

## Sustainability Planning for Community Schools



 National Center for COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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### What is sustainability?



Sustainability is a system of strategic thinking and effective action designed to institutionalize supportive practices and to secure the range of resources needed to achieve specific results.

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### Sustainability and Community Schools



- ◆ Community schools = A strategy for organizing school and community resources around student success
- ◆ Sustainability is more than fundraising (although it *does* include fundraising for sure)
- ◆ Think broadly about resources: Include human and financial, public and private, education and non-education dollars and competencies

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## Key Elements of Sustainability



1. Vision
2. Results orientation
3. Strategic financing orientation
4. Adaptability to changing conditions
5. Broad base of community support
6. Key champions
7. Strong internal systems
8. Sustainability plan

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## 1. Vision



- ◆ Know what you want to sustain
- ◆ Know how your initiative fits within the larger community
- ◆ Know what you mean by sustainability
  - Scope of activities
  - Scale of operation
  - Timeline

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## 2. Results Orientation



- ◆ Adopt a results framework
- ◆ Be clear about the results you want to achieve for children, families, community and community systems
- ◆ Use indicators to track status of children and families across the community
- ◆ Use performance measures to track your own work and improve performance

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### 3. Strategic Financing Orientation



- ◆ What are the expected fiscal needs?
- ◆ Make the best use of existing resources (funding and in-kind)
- ◆ Maximize available sources of public revenue
- ◆ Create greater flexibility in categorical funding
- ◆ Create public-private partnerships
- ◆ Explore new state and local revenue sources

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### 4. Adaptability to Changing Conditions



- ◆ Monitor announced opportunities for funding
- ◆ Consider new ways to frame your work to interest different funders
- ◆ Identify opportunities to improve policy climate
- ◆ Participate in collaborative advocacy to encourage change
- ◆ Work to improve ability to participate in these efforts

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### 5. Broad Base of Community Support



- ◆ Develop a plan to create a desired identity
- ◆ Nurture a community presence and support
- ◆ Encourage family involvement
- ◆ Support public education and engagement
- ◆ Build partnerships that foster collaboration rather than competition

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## 6. Key Champions



- ◆ Identify key decision makers and opinion leaders
- ◆ Develop an effective outreach plan
- ◆ Cultivate a broad base of champions
  - Elected leaders
  - Business leaders
  - Peers
  - Community leaders
  - Philanthropists

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## 7. Strong Internal Systems



- ◆ Know and involve the people you need to carry out your mission (staff, board, volunteers, etc.)
- ◆ Develop strong fiscal management, accounting, information, and personnel systems
- ◆ Use those systems to review strategies, make changes as needed

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## 8. Sustainability Plan



- ◆ Develop a comprehensive plan that takes account of short- and long-term needs
- ◆ Identify challenges and/or obstacles
- ◆ Identify strategies to garner needed resources and overcome challenges
- ◆ Identify and communicate with key partners

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### Funding Outlook for Community Schools



- ◆ Limited new (and likely decreased overall) public funding for education and human services
- ◆ Redirection strategies become more central
- ◆ Strong focus on results and accountability
- ◆ Need to communicate linkages to other education and family support agendas and to articulate benefits of community schools strategy

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### Key Lessons from CCS Financing Guide



Experienced community schools:

- ◆ Spend the bulk of their resources to help meet the core instructional mission
- ◆ Leverage diversified funding streams
- ◆ Create collaborative leadership structures that support finance and other key functions
- ◆ Form partnerships with public and private entities to expand capacity
- ◆ Invest in full-time site coordination

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### Key Lessons from CAS's 22-Year Sustainability Experience



- ◆ Moved over ten years from 100% private funding to 2/3 public and 1/3 private
- ◆ Major public sources include Medicaid, Early Head Start, Head Start, 21<sup>st</sup> Century CLC and other out-of-school time funding streams
- ◆ Major private sources include United Way, private foundations, corporations, individuals
- ◆ Sustainability work takes constant tending and requires organizational commitment

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**For further  
information, contact:**

The Finance Project  
Sustainability Planning Workbook  
[www.financeproject.org](http://www.financeproject.org)



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