**Organizational Capacity**

Systems that focus on strengthening administrative capacity to support an innovation during its initial implementation are more successful at sustaining the innovation once the initial trial ends.[[1]](#footnote-1) A study investigating implementation of School Wellness Policies (SWP) found that schools reporting higher SWP quality and effectiveness were more likely to have developed organizational capacity to implement an SWP (e.g. developed administrative procedures, made staff aware of SWP requirements, set up a wellness task force or committee).[[2]](#footnote-2) However, supporting capacity for school health programs are especially challenging given very limited federal and state funding.

Evidence suggests that policy and system change are effective strategies to addressing complex public health issues and better population health outcomes. [[3]](#footnote-3)  At the same time, leaders in education reform policy consistently speak to the necessity of capacity building to support school-wide improvement. More specifically, capacity building has been identified as a key driver (along with group work, instruction and systemic solutions) that works directly on changing the culture of a school (values, norms, practices, relationships) that translates into sustainable, whole-school change.[[4]](#footnote-4) Simply put, investments must be made that get at the intrinsic motivation and competency development of school staff in order to create lasting change.

Key components of organizational capacity include:

* Organizational systems are in place to support the various program needs. We see the presence of a strong school wellness council as central to this component.
* Leadership effectively articulates the vision of the program to leadership and stakeholders (i.e. school board within a district).
* Leadership effectively manages staff and other resources.
* The program has adequate staff to complete the program’s goals.
* Staff have a deep understanding of school systems and policy structures, education accountability measures, and how to connect school health policy and system change strategies.
* There is on-going professional development for school staff and partners with an emphasis on implementing and sustaining policy and system change strategies.
1. Johnson K, Hayes C, Center H, Daley C. Building capacity and sustainable prevention innovations: a sustainability planning model. *Evaluation Program Planning* 2004, 27(2), 135-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Budd EL, Schwarz C, Yount BW, Haire-Joshu D. (2012). Factors influencing the implementation of school wellness policies in the United States, 2009. *Preventing Chronic Disease,* 2012,9, 110296. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Frieden TR. A framework for public health action: The health impact pyramid. *American Journal of Public Health,* 2010,100(4), 590-595. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Fullman M. Seminar Series 204: Choosing the wrong drivers for whole school system reform. Center for Strategic Education. 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)