



## **Sustainable Communities: Professional development, curriculum, and support packages for K12 schools and universities**

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Revitalize communities and invigorate learning through interdisciplinary place-based programs on land use, brownfields redevelopment and sustainable communities. Sustainable communities and regional revitalization provide a powerful and inherently relevant context for improving achievement, equity, and teacher effectiveness.

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Creative Change supports K12 schools and universities to redesign curriculum and instruction through a lens of sustainability. Our leveled programs provide a gradual process to help you transition to new ways of teaching and learning. Each level offers customized packages of professional development, curriculum licensing, and strategic planning. Select from four levels based on your organization's goals and level of readiness.

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### **Level I) Imagine the Change: 1-3 day introductory programs**

Level I programs introduce new ways of reframing content and instruction through a lens of sustainable communities. Participants envision and define possibilities for change as they experience approaches they can replicate in their own classes. A typical package includes:

- 1-2 days of on-site professional development introducing core sustainable communities themes
- Age-specific curriculum samples
- Assessment of faculty interests and needs
- Compilation of evaluation outcomes and meeting with leadership team

Example: An urban educational institution is seeking ways to improve student achievement and community engagement, and wants to explore sustainable communities and regional revitalization as a possible focus for reframing curriculum. In a two-day workshop, Creative Change leads educators through hands-on activities that use the local community as a context for learning. Topics include regional environmental trends, community social fabric, and the links between culture and community. During the sessions, educators review age-specific curricula and resources, and evaluate ways the projects can be integrated into existing instruction to meet achievement goals. After collecting data on faculty needs and interests, Creative Change meets with the leadership team to develop a strategic plan as part of a Level II program.

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## **Level II) Plan the Change: 3-6 month planning phase**

Level II programs provide 3-6 months of strategic planning to help institutions define goals, strategies, evaluation, and a timeline for integrating energy into the curriculum. The work is guided by our *Sustainability Integration Framework*, a tool to support needs assessment, strategic planning, and evaluation. The framework addresses professional development, leadership, and other factors affecting the successful integration of sustainability.

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## **Level III) Begin the Change: Semester- or year-long programs to revise or create units, courses or programs**

Level III programs provide professional development, curriculum licensing and ongoing support focused on revising curriculum, courses and programs. Spread over a year or more, a typical package includes:

- 3-5 days of on-site professional development
- Multiple days of follow-up support and planning assistance
- Group license to the Curriculum Resource Center
- On-line evaluation and compilation of outcomes

The Curriculum Resource Center (CRC) is our digital content library of sustainability courses, units, and instructional resources. Materials are designed to support the integration of sustainability into the curriculum, and are aligned to Common Core and Next Generation standards.

Example: After completing the Level I program, the same institution works with Creative Change on a year-long initiative to integrate a broad range of sustainable communities topics into the existing curriculum. The initiative unfolds in three steps: A) on-site professional development, B) instructional redesign, and C) evaluation and communication.

### **Step A) On-site Professional Development (PD)**

Workshops begin by immersing teachers in content knowledge and research-based pedagogical strategies. To model effective approaches, the sessions engage staff in hands-on activities they can replicate with their students, followed by thoughtful analysis and discussion. Activities include:

- Mapping community assets and areas for improvement
- Exploring interactions between humans and ecosystems using the building and grounds
- Developing plans to introduce native species into campus landscaping
- Creating a 'report card' of community health indicators
- Researching local community partners and opportunities for collaboration

Through these activities, educators define how the content and approaches can improve learning. The staff then evaluates their existing units or courses and sets goals for reshaping them. A life science teacher engages students in mapping invasive species and increasing native plantings on campus. A math teacher uses local demographic data as the basis for graphing, while a social studies teacher examines local and state land use policies. The historical society serves as a resource for the students to develop oral histories—starting with their own families. The literacy coach develops activities to support reading and writing.

At the college level, teacher education faculty would focus on introducing these types of activities into methods courses, while an interdisciplinary team of faculty might collaborate on a new course examining brownfields redevelopment.

### **Step B) Instructional redesign**

The PD now shifts to the on-ground work of redesigning units and courses based on the goals set. Creative Change’s approach to instructional design provides educators with a framework for planning units that unfold as a narrative in which students are characters, the community is the setting, and community revitalization topics form interconnected subplots. Throughout the redesign process, instructors access lessons, model units and instructional design tools from the Curriculum and Resource Center, providing support to:



- Align instruction and assessment around transdisciplinary “Big Ideas”.
- Develop questioning strategies to promote critical thinking.
- Support literacy and writing skills through content instruction.
- Design and use assessments that have a real audience and purpose.
- Utilize rigorous content and pedagogy.

As the faculty continues their work, Creative Change provides on-going planning support through phone, email, Webinars, and in-person meetings (when possible). For example, Creative Change helps a teacher team develop specialized assessment tools to ensure the project meets achievement goals.

### **Step C) Evaluation and documentation**

By the end of the year, the efforts have resulted in a collection of instructional modules that demonstrate best practices in content and pedagogy. The faculty has evaluated the impacts of its work and wants to replicate the approaches in other areas of the curriculum. To support this, Creative Change compiles evaluation data into a report to communicate results to internal and external stakeholders. Based on the success of the work, the collaboration with Creative Change grows to other departments or schools through a Level IV program.

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**Level IV) Sustain the Change:** *Extended initiatives to build internal capacity and maintain effective change*

Level IV programs enable schools and districts to build internal capacity and institutionalize successful approaches. Clients gain training, resources and strategic planning assistance focused on preparing an internal team to lead, evaluate, and sustain instructional change. These packages, spread over two or more years, typically include:

- Multiple days of on-site professional development focused on “training the trainer” (preparing staff to lead internal PD)
- Strategic planning assistance to set and monitor goals
- Technical support with evaluation, documentation results, and communication materials
- On-going communication and planning with administration/leadership team

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