



“Work on relationships. They will be some of the biggest deposits you make into your bank of sustainability.”

—Terri Villa-McDowell,
Program Coordinator,
ABC Unified School District,
Cerritos, Calif.

Contents

- OSDFS Grantees and Partners Share Insights on Sustainability 2**
- More Lessons Learned and Recommendations 4**
- Legacy Wheel—A Legacy For Sustainability 5**
- News From OSDFS and The Field. 6**
- Research Findings. 7**
- Resources 7**
- Acknowledgments. 8**

Program Sustainability in Challenging Economic Times

Program administrators and educators returning for the 2009–10 school year did so during one of the harshest fiscal climates in almost 30 years. Budget cuts to K–12 education were announced across the country last summer, forcing difficult decisions impacting everything from class size to bus routes. Public schools in the United States are indeed operating in changing and challenging times.

Though economic recovery may take several years, violence prevention and other safety intervention programs continue to play a vital role in our schools. Support for this work still exists. Each year, the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) awards millions of dollars in financial assistance to education agencies and other organizations to implement programs and activities that promote student safety, health, and well-being. This funding is provided through grant programs with the expectation that grantees will develop and implement strategies to sustain their efforts when the federal funding period ends.

Some grant-funded projects have relied solely on these and other federal dollars to implement their programs. Too frequently, when the federal funding ends, the activities funded under the grant or project end also. In an economic recession and challenging state and local fiscal climates, sustaining project activities becomes even more difficult than usual.

The tried and true approach of “seeking other sources of funding”—from foundations and corporations—presents its own set of challenges. Because they also face shrinking investment earnings and revenue, competition for their funding has become tough. One bright spot, however, is that despite an almost 30 percent decline in foundation endowments, foundations are continuing to provide financial assistance for education and other community service initiatives according to the Council on Foundations’ 2009 report *Foundations Respond to the Needs of Families Even as Their Assets Have Declined*.

In these challenging times comes the need for new approaches to sustaining effective activities once federal funding has ended. This may mean eliminating activities that are no longer relevant, communicating in a different way, and seeking resources from sources never before tapped.

This issue of *The Challenge* will focus on “sustainability,” the ability to develop and execute a strategic plan for securing the support needed to continue the realization of project goals and objectives. We will discuss lessons learned and best practices as suggested by OSDFS grantees who are making great strides in sustainability despite the challenges of the current economic and funding climate. We will also share resources, research, and tips on sustainability. 

Lessons in Communications For Tough Economic Times

- Use data to make your point.
- Access your audience in multiple ways.
- Target the needs of your audience with the appropriate communications tool.
- Let your stakeholders experience the program.
- Find champions at all levels (school, district, parents, and community).
- Engage champions who can motivate others.
- Use ongoing communications strategies to keep stakeholders involved.

—Nora Carr, Chief of Staff,
Guilford County Schools,
Greensboro, N.C.

OSDFS Grantees and Partners Share Insights on Sustainability

The *Challenge* recently interviewed several current and past directors of projects (listed on Page 8) that received funding under five different OSDFS grant programs. The goal was to glean lessons and ideas that help answer the question, “What can we do to keep our efforts going?” The programs represented in this article—and, in fact, throughout this issue—include:

- **Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HS)**—A collaborative program funded not only by the Department of Education’s OSDFS but also by the U.S. departments of Justice and Health and Human Services. SS/HS supports the development of community-wide approaches to creating safe and drug-free schools and promoting healthy childhood development through enhanced school and community-based services.
- **Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Program**—Supports local school districts in their efforts to create, strengthen, and improve emergency management plans at the district and school-building levels in the four phases of emergency management: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- **Mentoring Programs**—Supports school-based mentoring programs and activities that serve children in grades 4 through 8 who live in rural areas, high-crime areas, or troubled-home environments, and/or who attend schools with violence problems.
- **Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse (GRAA)**—Assists local school districts in the development and implementation of innovative and effective alcohol abuse prevention programs for secondary school students.
- **Partnerships in Character Education**—Supports the design and implementation of character education programs that can be integrated into classroom instruction, are consistent with state academic content standards, and can be carried out in conjunction with other education reform efforts.

Those interviewed were asked to respond to questions about their original sustainability plans and how they evolved; to reflect on lessons learned about sustainability; to share what worked (and did not work); and to suggest what they might do differently. They were also asked to provide recommendations for new grantees.

Because of the differing nature and requirements of the five programs, some responses were specific to particular grant programs, while others were universal to planning, implementing, and sustaining projects. All of those interviewed emphasized the importance of collaboration and relationships between schools and key community organizations.

As acknowledged by several of the project directors, many schools, districts, and agencies that write and submit grant applications put the least amount of effort into the area of sustainability planning. Some described their initial plans as vague, nondescript, even nonexistent. Others described initial plans that were well developed and included:

- **identifying other potential funding sources,**
- **integrating model programming components into the existing school curriculum,**
- **seeking partners willing to include program costs in their budgets,**

- **reducing grant staff when needed, and/or**

- **charging a fee for services provided.**

While many projects began without sustainability plans or with plans that were inadequate, most learned through experience how to sustain high-quality and effective programs in challenging economic times. Below are examples of survival skills acquired by some of our most successful grantees.

- **Make sure the district’s needs match the absolute priority of the goals of the grant. Do not adjust the district’s needs to meet the requirements of the grant.** Determine how the funding being requested fits into the long-range vision of the school or community. Enlist help from stakeholders to determine whether the commitment, the willingness to work together, as well as the staffing and the resources can be put in place to implement the program.
- **Make the grant part of the bigger picture and plan.** Embed the project goals and objectives into the district’s overall mission to create safe and drug-free schools, ensure the health and well-being of students, and/or promote the development of good character and citizenship. Use the grant funding to create a catalyst to ongoing effectiveness, rather

One District’s Approach to Writing a Sustainability Plan

“Rather than utilize the traditional approach of designing a short-term intervention program to address a need and then doom the long-term impact of the program with a sustainability plan that includes the phrase ‘seek additional funding through other federal, state, and local grant opportunities,’ the school district seeks to make a system change.”

—Adam Valencia, Project Director,
Tulare County Office of Education, Tulare, Calif.

The district developed its Push In, Phase Out® model for sustainability (with assistance from its external evaluator), using its initial three-year funding to create this catalyst to an ongoing impact, rather than striving for just a three-year impact while federal funding was present.

(Read more about the Push In, Phase Out® approach on the facing page.)

More About Sustainability Methods From OSDFS Grantees

On the Push In, Phase Out[®] model of sustainability that the Tulare School District developed with the help of an external evaluator, using funds from a GRAA grant:

“During year one of a grant, the consultants or experts deliver the program and train teachers and those staff who will eventually deliver the services. In year two, the teachers and staff work together with the consultants or experts to implement the program. And in year three, the teachers and staff take the lead, with the experts serving only as consultants and mentors.”

—Adam Valencia, Project Director,
Tulare County Office of Education, Tulare, Calif.

On the importance of maximizing resources in the community, specifically developing a relationship with the local media, as described by another GRAA grantee:

“I write my own articles and take my own pictures for our news releases to our local newspapers [and] radio and TV stations. I have offered myself to be on programs as a guest or last-minute substitute. I learned the submission policies for all of our local news outlets and really concentrate on allowing plenty of lead time. I write an occasional guest column for our local paper and most importantly, I write lots of Thank You notes. I also give our media a heads-up on possible newsworthy stories and have become their source for information.”

—Bob Laipply, Project Director
Bucyrus City Schools, Bucyrus, Ohio

than just a three- or five-year impact while federal funding is available.

- **Begin working on sustainability on day one.** Make it a top priority of the project and weave it into every successful grant activity. Ask the question, “How will we do this next year and the year after that?” Imagine what the project will look like the day after the grant funding concludes and work to achieve that goal.
- **Cultivate a strong leadership style that encourages input from the beginning.** Listen to staff and to the community. Talk with them about the problems students are facing and prioritize the goals they want to work toward. Be committed and consistent in inviting their input.
- **Recognize the importance of evaluation tools that provide ongoing qualitative and quantitative data.** Establish ongoing assessment of the program and provide feedback to the school district and its partners on how well the project is meeting its goals and objectives and improving outcomes for children and youths. Learn how to look at what is most important—for those being served, those providing services, the school district, and the community—and

evaluate accordingly. Create a system of data collection, record-keeping, and reporting for those indicators important to each of the partnering agencies and organizations.

- **Employ effective communication strategies.** Draw on public relations and marketing research in planning how to get the message out and thereby build a strong base of key stakeholders. Use data that provides evidence the program works and use a person who can motivate others to share this message in multiple ways. Written communication, mass media, and one-on-one meetings—all play a part in a strategic communication plan.
- **Build capacity through developing relationships.** Include the faith-based community, business sector, education institutions, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations; align existing school and community goals. When organizations share a vision of serving children and youths, relationships endure and resources are maximized.
- **Be flexible and respect the different cultures and ways of doing business of the various institutions, organizations, and agencies involved.** Establish clear communication

protocols and procedures that meet the needs of partnering agencies. Identify clear roles and responsibilities among partnering individuals and agencies.

- **Invest in staff-training and in building internal capacity.** Be mindful of best practices and evolving school and community needs and be willing to modify procedures when needed in order to make use of new knowledge and respond to changing conditions.
- **Take an active role in policy planning.** Seek representation on relevant committees and boards of the district and other partnering agencies and learn to work within their administrative layers. You can thereby stimulate conversations about the value of your program in relation to policy development. For example, use events (such as weather emergencies that force school closures, school or community violence, or virus outbreaks) as opportunities to discuss how partnering agencies could strengthen current policies and procedures by incorporating aspects of your program.
- **Think strategically about what program components should be sustained.** Be flexible. Not all components of an initiative or program will continue—or should continue. Sustain only those components that are having a positive impact.

Gina Kahn, the risk prevention services coordinator of the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District in Massachusetts, summarized her views on sustainability as follows:

“Beginning with the end in mind means making sustainability the target instead of the by-product. Seek all opportunities to plant the key project elements securely into operational procedures. Use the momentum and energy of the grant project to generate meaningful changes in policy, as policy will drive expectations and behaviors when the grant funds are a dim memory. Sustainability is achieved [when] an element or priority becomes so deeply established that it is not only visible at the surface but contained within the core of the organization.” 

More Lessons Learned

In interviewing grantees about sustainability, *Challenge* staff also asked them to describe what they would do differently if they could start over. Here are a few of their responses:

- Start working on sustainability earlier.
- Request ongoing technical assistance (TA) if available through the grant program.
- Value the need for good data and evaluation from the beginning.
- Sign up for a class in basic business and financial management.
- Set up and maintain effective record-keeping systems.
- Establish problem-solving protocols early to facilitate the resolution of disagreements and conflicts that might arise among the partners.

Sustainability Recommendations for Grantees

Seek Advice

- Reach out. Talk to others who have conducted similar projects.
- Find a mentor. Ask questions.
- Ask for help from technical assistance (TA) providers, the program officer at the funding organization, and others.
- Communicate with the program officer at the funding organization. Respond quickly to inquiries and requests.

Monitor Progress Closely

- Keep sight of the original goals as stated in the grant proposal.
- Develop a sustainability plan at the beginning of the project and make it an action plan, not a vague statement. Report regularly on steps taken.
- Continually self-assess your progress toward sustainability.

Follow Good Business Practices

- Establish an ongoing training program to ensure the availability of trained staff at all times, even when some staff leave the project.
- Be aware of the ever-changing political and economic climate throughout the life of the funding. Be flexible and prepared to make adjustments as leaders and personalities change or as community and other statewide events take precedence. Maintain the integrity of the initiative while being responsive to changes in the needs and concerns of stakeholders.
- Hire cautiously and selectively. Consider employee skill sets required to make the project successful.

Connect With The Community

- Identify and maximize use of the community's resources.
- Always provide quality services.
- Network and collaborate using a five-pronged approach to partnerships, reaching out to the faith-based community, business sector, education institutions, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations.

Foster Open Communications

- Promote buy-in from educators and other stakeholders.
- Get a global picture by seeking to understand why specific partners are at the table and what information and outcomes are important to them.
- Establish clear communications procedures and protocols.
- Encourage input from those with diverse perspectives.

Legacy Wheel—A Legacy for Sustainability

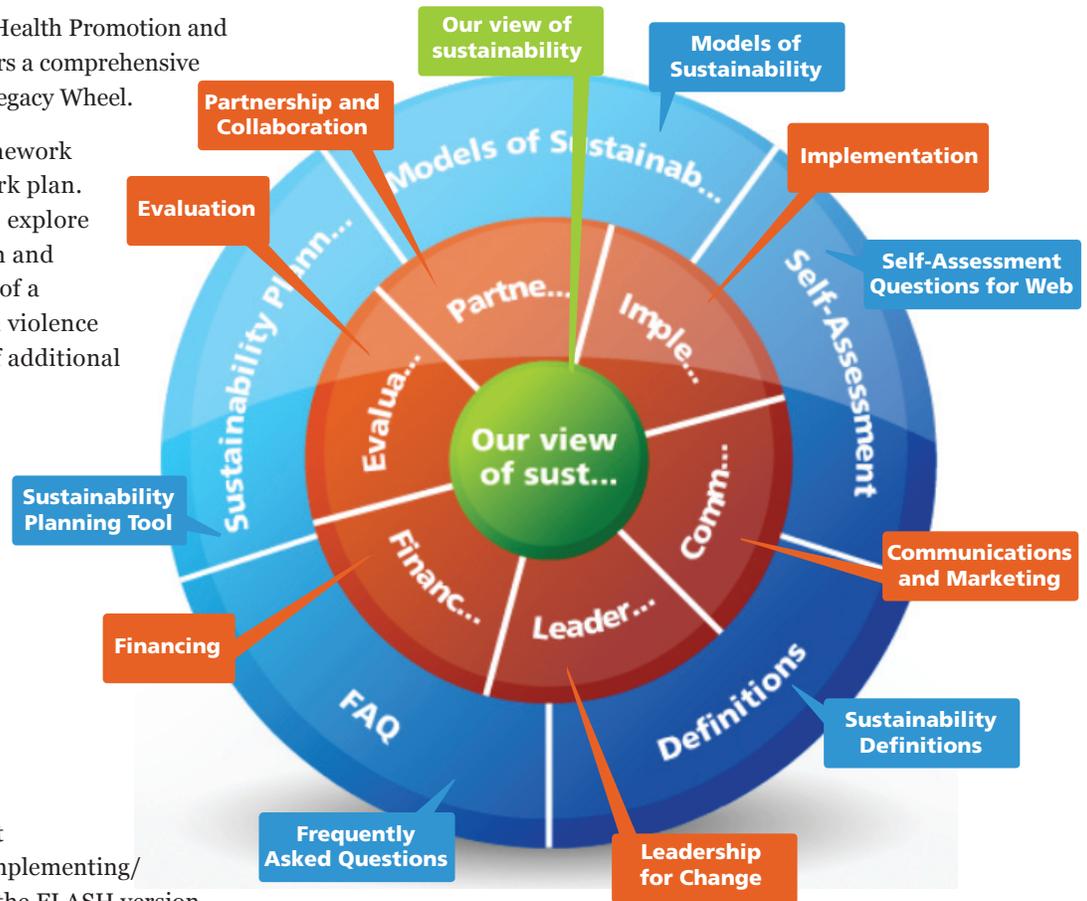
The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention offers a comprehensive overview of sustainability with its Legacy Wheel.

The Legacy Wheel provides a framework for developing a sustainability work plan. It is a tool that enables the user to explore six different strategies to maintain and enhance the positive components of a mental health promotion or youth violence prevention program, regardless of additional funding. Those strategies are:

- Leadership for change,
- Partnership and collaboration,
- Implementation,
- Communications and marketing,
- Evaluation, and
- Financing.

You can access the Legacy Wheel at <http://sshs.promoteprevent.org/implementing/sustainability/legacy-wheel>. Go to the FLASH version and click within the wheel to find information about each of the six strategies and links to related resources. Click on the outer wheel to find answers to frequently asked questions about sustainability, definitions, tools and models to help create a sustainability plan, and guidance on self-assessment.

In developing the Legacy Wheel, the center culled the experience and expertise of grantees nationwide who have been successful in their sustainability efforts.



Reprinted with permission from the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention provides TA and training to the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, which is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools of the U.S. Department of Education, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice.

News From OSDFS and the Field

Kevin Jennings Appointed Assistant Deputy Secretary for Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Kevin Jennings was recently appointed assistant deputy secretary to head OSDFS. He brings to this role over two decades of experience as a writer, teacher and leader in the field of K–12 education and civil rights. Jennings was a history teacher at Moses Brown School in Providence, R.I., from 1985 to 1987. He then served as History Department chair and a history teacher at Concord Academy in Concord, Mass., until 1995. Jennings is also the founder and former executive director of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, an organization that works to make schools safe for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. He has authored six books including *Mama's Boy, Preacher's Son: A Memoir*, which was named a 2007 Book of Honor by the American Library Association, and *Telling Tales Out of School: Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals Revisit Their School Days*, which was the winner of the 1998 Lambda Literary Award. Jennings received a bachelor's degree in history from Harvard University in 1985, a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies in education from the Columbia University Teachers College in 1994, and an M.B.A. from New York University's Stern School of Business in 1999.

OSDFS Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Discretionary Grant Awards

The OSDFS awarded grants in FY 2009 under the following initiatives and programs: Carol M. White Physical Education Program; Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative; Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Grant Program; Emergency Management for Higher Education; Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program; Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse; Grants to Prevent High-Risk Drinking and Violent Behavior Among College Students; Grants for the Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems; Models of Exemplary, Effective and Promising Alcohol or Other Drug Prevention Programs on College Campuses; Foundations for Learning Grants; and Programs for Native Hawaiians. For more information on the grant programs and funded projects, go to <http://www.ed.gov/osdfs>.



OSDFS National Conference Held August 3-5, 2009

The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) National Conference was held August 3-5, 2009, at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Md. Its theme was "The Power of Change: Healthy Students, Safe Schools, and Engaged Communities." The conference will be the focus of the next issue of *The Challenge* newsletter. Conference workshop and institute presentation materials are currently available online at <http://www.osdfsnationalconference.com>.

Redesigned Web Site From the Stop Bullying Now! Campaign

The recently updated Stop Bullying Now! Web site features a streamlined home page with information designed for both adults and children. The content for adults includes resources about bullying awareness, prevention, and intervention. The content for children is designed to help them learn about bullying and how to stop it. It includes tips, games, and engaging webisodes starring colorful animated characters whose exploits can be used to educate and initiate discussions about bullying. Visit the site at <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids>.

Update on the H1N1 Influenza From the U.S. Department of Education

Since H1N1 emerged in the early spring, we have learned a lot about who is most at risk for serious complications, how the disease spreads, and how sick most people get. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have published guidance for education settings, from early childhood through higher education, which can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/statelocal>. Most of the recommendations for the current situation focus on common-sense measures we can all take each flu season: cover coughs and sneezes, wash hands frequently, and stay home if you are sick. The U.S. Department of Education has supplemented these recommendations with guidance on how to protect the health and safety of students while ensuring the continuity of education and learning. ED's guidance can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/h1n1flu>.

OSDFS Prevention News Bulletin

If you would like weekly e-mail updates on OSDFS programs, as well as other information related to school safety, substance abuse and violence prevention in schools, and the promotion of student health and well-being, you may be interested in subscribing to the OSDFS PREVENTION NEWS BULLETIN. Subscription information is at: <http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/listserv/preventioned.html>. 

Research Findings

“National New Communities Program Sustainability Study: Sustainability Factors and Partnerships”

Lydia Marek and Jay Mancini

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2007

This ongoing research on sustainability began in 1996 using data from Cooperative Extension programs. Researchers originally looked at 92 community-based programs funded by the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Services (CSREES) through the National Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Initiative. Using these data and informed by existing literature on sustainability and surveys of program professionals, the team developed a conceptual framework for sustainability, which was published in 2004.

This most recent study examined 13 of 14 state CSREES/USDA New Communities programs one and two years after funding ended to identify the presence of the framework factors within the program, especially that of partnership and collaboration.

Available at

http://ag.arizona.edu/sfcs/cyfernet/evaluation/NCP_2007_final.pdf.

Resources

Sustaining Your Prevention Initiative

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education

This five-day, facilitated online workshop is made available to provide drug prevention and school safety coordinators with in-depth information and materials for institutionalizing program activities. Upon completion, participants should be able to

- Define sustainability and the benefits of sustaining program activities over time;
- Identify and review key factors and strategies for sustaining prevention programs;
- Build the school and community support needed to sustain program activities;
- Use data to create a “snapshot” of current activities, evaluate program success, determine future directions, and secure future funding;
- Integrate drug prevention and other safety activities into school reform efforts to ensure program sustainability; and
- Locate funding sources.

Visit the site at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/training/sustaining/index.html>.

The Finance Project

This non-profit organization provides research, consulting, TA, and training for public and private sector leaders nationwide. Its services are designed to help leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships that benefit children, families, and communities. The resources include a guide to finding funding and a special section—the Sustainability Planning Information Resource

“Predictors and Level of Sustainability of Community Prevention Coalitions”

Mark Feinberg, Daniel Bontempo, and Mark Greenberg

American Journal of Preventive Medicine 34, no. 6

(June 2008): 495-501

This article describes an analysis of data on the level of and predictors of sustainability in more than 100 Communities That Care (CTC) sites in Pennsylvania. The CTC model calls for a community-coalition approach, using best practices to achieve a positive impact on the problem behaviors of adolescents (e.g., violence, substance use, teen pregnancy). Local CTC board members attend intensive training, assess community risk factors, and choose and implement evidence-based programs to reduce risk and increase protective factors for adolescents.

Findings indicate that 90 percent of CTC coalitions in Pennsylvania continued operations after the initial three-year grant funding and about two thirds were still operating four years later. The authors discuss factors that predict sustainability, including coalition functioning and planning for sustainability.

Abstract available at [http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/S0749-3797\(08\)00237-7/abstract](http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/S0749-3797(08)00237-7/abstract).

Center—designed to enable initiatives engaged in sustainability planning to connect to helpful resources for completing each step of the process.

Check these materials at <http://www.financeproject.org>.

The Community Toolbox

*Workgroup for Community Health and Development
University of Kansas*

This Web site promotes community health and development by connecting interested people to ideas and resources. It provides how-to information on generating, managing and sustaining financial resources, as well as marketing for long-term sustainability. It also includes a troubleshooting guide, examples of programs that have successfully achieved sustainability, and links to other valuable resources.

Visit the site at <http://www.ctb.ku.edu/en>.

Center for Mental Health in Schools—UCLA

Supported in part by the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The center’s mission is to improve outcomes for young people by promoting resources for enhancing mental health in schools. Resources on sustainability include research articles, reports, training tutorials, and links to other relevant information available on the Internet. The center developed the *Sustaining School and Community Efforts to Enhance Outcomes for Children and Youth: A Guidebook and Tool Kit*, which is available free at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sustaining.pdf>.

The center’s Web site is: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>.



University of Colorado at Boulder
Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence
Campus Box 483
Boulder, CO 80309
(303) 492-1032
(303) 443-3297 FAX
E-mail: informationcnl@thechallenge.org

Photo Credit
Page 6: iStockphoto

The Challenge provides information and resources to help schools create safe and healthy learning environments for students. It is a publication of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. We encourage reproduction and distribution of this publication.

Current and previous issues are available on *The Challenge* Web site, which you can access via the link at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/resources.html>.

The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. This publication also contains hyperlinks and URLs for information created and maintained by private organizations. The U.S. Department of Education is not responsible for controlling or guaranteeing the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. Further, inclusion of these references does not reflect the importance of the organization, nor does it endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered. All URLs were last accessed on March 15, 2010.

Acknowledgments

Our thanks to the following individuals and grantees for their time and valuable input to this issue of *The Challenge*:

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

School District of Springfield R-12
Springfield, Mo.
Patty Moore, Substance Abuse Specialist

ABC Unified School District
Cerritos, Calif.
Terri Villa-McDowell, Program Coordinator

YESS—Youth Experiencing Success in School
Joliet, Ill.
Kelli Bettenhausen, Project Director

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Program

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District
Wilbraham, Mass.
Gina Kahn, Project Director

Seattle Public Schools
Seattle, Wash.
Pegi McEvoy, Project Director

Mentoring Programs

Quitman School District
Quitman, Miss.
James Bounds, Project Director

Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS)
Port Chester, N.Y.
Thomas Mitchell

Stand By Me (Mentoring Alliance)
Sonoma, Calif.
Kathy Witkowitz, Executive Director

Grants to Reduce Alcohol Abuse

Tulare County Office of Education
Tulare, Calif.
Adam Valencia, Project Director

Bucyrus City Schools
Bucyrus, Ohio
Bob Laipply, Project Director

Partnerships in Character Education

Guilford County Schools
Greensboro, N.C.
Nora Carr, Chief of Staff

Fairfax County Public Schools
Falls Church, Va.
Rima Vesilind, Special Project Administrator, formerly Principal

To ensure the articles in the newsletter meet your needs, the writing staff welcomes your feedback. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey found on *The Challenge* Web site—it's confidential and will help ensure that the most pertinent information is provided.

•••

Thank you for helping us keep our mailing list up-to-date. If you are receiving multiple or unwanted copies of *The Challenge* please contact us.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Denver, CO
Permit No. 1577