



The ABCs and 123s of CSPs (Camp-School Partnerships)



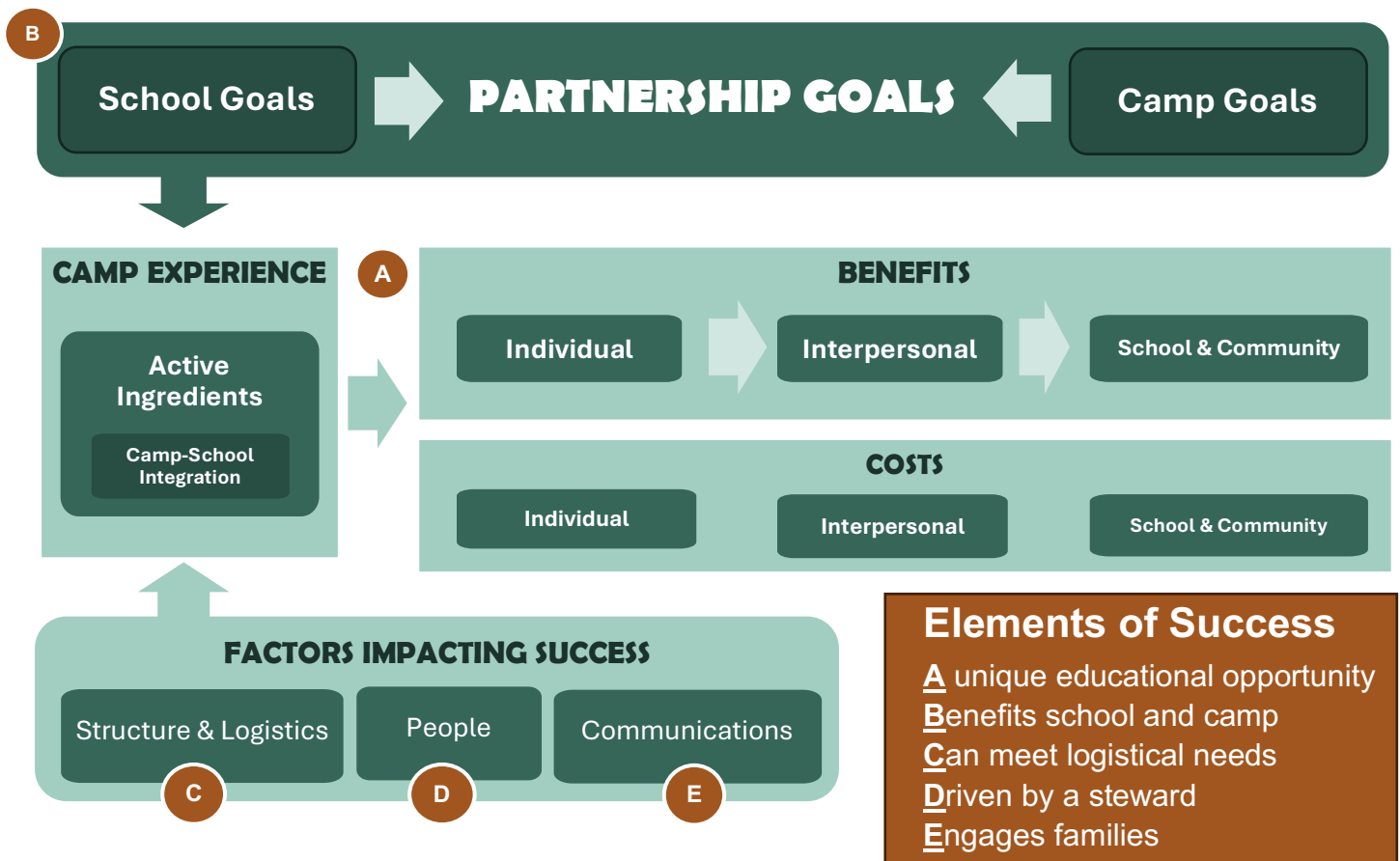
What is a Camp-School Partnership?

A **Camp-School Partnership (CSP)** is a relationship between a camp and a school entity – usually a class, school, group of schools, or district – that facilitates students attending camp in some capacity. While specific goals vary, CSP generally serve to support students’ learning and development and enhance their educational experiences. Partnerships operate at various levels, from small-scale collaborations in which teachers bring a group of students to camp for one or several days to district- or state-level partnerships in which camp attendance is integrated into every student’s educational experience. Camp visits facilitated by CSPs can occur during the school year or during the summer.

What makes for a successful Camp-School Partnership?

A **successful CSP** provides ongoing benefits to the camp and school, is logistically and economically sustainable, and retains the commitment of relevant parties over time. Figure 1 shows how successful CSPs function, according to our research. In the pages that follow, you will have the chance to consider how your camp can work towards a successful CSP.

Figure 1. A Conceptual Model for How Successful CSPs Function



A Unique Educational Opportunity

Successful Camp-School Partnership add value to youths' educational experiences, providing benefits that are not easily achieved in school. School entities that participate in CSPs are typically interested in providing their students with novel, meaningful experiences that will support their learning and development but that the school does not have the capacity to facilitate independently. Successful CSPs are able to fulfill this need, with the camp delivering experiences that the school has limited ability to provide - for instance, fun, hands-on learning, immersion in a novel, outdoor environment, opportunities to take risks and persevere, or community-building.

What is unique about your camp that can complement or extend classroom learning?

What resources can you use to find state standards and link them to your camp's offerings? (These can be tools, websites, or human resources.)

Beneficial to Camps and Schools

Successful Camp-School Partnerships are mutually beneficial, allowing both parties to meet their goals. Goals vary within and across CSPs, with camps and schools forming partnerships for a range of reasons. Camp and school goals do not need to be perfectly aligned for a partnership to be successful; rather, they must be complementary, such that each party is able to accomplish its goals within the partnership. If one or both parties is not able to get what they need, or if the goals are at odds, the partnership is unlikely to be sustained.

What are your primary goals in developing a CSP? Who on your team shares these goals?

Consider some of the common school-side goals for CSPs (social-emotional learning; community building; exposure to nature). What aspects of your camp could meet these needs?

Can Meet Logistical Needs

Successful Camp-School Partnerships are built upon logistical and operational fit between parties. Common logistical and operational considerations include transportation, funding, facilities, lodgings, staffing, and programming. While a partnership may be a good fit on paper, the success of the partnership is contingent on the camp and school being able to align their logistical needs and capacities. Without sufficient alignment, a partnership cannot form. However, perfect alignment between parties is unlikely, as even successful partnerships must navigate logistical challenges at times. Robust communication and clear role-identification help successful partnerships solve problems as they arise.

What timing, duration, and attendance model(s) can your camp currently support? What would you like to support in the future?

What are the main logistical considerations you'll need to address to operate a successful CSP? How might you address them?

Driven by a Steward (“Camp Champion”)

Successful Camp-School Partnerships have a partnership steward who takes the lead in facilitating the partnership. This is an individual - typically a school or camp staff member - who stewards the relationship between the camp and the school, serving as a liaison between parties and taking the necessary steps to ensure that students attend camp. At minimum, partnerships must have a steward on the school side, as success generally requires that someone within the school system advocates for and coordinates the partnership. However, the most successful partnerships have stewards at school *and* camp who can reliably dedicate time and attention to facilitating camp attendance and maintaining the necessary relationships.

Who within your camp community may be able to steward a CSP?

How might you identify a school-side steward for your CSP? (What existing networks of camp alumni or community connections can help you identify school professionals who may be good stewards?)

Engages Families and Caregivers

Successful Camp-School Partnerships continually establish trust with families and caregivers. This starts with a trusting relationship between the camp and the school, as schools must feel confident in recommending that students attend camp. In successful partnerships, the camp and the school develop flexible systems for building trust with families and caregivers, creating opportunities for families to learn about the camp experience, consistently communicating their investment in the emotional and physical safety of students, and responding to the specific needs of individuals and groups of students in culturally appropriate ways.

What steps will you take to build a trusting relationship with school partners? How will you assure schools that your camp is a safe and supportive environment for their students?

How might you build trust with school families? What might need to be different from your approach to building trust with camp families?

Setting Goals: Your CSP 123s

What are your CSP-related goals for the next year? (Try to set SMART goals – goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound).

Given your goals, what are your top 3 action items for the next 3-6 months?

1.

2.

3.

What remaining questions do you have about this process? What supports do you need to start or enhance your partnership work?