

# DESIGNING COMMUNITY MEETINGS WITH PURPOSE

Eric Shieh & Paco Hanlon, Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School (New York, NY)

[eshieh@metropolitanel.com](mailto:eshieh@metropolitanel.com) | [phanlon@metropolitanel.com](mailto:phanlon@metropolitanel.com)

## OPENING

### A VIDEO FROM MELS

What's going on?

What does it have to do with community?



## PARKING LOT FOR QUESTIONS

(There will be time for questions at several points during the session . . . we promise!)

# Three Approaches for *Doing* COMMUNITY

Adapted from Robert Chaskin (2013)<sup>1</sup>



## spatial

A focus on how **boundaries** and **membership** are drawn. These may be tied to a physical place (ex. country), institution (ex. school), or symbolic name/identity (ex. athlete).

### Key Concepts

- **Cognitive maps** – Individuals develop cognitive maps of their communities as they interact with their environment.
- **Individual differences** – Different individuals bring different experiences into their maps, so no one has the exact same view of their communities and how they relate to them. Social status is a particularly important factor.<sup>2</sup>

### Key Questions

How does my school define community boundaries with and for students? How is this supported or opposed by individual experiences or societal definitions?



## social

A focus on **relationships** among individuals. These are often based on common identity, experiences, shared norms, and concrete interactions.

### Key Concepts

- **Connectedness** (“network closure”) – The extent to which everyone knows everyone is important for mutual support and accountability.<sup>3</sup>
- **Identity and interest** – Both shared social identities and shared interests are important resources for relationships. Common identities are often overemphasized: communities always contain differences.

### Key Questions

How connected are the students? What common identity or shared experiences define their school or class community?



## political

A focus on structures for **participation** and **collective action**. A community involves collective deliberation, mobilization, and action around issues of common interest.

### Key Concepts

- **“Strong” democracy** – Processes of participation and deliberation are important for sustaining community.
- **Local knowledge and power** – The importance of “local” community knowledge (ex. student knowledge) must be recognized. Members have a right to exercise voice in issues that matter to them.

### Key Question

What does student voice look like? How is this work *youth-led*?

## Community Meeting Core Practices @ MELS

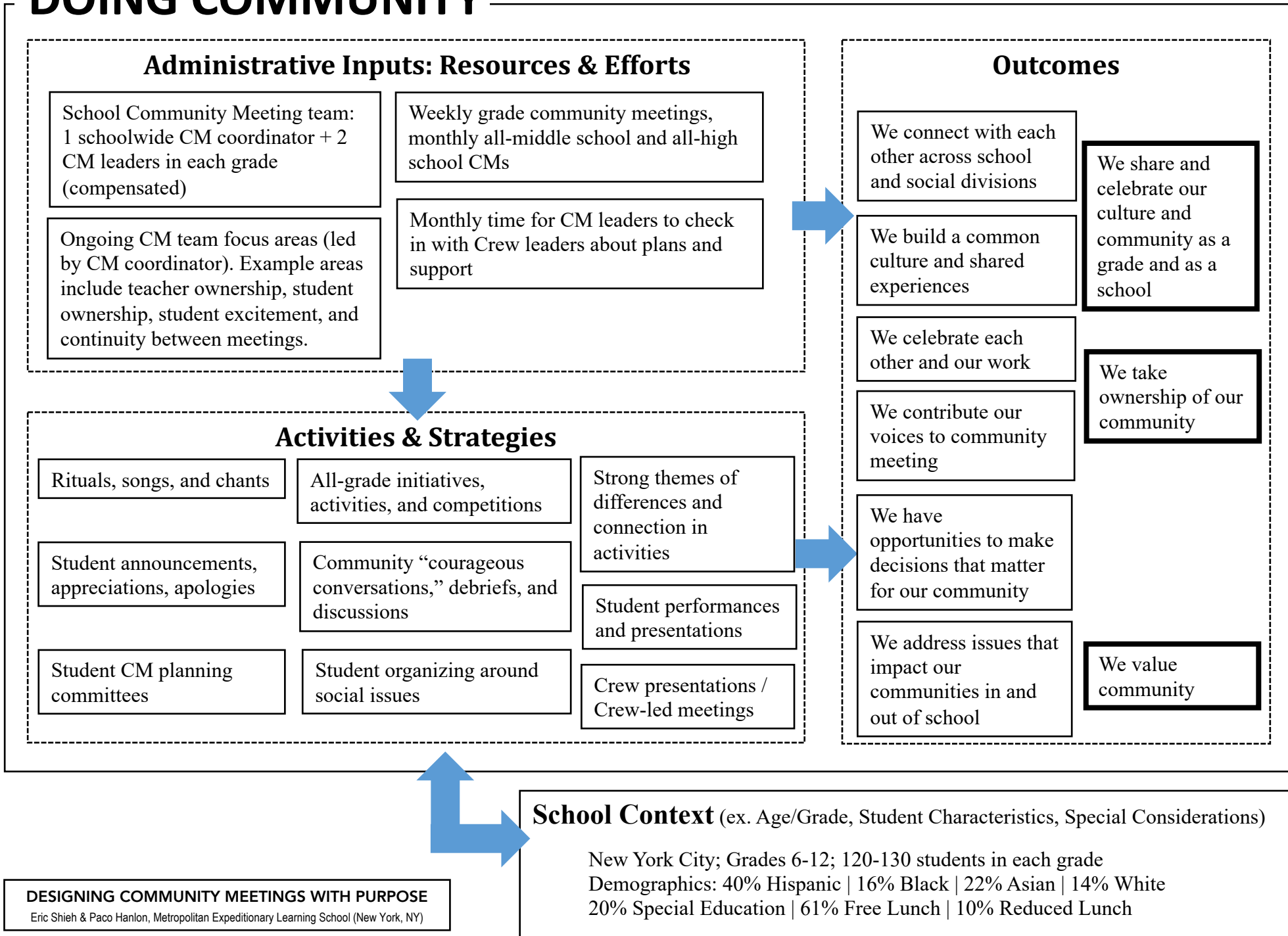
1. We share and celebrate our culture and community as a grade and as a school.
2. We take ownership of our community
3. We value community

<sup>1</sup> R. Chaskin, ‘Theories of Community,’ in *The Handbook of Community Practice* ed. M. Weil, M. Reisch, & M. L. Ohmer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013)

<sup>2</sup> K. Campbell & B. A. Lee, ‘Sources of Personal Neighbor Networks: Social Integration, Need, or Time?’ *Social Forces* 70, no. 4 (1992), 1077-1100.

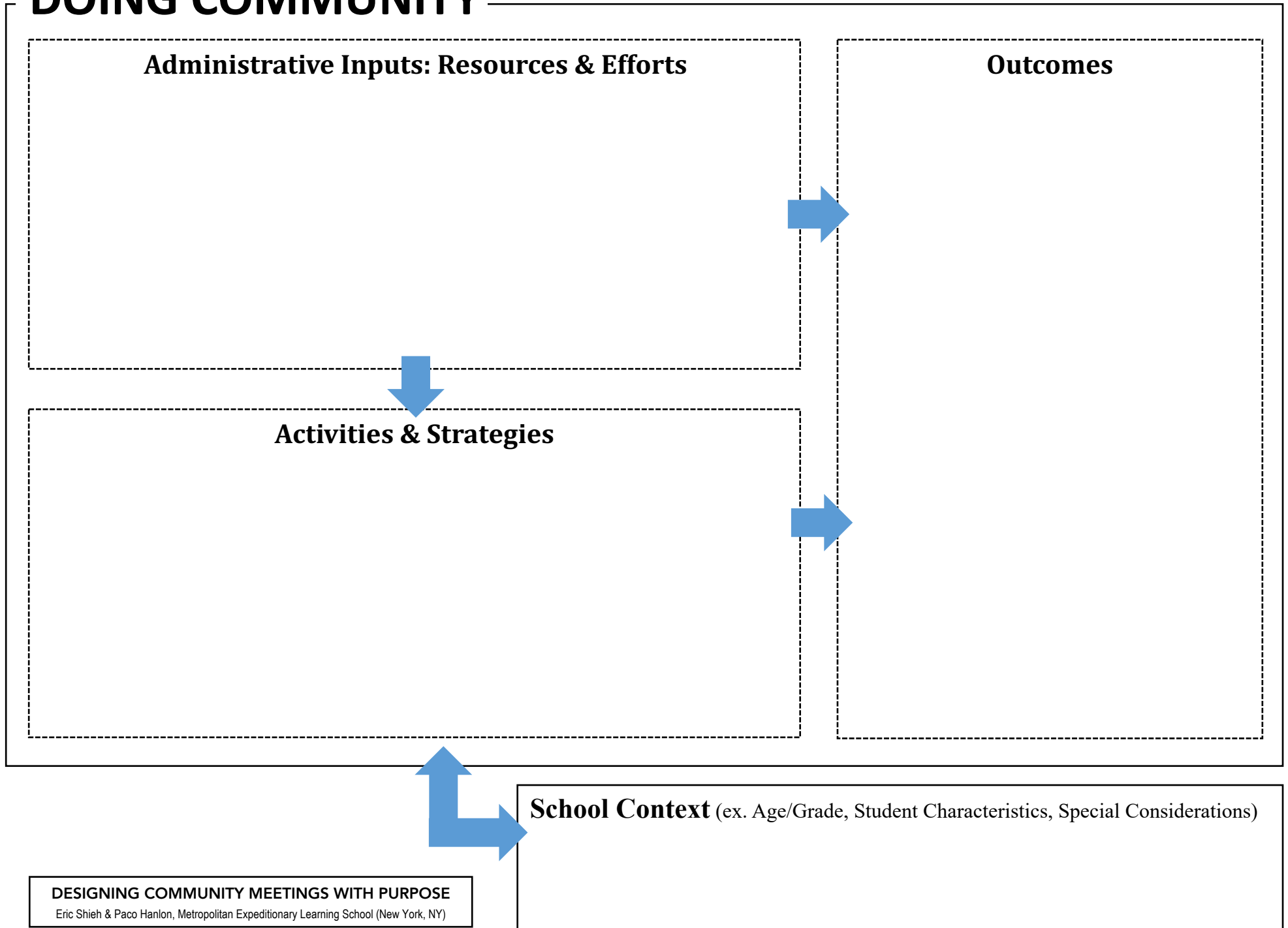
<sup>3</sup> J. Coleman, ‘Social Capital in the Development of Human Capital.’ *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (supplement), 95-120. See also R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

# DOING COMMUNITY



Mapping my school's current approach to

# DOING COMMUNITY



# GALLERY WALK & PRACTICES INVENTORY NOTES

## Two recommendations:

### OPTION 1

Deepen your thinking around the relationship between different kinds of activities and community outcomes. How does MELS connect these activities to our core practices? What other outcomes do you see?

### OPTION 2

Push your own Community Meeting practice by thinking how some of these activities might live in your school. What purposes might they be put toward in terms of doing community? How might they be adapted?

1. We share and celebrate our culture and community

2. We take ownership of our community

3. We value community

# COMMUNITY MEETING PLANNING

Plan a *next step* or aspirational Community Meeting for your school.

Consider the school's context and current work. What is the community practice or outcome you wish to develop? What activities and inputs are required?

## Meeting Outcome

What community practice do you wish to focus on?

## Meeting Activities & Strategies


## Administrative Inputs

What resources or efforts are needed to bring this meeting about?