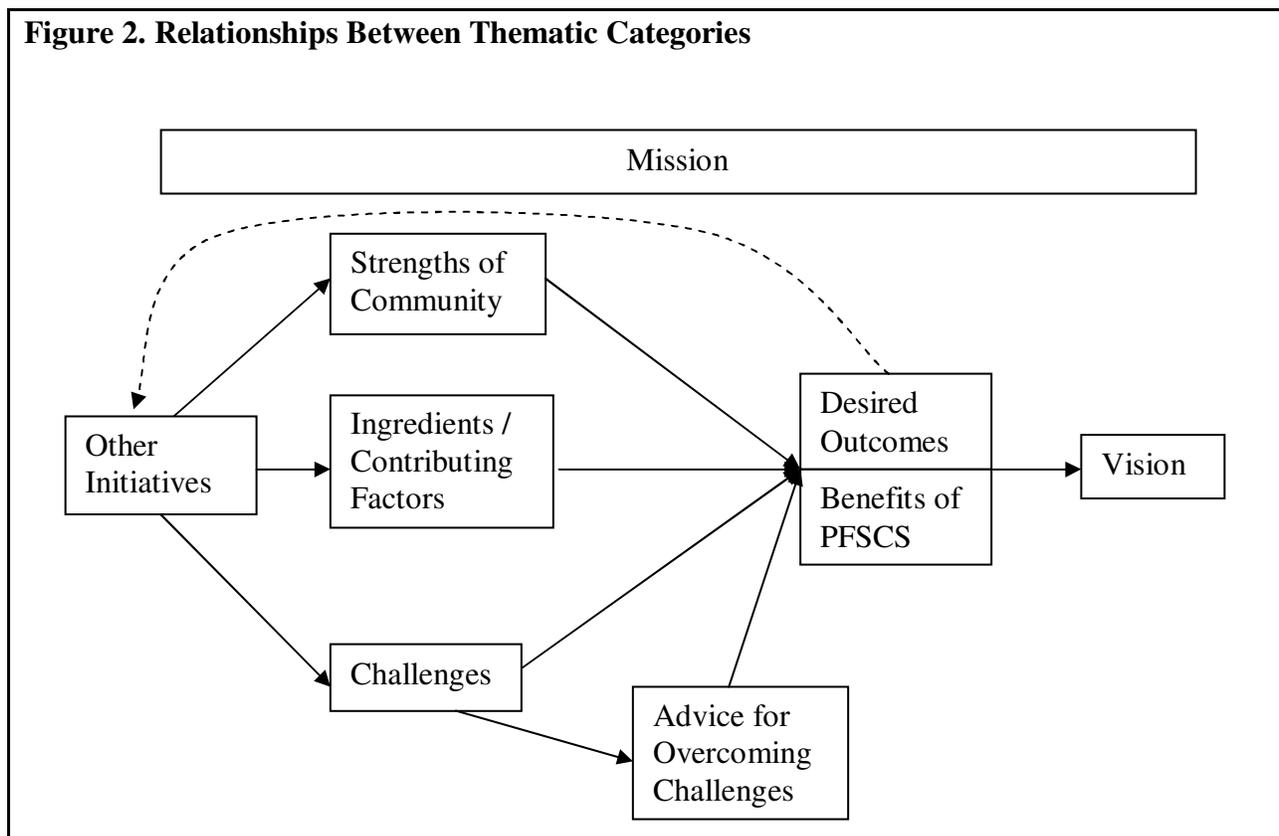
Each of these categories is described in the following sections. In turn, each of these categories is broken down into themes. Actual quotes are provided in italics to illustrate the theme in the voices of PFSCS stakeholders.

MISSION

It was clear that PFSCS is relatively new and not everyone is fully aware of it, how it functions, or how it is supposed to operate. Stakeholders were therefore asked to comment on what they thought the mission of the PFSCS was or, alternatively, what goals the PFSCS initiative should pursue. The themes regarding the mission or goals of the PFSCS initiative included: Integration, Community Focus / Community Hub, Family Focus / Family Engagement, Student Success, and a Comprehensive System of Service Delivery.
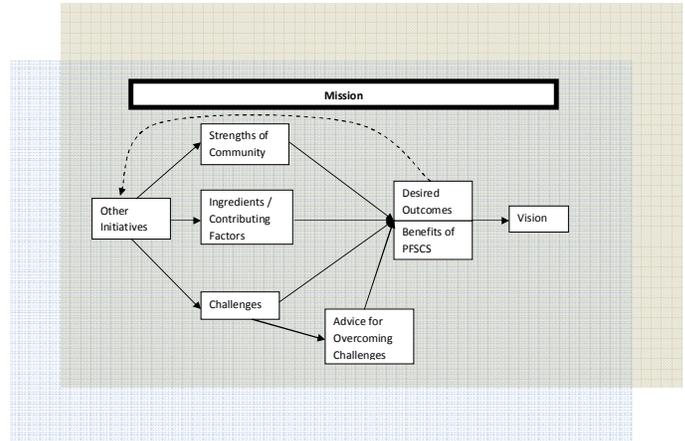
Integration. About half of the participants in this study thought that integrating the FSCS model within participating schools should be the mission or goal of the PFSCS initiative. Specifically, respondents felt that learning occurs across the day, including during the school day as well as Out of School Time activities. When discussing PFSCS programming, one interviewee said that we need "*to make sure that we're able to integrate our work with the work of the children during the school day.*"

Another aspect of this theme related to the goal of system-level change. Here respondents noted that community-based partners and the school needed to better align their respective missions to provide cohesive services and supports to children and families, as noted in the following: "*Both my understanding of the project as well as what I think is in children's best interest is to see schools far more integrated into other aspects of everything that's needed in order to have a healthy, well–adjusted, cognitively developed, socially developed, emotionally developed young person whether that's a preschool age child or a high school senior.*" The concept of the need for integration was based upon a broadened view of learning that went beyond in-school academics.

Community Focus / Community Hub. Stakeholders noted that eventually the school should function as a community hub, where community members come to obtain needed resources. One respondent said "*… it involves more people in the community, more of the players within the community, and by that I mean organizations that have more direct contact with the citizens and that's probably the most important distinction that I am aware of.*" Another person stated that the mission should be "*…to keep the schools open as a center of the community, to bring folks in. And in this community, we certainly need that, and again we have tried to do it on a small scale, but it's been very difficult for us without funding. So definitely to open the doors of the school, make it the center, and bring folks in.*"

Family Focus / Family Engagement. Stakeholders pointed out that the FSCS initiative has or should have a broad target audience. While desiring to improve students' academic indicators, respondents recognized that students are embedded in families and that the needs of families must be addressed in order for students to succeed. One respondent said that the FSCS

should focus on "*…supporting parents, and supporting the entire family. So through workshops and encouraging parent/teacher conferences, and meetings and that communication…*"

Student Success. At least seven of the participants in this study recognized that student success was embedded in the mission of the FSCS initiative. Some respondents clarified that they meant academic success, while others referred to student success in general or more broadly; some defined it to include student health and well-being.

Comprehensive System of Service Delivery. More than half of the participants in this study noted that the creation and provision of a comprehensive system of service delivery was a key component of the mission of FSCS. The following quote highlights this notion: "*To get as many children the help that they need. Because I know there's a cap and it's due to money…. But, somehow getting savvy with other organizations, like referring them, but then following through. We can always refer a family, but making sure that they go or that they get the help that they need for certain things because, you know how the economy and everything have been going, people have been desperate…*"

STRENGTHS

When asked to describe the strengths of the community that will help the Providence FSCS be successful, six themes emerged from responses. These themes focused on: Collaborations, Families, Leadership, Nonprofit Community, Organizational Providers and Staff/Teachers, and an Openness to Educational Improvement.
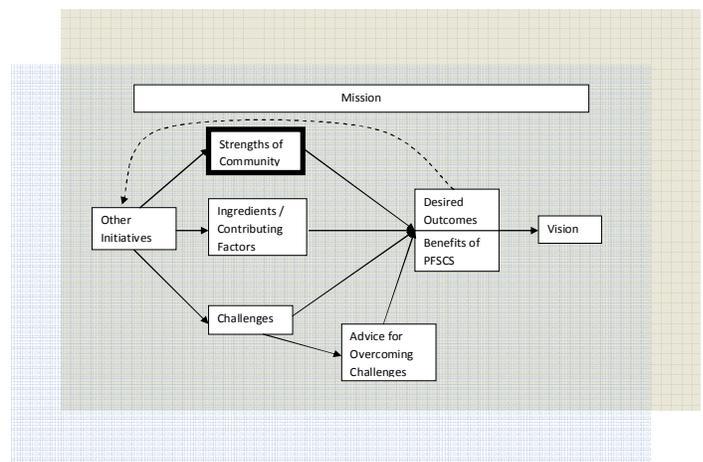
Collaborations. The most pervasive theme to emerge from this aspect of the study was the degree of collaboration occurring around PFSCS. This was described both broadly and also specifically, as noted in the following quote: "*I think there is an enormous amount of commitment and passion among people who work in all of these organizations who really believe in this work, who believe in collaboration, who know that a school on its own cannot be the answer to all of the issues that we're grappling with.*" One organization in isolation cannot meet all the needs of the children of Providence.

Families. Another clearly identifiable strength proposed by stakeholders was families. Although Providence tends to be culturally diverse, there is an emphasis on strong family bonds. Families and the diversity they represent were viewed by the respondents as strengths, but several interviewees also noted a potential challenge to implementation because families can be constrained by their physical and social environments. One person put it this way: "*…It's an array of families that come with different cultures and I think that that's a great benefit. And, at the same time, you can look at that as a challenge, a great challenge, because everyone is at*

different levels, with literacy and just their economic stability. And at the end, parents will choose their livelihood before they think of education, even though education is very, very important to them…"

Leadership. At multiple levels, the local leadership was viewed as a key attribute contributing to the current and future success of the Providence FSCS. The majority of comments regarding leadership tended to focus on the role of the mayor and superintendent. "*…There's the political leadership of the mayor and the superintendent, which are invaluable, and they 'get it' that it takes a whole community."* Additionally, the commissioner, program director, and legislators were also cited as key stakeholders providing crucial leadership.

Nonprofit Community. The diversity and dedication of the local nonprofit community were pointed out as additional core strengths of the initiative. Stakeholders recognized that there are many resources available in the relatively small city of Providence: "*…its rich and diverse array of nonprofit organizations and agencies. I think they can come to add value and support this initiative. I think they also have specific expertise around outreach and marketing, and community organizing, empowerment, certainly in the area of extended learning opportunities, and just a very rich… fabric of agencies and nonprofits that could be…assisting their work."* The Providence nonprofit community has a diversity of perspectives that may add value to the PFSCS initiative over time.

Organizational Providers/Teachers/Staff. Stakeholders appreciated both organizational providers and staff as strengths in the FSCS initiative. From the organizational side, some stakeholders recognized the pre-existing connections among involved organizations as a key attribute of the Providence FSCS. Other respondents focused on the importance of the involvement of particular organizations including the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), Dorcas Place, YMCA, and Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance (RIASPA). On the personal side, some stakeholders mentioned a number of individuals who were in key roles in PFSCS including teachers, parent engagement specialists, and site directors. Finally, the generalized sentiment that the initiative represents the efforts of hardworking and passionate individuals cannot be understated, as highlighted here: "*…I do know that the Y, the 21st century with the Y, plays a humungous part in helping the school. They're like the top, in my eyes. You go to them and they can reach for the stars… The parent liaison…She's phenomenal in getting stuff in, like emergency contacts, forms for this, forms for that. She'll go. She'll call them. She'll come and get them. She goes, 'I'll send you a taxi.' So that's huge, because I mean, if we don't get everyone's lunch application, we lose Title 1 money. So she'll go and make sure…"*

An Openness to Educational Improvement. "*This idea has traction in Providence."* Respondents spoke positively of the high level of openness that the community has to the concepts of a FSCS model. There is a clear desire to hone and improve the educational system in Providence for the betterment of students and families.

FACTORS LEADING TO THE CREATION OF THE INITIATIVE

There is a lot to be said for timing when it comes to the emergence of a large scale reform effort like the FSCS in Providence. This category illuminates stakeholder perceptions about some of the key ingredients that helped the FSCS initiative to take hold in Providence. The theme might be best illustrated by a respondent who said, *"I think that, what is that,* <u>The Perfect Storm</u>*, that movie? It explains how all these things come together…"* The following six themes were listed by stakeholders as key contributing factors for the start up of the FSCS initiative in Providence: Funding, Sense of Purpose, Leadership, Immense Need, Partnerships, and Building on an Established Foundation.
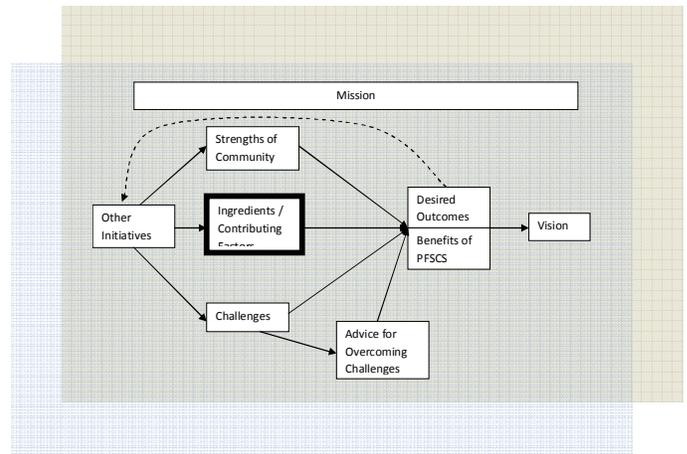
Funding. *"Money, first and foremost, you have to have the funds."* Stakeholders understood the vital role of funders to the establishment (and sustainment) of PFSCS. Funders needed to be interested in doing this type of work. Seed money needed to be provided and then these funds allowed the initiative to actually start to accomplish its mission.

Sense of Purpose. Beyond funding, stakeholders mentioned that individuals and affiliated organizations had a sense of purpose. Four sub-themes to the larger theme of sense of purpose emerged from the data: 1) a clear vision was required; 2) dedicated individuals had to come together; 3) a collective recognition for education reform to better serve children in an urban environment needed to underlie #1 and 2, and finally, 4) an agreement that FSCS provide what appears to be a better model for meeting these needs. One respondent captured this idea in the following: *"…you have to have some people that have a vision. I would also say a little bit of anger or frustration, to see things change. And then a willingness to have that vision altered a little bit because nothing ever goes smoothly"*. Individuals and affiliated organizations were and are dedicated to collaboration in order to address the immense needs of students in Providence.

Immense Need. The immense need of families and schools in Providence was a major driving factor in the origins of the FSCS initiative. This theme was conveyed repeatedly by interviewees and is illustrated by the following quote: *"Need, I mean it's certainly based on need, and they, in writing the grant, they have targeted the neediest communities. I mean, the West End, we have the highest gang activity. We have the most murders and prostitution and drug activity that's going on in the city…"*

Leadership. The interviewees saw those in leadership positions as key components in the initiation of FSCS in Providence. Supportive leadership roles included the mayor, the superintendent, the commissioner, other administrators at the school department, and leaders of community based organizations. Respondents were optimistic about new leaders in Providence who would support this model: *"I can't ignore the fact that there's new leadership in Providence, new leadership at the superintendent level, and there are some new administrators*

as well, within the school system. There [is] certainly new leadership at the Rhode Island Department of Education…"

Building on an Established Foundation. PFSCS did not evolve in isolation, but rather builds on a history of educational improvement initiatives in the area. *"So in Rhode Island in general over the past five to ten years, really actually ten to fifteen years, there has been a growth in after-school programs in general, both in quantity and quality. And then you had this Community School Initiative with United Way, and then…the Providence After-school Alliance, serving middle school youth. And so you have all these different initiatives kind of bubbling up to build the field some more, and some of them very specific to Community Schools, some more general to after-school. So they've really been developing over time."* Stakeholders in this study recognized that PFSCS is being built on an established foundation of other initiatives in Providence. For example, respondents noted that PFSCS was shaped by and is emerging from strategic afterschool programming that has been part of Rhode Island during the past decade. A variety of programs and initiatives were listed including: Casey Foundation/Making Connections, PASA, RIASPA, Toyota Literacy grant, the district's Parent Engagement Office, the Wallace Foundation, the Urban Education Task Force, the Mott Foundation's New Day for Learning initiative, the Children's Opportunity Zones, and the earlier Community Schools – RI initiative.

Partnerships. Stakeholders also credited the emergence of the FSCS model in Providence to strong partnerships. As one respondent noted, *"I think because they have funding and strong partnerships through this new initiative, they will be able to do a deeper job of creating on-site services or referral systems or partnerships with the agencies and organizations that can serve the families."* Indeed, according to interviewees, it is partnerships not only between community based organizations, but also between community based organizations and systems level administrators and politicians that have led to the FSCS initiative in Providence. Another stakeholder stated: *"I mean, you can have all of the community based organizations that you want and they can affect a certain amount of change, but it's so much more powerful when you've got the folks that actually pull levers, and affect system change [in conjunction] with folks that are very much in touch with what the community actually needs."*

DIFFERENCES/ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER INITIATIVES

It was clear from this study that PFSCS is emerging in a broader context of organizations, climate, and culture of Providence, particularly as it pertains to K-12 education. The participants discussed some of the differences and similarities between PFSCS and other initiatives and groups in Providence. This thematic category is comprised of the following: Casey, Children Opportunity Zone's and Community Schools
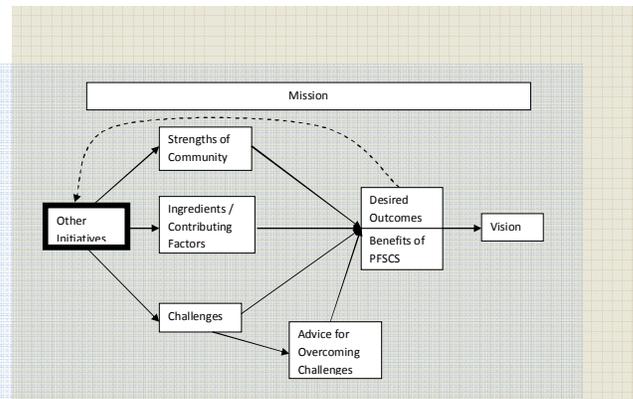
Rhode Island, Providence After-school Alliance, Collaboration – Integration, Comprehensiveness, Don't know, and No Differences.

Annie E. Casey / Making Connections. Annie E. Casey is a national organization that has invested money into improving educational outcomes in Providence over the past decade. Their support funds key components of the PFSCS initiative, in particular the reading intervention designed to improve third grade reading scores. A number of stakeholders discussed PFSCS synonymously with the Casey work in Providence, although one stakeholder clarified that they saw the PFSCS initiative building on the work of Casey. Some of the interviewed stakeholders had been primarily exposed to the PFSCS initiative through involvement with Casey. Some participants implied the synonymous relationship between the Casey investment and the PFSCS initiative by focusing on the third grade reading score indicator. One respondent stated, *"Well, one thing that I think is true is that, with Bailey in particular, the emphasis on moving the needle on reading has been a more intentional way to use the resources for the community school toward a specific objective."* Recently, Casey, in connection with Foundations, Inc. has provided the opportunity for an administrator to be housed at the Providence Public School Department to support work around third grade reading scores.

Child Opportunity Zones and Community Schools - Rhode Island. At least four stakeholders compared, contrasted, or stated how PFSCS builds upon the Rhode Island Department of Education's Child Opportunity Zones and the United Way's Community Schools – RI initiative. An example of this theme is provided by the following quote: *"I feel like it is building on some of the community school models that the United Way funded and that the COZ sort of model in 21st Century funded model, so I feel like it's building on some of those elementary school models…"* The Child Opportunity Zone's provide concurrent afterschool programming in various sites throughout Rhode Island. *"Well, the fact that they were a COZ site for fifteen years meant that they already had some form of an infrastructure. The CBO, in this case Dorcas, had already formed a partnership with some schools. So there was already a school link."* Additionally, there had been an earlier Community School model in Rhode Island. From 2001-2007, this initiative funded by United Way applied the community school model to four middle schools throughout Rhode Island (Newport, Providence, West Warwick, and Pawtucket). This model appeared to have a smaller breadth of desired impact; they focused "on creating after-school organizations with enrichment and academic opportunities for students, with a few additional parent workshops and events." (Brandeis University - Center for Youth and Families 2007: 11). At present, the work at the previous CSRI partner middle schools is differentially conceived and has different funding mechanisms at each of the sites.

Providence After-School Alliance. Three participants described PASA as a key local initiative. The role of PASA in PFSCS may be ambiguous to stakeholders, although PASA is recognized as being a key local education initiative that needs to be "at the table." One respondent put it this way: *"because the community schools started with elementary schools and because PASA started with middle schools, it really gives us some good continuity. So what you're doing will not be for naught when [the students] get to middle school, thousands and thousands of Providence kids are enrolled in some sort of part of the PASA program for Providence After-school Alliance. I assume there'll be a lot of communities that the feds are in,*

where that is not the case...So I think it's going to be an asset that should be paid attention to in this evaluation because you're going to have that benefit that other communities won't have. You can keep that energy going."

Collaboration – Integration. A dominant theme when addressing how PFSCS aligns with and/or differs from other initiatives had to do with collaboration and integration as noted in the following: *"[FSCS is] different in that it involves all key stakeholders, or it involves many key stakeholders with the recognition that if agencies serving children come together under one umbrella, that will be more effective, and so it's different in that way. It's not one group or just a school by itself saying, 'we're going to try to deal with these issues'."* Again, there is a focus on the need to partner to more fully address the immense needs of children and families in Providence.

Additionally, a sub-theme emerged that focused specifically on the relationship between the school and community partners, which is highlighted in the following: *"…it's become more connected to initiatives that are occurring in the Providence school department. The initiatives that full service, particularly around the academic piece, the connections were very strong. We made certain that any of the academic pieces that were before or after-school were very aligned with [the school department's] new curriculum or with the curriculum that we're continuing to build and write."*

Comprehensiveness. Another dominant theme was that PFSCS is substantially more comprehensive than past programs and initiatives. PFSCS builds on an understanding that families need additional supports to promote student success, broadly defined. The following two quotes bring respondent voices to this theme: *"… [I]t's much broader, in terms of what, the education that's offered, and it's not just school based education. It's more community based education."* Another respondent stated: *"…It just covers a broad array of issues that are really important for a kid to be able to succeed, and I'm not aware of another, such a comprehensive approach."*

Not sure. *"I don't know enough about it to know whether it's different or whether it adds value, or it's redundant or duplicative."* Some participants stated that they could not comment on how the PFSCS model is different or similar to other initiatives because they did not know enough about it.

No differences. Four interviewees stated that they did not think that PFSCS was different from other education reform initiatives. Three hinted that it may be different from other initiatives locally, but there is much discussion around FSCS nationally, after all FSCS is part of a national full service community schools funding mechanism. *"There is a lot of talk about it, certainly a lot of talk at the federal government level, wanting to bring folks in and make schools the center of activity, and keep the doors open for longer periods of time and the need is certainly there…"* These participants see increasing national support for the full service model. One participant said that PFSCS was similar to other education initiatives in the challenges it posed toward integrating school and FSCS agendas.

CHALLENGES FACING THE CREATION OF THE PROVIDENCE FSCS

Arguably the most important set of findings to emerge from this study were in regard to stakeholders perceptions of the greatest challenges facing the Providence FSCS. The following were listed as challenges or barriers by interviewed FSCS stakeholders.

Capacity – Ambitious. Stakeholders pointed out that PFSCS is an ambitious initiative and they were concerned about the capacity of the initiative to be fully implemented and then sustained. One respondent put it as follows: "*…it takes huge energy over time, relentlessness to be figuring out the transportation issues, the timing issues, the contractual issues, the how do you blend two worlds of non-school personnel and school personnel and all of those things are not for the faint of heart.*" Concern also was expressed specifically about building the needed infrastructure for the initiative. Both programmatic and systemic foundations need to be built to support the initiative achieving its desired outcomes and mission.
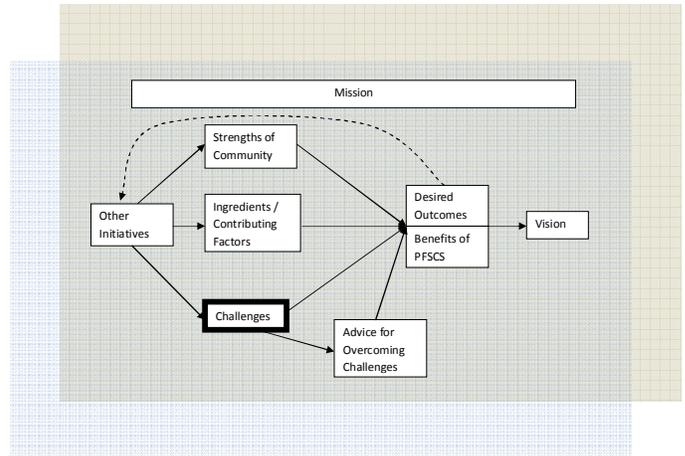
Communication. The importance of communication was a key theme throughout the interviews. Communication at all levels, from parent - teacher interactions to school - non-school staff interactions, and to leader - public interactions, was highlighted as providing potential challenges to the success of the PFSCS initiative. One interviewee discussing the challenges faced by parents communicating with schools said: "*99.9 tenths of parents are interested in their kids, but how to navigate a system that doesn't benefit their kids and that can very often rob you of your motivation.*" The same respondent later went on to talk about the challenges of communicating at the system level, "*[I]n order to change the system, you need some collective connection, and so how do you do that? And then if you look at most of the power structures, it's based on the dominant, those who are in power tend to be mostly white. And those that are of color that work in that system have to acquiesce to that system of values and the way things get done…I don't have an answer, but at least it needs to be acknowledged and talked about. And, you have to hear what people experience when they're going through it. And so, how do you create those conversations, that dialogue, and that shared knowledge?*"

At the level of communication between collaborators, one person pointed out the importance communication between teachers and community agencies: "*It's more about just the work about, at each individual's school, making sure that relationship is really strong between the school teachers and the community-based organizations.*" The difficulties of communication between collaborators linked to the next theme: Continued Collaboration.

Continued Collaboration. Stakeholders saw long-term collaboration as potentially challenging for the initiative. Specifically, interviewees discussed how relationships and important roles are "institutionalized" so that they last beyond the tenure of specific personalities or persons. This point is highlighted in the following quote: "*By definition of being a full service community school requires that you collaborate with all kinds of organizations, and while we all*

pay lip service to collaboration, it's really, really, really hard and it takes a lot of time and it takes nurturing of relationships. It's a lot easier to do it on your own than it is to try to collaborate. So, I think, and that doesn't mean that it's because it's a barrier, it doesn't mean that you don't still keep doing it, but I think acknowledging how hard that work is and, you know, I think especially when resources are so scare as they are these days, every individual organization that you're trying to collaborate with is in a survival mode. So in some ways it becomes easier to bring people together and in some ways it's harder. So I just think that's a barrier to the extent that it's hard work."

The Economy. The state of the economy was another key theme expressed throughout the interviews. Respondents discussed the impact of the economy from several different perspectives: (a) broadly, (b) as a challenge faced by families as well as the school district, and (c) in regards to sustainability of the PFSCS initiative long-term. Respondents noted that children's services are already notoriously underfunded and the addition of the recent crisis makes things that much worse. One participant noted: *"The financial crisis we have. So, you know, all the childcare services are underfunded. Mental health services are <u>not</u> funded in this state, and the overall economic joblessness crisis…We have the third, second or third highest unemployment rate in the country…and the second to worst state economy. Doesn't get any worse than that! And the sustainability of almost all the community school models in the country have been based on city and state funding."*

Respondents also highlighted concern with how education is funded in Rhode Island as creating an ongoing challenge for school districts. *"I would say funding is a huge issue…. number one we don't have a school funding formula, which we're the only state that doesn't have one. If we were able to transition to one, it would be more likely that there would be funding based on student need and student enrollment and be able to, weights for various poverty and ESL and Special Ed that tend to be much more likely to be the case in Providence. So that's a barrier and with the increasing state budget deficit and the cuts to cities and towns, I think it's just become very, very difficult to try to do things like this, which are so important to overall success in a sea of cuts. You know, I think fortunately the federal funding is very important to keep Providence at it, but it just is worrisome that there's this underlying problem of predictable funding."*

Integration. Another key theme throughout the interviews including discussion around challenges was integration, particularly of school and community partners. *"The challenge is if the principal and the teachers are not bought in and good equal partners with the community-based organizations, then challenges come up a lot."*

Family Engagement. Creating and sustaining authentic family engagement was seen as a challenge to the success of the FSCS. This broad category included both (a) the need to improve family - teacher interactions, and (b) to make schools welcoming and accessible environments for families. One participant stated, *"…gaining the trust of parents, so you know, instilling in parents that they could trust [the staff]. I am here and maybe I live here…but when parents feel like you know them; you know where they live. You know the community and you know their language because that's the other thing, I mean, their comfort zone is pretty much if I don't speak English [well], then I want to make sure that I am able to communicate to support my*

child. And when they don't have that, it really is a great limitation. That stops a parent's effort to advocate for their child. That is crucial."

A third sub-theme expressed by a minority of the sample was the frustration that ongoing attempts to engage families were unsuccessful. One participant mentioned, *"I feel like we're always trying to get the parents in; it's always a barrier though."*

Politics. The theme of Politics was supported and given voice by several different stakeholders in this study. Two areas comprised this theme: politics in general and the lack of funding formula for the state. *"I think there are some political challenges. Rhode Island is a highly political state. For our small size, politics is everything here. And so that may be somewhat of a challenge. Perhaps labor contracts, as I mentioned earlier, Providence right now is going through litigation and trying to implement the commissioners' order and it's being fought every step of the way by the union. So there may be union issues around this particular model, and perhaps even more union issues if one of the goals is to replicate this elsewhere or broader, in a more broad way…Yeah, I think resources, perhaps labor contracts, and then the politics of Providence, the politics of Rhode Island."*

Closely related to Politics and the next theme of School Culture were issues surrounding the **Union**. Specifically, several respondents saw the Teachers' Union as a potential impediment to the work of the PFSCS initiative.

School Culture. This was another pervasive theme across the interviews. It was closely related to several other themes, including communication, family engagement, and territorialism. In the voice of one respondent, *"Well, I think the greatest barrier is the schools themselves, that they are overwhelmed with expectations either from their own district or from the state, mandates and requirements and things they have to address and deal with. So I think it's very difficult for a school to embrace anything new, that I think there are strategies that help schools see how this would relieve some of their burden, but it takes very personalized relationships, and a series of successful experiences that would bring along the average teacher, principal, administrator, whoever is in the building….I think that there needs to be a series of experiences where teachers <u>see</u> that this Initiative is helping <u>them</u>, because I think they're very overwhelmed."* Schools and affiliated staff are not necessarily opposed to a FSCS model, but have been jaded by negative experiences in the past and unsuccessful attempts at collaborations and the communication required for a FSCS model to be successful. Schools and community based organizations need to be recognized as equal partners with a new model of how learning occurs. Learning is the area where schools and school staff have recognized expertise, but not potentially the larger context of non-academic student outcomes situated in the community. Therefore, not only the school culture needs to adapt to better meet the needs of students and families, but also the community based partners need to recognize the equal partnership of the school and school staff. This leads into the next theme of territoriality.

Territoriality. Territoriality was mentioned as a key theme. Stakeholders recognized that "turf issues" might impede development of the PFSCS at multiple levels from community partner-school interactions to the sharing of data. One participant mentioned, *"Well, I assume there will be some friction around roles, and again those are delicate situations that need to be addressed right away and smoothed out as things come up, and it could be as simple as we're*

bringing in health services so the school nurse feels threatened; [it] could mean we're referring families to Family Service for counseling and it threatens the social worker. [It] could be that we're doing a Reading ramp-up summer program and it threatens the classroom teacher. So I think, obviously if everybody is on board and understand that the goal here is to help the kid with all these multiple measures, people if they get it, they can let go of that stuff, but most people don't get it, and what they get is feeling threatened. So I think those things need to be addressed very quickly before it gathers a momentum of its own...

Transience. Concern about transience for families was another challenge raised by stakeholders. As noted in the following quote, transience makes it difficult to engage families and track associated outcomes over time. "*Last year I saw the increase [in homelessness] and heard of it more. I don't know if I just wasn't involved with it as much or I heard of it a lot more last year.*"

The System as a Barrier. The final theme in this category, System, was less clear or unified. Some stakeholders recognized that the system itself creates barriers to some of the tenets of the FSCS model (e.g., family engagement). Others pointed out how important it is that the initiative be embedded in the larger education reform movement if lasting change is to occur.

ADVICE FOR OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Immediately following the question on the challenges facing the creation of a FSCS initiative in Providence, respondents were asked for their advice on how to overcome noted challenges. As expected, responses tended to focus on two areas: Communication and collaboration.

Communication. It cannot be overstated how much importance stakeholders placed on communication in this study and the question about advice was no exception. "Communicate" was **the** major theme for advice to overcome noted challenges for PFSCS. In general, communication was noted as needing to be bidirectional and sustained into the future. At least 11 of the 18 interviewees gave advice related to improving communication. One participant noted,

> "*Yeah, it has been working, but I notice there are little gaps, you know, in between. Like with, there are so many different meetings, not all of us can get to everything so having maybe a newsletter or something saying, "this is going on", little blurbs of stuff through an email or through a hard copy, whatever, you know, a note.*"

Another participant stated,

> "*...so all those meetings, as long as they are happening, and as long as the principal is abreast of everything and that the FSC team is sure that there is feedback from teachers, you*
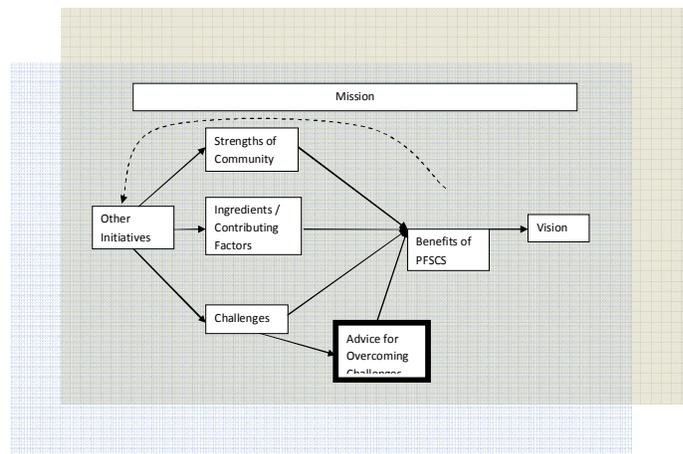
know…because you are in a building, you're in someone else's home, and you want to make sure that you will always be invited, and so I think that the communication is going to be critical. And the only person that can make that happen is the principal because the principal is who is going to make sure that if a parent wants to talk to a teacher, the principal is who is going to make sure that they can go ahead and actually get someone, you know, another teacher, to cover the classroom, while that happens."

Additionally, there needs to be consistent messaging from school administration to the public. Specifically, interviewees suggested that PFSCS needs to be promoted as an educational program and that PFSCS is not a "frills" program, but rather provides a form of social equity, helping to equalize the playing field for children who live in resource-poor neighborhoods with a swarm of affiliated barriers to success. One person said, *"I'd say for leaders that have influence to continue to promote the idea that this is part of an educational program. It's much easier to cut things that are seen as frills, but if we continue to be true to looking at the research and looking at the results from across the country and realizing that this is really key. What this is doing is nothing less than trying to equalize what students in the suburbs have versus what students in the inner city have."*

Respondents also identified several important communication loops that need to be established and maintained. These included communication between PFSCS and (1) Families; (2) Program staff – to fill in any gaps; (3) School principals – who can facilitate communication with staff and families; and (4) District staff. Finally, respondents suggested that better communication was needed between and among the larger educational initiatives in Providence if PFSCS is to reach maturity. Examples included: PASA, Making Connections, New Day for Learning, and RIASPA.

Work with Partners. Strongly related to communication, respondents focused on the need for all FSCS stakeholders to work with all FSCS partners. Obviously, some partnerships are more or less important than others, but the idea was that key stakeholders must be engaged in building a jointly-owned system. Developing a set of shared outcomes was suggested as a way to overcome challenges through collaboration.

BENEFITS OF A FSCS INITIATIVE
Respondents were asked to comment on the benefits of having a FSCS initiative in Providence. These themes focused on Collaboration, the establishment of a Comprehensive System of Supports for Families, Student Success, School Functioning, School Culture, and Evaluation and Accountability. The themes generated in the response to the perceived benefits of the FSCS are presented in Figure 3.
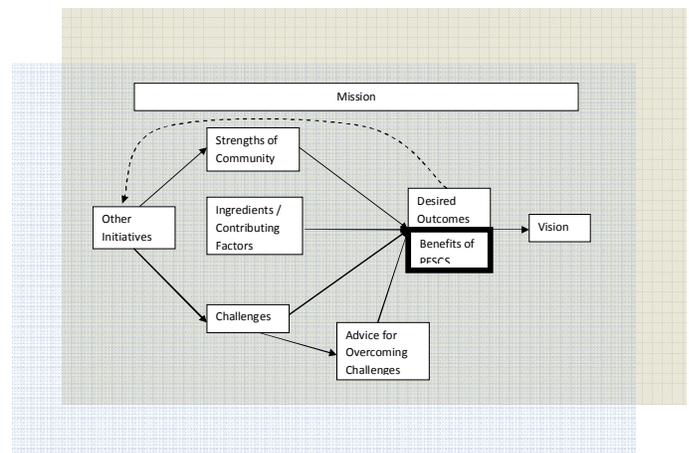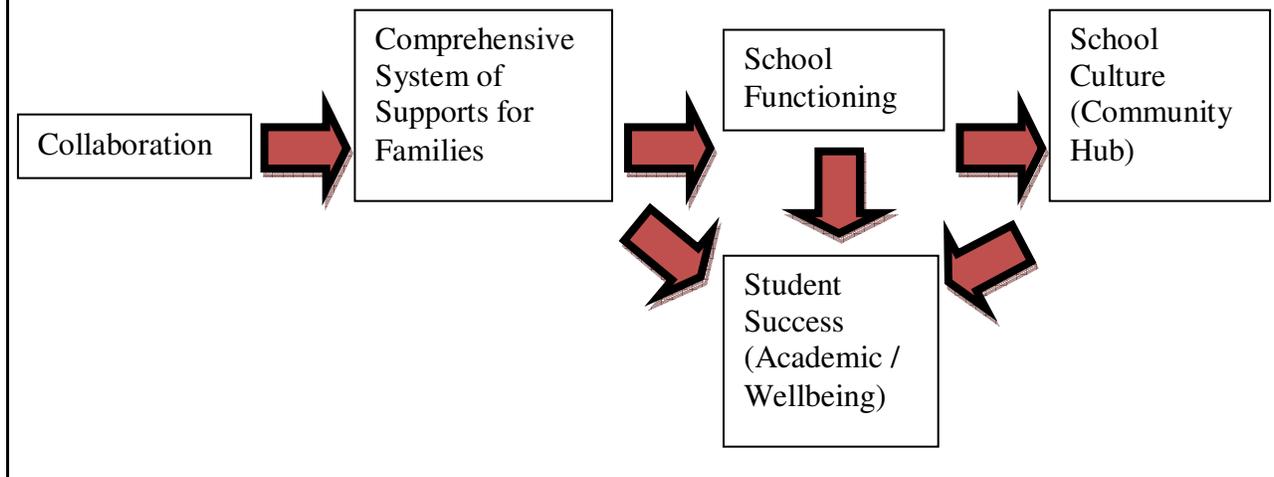
Figure 3. Stakeholder Perceived Benefits of the Providence FSCS Initiative

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┌─────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│ Collaboration│  ━▶ │ Comprehensive│  ━▶ │   School     │  ━▶ │   School     │
│             │      │ System of    │      │ Functioning  │      │   Culture    │
│             │      │ Supports for │      │              │      │ (Community   │
│             │      │ Families     │      │              │      │    Hub)      │
└─────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
                                        ↘        ┃          ↙
                                          ┌──────────────┐
                                          │   Student    │
                                          │   Success    │
                                          │ (Academic /  │
                                          │  Wellbeing)  │
                                          └──────────────┘
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Collaboration. Stakeholders recognized that collaboration needs to occur in order to meet the needs of children and families and that the PFSCS initiative was a model for doing just this. *"We won't improve unless the city cares and the state cares and not only the city and the state, businesses, universities, private citizens. We're not going to do, this is not work you do alone."*

Comprehensive System of Supports for Families. At least half of the interviewees noted that the creation and provision of a comprehensive system of family supports was a key benefit of the PFSCS initiative. Some respondents specifically mentioned building the system as key, while others noted the provision of services as an important benefit. One participant noted, *"The great benefit is to build an integrated system of supports for children's learning and academic achievement and development."*

Student Success. One stakeholder stated, *"Certainly the goal is to have kids functioning at or above grade level, but the bigger benefit or an equally important benefit is kids who are academically prepared, but also from a health perspective where they need to be and in terms of the social services that they need and in terms of their social and emotional development that in all areas of a kid's development that they are."* Respondents described two aspects of students' success as important benefits of having a FSCS in Providence. First, students' academic success was noted as a key benefit, which theoretically results from the comprehensive system of supports to alleviate historic barriers to academic success (e.g., homelessness). Other stakeholders described student success more broadly as engagement in learning, increased self worth, and improved health.

School Functioning. Some stakeholders viewed PFSCS as a method of improving school procedures and operations. For example, teachers would no longer have to focus as much energy on family concerns because families could be referred to case managers who could connect them with appropriate services. One participant mentioned, *"…being able to help to support that child in his learning and that requires a lot of different things. I mean, we have kids who come to*

school hungry or homeless or, you know, from abusive homes, and but also where we have parents who are struggling. I mean they are new to the country. They are second language learners and they're new so they don't even understand what the community could do to support them as they struggle through to support their children and their families…So…some of that outreach [has been done in the past] through our social worker to get support for families, but it doesn't seem to be quick enough and this partnership seems to be intimating that it's going to be faster."

School Culture (Community Hub). Another key theme was changing the school culture. Ideally, the school would become a place for all community members – and not just families of students in the school – to access services and supports. Teachers and community-based providers would begin to work together and integrate services. The common goal would become improving student success. This sentiment is captured by the following statement: *"There are things that we can't do at the school level. We can look towards these other providers and say 'hey, we need your help with this' or 'we need your help with that'. I think sometimes we overlook what we have here, and we go right to the outside. And that's what our committee does… We give referrals to John Hope. We were able to form a committee because we wanted the professionals in the building, the psychologists, social worker and […] the nurse, to be at the table and say 'oh, what about this kid?' So we could say 'I've already worked with them. We're already doing this', or 'I haven't worked with them yet. Let me try to find some things out', instead of saying 'oh yeah, just put them in to make a referral'."*

Evaluation and Accountability. Stakeholders saw the process of program evaluation as a key benefit arising from the FSCS initiative. The federal requirements for a longitudinal evaluation will provide an opportunity to study the process and evolution of the FSCS initiative in Providence. Stakeholders were particularly interested in using data and lessons learned to establish best practices for expansion. Moreover, systematic evaluation will also increase accountability by requiring the community to study the degree to which aspects of the FSCS are working and can be improved. One stakeholder stated: *"Shine the spotlight, that's the number one thing, and so that spotlight spotlights the positive, but also spotlights the challenges. It because, using the word 'focus', there is a focus that creates learning, that looks at best practices…just a primarily a focus on hopefully what works best, but also what the challenges are."*

OUTCOMES FOR THE PROVIDENCE FSCS INITIATIVE

Respondents in this study were asked to identify key outcomes for the Providence FSCS initiative. Although some interviewees were more specific than others about the indicators that they would like to see measured, 11 outcomes were noted.
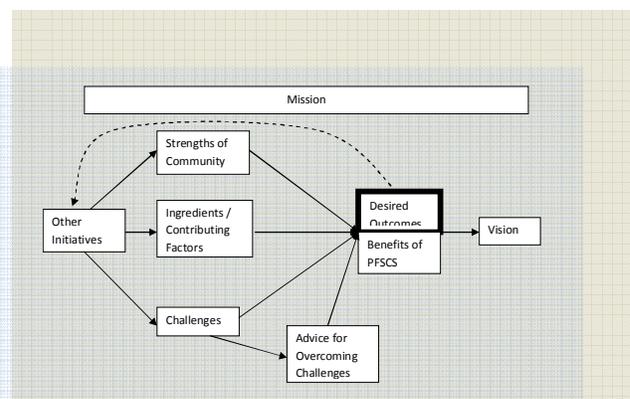
Access to Support Services. At least half of participants noted that access to support services should be a key outcome of the FSCS initiative. Some made connections between access to support services and other themes discussed below, such as student success. Theoretically, improved access to support services should lead to increased participation, another indicator mentioned by three participants. In the words of one respondent, *"Short-term outcomes should be developing a set of supports and linkages between the schools in these programs that are based on an analysis of the needs of the children and their families."*

Family Engagement. At least half of participants mentioned family engagement as a key outcome. Respondents noted that improved family engagement hinges upon adequate and appropriate communication. *"I'd like for parents to be reporting that they feel more connected to their school, more involved in their school."* Several participants also thought that **family literacy** should be included in measured outcomes.

Partnerships. Eight interviewees mentioned that partnerships need to be an outcome, particularly partnerships between school and non-school entities. One stakeholder mentioned, *"…increased relationship and more defined relationship between community partners and schools".*

School Climate. At least half of participants viewed improved school climate as an important outcome for the Providence FSCS initiative. Comments were related to family engagement, teacher engagement, improved communication, and partnerships among community based organizations, businesses, and schools to promote student success. *"…[A]ll these folks in the building, the kids were interacting, the folks that are working in the programs, and the teachers are working in this partnership, so that kids don't slip through the cracks. So that we have, we are the kind of place where families feel like they can come and they can be supportive, and the same for us. We can reach out to the community, and this partnership of being able to, you know we've got this kid; we need to do some things for this child, to support this family and this child's success. So that's what we would want, that give and take. Because I see it as a full partnership. I don't see it as [community based organizations] coming in and doing [something to the school]. I see it as all of us working together."*

Student Success. Respondents referred to student success generally, academically, and more holistically as a measure of well-being. While recognizing the importance of academic success, some stakeholders provided the caveat of being careful in making the connections between PFSCS interventions and academic indicators.

In another concept of success, four participants clearly stated outcomes related to the Making Connections' outcome of improving grade three reading scores. This overlap highlights that some may see Making Connections and PFSCS as synonymous or that the Making Connections side of PFSCS has received more publicity and attention from these stakeholders. *"…[T]he long-term outcomes around student outcomes would obviously need to be enumerated in a logic model so that, you know, they weren't promising too much, but, I would assume, they're hoping to get some academic outcomes, but I think social and emotional outcomes and leadership and civic outcomes are just as important… be careful how much they can promise from an academic standpoint. I think that it's all related, but a direct academic outcome would*

be more likely measured by an indicator like using engagement and attendance and that kind of thing…"

School Attendance. At least seven participants believed that a key indicator of the success of the Providence FSCS would be improved school attendance.

Engagement in Learning. At least six respondents said that student engagement in learning should be a key outcome. Further, engagement in learning should be linked to student success in general and possibly in academics as well. One respondent stated, *"If we have schools that are achieving, I think we could say that we have happy kids that value education and families that value education...see a brighter future ahead of them and possibly what families might see as an obstacle now getting into higher education and see that it is possible, and also preparing them for whatever careers or world of work they decide to tackle once they get out of high school."*

Evaluation. At least five interviewees were interested in evaluation itself as a key outcome for the FSCS initiative. These stakeholders were interested in clearly defining indicators, the relationships between short and long term indicators, and the sharing of information for expansion and collaboration with other local education efforts. One stakeholder stated, *"…a set of measures so you can demonstrate progress. And then, an analysis of policies and practices to be essentially strengthened or overhauled so this work can go to scale."*

Systems Building. At least five stakeholders noted that a key outcome of the FSCS initiative should be systems building, including building the infrastructure and policy connections for long term impact. *"I think narrowly how can we use the experience of full service community school at Bailey, Lima, Fortes and beyond, as an example, for how we need to be changing the system locally?.."*

Higher Education. Three participants mentioned the long term goal of improved admittance and graduation from institutions of higher education.

Sustainability. Three participants said that sustainability is an important outcome of the initiative and needs to be measured.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE
At the end of the interview, participants were asked to describe how they envision the PFSCS initiative in five years.

Sustainability and Replication.
At least half of the interviewed stakeholders hope to see the FSCS
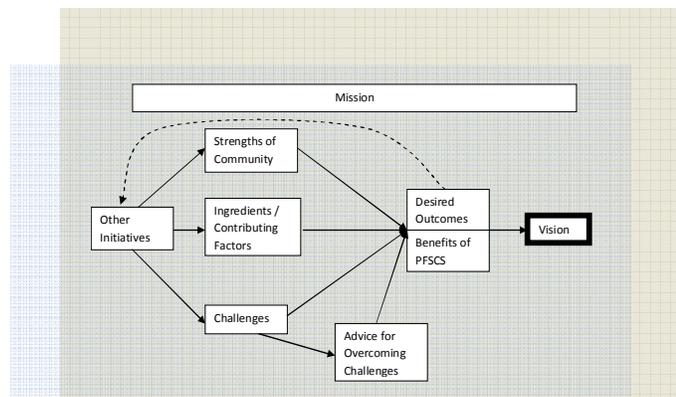
sustainable within five years. The majority of comments referenced funding and the need for a model for funding, including grant writing, city or district funding, and sustained funding from current funding sources. Similarly, respondents envisioned that the model would be expanded across Providence, both in terms of serving more students in current schools as well as replication into new schools, including elementary (seven stakeholders) and secondary (five stakeholders). A few stakeholders mentioned the need to expand the FSCS model to include students before enrollment in elementary school.

Culture Change. As noted elsewhere in these findings, respondents expressed the desire for culture change in Providence. A sub-theme focused on authentic, effective family engagement with clear two way communication. As noted by one participant, *"Well, I know right now, because they are trying to engage parents, they are trying to listen to parents. But I think one of the other issues is how do you share information with parents that's helpful and beneficial to them? And I would hope that out of this process that that comes out. As an active and engaged parent myself, it's still confusing at times, you know."*
Another sub-theme described the integration of school and non-school entities with shared outcomes. The topic of culture change also included the vision for schools as community hubs with service provision for students, families, and community members. The schools should serve as centers providing links to services outside of the school day. One stakeholder noted, *"…And having staff after-school at night so if kids want to come in and play basketball, then, let them use the gym and play basketball. Who can monitor that to keep the school safe and the kids safe? Like stuff like that because they can't go outside and play. There are a few times when [the students at a FSCS school] couldn't go out for recess because there's been gun fire."*

Comprehensive System of Service Delivery. At least seven participants shared their desire for a comprehensive system of services. One interviewee noted, *"…services to children and their families would be much deeper. And although the focus remains on academic success, that we're able to wrap the services fully around families that will include everything from, you know, family support, behavioral support, and family engagement, health and wellness. So that we're really doing a full wrap around service to children and their families, that it is a normal way of doing work."*

Evaluation. At least five stakeholders wanted to see systematic evidence of PFSCS' successes, as noted in this quote: *"I'd like to see a line of indicators, leading and lagging, and the measures that are going to be used, including academic ones, but also ones that affect health, that look at cultural adaptations and relations and the economic wellbeing and citizenship, as other indicators of progress. But, you've got to map those out beforehand. They should be used in the formal evaluation."* Through various conversations, stakeholders have also expressed an interest in a cost-benefit analysis of a FSCS model.

Student Success. The success of Providence's students was a clear theme of the five year vision for PFSCS. Some mentioned student success in general, while others mentioned improvement in academic and well-being indicators. In reference to indicators of student success beyond academics, one participant mentioned, *"I would hope that there are partners*

within the full service community school that can bring that critical part of education back into the picture because we have so lost it."

Social Equity. Finally, three stakeholders clearly saw PFSCS as an initiative founded on improving social equity, envisioning that the FSCS model has the potential to decrease educational disparities for urban districts. The following quote captures this sentiment. "*What this is doing is nothing less than trying to equalize what students in the suburbs have versus what students in the inner city have… the resources have always been scarcer. The parent involvement has been less welcome, were it possible given parent's work schedules, or a combination of the two. Students lose out when they don't have the enriching opportunities that children have in more affluent districts, when they don't have that sense of the whole community is rooting for them that you have when you go into a suburban school with tons of parents coming for open house. That matters. It's been too long that I think that we've said, 'well, there are ways to overcome that during the school day' and there really aren't…[FSCS is] a necessity."*

Recommendations

1. The primary finding of this baseline study was the integral role of communication for the success of the PFSCS initiative. Respondents were absolutely clear in their opinion that communication is and will continue to be the single most important contributing factor to the functioning, goals, and outcomes of the PFSCS initiative. Clear communication must occur at multiple levels, among and between all partners and, most importantly, with families. Respondents noted specifically that there needs to be bi-directional communication between the schools and community partners.

    a. Findings also indicated that the PFSCS needs to purposefully target partners as it matures and then needs to ensure partners are "fully" at the table. Moreover, partnerships must be constantly nurtured and renewed as leaders and staff turnover, as funding priorities shift, and as areas of the FSCS are found to be in need of improvement.

    b. One specific group of partners was noted as missing from the current configuration of the PFSCS – organizations representing health. Findings from this study suggest that the FSCS leadership needs to first reach out to representatives from health and then second, ensure this group is more fully represented "at the table".

c. Building school connections to the community needs to be ongoing and should target not only families and local businesses, but also adults whom do not necessarily have children in the school.

d. Improve connections between Providence Schools and the Providence FSCS work

e. Secure and maintain the buy-in of stakeholders

f. Findings indicated that there needs to be clear and consistent information shared with the broader community about what the PFSCS is and is not. There are some misconceptions about the FSCS and its goals. One idea expressed by interviewees was that the PFSCS leadership needs to initiate a comprehensive Publicity Plan for the initiative. The stakeholders interviewed for this study were targeted due to their knowledge of the children's services sector in Providence; however, a number of individuals did not feel like they were well informed of the FSCS initiative in Providence.

2. Integrate PFSCS programs with educational objectives. Respondents noted that one of the core features of the PFSCS model that differentiates it from other educational initiatives in Providence is its deliberate connection to academic outcomes. While respondents were quick to point out that academic outcomes should not be the only goal for the PFSCS, it was clear from the findings that respondents felt it must be one of the primary goals.

3. Place a core focus on the quality of the *climate* in the FSCS schools. Findings clearly indicated that schools, and in particular teachers, are the linchpin to the success of the PFSCS initiative.

4. Focus on sustaining the PFSCS initiative *now*. This will help to overcome concerns about long-term viability by focusing on this crucial but often overlooked aspect of the project now.

Conclusion

The commitment to the students, families, schools, and neighborhoods associated with the PFSCS cannot be overstated. Participants in this study expressed in many cases what can only described as excitement about the potential they see for this project to improve services and supports related to FSCS. Respondents described the many unique characteristics of the Providence community and the level of dedication to improving school outcomes that pervade the children's services in the city of Providence. The PFSCS initiative did not emerge in a vacuum and the stakeholders interviewed in this study talked openly about the work that set the stage for this project. Clearly, expectations are high, but as numerous respondents noted, this is the kind of multifaceted approach that is needed to meet those expectations. The focus on authentic family engagement and positive school climate were clear indicators that stakeholders view the success of the PFSCS initiative as predicated on healthy and sustained relationships between schools and families. This is the key that is missed by many school-reform efforts.

As a result of this study, three specific next-steps have been articulated for the evaluation:
1. Identify gaps between what we want to know and what we are measuring;
2. Build the theoretical linkages between the activities of PFSCS and academic outcomes;
3. Design a comparison study to understand and isolate the effects of the FSCS model.

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of Partners – Actual and Suggested

Identified Partner	% of sample	TOTAL:
Dorcas Place Adult and Family Literacy Center	94%	17
Casey, Making Connections, or Foundations, Inc.	72%	13
Providence Public School District	72%	13
YMCA	67%	12
Medical or health organizations (in general)	56%	10
John Hope Settlement House	50%	9
Providence Afterschool Alliance	44%	8
Schools (specific)	39%	7
Mayor's Office or the city	28%	5
New Day for Learning / Director of Extended Learning	22%	4
Parent organizations (in general)	22%	4
Social Service organizations (in general)	22%	4
Variety (too many to list)	22%	4
Don't Know	17%	3
Ready to Learn – Providence	17%	3
Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance	17%	3
Boys and Girls Club	11%	2
Institutions of Higher Education	11%	2
RI Department of Education	11%	2
RI Parent Information Network	11%	2
School teams	11%	2
Volunteers in Providence Schools	11%	2

Appendix 2. Interview Protocol

1. We are intentionally speaking with stakeholders with differing levels of involvement in Providence FSCS. **How much involvement** have you had in the Providence Full Service Community Schools Initiative? (*If asked*: Involvement means everything from planning, implementation, advisory boards, facilitating partnerships, etc.) Would you say: Nothing; A little; Some; A good amount; A lot

2. Providence FSCS is a new initiative founded on an emerging FSCS model. Based on your current understanding, what do you think should be the **mission or goals** of the Providence FSCS?

3. In your understanding, is Providence FSCS **different from other education improvement initiatives**? (*If yes*, how is it different from other local or national initiatives?)

4. What **factors helped to set the stage** for the creation of a FSCS initiative in Providence?

5a. Who are the **partners** involved in the Providence FSCS? (*If they are unsure, ask the following in place of 5a and 5b*: who do you think should be a key partner for this type of initiative?)

5b. Are there **other partners** you would like to see included in Providence FSCS?

6. What do you perceive as the **greatest benefit or benefits** of Providence FSCS as it becomes fully developed?

7. What SHOULD be the intended short-term (1-3 yrs.) and long-term (5-7 yrs) **outcomes**? (*Probe as appropriate based on responses to #2 and #6.*)

8. What **data sources** exist that might be able to help us gauge progress toward these outcomes? (*If appropriate:* how do we go about accessing this data source?)

9. What are the **strengths** of the community that will help Providence FSCS be most successful?

10A-B. *Two parts*: What do you perceive as the **greatest barriers or challenges** facing the Providence FSCS? What **advice** or ideas do you have for overcoming these potential barriers? (*These can be present or future barriers/challenges.*)

11. What do you **envision Providence FSCS** looking like in 5 years?
(*Alternatively*: How do you envision Providence FSCS evolving in the future?)

(*Shut off recorder when content of interview is done. Take notes as needed to supplement any additional comments made while discussing new nominees.*) We are interested in learning about how Providence FSCS fits into the Providence Children's Services System. What **other organizations or individuals** do you think we should interview?