

Elements of a Systemic Community Schools Initiative

The Children's Aid Society National Center for Community Schools has adapted The Finance Project's sustainability planning framework to create a summary of five elements that are central to building a successful, sustainable and systemic community schools initiative:

Shared Vision and Results Framework

- ◆ Stakeholders collaborate in the development of the vision, mission, and goals.
- ◆ Plan clearly identifies the necessary strategies, activities and partners.
- ◆ Model is well-defined and adapted to local needs.
- ◆ Results are clear, measurable, achievable and need-based.

Supportive Policy and Innovative Financing

- ◆ Policies at the district, municipal, state and federal levels recognize, promote and sustain school community partnerships.
- ◆ Public and private financing reflects a focus on the whole child and invests in both the implementation of services and in their coordination.
- ◆ A community school framework serves as a conduit for new funding streams, and existing resources (i.e., funding, personnel and space) are redeployed.
- ◆ Incentives exist to encourage partnerships at all levels, and partners are held accountable for results.

Effective Leadership

- ◆ Leaders boldly challenge conventional thinking and practice to support change within and across systems.
- ◆ Key champions are strategically cultivated from across sectors to advance the community schools agenda.
- ◆ Leaders use power and influence to generate broad-based support and build consensus for the initiative.
- ◆ Leaders from across sectors plan for succession and institutionalize structures to manage change and ensure continuity.

Broad Community Support

- ◆ Community stakeholders are active participants in needs assessment and resource inventory processes.
- ◆ Community resources - both financial and human - are organized to address needs and build on strengths.
- ◆ A variety of opportunities exist to engage stakeholders and ensure shared ownership of the initiative.
- ◆ During times of transition, community acts as a stabilizing and guiding force.

Stable and Flexible Systems

- ◆ Governance structures are responsive to changing contexts and represent the diversity of the communities they serve.
- ◆ Technical assistance builds capacity, ensures fidelity to the vision, facilitates continuous improvement.
- ◆ Fiscal management, communications, and human resource processes are informed by best practices.
- ◆ Roles of partners are mutually agreed upon and partners are held accountable for results.

Adapted from The Finance Project's Sustainability Planning Workbook