



Learning 2025
**LEARNER-CENTERED
FUTURE-DRIVEN
EDUCATION**



LEARNING 2025 LIGHTHOUSE DEMONSTRATION SYSTEM

AASA Learning 2025

Lighthouse Demonstration System Vignette

Butler Area School District (Pa.)

Recognized Fall 2024

Focus Area: Community Alignment

The Butler Area School District (BASD) is a model for effective community engagement. It seamlessly aligns its educational mission with the broader needs of the community.

Through strategic partnerships, innovative programs, and a commitment to inclusive and student-centered learning, the district has created a robust network that enhances educational outcomes and strengthens community ties. Central to this effort is the Community Compact for Children, which serves as a comprehensive foundation for all initiatives, ensuring unified approach to supporting students and families.

At the heart of the district's success is a deep commitment to listening and responding to its community. In partnership with the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education, the district has led a community engagement process, gathering over 3,000 survey responses and engaging 285 individuals in forums to develop belief maps and a Portrait of a Graduate.

BASD's partnerships with community organizations further enhance students' education by connecting them to real world opportunities and support systems. The district is dedicated to strengthening community engagement and expanding partnerships, ensuring continued support for students and families.

Community Compact for Children: The Foundation of Alignment

The Community Compact for Children is a cornerstone for the district's strategy to align its educational practices with the needs of the broader community.

Developed through extensive consultation with community stakeholders, the compact outlines the shared roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, families, and community partners in supporting the success and well-being of every child in the district.

Building on the principles of the Contract for Children, the district's partnership with the Butler Collaborative for Families (BCF) is integral to its commitment to community alignment. A coalition of over 50 organizations, BCF coordinates services across multiple sectors, including health, education, and social services to improve the quality of life for families in Butler County.

Through the Butler Collaborative, the district has integrated mental health services into the school environment to address the emotional and psychological needs of students.

The collaborative's resources enable the school district to provide family counseling, parenting workshops, and crisis intervention services.

This holistic approach, grounded in the Community Compact for Children, enhances academic performance and contributes to a more stable and supportive home environment.



50
Organizations



Multiple Sectors
Health, Education, &
Social Services



Holistic Services
Family Counseling,
Parenting Workshops,
& Crisis Intervention

The Power of Cross-Organizational Partnerships

The district's collaboration with Butler County government agencies is another example of how the Community Compact for Children connects all aspects of community alignment.

The school system's partnership with Butler County's Department of Human Services provides access to critical resources, including:

- housing assistance
- food security programs
- employment services

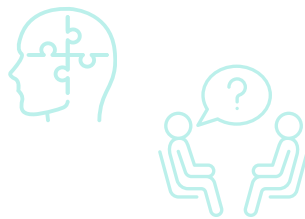


This integrated approach removes barriers to student success, ensuring that all students thrive both academically and personally.

Similarly, the district's partnership with Glade Run Lutheran Services provides a wide range of behavioral health and educational services. They are particularly effective in supporting students with special needs and those facing significant behavioral or emotional challenges.

This partnership allows the school district to offer specialized programs tailored to the unique needs of these students, including:

- therapeutic support staff
- mobile therapy
- behavioral consultation



The services are seamlessly integrated into the school environment, providing on-the-spot access to needed resources and support systems.

Collaborations also include local governance with regular interaction between the school district, the Mayor of Butler, and other community leaders. The district also maintains partnerships with higher education institutions such as Butler Community College and Slipper Rock University. Additionally, strong ties have been fostered with Butler County Commissioners who work closely with the district on a regular basis.

Additional community supports include winning a recent \$1.38 million grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, a part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Grant. It is designed to establish safe learning environments and prevent acts of bullying, violence, and hate. The funding supports the social, emotional, physical, and mental well-being of students and staff while enhancing family and community engagement and developing inclusive policies.

Using Research to Promote Effective Community Engagement and Implement Meaningful Programs

The Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institute recently published a detailed resource guide, helping school leaders define with their communities the purpose of school. Butler used these resources to distribute a survey that produced 3,000 responses at the secondary level alone. They also conducted community forums and a guiding coalition with 285 participants.

Stakeholders were asked through a series of survey questions what was the most important purpose of school:

- academic,
- economic (preparation for the workforce),
- civic, and/or
- social emotional.

Answers varied according to respondent audience. Information was used to help develop the district's Portrait of the Graduate as well as advocacy for public education at the local, state, and federal levels. The data also allowed staff to engage other groups and constituencies with different avenues of advocacy.

Implementing Impactful Programs and Learning Opportunities for All Students

The school district has identified themes for every school. Each elementary school has a clearly articulated theme that reinforces the power of academic growth, career development, and community involvement.

Themes include the following:

- Broad Street Elementary: A Community-Centered School
- Center Township Elementary: Center for Creative Thinking and Arts
- Connoquenessing Elementary: An Outdoor Appreciation Campus
- Emily Brittain Elementary: Community Partnership and Demonstration School
- McQuiston Elementary: Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math (STEAM)
- Northwest Elementary: Wonders of Work
- Summit Township Elementary: Community Agricultural Partnership at Summit

Additional Community Collaboration Support Services

The district offers a wide range of support services, each of which involves key aspects of community alignment and collaboration.

The district's Student Assistance Program and Support Teams, for example, provide comprehensive support for students in alignment with the district's Community Compact. Support teams work closely with families, educators, and community service providers to create individualized plans to address the needs of students with academic, emotional, or behavioral issues.

The district also places a strong emphasis upon empowering students to take control of their futures by providing them with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed. A recent initiative highlighted by Kidsburgh (a local Pa. media outlet) focuses on how BASD is helping students with diverse skills to chart their own paths to success, encouraging students to explore their unique strengths and interests. Students within the district, for example, have the opportunity to engage in real-world projects that align with their personal interests. This approach prepares them for future careers and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for their education.

A critical element of the district's approach is the "Parents as Allies" initiative, supported in part by the Grable Foundation. This program recognizes the vital role that families play in the educational success of their children and aims to empower parents to be active participants in their children's education by providing them with the tools, resources, and support needed to engage effectively with the school system.

Finally, a rich variety of educational programs (rooted in the Community Compact for Children) are closely aligned with community needs. The Community Agricultural Partnership, for example, at Summit Elementary School integrates local expertise into the curriculum by teaching students about sustainable agriculture while addressing food insecurity in the community.

Reflections on Community Involvement and Alignment

As suggested previously, the heart of the Butler Area School District's excellence in community alignment is a testament to its comprehensive approach to education, which is grounded in the Community Compact for Children.

By forming and sustaining cross-organizational involvement, the district has created a model for how school districts can effectively serve both their students and the broader community.