

# Stories of Sustainability

Snapshots from  
the Safe Schools/  
Healthy Students  
Initiative



## **Stories of Sustainability: Snapshots from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative**

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## Introduction

Since 1999, there have been 365 Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) grantees from 49 states. Each site strives to transform its schools and communities into safe, nurturing places where children and youth can learn, grow, and thrive. Through the SS/HS initiative, schools, juvenile justice agencies, law enforcement, mental health providers, and other community organizations work in partnership to meet the most pressing needs of students and their families, addressing issues such as healthy childhood development, substance abuse and violence prevention, and mental health promotion.

SS/HS funds are meant to spark positive system changes in schools and communities by providing the infrastructure and resources to establish cross-sector partnerships, identify and implement effective programming, and institutionalize long-term improvements over time. Sustainability is a major focus of the grant program, and grantees are encouraged to plan for sustainability from their first day of funding. Through the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, Technical Assistance Specialists (TASs) provide SS/HS grantees with training and guidance on sustaining essential successful functions beyond SS/HS funding.

It is instructive to understand just what the legacy of SS/HS has been in these communities. Understanding what legacies former SS/HS grantees have been able to continue can provide communities interested in replicating the SS/HS model with valuable perspectives on sustaining their own work. For example, why do some school-community partnerships continue to flourish over time? What programs, policies, services, and activities have lasted or even expanded among “graduated” grantees? Do former SS/HS sites still collect and share data? And how do former sites continue to fund staff and elements of programming and data management?

## Sustainability Case Example Selection Process and Interviews

In 2012, the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention set out to discover how SS/HS grantees from the 1999–2006 fiscal year (FY) cohorts had been able to sustain major components of their SS/HS work.

We identified case examples of sustainability in two ways. First, we asked TAS staff to recommend sites that had many successes during their SS/HS grant periods, and which, for at least one year after their funding ended, had sustained major pieces of their SS/HS work. Second, we gathered updated information from sites that participated in interviews for the 2006 and 2009 SS/HS monographs.

Having identified 30 possible case examples, we conducted brief, informal interviews with former project directors (PDs) from 20 of these sites. We asked the PDs what SS/HS partnerships, policies, programs, activities, and functions remained and how had they been able to sustain this work. The sites were geographically diverse and included rural, urban, and suburban areas from across the United States.

The site summaries that appear in this report provide more detailed snapshots of the SS/HS legacy in each of the 20 communities.



## Executive Summary

### What Former SS/HS Sites Have Sustained

Case example sites told us about an array of partnership arrangements, programming, activities, and funding streams that began with SS/HS and remain today. While all of the sites remain dedicated to the SS/HS vision as a guiding principle, each community's focus and approach have evolved over time to meet its unique and ever-changing needs. And although the programs and partnerships do not look exactly as they did during their respective grant periods, all have stayed true to the mission, goals, and objectives of the SS/HS Initiative.

Despite their different approaches and diverse needs, **the sites we spoke with have been most successful in sustaining:**

- » **SS/HS community partnerships**
- » **Programs, activities, and functions**
- » **School climate changes and improvements**
- » **Infrastructure changes**

The following section explores each of these components.

#### ***SS/HS Community Partnerships***

Most of the case example sites continue to have formalized coalitions with regular meetings, organizational structures, defined roles, and shared leadership, ownership, and decision-making across all levels. These coalitions consist of school and community leaders who came together during SS/HS to realize a common vision. Many PDs told us that while working together on SS/HS, the partners realized how much good they could accomplish together, and now post-grant, have recommitted to working together and even expanded their partnerships to help youth in their communities.

This has been no small feat. Many times, it took the entire SS/HS funding period for partners to overcome turf issues, differences in bureaucratic procedures, and competing priorities to learn to work together as an effective team. But once the collaborative partnerships saw how much more they could accomplish by banding together, they created formalized agreements that have led to increased reach, improved service delivery, and institutionalization of important functions.

Even in those places where formal structures no longer exist, SS/HS relationships and collaborative partnerships remain strong. Partners continue to work together to: provide services, both in- and outside of schools; collect, analyze, and share data; develop capacity; create policy and infrastructure; communicate results; seek out funding; and improve school and community environments.

As a result of the SS/HS Initiative, **these communities have developed partnerships that even today are able to accomplish common goals and address emerging community needs.** Partners continue to reinvigorate each other and develop new ideas and mechanisms for keeping the good work going, and to practice the flexible give-and-take that's the hallmark of a thriving collaboration. As one former PD told us, her site's success lies in "always being seen as a viable partner and delivering. We show partners the results they want to see. We provide the services we say we will provide and show great outcomes."

PDs also told us that communication is key to sustaining these partnerships. They have learned to communicate results to partners in terms meaningful to them (e.g., school superintendents want to hear about reduced absenteeism, increased graduation rates, and academic success) to keep partners dedicated to the mission. They have learned the importance of having open channels of communication among partners to ensure everyone shares a common vision and mission for the partnership. Open, frequent communication also helps overcome changing structures and leadership among partner organizations.

### ***Programs, Activities, and Functions***

Most sites were not able to sustain full-scale SS/HS programming once federal funding concluded. However, **collecting and analyzing data informed them about which components were most effective and guided decisions on what programming and activities, or essential functions, were vital to sustain after SS/HS funding ended.** For instance, many sites were unable to maintain a full staff of school-based mental health clinicians. Some of these school districts have worked with their partners to team up part-time school social workers with community mental health providers to continue to deliver wraparound mental health services to students. PDs told us this approach remains successful in improving not only mental health outcomes for students, but also attendance, grades, and graduation rates.

### ***School Climate Changes and Improvements***

While not always tangible, PDs shared that SS/HS improved their school and community environments, transforming the way school and community agency staff work with youth and their families. **The cultures of many former SS/HS school districts have evolved from a singular focus on academics to ones that nurture students' growth socially, emotionally, and academically.** Many schools now provide a holistic approach to educating students that includes partnering with community agencies and working with families to improve the potential of children and youth to thrive in all areas of life.

These changes are important because research shows that positive school climates benefit the development and learning of children and youth. Improving school climate impacts students at multiple levels of influence, from creating safer school environments that help all students feel physically emotionally, and socially protected, to providing more intensive, individualized supports for students exhibiting academic, social, or behavioral problems. For example, the SS/HS focus on increasing students' access to mental health services has not only led to more children receiving needed services, but also increased awareness about mental health issues, expanding educators' and school leaders' understanding of the importance of children's mental health. PDs said, for instance, that many school staff who once refused to acknowledge or discuss student mental health issues now support mental health promotion and advocate for mental health services in schools. In these schools, everyone who comes into contact with youth can provide support and connect children in need with a trained professional.

Additionally, case example sites that implemented school safety programming during SS/HS, including hiring school resource officers and implementing crisis management and prevention programming, report increased feelings of school safety by staff and students alike. These advances in school climate provide an ideal foundation for implementing systems change. Approaches such as wraparound mental health services and institutionalized PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) can only take root within a supportive environment where teachers and administrators believe that it is their job to help children and youth in all aspects of their lives. Likewise, case example sites demonstrated that improved school climates support the sustainability of SS/HS programs and activities.

## Infrastructure Changes

Perhaps the most enduring legacies are the systems, policy, and infrastructure changes that resulted from the case examples' SS/HS initiatives. Most notably, several former PDs now have district-funded roles overseeing school-community collaborations to promote and protect children's mental health and well-being. These staff manage essential resources, services, and fundraising efforts, as well as facilitate coordination with community agencies. Similarly, by leveraging all the connections they have made, these staff act as hubs for the delivery of services to children and families, including mental health care, afterschool programming, and parenting programs.

**Another important systems-level change is the ability of these communities to develop and maintain tools to measure and communicate progress. This capacity enables them to continue to engage stakeholders and secure ongoing funding for programming and activities.** For instance, several sites use data to show school boards how their efforts are reducing drop-out rates and increasing the number of students receiving diplomas, which enhances the likelihood that the school boards will continue to invest in the work.

## How Sites Sustain Essential Program Elements

All of the case example sites we spoke with shared some **common principles in their approach to sustainability**:

- » **Meeting the greatest need**
- » **Remaining flexible and agile to overcome obstacles**
- » **Maintaining strong leadership**
- » **Making data-driven decisions**
- » **Redefining sustainability**

**Meeting the Greatest Need.** Without exception, communities that have sustained successes are dedicated to responding to evolving school and community needs. Quite simply, **they see where the need is greatest and expand or adapt their approach to meet that need.** In some cases, this means initiating mentoring programs; in another, it is providing online high school diploma programs to students who have dropped out.

**Remaining Flexible and Agile to Overcome Obstacles.** None of the case example sites have had a seamless transition following the end of their federal funding period. Most sites have had to grapple with funding cuts, leadership turnover, and shifting school and community priorities—significant impediments to sustainability. However, in the face of these obstacles, our case example sites have regularly reevaluated needs, found new ways to deliver and support services, and continued to communicate and collaborate. **Sites that sustain their SS/HS work adapt to and overcome changes in the school and community environments to deliver effective programming and activities that create positive change.**

**Maintaining Strong Leadership.** Each case example site has a leader who is dedicated to advancing the SS/HS mission. As humble as they are dedicated, not one former PD claimed credit for sustaining essential aspects of their SS/HS Initiative, **but it is clear that their vision, dedication, and drive keep the work moving forward despite obstacles and resistance.** In discussing how their roles have evolved since their grants ended, the PDs said they see their top priority as serving children and youth through organizing ongoing collaboration, fundraising, and even "cheerleading"—communicating the successes of their initiatives and engaging partners on an ongoing basis.

**Making Data-Driven Decisions.** Unilaterally, all of the former PDs we interviewed conduct research before, during, and after implementing programming to learn which elements of SS/HS have had the greatest positive effect on the community's children and youth. As a result of these processes, **data-driven decision-making continues to guide the sites' choices about where to focus resources 3, 5, or even 10 years after their**

**SS/HS funding ended.** Each case example site continues to analyze needs and resources and implement programming and activities that will successfully address the evolving needs of youth and families in their communities. Moreover, they have established successful strategies to collect and analyze data at multiple levels (e.g., impact on schools, families, and communities). Finally, each case example site then uses these data to inform diverse constituencies about the effects of their work, gaining buy-in and support and identifying service providers to help close gaps.

**Redefining Sustainability.** The case example sites explained that they have had to rethink the term *sustainability*. All PDs acknowledged that the funding climate has changed since they were awarded their SS/HS grants, and they no longer envision receiving a multi-million dollar grant to continue their work. As their SS/HS funding drew to a close, they began to think of sustainability as more than keeping SS/HS intact in its exact form and instead prioritized activities and functions that led to the greatest positive outcomes. Their solution has been to diversify funding and rely on a variety of sustainability methods. **Sites have sustained SS/HS work by institutionalizing programming, building capacity, integrating delivery systems, and obtaining buy-in from key constituents.** Successful sites have also identified and adapted to shifting funding priorities to accomplish their goals. They have become experts at obtaining and managing blended funding streams from diverse sources. Because many sites exhibited this same adaptability when applying for SS/HS funding, it has not been a reach for them to try to fit their square peg of services in the circular hole of funding.

The way in which each site has secured ongoing funding varies widely. For example, some former sites incorporated as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations; others remained housed within their school districts.

Many sites have also secured external funding for their work from other sources, such as the following:

- » Categorical dollars from school districts
- » City funds
- » Education reform dollars
- » Federal grants (Systems of Care grants, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families; 21st Century grants, U.S. Department of Education; Title I funding, U.S. Department of Education; Readiness to Learn funds, U.S. Department of Education; Mental Health Block Grants to States, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- » State and private grants (Prevention and Mental Health Services Act Prevention and Early Intervention Grants, State of California; First Five Grants, State of California; Kaiser Permanente Grants, State of California; Safe Dates Grants, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; United Way Grants)
- » Private donors
- » Contracts with partners

## Challenges to Sustainability

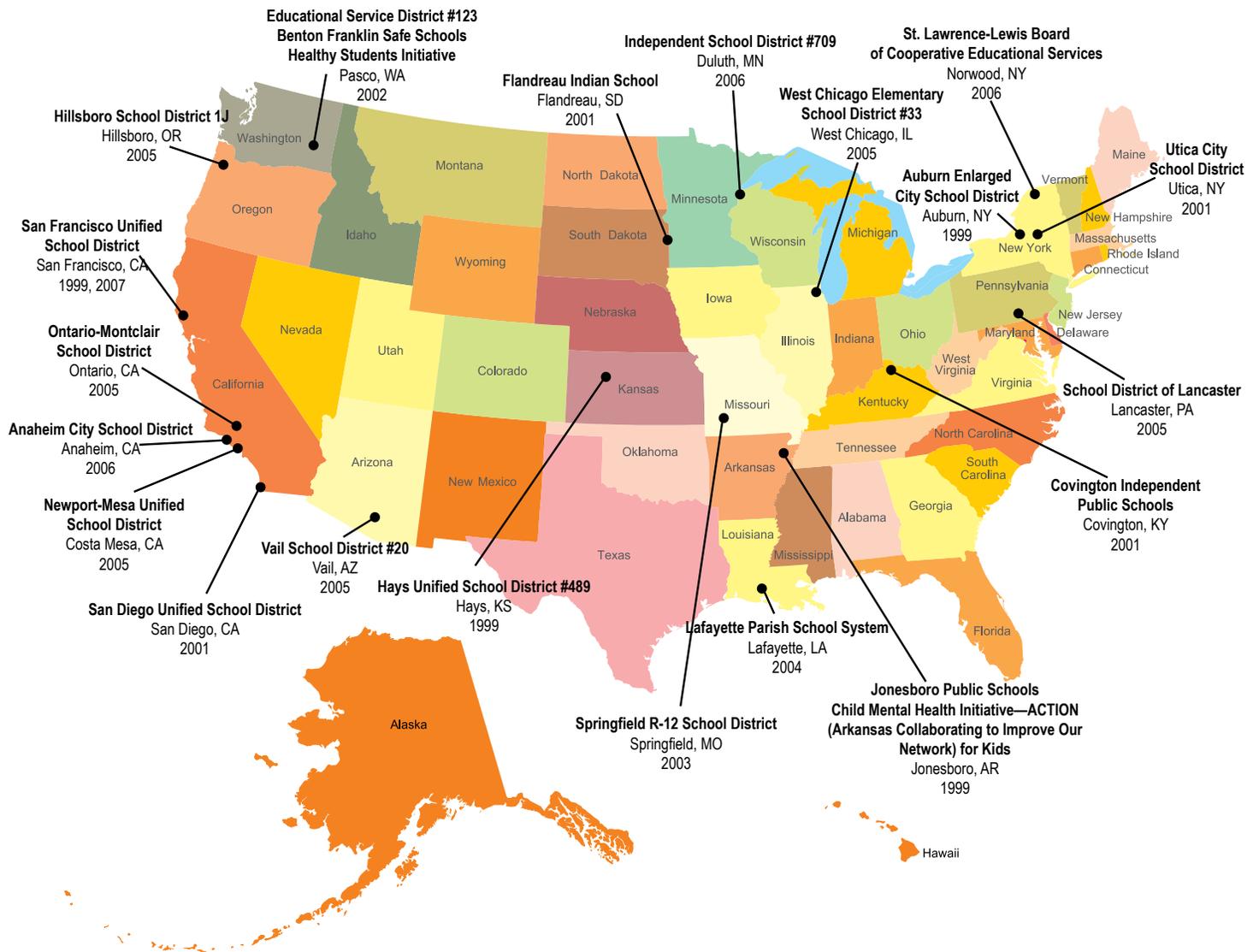
Of course, sustainability comes with many challenges and even some disappointments. In many communities, programming launched with SS/HS funding, while shown to produce positive outcomes, has been discontinued due to funding cuts and lack of support for the work. Several sites noted that alcohol and other drug prevention programming has been the hardest program component to sustain.

Many sites have faced the challenge of ongoing turnover of school leaders and partners, but they have used SS/HS communication and social marketing lessons to inform new stakeholders about their work and successes, continually engaging new collaborators.

What is remarkable about these case examples is that in these challenging economic times, they remain resilient and committed to the vision established during their SS/HS Initiatives. **They do not give up on finding new and creative ways to support the positive changes that SS/HS catalyzed in their schools and communities.**

## Site Examples

The following section provides overviews of each of our 20 case examples. We describe how each site has evolved to meet the ongoing needs of youth in their communities, what they have sustained, and how they have created their own SS/HS legacies.



## Anaheim City School District—Anaheim, California (FY 2006)

The SS/HS Initiative was the impetus for the Anaheim City School District to solidify partnerships with agencies that were poised to collaborate and create a tiered system of support to improve students' academic achievement and social and emotional well-being. Six years later, the partners continue to use data to guide their decision-making processes and rely on a diverse array of funding and support to sustain their SS/HS legacy.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Collaborating.** The partners (now called JumpStart4Kids) have blurred boundaries among organizations to jointly plan and implement evidence-based practices and programming. The school district, local YMCA, evaluator, non-profit mental health agency, police department, and district attorney's office work together to achieve the joint goal of giving youth the "jump start" they need to feel safe, happy, and empowered. Through participation on a formal Advisory Board, **they blend services and expertise, evaluate and share data, and remain dedicated to achieving the SS/HS mission and vision.** Six years after the SS/HS grant award, the JumpStart4Kids partners remain committed to working together to advance their work helping students succeed in all areas of life.

**Communicating.** Partners utilize communication strategies they learned from the SS/HS TASs to show positive outcomes and gain support. For instance, when the entire school district administration team changed during SS/HS, they used **social marketing strategies to demonstrate the impact of SS/HS on attendance, academics, mental health, and cost to win the new cabinet's support for the initiative.** Today, JumpStart4Kids continues to use these strategies to engage new partners, such as a private donor for a college preparatory program for elementary students.

**Making Data-Based Decisions.** Based on the SS/HS model, JumpStart4Kids **continually collects data to assess needs and determine which evidence-based practices are having positive, lasting effects on their students.** Data-driven decision-making allows them to focus time and resources on effective strategies and decide which activities are imperative to sustain. For example:

- » Second Step and 40 Developmental Assets have become the foundation for teaching social skills in all their schools due to data that show these programs are working.
- » Evaluation data showing the positive outcomes of programs have been instrumental in securing ongoing funding.
- » One of their biggest successes has been increasing support for their mental health work. By using data to show that this work has achieved positive results, including reducing violent and disruptive incidents and increasing one-on-one services for struggling students, they raised \$1.4 million in 2012 for mental health services for students (\$400,000 over their goal of \$1 million) from multiple funding sources.

**Creating Infrastructure.** The JumpStart4Kids model of joint ownership, blended services, and positive outcomes has **created an infrastructure and produced major systems changes that schools and the community rely on.** The district's administration team values JumpStart4Kids as an effective system of addressing mental health needs at schools and remains supportive of the initiative, and JumpStart4Kids has grown to become an essential part of the way schools operate.

*"Collaboration begins and ends with relationships. Trusting relationships are key to sustainability, helping obscure organizational boundaries, move beyond professional egos, and achieve the goal of blending resources to attain mutually valued outcomes."*

—Wendy Dallin, Anaheim City School District SS/HS project director

***Leveraging Support and Diversifying Funding.*** JumpStart4Kids successfully **sustains systems, programming, and activities through a diverse array of mechanisms**, such as the following:

- » Partners leverage funds and staffing. For example, the community mental health partner pays for data collection because the information helps them work better with schools to serve the students. School and community mental health also share the cost of a data entry person.
- » Eight funding sources cover the growing mental health work and include elementary schools' categorical dollars, grants, funding matches, a private donor, and Medicare/MediCal.



The school district remains the lead agency for JumpStart4Kids allowing them to write for grants intended for local education agencies, while partners can take the lead on grants appropriate for their agencies (i.e., non-profit agencies, the police department).

## Auburn Enlarged City School District—Auburn, New York (FY 1999)

Auburn Enlarged School District, from the first cohort of SS/HS grantees, was so successful at maintaining widespread community change that they helped a consortium of five neighboring school districts be awarded a 2009 SS/HS grant, thereby sustaining a continuum of SS/HS programming since 1999.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Sharing Leadership and Ownership.** As soon as they received SS/HS funding in 1999, the collaborative—including representatives from juvenile justice, local police, the sheriff’s office, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, and school superintendents—established the non-profit Cayuga County SS/HS Partnership to administer the grant. With this partnership, no one agency (in this case, the school district) would own or solely administer the grant, allowing the partners to **work together to solve problems, share leadership activities, and have an equal stake in achieving goals.**

The partnership, now called Partnership for Results (PFR), expanded a great deal with the successful application by five local school districts, led by the Union Springs Central School District, for SS/HS funding in 2009. PFR integrated Union Springs’s work in its own, and the two communities began working in synergy. The collaborative added new partners, including Union Springs’s school superintendent, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), the county mental health commissioner, the chief clerk of Cayuga County courts, the director of the County Youth Bureau, and the assistant director of Probation. PFR remains a partnership of shared leadership and ownership, and many programs implemented during the 1999 grant period have become part of the 2009 SS/HS grant.

*“The fact that the partnership was born out of the original grant, the bulk of the programs continue, and that we got involved in another SS/HS grant is the biggest success.”*

—Katie Moran, Partnership for Results  
executive director

**Planning for Sustainability.** Since 1999, PFR has initiated programming with the goal of long-term sustainability. They work with partners to **develop capacity and share and integrate services.** For example, the commissioner of Health and Human Services brings together staff and organizes meetings for PFR’s Strengthening Families program. PFR has made itself invaluable to the community, and is seen as integral to how children and their families access services in Cayuga County. Although the superintendent of Auburn schools and the sheriff have each changed three times in recent years, PFR has easily engaged the new leaders because participating in the partnership is seen as part of their jobs. PDR Executive Director Katie Moran says, “This group that we have works so well and so collaboratively together, that even if SS/HS goes away, we will bring lasting change into the county in terms of getting things done. . . . If nothing else, that these people are talking and working together collaboratively is a wonderful thing and will be a really good legacy.”



**Creating Data Systems.** PFR has been on the forefront of **using data systems to assess programming, eliminate duplication of services, and increase the initiative’s reach.** This “information and aggregation and collection among systems,” as former Auburn Project Director and current Union Springs SS/HS Evaluator Philip Uninsky calls it, adheres to legal, human, and civil rights, and allows information collection that helps PFR better its services and meet the changing needs of students. PFR continues to revise and

update consent-driven information collection policies to make the best use of current technologies and to better coordinate services for students and families. They recently began working with a non-profit with the hope of refining a PFR-developed database, which will allow agencies all over the county to access joint client records and view the services each receives. This will enable them to coordinate services and build partnerships with new community agencies.

***Looking to the Future.*** With Union Spring's SS/HS funding ending, PFR is looking for ways to sustain their work with the networks and partnerships they have created over the past 13 years. They have successfully **institutionalized programming and received funding for many activities.** In addition to SS/HS funding, school, local, and state dollars support their mental health services, as well as the Resilience Project, Juvenile Justice Intensive Supervision program, Multidimensional Family Support, and truancy prevention programming. Afterschool programs are expanding throughout the county and are supported by NY State Extended School Day/ Violence Prevention Advantage funding and 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Additionally, PFR has developed a school resource officer database, which they are ready to sell to other districts to further support their work, and are currently applying for a United Way mentoring grant.

## Educational Service District #123

### Benton Franklin Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative—Pasco, Washington (FY 2002)

The SS/HS grant gave the Benton Franklin SS/HS Initiative the resources to provide comprehensive mental health services within juvenile justice settings—a real need in their community. This nationally renowned program continues to provide wraparound care for systems-involved youth and to successfully improve outcomes.

## Keys to Sustainability Success

**Meeting the Greatest Need.** A needs assessment that showed a gap in mental health services for systems-involved youth compelled school and community partners in Benton Franklin to apply for an SS/HS grant. During their SS/HS grant period, they focused on providing comprehensive mental health services, assessment, and screening to youth in juvenile justice settings, as well as helping youth transition and stabilize upon release. Today, the collaborative—comprising representatives from schools, juvenile justice, community mental health, law enforcement, hospitals, and early childhood development centers—continues to **collect, analyze, and share data to illustrate needs, resources, and gaps and to help them sustain the most vital pieces of their work.**

Since SS/HS funding ended, the Benton Franklin collaborative has expanded their health initiative, providing mental health care, substance abuse screening, and transition services to juvenile justice system-involved youth. Data show this initiative has reduced costs in court systems, increased care for youth, and increased the probability that the youth transition to ongoing mental health care and wraparound services upon release.

**Building Capacity.** Through SS/HS, the partners were able build capacity to sustain their programming. Their work within the community and among juvenile justice partners has **built the knowledge and skills of all partner staff**, such that staff are now able to provide intensive case management for youth. For example, juvenile justice probation officers are increasing their skills so they can work with children and youth who have mental health issues and provide different levels of response and priority care as appropriate. School staff have also increased their abilities to work with youth as a result of SS/HS. They now understand how to address students' social and emotional needs, and receive training on identifying and referring students who are high risk for negative outcomes, such as those exposed to trauma or bullying.

However, mental health and wellness services in Benton Franklin are not just limited to systems-involved youth. The initiative also has hired a strong educational leader, the assistant superintendent, who understands the social-emotional learning (SEL) needs of students and families, and works to improve SEL services in schools. He has linked SEL to school principals' strategic plans and brings in experts to work with teachers to improve their interactions with students and focus on SEL.

**Changing School Climates.** While they no longer have funding for school-based mental health services, **this work broke the stigma associated with children's mental health and helps school staff to triage students needing assistance.** Since SS/HS, teachers, staff, and principals are more compassionate and see that they can play a role in getting youth the help they need via referrals to community-based counselors. "We are empowered now to know what do to," says SS/HS Project Director Diane Shepherd.

*"[SS/HS] has changed the landscape in our schools. That's the sustainable piece."*

—Diane Shepherd, Benton Franklin Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative project director

**Using Creativity to Sustain Work.** Benton Franklin has been resourceful in supporting their SS/HS-initiated work:

- » A SAMHSA mental health block grant supports early intervention screening for substance abuse and mental health indicators. This project supports full-time staff in schools, and enables them to measure outcomes over time to see if the model elicits change around early initiation and use of alcohol, which can help inform future programming.
- » Education reform and professional development funding support the assistant superintendent's work with SEL.
- » A Readiness to Learn grant, from state legislative funds for low-income children and their families, in the amount of \$169,000 matched to \$500,000 in services, supports family advocate positions; mental health referrals from teachers and staff; service match funding, when possible, for undocumented families who cannot receive Medicaid, as well as other uninsured and underinsured residents; and a public health nurse who performs environmental scans.



## Covington Independent Public Schools—Covington, Kentucky (FY 2001)

During their SS/HS grant, Covington Independent Public School District (CIPSD) worked with community organizations with shared interests who collaborated for lasting change. These partnerships grew and evolved into Covington Partners, a non-profit organization that continues to sustain and enhance SS/HS programming.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Sharing Ownership and Leadership.** CIPSD began their SS/HS grant period with an existing community coalition of schools, a local mental health agency, the Covington Police Department, and North Key Community Care. That early collaboration grew into Covington Partners, a non-profit that continues to thrive and add new partners (including various family services, Catholic Charities, and the Covington Housing Authority). The coalition is governed by an independent board of directors that contracts with community groups and school districts for services and staff. The coalition's structure **enables the partners to share funding and brings community leaders together to collectively promote their work in the community.** With its variety of perspectives, the coalition brings a freshness to programs, keeping community members interested in its work. In 2011, the coalition launched an awareness campaign that included a new website and logo, as well as a social media presence to communicate their work's scope, results, and successes.

**Gaining Financial Independence.** In 2004, Covington Partners **became a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, giving them financial independence and increased flexibility to work with a variety of schools, partners, and funding sources.** The coalition works with both public and private schools to offer students a variety of enrichment opportunities, such as life skills training, leadership development, and afterschool fitness classes. Covington Partners also runs a mentoring program that includes 150 adults from the community who serve as positive role models for students. Partners work together to enlist sponsors for fundraising events, such as golf outings and silent auctions, that help fund SS/HS work. Additionally, the local United Way awards funding to the coalition based on positive outcome data from SS/HS-generated programming.

**Making Data-Based Decisions.** Since the second year of the SS/HS grant, Covington Partners has worked with an evaluator to track the progress of the SS/HS initiative. They focus on measuring "The Big Three"—attendance, behavior, and academic success, which are of particular interest to school administrators. Their data continue to show their programming and activities improve these areas, helping garner the administrator support that is key to sustaining SS/HS functions and systems.

For instance, because outcome data show that their hall monitor/school resource officers have a positive effect on school safety and climate, the district continues to fund the positions. Covington Partners also expanded the mentoring program from middle schools to elementary and high school students and secured funding for the Leadership and Resiliency program because data support their success.

*"We won't start something without planning for sustainability right from the beginning."*

—Janice Wilkerson,  
Covington Independent Public Schools  
SS/HS project director

Understanding the importance of data collection and sharing, the partners continue **to develop new systems for gathering and distributing data to increase the effectiveness of service delivery and eliminate duplication.** To this end, Covington Partners will soon adopt the Learning Partner Dashboard, a data sharing system developed by the Cincinnati Public Schools. This database compiles information on individual students from all school-based systems, which will streamline assessments, activities, referrals, and support systems for easy access by school staff and community partners.

## Flandreau Indian School—Flandreau, South Dakota (FY 2001)

Students at Flandreau Indian School (FIS) are American Indian high schoolers from diverse Indian Nations from across the country who board at the school. During SS/HS, FIS focused efforts on providing culturally appropriate, quality education in a safe environment. They also created a transition program for students involved in negative behaviors that continues today, over a decade after FIS first received SS/HS funding.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Improving School Climate.** During SS/HS, FIS **improved their school climate by implementing safe school policies, initiating comprehensive educational reform, and enhancing a safe, positive academic and dormitory environment.** This work continues, and the school has recently added a cultural component, citing research that shows American Indian youth who belong to Indian clubs or groups have significantly fewer behavioral issues than those who don't. Several times a week, facilitators meet with students of various age groups to discuss their different cultures. They also bring in tribal elders as mentors, have guest speakers, and perform biweekly sweat lodge ceremonies. FIS data show that negative behaviors decreased once this cultural awareness initiative started.

**Sustaining Key Functions.** One of FIS's key initiatives during SS/HS was a transition program for students who repeatedly exhibited negative behaviors and were on the path to suspension or expulsion. Rather than punishing these students, FIS sought to support them and get them back on track. The transition program pulled the youth out of the general student population and housed them in a dedicated section of the dormitory where they received individual and group counseling, redirection, wellness activities, and afterschool care. After 15 days, they graduated from the program but continued to work closely with staff as they transitioned back into the general student population.

*"We work with students in a way that builds relationships and helps them be successful."*

—Tammy Renville, Flandreau Indian School program specialist

Though this program successfully reduced behavior problems and disciplinary sanctions, FIS has endured repeated budget cuts and has been unable to maintain the program in its entirety since 2010. However, school administrators **saw the value in keeping key functions of the initiative based on the same principles,** and believed they would still see positive results. FIS sustained the most meaningful component of the transition program: mental health services and supports. While students with behavioral issues are no longer housed separately from their peers, FIS counselors and social workers work with them both individually and in group sessions, providing therapy, finding needed supports, and working on goal setting.

**Building Relationships with Key Constituencies.** FIS **built strong partnerships** with the local sheriff's office and two police departments during SS/HS and FIS now has memoranda of understanding with these groups. Law enforcement personnel help with student disciplinary issues and host community events, such as police department-student basketball games, to show students officers are available as community resources. Since SS/HS, FIS has also built a partnership with Indian Health Service, which provides medical and dental clinics for students, to address the growing healthcare needs of their students.

**Remaining Dedicated to the SS/HS Mission.** FIS receives funding from the Indian School Equalization Program as well as grant money from the Office of Victims of Crime, and they continue to look for other grants to build upon their work. "We'd like to **continue in the direction we were going with the SS/HS grant,**" says Tammy Renville, Flandreau Indian School program specialist.

## Hays Unified School District #489—Hays, Kansas (FY 1999)

The SS/HS legacy in Hays has evolved over the past decade to meet the changing needs of children, youth, and adults in their community. One of the biggest successes of the Hays Unified School District 489's SS/HS grant has been the Learning Center of Ellis County, which has not only been sustained but expanded since their SS/HS funding ended.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Meeting Evolving Needs.** The Learning Center of Ellis County, managed by the Hays Unified School District 489, was established during SS/HS as an alternative graduation program for recent high school drop outs. It was imperative to their staff to provide high school diplomas instead of GEDs because research shows diplomas lead to greater future success (e.g., increased earnings) over GEDs.

Growing problems in the community, including high rates of poverty, teen pregnancy, out-of-home teen placements, DUIs, and low graduation rates, made it clear that the Learning Center could serve many members in the community. Consequently, the center **expanded their services** to include high school diploma classes for adults, as well as classes in English as a second language, foreign language, technology, and basic adult education (e.g., mathematics and non-degree remedial English).

Now entering its 12th year, the Learning Center serves eight local school districts. The majority of their students are women, many of whom dropped out of high school when they became single teen parents. Their mastery-based courses do not allow for failure; students are not able to move on to new lessons until they pass assessments for current lessons.

In 2005, the Learning Center became a licensed virtual classroom, thereby allowing students from across Kansas to enroll in self-paced classes. The Learning Center also provides the following services:

- » On-site licensed teachers with extended hours for students needing extra help or students with learning disabilities
- » Summer classes
- » Childcare
- » Laptops and e-readers
- » Credit retrieval and credit advancement services

*SS/HS provided the seed money to establish the Learning Center of Ellis County. The Learning Center has had a huge community impact, enrolling over 2,300 students and graduating 213, and it continues to expand the services it provides and students it serves.*

**Communicating with Community Stakeholders.** The Learning Center collects formal data on their work, including student enrollment, demographics, and graduation and transfer rates, as well as community data such as the percent of adults without a high school diploma and the earning potential of those with diplomas. They **use these data to inform local stakeholders**, including mental health and early childhood education providers and state agency staff, who can refer clients to the Learning Center. They also inform the community-at-large about the importance of their work in terms that are meaningful to them. For instance, the Learning Center was highlighted on a public radio show explaining how their graduates can positively impact the community due to their increased earning potential. Such communication activities help get buy-in and support, as well as attract new students.

**Utilizing School Funds.** To the great benefit of the Learning Center, the state of Kansas funds adult education to the same degree as it funds K–12. This has allowed the Learning Center to continue to be managed by the Hays Unified School District, which covers many of their costs. As long as they provide data on students' attendance rates, they will receive full funding for 80–100 students annually on a year-round basis. The remaining costs are paid for with sliding-scale student fees. Anita Scheve, coordinator of the Learning Center, said that as long as the legislature continues to fund adult education, they **will remain self-sustaining and continue to be a vital part of the Hays community.**

## Hillsboro School District 1J—Hillsboro, Oregon (FY 2005)

Throughout the life of their SS/HS grant, Hillsboro School District 1J (HSD) focused on strengthening existing partnerships to increase integration between county, school, and community systems. With these systems working in synergy, HSD is able to sustain much of their SS/HS work and has inspired similar work in other schools in Oregon.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Collaborating.** A cornerstone project of HSD's SS/HS grant was implementing a PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) program at each school in the district. Central to PBIS is establishing a "common language" when responding to positive and negative behaviors to send a clear message to students about expectations. Creating this common language required that groups operating both inside and outside of schools—teachers, school administrators, parents, coaches, afterschool program staff, and juvenile justice workers—collaborated to ensure that PBIS implementation was successful. **This collaborative culture strengthened existing partnerships that continue to support the group's work today**, despite turnover in nearly all partner agencies.

These partnerships have led to sustainability for many of HSD's successful initiatives begun during SS/HS. When budget cuts eliminated staff who managed PBIS, partners absorbed responsibilities and shared leadership, enabling the program to move forward. Positive outcome data (e.g., lower absentee rates and higher academic performance) validated the benefits of PBIS to key decisions makers who allocated district funding to continue the program so that it is now institutionalized in schools. HSD's districtwide implementation of PBIS is viewed as so successful that HSD is used as a model for other districts in Oregon who are working toward implementing PBIS or related programming.

*"SS/HS programs are seen as best practices. It is being taken up at school or school-district levels."*

—Liza Andrew-Miller, Hillsboro  
School District 1J  
SS/HS project director

Additional partner-supported initiatives from SS/HS that continue today include the following:

- » Afterschool programming implemented by HSD, Campfire USA, and the Hillsboro's Department of Parks and Recreation and currently supported by a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant.
- » A joint program of HSD and the Sheriff's Department, in which police officers work with children of incarcerated parents. It has been so well-received that their work is now being replicated by others throughout the state.
- » A system in which mental health partners train school staff in early identification of mental issues and how to triage them to appropriate services.
- » School safety, equity, and alcohol and drug initiatives.

**Sustaining Key Functions.** HSD focuses on **sustaining essential functions of SS/HS programs**. When budget cuts resulted in removing juvenile justice workers from schools, HSD refocused their work with juvenile justice to gang prevention based on a growing need in their community. Now, schools throughout the county have the opportunity to interact with juvenile justice workers in courts—a cross-system integration that grew from partnerships built with SS/HS. And when funding for Latino Outreach workers at HSD ended, the schools institutionalized the school-parent connections the program created.

***Making Data-Based Decisions.*** Throughout the life of HSD’s SS/HS grant, outside evaluators measured the progress and outcomes of its programs. For instance, data showed that mental health services in schools—including mental health coordinators who identify at-risk students and provide support services—resulted in gains in attendance and academic performance. Despite budget cuts, these data helped HSD dedicate a wide range of services, such as mental health teams that support families, to the attendance initiative. As a result of the improved attendance, the number of dropouts has decreased, and HSD now has a 78 percent graduation rate, one of the highest in the state.



HSD also **relies on lessons learned from SS/HS data to guide decisions on funding opportunities** that surfaced after SS/HS funding ended. For instance, when the county was awarded a grant from the Department of Education to focus on comprehensive crisis response, the district used SS/HS data to effectively and efficiently implement crisis response plans in schools throughout the district. Already knowing the needs, gaps, and strengths of their schools and community, and having experience working collaboratively in implementation, HSD was able to make the most efficient use of the funding.

## Independent School District #709—Duluth, Minnesota (FY 2006)

During SS/HS, the communities of Duluth, Proctor, and Hermantown, Minnesota, formed a coalition to prevent high-risk behaviors and promote healthy youth development. From day one, they planned for sustainability and today, the coalition remains strong. Duluth is looking beyond money as the sole means of sustainability, and toward using all spokes of the SS/HS legacy wheel to frame sustainability and create a lasting legacy in the Duluth area.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Collaborating.** All of Duluth, Hermantown, and Proctor’s work during SS/HS to secure and strengthen their partnership means they now have an agile mechanism to reach their potential, respond to unforeseen circumstances, and allow for natural growth. As their SS/HS funding was nearing its end, the partners—including the school district, community police, and wellness and mental health providers—created **a framework for collaboration** that they measure through a sustainability rubric. The framework includes a five-year plan for collaboration and a list of agreements and procedures for all members. “This framework became our legacy,” says Jodi Beckstrom, SS/HS project director. “But it was hard to build. It took many hours of concerted efforts to build these systems with partners to ensure they would embrace ownership.”

**Utilizing a Strategic Planning Process for Sustainability.** The partners utilized a unique sustainability planning process to create a systemic approach to improving school climates as a way of creating lasting change. As their SS/HS funding ended, existing work groups were charged with **creating sustainability plans to address each of the SS/HS key elements**. Each work group identified the core functions of their work and prioritizes what needed to remain past grant funding. Once identified, the groups determine ways to sustain these functions beyond the grant through informal networks, shared practices, access to services, intra- and inter-agency programs, and formal agreements and policies.

For instance, a work group is charged with implementing and sustaining a successful truancy reduction program, which cost benefit analysis determined saved the juvenile justice system over \$3.8 million. The work group created a sustainability plan that includes: specific steps for a truancy subcommittee; formal agreements for truancy policies; a sustainability action plan; and a person responsible for realizing the plan.

*“We are redefining sustainability. We are transforming our possibilities for service delivery using a systems approach.”*

—Jodi Beckstrom, Independent District #709 SS/HS project director

**Building System Capacity.** From her first year as project director, Beckstrom focused on **developing system capacity to improve school climates as a means of sustainability**. As their SS/HS funding ended, many partner agencies indicated that they did not have the funding to maintain their SS/HS programming. This helped them to realize that framing sustainability in terms of money was not relevant and that they needed to work together to change the systems and create positive school environments.

Today, their approach to sustainability focuses on building system capacity rather than implementing program after program (“programitis” as Beckstrom calls it). The work is guided by their Systematic Approach to Improving School Climate, a seven-year plan that includes a logic model illustrating activities, levels of impact, and supports and resources, and shows how each will lead to defined goals. To help build capacity, they also created a districtwide plan for sustaining essential programming to mitigate the practice of school-by-school program implementation. To this end, the district created a District Improvement Team with its own structure and budget to carry out the plan, take over the programs, and make decisions, truly owning the work they were doing. The result of this capacity building is a system of care that helps children and youth in all aspects of their lives, rather than just academic learning.

## Jonesboro Public Schools

### Child Mental Health Initiative—ACTION (Arkansas Collaborating to Improve Our Network) for Kids—Jonesboro, Arkansas (FY 1999)

The 1998 Westside Middle School shooting in Jonesboro was one in a series of violent school events that became the impetus behind the establishment of the SS/HS grant program. With the help of SS/HS, Jonesboro brought together a group of school and local partners to help their community heal from the shooting and address students' mental health needs. Today, the SS/HS legacy continues in Jonesboro with their ongoing school-based mental health and crisis management work.

## Keys to Sustainability Success

**Bringing Together Divergent Systems.** Jonesboro began their 1999 SS/HS grant in a county of 100,000 people, eight schools districts, and one challenge—none of the school superintendents had ever worked together before. However, SS/HS brought these diverse leaders together to form the Craighead County School Superintendents' Association that prioritized recruiting new partners and providing school-based mental health as their goals.

Today, four of the districts still participate in the Association. They have **forged numerous synergistic partnerships, and continue to deliver and expand services focused on improving student mental health and managing crises.** Today, the group works with: Arkansas State University (program evaluation, training and technical assistance for PBIS, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports); Jonesboro Parks and Recreation (City Stars recreation program serving thousands of students); local mental health providers (mental health services in schools, PBIS); and crisis management teams (crisis response, building planning).

*“Work that started with SS/HS has become a daily part of what we still do.”*

—Marilyn Copeland, Child Mental Health Initiative ACTION SS/HS project director

SS/HS was the first time Jonesboro ever had mental health services provided in schools, and these services continue today in all of the county's schools. New programming has also evolved out of the partnerships SS/HS forged: Jonesboro instituted Drug Courts in schools and crisis response teams continue to work in schools, train school staff, and also provide crisis intervention and prevention services. The partnership has been so successful that they applied for and were awarded a Systems of Care grant in 2005, which funds much of their PBIS work.

**Collecting and Sharing Data.** Jonesboro **collects data to assess needs and evaluate the success of their programming, and they use data-driven decision-making to prioritize future work.** Arkansas State University assesses local and national evaluation data so the Jonesboro collaborative not only knows their specific needs but how those needs compare to the rest of the country. Data is shared among all of the partners to better coordinate services, and results are shared with community stakeholders to maintain their buy-in and support.

**Diversifying Support.** Much of Jonesboro's **work is self-sustaining.** The Superintendents' Association has no funding and is maintained by the superintendents, who volunteer their time to continue their legacy of success. The PBIS implementation work is institutionalized and supported by schools, as is the crisis management programming. And once the Systems of Care grant ends, Arkansas State University will provide the training and technical assistance for PBIS. The city and local sponsors support other activities, such as City Stars, and Medicaid and state funding cover the school mental health services.

## Lafayette Parish School System—Lafayette, Louisiana (FY 2004)

SS/HS enabled the Lafayette Parish School System (LPSS) to cultivate and strengthen partnerships, respond to crises, and expand health services in schools. Supportive leadership coupled with data collection and sharing have been keys to the sustainability of SS/HS work at LPSS.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Working with Partners.** Since 1999, LPSS has participated in a widespread school-community coalition. SS/HS funding gave the coalition the opportunity to re-focus their work, and it grew into the Task Force for the Prevention of Violence in Schools. The Task Force includes members from the local mental health agency, the judicial district and juvenile drug courts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, a community health care clinic, women's and children's shelters, and Goodwill. Today, the group meets monthly during the school year to keep each other informed about their ongoing work and keep abreast of community needs.

*"It's wonderful that we had the grant. . . . We have a lot of forward-thinking people, but they never would have come together and said 'let's see where this takes us.'"*

— Barbara Friedrichs, Lafayette Parish School System SS/HS project director

**The Task Force collaborates on ways to sustain programming.** When the SS/HS grant ended, the Task Force's Leadership and Resilience Program, which aims to reduce the number of students referred to the criminal justice system, became a permanent program at the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office Corrections Division. The school system has sustained eight of the nine SS/HS-initiated school-based mental health practitioners, and treats students that the community mental health agency can no longer see due to budget cuts.

**Meeting the Greatest Need.** The Task Force members' **sense of shared responsibility for the wellbeing of students helps them respond adeptly when faced with crises.** The Task Force registered and transitioned hundreds of new students who were relocated to LPSS after Hurricane Katrina, and the strong working relationships forged during that crisis helps them become agile and meet evolving needs in their schools and community.

**Engaging Leadership.** The district recently hired a new superintendent, Dr. Pat Cooper, who supports coordinated school health. With his leadership, the Task Force is **implementing health and wellness teams at all district schools**, increasing mental health staff, and working to place a social worker and a nurse in every school. Today, LPSS schools employ nearly 20 registered nurses (increased from 12 during the SS/HS grant period), as well as licensed practical nurses who assist special education students.

**Making Data-based Decisions.** In 2005, the Task Force implemented a mental health referral database that continues today. It helps partners **collect, share, and evaluate data to make timely decisions regarding mental health services in schools.** When data showed improved graduation rates among students who had been referred to mental health services, the Task Force prioritized sustaining mental health service delivery and social worker positions.

**Finding New Ways to Support Work.** While the school district funds many of the coordinated health services in schools, the partnership is seeking additional funding. They recently began collaborating with a federally qualified health center (FQHC), which can bill school-based mental health and nursing staff services through Medicaid. The Task Force also acquired state funding to cover positions established during SS/HS, such as staff to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and violence and substance abuse prevention programming. Barbara Friedrichs, SS/HS project director, says they are "making progress" in **finding long-term support for their work** and understands that it takes time to truly sustain the work.

## Newport-Mesa Unified School District—Costa Mesa, California (FY 2005)

The Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) is a socio-culturally and racially diverse district that faces a range of challenges including gangs, violence, and truancy. By creating a clear vision during their SS/HS grant, NMUSD was able to focus on priority issues and set the groundwork for creating systemic change that continues to be sustained today.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Creating a Shared Vision.** At the beginning of their SS/HS funding, the NMUSD alliance—with the school system, Costa Mesa Police Department, and district attorney’s (DA’s) office playing key roles—came to a **common understanding of the priority issues** they wanted to address and established procedures for how the initiative would operate. They identified areas of particular urgency, including gang violence, truancy, school-based mental health care, parenting, and homelessness.

Today, this shared vision adapts to meet growing needs. After SS/HS, the school district, with the support of the DA and police, implemented GRIP, the Gang Prevention and Intervention Program, in three of the district’s elementary schools. The SS/HS-initiated program focused on providing services to homeless families is still in place as the number of families needing these services continues to grow. Likewise, the group continues to implement Parenting Wisely, Second Step, and Challenge Days throughout the district. Many of the school-based counselors have evolved into social emotional counselors instead of strict academic counselors, and the school nurses and school community facilitators are also highly involved in the social emotional care of NMUSD students.

**Reforming Systems and Improving School Climate.** By establishing a shared vision of how SS/HS could help their schools and communities, **the partners were well-aligned to achieve lasting systems change.** One of the most notable systemic changes is an improvement in service provision to students at risk of expulsion. Today, no student can be banned from district schools for lack of attendance unless Project Director Jane Garland determines the district has attempted all possible interventions available to them. This protocol has increased accountability and action from school- and community-based service providers.

*“Children cannot be looked at strictly from an educational perspective. We look at the whole child.”*

—Jane Garland, Newport-Mesa Unified School District SS/HS project director

The guiding SS/HS vision has also led to improved school climates. Garland reports a shift in attitude among school administrators over the past few years, including an increase in their willingness to tackle head on the issues connected to SS/HS. “I think the growth of the people in caring about the issues, as each person gets onboard, changed the atmosphere,” she says. “If we don’t change, we can’t expect things to get better. [NMUSD] was a good place then but now it’s a great place. . . . Some of our principals have started afterschool programs, tutoring, things we have not seen before. It is a gut-level change.”

**Working with Partners.** The cohesion that SS/HS created between school and community partners helped NMUSD to overcome a significant change in high-level leadership that may have otherwise derailed their work. In 2012, the district lost its superintendent, who had been a strong supporter of SS/HS. However, SS/HS programs continued to grow and move forward. Garland believes this can be attributed in large part to changes NMUSD made in terms of **increased communication and to the partnerships that were formed during the SS/HS grant period.** The group has also expanded their partnership base to establish the NMUSD Community Alliance. This large coalition, consisting of various community organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, homeless shelters, and health and human services, works together to address new and ongoing needs in the community by coordinating services and applying for funding.

***Facing Funding Challenges.*** Many programs developed during SS/HS are **now institutionalized or sustained by district and community partners who provide in-kind or low-fee services.** For example, community mental health providers provide in-school services either for free or on a sliding scale, and a pre-school-based family outreach worker is now covered by the Commission on Children. This position continues to do work related to parenting—a hallmark of the SS/HS program at NMUSD. NMUSD is experiencing barriers when trying to connect students with mental health services due to different bureaucratic processes and an amendment to California’s AB1802 Law that no longer provides supplemental funding for school counseling. While many programs are still in place, they have not yet been sustained at the level that NMUSD desires. However, Garland says she remains committed to finding support to cover additional social workers and mental health providers.

## Ontario-Montclair School District—Ontario, California (FY 2005)

The Ontario-Montclair School District (OMSD) implemented their SS/HS programming with a strong school-community partnership and a sound strategic plan. After their SS/HS funding ended, they continued to collaborate with partners, create systems for change, and advance their programming and services to address evolving needs in their diverse community.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Working with Partners.** During SS/HS, OMSD had great success collaborating with its partners and now after SS/HS, continues to work with: the Inland Empire United Way, Pacific Clinics (a mental healthcare and behavioral therapy service provider), Para los Niños (a youth services organization), Kaiser Permanente, The City of Montclair, Bilingual Family Counseling, the House of Ruth (a domestic violence advocacy and services organization), and Chaffey Community College. These partners coordinate and deliver SS/HS-initiated services and programming including Positive Action, Second Step, parenting classes, family outreach, service coordination, and triage mental health services for students and their families.

*“See the future and be flexible. . . . Always be seen as a viable partner and deliver. Show partners the results they want to see. Provide the services you say you will provide and show great outcomes.”*

—Bonnie Mooney, Ontario-Montclair School District SS/HS project director

OMSD continues to keep the collaborative relevant by meeting regularly and connecting with new partners on areas of expanded work. They also **expand existing services as needs arise**. In addition to providing mental health services in schools, the collaborative now provides case management, transportation for children to medical services, and health insurance enrollment, and the partnership is also agile enough to adopt new programming to obtain funding. Recently, for example, as state money for their mental health work began diminishing, they initiated the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program in schools as a way to support and expand mental health services. Additionally, OMSD, the City of Montclair, Chaffey Joint Union High School District, Chaffey College, California State University of San Bernardino (CSUSB), have come together to initiate the Promise Scholars program that motivates youth to get into college, guarantees a seat at CSUSB, assists with completion of financial aid applications, and provides scholarship funds.

**Collecting and Analyzing Data.** OMSD **collects and analyzes an array of detailed data**, including mental health needs and outcomes, truancy, case management, health insurance status and eligibility, and services received by each child. All partners use the same evaluation tools and share outcomes. These data tell them about community needs, strengths, and gaps and give them results to share with the school board of trustees, principals, local city government, the mental health commissioner, and the boards of local organizations. Finally, the data show how each partner contributes to the team and ways they can work better together.

**Diversifying Support.** OMSD does not rely on one source of funding to support their initiatives. Rather, they have **diversified the support for programs, and it has been a successful model for sustaining an array of work begun during SS/HS**. Partners provide services (e.g., Bilingual Family Counseling provides counselors in schools; Pacific Clinics provides intensive psychiatric services and evaluation), and they build capacity among staff (e.g., train teachers and parent educators to deliver Second Step in all preschools). Also, individual schools pay for services such as case management, insurance enrollment, and transportation and outreach consultants stationed at their schools. Other funding mechanisms include:

» **State funding:** Title I funding provides \$480,000/year for counseling, case management, and transportation for students. OMSD also allocates \$300,000/year from MediCal to maintain the programs and services our Family and Collaborative Services department has provided since SS/HS.

» **Grants:** First 5 Funding provides \$365,000 per year for three years and covers staff, supplies, and materials for case management and mental health and developmental screening; a Mental Health Services Act Prevention and Early

Intervention grant provides \$1.2 million for three years for alcohol and substance abuse prevention education, counseling for uninsured students, and substance abuse prevention classes for parents; over the past five years, Kaiser Permanente has provided a \$7,500–25,000 grant annually for intern-level mental health counselors' training and related costs; a \$145,000 McKinney Vento federal grant covers homeless children's services; a United Way grant of \$15,000 supports the programmatic aspect of Promise Scholars.

» **Contracts:** The County of San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health pays for EPSDT mental health services (the current fiscal year contract is \$816,000; and the City of Montclair has provided \$50,000/year for the past 15 years for case management).



## San Diego Unified School District—San Diego, California (FY 2001)

The San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) began their SS/HS grant with the goal of reducing school expulsions by meeting the needs of at-risk and underserved youth with an array of services. Their work expanded from this initial core project, but the focus on reducing expulsions and providing accessible mental health care remains; a decade after first receiving funding, school expulsions in the district have decreased from 400 students a year to 200, and SS/HS has completely transformed the way schools and community partners deliver services to children and youth.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Sharing Leadership and Ownership.** Since the inception of their SS/HS grant, SDUSD has operated on a **model of shared leadership and ownership among all partners**, which today include school district special education staff, community mental health providers, juvenile justice and probation, and child-serving community agencies such as child welfare. As when they first received funding, the group focuses on bringing services to at-risk adolescents and youth by bridging divides.

All partners share leadership responsibilities and integrate services to best meet students' needs. For example, the school district's MediCal-compliant mental health center, built during the SS/HS grant period, still operates due in large part to funding and staff provided by youth probation and community mental health agencies.

Some agencies have access to funds that SDUSD can use for programming. The collaborative can access dollars earmarked for education to provide intensive services for emotionally disturbed students, sharing systems and services to meet the needs of these children. Moreover, SDUSD's partnership with special education brings in millions of dollars of non-grant funding each year for services for students in need. SS/HS Project Director Shirley Culver spends much of her time fostering these partnerships, finding ways to work together to address problems that no one agency could address alone. Says Culver, "Distributing [the work] among people in the community makes it feel like it is community-owned and gives it freshness."

*"Make what is really working for the kids continue to work. Keep talking and working together through tough financial times. . . . Focus on things that you know are really making a difference."*

—Shirley Culver, San Diego Unified School District SS/HS project director

**Improving School Climate.** Improving school climate was the basis for all of the work SDUSD initiated during SS/HS, and **school climate improvements continue to be the foundation for enriching structure, communication, and standards necessary for implementing programming.** During SS/HS, SDUSD presented student mental health in a public health model, training all administrators, teachers, and support staff on the mental health framework to help them see that mental health issues are just as important as physical health issues. This has transformed schools—which in turn has transformed the community—laying the groundwork for all mental health services and fostering the continued support for the district's mental health center. Today, all school-based programming is infused with mental health and caring for mental wellness has become part of the schools' culture. Such transformation leads to greater staff capacity and long-term sustainability. Bus drivers, for instance, are trained in suicide prevention. This training does not require any funding but builds capacity among staff and helps support children and youth in need.

Within this framework, SDUSD schools continue to implement new evidence-based programs and activities that help youth grow and flourish in the educational setting. In 2010, 45 schools in the SDUSD implemented PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), and preschools implemented First 5 and Incredible Years.

These programs, which continue today, have a huge impact on students' success and are only possible because the teachers and staff believe in them and feel supported and capable in delivering them to students.

However, culture change in SDUSD is not limited to the schools. Over the past 12 years of working together, agencies have also changed in the ways they think about and work with each other. Culver believes that once you find the right representatives from each agency, you can work on changing the culture of each. These changes can withstand any turnover among leadership and keep the partnership strong. She says, "It doesn't matter where the funding is coming from. [Climate change] gives us more opportunity to transform the kids in any school."



## San Francisco Unified School District—San Francisco, California (FYs 1999 and 2007)

The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) was fortunate to have two SS/HS grants for different sets of schools, which established a legacy of successful outcomes for students and families in their area. One of their most successful and enduring models has been the establishment of comprehensive wellness centers in all of the district's high schools.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Collecting and Analyzing Data.** The SFUSD SS/HS partners have **a long history of collecting and analyzing data to determine which activities are effective, decide where services are needed, and create action plans.** The SS/HS partners who remain collaborators with the school district are SFUSD's Child Development Department; the Department of Public Health; juvenile probation; local police; the Department of Children, Youth, and Families; the University of California-Berkley; Mentoring for Success (a school-based mentoring program); and community behavioral health service providers.

The partners share data among themselves to better track student outcomes and services received. In 2011, they piloted a survey that collects student-level data such as interventions received, service providers seen, and dates of service to help the partners better manage their service provision. Additionally, the University of California-Berkley is tracking student- and school-level outcomes for schools to help the partners decide which key elements are essential to sustain.

**Building Capacity.** SS/HS provided SFUSD with the resources to build staff capacity and create systems to sustain key elements of successful programming. "A lot of it is just building the capacity of people who are already there," says Curtiss Sarikey, the former San Francisco Unified School District project director, "And working with some of these systems to find new homes for things, and giving staff the support do to it." To this end, SFUSD provides Second Step staff with training facilities, and in return, it receives 10 free training spots, resulting in staff who are qualified to deliver the intervention. Moreover, health curriculum leaders implement health curricula in schools, while other staff train to be trainers of interventions, building capacity among staff to deliver relevant programming and activities.

**Creating Infrastructure.** SFUSD built a strong infrastructure with SS/HS, and many programs continue due to that infrastructure. Much of the SS/HS-initiated programming will become part of the SFUSD's Student Support Services Department, whose role will be to promote SS/HS's key elements. This includes brief interventions for students who use alcohol or other drugs, and the student assistance program that provides an umbrella of support by assessing students and creating relevant interventions in conjunction with partners. Additionally, the more than 30 school district nurses and 70 social workers brought on during SS/HS are so integral to the functioning of schools that they are supported by city and county propositions.

*"We aligned a lot of good resources that our district or the partners already had in place, and brought them to a strategic position. We want to continue to improve outcomes for our highest needs students in San Francisco. That is key."*

—Curtiss Sarikey, former San Francisco Unified School District project director

**Integrating Service Delivery.** The wellness centers in SFUSD high schools are an important part of the district's landscape and **continue because of integrated service delivery.** Positions and services within the centers are funded by partner agencies and grant funding.

The partners are happy with their established system of integrating services, but the different bureaucratic system within each organization can present challenges. To help families navigate the complex array of partner systems, the Department of Public Health (DPH) has a designated point person who serves as the families' contact for all referrals to community services. This system works because it not only benefits schools but also helps DPH connect the hardest-to-reach families to mental and public health services. Currently, the partners are discussing how they can leverage funding to support this point person's position.



## School District of Lancaster—Lancaster, Pennsylvania (FY 2005)

The School District of Lancaster (SDL) has enjoyed enormous sustainability success. According to Project Director Pam Smith, all of their SS/HS partnerships and services with demonstrated success have continued or even expanded. Smith attributes this to creating a school-and-community based initiative and enacting broad systemic change. SDL's work engaging community partners is so innovative that Smith has presented on the topic at meetings of the National School Board Association and the Pennsylvania School Board Association.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Building a School-Community Partnership.** Although SDL is a resource-rich area, schools and community agencies were operating in silos before SS/HS. The school district had high rates of expulsion, school violence, gangs, and drug and alcohol abuse, as well as a generally poor school climate. No single entity had the tools to deal with all these issues—until SS/HS. The SS/HS grant enabled SDL to address these problems by bringing together a strong cadre of partners: school leaders, the County Directors of Juvenile Probation and Mental Health, the local police, an evaluator from Franklin and Marshall College, a representative from the Council on Alcohol and Drug Use, a community representative, and a delegate from the mayor's office.

Today, all of these constituencies continue to work together and have added new partners, such as the Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency, the United Way, and faith-based partners.

Partners **share ownership and leadership of the initiative, operating under the philosophy that a school-community-based project would be the most sustainable and lend itself to having a broader impact.** Together, these partners contribute \$13.1 million annually in in-kind services and staff. "This full service school-community model has been pivotal in sustaining the work," SS/HS Project Director Pam Smith told us. This includes supporting at least one full-time mental health clinician in each of the district's 23 schools, school resource officers, and school-family liaisons.

**Creating Systemic Change.** Led by the initiative's Systemic Partners Team, SDL has focused on enacting systems change as a means of sustainability. During SS/HS, the Systemic Partners Team met monthly to discuss how **essential functions (rather than programs) could be sustained as part of systems change.** Smith spent this time training staff and building capacity among partners. The partners now provide services, management, and oversight inside the schools, allowing Smith to focus her time on large-scale systemic work—coordinating and mobilizing new partners and initiatives, and engaging all partners in decision-making processes—rather than on site-specific operations. This model has truly changed the district culture. Now people think about helping children and youth through systemic change rather than by implementing short-term programming.

**Leveraging Support and Diversifying Funding.** SDL sustains their work by **leveraging support from partners and garnering funding from diverse entities.** They have contracts with community mental health agencies to provide school-based behavioral health work. The agencies, in turn, bill insurance when appropriate and provide in-kind support in the form of direct services. SDL also collects survey data on parents, students, and principals and then uses it to make decisions regarding programs and which funding opportunities are relevant to pursue. For example, survey data helped them receive a Communities That Care grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to support their work.

*"I attribute our sustainability to the systemic work we did with partners for SS/HS. Without SS/HS we wouldn't be here."*

—Pam Smith, School District of Lancaster  
SS/HS project director

## Springfield R-12 School District—Springfield, Missouri (FY 2003)

The Springfield R-12 School District (SDS) used their SS/HS funding to create developmentally and culturally appropriate interventions to address the complex needs of youth and families, including poverty, hunger, school dropout, substance abuse, and lack of mental health services. Since their SS/HS grant ended, SDS has faced significant funding challenges but has remained dedicated to serving their community's most disadvantaged families. Key SS/HS staff continue to seek support for their work by increasing community awareness about children and youth needs and reconnecting with partners.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Remaining Dedicated to the Mission.** A 2011 survey showed hunger/lack of food as the number one issue faced by Springfield's children and youth. While many of the activities and programs initiated under SS/HS have been discontinued due to drastic budget cuts, a core group of former SS/HS staff—called the Kids First Committee—**remains dedicated to finding ways to address hunger and other pressing needs** (including lack of housing, clothing, and transportation) of local children and youth.

The school-community collaborative includes: Care to Learn, a group dedicated to addressing children's health, hunger, and hygiene; the Community Partnership of the Ozarks, an organization that addresses a host of children, family, and community issues in the area; Ozarks Food Harvest Food Bank; key community leaders from other support organizations; and school leaders who are working together to coordinate services and programs to tackle these problems. Currently, the group is focusing on increasing access to reduced-price and free school lunches, improving attendance, and working with families on stability and mobility issues.

The 2011 survey also showed a huge need for behavioral health services. Severe budget cuts in 2010–2011 meant the end of one of SDS's longest enduring and most successful SS/HS initiatives, school-based mental health programming. The creation of this program was the result of a needs assessment of school administrators and staff, which showed site-based mental health clinicians, nurses, and social workers were the schools' greatest need. Since the funding cuts, the schools that had onsite mental health services have seen "a huge hole" in the mental health services they are able to provide to students. Kids First remains dedicated to their common cause by working to tie behavioral health services in with other programming and to reconnect with social service agencies to revive school-based mental health care.

"We are working with [community partners] to pull together a group to address the mental health issues," says Jean Grabeel, Springfield R-12 School District's coordinator of health services. "Here's our dream: we need school-based services. [Kids First] will facilitate the group. We are taking time to build case: The need is there and growing! Mobility, stability, poverty, health needs continue to grow. We need to pool resources so it's not just the school district shouldering the burden of finding resources. The community partnership will facilitate the group so the directive isn't coming from the school system."

**Communicating with Key Stakeholders.** Kids First **continues to cement emerging partnerships and court new funders and supporters, and staff remain hopeful about reinvigorating the SS/HS legacy in Springfield.** They are reconnecting with former SS/HS collaborators and recruiting new agencies to address their population's multifaceted problems. Currently, Kids First is embarking on a campaign to partner with community agencies that aims to (1) increase awareness about youth needs, (2) get key players back to the table, (3) revamp

*"The kids are dealing with issues of domestic violence, homelessness, hunger, and mental health. This is what the picture is. How can we work better as a community?"*

—Jean Grabeel, Springfield R-12  
School District coordinator of  
health services

the school-based mental health work begun during SS/HS, and (4) inform people about their work. The campaign is already starting to bear fruit. Beginning in the fall of 2012, Mercy Hospital in Springfield has provided two social workers once a week at a district elementary school (paid for by the district employee assistance program) to provide mental health services and support to students, families, and staff. Data from this pilot project will show if it improves outcomes. If so, Mercy Hospital may implement the services in other schools at no cost to the school district.

## St. Lawrence-Lewis Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)— Norwood, New York (FY 2006)

The St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES used their SS/HS funding to improve the limited resources available across their large, rural area, addressing concerns identified by a youth risk survey. Much of their SS/HS work focused on forming a strong partnership, utilizing strategic planning, and creating an infrastructure to sustain their work when funding ended. Today, the collaborative remains strong and true to their mission of increasing services for students and families.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Working with Partners.** The St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES project has a legacy of school-community partnerships. During SS/HS, the Communities that Care (CTC) Coalition served as the SS/HS project management team, and this all-volunteer group continues to serve as an active coordinating body for mental health providers, schools, local government, county agencies, local law enforcement, service providers, colleges and universities, and the prevention council in St. Lawrence County. The group strives to **coordinate services and build capacity among all partner agencies to more efficiently and effectively serve local children, youth, and families.**

The coalition works in synergy to provide resources for the entire county, rather than the separate localities, and incorporates project priorities into individual agency plans. Stakeholders from schools and county agencies are involved in decision-making processes, and each shares a strong commitment to continuing capacity building. The coalition has an extensive reach, from impacting county policymaking to integrating annual planning for local mental health, chemical dependence, and disability services. Following are some examples of programming the coalition has sustained or expanded from SS/HS:

1. **School Safety:** The New York State Police and St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Office work with schools and county services to assess safety and emergency planning and procedures.
2. **Early Childhood Education:** The Department of Social Services partners with adult literacy providers to impact early childhood development, provide parenting classes, and work with families who are in jeopardy of having children placed outside the home or are working to transition children back home.
3. **Underage Drinking:** The coalition secured a multi-year Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG) and utilizes environmental strategies to address factors contributing to underage drinking among students in grades 9–12. The *Change the Way* campaign enables them to expand the scope of efforts to reduce youth risk behaviors and increase community protective factors.
4. **Positive Youth Activities and Services:** Two former SS/HS districts work with a third district and community partners on afterschool programming that is funded through a New York State Education Department program.
5. **Homeless Education:** The BOCES administers a multi-year grant through the New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students to provide information, referrals, and training to schools, parents, and others about the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

*"Initially, our partners operated in a compartmentalized fashion. Now each contributes to an integrated effort. This has been the most outstanding outcome. The team will continue to do great things for kids."*

—Marsha Sawyer, St. Lawrence-Lewis  
SS/HS project director



“When the project began, I looked forward to seeing where we would be in five years,” says Marsha Sawyer, SS/HS project director. “Here we are and the impact of SS/HS is evident. The ongoing collaboration continues to support the healthy development of our children and strengthens families residing within our rural communities.”

***Using Data to Drive Strategic Planning.*** **Data collection and analysis continue to drive the coalition’s work.** As part of the coalition’s SPF-SIG, they conducted a comprehensive community assessment in 2011 to guide their strategic planning. In fact, the data they collected were so complete, that county agencies contact the Coalition when they require data for grant writing, budgeting, and other activities.

## Utica City School District—Utica, New York (FY 2001)

Eleven years after receiving an SS/HS grant, the Utica SS/HS Partnership has kept true to its mission, goals, and objectives. They have sustained 25 of their original 32 SS/HS-initiated programs, and continue to create policy and improve service delivery through their self-sustaining initiative.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Sustaining Essential Elements.** For the Utica SS/HS Partnership, **sustainability is not about replicating programs, but replicating successes in the long-term.** While the majority of the SS/HS-initiated projects remain in every school district, each has evolved in response to three questions: *What worked? What didn't? What support do we need to sustain what is effective?* This framework allows the partnership to tailor best practices' integral elements to meet the needs of their community.

**Working with Partners.** The focus of the initiative remains on assisting high-risk youth before they become systems-involved. The partnership remains largely unchanged from the SS/HS days with **all partners merging funding and collaborating regularly.** Members of the Utica SS/HS Partnership include the city school district, the director of security and operations, local law enforcement, social services, juvenile probation, school resource officers, city and county mental health providers, families, and students who work together to provide wraparound services in schools and partner agencies. This work brings together agencies that had never previously collaborated, and each agency is able to provide services that are meaningful to them. This long-term collaboration has resulted in staff and services in schools where agencies previously didn't operate.

Additionally, Utica SS/HS actively recruits new potential community partners by sharing data noting the effectiveness of the initiative's work, showing that Utica SS/HS is a viable partner, proving Utica SS/HS's value to the organization, and explaining how each can benefit from working together on shared goals.

**Creating a Shared Vision.** Utica SS/HS **aligns each partner agency's goals and services to achieve a common vision.** Utica SS/HS emphasizes that when school districts and community agencies contract for services with them, these community agencies are purchasing positive outcomes, such as improved attendance and student grade point averages, and not just procuring service hours. In this way, Utica SS/HS has succeeded in forming the new relationships necessary for sustainability and success.

For example, schools and law enforcement agencies both saw a need for afterschool programming to keep teenagers out of trouble, but the Utica SS/HS teen center couldn't afford transportation from schools to their facility. The police, schools, and the Utica SS/HS teen center collaborated to create an art-based afterschool program and divided the responsibility for transportation: youth use school buses to get to the program and the teen center supervises their pick up at night.

**Creating Policy and Integrating Service Delivery.** Utica SS/HS is widely regarded as a community resource in their county. **The partnership is the nucleus for service delivery in schools, facilitating collaboration with community agencies.** When a youth is sent to county court, the court officials ask, *Did Safe Schools work with the child?* If not, the child is sent back to school and referred to Utica SS/HS, which in turn works with juvenile probation officers on alternatives to placement.

*"We act as the hub for services in schools and work with surrounding agencies. We facilitate work within schools. We have created relationships with other entities that didn't exist before."*

—Anne Lansing, Utica SS/HS Partnership, Inc.  
executive director

***Building Capacity.*** Partner organizations that covered the costs of service provision during SS/HS now train staff to provide those services at schools. For example, they trained the director of school resource officers (SROs) in a train-the-trainer model, and the Utica City School District now has the largest group of SROs in the state outside of New York City and Yonkers. They also **weave effective elements of programming, such as their truancy reduction program, into existing classes and train teachers to deliver the curricula.**

***Diversifying Support.*** In the beginning, the Utica SS/HS Partnership established itself as a 501(c)(3) organization as a strategy to continue working as equal partners and be able to apply for funding. In addition to grants, the partnership contracts with agencies and receives support from small donors. Additionally, **they collect data and show the positive outcomes to key stakeholders to get their buy-in and support.** For example, using the collected data, they can show that their college prep program improves grades, attendance, and school involvement.

## Vail School District #20—Vail, Arizona (FY 2005)

Vail School District #20 started their SS/HS grant with a group of people who were passionate about changing school culture and climate. Since that time, the district has improved the quality of their programming, increased schools served, and used data to strategically plan for sustainability.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Fostering Partnerships.** The SS/HS initiative (now known as Vail CARES) had a strong system of partners when they submitted the grant application, and there has been minimal turnover of leadership since that time. The partners, who bring an array of expertise and services to Vail CARES, include the University of Arizona College of Education, a Phoenix-based mental and behavioral health provider, the local YMCA, religious groups, the Pima County Sheriff's Department, and the Tucson Police Department. The group is managed by a board of volunteer citizens who **collaborate and support data-driven decision-making**.

The partners provide needed services in schools, including the following:

- » The YMCA provides out-of-school time activities and summer programs.
- » A faith-based group hosts an annual parenting event.
- » Law enforcement partners review emergency planning procedures and work with court-involved youth from the district.
- » A clinician from the community mental health provider works inside the district with students with special needs and behavioral issues, providing referrals, individualized plans, trainings, and support to school-based behavioral specialists and service coordinators.
- » School- and community-based mental and behavioral health clinicians serve at-risk families, with the Mental Health Pavilion in Tucson triaging services for the group.

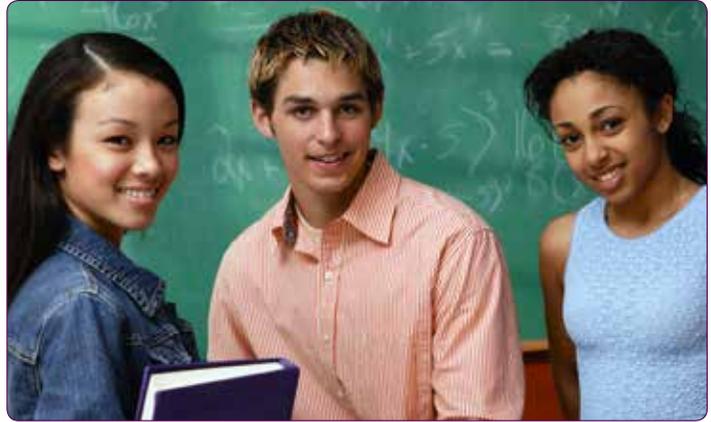
**Collecting and Sharing Data.** Each school implements different evidence-based activities and programs based on its individual needs. Vail CARES collects data on school climate, academics, and other benchmarks, allowing them to identify and address problems on a school-by-school basis and create plans for addressing challenges in the upcoming year. For instance, data show that their violence prevention/protective school characteristics programming has positive effects on school culture and climate. Therefore, Vail CARES continues to advocate for safe school policies and procedures, high academic expectations, strong boundaries, and adult-student connectedness. Likewise, data showed PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) was successful in improving school climate, so Vail CARES made it a priority to sustain the program. Today, the Vail CARES Cadre, a districtwide committee with representatives from each school, trains and supports core teams who implement PBIS in individual schools based on their needs.

**The use of data helps their work evolve to meet changing needs.** As an example, local data led Vail CARES to expand their programming to address issues of hunger, civil infrastructure, and emergency preparedness. Partners also share results among themselves and with constituencies to coordinate services and get buy-in from the community. Police share data on student arrests with schools, and schools share data on student achievement and school climate with parents.

**Sustaining Essential Functions.** While much of their work is supported by tax overrides of up to 15 percent,

*Ten years ago, Vail School District #20 performed below average academically. In striking contrast, the successes they achieved in SS/HS and beyond have resulted in their rating as the number one school district in the state for the 2011–2012 school year by the Arizona Department of Education.*

which have passed annually for the last 17 years, Vail CARES saw drastic funding cuts after SS/HS ended. To continue their SS/HS legacy, the board **used data to decide which components and activities of their work were having the greatest positive effect, and made them a priority for sustainability.** The programs that have been sustained are the early childhood programs (now self-funded by parent fees, grants from the state, and scholarships) and the middle school out-of-school programming (self-supported through fees and grants from outside organizations such as IBM). Principals at each school ensure the programming is implemented with fidelity. Though



alcohol, tobacco, and other drug programming as it existed during SS/HS was discontinued, the Vail CARES's managing board recognized its value and has institutionalized substance abuse prevention curricula into classes.

## West Chicago Elementary School District #33—West Chicago, Illinois (FY 2005)

From the time they were awarded their SS/HS grant in 2005, West Chicago Elementary School District 33 focused on systems change, infrastructure development, and collaboration as a way to create a school-community model to bring services to youth.

### Keys to Sustainability Success

**Nurturing Collaboration.** This former SS/HS site, now called WeGo Together for Kids, counts collaboration as the strongest component of the initiative today. The school district wrote the SS/HS grant application with partners from a local prevention agency, a health department, community mental health providers, and the police department. After receiving funding, other key partners came onboard, including a nearby university, an early childhood agency, and the juvenile division of DuPage County Probation. Today, WeGo Together for Kids comprises **40 community partners who share the vision of all members in the community supporting each other in creating an environment for growth, wellness, safety, happiness, and wisdom.**

The partners continue to collaborate formally to cultivate the work begun with SS/HS, and the group welcomes new partners when opportunities arise; for instance, the American Cancer Society recently joined them to begin working on a childhood obesity prevention program.

**Creating a Collaborative Infrastructure.** SS/HS Project Director Marjory Lewe-Brady credits the initiative's sustainability to their emphasis on creating the infrastructure needed to coordinate partners' existing resources and services, rather than implementing evidence-based programs and practices. **They realized that by coming together they could more efficiently deliver their respective services—such as mental health care for students—than they could by working independently.** During their SS/HS funding period, every month in the Monthly Service Provider meeting, providers from a community organization would share with the group resources they could offer, ranging from mental health services to helping families get library cards to creating a system for referrals and coordination.

This infrastructure allows WeGo Together for Kids to continue to share services to meet evolving community needs. For instance, during the grant, the partners created a comprehensive afterschool program for students that provided an opportunity to reach out to at-risk families. Using the afterschool program as a launching point, the partnership now provides family events, adult literacy education, and parenting classes for families in the district. They have also capitalized on various partners' expertise to enhance District 33's social and emotional learning initiative, safety and emergency management planning and training, and wellness activities. This allowed district initiatives to spread into the entire community; while many of these resources have always existed in West Chicago, SS/HS provided the opportunity to bring them together and maximize their reach.

A significant gain brought about by resource coordination is the new partnership with the West Chicago faith community. SS/HS created the systems for collaboration and resource sharing that brought local churches together with community service providers and the district. Today, the churches help ensure food security for families in the district, and, through the Kids Hope program, church members mentor elementary school students. These programs are sustained through the churches' giving programs.

*"We have been integrated into the fabric of how things work in this community."*

—Marjory Lewe-Brady, West Chicago  
Elementary School District 33 SS/HS  
project director



***Institutionalizing Systems, Leveraging Services, and Applying for Grants.***

WeGo Together for Kids has faced numerous funding cuts over the years, but the partners remain positive and continue to make funding decisions together. Since SS/HS ended, **they have diversified funding and institutionalized systems whenever possible.**

The collaborative infrastructure and systems have been highly sustained, and WeGo Together for Kids has become institutionalized in the school district. The initiative continues to be embraced by the District 33 Board of Education and the superintendent, and the school district funds Lewe-Brady's position.

The initiative leverages partners' resources in terms of services, time, and donations. For example, the police department pays for a pilot afterschool program and interns from several community mental health centers provide services to uninsured, at-risk families for free.

The initiative also utilizes grant money to pay for specific programs: a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant pays for afterschool programming (which now serves 400 students—more than during SS/HS); a United Way grant covers a full-time mental health clinician in the middle school; the local WalMart provides a small grant for family nights; and a grant from the American Cancer Society provides Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH), including a nutrition and fitness curriculum and equipment.

While some services available during SS/HS have been cut due to lower funding levels, Lewe-Brady believes the initiative can be sustained in the long term because "the partners benefit from working together, and so the collaboration continues."