

# Formative Evaluation of Eastern Carver County School District

## Background

In recent years, Carver County has witnessed rapid growth in the number of residents from diverse ethnic communities. A similar pattern is reflected in the growing diversity of the student population of Eastern Carver County School District. Today, the student body is 9.17% Hispanic, 5.13% Black, 4.62% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.51% American Indian.

The Intercultural Specialist (ICS) program by Eastern Carver County School District seeks to connect families from ethnic minorities and underserved communities with the school system. The program has 6 full-time ICSs working with Latino, Hmong, Somali and other ethnic minority communities. Key roles of the ICSs include- help students from ethnic minority communities to achieve academic success, provide school system related information to parents, promote cultural awareness and help teachers to work with students and parents from ethnic minority communities.

## Importance of Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is a crucial resource for a program. As opposed to summative or outcome evaluation, which focuses on determining merit or worth of the program, formative evaluation seeks to develop resources that could be used for program improvement. Formative evaluation helps program planners to identify mechanisms through which the program can produce the desired impact, understand the lessons learned, and discern between theory and implementation failure.

## Terms and Concepts

**Outcome chain-** Outcome chain is a visualization of assumed cause-and-effect relationships between intermediate outcomes and ultimate impacts of the program. Outcome chains help us understand what intermediate outcomes need to be achieved for the program to work.

**Mechanisms-** Programs 'work' by enabling participants to make different choices. Making and sustaining different choices requires a change in participant's reasoning and/or resources. This combination of 'reasoning and resources' is known as a program mechanism.

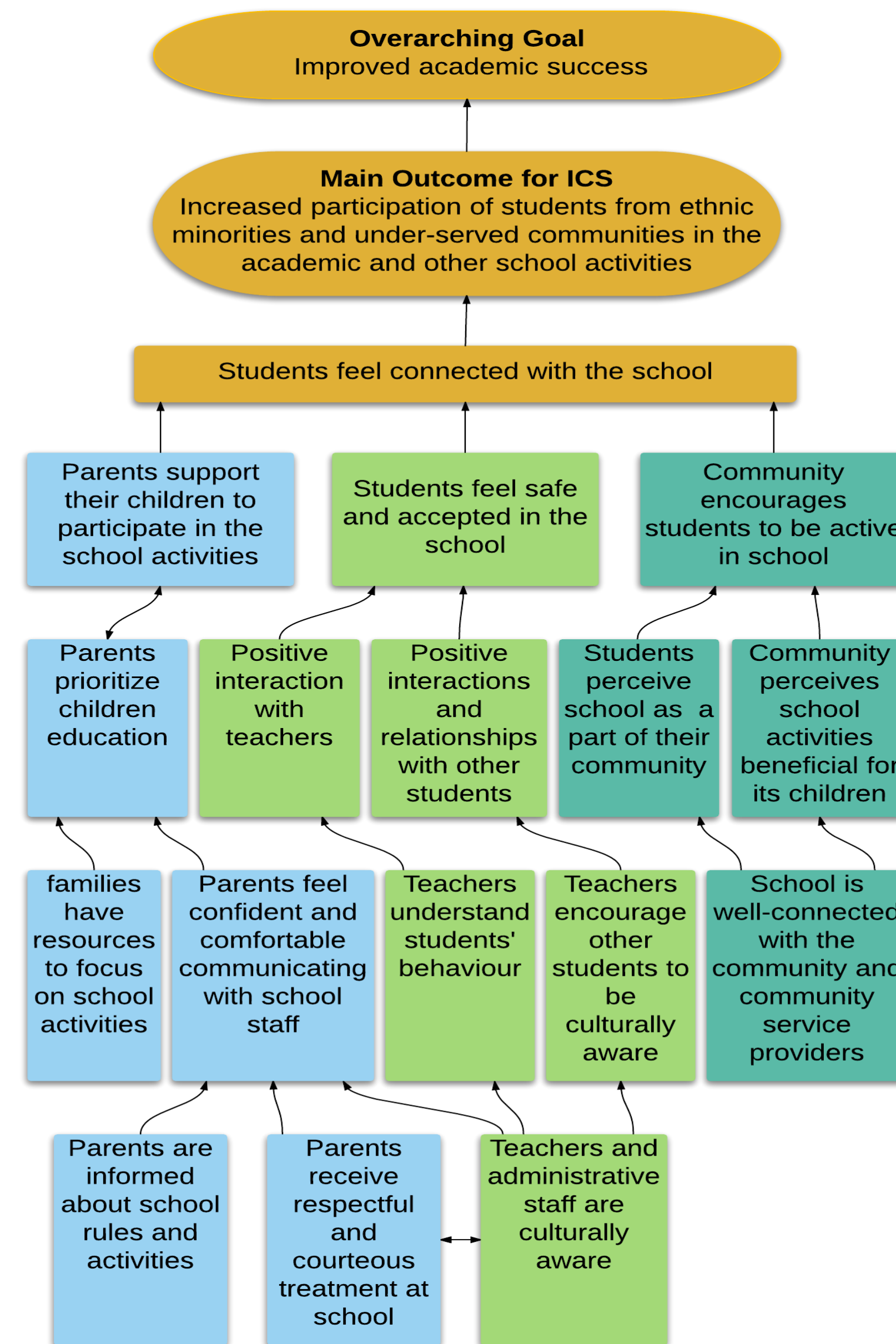
**Attributes-** Attributes are essential features of the program that help us understand What, When, Where, Why and Who aspects of each of the outcomes.

## Methods

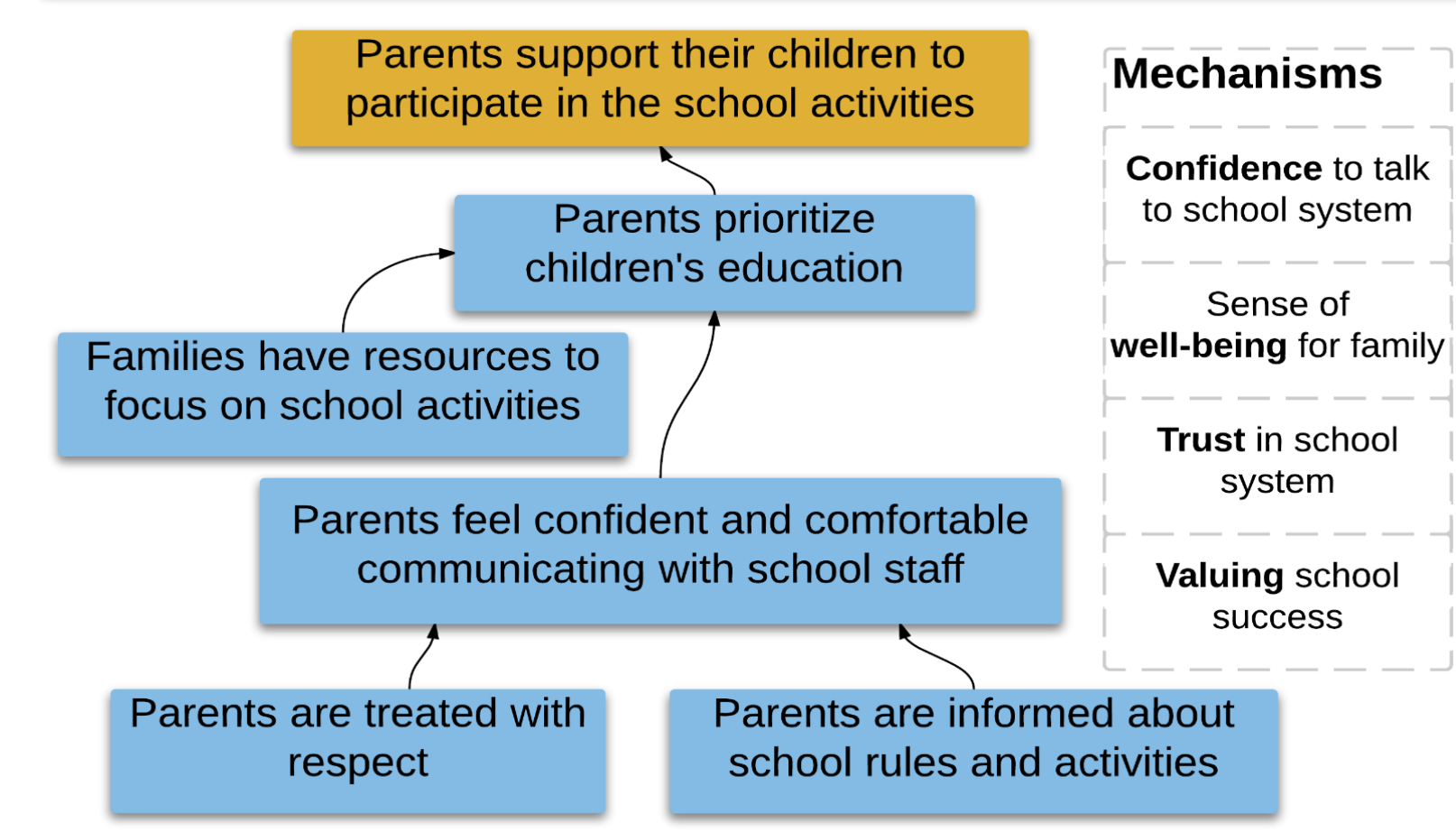
Evaluation data was collected through following methods.

Method	Type	Number of participants
Workshop	Interactive session	8
Meeting with program director	In-depth interview	1
Meeting with key program staff	In-depth interview, interactive session	2
Interview with ICS staff	1-on-1 in-depth interview	4

The evaluation was conducted through a series of participatory workshops and meetings. Discussions and narratives were recorded in verbatim and were later analyzed using compare and contrast methods. Internal validity of data was ensured by sharing all the documents with the program staff and incorporating their comments in the draft.

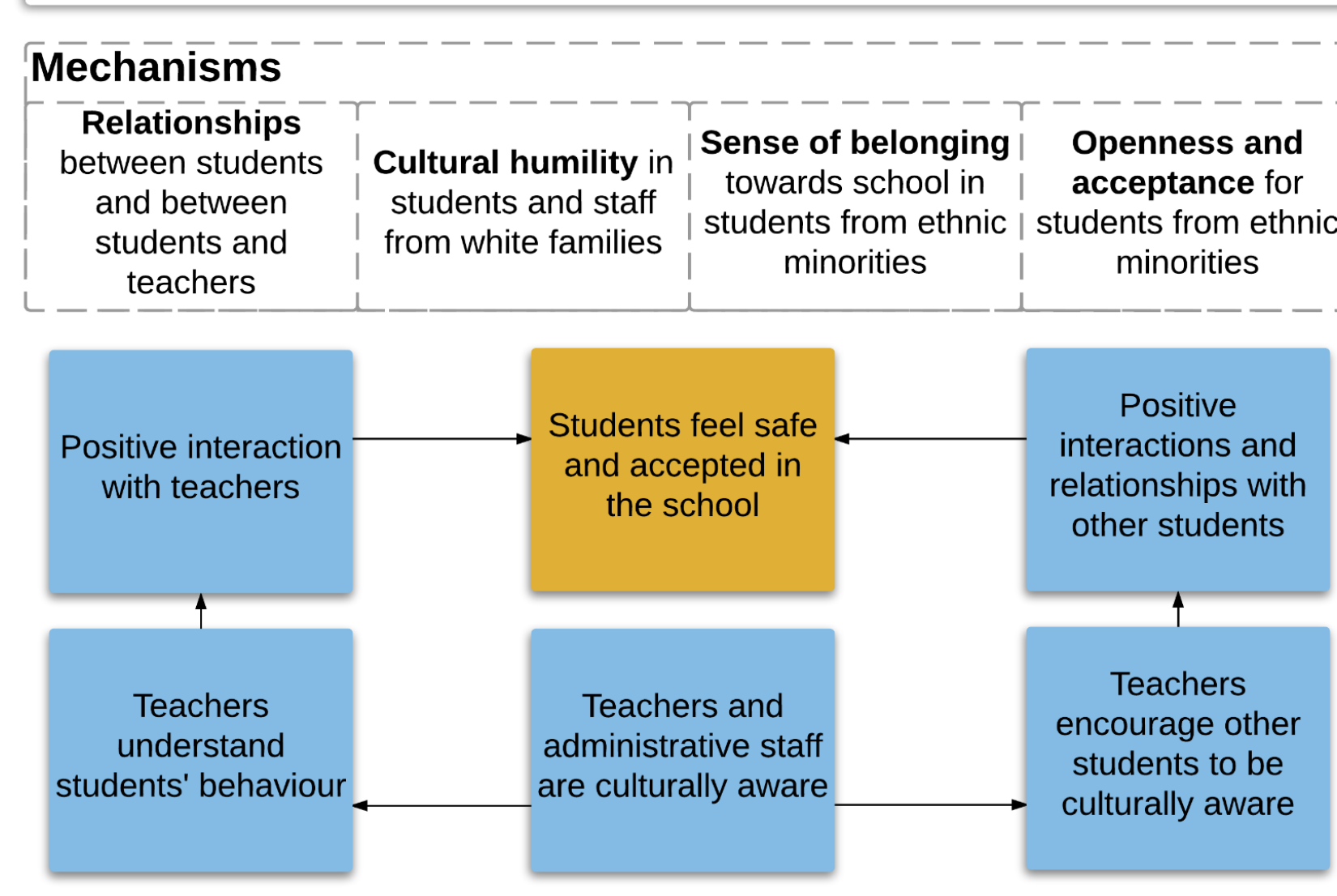


### Outcome 1: Parents support their children to participate in school activities



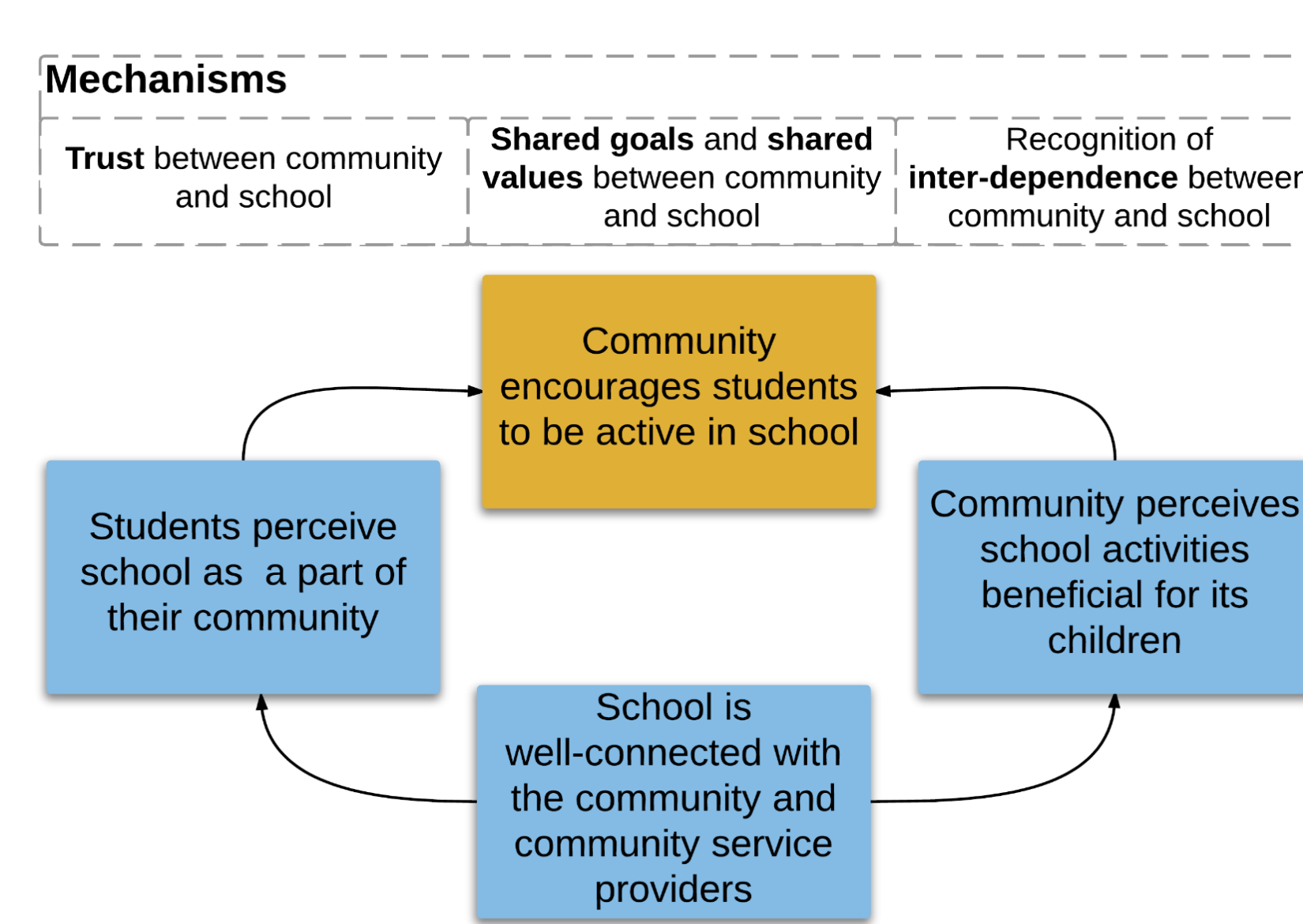
Attributes	Parents' Confidence and involvement	Basic Needs	Informed Parents
1. Parents attend school activities	1. Families know about community level support systems	1. Parents are informed about basic child care and parenting laws in US	1. Parents are informed about their child's progress in the school
2. Active participation in Parent-Teacher conferences	2. Community level services such as Health Care, Food Markets are aware about families that need help	2. Parents are informed about their entitlements	2. Parents are aware about their child's progress in the school
3. Parents help in homework	3. Families know basic laws, rules and their entitlements in US.	3. ICS and other school officials participate in community meetings	3. Parents are aware about the challenges their child is facing
	4. Seek help	4. School helps community to connect with other services	
	5. Ask questions for career development	5. Joint activities by school and community	

### Outcome 2 - Students feel safe and accepted in the school



Attributes	Teachers understand students' behavior	Positive interaction with teachers
1. Teachers understand family context as a mediating factor for students' performance	1. Teacher know family context	1. Students ask questions
2. Teachers know when to consult with ICS	2. Teachers understand role of culture in students' behavior	2. Students seek help
3. Teachers try to establish direct contact with parents	3. Positive interactions between students from different cultures	3. Students interact with teachers in and outside of class
4. Teachers have basic knowledge of customs, manners and traditions in Somali, Latino and Hmong communities	1. Friendships between students from different cultures	Teachers promote cultural diversity
	2. Study groups/project (groups include students from all cultures and ethnic groups)	1. Teachers organize events or days celebrating traditions from different cultures
	3. White students participate in customs and traditions of ethnic minorities	2. Teachers ask students from cultural minority to share information in the class
		3. Teachers show interest in other cultures and languages

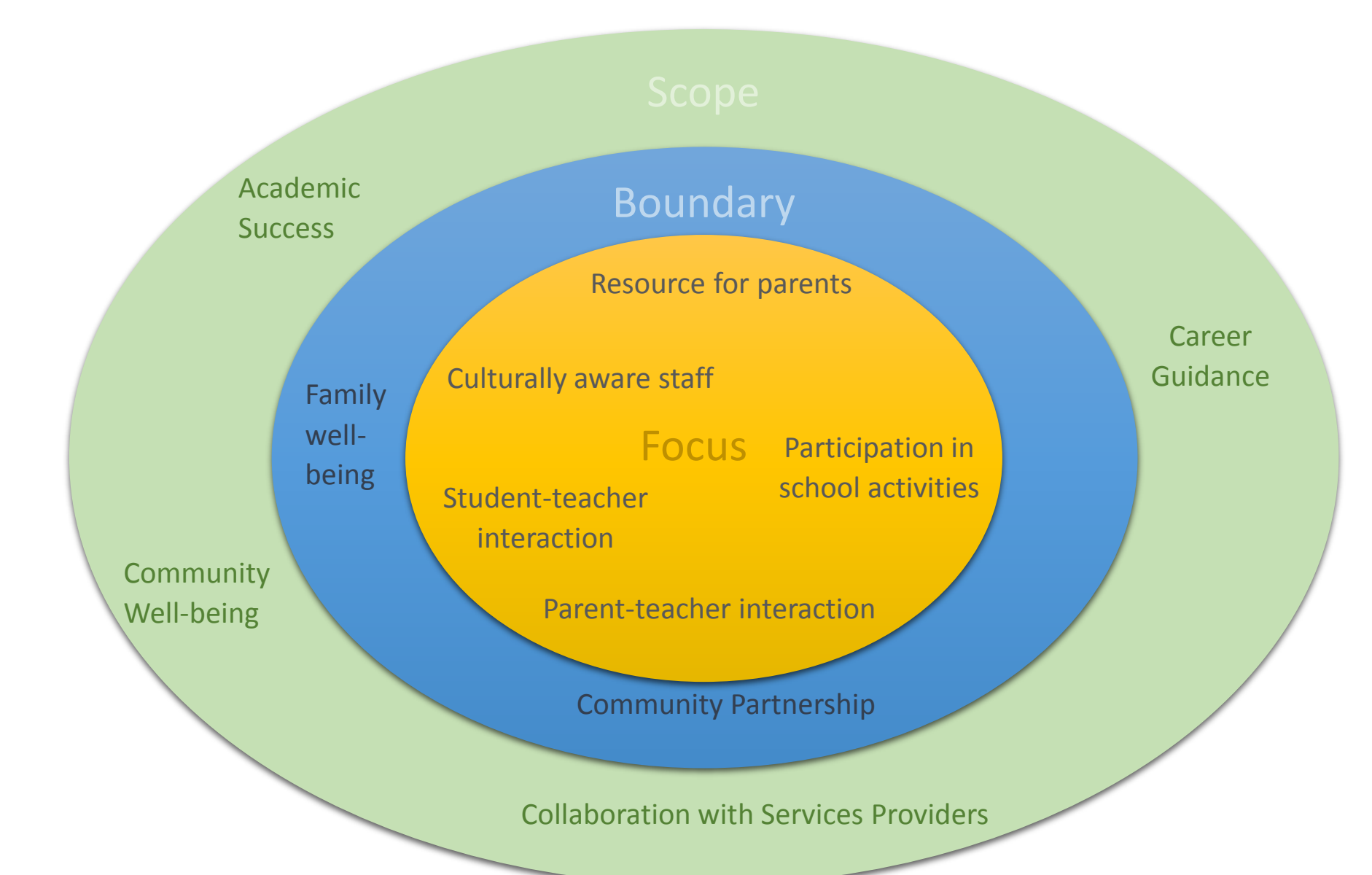
### Outcome 3 - Community encourages students to be active in the school



Attributes	Community perceives school activities as useful for children	School is connected with community	Students perceive school as a part of community
1. Joint activities by school and community	1. School understand community's needs, concerns and priorities towards the children	1. Students share community festivals/meetings/fairs with school staff	
2. Community elders/influential people talk about school programs and education in their meetings	2. School officials participate in community festivals and celebrations	2. Students invite teachers and staff to community (festivities)	
3. Community members are informed about important school activities	3. ICS and other school officials participate in community meetings	3. Community members participate in school programs/activities	
	4. School helps community to connect with other services	4. Joint activities by school and community	
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## Focus and Scope



## Conclusion and Next Steps

The formative evaluation process identified important constructs and mechanisms for the ICS program. The main outcome identified through the process was increased participation of students from ethnic minorities and underserved communities in academic and other school activities. Some of the important mechanisms for achieving this outcome are: 1) Parent trust in the school system, 2) Well-being of families, 3) Parent confidence to communicate with the school system, 4) A sense of belonging among students from ethnic minorities 5) Shared goals and values between the school and community. Next steps may include a summative evaluation to help staff understand the impact of the program on parents, teachers and students. The ICS team could also develop a database system to record academic and other success achieved by students.

## Credits

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Photo Credit: Satlaj Dighe and Eder Castillo

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