



Opportunity-Rich Schools and Sustainable Communities

Seven Steps to Align High-Quality Education with Innovations in City and Metropolitan Planning and Development

Issue

Competitive and vibrant metropolitan regions of the future will have high-quality K–12 education systems that attract families, provide robust educational experiences, and bolster regional economic engines. Educational opportunity is the wellspring of individual, regional, and national progress. Parents, teachers, and civic and education leaders intuitively understand that high-quality educational opportunities for young people are essential to community health and economic vitality. Many people across our country, however, face daunting obstacles to getting ahead. This is especially true for low-income communities faced with substandard housing and poverty-concentrated neighborhoods, where conditions undermine health and economic prosperity and overwhelm schools.

“Win-win strategies are needed to ensure better schools, healthier neighborhoods, and more vital cities, together.”

Improving access to quality schools is critical if metropolitan areas want to ensure vibrant, resilient communities that retain the talent of young families. But, what are the mechanisms to link planning and infrastructure developments in communities and regions to efforts that improve K–12 schools? How do we build the civic capacity for regional planning and community development whereby leaders tangibly link their work to educational improvement efforts to create cross-sector “win-wins,” increase productivity, and foster social equity? Innovative, cross-sector partnerships are showing the way; done right, cross-sector approaches not only lead to new operational efficiencies and the effective use of limited resources, but also have important implications for how institutions respond to issues of social equity.

Challenges

Innovative work in this area faces strong challenges, which must be understood and overcome:

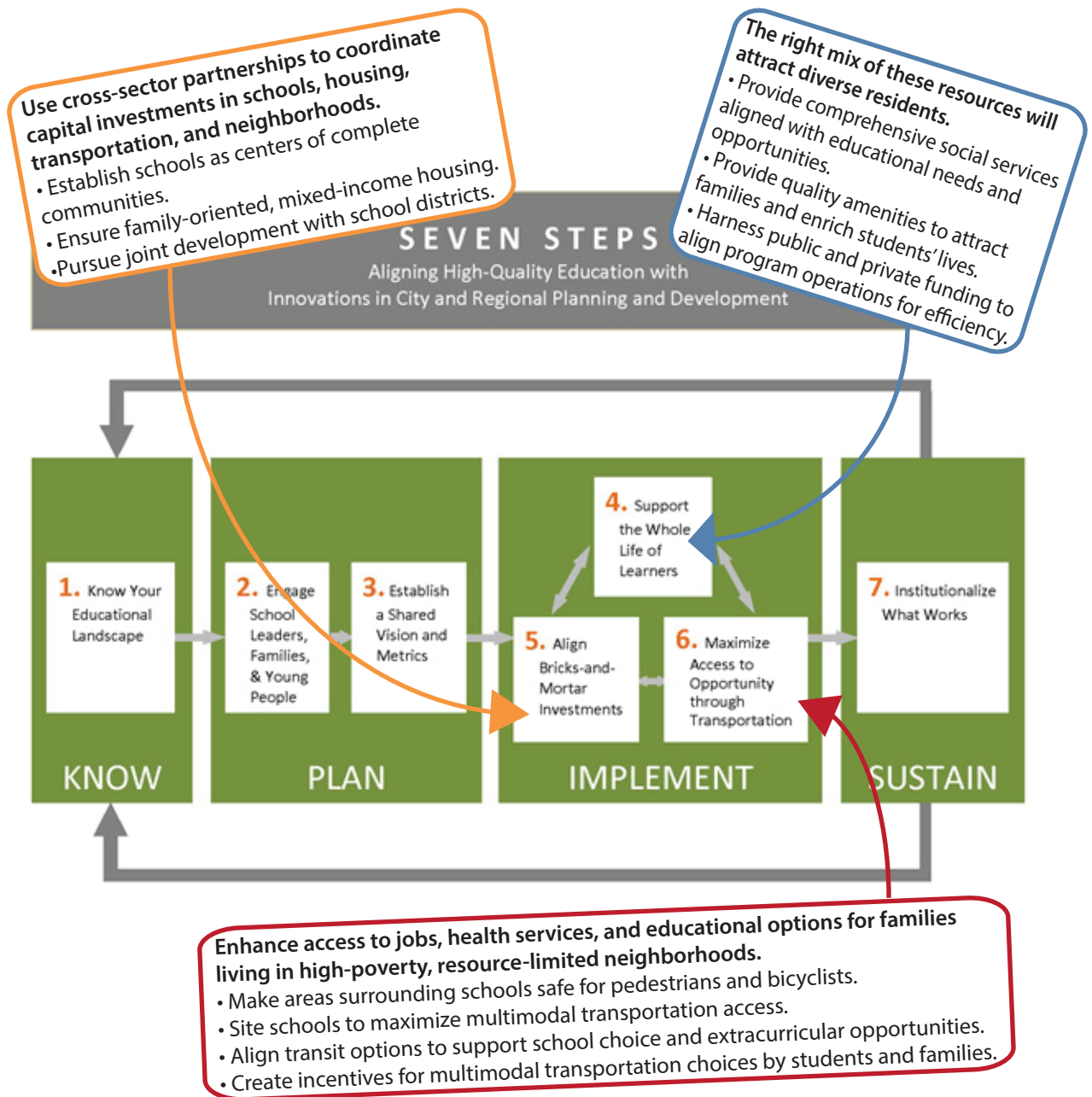
- Concentrated poverty, racial segregation, and economic isolation undermine school quality.
- Out-of-school factors contribute significantly to in-school success.
- Institutional and policy silos reinforce piecemeal approaches.

Recommendations

Ensuring Trajectories of Opportunity for All Young People in Sustainable Communities

To set young people on a path to economic self-sufficiency and prosperity, we must align people, policies, and places to ensure robust trajectories of opportunity for all children. Trajectories of opportunity structure success over the course of young people’s lives, helping them overcome obstacles through aligned and accessible resources across education, family and social supports, and healthy and safe environments. For effective cross-sector policy and practice to promote positive educational outcomes in tandem with housing, transportation, and sustainable-community policies, we recommend seven important action steps for planners, policymakers, educators, and others. Three of these focus directly on implementation and are highlighted below.





The Center for Cities + Schools at the University of California-Berkeley is an action-oriented policy and technical assistance center working to promote high quality education as an essential component of urban and metropolitan vitality in order to create equitable, healthy and sustainable cities and schools for all.

The full report was prepared for the What Works Collaborative, a foundation-supported research partnership that conducts timely research and analysis to help inform the implementation of an evidence-based housing and urban policy agenda.

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