As we examine our advocacy efforts in the promotion of physical activity, it is imperative that we keep in mind the holistic view of sustaining change and development throughout the movement. While in effect the industry was popularized with the “people, planet, profits” moniker, the idea of the triple bottom line approach has much salience to improving the physical activity programs of which we champion. In essence, the triple-bottom line suggests that for any program, intervention, or business to experience a sustainable level of success and development, it must satisfy three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social.

The first, economic, is one that most educators are often familiar with. Here, we have the responsibility of showing that physical activity makes good fiscal sense. In fact, it is our “burden of proof” to connect beneficial outcomes (i.e., health benefits, academic benefits, etc.) back to physical activity in a direction that can be shown to improve traditional bottom lines in schools such as fiscal budgets and academic progress. Such an approach is only a reminder of what we already know well – that what we do within the physical activity curriculum both now and in the future must be shaped to target measurable outcomes that have a positive spillover into both the academic and local communities. Other opportunities to improve the traditional fiscal bottom line might include:

- Making physical activity the center of fundraisers for schools and communities, rather than selling various goods throughout neighborhood communities.
- Looking for opportunities to improve data collection of physical activity outcomes and the extent to which varied elements of the physical activity curriculum can be tied to academic gains throughout the course of the year.

The second perspective reminds us that physical activity sustainability only occurs if the program is a good steward of environmental resources. The pillar of economic sustainability is imperative to the public’s agenda for geo-preservation, but also of those physical resources established by the school and local communities. One highlighted approach to this aspect would be tying in physical activity to the reduction of one’s carbon footprint. Among this approach might also include:

- Creating a club program that has students track the amounts of walking and running they do outside of school and creating a reward system based upon the amount of energy created/consumed “off the grid.”
- Use fundraisers to raise awareness for bike, running, and walking paths to encourage physical activity as a mode of transportation.
- Establish walking and running clubs in conjunction with civic and municipal growth, and make sure planning committees that ensure policies for future growth are mindful of encouraging physical activity.

Finally, sustainable development can only remain if the physical activity becomes embedded within the social
fabric of the school and community. While also the most overlooked, social sustainability requires that the essence of the physical activity program become congruent with the values, norms, behaviors, and identity of those individuals within the program and those outside who support the efforts. The idea of social sustainability as a lens for shaping our view of physical activity is not a novel one, but one that serves to remind us that our ability to make any lasting progress in physical activity is predicated upon our ability to achieve “buy-in” from all stakeholders. Most importantly, physical activity or a physical activity program must become a staple of a school’s or community’s identity. That identity unifies current members and participants with neophytes and outside individuals, to provide an opportunity to maximize the program’s impact and advocacy efforts. Targeting the social sustainability of physical activity programs might include:

• Creating a local physical activity community advisory board of prominent local figures who have a personal interest in any form of physical activity. The advisory board might have some form of responsibility for tying in school-based physical activity efforts with community-based efforts and might include events to raise awareness or promote physical activity. The board would, more informally, give educators an opportunity to create highly-strategic alliances throughout the community that will become necessary for future resource acquisition.

• Targeting the collective identity of the school or the community when promoting fun runs, races, jump rope challenges, etc.

• Creating an “adoption” program where community and school members (i.e., faculty, students, administrators, staff, etc.) can be connected and track each other’s progress along targeted physical activity goals, culminating in a community-wide event where community and school efforts are recognized. Here, further awareness can be made on the benefits of the physical activity movement.

The use of the triple-bottom line lens in reviewing your physical activity program is not intended to revolutionize any new approach, but to serve as a key reminder that we must be beholden to numerous bottom-lines if we are to achieve the impact and change which we pursue.