

# Building Institutional Capacity for Sustainability-based Instructional Change

*A framework to support strategic  
planning for K12 institutions*

*This document is a summary of the full framework.*

*Contact us to learn about our capacity building  
framework for higher education.*



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Creative Change Educational Solutions (CCES) is a nonprofit organization advancing educational leadership and transformation through a lens of sustainability. We help educational institutions use renewable energy, brownfields redevelopment, and other sustainability sectors as platforms for raising achievement, preparing citizens, and supporting educational equity. Based in southeast Michigan, CCES serves K12 schools, colleges, and nonprofit/governmental institutions at the state and national levels, with programs for kindergarten through adult education. Since our founding in 2002, Creative Change's partners have included:

Ann Arbor (MI) Public Schools  
Boston Latin School  
Eastern Michigan University  
Hartland (MI) High School  
Jackson (MI) Intermediate School District Math and Science Center  
Marygrove College  
Michigan State University  
New Rochelle (NY) High School

Proctor (MN) Public Schools  
Purdue University  
San Jose State University  
Scarsdale (NY) Public Schools  
Somers Public Schools  
The Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation  
United Nations Global Teaching and Learning Project  
University of Minnesota, Duluth  
University of Michigan  
Yonkers Public Schools

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## About this document

To be effective, curriculum transformation must be embedded within other achievement initiatives. Creative Change offers a systems approach that helps institutions use sustainability-based curriculum change to strengthen reform efforts focused on accountability, equity, and leadership development.

This document summarizes our framework for helping institutions build capacity to plan and implement change in six key areas affecting instruction. Derived from years of experience supporting early adopters, the framework drives strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation as we work with clients. After evaluating needs and opportunities, we provide scaled packages of staff development, curriculum, and support to help clients meet their goals. Package levels:

- *Level I) Imagine the Change:* Defining a vision is the first step of any change process. These 1-3 day introductory programs help educators define possibilities for change in curriculum and instruction. Programs include needs assessment, introductory workshops, curriculum samples, & planning with a leadership team.
- *II) Begin the Change:* These 1-2 year programs begin with developing a Change Plan driven by the elements in this Framework. Based on identified goals, programs provide institutions with a customized package of staff development, curriculum licensing, evaluation, and guided planning.
- *III) Sustain the Change:* Maintaining effective initiatives requires building organizational capacity to lead and manage change. These extended programs include staff development, curriculum licensing, development of lead teachers through internal "training of trainers," and on-going strategic planning.

Our Curriculum and Resource Center offers a deep portfolio of courses, units, and instructional resources on food systems, renewable energy, brownfields redevelopment, intercultural communication, and other sectors. These standards-based resources raise the bar on rigor and equity while preparing learners for academic and career pathways in a sustainable society.

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**Building Institutional Capacity for Sustainability-based Instructional Change: Framework Summary**  
(Rubrics to assess each dimension are included in the full Framework.)

<b>Capacity Building Dimension Core question</b>	<b>System/Policy Elements Affected</b>	<b>Integration of SE into existing initiatives/practices</b>
<p><b>I) Leadership and Culture</b> <i>What is education for? What future are we educating and leading towards? What is desirable/possible? What has value and is worth supporting?</i></p>	<p>Fundamental assumptions about what education is for, what is worth learning/doing, and what/to whom schools should be accountable. This drives big-picture policy about standards, school design, reform models, etc.</p>	<p>A. Communication, buy-in, and support of sustainability as an institutional value B. Integration with big-picture reform initiatives: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, school redesign, etc. C. Student leadership</p>
<p><b>II) Curriculum/Courses/Credits and Standards</b> <i>What is considered worth learning? How is learning legitimized?</i></p>	<p>The content and requirements for courses, after school programs, vocational programs, and other instructional venues. To be lasting, change in these areas should be connected to credits, certificates, or other meaningful credentials. (See III.)</p>	<p>A. Quality of sustainability lens, instructional design, and pedagogy B. Credits and standards C. Accountability: district-wide assessment D. Connections to other instructional initiatives E. Technology: Moodle, Blackboard, online learning, other uses of technology</p>
<p><b>III) Post-secondary Pathways (college, career)</b> <i>How are we preparing students for opportunities beyond high school?</i></p>	<p>Articulation agreements, graduation requirements, coop or internship opportunities.</p>	<p>Early College Alliance, Middle Colleges, school-to-work, articulation models. (These models are emerging one district and community college at time.)</p>
<p><b>IV) Staff Capacity</b> <i>What should teachers and other staff know and be able to do? What knowledge and skills are staff held accountable for?</i></p>	<p>Involves interdisciplinary content knowledge as well as skills in curriculum integration, instructional design, and the whole span of what constitutes effective teaching.</p>	<p>A. Staff knowledge/skills/dispositions B. Staff development and support: PD programs, Professional Learning Communities, on-going support C. Accountability initiatives: teacher and leadership assessment</p>
<p><b>V) Campus Sustainability</b> <i>How can the campus be a context for learning?</i></p>	<p>Facilities/operations: Energy use, water, landscaping, food, etc.</p>	<p>Food service, purchasing, solid waste, utility contracts, transportation</p>
<p><b>VI) Community stakeholder engagement</b> <i>How do the above elements connect to broader sustainability initiatives?</i></p>	<p>Parents, community relations, partnerships involved in sustainability measures. This can be an arena for developing internships, service learning opportunities, capstone projects, etc.</p>	<p>Service learning programs, partnerships with community organization and businesses, PTOs, and parent engagement</p>

**The Bottom Line Factor: To what extent are resources allocated to support the above?**  
*The question for state and national policy leaders: To what extent is sustainability supported by state/national mandates?*