

SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

Building Capacity for an Expanded Vision of School-to-Career

By Alex Hoffinger

Springfield Communities and Schools for Career Success (CS²) is a leading site for a nationally recognized, capacity-building initiative in Massachusetts focused on school-to-career, education reform, and youth development. Springfield CS² has created a strong, sustainable school-to-career intermediary structure operating out of the Springfield Public Schools. Since the inception of CS² in 1994, school-to-career has grown from a pilot program at two schools to a citywide effort serving both in-school and out-of-school youth.

CS² staff have been central to these developments. Called “school-community entrepreneurs,” they helped design the city’s school-to-career system and staff its school-to-career local partnership. They are the driving force behind school-to-career developments at schools, businesses, and community agencies. And they provide or broker services to numerous participating employers and community agencies. CS² entrepreneurs succeed at playing two roles: “change agents” within the schools and “neutral” ambassadors to non-school partners.

Equally important, CS² champions a vision that explicitly links Springfield’s school-to-career system not only with workforce development but with community development as well. Springfield CS² demonstrates that community-based organizations (CBOs) can be active, valued partners in implementing the school-to-career agenda.

Key Lessons

- School-based intermediaries can be “neutral” brokers if employers and other community partners are well represented on the school-to-career governing body and can effectively provide input on governance and programming.
- School district funding can become a foundation for sustaining school-to-career intermediary functions.
- Sufficient staff resources and a strong team can build capacity and drive change.

Background Information

- **Mission:** The mission of CS² is to create a coherent sequence of services and experiences to help young people make successful transitions to adult responsibilities of further education, training, and employment.
- **Structure:** Springfield CS² is a hybrid. Its school-community entrepreneurs and the school-to-career staff they manage are school district employees. However, the Springfield School to Work Partnership, Inc., an independent nonprofit, oversees the school-to-career effort. The partnership has 35 members who represent business, government, CBOs, teachers, school administrators, and postsecondary institutions. Its executive committee consists of three representatives from the private sector, three from CBOs (one of whom also serves on the school board), one from city government, and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Peter Negroni. For the last three years, the partnership has been co-chaired by Dr. Negroni and Ronald Johnson, one of the CBO representatives on the executive committee.

Statewide, CS² is an initiative in six communities. It is designed and administered by the Center for Youth Development and Education (CYDE), a division of the Corporation for Business, Work, and Learning, a state quasi-public workforce development organization.

- **Funding:** After four years of development, financed mostly by “soft” money or time-limited grants, CS² and school-to-career now are largely integrated into the school district’s budget. During the 1998-99 academic year, the Springfield Public Schools underwrites over 60 percent of the staff costs and other expenditures related to school-to-career.

Other funding sources remain significant. A grant from a statewide CS² initiative supports one staff position and provides seed funds. A 1993 grant from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund made CS² possible in Massachusetts. Since then, other foundations, the Massachusetts legislature, and local communities have supported the initiative.

A federal Urban/Rural Opportunities Grant (UROG) supports community-based programming in Springfield for at-risk and out-of-school youth through a network of CBOs convened by CS²—the “CBO Provider Network.” Additional support for school-to-career programming comes from state “Connecting Activities” funds, grants from local foundations and businesses, and rollover funds remaining from a Massachusetts Office for School to Work implementation grant.

Not all school-to-career funding flows through the Springfield Public Schools. The Local Partnership receives and expends UROG, Connecting

Activities, state school-to-career, and local grant funds apart from the district budget.

- Partners: Springfield Public Schools, Hampden County Regional Employment Board, Springfield Technical Community College, Springfield College, Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Springfield School Volunteers, and many employers and CBOs.
- Organization Type: School District/Local School to Work Local Partnership
- Contact Information: Community and Schools for Career Success, Springfield Public Schools, 195 State Street, Box 1410, Springfield, MA 01102, attn.: Patricia Spradley; phone: (413)787-6597; fax: (413)787-6629; E-mail: spradley@sp.sps.springfield.ma.us.

Historical Summary

Building Capacity Through CS²

Community and Schools for Career Success is a capacity-building strategy. It recognizes that many communities have the ideas and potential to forge strong partnerships and implement reforms, but few have the staff resources to drive and support such agendas. The key CS² innovation is to deploy a small team of change-agents—“school-community entrepreneurs”—that organizes, develops, and implements reform at the school and district levels.

A CS² team consists of three entrepreneurs, two at the middle and high school level and one at the district/community level. The team shapes and implements community plans with the guidance of a local multi-stakeholder partnership. CS² teams focus on developing school-to-career systems (beginning at the middle school level), related instructional and curricular reforms, and supportive youth development programs and services.

In each CS² community, the entrepreneurs play a wide assortment of roles: organizer, facilitator, program developer, fundraiser, project manager, and public relations agent, among many others. CYDE, as statewide CS² manager, supports the entrepreneurs with ongoing training, technical assistance, and seed funds. CYDE also provides funds for staff salaries, but the amount declines over time to encourage communities to pick up most of those costs.

CYDE selected Springfield and three other communities to launch CS² in 1994. Springfield's effort began with a multi-stakeholder advisory board anchored by Dr. Peter Negroni, the school superintendent, and William Ward, director of the Hampden County Regional Employment Board (REB), which is the city's Private Industry Council. The advisory board hired three entrepreneurs,

Pedro Rivera, Pat Spradley, and Lynn Yanis, who began laying out their vision and plans for a local school-to-career and youth development system.

The CS² entrepreneurs did not begin from scratch. Springfield already had a record of school-business collaboration, particularly through the Springfield School Volunteers organization, founded in 1990. Also, a handful of CBOs were working with schools, mainly providing career development services to targeted groups of students in middle and high schools. Yet all these partnerships tended to be small-scale, with no coordinated plan to expand or deepen collaborations between the schools and community stakeholders.

To the planning task, the CS² entrepreneurs brought a breadth of strengths, talents, and backgrounds, as well as a fresh perspective on the Springfield Public Schools. None had any previous connection with the district. Pat Spradley had managed a temporary employment agency, Pedro Rivera came from the high-tech industry, and Lynn Yanis had worked on school partnerships in New York City. Indeed, some school personnel perceived the entrepreneurs as “outsiders”—and so, at first, did the entrepreneurs themselves.

At the outset, Springfield CS² made two key decisions.

First, the advisory board and entrepreneurs would focus initially on two schools—Putnam Vocational-Technical High School and the middle school grades at the Rebecca Johnson K-8 School. These would serve as demonstration sites for employer recruitment efforts, school-to-career-related professional development for teachers, and workplace learning opportunities for students.

Second, to further frame their work, the Springfield CS² entrepreneurs stated their determination to use CS² resources to create, support, and advance local activities that met six criteria:

- Explicitly value diversity;
- Involve a wide range of stakeholders;
- Model and integrate continuous improvement;
- Maximize and strategically integrate the use of technology;
- Provide students and faculty with career path techniques and examples for lifelong learning; and
- Integrate all grade levels, the worlds of school and work, and CS² with other school-to-career activities.

At the top of the list, entrepreneurs sought to value diversity in all planning and implementation. In particular, they wanted to ensure that program content, partners, spokespersons, staff, and participants would reflect—indeed celebrate—Springfield’s ethnic and racial diversity. This decision would soon tangibly influence the direction of school-to-career in Springfield.

Growth Under the School To Work Opportunities Act

By early 1995, school-to-career activities at the Putnam and Johnson schools were well underway. Among these activities were employer outreach, school-to-career orientations for school staff, community-based academic projects, the infusion of career development activities into the curriculum, school-based “total quality” teams, and the development of a pilot summer program to integrate academics with work-based learning.

At the same time, the National School-to-Work Office selected Massachusetts in the first round of state implementation grants. Springfield was well positioned to apply for this funding: through CS² it had convened a multi-stakeholder oversight body, developed a strategic plan, and begun implementing school-to-career. CS² expanded its advisory group, primarily with more employer representation, so that the organization would constitute a school-to-work local partnership as defined by the federal legislation, and the CS² entrepreneurs authored the partnership’s successful proposal for three years of federal funding, covering three school years beginning in 1995-96.

The federal grant led to major developments. The partnership incorporated as a non-profit, indicating its intent to establish a separate identity for its work. It established three subcommittees—Workplace Competencies, Career Curricula and Counseling, and Workplace Experience—and staffed them with the entrepreneurs. The grant also funded three new positions, two in the schools and one to work with CBOs. These staff, responsible for day-to-day program coordination, reported to the entrepreneurs, who maintained responsibility for overall program development and management.

The federal grant also enabled CS² to create the CBO Providers Network. The CS² entrepreneurs had proposed that the Local Partnership actively recruit, integrate, and fund CBOs and other agencies already working with youth to become providers of school-to-career services. This decision was informed by: 1) the statewide CS² emphasis on supportive services to provide all youth with an opportunity to participate in school-to-career programs; and 2) the commitment of Springfield CS² to valuing diversity in school-to-career implementation. Springfield CS² recognized that initial school-to-career efforts did not adequately address the needs of many at-risk students and that CBOs, in reflecting Springfield’s diversity, could fill significant gaps.

From 1995 to 1998, career development and work-based learning experiences for Springfield youth grew dramatically. The expanded, entrepreneur-led staff of six recruited many employers, provided students with thousands of workplace learning experiences (including worksite visits, job shadows, internships, and structured work-based learning during the summer), helped infuse career development activities into the school curricula, and created many opportunities for relevant professional development. During this first phase of school-to-career implementation, the partnership also maintained its focus on a few schools, adding the High School of Commerce to the original two sites.

Citywide Expansion and a Long-Term Commitment to School-to-Career

Toward the end of the 1997-98 school year, CS² and the Springfield School to Work Local Partnership planned a significant expansion of their efforts. “Phase 2” of school-to-career would extend activity to fifteen schools across the district, including all six high schools and four middle schools; in addition, five elementary schools would develop age-appropriate experiences.

At the same time, however, Springfield’s three-year federal grant was nearing its end, raising serious questions for the Local Partnership and Superintendent Negroni in particular. Was the school district truly committed to school-to-career? Was the business community? If school-to-career were to expand, how would the larger agenda be funded, structured, and staffed? A federal UROG grant, awarded in the fall of 1997, could support the CBO Provider Network, and the statewide CS² initiative would continue to fund one position. But what about the larger intermediary role played by the three CS² entrepreneurs and the three other school-to-career staff?

Although it had not been Dr. Negroni’s original intent, the track record of CS² and school-to-career convinced him to “institutionalize” the school-to-career agenda in the district and make the district the major underwriter of intermediary work. At the beginning of the 1998-99 school year, the district elevated school-to-career to departmental status, with its own budget and increased authority, and named Pat Spradley, a CS² entrepreneur, to head the new department (see Table 1). Together with other school-to-career department staff, she now manages or coordinates a full “menu” of school-to-career offerings.

Table 1

Springfield CS²/School-To-Work Budget and Sources of Funding

School Year	Funding Sources	Annual Totals
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	CS2 (CBWL)	STW LP (MA STW Office)	UROG (National STW Office)	Local employers, foundations	Summer of Work and Lrng Prog. (state)	Springfield Public Schools	
1994-95	132,158	0	0	0	0	23,673	155,831
1995-96	117,483	100,000	0	0	35,000	36,517	289,000
1996-97	73,037	174,400	40,000	2,000	40,000	235,963	565,400
1997-98	55,745	170,000	35,000	45,000	40,000	369,005	714,750
1998-99	63,568	124,000 (rollover funds)	142,000	34,000	40,000	352,000	755,568

Meanwhile, Springfield has begun expanding school-to-career activities, even though it has three fewer full-time district-level staff than during the federal School-to-Work grant years to support this growth. To support this expansion, school-based school-to-career teams are in place or being formed at all six high schools and several middle and elementary schools, with each team responsible for implementing a comprehensive school-to-career menu. Team members are teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators who perform school-to-career intermediary functions for their school on a part-time basis.

Convening ALL Partners: The CBO Providers Network

Prior to CS², the record of partnerships between the Springfield Public Schools and community-based organizations was spotty, at best. Some school personnel thought that CBOs worked only with “problem kids;” CBO expertise on life skills, job readiness, and career development largely went unrecognized. By the same token, CBOs had little knowledge of school access for non-certified personnel or how schools worked in general. Also, some CBOs pulled away from CS² as the advisory board expanded into the school-to-career local partnership, believing that the focus had shifted toward an employer-driven agenda. Finally, few of Springfield’s CBOs communicated regularly with one another and collaboration was rare.

The CS² entrepreneurs proposed that the Local Partnership establish a network of CBOs and other agencies that were providing services for youth. They suggested that such a network could strengthen the community-based efforts of these organizations and bring a range of needed services into the schools to support school-to-career. The entrepreneurs also proposed to reserve almost one-third of the federal implementation grant—or \$100,000 in each of three years—for CBO-provided school-to-career services.

Why do so? As the entrepreneurs explained in their proposal:

- CBOs are large and important EMPLOYERS in our community.
- CBOs tend to employ RACIALLY & ETHNICALLY DIVERSE professionals who are mentors and models for youth.
- Many CBOs have devoted themselves to serving precisely those youth who have historically been UNDERSERVED because of racial or ethnic identity, poverty, disability, language use or gender.
- CBOs often involve the WHOLE FAMILY—parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends—in addressing the multiple needs of young people.
- Many CBOs already work effectively with OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH, a population too frequently ignored by school-to-career programs.
- CBOs tend to address the MULTIPLE NEEDS of youth, including recreation, academic enrichment, child care, counseling, mentoring, and other disparate health, human, and social service needs.
- Without proactive funded efforts to honor and integrate the work of community organizations, all education reform efforts run the risk of replicating DISCRIMINATORY SYSTEMS that have failed to meet the needs of at-risk youth whose lives and futures depend most fundamentally on public education.

The Massachusetts Office for School to Work approved the proposal, and soon thereafter the entrepreneurs' expanded vision of school-to-career began taking shape. By the spring of 1996, CS² had convened a Provider Network of 19 agencies, launched a series of provider training sessions on school-to-career and interfacing with the schools, and distributed \$100,000 in implementation and development grants through a competitive process. Since that time, the Local Partnership has continued to award grants to network members through an annual competition. Direct services provided by CBOs to at-risk and out-of-school youth under these grants have included: training in workplace competencies and team-building; career orientation and life planning; visits to colleges and universities; job shadowing; formal job internships; advocacy with city and state agencies; referrals to day care, health care, and other social services; individual and small group mentoring; and academic tutoring.

By the fall of 1997, the Local Partnership had funded over 30 agencies, 10 of which targeted out-of-school youth. During the 1997-98 year, almost 1,000 youth received services through the Provider Network (see Table 2). In addition, the bimonthly meetings of the Provider Network have been important to program quality and community empowerment. Aside from

offering school-to-career-related training, they have served as a forum for facilitating collaboration, evaluating programming, addressing shared concerns, and discovering and filling gaps in the school-to-career system.

Table 2
The CBO Providers Network: Participation Summary

Numbers of:	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Youth Served	537	825	916	970
Adults Trained	85	17	23	27
CBO's Funded	16	18	21	22
CBO's in the Network	16	18	26	41

The CS² entrepreneurs, meanwhile, have served a critical “school-CBO intermediary function” and advocate for CBOs within the school system. CBO representatives describe resistance they had faced to their presence in schools before the network, whether for working with students or managing school-sponsored career development activities outside the school walls. CS² entrepreneurs have made the connections and helped resolve concerns about liability and other issues. Now, says one network member, “Teachers are calling me to get into their classrooms. . . . Now schools welcome and are dependent upon organizations with community connections. They realize that they can’t do it all.”

Providing/Brokering Operational Functions

CS² and other school-to-career staff directly provide or broker many of the operational functions of a school-to-career intermediary. Being based in the school district—initially “hosted” by the district and now formally integrated within the structure of the Springfield Public Schools—has made it easier for these staff to perform this role. Yet their achievements cannot escape the push and pull that take place when promoting change from within, and the staff have had to pay special attention to non-school constituencies, namely employers and CBOs.

Laying the Groundwork for School-Level Change

Their identity as school-based “change agents” has helped CS² entrepreneurs gain an audience in the schools for new ideas, while also making it easier for them to advance a strong school-to-career agenda in the face of institutional inertia or resistance. Not only had the entrepreneurs gained the confidence of Superintendent Negroni; they had proven their worth to the principals at all three “demonstration” schools. At Commerce and Rebecca Johnson, the

entrepreneurs were instrumental in helping new principals as they came on board; entrepreneurs also provided key assistance in Putnam's re-accreditation process. Because of the trust they have earned, the entrepreneurs can function, in effect, as "agents" of the superintendent and principals, with high-level backing for reform initiatives.

One reform notion that has taken root in Springfield is the adoption of Total Quality Management (TQM) to support school improvement and create school-based school-to-career teams. CS² entrepreneur Pedro Rivera was a former Digital Equipment Company manager and had been trained in TQM. In 1994, at the suggestion of Putnam's principal, Rivera facilitated TQM training and implementation to address poor attendance, low test scores, theft, and a host of other problems, as well as to reinvigorate the school's career-related curriculum and offerings. He led workshops for teachers, with local business partners supplying additional trainers. Based upon the success with TQM at Putnam, 15 business partners now share management, marketing, and team-building expertise with schools throughout the district; four businesses are helping schools implement TQM.

High-level support has also resulted in key policies relevant to school-to-career implementation. As noted, Springfield CS² has developed a broad menu of school-to-career offerings. Called the "Stairway to Success," (see attachment) this menu provides a common framework and sequence for structuring school-to-career experiences across the district. It contains seven "steps"—career classroom speakers; trips to colleges and work sites; job shadows; internships; school-based career centers; mentoring; and summer academics combined with job experience (see Table 3).

Table 3
Participation by Youth in "Stairway to Success" Programs

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00 (projected)
Summer of Work & Learning	20	48	63	98	105
Work Site Mentoring	20	30	43	94	200
HS-based Career Centers	0	0	56	352	5,000
Internships	156	122	165	117	200
Job Shadowing	0	112	362	378	780
Trips to Colleges/ Work Sites	1,598	471	825	1,107	1,500
Career Classroom Speakers	827	3,290	2,970	2,311	4,000

As part of the second phase of implementing school-to-career, CS², with the superintendent's support, has made district-level school-to-career services available only to schools that form a school-based team that has partial

responsibility for implementing the seven steps. These services include, among others, recruiting students for job shadows and internships, managing schedules for classroom speakers, and providing school-based support for the internship experience. Each team must include at least one guidance counselor and one core subject teacher, and each must designate a team leader and identify who will manage the school's piece of each step in the Stairway. Team members receive common planning time and, in some cases, extra pay for before-and after-school time.

Another major policy change relates to internships. Responding to CS² advocacy within the school administration and before the school board, the Springfield Public Schools began awarding academic credit for internships in January 1999. Pat Spradley and Roy Tracy (one of the two other district-level school-to-career staff) are responsible for developing internship slots. They also monitor internships and help employers to structure internship experiences according to a work-based learning plan, specifying particular competencies to be attained and demonstrated. Supplementing the work-based experience is after-school academic instruction relating to workplace skills, including development of an internship portfolio. Responsibility for this component of an accredited internship lies with teachers at each school who are members of their building's school-to-career team.

Supporting Employers and Promoting Quality Workplace Experiences

From the outset, the business community supported the Local Partnership. The Hampden County Regional Employment Board was a strong presence in Springfield, and its director a key original CS² sponsor. Also, particularly since the early 1990s, school-employer partnerships had been nurtured through the Springfield School Volunteers, a district-affiliated, private nonprofit that hosts recognition events, secures corporate donations, and serves as a volunteer clearinghouse. Ultimately, though, to expand and deepen business partnerships, the CS² entrepreneurs, as lead staff to the Local Partnership, had to respond to employer needs and agendas. They needed to demonstrate that they welcomed strong employer involvement in planning, could run workplace-related programs, and could prepare young people for workplace experiences. CS² staff have done so, deepening their credibility with the business community by brokering or directly managing high-quality programs and services.

One such project is the Summer of Work and Learning, an intensive employment and academic enrichment program managed by CS² and operated in collaboration with the Hampden County REB. Begun in 1995 as a small pilot program, in 1998 the Summer of Work and Learning involved 100 young people—both in school and out-of-school youth. Moreover, the teachers and student teachers responsible for overseeing the academic

component participated in the employment component, as “externs” working alongside the youth participants. School officials and employers alike view the program as a model for integrating work and learning.

CS² has brokered other programs and services to partners with the right expertise. For example, Springfield Technical Community College delivers worksite mentor training on behalf of the Local Partnership. Also, members of the CBO Provider Network are involved as both employers and service providers in connection with career development and worksite experiences.

Most recently, CS² and the Local Partnership created a structure to better prepare Springfield youth for intensive work-based learning experiences. CS² school-to-career staff designed and introduced “Career Development,” a semester-long course that will be a prerequisite for student internships. The course addresses such workplace-readiness skills as work values, communication, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, decision making, problem solving, and time management. Beginning in September 1999, all high schools in the district will offer Career Development. In addition, CBO Provider Network members are learning to teach the course, which also serves as the internship prerequisite for out-of-school youth.

Achievements

School-to-career activities and influence in Springfield have grown significantly in a brief period of time.

During the 1998-1999 year, over 4,000 high school youth participated in a full range of school-to-career activities, including classroom speakers (2,970 youth), worksite mentors (94 youth), internships (117 youth), and integrated work and learning over the summer (98 youth). High school youth also participated in job search coaching, job shadows, and peer leadership, among other activities. Meanwhile, over 2,000 children in grades K-8 participated in age-appropriate school-to-career activities during the same year, including classroom speakers, mentors, and field trips to employers. With school-to-career expansion underway throughout the district, significant increases in participation are projected for the 1999-2000 year.

By broadly engaging CBOs, Springfield CS² has improved program quality, served at-risk and out-of-school youth effectively, and linked school-to-career to community development.

CBOs are prominently represented on the Local Partnership and its executive committee. Sustained financial support of the CBO Provider Network has brought school-to-career resources to community agencies and the young people they serve. CBO expertise in career development and in addressing the needs of at-risk students now can reach a broader audience in the schools.

There are other benefits to the association between Springfield CS² and CBOs. Local Partnership money comes with fewer restrictions than funds through the Job Training and Partnership Act or the Workforce Investment Act. Community agencies can serve youth without contorting program design to satisfy income-eligibility requirements. More recently, the Local Partnership has developed plans to pair particular CBOs with “business mentors”—private-sector executives who provide management and financial advice and help design human service internships. The business-mentor program is part of the partnership’s conscious effort to strengthen Springfield’s human-service sector and make it more attractive to young people as a career path.

Finally, CBOs now speak with a collective voice. Instead of being relegated to marginal status, they have advocates within the school system and broader contacts with the private sector. Conversely, Springfield’s CBOs, along with employers, are vocal supporters of an expanded vision of school-to-career and advocate for its continuation in the face of expectations by others in the community that it will some day fade from view.

Springfield CS² has demonstrated successful school-to-career models and practices.

Local models for career preparation, teacher professional development, and integrated work and learning, among other school-to-career efforts, have demonstrated the benefits of school-to-career for young people and the institutions that serve them. These efforts now provide the foundation for the citywide expansion of school-to-career.

School-to-career has a firm foothold in Springfield’s education and youth policy agendas.

After just four years, school-to-career has been integrated into the school district’s structure, budget, and long-term plan. Just since 1998, the district has elevated school-to-career to full departmental status, supported the formation of school-based school-to-career teams, approved internships for academic credit, and introduced a career development course at all district high schools and at community agencies.

The Future: Plans, Priorities, and Challenges

The top priority for Springfield school-to-career staff is the roll out of the Stairway to Success menu and sequence to all district schools.

Much of the groundwork has been laid for this roll-out, and it would not be underway without the superintendent’s blessing and strong support. However, full implementation faces serious challenges. Although school-to-

career teams are forming at many schools, not every principal is a strong advocate, and not every team member has volunteered for the mission. Teams have common planning time, receive guidance and technical assistance from central school-to-career staff, and receive stipends in some cases, but the pace of school-based implementation is necessarily tied to each building's circumstances and district-wide collective bargaining agreements. Also, while school-to-career offerings are well defined in the high schools, more needs to be done to persuade elementary and middle school staff, students, and parents that age-appropriate school-to-career offerings are valuable in the earlier grades.

Relatively few Springfield teachers believe that school-to-career can improve teaching or educational outcomes.

Springfield CS² school-to-career staff know they must better articulate how integrated work and learning activities can improve student performance, help students understand and connect to the world around them, and prepare them academically and socially for the future.

This objective is made more challenging by a high-stakes emphasis on student performance as gauged by standardized tests. Within a few years, a passing score on the new Massachusetts Career Assessment System will be a statewide graduation requirement, and student performance on this test will likely be the primary measure for district and school accountability.

Despite its relatively secure status, Springfield CS² must work hard to secure enough funding to sustain a strong, multi-dimensional intermediary effort.

The school district funds a large portion of the overall school-to-career budget. This is, of course, mostly good news. On the other hand, financial dependence on the district makes school-to-career potentially vulnerable to competing district priorities.

Raising non-district dollars also remains a challenge. For example, CS² has relied on both federal and state funds to support the Summer of Work and Learning. This year, however, there is concern about the federal contribution, given uncertainty about the local distribution of new federal Workforce Investment Act funds. Also, although the UROG grant funds the CBO Provider Network for two more years (a lifetime in this field), CS² must find resources for it over the longer term. Finally, at least in the near future, it is fair to assume that CS² will have to look to non-district sources of grant funding—federal, state, private foundation, or corporate—to launch any major new school-to-career initiative.

Key Lessons

School-based intermediaries can be “neutral” brokers if employers and other community partners are well represented on the school-to-career governing body and can effectively provide input on governance and programming.

On the one hand, Springfield’s “insider strategy,” operating within the school district, has an advantage: the support and ear of the Superintendent have made it possible to advance an ambitious set of programs and services relatively quickly. On the other hand, the influence of community partners, backed up by independent dollars, has been essential in ensuring that the school-to-career agenda is not wholly owned by the school district. Springfield’s Local Partnership is noteworthy in its equal representation of educators, employers, and community activists. The Local Partnership also controls significant financial resources that benefit the schools but are independent of the district budget. As a consequence, the Local Partnership, particularly its executive committee, can give effective voice to non-school perspectives. Put simply, real leadership in Springfield emanates from both inside and outside the school district.

Just as important, CS² and school-to-career staff members have demonstrated they can reach out to employer and CBO constituencies and represent these outside interests within the school district bureaucracy. Meanwhile, they have worked hard to allay concerns among some educators that school-to-career represents an exclusively business-driven agenda.

Being a school-to-career intermediary is a balancing act. It is made more difficult—some would say impossible—if the intermediary is institutionally based in the schools. But the Springfield CS² experience demonstrates that under the right conditions, a school-based intermediary can be an effective agent of change and can advance a multi-stakeholder agenda.

School district funding can become a foundation for sustaining school-to-career intermediary functions.

Springfield demonstrates that school district funding can provide a long-term foundation for school-to-career intermediary activities. School district dollars are relatively stable and renewable compared with the “soft money” that has launched most school-to-career initiatives. This result, indeed, is consistent with the intention of the School To Work Opportunities Act—that funds serve as “venture capital.” It is also consistent with the original vision of the statewide CS² initiative: as external seed funding for entrepreneur teams declined, these teams would prove, through worthwhile programs and new funds raised, that they were worth a major investment by the host district.

Sufficient staff resources and a strong team can build capacity and drive change.

Springfield demonstrates that the CS² capacity-building strategy can work. The city was fertile territory for school-to-career, but it took a significant number of staff dedicated to the effort to develop a broad vision that resonated with stakeholders, cultivate relationships, and implement programming that ultimately confirmed school-to-career's value and contribution to the local education and youth-serving agenda. Also, the Springfield experience demonstrates the necessity of having staff involved in governance, policy, and program development, on the one hand, and program coordination and service delivery on the other.

The accomplishments of Springfield CS² derive also from the entrepreneurs' strengths as a team. School-to-career is a complex undertaking, requiring patience and resiliency. Although individual entrepreneurs have assumed particular roles and responsibilities in school-to-career implementation, their mutual support and their complementary strengths have been critical.

Acknowledgments/For More Information

Alex Hoffinger of the Corporation for Business, Work, and Learning prepared this case study. Major sources include interviews with CS² entrepreneurs Patricia Spradley and Lynn Yanis, as well as the following documents and sources which may be consulted for further information:

Lawrence Neil Bailis and Alan Melchior. November 1996. Evaluation of CS²: Second Annual Report on Implementation Activities, prepared for Center for Youth Development and Education, Corporation for Business, Work and Learning.

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Springfield CS²/Springfield School to Work Local Partnership, Inc. 1997. Community Is Critical: A Guide to School-to-work Transition + Community Development.

Center for Youth Development and Education Web site: www.cbwl.org/cyde