Smaller Learning Communities
2008-09 Evaluation Report
Los Angeles Unified School District

Cohort V, Year 4
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Research conducted by:

Michael Butler
P. Marcell Gilmore
Gail Grant Ed.D.
Filiberto Barajas Ph.D.
Mikala Rahn, Ph.D.
Arleene Rodriguez
Albert Chen
Hoky Lin
Rosario Menjivar

Public *Works*, Inc.
90 N. Daisy Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91107
(626) 564-9890
(626) 564-0657 fax

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Part I—Introduction and Literature Review

With the leadership of the Gates Foundation in creating a national agenda to fund high school reform and research, public support through the federal Smaller Learning Community (SLC) grants, and consensus on the need to address the persistent problem of high school dropouts and lackluster student performance nationwide, school districts across the nation are transforming large comprehensive high schools into smaller, more manageable units of 200-500 students. Simultaneously, autonomous small high schools (typically new start-up schools or charters) have been developed to provide a more personalized high school experience.

SLC reforms combine with the push for accountability of the standards-based reforms of the 1990s and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Under the lens of the so-called "New 3R's," SLC reform strategies are intended to match academic achievement (*Rigor*) with curricular approaches that bring meaning and application to students (*Relevance*) along with enhanced personal connections (also termed "personalization") to adults and other students (*Relationships*). As such, SLC reform involves changes that offer what many say is the opportunity for badly needed secondary school improvement—providing what is often lacking in high school education and the possibility for curricular change, meaningful collaboration, and systemic student support.

This report provides the evaluation results from 2008-09 for the 21 comprehensive high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) that received US Department of Education Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) implementation grants.[1] LAUSD hired Public *Works*, Inc., a non-profit headquartered in Pasadena, California, to conduct a third-party evaluation of the Year Four SLC efforts at ten Cohort 5 schools—Canoga Park, Grant, Huntington Park, Lincoln, Los Angeles, Manual Arts, Marshall, San Pedro, Sylmar, and Washington Preparatory high schools— Year Three SLC efforts at eight[2] Cohort 6 schools— Bell, Chatsworth, Franklin, Monroe, Polytechnic, Roosevelt, Van Nuys, and Westchester — and Year 1 efforts at three Cohort 8 schools— Fairfax, Reseda, and South Gate. See **Appendix A** for a map of the Cohort 5, Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 schools in LAUSD.

About the US Department of Education Grants

Since 2000, the U.S. Department of Education's SLC grant program has provided planning and implementation grants to high schools with 1,000 or more students in order to plan, implement, or expand SLCs. The grants support a range of strategies including creating schools within schools with varying degrees of autonomy,[3] restructuring the school day to allow for cohort scheduling and more consistent student-adult interactions, and

[1] The U.S. Department of Education has awarded funds on an annual basis. Cohort 5 schools received five-year grants with implementation funding beginning in 2005-06. Cohort 6 schools received five-year grants beginning in 2006-07. However, three of the schools in Cohort 6 were prior grantees from Cohort 3 (Monroe, Polytechnic, and Roosevelt). Cohort 8 received funding beginning in 2008-09.

[2] One grantee school, Locke, did not continue in the SLC grant program as it reverted to an independent charter school in 2008-09 and opted not to receive USDE SLC funding.

[3] School-within-a-school refers to an autonomous school that, while it may be in its own building or in a building with another school, is organizationally, fiscally, and instructionally independent.

formal adult mentoring and advisory programs.[4] Implementation of these structural changes share the goals of a more personalized high school experience for students in smaller schools within schools and to improve student achievement and performance.

Continued under the Bush Administration's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the program originally provided three-year implementation grants ranging from $250,000 to $550,000 per school. The previous LAUSD grantees: five Cohort 3 schools received three-year grants totaling $2,399,710 beginning in the 2003-04 school year. The seven Cohort 4 schools in LAUSD received three-year grants beginning in the 2004-05 school year in the amount of $3,850,000. Cohort 5 (10 schools) received a five-year implementation grant of $10,625,000 in 2005-06. LAUSD also received $6,068,191 in implementation funding for schools involved in the Cohort 6 grant cycle. No LAUSD schools were funded in Cohort 7; LAUSD received $3,001,615 for funded in Cohort 8 (three schools) began funding in the 2008-09 school year. Both Cohort 6 and 8 received five-year grants with a review of implementation after year three. Schools making progress would then receive the additional two years of funding.

Background to the SLC Approach

High School Student Performance

In the late 1990's, after years of reform focused on implementing standards-based accountability systems which tended to yield improved student outcomes at the elementary level, questions about the stubborn lack of progress among secondary schools came to the forefront as the new frontier of education reform. Both performance on international assessments and national measures of student achievement indicated the need for dramatic improvement.

In 2003, US students placed 28th in mathematics and 29th in problem solving out of 40 participating countries with sufficient data on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Further, from 1992 to 2002, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated that 60 percent or more of 12th graders performed below the Proficient level (Klekotka, 2005).

The achievement gap continued to be large with African-American and Hispanic students at the end of high school having reading levels equivalent to White eighth-graders (Phi Delta Kappa International, Topics & Trends, Volume 5, Issue 4). Other data suggested that even college-going high school students were unprepared to succeed in college. For instance 25% of freshmen at four-year institutions and 50% of freshmen at two-year colleges did not return for the second year (Phi Delta Kappa International, Topics & Trends, Volume 5, Issue 1).

The persistent and high dropout rate across the nation also began to receive more attention, especially as researchers pinpointed the problems existing in so-called "dropout factories" characteristic of many urban school districts. As the No Child Left Behind Act and state accountability strategies such as exit exams have raised the profile of the number

[4] Advisory systems place students under the guidance and care of a teacher or administrator for their entire school experience on a regular (daily or weekly) basis.

of students who don't complete high school, a key study by Robert Balfanz at the Center for Social Organization of Schools based at Johns Hopkins University identified approximately 2,000 schools in 15 states (including California) that account for 80 percent of high school dropouts located primarily in urban areas, the South, and the Southwest (Balfanz, 2004 and Samuels, 2007).

The 21st Century Take on High School Reform

In 2005, following the National Education Summit on High Schools, the National Governors Association identified an *Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools* that called on state leaders to: (1) make all students proficient and prepared; (2) redesign the American High School; (3) give high schools the excellent teachers and principals they need; (4) hold high schools and colleges accountable for student success; and, (5) streamline and improve education governance.

The actions of the nation's governors followed many years of commission reports, conferences, and research identifying the anonymity, apathy and alienation so prevalent among our nation's youth combined with the overriding consensus that it was driven in large part by the very structure of high school education embodied in large, comprehensive high schools. Launched in 2000, the Gates Foundation five-year high school initiative provided over a billion dollars in funding on a range of fronts—at the individual school level to break up large schools or start new schools, for researchers and policymakers to learn more about effective practices, and most recently, to build capacity at the district level to sustain widespread change.

While high school reform has been characterized by "dozens of actors and innumerable initiatives," reformers are "focusing primarily on five strategies—improving school climate, strengthening curriculum and instruction, raising graduation requirements, helping freshmen get up to speed academically, and preventing students from dropping out" (Toch, 2007, p. 434).

Lessons Learned About the Impact of School Size

Practitioners and policymakers have debated the appropriate size for high schools from at least the mid-20th century when population growth and funding practices resulted in large high schools becoming the norm. Ted Sizer of the Coalition of Essential Schools (organized in 1984) and Deborah Meier (known for her work with Central Park East in New York City in the late 1980's and early 1990's) were among the more vocal and renowned advocates for small, personalized learning environments for high school students. In turn, private foundation funding from the Gates Foundation beginning in 2000 and earlier Annenburg Foundation grants to reform urban schools favored the movement toward small schools or smaller subunits within the larger campus.

Beyond improving academic achievement, research suggested that small schools built a more positive and productive educational environment conducive to student learning. A sense of community constructed through student self-selection, as well as increased staff interest in students, led to greater feelings of belonging and more investment in making the school a quality place to learn. Classroom discipline problems, disruptions, and assaults were found to be less common in small schools, due to an increased sense of community and genuine investment in the school and learning (Cotton, 2001).

Based on these reviews of research and other information from high school students themselves, attention was placed on school size as the "lever" for improving high school student outcomes. However, in their review of the research related to small school size, authors Lee, Ready, and Welner report that "not all small-school news is good" and that "a bit of caution may be in order" (pg. 7). They found issues related to privacy in which the reputations of students' siblings or parents preceded them and that small schools often attempted to replicate the more comprehensive curriculum of larger high schools with faculty teaching out of their specialties. The lesson for those attempting to break up large high schools is that smallness by design or by choice appears to have the most impact on how small schools perform. "Much of the enthusiasm for small schools focus on those small schools that *want* to be small, often have selective entrance criteria, and are staffed by innovative faculty and attended by committed students (Lee, 2002, pg. 8)."

Common Approaches to Implementing SLCs

Under the US Department of Education's SLC grant program, implementation grants are provided to high schools with 1,000 or more students in order to implement and expand SLCs. The grants support a range of structures (i.e., reorganization of student placement and staff assignments) and strategies (i.e., techniques and measures to provide interdisciplinary, personalized instruction and guidance to students) including creating schools-within-schools, career academies, restructuring the school day, formal adult mentoring and advisory programs all with the goal to create a more personalized high school experience for students and to improve student achievement and performance (see Table 1 for a summary of common approaches to SLCs).

Table 1: Structures and Strategies for Small Learning Communities

Small Schools and Schools-within-Schools	The term "small school" or "school-within-a-school" refers to an autonomous school that, while it may be in its own building or in a building with another school, is organizationally, fiscally, and instructionally independent (Small Schools Project, 2001a). Teachers and students are self-selected. The school has its own leader, school-day schedule and classroom space. Small schools, like other small learning community models, can have a focus, or theme, be identified as an "alternative" school, or have a number of other labels attached. Regardless, small schools operate autonomously.
Academies	Under the academy model, high schools organize the curricula and education program for a subset of students (usually ranging from 200-400 students) around one or more themes, typically career or occupationally related. Under the model, a small group of students is grouped with a team of teachers responsible for creating interdisciplinary and personalized curriculum across career and academic content. Students stay with this team of teachers typically for grades 10-12. In addition, career academies partner with employers, postsecondary institutions and other community groups to infuse the curriculum and educational experience of students with one-to-one mentors, internships, service learning and other extracurricular support.
Magnet Schools	Magnet schools, usually with a core focus such as mathematics and science, performing arts or humanities, typically draw students from an entire district and have often been used as a strategy for racial desegregation of urban school districts. Although magnets are "choice" programs open to all, the admission processes are often complicated and include factors such as timing of application, race/ethnicity, preferences for existing siblings, transportation considerations, teacher recommendations and grades. Magnet students often benefit from additional fiscal and personnel resources including a core group of faculty that primarily teach within the Magnet and additional individual support through a Magnet director and/or specially assigned counselor.
Houses	A house contains classrooms for teachers of core subjects who function as a team to instruct a small group of students (ranging from 100-500) (Sammon, 2000). In some models, students can take additional subjects elsewhere in the school, though not always with the same students in their house. Some schools have used the house model as a way to help freshmen transition into the larger high school by offering a separate house for sub-sets of the entering freshmen class who are paired with a core group of teachers and separated from the rest of the school. Often, houses can contain a sequence of career-related and/or academic courses that lead toward graduation (Cotton, 2001). Houses are often an alternative option for groups aiming to produce the same positive student outcomes as small schools, but do not quite have the intention, funding or resources available to achieve a completely autonomous small school.
Other "Small" Strategies	Comprehensive high schools are devising additional strategies for breaking up the learning experiences of students so that they can form more significant attachments to adults and their peers. Examples of these strategies include: • Advanced courses for high-achieving students • Newcomer schools for immigrant students entering a school system for the first time • Modifications to the high school schedule (for example, block scheduling) • Ninth-grade house plans similar to houses but involving only the ninth grade • Advisory systems in which students are placed under the guidance and care of a teacher or administrator for their entire school experience (essentially a personal academic and social guidance counselor)

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Complementary Reforms to Support Smaller Learning Communities

As comprehensive high schools break up into smaller units and new schools are started, what is being learned is that size is no guarantee for success. Schools that have experienced the most success have implemented complementary reforms that bring about improvements for student outcomes.

College Prep Curriculum for All

An increase in the rigor of high school courses and adopting a curriculum that supports students as they transition out of high school into college is no longer viewed as at odds with a relevant and supportive environment that encourages students with the least preparation to stay in school. In fact, evaluations of SLC efforts have concluded that the freshmen year is a pivotal year that must address both the need for freshmen with poor academic skills to catch up and to offer them rigorous courses that supports credit attainment and on time graduation (Toch, 2007).

Since 2001, 11 states and LAUSD, the second largest school district in the nation, required students to complete a full college-prep course sequence. In addition, 22 states currently require graduation exit exams. Many feared that these increases in graduation requirements would result in higher dropout rates. In addition, there was fear that these initiatives requiring more academic coursework runs counter to the notion of relevance and personalized learning.

However, emerging research indicates that may not necessarily be the case and that the combination of rigorous coursework with relevance is supportive of students graduating. For example, one study from Johns Hopkins University found that "enrollment in career-technical education is positively associated with higher graduation rates, but *only* when the tech courses are taken along with more challenging academic courses (Toch, 2007, pg. 435)." On the other hand, an evaluation of efforts to raise graduation requirements in Chicago noted that simply calling courses college-prep was not sufficient and that the courses needed to be taught by capable teachers that can provide a challenging curriculum and motivation for students to complete the material (Toch, 2007).

Professional Learning Communities and Distributed Leadership

Another complementary reform to SLCs is to support professional collaboration and distributed leadership among professionals in the new, smaller sub-units. In schools that move beyond structure and discussions of "architecture" as put by Tom Vander Ark, former executive director of the Gates Foundation education initiatives, the development of professional learning communities offers a real opportunity for making instructional change the focus of reforms. According to Richard DuFour, a national expert on the implementation of this kind of reform, professional learning communities focus on three "big ideas": (1) shifting from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, (2) creating structures that promote a collaborative culture, and (3) an orientation on judging effectiveness based on results (DuFour, 2004).

Professional development to support improved pedagogical methods could be delivered within SLC teams, but it was also important to complement this with professional development within the content areas of teachers departments or specialties (Quint 2006). With more collaboration and targeted professional development, faculty and staff in SLCs and small schools work together to improve curriculum quality. This enables teachers in these settings to teach across content areas and spend more time personalizing curriculum and lessons to address the needs of individual students.

Personalized and differentiated instruction offers teachers more flexibility and more options in teaching students based on what works, which includes considerations for learning styles, socio-cultural influences and possible learning disabilities (US Dept. of Education, 1999). This increased tailoring of education to individual needs contributes to the narrowing of the achievement gap, and at the same time reduces the effects of ethnic minority and poverty, by harnessing group effort and focusing it upon helping all students in the specific areas they need the most (Howley, Strange, and Bickel, 2000).

"Family" of High School Reforms

There are three major reform models that constitute what MDRC refers to as the family of high school reform—Career Academies, the oldest, followed by *Talent Development* and *First Things First*. Career Academies, initially developed in 1969, exist in approximately 2,500 schools throughout the country. According to the Career Academies Support Network, the attributes of career academies include: 1) students enrolled in classes together for at least two years, which are taught by a interdisciplinary teaching team; 2) a curriculum that prepares students for college through a career theme, which allows students to learn how their academic courses are related to the workplace; and 3) the development of strong relationships between employers, the community, and postsecondary institutions that allows them to provide resources to boost student achievement. *Talent Development*, a high school model from Johns Hopkins implemented first in Philadelphia and in other districts across the nation focused on providing 9th graders with accelerated "catch-up" courses in reading and math. *Talent Development* high schools offer a double dose of math and English for an entire year (90 minutes each). "During the first semester, they take classes designed to give them the academic and study skills necessary to handle college-prep courses later on; during the second semester, teachers follow the district's regular curricula for English and algebra, supplemented with special materials developed by Johns Hopkins University (Toch, 2007, p. 436)." Students taking this sequence outperformed their peers in comparison schools and even students who started with higher-than-average achievement benefited. *First Things First* programs were created in the mid 1990s. Quint (2005) stated that this model has three components: 1) SLCs in which students are grouped together for 4 years, and take core classes with a finite number of teachers; 2) a "family advocate system" that pairs each student with a faculty member that meets with them weekly and their family at least twice a year to discuss their progress; and 3) staff must be provided professional develop that to help improve their understanding of instruction, and how it relates to engaging students in rigorous work that is aligned with state standards. While each of the reforms aim to increase student success, the process is different in each of the models. The most critical difference between the models is concerning the concentration of school's efforts address the middle school to high transition.

Ninth Grade Transition

Ninth grade is the linchpin grade level to ensuring high school success. It is the "last place along the K-12 pipeline where a large number of students are retained before dropping out of school completely (West, 2009, pg. 9)." The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University examined the first time 9th grade retention. The center created a "first time ninth grade estimate (calculated by dividing the number of first-time 9th graders by the total number of students enrolled in 9th grade)." The study collected self-reported data

from the NCES' National Education Surveys Program, and achievement data from six states in various regions of the country over nine different years of data collection spanning 1991 to 2007. It should be noted that the only factor that was shown to decrease 9th grade retention was urban school setting. Data showed the more rural the school setting (smaller schools); the greater number of first time 9th grader students in attendance. More school districts have focused on 9th graders because students who fail to earn sufficient credits to matriculate to 10th grade are much more likely to dropout.

Implementation Issues for Smaller Learning Communities

While many high school reformers were entering uncharted territory as the SLC movement took hold, evaluation results and lessons learned are beginning to surface that may help to keep reform on track. Evaluation results funded by the Gates Foundation of its own high school reform initiative, findings from the MDRC evaluation of three widely implemented models, and an evaluation of New York City's New Century High Schools Initiative are just a few examples of recent publications indicating both the promise of and trouble spots to watch out for in the implementation of SLCs. In particular, early SLC implementers quickly learned that though small learning environments often provided the context to make reform possible, the break up into smaller units was only the beginning, not the end of the process.

Conversions vs. Start-ups

Schools, especially in urban districts, have taken a variety of approaches to restructuring high schools including spinning off new schools from closed or reconstituted high schools, as charters run by other organizations, or conversions of larger schools into smaller subunits with varying degrees of autonomy over decision-making and fiscal responsibility. One of the largest infusions of support for these changes has been the Gates Foundation National School District and Network Grants Program, which also funded an evaluation by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and SRI International.

Early findings from the evaluation indicated that after the first year of operation, new small high schools had already made great strides in establishing deeper and more supportive student-teacher relationships both academically and personally. However, these environments required a large amount of work to put in place, more than the teachers had first anticipated. Further, the work of establishing a new school was more complicated and time-consuming leading to significant shortfalls of the resources necessary to implement all of the components needed to meet the challenging student populations they had been successful in recruiting. Facilities suitable to these new small schools were difficult to come by and the multiple roles of instructional leaders, personal advisors, and participants in distributed leadership challenged these teachers (AIR/SRI, April 2003).

The evaluation's examination of large school conversions also found that conversions of existing schools take longer than first envisioned with planning encompassing a two-year process. Further, conversion high schools had more difficulty instituting the type of structures for personalization that emerged in new small schools after the one start-up year. Teacher commitment to SLC change in conversions was also more tenuous due, in part, to the fact that SLC planning teams tended to involve a small proportion of teachers at the school (AIR/SRI, April 2003).

Mixed impact of SLCs on Student Achievement

In the most recent round of evaluations of high school conversions and new start-up schools, the impact of SLCs on student achievement has been decidedly mixed. While many have made progress in improving school climate and positive impact on attendance, dropout rates, and student participation in work-based learning, there is less conclusive evidence of the impact on student achievement as measured on standardized tests. For instance, the MDRC summary of its evaluations of Career Academies, *First Things First*, and the *Talent Development* model found improvements in eleventh-grade math and reading tests in *Talent Development* schools for students where the interventions had been in place the longest but no effect on achievement within the Career Academies they studied (Quint, 2006).

The evaluations of Gates-funded new and converted high schools indicated that the introduction of curricular relevance under SLCs could not be correlated with the quality of student learning. While there were some improvements in reading and language arts especially in high schools that had implemented the Foundation's Attributes of High-Performing Schools to a higher degree,[5] the study showed lower levels of rigor in Mathematics assignments at new and redesigned high schools (AIR/SRI, 2005b). In a more recent evaluation report (AIR/SRI, 2007), which examined a sample of 12 large high schools in the first or second year of a reconfiguration into 38 SLCs, the authors concluded that:

- Assignments in both English/Language Arts and Mathematics were more relevant and at least as rigorous in the redesigned SLCs as they were in the original large high schools;
- The quality of student work improved in English/Language Arts but declined in Mathematics after redesign; and,
- There was a positive relationship between student work quality and test scores in Mathematics but no relationship in English/Language Arts.

Although the AIR/SRI evaluation included caveats on the time lag between the introduction of new curricula and quantitative results, and also urged more research on the measurement of classroom instructional practices and the correlation between student work quality and achievement testing, the results of this evaluation clearly presented a mixed picture of the impact of SLCs on student achievement. While these findings did not negate other research on the impact of SLCs on reduced dropout rates, improved attendance, increased likelihood of on-time graduation (Kemple, 2000), the lack of demonstrable, unequivocal results in improving test scores within a short period of time led many to conclude that the "silver bullet" proposed by SLC restructuring had missed the mark (Ravitch, 2008).

[5] Gates Foundation Attributes of High-Performing Schools include 1) Common Focus, 2) High Expectations, 3) Personalization, 4) Respect and Responsibility, 5) Time to Collaborate, 6) Performance-Based, and 7) Technology as a Tool (AIR/SRI, 2005).

De Jure versus De Facto SLC Implementation

To some extent the absence of SLC impact on student achievement can be attributed to insufficient attention to classroom teaching and learning. On paper (*de jure*) schools have committed to multiple structural changes, converting large high schools into smaller subunits, and assigning counselors, teachers and administrators to various SLCs. However, many schools and districts have not significantly changed their *modus operandi* with respect to instruction, or done so at scale. As a result, *de facto* SLC implementation is more inconsistent and sporadic within and across schools. Moreover, the success of SLCs has been defined, rightly or wrongly, as improved student performance on standardized assessments. The expectation that student performance would increase without wholesale changes to instructional practices is misguided and shortsighted. Schools must change instruction along with structure to have a meaningful effect on student achievement.

Autonomy

The issue of autonomy in SLCs goes to the heart of the reform in the breakup of large impersonal and bureaucratic comprehensive high schools. In the context of SLCs, autonomy can have a variety of definitions or approaches. For instance, SLC faculty may have autonomy over various aspects of organizing curriculum and instruction such as scheduling, staffing classes, and the like but little decision-making authority over core components of school organization such as budgeting and hiring decisions. Other aspects of autonomy include procedures for recruiting and selecting students, student conduct, and SLC safety.

The variation in levels of autonomy also presents one of the largest stumbling blocks in implementing the types of learning environments most connected to student success—those that allow for collaboration among adults and personalization for students. As high schools go through the conversion process, school-wide planning often takes three-years or more delaying discussions by SLC teams or schools-within-schools about the central questions of instructional improvement and just what is meant by personalization. In addition, to avoid "community unrest," issues "revolving around ability-grouping, advanced-placement opportunities, band, school spirit, or athletics may take precedence over strong efforts to improve instruction and enhance personalization (Fink and Silverman, 2007).

Size

While there is no consensus on the "perfect" size for a high school or an SLC, a large-scale quantitative study using nationally representative and longitudinal data explored the ideal size of a high school based on student learning. Using data from 10,000 students in 800 public and private schools in the US, achievement gains in mathematics and reading over the course of high school were found in schools of between 600 and 900 students (a middle-sized high school). However, maintaining an even smaller school size was a more important factor for schools enrolling high proportions of disadvantaged students (Lee, 2002). SLC conversion schools vary greatly in the numbers of students per SLC, which is often dependent on the overall size of the school and the number of SLCs the faculty deems is feasible to implement. For most of the SLCs in high school conversion schools a range of 200 to 400 students per SLC is feasible, particularly in urban settings.

Tracking

Tracking students by their perceived ability is a long-standing practice prevalent in American high schools that has been the subject of deep controversy especially related to the persistent achievement gap for low-income and minority students. While there are both opponents to and advocates for ability-based tracking, researchers are finding that grouping students in SLCs can either serve to dismantle or reinforce low, medium, and high-ability tracks. "What research exists on schools-within-schools suggested that secondary schools that engage in this reform improve their social environments. However, early indications also suggest that the reform may increase internal stratification inside high schools, especially if unrestrained choice is the means used for students to be matched to sub-units (Lee, 2002, pg. 34)." In an article describing the "multiple pathways" approach embedded in many SLC reforms, authors Jeannie Oakes and Marisa Saunders describe how important it is to implement programs that consciously allow students to select programs based on their interests rather than being "selected or directed" based on their past achievement, where they are assumed to be going after high school, or their perceptions of the level of difficulty of the courses in a given SLC (2007).

Managing the Master Schedule

Implementing a master schedule that works for all SLCs in a converted high school is one of the biggest challenges to success. Scheduling classes to insure "purity" of teachers and students within the same SLC has been a major challenge to school administrators especially for students in the upper grades who may want to take electives offered by other communities (Quint 2006). Building in more autonomy and a separate identity for each SLC, reducing the number of student and teacher "cross-overs" between SLCs, and allowing for flexibility in the master schedule (i.e., not maintaining a common bell schedule) are all strategies for managing the master schedule in converted high schools. In addition, reducing the number of small, specialized programs may also contribute to SLC purity.

Research on the use of various block scheduling (e.g., 4x4 blocks, alternating A/B days) has not yielded a consensus on the impact of these types of schedules on student achievement. In a comparison of a traditional schedule to a 4x4 block schedule, there were no differences in academic achievement, teacher satisfaction with the schedule, or the use of instructional strategies. However, other research has found that block schedules may result in fewer discipline problems and failures, less time spent on classroom administration, and the opportunity for students to earn more credits with the 4x4 block schedule, a real benefit for students in need of credit recovery (i.e., those who failed academic courses) and/or (Phi Delta Kappa International, Topics & Trends, November 2006, Volume 6, Issue 4).

In *Talent Development* schools, double-blocked schedules were found to be especially useful for freshmen because it allows students to earn more credits per year (i.e., it has a built in safety net for students who fail core academic courses and need to repeat these courses) than other types of scheduling. Traditional scheduling allows for students to attempt fewer courses. Semester-long, intensive "catch-up" courses allow ninth-grade students to have additional support in reading and mathematics, key to staying in school and graduating (Quint, 2006).

Time for Collaboration

The adoption of thematic curriculum provides opportunities for students to engage in subject matter learning that is more relevant and performance-based. When conducted as interdisciplinary learning, student participation in SLC thematic learning may allow learning across disciplines to reinforce one another. However, in order to make thematic curriculum a reality teachers need time and training to plan. Unfortunately, time is not a plentiful resource at many schools. District defined staff norms and contractual restriction often limit opportunities for the entrepreneurial use of time and staff allocation policies in line with SLC principles. Implementing SLCs without changing the master schedule to support common planning time often constrain opportunities for SLC development.

Physical Space

A study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 14 percent of US public schools are overcrowded and eight percent are severely overcrowded. Moreover, schools enrolling mostly minority students are more likely to be overcrowded than schools with less than half minority enrollment (Lee, 2002). Year-round schedules and multiple tracks are commons strategies for addressing these over crowded schools. Given this context, especially in urban areas, for high schools converting to SLCs, creating space that supports autonomy can be an overwhelming challenge. For instance, locating teachers by SLC may not be possible given the facility's configuration. The traditional organization of most high schools into departments (e.g., English, Math, Science) is also usually reflected in the layout of buildings making it difficult to co-locate a team of teachers from multiple disciplines. This is further complicated in over-crowded schools where teachers must sometimes move from classroom to classroom and where students attend on different year-round tracks.

Reform Context in LAUSD

Reforms aimed at expanding SLCs in LAUSD were shaped by decentralization and standards-based instruction reforms begun in the 1990's. Decentralization efforts such as School Based Management (SBM) in 1989 and LEARN reforms in 1993 aimed at providing local schools and parents with greater decision-making authority. In 2001, advocates of greater decentralization reorganized LAUSD into eleven semi-autonomous local districts, reduced to eight local districts beginning in July 2004.

Driven by the standards-based instruction movement and State accountability mandates, LAUSD adopted standards-based instructional reforms. Beginning in 2000, LAUSD developed standards-based instructional guides specifying curricular scope and sequence at each grade level and subject area. LAUSD also adopted the *Principles of Learning* developed by the University of Pittsburgh as a guiding force for assessing teaching practices and student learning. As part of this effort to deepen the alignment of instruction with state content standards, LAUSD also funded schools with literacy and math coaches and prioritized professional development for teachers on standards-based instruction. In addition, LAUSD has implemented a system of periodic (formative) assessments to help teachers differentiate English/Language Arts instruction at the elementary level, as well as in English, Mathematics, and Science at the secondary level. According to its SLC position

paper, these reforms were part of the first stage of developing equity and excellence in LAUSD schools.

Due in part to the focus on standards-based instructional reforms, elementary student achievement has improved over multiple years. Unfortunately, these improvements have not been replicated at the secondary level. Therefore, LAUSD moved into a second stage of the standards-based reform. As stated in LAUSD's position paper on SLCs, the District recognizes that "we cannot reach new heights of equity and excellence while confined by a bureaucracy with a tendency to conserve customs or practices that work only for a small fraction of the student body." Therefore, LAUSD is currently engaged in a variety of reforms to address the size and constraints of large comprehensive high schools, including creating SLCs within existing high schools and establishing new small schools.

Growing research on the potential for SLCs to enact substantive instructional reform at the secondary level combined with the availability of funding for SLCs from the sources such as the U.S. Department of Education and the Gates Foundation prompted LAUSD to develop a list of essential attributes that will guide the implementation of SLCs at both new secondary schools in the district and large, urban schools engaged in transformation efforts. Finalized in Summer 2004, these eight attributes include the following:

1. Unifying Vision
2. SLC Identity
3. Rigorous, Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment
4. Professional Development
5. Equity & Access
6. Personalization
7. Accountability & Distributed Leadership
8. Collaboration, Parent & Community Engagement

The implementation grants received by the 21 comprehensive high schools included in this evaluation can be used to support a variety of SLC structures and strategies. Structures include academies, houses (grouping students in semi-autonomous structures—for instance, freshmen houses), schools-within-schools (with a higher degree of autonomy than a house structure) and magnet programs. Strategies supported by the grant include freshmen transition programs, multi-year groupings, alternative scheduling, adult advocate systems (such as formal mentoring programs) and teacher advisory systems (in which small groups of students are paired with a teacher during an advisory period to support individualized attention and personalization of the counseling function). The specific strategies and structures under development in each of the high schools included in this evaluation are described in more detail in Sections III and IV of this report.

Despite the variety of ways in which the grants can be used to support SLCs, it is expected that SLCs will be available to students "wall-to-wall" by the end of the grant period. In other words, all students must have the opportunity to participate in a SLC. Before proceeding to the evaluation of the structures and strategies that current grantee schools are using to implement SLCs, it is essential to recognize that SLCs have existed in LAUSD at the secondary level for more than two decades. School-within-a-school programs such as magnet schools, academies (including California Partnership academies), and Humanitas programs have provided a *subset* of students with rigorous, personalized, thematic and interdisciplinary instruction. The challenge now is to scale up these existing specialized programs so that all students benefit from participation in SLCs.

Figure 1: Small Learning Communities Graphic Illustration

	Rigor *Standards-based Instruction*	**Relevance** *Student Engagement*	**Relationships** *Personalization*
Structures	Instructional Guides	Thematic Contextualized Learning	Freshman/9th grade house
	Secondary Periodic Assessments	Career Technical Education (CTE)	Advisory periods
	State-adopted materials	Interdisciplinary curricula	Assignment of counselors to SLCs
	Content-specific coaching	Connections to prior knowledge and student background	Looping
	Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)		Adult advocates/mentors
Strategies	Differentiated/Scaffolded teaching	Project-based learning	Student-centered pedagogy
	Research-based instructional strategies	Performance assessment	Culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy
	High level discussions and questioning (Accountable Talk)	Service learning	Student goal setting (Individual Graduation Plans)
	Targeted academic intervention	Work-based learning	Relationship building (field trips, guest speakers, recognition assemblies)
	Culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy	Culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy	Proactive counseling
			Student leadership and enrichment opportunities
Outcomes	High academic expectations and college readiness manifest as increased:	Increased student engagement and retention of knowledge manifest as:	Student connections to school and individual teachers/counselors manifest as:
	CST	Student attendance	Student attendance
	CAHSEE	College/career exposure	Decreased suspensions/expulsions
	College eligibility (A-G completion)	Increased graduation rates/lower dropout rate	Increased graduation rates/lower dropout rate
	EL redesignation	Completion of Individual Graduation Plans (IGP)	Completion of Individual Graduation Plans (IGP)

As shown in **Figure 1** above, SLCs are an "umbrella" for high school reform impacting all three Rs – Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. In the traditional high school, increasing academic rigor has been the primary emphasis of educational reform. Like other districts across California and the nation, standards-based instructional reforms have focused attention on the need for a guaranteed, viable curriculum for all students. LAUSD has developed instructional guides in the academic core areas specifying curricular pacing to address key standards, as well as suggested model lessons and practice assessments. LAUSD has also implemented a system for formative assessments in the core academic areas. These Secondary Periodic Assessments (SPA) are intended to provide teachers with data on student academic progress "along the way" tied to the curriculum taught. Site-based academic content coaches and mandated participation in State-approved professional

development tied to State-adopted texts are additional manifestations of the emphasis accorded to academic rigor in the last 5-7 years.

SLCs aim to augment this emphasis on academic rigor with relevance and relationships so that students are engaged and connected to a rigorous, standards-based instructional program. Curricular relevance is manifest in efforts to ensure that students have opportunities to participate in hands-on, project-based learning that allows them to apply and connect learning within and across academic disciplines. Relevance also means connecting learning to real-life applications that showcase how learning will be applied in career/workplace settings so students understand how and why what they are learning is important beyond high school. Through exposure to contextualized, thematic learning, students are more likely to retain knowledge and skills that they have been taught.

The relationships focus of SLCs addresses directly the need to personalize the high school educational experience so that fewer students are allowed to drift and/or fall through the cracks. Personalization strategies intended to connect students to the staff (teachers, counselors, administrators) within a smaller learning environment so that individual student needs are met. Personalization includes "bonding and branding" activities that provide students with effective transitions into high school and a distinctive educational experience (i.e., how participation in one SLC is different from that received by other students who have chose another SLC) during their high school years. More importantly, however, personalization of instruction means student-centered pedagogy that takes into account student interests, talents, background, and aspirations. Personalization also implies a greater emphasis on individualized counseling and guidance so that all students develop accountability for their own learning and have a concrete plan for high school graduation and beyond that is the frequent focus of student-adult interactions.

In October of 2004, the Los Angeles Board of Education moved further in the direction of supporting the Smaller Learning Communities through the approval of Bulletin 1600. This policy memorandum called for the establishment and development of SLCs across all high schools within the district. Significantly, Bulletin 1600 reiterated support for the eight essential LAUSD attributes and established a formal procedure for complying with the attributes. As outlined in Bulletin 1600, all new and existing secondary schools must submit a proposal to the central SLC committee after which is submitted to the superintendent. This proposal must first contain evidence that school stakeholders have developed a vision for SLCs that meets local needs. Each SLC at a school must submit a request for proposal (RFP) that outlines how the SLC will embody the eight attributes. Second, schools must show evidence that their SLC design has considered the impact of how a multitude of SLCs will co-exist within a larger high school structure through a school-wide impact report. In essence, the Bulletin 1600 approval process is designed to force SLC teams and schools to really think through the changes they intend to implement as part of SLCs. At the time of this report writing, all of the 21-grantee sites included in the evaluation have been approved under this process.

In 2008, the Los Angeles Board of Education went further, passing a resolution on the desirability of converting all comprehensive high schools into Small Schools of no more than 500 students. Existing large schools would be transformed into campuses of multiple Small Schools, to be phased in first among the district's high priority schools commencing in 2010. By 2020, LAUSD "will be transformed into a district containing a portfolio of school options, a preponderance of which are Small Schools."

District support for the implementation of SLCs has been coordinated through the Office of School Redesign. Although primarily a site-level initiative, the implementation of SLCs in the period 2003-2006 included regular meetings with central district staff to participate in professional development on SLC practices throughout the U.S., review local SLC evaluation results, discuss promising practices, and raise questions related to District policies and support. In 2006, LAUSD shifted oversight and supervision of SLCs to the eight local districts within LAUSD. While the Office of School Redesign continues to provide some professional development support and fulfills the compliance accountability and reporting functions associated with the USDE grantees, local districts are primarily responsible for assisting the high schools in their purview in moving toward the eight SLC attributes.

Public *Works*, Inc. Evaluation and Report Organization

As required by the U.S. Department of Education, districts receiving SLC Implementation grants are required to hire a third-party evaluator. In 2003, LAUSD hired Public *Works*, Inc., a 501c(3) corporation headquartered in Pasadena with a wide range of experience conducting evaluations in the area of public education and school reform.

Following this introduction, Part II of this report presents the methodology used to complete the evaluation. Part III profiles the Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 SLC schools, focusing on SLC participation rates and the demographic characteristics of students at these schools. Part IV contains analysis of SLC implementation by the eight LAUSD SLC attributes. Part V provides student and school outcome data on the ten Cohort 5 schools from 2004-05 (baseline prior to the SLC grant) to 2008-09 (after four years of SLC grant implementation); eight Cohort 6 schools from 2005-06 (baseline prior to the SLC grant) to 2008-09 (after three years of SLC grant implementation), and three Cohort 8 schools (baseline prior to the grant) to 2008-09 (after one year of SLC grant implementation). Part VI includes conclusions and recommendations.

PART II—EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation conducted by Public *Works*, Inc. encompasses two primary analytic approaches: qualitative and quantitative in order to assess both improvements in student outcomes and progress with regard to program implementation. The research questions which form the basis for the evaluation focus on the extent to which the implementation of SLCs has…

- Modified the delivery of curriculum and instruction
- Personalized instruction in ways that benefit students
- Improved school climate
- Engaged and involved parents, business, and community members
- Improved student achievement and increased student eligibility and preparation for postsecondary education and careers

In addition, the evaluation examines the kinds of technical assistance and/or support needed to effectively implement SLCs at large, urban high schools. In this way, the evaluation design allows the district and individual schools to use the data collected for the evaluation to improve program implementation during the grant period.

In order to frame the current evaluation, Public *Works*, Inc. worked with LAUSD to develop a set of categories to be used in data collection and to organize the analysis. The categories employed by the evaluation mirror the eight LAUSD attributes, which encompass the areas of importance, contained in both LAUSD's application for SLC funding and research-based components found to be critical for early implementers of SLCs.

Qualitative Evaluation Approach

Three primary data collection methodologies were used for the analysis contained in the qualitative section (Section IV) of the report:

1. A review of the literature related to SLC implementation;
2. Staff and student surveys; and
3. Site visits to each high school.

Literature Review

The review of literature conducted for this evaluation examined several dimensions of the implementation of SLCs including: the rationale and context for high school reform, a summary of the bodies of research supporting SLCs as a reform strategy, a typology of strategies to implement SLCs and lessons learned from early implementers. Public *Works*, Inc. prepared an extensive bibliography for the literature review, which is included as **Appendix B**.

Surveys

Public *Works*, Inc. developed four surveys of key stakeholders for this evaluation, one for school staff and three for students. Each school was provided with the results of the surveys individually and for the group of 21 schools funded by the grant. These surveys will be administered annually as part of the evaluation. The staff and student survey results summarized across the 21 high schools are contained in **Appendix C**. More detailed results by cohort are available at www.publicworksinc.org.

Staff Survey.

The staff survey was developed to ask all school staff about their knowledge and involvement in the SLC initiative at their school. The survey provides information about the percentage of school staff self-reporting that they are currently involved in planning or assigned to an SLC and opinions about various aspects of implementation at their school. Staff surveys (teachers, counselors, and administrators) were administered to staff at the 21 high schools between March and June 2009. In order to calculate a survey response rate, Public *Works*, Inc. used the California Department of Education (CDE) reported number of certificated staff to estimate the number of staff at each school.

Table 2: Staff Survey Response Rates, Spring 2009

High School	N of Certificated Staff*	N of Completed Surveys**	Response Rate
Cohort 5			
Canoga Park	101	81	80%
Grant	137	122	89%
Huntington Park	223	125	56%
Lincoln	151	121	80%
Los Angeles	199	137	69%
Manual Arts	198	99	50%
Marshall	213	175	82%
San Pedro	166	110	66%
Sylmar	192	140	73%
Washington Prep	162	92	57%
Cohort 6			
Bell	235	181	77%
Chatsworth	147	101	69%
Franklin	147	95	65%
Monroe	161	137	85%
Poly	197	156	79%
Roosevelt	275	208	76%
Van Nuys	149	97	65%
Westchester	94	96	102%
Cohort 8			
Fairfax	135	101	75%
Reseda	126	98	78%
South Gate	161	149	93%
Total/Average	**3,569/170**	**2,621/125**	**75%**

*Source: California Department of Education 2008-09

**Respondents were primarily classroom teachers (85%), followed by counselors (7%), administrators (3%), teaching assistants (3%), and other classified (2%).

In order to ensure a high response rate, the surveys were administered in several ways including at faculty meetings where all staff was present, during department meetings and through individual follow up completed by the schools' designated SLC coordinator, School Improvement Facilitator (SIF), or Assistant Principal. Table 2 (above) displays the response rate for each school based on the number of completed surveys. Overall, Public *Works*, Inc. achieved an average response rate of 75%.

Table 3: % Staff Self-Reporting Assignment to SLC by Type (N=2,624)[6], Spring 2009

High School	Academy/ Pathway	House	Magnet	Other	Not Assigned
Cohort 5					
Canoga Park	30%	54%	1%	13%	16%
Grant	59%	17%	14%	12%	5%
Huntington Park	85%	4%	0%	6%	7%
Lincoln	74%	3%	9%	18%	2%
Los Angeles	59%	17%	14%	12%	5%
Manual Arts	67%	5%	7%	13%	3%
Marshall	72%	4%	9%	14%	7%
San Pedro	43%	42%	10%	3%	1%
Sylmar	55%	21%	14%	11%	12%
Washington Prep	78%	2%	4%	13%	5%
Cohort 5 Average	**62%**	**17%**	**8%**	**12%**	**6%**
Cohort 6					
Bell	58%	32%	1%	8%	2%
Chatsworth	76%	22%	0%	7%	7%
Franklin	90%	0%	0%	7%	3%
Monroe	64%	20%	16%	2%	2%
Poly	44%	35%	8%	13%	6%
Roosevelt	80%	3%	7%	12%	9%
Van Nuys	69%	3%	22%	9%	18%
Westchester	53%	19%	19%	12%	11%
Cohort 6 Average	**67%**	**19%**	**12%**	**9%**	**7%**
Cohort 8					
Fairfax	86%	4%	0%	11%	2%
Reseda	59%	35%	6%	7%	13%
South Gate	80%	0%	0%	6%	19%
Cohort 8 Average	**75%**	**13%**	**2%**	**8%**	**11%**
Total/Average	**68%**	**16%**	**8%**	**10%**	**7%**

Based on self-reported survey results, a vast majority (93%) of staff selected or was assigned to a SLC across all cohorts.[7] Cohort 6 was slightly higher than Cohort 5 (94% compared to 93%). Cohort 8 (88%), in its first year of implementation lagged behind current grantee cohorts in the percentage self-reporting affiliation with a SLC. Staff survey respondents were also asked to self-identify their SLC affiliation by checking from a list of SLC options (see Table 3 above). The vast majority of respondents (84%) stated that they were in either

[6] Respondents could check multiple options.
[7] This average masks important differences and significant variation at individual schools (see Table 3).

an academy/career pathway or house structure. Cohort 8 had the highest percentage of staff listed as not being assigned to a SLC (11%).

The analysis of the staff survey included overall frequencies and area means as well as results compiled for each school. In addition, Public *Works,* Inc. examined cross-tabulations of results by the number of years of teaching and by self-reported assignment to SLC. A chi-square test was performed on the cross-tabulations in order to determine statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Student Surveys.

In order to provide an assessment of student opinions and experiences in high school, students were surveyed with regard to their expectations for learning, classroom instruction, counseling and guidance, and personalization. Students were also asked to identify whether or not they participated in a SLC, as well as participation in activities such as after-school programs, college courses, internships and the like. The survey concluded with demographic questions including grade, gender, race-ethnicity, highest-level math class and plans after graduation in order to track student responses to SLC implementation over time.

Table 4: Student Survey Response Rates, Spring 2009

High School	10th Grade Enrollment*	Completed Surveys	Response Rate	12th Grade Enrollment*	Completed Surveys	Response Rate
Cohort 5						
Canoga Park	340	314	92%	253	277	109%
Grant	474	475	100%	443	372	84%
Huntington Park	612	478	78%	435	343	79%
Lincoln	687	435	63%	441	266	60%
Los Angeles	465	387	83%	317	248	78%
Manual Arts	509	285	56%	389	317	81%
Marshall	577	516	89%	546	489	90%
San Pedro	676	490	72%	414	351	85%
Sylmar	735	768	104%	594	562	95%
Washington Prep	389	294	76%	342	294	86%
Cohort 6						
Bell	779	524	67%	560	461	82%
Chatsworth	798	658	82%	640	523	82%
Franklin	549	404	74%	376	258	69%
Monroe	688	537	78%	544	437	80%
Poly	586	411	70%	651	446	69%
Roosevelt	722	511	71%	632	275	44%
Van Nuys	744	623	84%	538	434	81%
Westchester	287	275	96%	300	202	67%
Cohort 8						
Fairfax	669	308	46%	405	243	60%
Reseda	329	350	106%	382	345	90%
South Gate	799	705	88%	631	432	68%
Total/Average	**12,414/ 591**	**9,748/ 464**	**80%**	**9,833/ 468**	**7,575/ 361**	**78%**

*Source: grantee school site per report AT-14.

Public *Works*, Inc. administered the surveys to all 10th and 12th graders. Schools provided the master schedule for selected Social Studies courses in order to calculate the actual number of students enrolled. Surveys were dropped off and schools were given several weeks to administer and return completed surveys between March and June 2008. Overall, Public *Works*, Inc. achieved an average 80% response rate for sophomores and a median response rate of 78% for seniors (see Table 4 above).

Graduate Student Follow-Up.

In order to comply with federal reporting requirements for the SLC grants, Public *Works* also conducted follow-up phone interviews with graduates from the 21-grantee sites to measure the actual postsecondary outcomes of students.

Table 5: Graduate Follow-up Survey Response Rates

High School	# of Phone Surveys Completed	# of Graduate Surveys	Response Rate
Cohort 5			
Canoga Park	103	137	75%
Grant	127	184	69%
Huntington Park	109	192	58%
Lincoln	69	117	59%
Los Angeles	111	157	71%
Manual Arts	164	241	68%
Marshall	296	407	73%
San Pedro	100	172	58%
Sylmar	228	333	68%
Washington Prep	123	214	57%
Cohort 6			
Bell	114	204	56%
Chatsworth	151	307	49%
Franklin	128	211	61%
Monroe	160	274	58%
Poly	139	218	64%
Roosevelt	130	199	65%
Van Nuys	178	274	65%
Westchester	59	93	63%
Cohort 8			
Fairfax	112	159	70%
Reseda	182	287	63%
South Gate	126	181	70%
Total/Average	**2,909/139**	**4,561/217**	**64%**

Starting in September 2009[11], surveys were administered to seniors who provided contact information during the Spring 2009 survey administration.[8] The survey student opinions related to student activities since high school, the value of student experiences in high school for later life, and future plans of graduates not currently enrolled in postsecondary

[11] Follow-up phone surveys were conducted September 2009 through December 2009.

[8] Across all schools, total of 74% of the seniors provided contact information on their 12th grade survey administered in Spring 2009. Of these, the evaluation successfully contacted and obtained follow-up surveys for 64%.

education after high school. As shown in Table 5 above, the average response rate across the 21 high schools was about 64% (2,909 out of 4,561total surveys).

Site Visits

In order to provide qualitative information regarding the implementation of SLCs at the school level, Public *Works*, Inc. conducted site visits to each of the 21 schools in Cohorts 5, 6, and 8. The site visit consisted primarily of interviews and focus groups of key administrators, staff and students at the school. In order to speak with a range of school stakeholders, Public *Works*, Inc. requested that the following categories be used in the development of the agenda for the site visit:

- √ SLC Grant Coordinator/Administrator
- √ Principal
- √ Teachers involved in SLCs
- √ Teachers not involved in SLCs
- √ Counselors
- √ 9th thru 12th graders participating in SLCs
- √ 9th thru 12th graders not participating in SLCs
- √ SLC Advisory Committee or Team

To prepare for the site visit, Public *Works*, Inc. requested that each school complete an inventory of current and planned SLCs and to provide the school's current Master Schedule. In addition, Public *Works*, Inc. prepared a demographic and data profile of each school in order to understand the school's enrollment and staffing statistics. Public *Works*, Inc. held a training for the site visit team prior to the site visits, which included a review of the overall goals for the site visits, background information, a review of the protocols developed specifically for the site visits, and qualitative methods to be used.

In order to analyze and summarize the data collected during the site visit for each school site, Public *Works*, Inc. used an implementation checklist prepared specifically for this evaluation. Survey and site visit information was summarized in the checklists completed for each site (see **Appendix D**). The Site Visit Checklist provides a means to measure an overall average rating of the status of implementation for individual areas within the initiative. The eight areas rated on the checklist for the SLC grants included:

1. Unifying Vision
2. SLC Identity
3. Rigorous, Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment
4. Equity & Access
5. Personalization
6. Accountability & Distributed Leadership
7. Collaboration, Parent & Community Engagement
8. Professional Development

The following rating scale was used to provide a gauge of the level of implementation of individual components of small learning communities based on survey results and site visits. The scale incorporates a rubric of both effectiveness of implementation and coverage of the school community, which is broadly defined as students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community partners as appropriate to the particular strategy.

SLC Checklist Rating Scale

1=No Evidence of Implementation. Strategies have not been developed; few or no school community members involved and/or impacted; planning to take place in the future.

2=Planning for Implementation. Strategies are in the planning stages; some or a few school community members are involved in planning; few or no school community members impacted.

3=Early Implementation. Strategies are moving beyond planning to implementation; school community members are being recruited for implementation and participation; some school community members impacted.

4=Developmental Implementation. Strategies have moved into implementation; implementation at the early developmental stages; impact on school community is growing.

5=Solid Implementation. Strategies are in solid implementation stage; impact on participants is evident but continues to be fine-tuned.

6=Full Implementation. Strategies are fully implemented; 100% of target school community is participating and impact is positive.

Quantitative Data Measures and Sources

In order to evaluate the grantee schools on variety of objective indicators, Public *Works*, Inc. collects the following student-level quantitative data from LAUSD for 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09.

Demographic Data

- Student identification number
- Gender (M/F)
- Grade Level (by credits accumulated and chronological age)
- Date of birth (if applicable)
- Ethnicity
- Free/Reduced Meal eligibility or National School Lunch Program (Yes or No)
- Track (if applicable)
- Special Education (Yes or No)
- Gifted and Talented/GATE (Yes or No)
- English Language proficiency (EO, IFEP, EL, RFEP)
- ID 01 SLC Codes from Field 140[9]

Achievement data

- Number of days attended and days enrolled
- California High School Exit Exam Status (Pass/Fail) and Scaled Scores in English/Language Arts & Mathematics[10]

[9] This field denotes which kind of SLC as student is enrolled in.

- California Standards Test (scaled scores and proficiency levels) English Language Arts and Mathematics[11]
- Graduation status (graduation date)

In addition, the evaluation utilized data available at the school-level from the California Department of Education including:

- Adjusted 1-year and 4-year dropout rates[12];
- Graduation rates[13]; and,
- Percentage of graduates meeting UC/CSU eligibility.[14]

The quantitative section of the report focuses documents the changes in student outcomes from the baseline year of baseline 2004-05 and year four (2008-09) for Cohort 5 schools; baseline 2005-06 and year three (2008-09) for Cohort 6 schools; and baseline 2007-08 and year one (2008-09) for Cohort 6 schools;

For all indicators, this report compares Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools to previous USDE SLC grantees (Cohort 3 and Cohort 4), as well as all "other" LAUSD comprehensive high schools that have not received a USDE grant in cohorts 3-6. The data under analysis excluded: 1) magnet schools and programs and 2) small, autonomous schools under 500 students. For a complete list of schools included in analyses, please consult **Appendix F**.

The next section of the report profiles the demographic characteristics and school performance of the 21 schools included in the evaluation. In addition, this section of the report describes the level of SLC participation and the SLC structures and strategies implemented at the Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools in 2008-09.

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[10] Beginning in 2005-06, no student will receive a public high school diploma without passing the English/Language Arts and Mathematics portions of CAHSEE. The primary purpose of CAHSEE is to significantly improve achievement in public high schools and to ensure that students graduate with grade level competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students begin taking CAHSEE in the 10th grade and have until the 12th grade to pass the exam. High school students must score a 350 or higher in both subject areas to pass CAHSEE. For this study, Public *Works*, Inc. used both the passing score of 350, as well as more rigorous cut scores established by CDE to meet NCLB proficiency requirements (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress). These cut scores more accurately reflect CST performance levels and signify 10th grade achievement of proficiency in English/Language Arts and Mathematics for both years analyzed.

[11] The CST is administered every Spring to LAUSD students and scored as part of the State's Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR). The purpose of the CST is to assess students' performance in relation to the California Academic Content Standards. These standards, adopted by the State Board of Education, are grade and content specific and outline what students in California are expected to know and be able to do. Based on their performance, students are assigned one of the following five proficiency levels: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic and Far Below Basic. A student who performs at or above the Proficient level is considered to have met the State standards.

[12] Data on this indicator was "adjusted" for the first time in 2006-07 to reflect more accurate tracking of the number of students at high schools over time.
[13] Based on the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) definition required for reporting under the No Child Left Behind Act.
[14] This indicator reflects the proportion of 12th grade graduates who complete the A-G sequence of courses, which lead to eligibility at public, four-year colleges and universities in California.

PART III—PROFILE OF SCHOOLS

This section of the report describes the school and student characteristics of the Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools. In addition, this section documents SLC enrollment and describes the SLC structures and strategies in place in 2008-09.

Staffing Characteristics

As shown in Table 6 below, the typical LAUSD high school had an average of 149 certificated staff members in 2008-09. An average of 96% of the faculty were fully-credentialed in 2008-09, slightly below the LAUSD average. Teachers meeting NCLB definition of "high-quality teachers" (i.e., credentialed in subject area teaching) taught 81% of core academic courses. In terms of teacher experience, 14% of the teachers were first or second year teachers, approximately equal or below the LAUSD average.

Table 6: Characteristics of Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 Schools (2008-09)

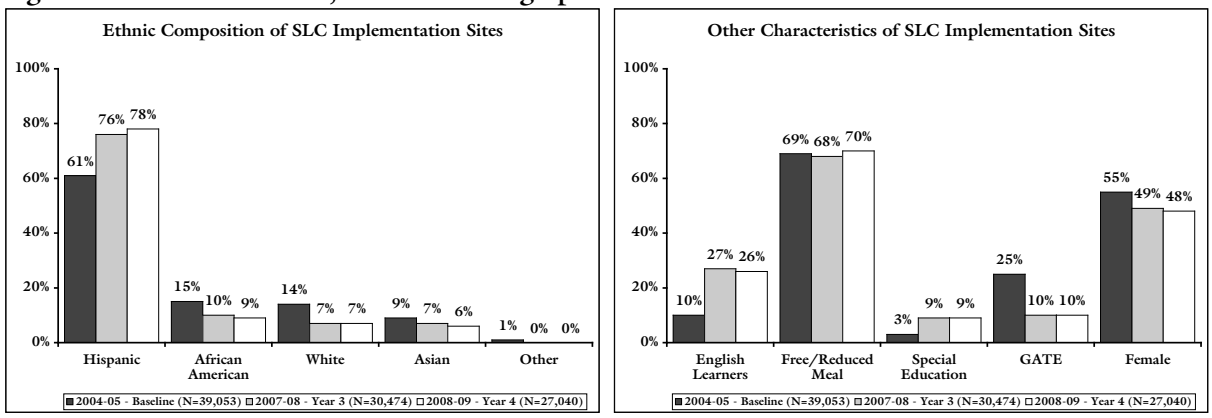
	Student Enrollment	Total Certified Staff	% Fully Credentialed Teachers	% Core Taught by NCLB Compliant Teachers*	% 1st & 2nd Year Teachers
Cohort 5					
Canoga Park	1,872	101	94%	74%	14%
Grant	2,632	137	97%	79%	9%
Huntington Park	4,251	223	96%	88%	18%
Lincoln	2,760	151	98%	86%	13%
Los Angeles	3,170	199	97%	85%	11%
Manual Arts	3,498	198	95%	68%	18%
Marshall	3,823	213	99%	85%	3%
San Pedro	3,415	166	98%	82%	8%
Sylmar	3,664	192	99%	83%	16%
Washington Prep	2,384	162	92%	70%	26%
Cohort 5 Average	***3,147***	***174***	***97%***	***80%***	***14%***
Cohort 6					
Bell	4461	235	96%	81%	14%
Chatsworth	3223	147	98%	83%	9%
Franklin	2646	147	98%	79%	3%
Monroe	2905	161	97%	79%	18%
Poly	4312	197	97%	86%	8%
Roosevelt	4630	275	97%	80%	16%
Van Nuys	3044	149	97%	78%	7%
Westchester	1808	94	99%	75%	10%
Cohort 6 Average	***3,379***	***176***	***97%***	***80%***	***11%***
Cohort 8					
Fairfax	2668	135	97%	91%	4%
Reseda	2283	126	97%	84%	6%
South Gate	3377	161	99%	74%	25%
Cohort 8 Average	***2,276***	***141***	***98%***	***83%***	***12%***
LAUSD Average	***150,498/ 2,840***	***7,913/ 149***	***5,071/ 96%***	***4,213/ 81%***	***748/ 14%***

Source; California Department of Education
* 2007-08 data; [2008-09 not available]

Student Demographic Characteristics

In 2008-09, an average of 3,147 students enrolled at Cohort 5 were predominantly Hispanic/Latino (78%), followed by African Americans (9%), White (7%), and Asian (6%) (see Figure 2). Of these students, 70% were eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) also known as Free/Reduced Meals program. More than one-in-four (26%) were English Learners (EL), with 9% Special Education and 10% in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs.

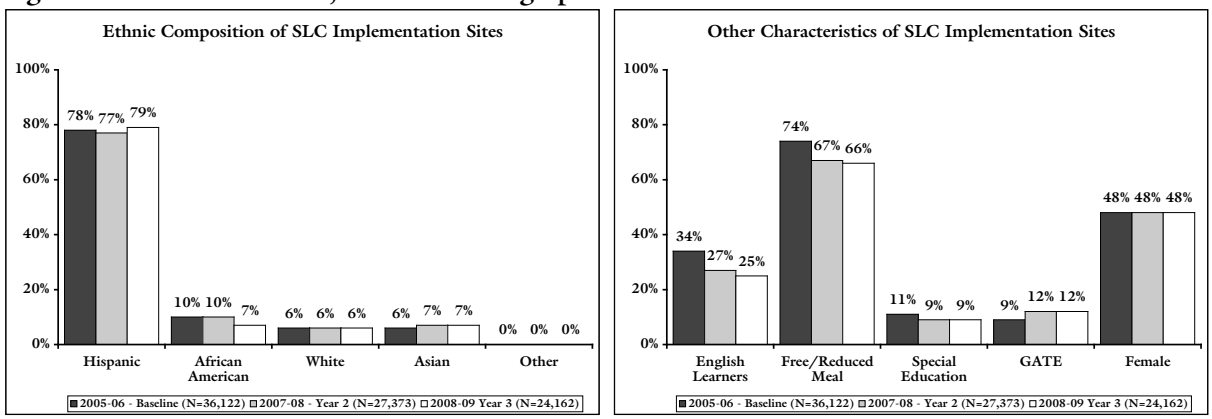
Figure 2: Cohort 5 Schools, Student Demographic Characteristics



Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

As shown in Figure 3, the demographic characteristics of the 3,379 students average at Cohort 6 schools were nearly identical. Students enrolled at Cohort 6 were predominantly Hispanic/Latino (79%), followed by African Americans (7%), Asian (7%), and White (6%). Of these students, two-thirds (66%) were eligible for the NSLP. One-in-four (25%) were EL, with 9% in Special Education and 12% in the GATE program.

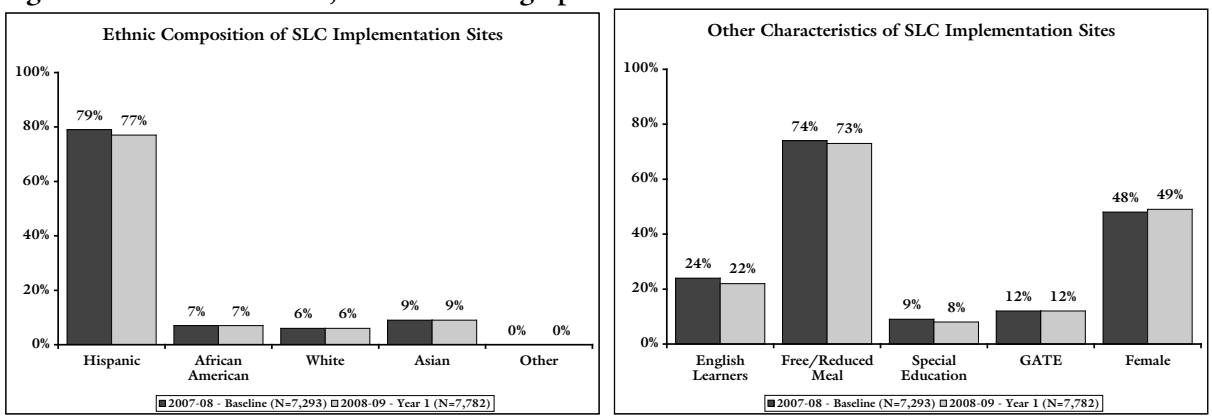
Figure 3: Cohort 6 Schools, Student Demographic Characteristics



Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Figure 4 displays the characteristics of the 2,276 students average enrolled at Cohort 8 schools in 2008-09. Again, these students were primarily Hispanic/Latino (77%), with 9% Asian, 7% African American, and 6% White. Most (73%) qualified for NSLP, with 22% EL, 8% Special Education, and 12% GATE.

Figure 4: Cohort 8 Schools, Student Demographic Characteristics

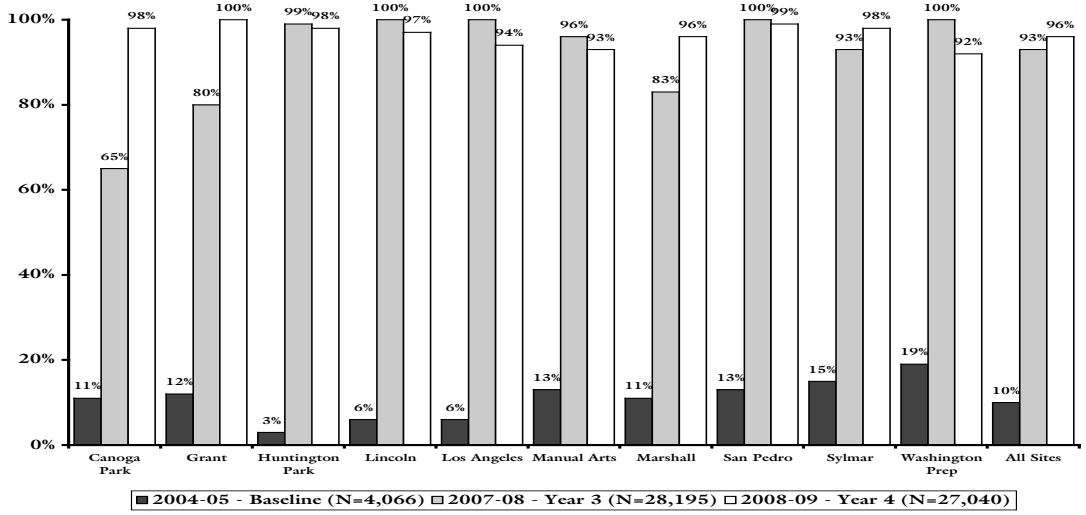


Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

SLC Participation

Of the 39,053 students at Cohort 5 schools at baseline (2004-05), 10% (4,066 students) were identified as SLC participants at the ten Cohort 5 schools.[15] By Year 2 (2006-07), the percentage of students assigned to a SLC had grown to 59% (21,887 students) as most 9th and 10th graders were enrolled in a SLC. In 2007-08 (Year 3), nearly all (93%, or 28,195) of students at Cohort 5 schools were in a SLC. In 2008-09, the proportion of students in SLCs increased slightly to 96% of all students. This increase can be seen visually in Figure 5 below. Detailed numbers illustrating the SLCs developed and/or expanded at these schools may be found in **Appendix E**.

Figure 5: Cohort 5 Schools, SLC Participation of Students by Year



Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

[15] This report defines SLC as students who share the same teachers and courses for at least 50% of the time (i.e., at least three high school courses, two of which must be core academic courses per term). Using this definition, at baseline, SLC enrollment was confined to magnet programs and defined academy programs.

The growth in SLC enrollment at Cohort 5 schools was most pronounced in 9th grade. As shown in Table 7 below, 9th grade enrollment in SLCs grew from 10% at baseline to nearly all freshmen in Year 3. Similarly, SLC enrollment grew considerably among 10th and 11th grade students in Year 3. By Year 4 of the grant, essentially all students 9-12 were in a SLC.

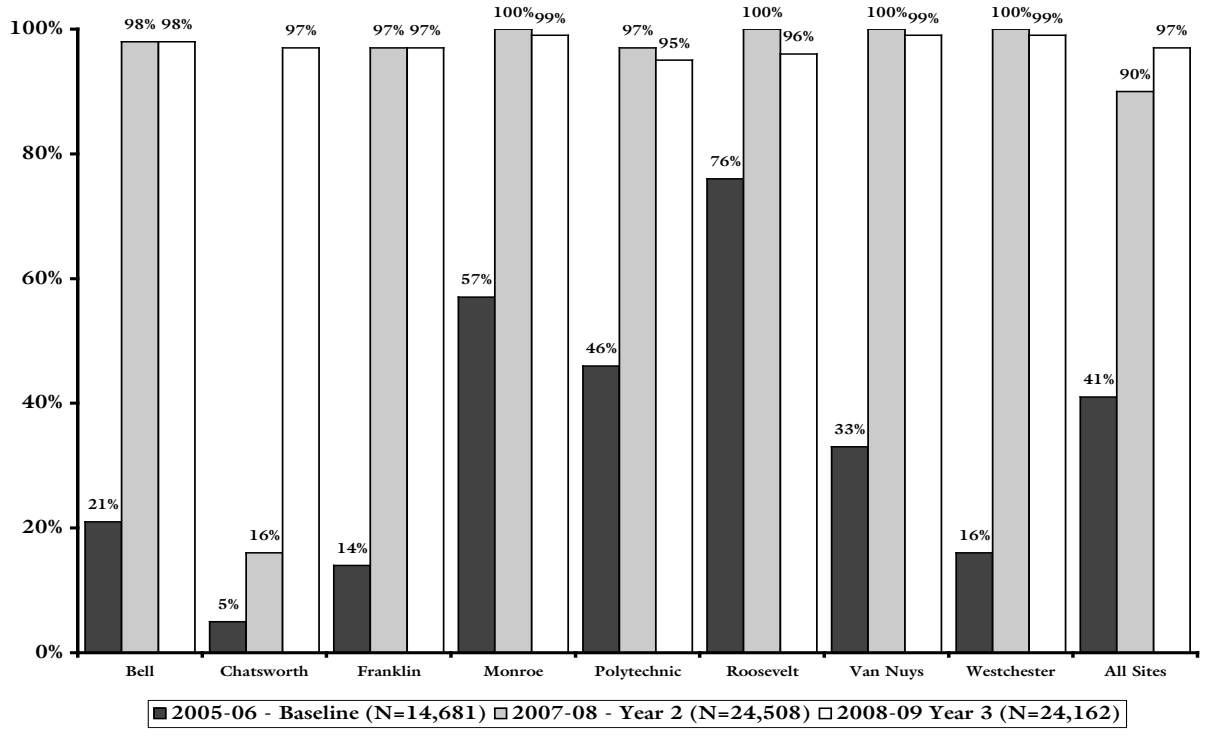
Table 7: Cohort 5 - SLC and Non-SLC Student Enrollment by Grade (% in SLC)

Grade Level	Enrolled in SLC			Not Enrolled in SLC		
	Baseline (N=4,066)	Year 3 (N=28,195)	Year 4 (N=27,040)	Baseline (N=34,987)	Year 3 (N=2,279)	Year 4 (N=987)
9th Grade	1,522 (10%)	10,132 (98%)	9,375 (96%)	13,116 (90%)	180 (2%)	439 (4%)
10th Grade	1,273 (13%)	7,400 (94%)	6,897 (97%)	8,873 (87%)	462 (6%)	229 (3%)
11th Grade	1,109 (14%)	5,700 (93%)	5,353 (97%)	6,680 (86%)	424 (7%)	183 (3%)
12th Grade	861 (13%)	4,963 (80%)	5,415 (98%)	5,619 (87%)	1,213 (20%)	136 (2%)
Total	**4,066 (10%)**	**28,195 (93%)**	**27,040 (96%)**	**34,987 (90%)**	**2,279 (7%)**	**987 (4%)**

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

At baseline (2005-06), the eight Cohort 6 schools enrolled 41% (14,681 students) in SLCs. The large proportion of SLC students in Cohort 6 is attributable to the fact that three schools were prior grantees from Cohort 3 (Monroe, Polytechnic, and Roosevelt), and a school with three large magnet programs (Van Nuys). By 2007-08 (Year 2), nearly all (90%, or 24,508) of students at Cohort 6 schools were in a SLC. SLC participation continued to increase to 97% (24,162) in 2008-09. This increase can be seen visually in Figure 6 below. Detailed numbers illustrating the SLCs developed and/or expanded at these schools may be found in **Appendix E**.

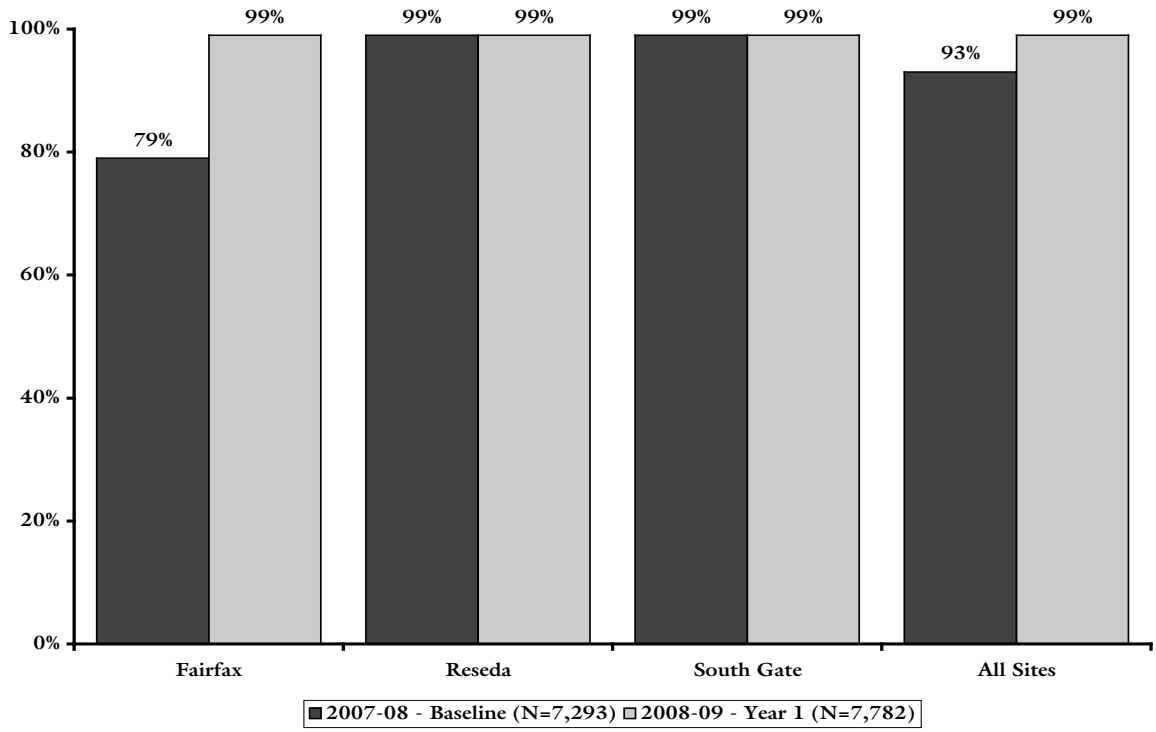
Figure 6: Cohort 6 Schools, SLC Participation of Students by Year



Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

As shown in Figure 7 below, the proportion of students enrolled in a SLC among Cohort 8 schools was considerably higher (93%) at baseline (2007-08). This reflected the fact that these schools were implementing the district policy on SLCs (Bulletin 1600) prior to receipt of a USDE SLC implementation grant. In 2008-09, this proportion grew to 99% of students. Detailed numbers illustrating the SLCs developed and/or expanded at these schools may be found in **Appendix E**.

Figure 7: Cohort 8 Schools, SLC Participation of Students by Year



Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

The growth in SLC enrollment can also be seen in Table 8, which shows the proportion of students at each grade level enrolled in a SLC. By the end of Year 2 (2007-08), the majority of 9th (92%), 89% of 10th graders and 11th (88%) graders were in a SLC. In 2008-09, (year 3) nearly all students at all grade levels were enrolled in a SLC.

Table 8: Cohort 6 - SLC and Non-SLC Student Enrollment by Grade (% in SLC)

	Enrolled in SLC			Not Enrolled in SLC		
Grade Level	Baseline (N=14,681)	Year 2 (N=24,508)	Year 3 (N=24,162)	Baseline (N=21,441)	Year 2 (N=2,865)	Year 3 (N=651)
9th Grade	6,185 (47%)	8,290 (92%)	8,298 (98%)	7,105 (53%)	730 (8%)	161 (2%)
10th Grade	4,286 (45%)	6,096 (89%)	6,220 (98%)	5,248 (55%)	775 (11%)	141 (2%)
11th Grade	2,418 (34%)	4,993 (88%)	4,547 (95%)	4,647 (66%)	656 (12%)	257 (5%)
12th Grade	1,792 (29%)	5,129 (88%)	5,097 (98%)	4,441 (71%)	704 (12%)	92 (2%)
Total	**14,681 (41%)**	**28,195 (93%)**	**24,162 (97%)**	**21,441 (59%)**	**2,865 (10%)**	**651 (3%)**

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Cohort 8, unlike the other cohorts, had a greater degree of clarity regarding how SLC implementation would occur at their sites. Prior to the grant, the schools were implementing SLCs per the Bulletin 1600 directive declaring that all existing LAUSD high

schools would convert to Small Learning Communities, and new schools would be designed with contiguous space in order to facilitate SLC implementation. As shown in Table 9 (see below), all Cohort 8 students were essentially assigned to a SLC in their baseline year. Grades nine through eleven were fully impact by SLC in the baseline year, while nearly three-quarters of the seniors were impacted by SLC as well. By Year 1 of the grant, all grade levels were equally impacted.

Table 9: Cohort 8 - SLC and Non-SLC Student Enrollment by Grade (% in SLC)

Grade Level	Enrolled in SLC		Not Enrolled in SLC	
	Baseline (N=7,293)	Year 1 (N=7,782)	Baseline (N=551)	Year 1 (N=88)
9th Grade	2596 (99%)	2500 (98%)	29 (1%)	50 (2%)
10th Grade	1780 (99%)	1905 (99%)	20 (1%)	11 (1%)
11th Grade	1651 (100%)	1641 (99%)	7 (0%)	16 (1%)
12th Grade	1266 (72%)	1736 (99%)	495 (28%)	11 (1%)
Total	**7,293 (93%)**	**7,782 (99%)**	**551 (7%)**	**88(1%)**

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

SLC Structures and Strategies

The structures and strategies that schools have implemented as part of their SLC design vary by school (see Table 10 below). In general, sites are employing one of two models. The first model involves all 9th grade students in a house or transitional freshman structure. These students then matriculate into thematically organized SLCs in grades 10-12. Twelve schools are using this first model. The second model, used in the other nine schools, involves students in SLCs in vertical 9-12 SLC structures. Because students are programmed directly into a SLC upon entrance to high school, this model necessitates proactive information dissemination and recruitment practices with feeder middle schools. This second model continues the legacy of pre-existing SLCs such as magnet and career academy programs, which have always been organized on a 9-12 basis.

All of the Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools have created or expanded SLCs with a career pathway focus. These SLCs are not narrow job training; rather, they provide students with exposure to a broad industry/career sectors, emphasizing educational preparation and real-life applications of learning connections which allow students to explore whether or not they would like to pursue postsecondary education or training in this area. Career pathway SLCs at grantee schools included a wide range of industry sectors including (but not limited to) health care, business & finance, technology & engineering, public education, public service/law/government, visual and performing arts, media & communications, law enforcement & criminal justice, etc. For a complete listing of SLCs by school, please consult **Appendix E**.

Seventeen of the twenty-one Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools have themed SLCs such as social justice, math/science, Humanitas, global studies, international studies, environment studies, and leadership. These SLCs have an overarching interdisciplinary theme, albeit one that does not fit neatly into a career pathway. In addition, seventeen of the twenty-one schools have either a magnet program and/or SLCs that explicitly reference a college preparation orientation. Many of the magnet programs have a career pathway theme (marine science, communications & media, music and performing arts, medicine, aerospace, law enforcement, transportation, etc.), while others reflect an academic orientation (e.g., math/science/technology, etc.). The so-called college preparatory SLCs

suggest a more general educational pathway, but one clearly tied to postsecondary education.

Table 10: SLC Structures and Strategies, 2008-09

	% SLC	Freshmen House/ Academy	Advisory Period	Career Pathway SLC	Other Themed SLC	Magnet Program or College Prep SLC	Common Planning by SLC
Cohort 5							
Canoga Park	98%	●	◗	●	○	●	●
Grant	100%	●	◗	●	●	●	○
Huntington Park	98%	○	○	●	●	○	◗
Lincoln	97%	○	◗	●	●	●	○
Los Angeles	94%	●	◗	●	●	●	○
Manual Arts	93%	○	○	●	●	●	○
Marshall	96%	○	○	●	●	●	○
San Pedro	99%	○	○	●	●	●	○
Sylmar	98%	●	○	●	●	●	○
Washington Prep	92%	○	○	●	●	●	○
Cohort 6							
Bell	98%	●	◗	●	●	○	○
Chatsworth	97%	●	○	●	●	○	○
Franklin	97%	○	◗	●	○	●	○
Monroe	100%	●	●	●	○	●	●
Polytechnic	95%	●	●	●	●	●	○
Roosevelt	96%	○	○	●	●	○	○
Van Nuys	99%	●	◗	●	●	●	○
Westchester	99%	●	○	●	●	●	○
Cohort 8							
Fairfax	99%	○	○	●	●	●	○
Reseda	99%	●	○	●	●	●	○
South Gate	99%	○	○	●	●	●	◗

Source: Public Works, Inc. evaluation site visits and school-provided documentation

● = Complete ◗ = Partial ○ = Not occurring

Only a small number of schools employed the use of an advisory period to enhance personalization. Advisory is a set aside time where students meet with a teacher or other school staff member. The content of the advisory varies, with schools using advisory for grade checks, postsecondary planning, CAHSEE preparation, Socratic Seminars, discussion of current events, etc. Regardless of the exact nature of the advisory activities, the overriding goal is to connect an adult with students in a non-academic setting. Ideally, the advisory teacher stays with or "loops" with students as they move through high school, serving as at least one adult on campus who knows the student well and can advocate on their behalf. As shown in Table 10 above, only two schools have implemented advisory for all grades 9-12, with another seven schools using advisory at some (typically 9th and/or 10th grade) but not all grade levels.

Only two schools had reorganized their master to allow a common conference/prep period for teachers by SLC. Another three schools did this for some (typically 1-2 SLCs) but not all SLCs. Embedding a common conference into the master schedule sends a powerful message to staff about the importance of coordination of teaching and learning within SLC teams, as well as providing regular opportunities for student-centered collaboration.

Part IV – Status of SLC Implementation by Attribute Area

This section of the report focuses on the status of SLC implementation, presenting an average score/rating (scale 1-6) for the Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools in terms of the eight LAUSD attributes. It is critical to note that the evaluation conducted by Public Works, Inc. used the LAUSD attributes to benchmark what a fully implemented high school organized around SLCs for all students would look like in each area. The evaluation was not intended to rate or score individual SLCs within a high school. Where appropriate, examples of innovative strategies or approaches employed by individual schools are described to illustrate the variety of approaches and to share information on best and promising practices.

Area 1: Unifying Vision

Evaluation Benchmark: *A shared vision created by a group of educators, support staff, students, parents and community who comprise the school learning community who assume responsibility for the learning of every student through a distinctive and focused standards-based curriculum.*

Average Rating:

▼3.1 (Cohort 5)
▼3.9 (Cohort 6)
▼3.3 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

Comprehensive high schools undergoing a conversion to SLCs must initially develop a shared vision for change that allows for the development of individual SLCs with unique identities and autonomy in various aspects of decision-making. For these new structures to take hold during the SLC conversion process, high school staff, administrators, students and parents must understand the reasons for change and the direction that the school is headed. As shown in the rating above, Cohort 6 schools are furthest along in creating unifying vision for SLCs (developmental implementation). Cohort 8 posted an impressive rating (early implementation) after only one year of SLC implementation under the USDE grant with Cohort 5 displaying the least progress (also at the early implementation stage) on this benchmark despite the longest tenure (four years) under the grant.

Establishing and Revising Vision for SLC Restructuring

By identifying eight attributes required for SLCs, Bulletin 1600 forced schools to consider the wide array of reforms falling under the "umbrella" of SLCs. Nonetheless, schools differed widely in how they developed individual SLC proposals and the school-wide impact report required under Bulletin 1600. Some schools responded by creating subcommittee or SLC groups responsible for crafting a school-wide SLC vision and designing an SLC structure based on the eight attributes. At other schools, each SLC was charged with the task of submitting a document in compliance with Bulletin 1600 with a smaller group working on the school-wide impact report. In a few schools, a small team

primarily drawn from school administrators and out-of-classroom personnel responded to Bulletin 1600 with little faculty input.

Stakeholders described several external forces as the major impetus for converting to SLCs. These included LAUSD's Board Resolution on SLCs (Bulletin 1600),[16] other district mandates related to lowering dropout rates and closing achievement gaps, Program Improvement (PI) requirements under No Child Left Behind,[17] and pressure from local community organizations to improve student achievement and programmatic offerings for students.

Over time, however, school staffs have begun to develop more compelling reasons to restructure their high schools that reflect their particular needs and school context. Nonetheless, interviews with the stakeholders in schools suggest that schools were not entirely clear about how SLCs would impact school performance. While stakeholders at more than half of these schools were aware of the mandate to involve all students in restructuring efforts (i.e., "wall to wall" conversion to SLCs), few could articulate the purpose of this restructuring effort beyond a general desire for personalization (Cohort 5 especially) or part of the overall push for increased student achievement (more likely in Cohort 6 schools).

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Collaboration Toward a Shared School Vision: At **Los Angeles High School**, significant strides were made to inform staff about the vision and purpose of SLCs. Leadership retreats involved staff in looking at the "big picture" of high school restructuring. Collaborative discussions led by the School Improvement Facilitator helped achieve consensus on LAHS has made a concerted effort to involve staff in the process of creating a structural plan that outlined a focus on a geographically distinct 9th grade house with transition to thematic SLCs in grades 10-12. School leadership demonstrated a commitment to collaboration by ensuring that the school's master schedule creation was more transparent and egalitarian. As a result, staff began to see linkages between school restructuring and outcomes such as fewer dropout and an equitable plan for ensuring that more students becoming eligible for postsecondary education through completion of A-G requirements.

As shown in Table 10 below, 60% of the staff at Cohort 5 schools and 61% of staff at Cohort 6 schools agreed that there was a clear vision and/or goals for SLC implementation at their school in 2008-09. Cohort 8 outpaced the older grantee schools with 65% of the staff in agreement that the school's SLC implementation vision was clear to them. The fact that Year One grantees could have a stronger vision this early in implementation speaks to impact of Bulletin 1600 and a more discerning selection process of grantee schools. Additionally, less variability in the performance levels of schools due the cohort size and prior achievement has had a positive impact on vision, as well as achievement indicators.

[16] Bulletin 1600 was published by LAUSD's Office of School Redesign in February 2005. The memorandum identified eight attributes of SLCs and outlined a process for district approval of school SLC restructuring plans. Bulletin 1600 has become a blueprint for SLCs in LAUSD.

[17] All schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are identified for PI under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Schools with three or more years of PI status must implement one of the following corrective actions: replaces school staff; implement new curriculum; decrease management authority at school level; appoint outside expert; extend school year or day; and/or, restructure internal organizational structure of school. Restructuring SLCs into wall-to-wall SLCs meets the corrective action criteria outlined for schools in PI three years or more.

At the same time, the survey data highlights small increases in the perception of vision by veteran grantee schools, especially Cohort 5, which had significant improvement when compared to Year One (2005-06) of their USDE grant. Nonetheless, it is problematic there is still considerable room for growth four years after receipt of the grant. Indeed, less than half of the ten Cohort 5 schools showed a majority of staff aware of the school's vision for SLC implementation during 2009 evaluation site visits. By contrast, three-fourths of the eight Cohort 6 schools showed strong vision with regard to SLC implementation. It is important to note that three of the Cohorts 6 schools were originally Cohort 3 grantee schools. As such, these schools had been implementing SLC since 2003-04. Put another way, tenure implementing SLCs does correlate with increased staff awareness and perception of SLC vision.

Table 10: Staff Perceptions of Vision and Leadership

Cohort 5	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(N=1280)	**(N=1273)**	**(N=1302)**	**(N=1202)**	**-78**
The vision and goals for implementing SLCs are well understood by staff.	42%	48%	59%	60%	18%
This school has a strong leadership team that guides instruction and the implementation of the SLC initiative.	52%	52%	57%	56%	4%
The architectural design and/or use of space at this school support the implementation of SLCs.	26%	27%	36%	37%	11%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(N=1285)**	**(N=1218)**	**(N=1074)**	**-211**
The vision and goals for implementing SLCs are well understood by staff.	NA	54%	58%	61%	7%
This school has a strong leadership team that guides instruction and the implementation of the SLC initiative.	NA	55%	58%	57%	2%
The architectural design and/or use of space at this school support the implementation of SLCs.	NA	37%	38%	43%	6%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	**(N=348)**	**(NA)**
The vision and goals for implementing SLCs are well understood by staff.	NA	NA	NA	65%	NA
This school has a strong leadership team that guides instruction and the implementation of the SLC initiative.	NA	NA	NA	66%	NA
The architectural design and/or use of space at this school support the implementation of SLCs.	NA	NA	NA	59%	NA

Another key difference hinged on pace of SLC implementation. Most (15 schools) chose a more rapid pace of SLC implementation, involving all or virtually all staff and students in SLCs within the first two years of the grant. By contrast, seven schools (four Cohort 5 and three Cohort 6) opted for a more incremental approach, piloting a few SLCs and engaging in more planning and/or implementing SLCs one or two grade levels per year. Previous

evaluation reports have noted the benefits of a more rapid restructuring plan in terms of master schedule coherence and sending a clear message on the importance of SLC principles.

It is also interesting to note that most SLC grantees have had to revisit or revise their vision for SLCs. The majority of schools in Cohort 5 (7 of 10), Cohort 6 (7 of 8), and Cohort 8 (2 of 3) provided evidence of changes to SLC vision tied to implementation challenges and/or changed conditions. Changes to vision were often related to shrinking enrollment (due to changing demographics as well as the opening of new high schools) that necessitated consolidation or elimination of some SLCs. Other common changes to vision involved shoring up SLCs struggling to establish firm identity, reconstituting the role of SLC lead teachers in relation to department chairpersons, reorganizing geographically to decentralize the campus by SLC, as well as revision of school master schedule to align more directly with SLC priorities.

Another key factor influencing vision for SLC implementation hinges on ensuring that SLC development is considered within the broader context of multiple SLCs on site. Put another way, decision-making for SLC implementation must consider both the trajectories of individual SLCs as they evolve and the interrelatedness of SLCs within a school-wide system. Site visits indicated that only two out of ten Cohort 5 schools had effectively negotiated how to have SLCs interrelate with other SLCs and the campus as a whole. In Cohort 6 nearly two-thirds (5 out of 8) of the schools were successfully working on interrelations of SLCs. Only one Cohort 8 school has been able to move forward in this area.

Geographical Reorganization

Architectural design refers to the use of space to support the school's SLC vision and mission. In particular, many schools have reorganized geographically so that SLCs are in contiguous space on campus. Others have gone further, decentralizing administrative and counseling offices to dispersed "SLC offices" spread throughout campus. While not required, this geographic reorganization tends to promote the principle that SLCs are the primary vehicle for school restructuring, while also serving to decentralize instructional support services that contribute to overall personalization. The process to geographically reconfigure their sites to promote the proximity of teachers/students by SLC had been a "hot button" topic among faculty at many of the grantee schools in prior years.[18] However, as buy in for SLC has increased, the opposition has become less fervent.

Half (five of ten) of the Cohort 5 schools, and nearly all (seven of eight) of the Cohort 6 schools completed some type of school reorganization plan to meet SLC needs. In Year One of the grant, one of the three Cohort 8 schools had reorganized its campus to decentralize by SLCs. As shown in the survey data in Table 10, more than one-third (37%) of Cohort 5 staff agreed that the use of space supports SLC implementation. Almost one half (43%) of Cohort 6 staff agrees that space was being reorganized by SLC. Cohort 8 outpaced Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 in agreement over space being used at the school to support the SLC implementation (59%).

[18] Science facilities are the one area largely unaffected by the move to contiguous space because of facilities requirements for this department.

SLC Leadership and Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder involvement pertains to schools involving a wide range of stakeholder groups (e.g., teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, students, and community members) in planning, implementing and problem solving related to the implementation of SLCs. It also hinges on the existence of a governance body or forum to share information, make decisions and resolve conflicts pertaining to SLCs.

Clearly, school leadership plays a role in articulating and reinforcing the vision for SLC restructuring, as well as showcasing the "big picture" or interrelatedness of SLCs nested within the same high school campus. As shown in Table 10 above, Cohort 8 staff was most likely (66%) to agree, "their school has a strong leadership team that guides instruction and the implementation of the SLC initiative." Both Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools have shown scant improvement on this survey item with 56% and 57% in agreement, respectively, in 2009.

The fact that these percentages have only improved slightly over time may be linked to the fact that 100% of the Cohort 5 schools and over 60% of the Cohort 6 schools have experienced principal turnover during the USDE grant period (i.e., in the last three or four years). It could be argued that the inability to maintain stable leadership and staff ambivalence on SLC reform has stymied SLC implementation for Cohort 5 schools. However, it should be noted that in spite of the obstacles, SLC implementation has gained support from staff at the school sites. Turnover at the administrative level does not have to be a detriment to SLC reform. Moreover, staff buy-in may be the factor that keep schools from experiencing sizeable decreases in school vision.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Flexibility and Collaboration during SLC Decision-Making: When the transition from a year around calendar to a traditional one was moved up by twelve months and announced six months before the transition was to happen, the faculty at **Franklin High School** stayed focused on both rigorous instruction and the SLC reform. This transition necessitated the consolidation of three SLCs and reconfiguration of the SLC design after having gone wall-to-wall and reconfigured to contiguous space. Even so, "we have been pulling together as a Franklin community. I'm proud of that," said one Department Chair. Franklin faculty members recognized that "with the SLCs reconfigured, it will be awhile to get back in the groove." This challenge was viewed as "an opportunity for dialogue in our community."

SLC Governance and Management

In 2008-09, only four schools (one Cohort 5 and three in Cohort 6) demonstrated effective governance for making decisions and resolving conflicts pertaining to SLC implementation. At some schools, SLCs were in competition with one another for students, teachers, and honors/AP classes. Another source of tension at some schools came from a lack of clarity about the role of departments in SLCs and a competition for professional development/collaboration time between departments and SLCs. Division between SLCs and magnet programs on the design of master schedule served as another major source of tension at a couple of grantee sites. Schools that have been able to establish the roles and responsibilities of SLCs in relation to subject area departments and magnets have experienced less staff friction.

In response to this friction, many schools (six of the ten Cohort 5 schools, and four of the eight Cohort 6 schools, and all three Cohort 8 schools) took active steps to increase stakeholder involvement through distributed leadership, greater transparency, and provision of opportunities for decision-making. Nonetheless, SLC implementation has tended to highlight limitations in school leadership capacity precisely because SLC implementation placed more demands on school leadership's ability to clearly communicate, make transparent school priorities, and involve a broader array of stakeholders in school governance.

Table 11: Staff Perceptions of School Decision-Making

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	**2009**	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	**(N=1202)**	**-78**
The results of major school decisions are communicated to all staff.	57%	58%	61%	59%	2%
All staff members have a say in school decisions.	37%	37%	39%	42%	5%
Most staff members at this school trust one another.	43%	44%	47%	47%	4%
Cohort 6	2006	2007	2008	**2009**	Net Change
	(N=N/A)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	**(N=1074)**	**-211**
The results of major school decisions are communicated to all staff.	NA	56%	61%	60%	4%
All staff members have a say in school decisions.	NA	38%	40%	41%	3%
Most staff members at this school trust one another.	NA	47%	46%	49%	2%
Cohort 8	2006	2007	2008	**2009**	Net Change
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	**(N=348)**	**(NA)**
The results of major school decisions are communicated to all staff.	NA	NA	NA	64%	NA
All staff members have a say in school decisions.	NA	NA	NA	41%	NA
Most staff members at this school trust one another.	NA	NA	NA	59%	NA

Another complicating factor is the existence of year-round calendars at one-third of the grantee schools. With staff on three separate calendar tracks, communication and dissemination of information were often problematic. As shown in Table 11 above, 59%, 60%, and 64% of the staff at Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools respectively, agreed that staff received communication about major school decisions. This percentage increased only 2%-4% since baseline at Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools. The agreement percentage on this question for Cohort 8 at Year One was much higher than Cohort 5 and 6, which leaves open the possibility that Cohort 8 is beginning SLC implementation with greater capacity on this dimension.

Equally disheartening is the fact that schools have largely been unable to make significant inroads at increasing the percentage of staff who feel that they have say in major school

decisions. Less than half (41%-42%) of staff at all schools agreed with these survey items with gains of only 2%-4% at Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools in the last three or four years.

Moreover, less than half of the staff of Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools felt that their school creates an environment where staff members trust one another (47% and 46%, respectively). Trust among staff was more likely to occur at Cohort 8 schools (59%).

Aligning School Improvement Plans

Site visits indicate that many schools viewed Western Association of School Credentialing (WASC) accreditation requirements separately from SLC implementation. In response to the evaluation's recommendations in 2005-06, the LAUSD Office of School Redesign produced a four-page memo outlining 18 steps to integrate SLC development into the WASC process. This document presented three viable alternatives for aligning SLC to the WASC Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLR):

(a) Develop a written statement of Expected Community-wide Learning Results (ECLR) in order to ensure complete alignment. Arrange these interdisciplinary, SLC specific outcomes under the broad categories of the established School-wide ESLRs (i.e. collaborative workers, complex thinkers, effective communicators). SLC local outcomes must be reflected along with state standards in the site plan for creating a new standards-based educational system (CDE Aiming High, Chapters 4 and 5).

b) Organize lists, as above, of traditional learning objectives for all SLC students including: description of specific cognitive, affective, or behavioral outcomes, tasks and conditions of learning, methods of assessment, and criteria for acceptable performance. Stress higher order processing using Bloom's taxonomy.

c) Organize thematic or integrated curriculum units around the ESLRs that are consistent with the SLC's unique academic focus. These units will stress such desired results as essential understandings, key concepts, selective competencies, or habits of mind. Delineate the sequence of learning experiences, performances, instructional strategies, essential questions, and multiple assessments that have been developed through backward planning. The SLC must be in agreement as to the implementation of these units. Save your exemplars for show-and-tell.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Linking SLC and WASC: **Polytechnic High School** is used the WASC accreditation process as a vehicle for high-level collaboration tied to the development of SLC identity. SLCs chose an ESLR from WASC and transformed it into a deep level question that could form the basis for interdisciplinary linkages by SLC. For example, the 9th grade house transformed an ESLR on effective communication into a question about the role of communication and conflict within each academic subject area. Teacher teams then identified key standards and curriculum units tied to the themes of communication and conflict, as well as essential questions to guide classroom learning activities. The end result was a process that showcased the school's commitment to standards-based academic rigor while also cementing the role of SLCs in changing the high school educational experience. Moreover, Polytechnic High School's school-wide SLC impact report (Bulletin 1600) shows a comprehensive alignment of school resources toward support of improvement goals and clearly portrays how SLC structures and strategies are intended to improve student achievement.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

"***Staying Focused on SLCs.*** **Monroe High School**, a Cohort 6 school and a repeat grantee from Cohort 3 has established a clear vision for SLCs that is understood and embraced by staff, students, and other stakeholders. However, as a SAIT school, Monroe was subject to corrective actions regarding school restructuring. Initially, the SAIT monitors recommended prioritizing subject area department collaboration to foster instructional improvement. Rather than overturn years of hard won gains in developing interdisciplinary SLC teams, Monroe's leaders challenged the SAIT recommendations, urging a set of corrective action more aligned with the school's SLC orientation. These arguments were persuasive and demonstrated to the SAIT monitor the school's commitment to a unifying vision for SLCs as the primary vehicle for school improvement."

Nonetheless, only a couple of schools provided evidence that a coherent school plan was developed that used both SLC implementation and the WASC self-review (largely organized around subject area departments) process to further improve instruction. Most schools involved in the WASC Focus on Learning accreditation process continued to cite WASC as a primary factor for postponing and/or delaying SLC implementation. In particular, WASC tended to monopolize schools' professional development calendars, subsuming on-going efforts to refine SLC vision and identity. The WASC reports developed by these schools did not sufficiently highlight the role of interdisciplinary SLC teams as a primary strategy to improve instruction as part of overall efforts to improve student achievement. There have been a few examples, however, of schools (see best practice above) that successfully integrated SLCs into WASC and/or used WASC recommendations to fine-tune and/or focus SLC plans during the accreditation process. However, most schools tended to lose sight of what the WASC process is about; namely, weaving together the diverse programs, services, and reform initiative in place on a high school campus into a coherent blueprint for school-wide improvement.

Other external planning processes were not well-integrated with SLC designs. For example, schools subject to School Assistance and Intervention Teams (SAIT) or often prioritized departmental collaboration and professional development and ignored school efforts to develop and nurture SLCs based upon interdisciplinary groupings of teachers (but see best practice on this score). This bifurcation of school planning contributed a fragmented vision for school improvement and reinforced the notion that SLCs were only one of many reform initiatives rather than an umbrella approach for restructuring the high school educational experience.

Summary and Recommendations

Evaluation site visits clearly showed that SLC implementation was better served by effective and transparent governance structures that ensure a school-wide perspective on how each individual SLC operates within a lager school structure designed to address the needs of all students. The largest challenge for schools lies in connecting the rationale for SLC restructuring to instructional improvements aimed at addressing low levels of student achievement and the achievement gaps that persist between different student subgroups.

Schools that set clear priorities regarding student needs and created more transparency around decision-making experienced more success in overcoming issues of divisiveness. In fact, the common characteristics of schools with the most problems establishing and communicating the school's vision for SLC restructuring were: 1) administrative turnover;

2) persistent concerns regarding communication and transparency of decision-making; and 3) intra-faculty divisions pitting departmental and SLC needs against one another. Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations regarding the development of a unifying SLC vision:

1. **Clarify and continually reinforce the rationale, purpose, and direction of SLC reform efforts.** Implementing SLCs on a school-wide basis is a revolutionary paradigm shift in how high school education ought to be organized. It is necessary to continually communicate the roles and responsibilities of all staff in carrying out SLC restructuring, as well as information on SLC progress during school-wide faculty meetings, professional development, school newsletters, and other communication methods.

2. **Minimize administrative turnover to help project a sense of continuity to SLC restructuring.** As administrators change, SLC implementation stalls. In some cases, principals were the SLC visionaries that drove reforms. When they left, SLC implementation suffered. At other schools, assistant principals were instrumental in SLC implementation. LAUSD should consider policies that would ensure continuity and stability within key leadership positions such as a minimum of a three-year term for high school administrators.

3. **Create transparent governance structures and work to become more inclusive and communicative.** Staff needs to work together to maximize resources and build capacity to effectively deliver rigorous instruction. Developing SLCs requires empowering teachers and cultivating teacher-leaders who are able to demonstrate collective responsibility for student learning. Pre-existing governance, departmental and programmatic structures need to make room for the expansion of school leadership under SLCs. At the same time, the increase in the number of school decision-makers highlights the importance of transparent, responsive governance structures capable of supporting school-wide communication and coordination during the transition to SLCs. Schools need to provide opportunities for staff to create a shared vision, work and learn collaboratively, and participate in decision-making.

4. **Align school improvement plans.** Many schools function with multiple school plans, mandated by a variety of funding sources that do not coherently communicate a unified instructional vision for school improvement. It is increasingly necessary that schools map out reform efforts across these plans (e.g., SAIT, WASC, etc.) in order to create coherency and communication of a vision for instructional improvement that cuts across multiple compliance mandates and reporting structures. In this way, SLCs can function as a true "umbrella" for high school reform.

Area 2: SLC Identity

Evaluation Benchmark: *Each fully implemented SLC has an educational philosophy and approach that is known and shared by students, staff, families and community partners. SLCs have a unique academic identity, distinct and heterogeneous groups of students, distinct physical boundaries and an administrator or teacher leader that leads a cohesive faculty team. SLC teams make decisions related to: curriculum, instruction and assessment; budget, personnel and facilities; master schedule and student programming; and student conduct and issues of community safety. SLCs range in size from 100 to 500 students.*

Average Rating:

▼3.3 (Cohort 5)
▼3.6 (Cohort 6)
▼3.0 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

Establishing a strong educational identity is a critical first step in establishing a successful SLC. With time, successful SLCs are able to clearly differentiate themselves from other SLCs or campus programs, through one or more of the following: thematic focus, pedagogical emphasis, a set of core values, established mission or goal, and/or co-curricular offerings. When a shared sense of purpose is clearly understood and embraced by students and teachers, SLCs can become powerful vehicles for increased academic success.

As shown in the ratings above, Cohort 6 is furthest along in this attribute (Developmental implementation), followed by Cohort 5 and Cohort 8 (Early Implementation) in terms of *school-wide* development of strong SLC identity across all SLCs on their campuses. Despite progress from previous years, it is the uneven development of SLC identity within schools that has prevented higher implementation ratings on this attribute. In other words, some individual SLCs at all sites have developed firm identities and exercise more involvement in the exercise of semi-autonomy, while others have lagged behind.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Accelerating SLC reform: After three years of low to moderate SLC implementation, **Grant High School** reexamined its SLC model and made significant strides by going wall-to-wall, including the creation of a Ninth Grade House to aid freshmen transition, expanded SLC choices for students, and increased staff buy-in for SLC restructuring. SLCs were provided with visible links on the school's website. Each SLC has posted information concerning their description, vision, and mission for parents, community partners, and students to view. This serves as an example of what can be done in short amount of time when committed to implementing SLCs.

Educational SLC Identity

In prior years of the evaluation, many schools reported that an emphasis was placed on increasing the distinctive educational identity of different SLCs. However, evaluation findings did not support the notion that this was occurring pervasive manner across all SLCs on campus. While SLCs had themes of an educational orientation, limited evidence

existed that instructional delivery had been modified to infuse core academic learning based on these themes.

During the 2008-09 school year, grantee schools made progress in this area. The majority of schools in all cohorts (seven out of ten Cohort 5 schools, six Cohort 6 schools, and two out of three Cohort 8 schools) provided evidence of a clear, distinct *educational* identity for many or even most SLCs on campus. Stakeholders representing different SLCs were able to articulate the beginning stages of changes such as adoption of common pedagogical techniques, project-based learning within and across subject areas, and modified assessment practices.

Evaluation findings from the site visits suggested that the increase in "educational identity" of SLC was largely correlated with SLC team cohesion, prioritization of SLCs in school-wide professional development, and master schedule alignment to "core" SLC students in at least three of their courses per term (also know as SLC "purity" of course rosters). Furthermore, several schools that were initially slow adopters of SLC reform shifted to a more rapid "ramp up" of SLC implementation.

The proportion of staff agreeing that SLCs have "a unique educational philosophy that is shared" increased to 62%-64% in 2009 (see Table 12). Schools in Cohort 5 increased 18% from baseline, with Cohort 6 schools also witnessing gains of 10%.

Table 12: Staff Perceptions of SLC Educational Identity

Cohort 5	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(N=1280)	**(N=1273)**	**(N=1302)**	**(N=1202)**	**-78**
SLCs at this school have an educational philosophy that is shared by students, staff, families and community partners.	44%	49%	60%	62%	18%
SLCs have unique academic identities.	57%	65%	70%	72%	15%
SLCs make decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment.	47%	48%	50%	53%	6%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(N=1285)**	**(N=1218)**	**(N=1074)**	**-211**
SLCs at this school have an educational philosophy that is shared by students, staff, families and community partners.	NA	53%	59%	63%	10%
SLCs have unique academic identities.	NA	67%	73%	71%	4%
SLCs make decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment.	NA	53%	54%	58%	5%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	**(N=348)**	**(NA)**
SLCs at this school have an educational philosophy that is shared by students, staff, families and community partners.	NA	NA	NA	64%	NA
SLCs have unique academic identities.	NA	NA	NA	71%	NA
SLCs make decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment.	NA	NA	NA	50%	NA

Similarly, 71%-72% of staff was in agreement that SLCs had unique academic identities, an increase of 15% since baseline among Cohort 5 schools. After only one year, Cohort 8 schools were at a level that either equaled of exceeded their predecessors, suggestive of the fact that SLC reforms had been occurring prior to the receipt of the USDE grant. There were also gains in the proportion of staff agreeing that, "SLCs make decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment." More than half (53% in Cohort 5 and 58% in Cohort 6) agreed with this survey item in 2009. In its first year under the grant, half of Cohort 8 staff agreed that SLCs made decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In fact, data from the site visits to grantee schools suggested that the number of schools possessing a significant degree of autonomy in curriculum, instruction, and assessment had improved from only four schools (all in Cohort 6) in 2007-08 to eight schools (three in Cohort 5, four in Cohort 6, and one in Cohort 8) in 2008-09.

Schools that continued to struggle with demonstrating a clear and distinctive educational identity were not able to communicate how the student learning experience was different from the instructional program prior to the introduction of SLCs. Instructional changes remained focused almost solely on the district's curricular and assessment mandates (e.g., Instructional Guides and Secondary Periodic Assessments). To the extent that teachers were able to adapt teaching and learning to meet the unique needs of their students, these discussions primarily occurred in academic departments; there was little or limited SLC autonomy welcomed or anticipated in terms of academic instruction at these sites.

Another common factor was the lack of master schedule coherence at these schools. Although nearly every teacher and every student on campus was identified with a particular SLC, students were insufficiently cored in academic classes (i.e., mixed rosters of students from different SLCs in the same classrooms were common). As a result, teachers had limited incentives for differentiating instruction based on the common interest of students implicit in selection of a SLC. In addition, some schools continued to experience difficulties with teacher collaboration under the SLC model. In fact, a move toward Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in some schools explicitly excluded SLCs on the ground that PLC style collaboration around a data-driven cycle of inquiry could not occur within interdisciplinary teams – an extrapolation of PLC definition far beyond that intended by the originators of this movement.[19] Without a functioning, coherent

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Reaffirming SLC identity: **Sylmar High School** has continued to define the educational philosophy of SLCs through the consolidation and expansion of several SLCs in order to cultivate a unique identity for each structure. All SLCs have a leadership team (lead teacher, counselor, and assistant principal) that is given input on curriculum, budget, instruction, personnel, and master schedule. Furthermore, administration has worked to codify SLC identity by moving to contiguous space. Sylmar has approved SLC banners, logos, and colors. Leadership teams have been provided space on campus with satellite offices with the goal of fostering stronger relationships and support for the respective SLCs. The move to contiguous space conveys the message that the school is committed long-term to SLC reform.

[19] See DuFour,Richard and Eaker, Robert (1998). *Professional Learning Communities: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement.* The research defines PLCs as collaboration that is student-centered, purposeful, and accountable for results. How this is inconsistent with SLCs or other interdisciplinary team structures is unanswered by those who have drawn a line of separation between SLC and PLC.

interdisciplinary team, it was nearly impossible to enact changes to core academic instruction aimed at making the theme of the SLC evident.

Structural Support and Autonomy

Evaluation data suggest that the structural support for SLC identity have largely been established. Only two schools did not assign a lead teacher, administrator and counselor to each SLC (one of those schools were moving from SLC to a small school structure). As shown in Table 13, two-thirds (69%-75%) of more of staff at the Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools agreed that teacher-directors and administrators assigned to SLCs were leading cohesive SLC teams.

Table 13: Staff Perceptions of SLC Structural Identity

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
The school's master schedule supports SLCs.	36%	45%	55%	57%	21%
SLCs make decisions related to the master schedule and student programming.	38%	46%	53%	57%	19%
SLCs have administrators or teacher-directors who lead a cohesive faculty.	48%	57%	66%	69%	21%
SLCs have distinct physical boundaries.	22%	24%	41%	45%	23%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
The school's master schedule supports SLCs.	NA	52%	58%	59%	7%
SLCs make decisions related to the master schedule and student programming.	NA	46%	52%	53%	7%
SLCs have administrators or teacher-directors who lead a cohesive faculty.	NA	64%	71%	70%	6%
SLCs have distinct physical boundaries.	NA	35%	36%	43%	8%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=348)	(NA)
The school's master schedule supports SLCs.	NA	NA	NA	59%	NA
SLCs make decisions related to the master schedule and student programming.	NA	NA	NA	41%	NA
SLCs have administrators or teacher-directors who lead a cohesive faculty.	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA
SLCs have distinct physical boundaries.	NA	NA	NA	62%	NA

While some administrators and counselors assigned to SLCs were struggling to adapt to their new role (see Accountability and Distributed Leadership findings for more detail on this point), many spoke positively about their ability to interact with both teachers and students in SLC settings, which resulted in a firmer understanding of SLC identity.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Master Schedule Alignment. At Monroe High, the school's master schedule is annually updated in accordance with SLC principles. SLC lead teachers play a key role in ensuring that students are "cored" by SLC and that SLCs have common planning time built into the schedule. When enrollment declines necessitated the elimination of one SLC, Monroe's stakeholders carefully and deliberately made a decision to best reflect student interests and the coherence of the overall Master Schedule across. SLCs.

The survey data also suggest that the majority (57%-59%) of staff believe that their school's master schedule supports SLCs. This is significant insofar as alignment of the master schedule to SLC priorities had been a major area of friction and dissention in prior year evaluations (and still is at some schools). Indeed, in 2008-09, master scheduling appeared to be the area where SLCs were most likely to show an increase in functioning semi-autonomously. Based on evaluation site visits, ten schools (six in Cohort 5, three in Cohort 6, and one in Cohort 8) showed a high level of SLC autonomy in design of master schedule and in student placement into SLCs. Survey results mirror these findings (see Table 13 above) with slightly more than half of the staff at Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools agreeing in 2009 that they exercise some control of school's master schedule. This was a large increase (19% since baseline) for Cohort 5 with 7% more staff in agreement at Cohort 6 schools. Less than half (41%) of the staff at Cohort 8 schools felt that SLCs made decisions about the master schedule which may reflect the fact that these schools have had less experience under the grant, or that decisions about master schedule have been less participatory and/or communicated to staff as whole.

The autonomy granted to SLCs with regard to input on budgetary and personnel autonomy was less pervasive. Six out of 21 schools were at the point in their development where they granted SLCs a major role in decision-making tied to budgets, personnel, and facilities. The survey data in Table 14 below supported support site visit findings. Less than half (42%-46%) of the Cohort 5 Cohort 6, and slightly over one-third (34%) of Cohort 8 staff agreed that SLCs made decisions regarding budget, personnel, and facilities. Approximately half (49%-52%) of staff in all the cohorts also perceived there to be a SLC role in issues related to student conduct and school safety. Evaluation site visits indicated a substantive role for SLCs in student conduct and safety evident at only five schools.

The findings described above concerning SLC identity and autonomy must be bracketed by a caveat. The severe budget cuts experienced by the district due to State budget shortfalls placed a cloud over future plans to expand SLC decision-making. As of the end of the 2008-09 school year, several SLCs were slated to lose their lead teacher because of layoffs and the reallocation of District personnel. Moreover, uncertainty over staffing created tensions both within schools and between schools and the district. The resulting climate undoubtedly constrained the anticipated expansion of SLC identity and semi-autonomy at some schools.

Table 14: Staff Perceptions of SLC Autonomy

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
SLCs make decisions regarding budget, personnel and facilities.	32%	37%	41%	42%	10%
SLCs make decisions related to student conduct and issues of community safety.	34%	40%	47%	52%	18%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
SLCs make decisions regarding budget, personnel and facilities.	NA	43%	49%	46%	3%
SLCs make decisions related to student conduct and issues of community safety.	NA	44%	48%	49%	5%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=348)	(NA)
SLCs make decisions regarding budget, personnel and facilities.	NA	NA	NA	34%	NA
SLCs make decisions related to student conduct and issues of community safety.	NA	NA	NA	51%	NA

Summary and Recommendations

The structural elements of SLCs are largely in place at the 21 grantee high schools. A triad of leadership comprised of lead teachers, counselors, and administrators assigned to SLC is present. Master schedule development in line with SLC principles, a formerly major obstacle to SLC identity, improved in 2008-09. Significantly, many grantee schools also made progress in terms of developing distinctive educational identities evident as adoption of common pedagogical techniques, project-based learning within and across subject areas, and modified assessment practices. The increase in "educational identity" of SLC was largely correlated with SLC team cohesion, prioritization of SLCs in school-wide professional development, and master schedule alignment. Two primary obstacles remain. First, ensuring that SLC identity occurs among all SLCs and is not confined to a subset of SLCs on campus. Second, expanding the areas where SLCs exercise some degree of autonomous decision-making.

Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations regarding SLC identity:

1. **Continue to focus on establishing a strong identity for each SLC that is evident in what students are learning in the classroom.** Schools should continue to channel SLC identity efforts to impact the delivery of thematic instruction *in all SLCs on campus.* Students should understand, from the beginning, each SLC's distinct approach to learning evident in thematic linkages, specific instructional strategies, personalization strategies, and/or assessment methods. SLC teams should be expected to clearly communicate the identity and distinctiveness of each SLC in terms of an academic program and educational experience.

2. **Nurture collaboration within SLC teams.** SLC identity is strengthened when all personnel within an SLC are assigned exclusively to that team. In addition, SLC teams of teachers, counselors, and administrators (the "triad" of SLC support) need opportunities to collaborate and work together to create an academic SLC identity. Set aside time for collaboration, and clear guidelines on the components of academic identity should be fostered and supported by school and local district leadership. Furthermore, schools would benefit from clearly delineating the responsibilities of the triad of support. In essence, time must be allocated for this to take place, as well as training to ensure competency in new leadership roles.

3. **Define and expand areas for SLCs to exercise semi-autonomous decision-making.** Schools must continue to move forward in creating a distinct "academic" identity in each SLC. For example, all SLCs would be well-served to articulate the set of common instructional strategies that will serve as the instructional "glue" for all teachers regardless of subject area. In addition, schools need to cement gains in involvement in master schedule, by ensuring that classes conform to SLC purity (i.e., 85% or more students from the same SLC) and establish their own clear boundaries regarding SLC autonomy in the area of budget, staff selection, and student discipline. Once decided, these areas of autonomy must be clearly communicated to all staff.

Area 3: Rigorous Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Evaluation Benchmark: *A standards-based educational program embodies high expectations for every student so that they achieve grade-level standards, use appropriate technology, district adopted textbooks, and materials to support instruction, meet high school graduation requirements, college entrance requirements and are prepared for post-secondary experiences and the world of work. Instruction is adapted based upon learning needs within a rigorous culturally relevant and linguistically responsive curriculum; student performance is measure to report on progress and accomplishments and to inform future instructional practices. Multiple forms of standards-based assessments are used including some benchmarks by the district. Additionally, school indicators are used as measures of school progress including, for example, attendance, dropout rates, number of high school graduates, etc.*

Average Rating:

▼2.7 (Cohort 5)
▼3.0 (Cohort 6)
▼2.7 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

With the advent of standards-based accountability, there is increased public scrutiny of student performance on standardized tests, as well as dropout and graduation rates in urban high schools. None of the SLC grantee schools met the state's threshold score of 800 on the Academic Performance Index (API), with six scoring under 600 in 2009 (see Section 5 of this report for a complete analysis of quantitative outcomes). Similarly, all but one grantee high school were designated as Program Improvement (PI) schools under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for failure to meet ambitious targets for school-wide and subgroup proficiency in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Indeed, six schools have been in PI since 1997-98. Lastly, four-year adjusted dropout and graduation rates suggest that 25%-30% of students have been unable to meet the rising requirements for high school graduation, dropping out of school between 9th and 12th grade.

It is against this background of "high stakes" accountability that the SLC grantee schools (and indeed all LAUSD schools) have been asked to raise student achievement and overall school performance on a host of indicators and metrics. In particular, the hypothesis of SLC restructuring is that schools must augment standards-based academic rigor with increased curricular relevance and personalized instructional strategies. However, most of the grantee schools continue to struggle with this aspect of SLC reforms on a school-wide basis. In general, only a few (1-3) SLCs have been successful in changing classroom teaching and student learning in line with SLC principles. This is evident in the ratings above, which indicate implementation in either the late "planning" stage (Cohort 5 and Cohort 8) or early implementation (Cohort 6).

Integrating SLCs and Instructional Reform

Over the past several years, LAUSD has implemented a system of instructional guides and formative benchmark assessments tied to state content standards as a way to create a

common set of academic expectations across schools. At the same time, schools were urged to restructure their high schools into SLCs to increase student performance and address the high school dropout crisis. Many teachers across grantee schools have struggled to with delivering a thematic approach to instruction based on augmenting academic rigor with personalization and curricular relevance because they view this approach as being in conflict with the district's instructional guides and system of formative assessment. Moreover, schools are struggling to balance and reconcile standards-based reforms which tend emphasize the importance of academic content delivery through subject area departments as the organizational principle of the high school and SLC instructional reforms which suggest that smaller, interdisciplinary teams within the high school are a more effective vehicle for engaging students in rigorous, relevant, and personalized academic content.

At the district level, leadership has attempted to publicize the fact that the instructional guides are truly a "guide" for instruction and not a straight jacket for instructional delivery. Unfortunately, it is been difficult to break out of the mindset that developed as a result of prior history with top-down curricular mandates. Put another way, few schools have taken advantage of the flexibility already granted to them and many teachers continue to see their role as delivering mandated curriculum rather than changing instructional delivery to meet the individual needs of students, many of whom arrive in high school performing well below grade level. As long as instruction is standards-based and deviation from the guides involves re-sequencing the standards to meet the needs of a thematically-oriented SLC, it is allowable under the current instructional paradigm. Indeed, district leaders in LAUSD would like school to embrace a vision of enhanced relevance, differentiated instruction, and depth of learning summarized by Wiggins and McTighe (2008):

> *"The mission of high school is not to cover content, but rather to help learners become thoughtful about, and productive with, content. It's not to help students get good at school, but rather to prepare them for the world beyond school-to enable them to apply what they have learned to issues and problems they will face in the future. The entire high school curriculum-course syllabi, instruction, and especially assessment-must reflect this central mission, which we call learning for understanding… Unfortunately, the common methods of teaching and testing in high schools focus on acquisition at the expense of meaning and transfer. As a result, when confronted with unfamiliar questions or problems (even selected-response problems on standardized tests), many students flounder."*[20]

Changes to Classroom Teaching and Classroom Learning Experiences

Survey data from staff at the grantee schools (see Table 15 below) paint a rather optimistic portrait of classroom teaching and learning at the grantee schools. For example, approximately 84% of staff agreed that instruction was responsive and accommodates diverse student interests, learning styles and educational needs.

[20] Wiggins, G, and McTighe, J. (2005). Put Understanding First *Educational Leadership 65 (8), 36-41*

Table 15: Staff Perceptions of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
Instruction is culturally responsive and accommodates diverse student interests, learning styles and educational needs.	77%	79%	83%	84%	7%
School-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students.	75%	76%	75%	78%	3%
Students understand classroom academic expectations.	70%	78%	79%	81%	11%
Curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels.	73%	74%	76%	78%	5%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
Instruction is culturally responsive and accommodates diverse student interests, learning styles and educational needs.	NA	81%	83%	84%	3%
School-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students.	NA	75%	76%	79%	4%
Students understand classroom academic expectations.	NA	79%	81%	85%	6%
Curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels.	NA	74%	79%	82%	8%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=348)	(NA)
Instruction is culturally responsive and accommodates diverse student interests, learning styles and educational needs.	NA	NA	NA	83%	NA
School-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students.	NA	NA	NA	77%	NA
Students understand classroom academic expectations.	NA	NA	NA	81%	NA
Curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels.	NA	NA	NA	78%	NA

Similarly, over three-quarters of staff surveyed agreed that school-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of English Language Learner students. Staff was also extremely positive about the extent to which students understand classroom expectations (83% average across all cohorts), and curriculum and instruction being organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels. All survey items in this area began relatively high and have improved somewhat over the last 3-4 years.

These survey findings were somewhat at odds with data from the evaluation site visits which supported the notion that schools were experiencing difficulty balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches to educational reform. Only four schools (two in Cohort 5 and two in Cohort 6) showed clear evidence that curriculum and instruction have been reorganized under SLC implementation to ensure that all students were exposed to rigorous, relevant, and personalized instructional program, delivered though SLCs.

Both of the Cohort 6 schools were also funded under Cohort 3 (i.e., they have been implementing SLCs since 2003-04) and were able to provide evidence of widespread use of interdisciplinary curricula where the thematic orientation of the SLC was evident and infused (at least in part) into classroom instruction and/or common instructional practices that were utilized by teachers within each SLC. Another seven schools (five Cohort 5 and two Cohort 6) showed moderate advances in this area. At these schools, SLC teams have begun to plan common lessons/units tied to SLC themes, integrate project-based learning activities in classroom teaching, and had reached some degree of consensus on a common set of instructional strategies or practices which would be implemented throughout their SLC.

By contrast, interviewees at many schools cautioned that changes designed to improve academic rigor were either only occurring in "pockets" (i.e., 1-3 SLCs per school) or were more "teacher-driven" than "SLC-driven." In other words, the degree of classroom rigor was dependent on the SLC and/or linked to who is teaching and not necessarily consistent for all teachers within a given SLC. Most of these schools, cited "personalization" as a more prevalent SLC focus, with curricular and instructional changes further down the line.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Focus on Key Student Outcomes: At **Polytechnic High School**, teacher leaders prioritized planning for postsecondary in the Freshman Center. Students were regularly provided with information on A-G requirements, and teachers were urged to focus on increasing 10th grade CAHSEE pass rates, as well as reducing the percentage of 9Rs (i.e., students with insufficient credits to matriculate from 9th to 10th grade). These continue to be clear success indicators at the school that teachers and other staff identify with and rally around.

Faculty and students at several of the grantee sites raised also concerns about significant disparities between high- and low-performing students in terms of access to rigorous content. This situation was more likely at schools with magnet programs or pre-existing SLCs with a track record of attracting more talented or committed teachers and/or higher performing students. At these schools, disputes often occurred around master schedule development as newly emergent SLCs argued for a more transparent and inclusive process for staff assignment and student placement, which they contrasted with the prior "preferential" treatment accorded to magnets and other specialized high school programs. Similarly, many schools experienced difficulties in expanding access to Advanced Placement/Honors classes when prior deployment of staff resources had limited these course offerings to one or two tracks (usually Tracks A and C).

However, the most common barrier to increasing student achievement was buried in the subtle beliefs expressed by many adults during site visits. One adult after another pointed to student apathy as reasons why the district rigor was not practical or realistic. Others said that teaching was "rigorous enough" but that students lacked the necessary prerequisite skills to perform well on standards-based assessments that assume students are at grade-level. Nearly all schools struggled with the implementation of instructional differentiation

or "scaffolding" intended to address individual learning needs. In fact, only one school (in Cohort 6) was able to articulate a school-wide definition of scaffolding describing what teachers would be expected to do about the lack of prerequisite skills for the typical or average high school student. Another nine schools (five Cohort 5. two Cohort 6, and two Cohort 8 schools) were able to describe changes in instructional delivery tied to scaffolding occurring in some SLCs.

Assessing and Monitoring Student Progress

On average, 70% of staff agreed that their school had a model in place to monitor individual student progress (see Table 16). Over the course of the grant, Cohorts 5 and 6 have only increased their agreement percentage 2% and 6%, respectively. Likewise, staff data was mixed concerning their school disaggregating student data as a regular part of school planning and assessment. Cohort 5 increased 7% under the grant (still only 60%), and Cohort 6 actually decreased 6% under the grant (still only 55%, a 10% drop from the previous year). Cohort 8 surpassed both older cohorts on this one year into the grant.

Table 16: Staff Perceptions of Student Progress Monitoring

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
There is a clear, connected and comprehensive model for monitoring student progress.	65%	63%	65%	67%	2%
Examination of disaggregated student data is a regular part of school planning and assessment.	53%	55%	61%	60%	7%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
There is a clear, connected and comprehensive model for monitoring student progress.	NA	67%	70%	73%	6%
Examination of disaggregated student data is a regular part of school planning and assessment.	NA	61%	65%	55%	-6%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=348)	(NA)
There is a clear, connected and comprehensive model for monitoring student progress.	NA	NA	NA	70%	NA
Examination of disaggregated student data is a regular part of school planning and assessment.	NA	NA	NA	69%	NA

Indeed, evaluation site visits indicated that only two schools (one Cohort 5, and one Cohort 8) could point to evidence that SLC teams were using multiple forms of assessment to evaluate student progress and offer students the opportunity demonstrate learning through performance-based learning assignments, portfolios, or student-led conferencing. Another seven schools (three in Cohort 5 and four in Cohort 6) provided moderate evidence of these practices, typically confined to a few SLCs rather than school-wide improvements.

Interdisciplinary or Thematic Curricula

Some faculty perceived that the emphasis on content area standards was detrimental to the move toward interdisciplinary thematic instruction. Many teachers expressed the sentiment that interdisciplinary assessments or projects were discouraged in order to adhere to what is tested on standardized tests such as the California Standards Test (CST) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

Nevertheless, it appears that the more experienced SLC schools found ways to implement internal assessments aligned to SLC-specific themes. Two schools in Cohort 6 (both repeat grantees from Cohort 3) reported widespread development of SLC-specific assessments on campus. Most of these schools dedicated a significant amount of common planning iime to develop curricula and assessments aligned to SLC identity. Seven additional schools (three in Cohort 5 and four in Cohort 6) stated that one or more SLCs had begun to implement interdisciplinary units and/or projects. Many schools said that the well-established SLCs (e.g. Humanitas) were more likely to have developed effective interdisciplinary curricula.

In integrating SLC reforms with instruction the key challenge is the capacity and willingness of schools to innovate within the constraints of high-stakes accountability and district mandates aimed at ensuring standards-based rigor. At the risk of oversimplification, this is difficult and time-consuming works that requires an in-depth commitment to collaborative teaching. The experiences of teaching in one Louisiana district highlight these lessons and are worth quoting at length:

> *"We were pretty sure this rigid curriculum framework would spell the end of our interdisciplinary units, but once we rolled up our sleeves and started working on the state documents [standards], we found the opposite was true. Not only could we continue to create these units, we could improve them. Ironically, the inflexible curriculum helped us see the wisdom of making our lessons even more tightly focused and connected…we could no longer hide behind 'fluffy' activities with vague intentions. If we wanted to successfully address our individual class requirements while also showing students how the ideas from one course applied to others, we had to truly understand these connections ourselves. So we immersed ourselves in intensive curriculum mapping, looking for opportunities to build bridges from subject to subject. The process pushed us to think had about which concepts to connect and when…Interdisciplinary units are not easy to plan or to teach. There is no question that all our lives would have been simpler if we had just bent to state and district requirements and taught the curriculum in a lock-step sequence. We wouldn't have had to work so hard to find extra*

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Developing Thematic Curricula: **Monroe High School** has developed, and continues to develop relevant, rigorous thematic, interdisciplinary curricular units that are clearly standards-based. Within individual SLCs, debates, culminating projects, themed essays with rubrics, poster board presentations, Unit Project Essays with challenging questions are the norm. Each SLC has four projects per year and SLCs continue to try to develop methodologies to integrate all subjects into the projects. Students are held to high standards by Monroe staff and are being prepared for the future and what 'life is really like'. Teachers ensure student success by making certain extra help is always available through teachers, peers, or formal tutoring programs. Comprehensive student achievement data is available to SLCs in a Documentary Library which is frequently updated from Monroe's Data's Support Services.

materials, create connections, or change our plans because a colleague suggested a better approach. But then we would have lost a valuable asset: our students' interest."[21]

Student Perceptions of Curriculum and Instruction

Like staff, students at the grantee schools were largely positive about the instructional program, albeit at levels lower than those expressed by school staff. As shown in Table 17 (below), approximately 70% (range of 65%-78%) of 10th graders agreed that classes were interesting and challenging, that they were held to high expectations that were clear, that they were taught at a high level, and that they were encouraged to challenge themselves academically. The results for 12th grade survey respondents were more positive than 10th graders across all items (range of 74%-82%).

Table 17: 10th Grade Student Perceptions of Curriculum & Instruction

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=4823)	(N=5117)	(N=5314)	(N=4442)	-381
I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	63%	65%	66%	70%	7%
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	75%	75%	77%	76%	1%
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	70%	70%	71%	69%	-1%
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	69%	67%	69%	74%	5%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=4939)	(N=5203)	(N=3943)	264
I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	NA	62%	65%	70%	8%
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	NA	75%	78%	76%	1%
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	NA	70%	72%	69%	-1%
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	NA	69%	72%	78%	9%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=1363)	(NA)
I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	NA	NA	NA	65%	NA
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	NA	NA	NA	72%	NA
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	NA	NA	NA	66%	NA
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	NA	NA	NA	72%	NA

The data from both tables show that schools have made progress with 10th and 12th graders under the grant with regard to providing opportunities to do assignments and projects

[21] Wild, Monique D, et. al., "Collaborative Teaching: The Best Response to a Rigid Curriculum," Education Week, May 21, 2008.

about interesting topics in class, and teaching academic subject matter at a high level. Cohort 5 10th and 12th graders improved an average of 6% and 8%, respectively, while Cohort 6 10th and 12th graders improved approximately 8% over the grant. Grantee sites made little or no impact on survey items focused on receiving clear expectations from teachers, and fairness in grading.

At the same time, some students explained in focus groups that they felt that their classes lacked relevance and even though teacher expectations were clear, they were low. Many students could articulate a discrepancy between expectations teachers held toward students in Advanced Placement or Honors courses versus those enrolled in regular classes. Some students claimed that some of their "teachers don't really teach," pointing to low expectations.

Table 18: 12th Grade Student Perceptions of Curriculum & Instruction

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=3373)	(N=3737)	(N=4370)	(N=3519)	146
I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	71%	71%	72%	79%	8%
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	79%	79%	79%	81%	2%
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	77%	78%	78%	79%	2%
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	73%	72%	73%	81%	8%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=3486)	(N=3828)	(N=3036)	-450
I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	NA	70%	73%	77%	7%
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	NA	79%	81%	81%	2%
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	NA	79%	79%	77%	-2%
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	NA	72%	76%	82%	10%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=1020)	
I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	NA	NA	NA	74%	NA
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	NA	NA	NA	80%	NA
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	NA	NA	NA	76%	NA
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	NA	NA	NA	77%	NA

Academic Intervention

While virtually all SLC grantee schools offered a variety of school-wide intervention opportunities available at the schools, only three schools could point to intervention options organized through SLCs apart from availability of tutoring (2 in Cohort 5, and 1 Cohort 6). School wide intervention programs typically focused on after-school or Saturday tutoring (e.g., Beyond the Bell), embedded academic interventions mandated by LAUSD (e.g., Read 180, High Point, etc.), CAHSEE preparation and credit recovery. Some schools emphasized ninth grade transitional support, such as tutoring, Summer Bridge, or "self-contained classes" to provide remediation. In fact, there was one school in Cohort 5 that created a program for 9Rs (students who earned insufficient credits as 9th graders to matriculate to 10th grade) to increase student achievement and personalization, which was housed on a separate campus. Also, there were a small number of individual SLCs that used "electives" unique to the SLC theme to address learning gaps or build student skills needed in core subjects. In sum, academic intervention was largely offered on a school-wide basis, and disconnected from SLCs.

Articulation

More and more high schools are beginning to work with middle schools to reach 8th graders as early as possible. Five schools (4 in Cohort 5, and 1 in Cohort 8) provided evidence of strong, purposeful articulation with feeder middles schools during the 2008-09 school year, ranging from counselor meetings with 8th grade students to SLC presentations done by high school students and teachers, and coordination of articulation through Gear-Up. Most schools produced brochures and presentations so that students (and parents) were able to make informed choices in the selection of a SLC. However, only two schools (one each in Cohort 5 and Cohort 6) had a "Summer Bridge" program for incoming 9th graders as a way to strengthen the transition to high school. Schools with 9th grade houses/freshman transition academies were much more likely to say that articulation with middle schools had improved.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Middle School Articulation: **Canoga Park High School** has made significant strides at easing the transition from middle school to high school. The school strengthened its articulation with its middle feeders schools to achieve two goals: properly assessing the capabilities of middle school students coming to Canoga park; and creating opportunities for student success once at the school. To meet those goals, Canoga Park not only programmed into classes based on middle school data (CSTs and grades). Students who were identified as being at-risk were encouraged to attend the school's Summer Bridge program. The transition to high school is further facilitated by the Freshman Center, a 9th house structure that serves as an additional buffer in transitioning from middle school to high school.

Postsecondary Preparation

Another factor impacting high school instruction in LAUSD is the Board adopted policy that requires all students to be enrolled in an A-G college preparatory course of study as 9th and 10th graders. Originally, the policy was supposed to start with the class of 2010 (9th graders in 2006-07), but it has been pushed back to the Class of 2012, and further delayed to the incoming class of 2012. Regardless of when it is mandated to be implemented, all students, upon entering high school, are now placed on a "college track" by the very fact that they are automatically enrolled in courses required for college entrance (A-G). For students at some schools, the preparation for postsecondary education ended there. While

all schools have college counselors on staff, many students interviewed during site visits claimed they never met with a college counselor or received the message that he/she was "college bound."

While a handful of schools had begun the process of A-G for all prior to the district A-G policy, faculty at some schools suggested that the A-G district mandate is potentially detrimental for SLCs as it makes electives more difficult to justify and reduces options for students who are not interested in attending college. Many feared that the removal of electives that do not meet the A-G criteria would further disenfranchise students who are at-risk of dropping out. For their part, counselors at several schools voiced alarm at how few teachers were adequately informed about the A-G requirements and suggested that some teachers were disseminating incorrect information to students about course selection.

Table 19: 10th Grade Student Perceptions of Postsecondary Preparation

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=4823)	(N=5117)	(N=5314)	(N=4442)	-381
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	40%	40%	41%	54%	14%
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	78%	78%	78%	76%	-2%
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	76%	75%	76%	76%	0%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=4939)	(N=5203)	(N=3943)	-996
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	NA	45%	50%	56%	11%
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	NA	79%	81%	76%	-3%
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	NA	77%	79%	79%	2%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=1363)	NA
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	NA	NA	NA	51%	NA
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	NA	NA	NA	78%	NA

Tables 19 and 20 indicate that approximately 76% and 81% of 10th and 12th graders, respectively, believed that their education had encouraged them to consider postsecondary education. However, these percentages decreased slightly among students at Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools. In addition, 51%-54% of 10th graders, and 52%-56% of 12th graders agreed that they were encouraged to take an Advanced Placement (AP) class. These percentages did increase 11% and 14% among 10th graders in Cohort 5 and Cohorts 6, respectively, over the course of the grant. The percentage of seniors encouraged to enroll in

AP courses also increased while under the grant for Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 (6% and 9%, respectively).

Nonetheless, grantee SLC schools have a long way to go in terms of formalizing and implementing plans to create a college-going culture for all students. This conclusion is supported by findings from the evaluation site visits, which indicated that only four grantees schools were found to have formalized articulation agreements with postsecondary institutions, with two additional schools making progress in this area. For the most part, some SLCs have concurrent/dual credit programs and conduct field trips to local colleges and universities.

Table 20: 12th Grade Student Perceptions of Postsecondary Preparation

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=3373)	(N=3737)	(N=4370)	(N=3519)	146
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	48%	48%	46%	54%	6%
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	85%	84%	84%	83%	-2%
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	78%	78%	79%	81%	3%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=3486)	(N=3828)	(N=3036)	-450
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	NA	47%	52%	56%	9%
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	NA	84%	85%	81%	-3%
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	NA	76%	80%	82%	6%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=1020)	NA
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	NA	NA	NA	52%	NA
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	NA	NA	NA	79%	NA
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	NA	NA	NA	82%	NA

Credentialing

Teacher credentialing continued to be seen as a barrier to SLC implementation, but not near the issue it had been in prior years. Many of the grantee schools serve the lowest performing students, and struggled to hire highly qualified teachers in all subject areas.[22]

[22] No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates that all school and districts provide students with "highly qualified" teachers by the end of the 2005-06 school year. Highly Qualified or NCLB compliant teachers in core academic

On average, 81% of faculty at the grantee schools was NCLB compliant, a percentage that matched the LAUSD average.

Other schools were challenged to create a master schedule with SLC purity when insufficient numbers of teachers were credentialed in a particular subject area. Purity is further impacted by staff composition with regard to teacher leadership responsibilities (e.g. SLC lead or department chair). When a teacher cannot teach the requisite number of classes to meet the needs of their SLC, students must take classes from a teacher outside of their SLC; thus eliminating purity. These difficulties are linked, in part, to the district's policies regarding "norming" which allocate the number of teachers to schools based on student enrollment.[23] With regard to SLCs, the crux of school difficulties lies in the fact that district norms ignore the allocation of teachers to distinct SLCs. As such, some teachers must be assigned to more than one SLC and/or course rosters in schools must be adjusted to place students from multiple SLCs into the same course section. The norming issue will be exacerbated next year, as the District may increase class size further in order to deal with the staff implications of additional budget cuts.

Summary and Recommendations

The evaluation data suggests that SLC reforms have had only a minimal influence on classroom teaching and learning *on a school-wide basis.* Grantee schools have made progress in terms of developing SLC derived structures (i.e. wall-to-wall implementation, assigning staff to SLC, contiguous space, altering the master schedule, etc.). Unfortunately, most schools have made only limited progress in changing instructional practices in line with all three R's of SLC restructuring (rigor, relevance, and relationships). Although some schools have experienced improvements in student achievement that exceed district averages (see Section 5 of this report), the evaluation data indicate that there was a very weak correlation between SLC implementation ratings and patterns of improvement on quantitative measures of student achievement.

Most SLCs have not yet focused a significant amount of time and effort effectively integrating ongoing demands for delivery of rigorous standards-based instruction with SLC-driven personalization and curricular relevance. To the extent that changes have occurred they are confined to 1-3 SLCs. As such, it is clear that virtually all schools need to make a more systematic attempt to ensure that at the heart of every SLC is a coherent academic program based on rigorous expectations and effective instruction. Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment:

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subject areas (English, reading/language arts, math, science, foreign language, civics/government, economics, arts, history, and geography) are required to hold a bachelors degree, state certification or have an Intern Certificate/Credential for no more than three years, and achieve subject matter competence in the subject matter being taught. Furthermore, NCLB competence may be met by passing an examination, a commission approved subject matter program, or a major or units equivalent to a major. California's State Board of Education has defined a major equivalent as 32 semester hours.

[23] For high schools, the academic subject class size for Predominantly Hispanic Black Asian and Other (PHBAO) schools is 32 in grades 9-10 and 40.5 in grades 11-12. For all nonacademic subjects, the class size policy is 40.5. For desegregated high schools, the class size is 37.5 for academic classes in grades 9-10, 40.5 for academic classes in grades11-12, and 40.5 for all nonacademic classes.

1. **District clarification is needed on bringing together the focus on academic rigor at the heart of standards-based instruction with SLC efforts to augment rigor with curricular relevance and personalized instruction.** The evaluation findings conclusively demonstrate that many schools continue to be confused about the expectations for modifying and improving instruction thru SLCs. Other schools wonder whether the significant investment of time and professional development within SLC teams to effectively create a map of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for thematic curricula will be acceptable to central and local district staff charged with oversight of instruction. To resolve this dilemma and create a greater degree of instructional coherence, clearer guidelines or examples are needed which showcase how thematic, contextualized learning can take place within the standards-based instructional paradigm. LAUSD has, for example, allowed some interdisciplinary SLCs (e.g., Humanitas) to waive certain curricular mandates if they can provide a standards-based curricular map that is coherent and research-based. LAUSD should expand awareness of the flexibility already available to schools.

2. **Focus SLC efforts on changing classroom instruction.** Many schools remain focused on the implementing the structures of SLC redesign and improving the relationships between staff and students rather than aggressively changing instructional practices to encompass curricular relevance or personalized approaches to learning. Some of the lack of instructional focus exhibited by SLCs is linked to confusion about the district's intended role for SLCs and/or the extent to which SLCs can and should modify and adapt instructional delivery based on the SLC's thematic focus and unique student needs. It is necessary for SLCs to continue to move the focus into the classroom by articulating SLC specific academic expectations and an approach to learning. A few schools have shown that SLCs can embody an overt academic focus predicated on academic rigor that is authentically augmented by relevance and personalization. This is difficult and time-consuming work but not impossible to achieve when SLC leaders (SLC lead teachers, administrators assigned to SLCs, and dedicated counselors) work together to plan and implement standards-based lessons that also integrate the thematic orientation of the SLC in applications (relevance) and differentiated, scaffolded support for students (personalization).

3. **Utilize SLCs more effectively as the vehicle for establishing a college-going culture**. Most schools have made only limited progress in thoroughly instituting a college-going culture. While student expectations for postsecondary education have been raised, postsecondary eligibility has not increased. As it stands now, LAUSD (including the grantee sites) UC/CSU completion rates are below the state average. SLCs may have a major role to play in helping carry out the district's policy for a default A-G curriculum. SLCs could, for example, tailor thematic approaches to learning (in the core academic program) that link high school experiences more concretely to postsecondary pathways and eventual career options. Similarly, SLCs might play a more proactive role in providing students with exposure to note-taking and study skills, as well as increase opportunities for academic dialogue and student research projects of the kind that will be needed for success at the postsecondary level.

4. **Consider employing SLCs as a vehicle for the delivery of academic intervention.** At present, academic intervention at most high schools is unsystematic. It relies largely on student volition (i.e., students volunteering to attend after-school tutoring or Saturday School) and is typically reactive and not proactive in orientation (e.g., mandates for CAHSEE preparation courses for 12th grade non-passers). Given these conditions, SLCs may well be better-positioned to develop and manage student intervention (during the school day or in extended day programs) more effectively than school-wide programs by taking a role in organizing student referral/intake, monitoring intervention attendance, providing differentiated instruction for intervention courses/programs, and conducting parent outreach tied to student participation in intervention.

5. **Improve articulation by working more closely with middle schools to ensure that incoming 9th graders receive information and support needed to transition to high school.** Most high schools need to place additional emphasis on middle school articulation. Efforts should focus on beginning the SLC "conversation" earlier during the 8th grade year than the traditional Spring visits to program incoming 9th graders. In this way, students will be able to make truly informed choices about their high school program of study. As part of the improvement of middle to high school articulation, the transfer to data on middle school students to high school staff must be provided in a more timely fashion so that high schools are able to determine who their clientele is and to allocate students to SLCs in a balanced and equitable manner.

6. **Ensure that SLCs are staffed with highly qualified teachers in all core academic areas and assigned to a specific SLC.** The district has a role to play in attracting qualified staff (particularly Math and Science teachers) and in maintaining NCLB compliance. With the implementation of SLCs, there is an additional challenge of ensuring that teachers are assigned to a SLC (at least three of their five courses) and that course rosters are "pure" in that students taught in a particular course section belong to the same SLC. At some schools, these twin desires have highlighted the inadequacy of the current "norm tables" for school staffing. Schools implementing SLCs may need additional flexibility in staffing including district willingness to apply for State waivers so that teachers are able to teach a course section or elective out-of-subject.

Area 4: Professional Development

Evaluation Benchmark: *Small School Learning Communities demonstrate implementation of central and local district training and resources. Continuous professional learning is focused on improving practices and performances as a vehicle for school improvement and program coherence. This is accomplished through collaboration, reflection, the analysis of student work and data, and a review of pedagogy. Common planning time is provided for teachers to gain in-depth knowledge of their content standards to work on lesson design, review student work, and performance data. Professional development is monitored and assessed regularly for effectiveness and implementation to ensure continuous school improvement.*

Average Rating:

▼2.6 (Cohort 5)
▼2.6 (Cohort 6)
▼1.7 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

Implementing professional development that supports the various facets of SLCs is a challenge for schools, which historically organized professional development around a combination of district mandated topics, school-wide foci, and departmental needs. The evaluation data assembled for this report suggest that there is limited evidence of a systemic shift toward providing regular professional development organized to support the development of distinctive academic approaches and instructional strategies within SLCs. Few schools consistently provided professional development of common planning time aimed at promoting a common understanding of SLCs, along with the regular allocation of collaboration time for individual SLC teams to meet around a defined *instructional* agenda. This is reflected in the ratings above, which place all three cohorts within the "planning" stage of implementation. It is also important to note that this attribute has been one with the least amount of implementation growth over the past three years.

Structuring Professional Development

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) offer a useful framework for organizing professional development. As advanced by Richard Du Four (2004), a leading proponent of PLCs, the core principles that distinguish PLCs from other forms of teacher collaboration and professional development include:

- ***Student Centered***: The core mission of schools is to ensure that students learn, not that they are merely taught. The focus of professional development and collaboration must be on the *attained* curriculum.

- ***Collaborative***: Schools improve when teachers are given time and support to work together to clarify essential learning, develop common assessments, analyze evidence of student learning, and use that evidence to learn from one another. No school can help all students achieve at high levels if teachers work in isolation. Collaborative

conversations call on team members to make public what has been traditionally private – goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and results.

- ***Focus on Results:*** PLCs welcome data and turn data into useful and relevant information that is shared widely in a timely fashion. Effectiveness is measured by results (outcomes) rather than intentions (process). All programs, policies, and practices, need to be continually assessed on the basis of their impact on student learning.

Applied to SLCs, the PLC concept suggests a need for regular collaboration and professional development among SLC teams that share these characteristics. Time would be allocated to development of common foci (e.g., common instructional strategies within a SLC, interdisciplinary lesson planning, etc.), followed by careful examination of data (e.g., peer observations, formative assessments, analysis of student work) to ascertain the effectiveness of the common SLC foci. The work of PLCs would expand the knowledge of participants and encourage innovation and excellence by requiring teachers to reflect honestly and openly together about their own practice and intentionally seek ways to do their work better.[24]

Time for SLC Professional Development

One major challenge for schools is allocating time for SLCs to meet on a regular basis during the regular school day, typically during Tuesday banked time. Less than half of the grantee schools (four in Cohort 5, four in Cohort 6, and one in Cohort 8) reported that SLCs met at least twice monthly for collaboration and common planning. Nine (across the three cohorts) schools indicated that SLC teams were provided with monthly collaboration time. The remaining three schools (three Cohort 5 and one Cohort 6) either prioritized collaboration within subject area departments and/or PLCs organized by subject area department over SLCs, or reported that professional development time was virtually all devoted to WASC and, therefore, collaboration within SLCs rarely occurred in 2008-09.

From a structural standpoint, only five schools (four Cohort 5 and one Cohort 6) provided common conference periods to teachers within the same SLC. Even at these schools, common conferences by SLC were limited to some SLCs (e.g., 9th grade house teachers or Humanitas) and/or some tracks.

Staff Perceptions of Professional Development

As shown in Table 21 below, most staff at Cohort 5 (78%) and 73% Cohort 6 (73%) schools agreed that SLC teams met regularly for planning in 2008-09. Cohort 8 surpassed the older cohorts in Year One of the grant, with 83% of staff agreeing that they met regularly in SLC teams. However, less than fifty percent of staff (in all cohorts) felt there was sufficient time for teachers to support students' academic and personal needs, or to analyze student work. It is important to note that staff perceptions of professional development improved markedly at Cohort 5 schools, which have witnessed double-digit increases in the percentage of staff agreement on these survey items.

[24] Taken from *Professional Learning Communities: Professional Development Strategies that Improve Instruction* by the Annenberg Institute of School Reform at Brown University.

Table 21: Staff Perceptions of SLC Time Allocated for Professional Development

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202	-78
SLC team members meet regularly for planning curriculum and activities.	62%	71%	77%	78%	16%
There is sufficient time for teachers to support students' academic and personal needs and to help them plan for the future.	33%	37%	40%	44%	11%
There is sufficient time for teachers to discuss and analyze student work in SLC team meetings.	27%	35%	39%	41%	14%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(N=1285)**	**(N=1218)**	**(N=1074)**	**-211**
SLC team members meet regularly for planning curriculum and activities.	NA	71%	77%	73%	2%
There is sufficient time for teachers to support students' academic and personal needs and to help them plan for the future.	NA	39%	44%	45%	6%
There is sufficient time for teachers to discuss and analyze student work in SLC team meetings.	NA	35%	38%	36%	1%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	**(N=348)**	**NA**
SLC team members meet regularly for planning curriculum and activities.	NA	NA	NA	83%	NA
There is sufficient time for teachers to support students' academic and personal needs and to help them plan for the future.	NA	NA	NA	47%	NA
There is sufficient time for teachers to discuss and analyze student work in SLC team meetings.	NA	NA	NA	41%	NA

Despite improvements over time, the fact that fewer than half of staff felt that professional development and collaboration time was adequate to meet student needs suggests room for improvement. Based on the survey results, it is possible to infer that staff would like to spend more SLC team time during professional development on the discussion of students, looking at student data, and planning activities to better meet student needs. In sum, schools are doing a decent job at providing regular intervals to meet within SLC teams, but struggle at focusing that time on student needs and student work analyses.

Table 22: Staff Perceptions of Professional Development

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202	-78
Teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public.	63%	66%	69%	74%	11%
SLC topics are a regular feature of school-wide professional development.	64%	66%	66%	65%	1%
Professional development promotes greater alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements.	63%	62%	65%	64%	1%
Professional development for the SLC initiative is designed by teachers and is specific for our school.	54%	60%	63%	66%	12%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(N=1285)**	**(N=1218)**	**(N=1074)**	**-211**
Teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public.	NA	66%	69%	74%	8%
SLC topics are a regular feature of school-wide professional development.	NA	67%	68%	64%	-3%
Professional development promotes greater alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements.	NA	63%	68%	69%	6%
Professional development for the SLC initiative is designed by teachers and is specific for our school.	NA	55%	62%	63%	8%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	**(N=348)**	**NA**
Teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public.	NA	NA	NA	77%	NA
SLC topics are a regular feature of school-wide professional development.	NA	NA	NA	67%	NA
Professional development promotes greater alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements.	NA	NA	NA	66%	NA
Professional development for the SLC initiative is designed by teachers and is specific for our school.	NA	NA	NA	62%	NA

According to Table 22 above, approximately three-quarters of the staff at the grantee schools (all cohorts) agreed that professional development was a public, collaborative forum for teachers. Fewer (approximately two-thirds of staff) also agreed that SLC topics were a regular feature of school-wide professional development. Staff survey data in Table 22 shows that Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 have experienced stagnant growth with regard to making SLC topics a regular feature of school-wide professional development.

Similarly, about two-thirds of staff in all three cohorts agreed that professional development was promoting the alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements. Roughly two-thirds (62%-66%) agreed that professional development allowed opportunities for teachers to shape and design the selection of professional

development topics. However, many teachers participating in evaluation focus groups noted that time set aside for SLCs was largely designed and prescribed by school administrators and/or district mandates.

Indeed, many SLC teachers continued to be concerned that the school-wide instructional agenda provided limited opportunities for SLC teams to collaborate around agreed upon instructional priorities based on the needs of "their" students. In particular, faculty at many schools reported struggling to reconcile the *subject-specific* orientation of the district's instructional guides and formative assessments with SLC reforms aimed at ensuring that personalization and relevance are embedded into the students' *interdisciplinary* educational experiences tied to SLC themes.

A review of documentation provided by grantee schools in conjunction with site-based interviews and focus groups with school stakeholder suggests that the common topics for SLC professional development and collaboration in 2008-09 included:

- Building SLC identity and intra-faculty team building
- Examining summative and formative data
- Designing personalization activities and experiences
- Mapping curriculum to address implications of Understanding by Design
- Developing thematic lesson units
- Recruiting students into SLCs
- Designing school Master Schedule
- Reviewing student conduct/discipline

Essentially, many of the SLCs created since the grant spent time solidifying who they are, how they are distinct from other SLCs, how they will operate as a team, and how they would get to know their students and build community within their SLC. A smaller number of schools had SLCs focused on academic interventions, advisory period curricula, common rubrics, shared expectations for students, strategies for serving English Learners, and use of research-based instructional strategies.

School-wide and/or departmentally organized professional development was more apt to address an overt instructional agenda comprised of:

- Using district instructional guides to ensure common lesson pacing
- Analyzing data from Secondary Periodic Assessments
- Discussing elements of academic rigor
- Explaining instructional differentiation techniques (e.g., Thinking Maps and SDAIE techniques)
- Discussing instructional use of technology
- Reviewing AVID strategies and program elements
- Developing common assessments
- Reflecting on accomplishments and needs for WASC

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Empowering Teachers to Design Professional Development: At **Monroe High School**, each SLC participated in a two-day retreat in the Fall of 2006, followed by a one-day professional development session on standards mapping. The focus of these retreats was the prioritization of academic content standards within thematic instruction, as well as research-based pedagogy for English Learner and Special Education students. SLCs at Monroe also received a one-day professional development session on curricular mapping used The school's SLC Coordinator provided non-negotiables on how the time was to be used but each to SLC designed their own professional development plan for the school year. Based on the success of these sessions, Monroe banked time to allow every Tuesday in 2007-08 to be available for SLC and/or departmental professional development.

Across schools, the most commonly expressed desires for professional development *within SLCs* included the following: a) personalizing teaching via differentiation and scaffolding of lessons prescribed by district instructional guides; b) using assessment data disaggregated by SLC to target student needs; c) focusing SLC team teachers on common lesson plans and/or common instructional strategies; and d) developing thematic or interdisciplinary units tied to SLC themes and/or pathways. Put another way, the SLC grantee schools would like to see their SLCs operate as PLCs. A smaller number of schools wanted professional development focused on effectively using instructional time within a block schedule, SDAIE strategies to meet the academic needs of English Learners, and leadership training for administrators, counselors, and SLC lead teachers.

Leadership Development

Professional development is a necessary resource in providing background, philosophy, rationale, and expectations of district and school based priorities. SLC reform has created opportunities for new school leaders as well as the redesignation of existing roles. That being the case, schools have provided scant opportunities for professional development in order to support new teacher leaders and the new role of counselors and assistant principals. The inability to prioritize professional development to address the needs of staff most intimately involved with SLC implementation undercuts the permanence of the reform.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Leadership Development for SLC Lead Teachers. At **Huntington Park High**, in conjunction with assistance from LAUSD Local District 6, designed a comprehensive training program for SLC lead teachers throughout the 2008-09 school year. Spurred by an influx of new lead teachers, the training focused on effective team management, facilitation skills, organizational change literature, backwards mapping of curriculum to standards (Understanding by Design), and academic intervention strategies. A clear list of ten key responsibilities was developed for lead teachers to clarify leadership expectations and responsibilities for this position.

Out of all of the grantee sites, only four schools offered any type of professional development for the lead teachers at the very least. This is unfortunate because teachers who take on the task of being a lead teacher are often the most enthusiastic about the reform, or the most willing to step up to fill an important leadership void. Without the proper training, those teachers can become an island to themselves, over burdened and unsupported. Professional development must provide insight and understanding of what the position entails, how to delegate responsibilities to others, how to conduct a meeting, and involvement in the development of the master schedule.

Summary and Recommendations

Schools largely continued to organize professional development on a school-wide or departmental basis, with SLC teams typically meeting once per month. Common planning time and leadership development opportunities were rare. Moreover, professional development within SLC teams tended to focus on structural issues about how SLCs function and personalization activities rather than helping teachers deliver classroom instruction linked to the thematic orientation of their SLC or common instructional practices that unite all SLC teachers on a team. At the same time, SLC faculty have articulated an agenda for PLC-style professional development that would likely tie SLCs more concretely to an instructional agenda characterized by thematic/interdisciplinary common lesson plans organized to support differentiation. Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations to schools regarding professional development:

1. **Become more strategic in designing and allocating professional development time.** Simply dividing time 50-50 between SLCs and departments does not necessarily reflect a coherent plan based on priorities. Schools that have taken the time to sequence and connect professional development topics have been more successful at maximizing the time and providing faculty with a coherent message about school reform efforts. With faculty input, school leaders should strategically identify topics sequence for the year, choose the most appropriate group (SLCs, departments, grade-level teams or school-wide faculty) for the topic, and ensure that professional development activities are connected to school-wide improvement priorities.

2. **Foster the development Professional Learning Communities, organized by SLC, and focused on responding to staff and student needs.** Provide instructional leaders (SLC leads and department chairs) with training on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and work with faculty to develop an annual professional development plan that sequences topics, providing teachers time to apply, reflect and collaborate on instructional strategies and to analyze student data/work samples. In this way, efforts to create SLC identity and personalize student learning can be connected to a focus on instructional improvements and student results. Schools should provide SLCs with training, templates, facilitation, and/or data needed to effectively diagnose student needs and strategize SLC/PLC efforts around improved academic achievement.

3. **Create a coherent professional development plan that markets SLC as an umbrella reform for school improvement instead of one of many initiatives.** More help is needed for faculty to understand how multiple reform efforts are connected. School leaders need to effectively "filter" and "translate" external mandates for change into a coherent instructional improvement plan that makes sense to the classroom teacher. At a minimum, this means clarifying school priorities and showing how SLC implementation is intended to complement, not supplant, standards-based instructional reforms. Even better, high schools should submit an annual professional development plan to their local district that clearly specifies how professional development will address rigor, relevance, and

relationships, allocating this topics between SLC teams, subject area departments, and school-wide professional development forums.

4. **Create processes to measure and monitor the impact of professional development on classroom instructional practices.** Few schools have processes in place to systemically monitor the "transfer" of professional development to the classroom. In order that SLC lead teachers, counselors, and administrators assigned to SLCs have the capacity necessary to serve as instructional resources and agents of change, all three positions need additional, differentiated training on how to adequately monitor whether SLCs have implemented strategies or approaches from professional development. Again, PLC strategies on focusing on results provide a good venue for deepening leadership capacity in this area.

Area 5: Equity and Access

Evaluation Benchmark: *Every student will participate in a rigorous quality curriculum that is culturally relevant and linguistically responsive to their unique learning needs, thereby eliminating achievement gaps between groups for students.*

Average Rating:

▼2.8 (Cohort 5)
▼3.1 (Cohort 6)
▼2.7 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

Realizing that in the past SLCs did not always serve heterogeneous populations of students, SLC grantee schools have attempted to increase equity and access to SLCs. SLC grantee schools were urged to redesign student recruitment and placement strategies in order to balance student access (choice) to SLCs, with an equitable distribution of students (and, to a lesser degree staff) across the different SLCs at each site. Equity is at the core of LAUSD SLC policy, asking schools to organize SLCs into heterogeneous groupings of students. Ensuring equity is essential because a perception that SLC implementation is "tracking" under a different name would seriously undermine the basis for the restructuring effort. In addition to student placement, this attribute hinges on the provision of culturally relevant and linguistically responsive instruction in order to close achievement gaps.

As shown in the ratings above, Cohort 6 scored highest on this attribute (early implementation), followed by Cohort 5 and Cohort 8 (both planning for implementation). At the risk of oversimplification, many schools have made strides in structuring SLCs to ensure more equity in student placement. However, few schools have actively implemented policies or procedures to ensure that instruction is culturally relevant or linguistically responsive.

SLC Recruitment and Placement

All schools distributed SLC preference surveys, giving students an opportunity to select from a "menu" of SLC options. Typically, students ranked SLCs in terms of first, second, or third preference. In some schools, students met with a counselor, to identify SLC preference during advisement. Few schools required parental sign-off or approval of student choices to SLCs.

Both staff surveys and evaluative site visits provided evidence that schools have made improvements in the areas of access and equity. As shown in Table 23 below, approximately 70% of staff at the grantee schools agreed that SLC admissions were open and inclusive, and that SLCs included heterogeneous groupings of students. Moreover, these percentages have improved over time, particularly among staff at the Cohort 5 schools. During evaluation site visits, nearly three-quarters of the grantee sites stated that they have an open and inclusive admission process during the sites visits. In fact only two schools stated that the admission process was an area of concern.

Table 23: Staff Perceptions of Equity and Access

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78%
Admission to SLCs is open and inclusive.	56%	61%	69%	68%	12%
SLCs include heterogeneous groupings of students and are not tracked by student ability.	53%	63%	71%	74%	21%
Most staff at this school are committed to the principle that "all children can learn.	65%	69%	73%	76%	11%
SLCs provide information and outreach about their programs to high school students and parents.	57%	63%	70%	73%	16%
SLCs provide information and outreach about their programs to middle school students and parents.	47%	55%	61%	65%	18%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
Admission to SLCs is open and inclusive.	NA	63%	66%	70%	7%
SLCs include heterogeneous groupings of students and are not tracked by student ability.	NA	62%	68%	71%	9%
Most staff at this school are committed to the principle that "all children can learn.	NA	75%	76%	79%	4%
SLCs provide information and outreach about their programs to high school students and parents.	NA	64%	70%	69%	5%
SLCs provide information and outreach about their programs to middle school students and parents.	NA	49%	56%	52%	3%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=348)	NA
Admission to SLCs is open and inclusive.	NA	NA	NA	66%	NA
SLCs include heterogeneous groupings of students and are not tracked by student ability.	NA	NA	NA	76%	NA
Most staff at this school are committed to the principle that "all children can learn.	NA	NA	NA	84%	NA
SLCs provide information and outreach about their programs to high school students and parents.	NA	NA	NA	71%	NA
SLCs provide information and outreach about their programs to middle school students and parents.	NA	NA	NA	61%	NA

Outreach and Communication about SLCs

Outreach and communication to both high school and middle school students and their parents regarding SLC options also showed increases. Approximately 70% of staff agreed that information and outreach were conducted with high school students and their parents

on SLC information. A lower but also improving percentage of approximately 60% of staff agree that SLC marketing and outreach extended to middle school students and parents.

In general, schools with a 9th-12th grade SLC structure (six Cohort 5 schools, two Cohort 6 schools, and one Cohort 8 schools) relied on articulation between their high school and feeder middle schools to effectively to inform matriculating 8th graders on their SLC choices and recruit them into SLCs. Schools often had representatives of SLCs present at the middle school annual "road show." Other schools hosted SLC fairs on the middle school campuses and encouraged students and parents to attend. At least one school transported 8th graders to the high school campus for tours and SLC exhibitions hosted by high school SLC students.

Regardless of the approach, the delay of articulation until 2-3 months prior to 8th grade graduation meant that some incoming 9th grade students received only a cursory understanding of what a SLC is and other students were less aware of how this choice would impact their high school experience. Indeed, at schools lacking a transitional 9th grade structure, students were more likely to describe the SLC selection process as haphazard, and driven less by student or parental interests and aspirations, and more subject to short-sighted whims of students aimed at staying with their friends from middle school. Students at these schools were also more likely to be interested in transferring to another SLC. Moreover, a significant number of 8th graders demonstrated a lack of interest or initiative and did not select a SLC, forcing schools to assign these students to a SLC.

By contrast, schools with a 9th grade SLC structure (four Cohort 5 schools, six Cohort 6 schools, and two Cohort 8 schools) have a one-year period where the 9th graders are, in effect, a captive audience for information dissemination and SLC recruitment. At these schools, students were more apt to receive multiple opportunities to learn about SLC options during fairs or assemblies. Students at these schools were also more likely to have opportunities to meet with older students who are enrolled in the various SLCs.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

SLC Fair: In order to help students make informed choices among various SLC options, **Polytechnic High School** organized a SLC Fair for 10th grade students. Students were exposed to SLC brochures and held classroom discussion on career pathways prior to the Fair. Under the supervision of a teacher, groups of students were guided through an interactive rotation in order to ensure all students heard a structured presentation and were able to ask questions about all of the various SLC options available at the school.

Evaluation site visits suggest that limited efforts have been undertaken to involve parents in SLC selection process at most schools, irrespective of whether these schools had a 9th grade transitional structure. In student focus groups, respondents stated that they chose a SLC and the parents signed off after a few cursory questions. There were some occasions where parents told their child which SLC they would join based on perceptions about preparing students for postsecondary success. In the end, the qualitative data gathered on site indicates that most students and parents are not discussing student interest or postsecondary life and the role the SLC may play in impacting those outcomes.

Heterogeneous Groupings

Now that most students are enrolled in SLCs, the chief issue in terms of equity and access hinges on intra-school variation (i.e., comparing SLCs to one another at the same school). As reported in prior evaluation reports, the least "representative" SLC structures were magnet programs. Relative to the overall school demographic data, these pre-existing SLC structures tended to under-represent males, Hispanics, English Learners, and Special Education students, and dramatically over-represent GATE students (see Appendix E for detailed tables by school).[25]

SLC BEST PRACTICE

A Clear Process for Selecting a SLC: At **Los Angeles High School**, the process for 9th grade students in the school's house to learn about and make the selection of an SLC is designed to ensure that students make an informed and deliberate selections, balanced with equity. If first choices for SLC are not possible, individual students meet with faculty to inform them about the need to place the student into a second or third preference. However, no student is placed in a non-requested SLC without a personal conference with the student, parent/guardian, and SLC representative. At the end of each school year, each SLC holds an orientation/celebration for all members to welcome incoming 10th graders and congratulate graduating seniors. Data in Appendix E show that Los Angeles High had one of the highest levels of equity with no significant disparities in the distribution of students to SLCs based on demographic characteristics.

Data on the distribution of students by school and by SLC is included in **Appendix E** of this report. These data indicate that student equity has improved.[26] Excluding the magnets on campus, the most common inequity among SLCs related to gender (12 schools with significant under-representation of males or females within some SLCs) and English Learners (11 schools with large or very small concentrations of EL students within some SLCs). Put another way, most (but not all) schools have distributed students across SLCs to achieve a high degree of equity in terms of student ethnicity, as well as participation of Special Education and GATE students. On-going gender inequities may reflect the prioritization on student choice (i.e., males may be more inclined to choose some kinds of SLCs and vice versa). Similarly, EL (and Special Education) concentrations may be attributed, in part, to teacher credentialing requirements for teaching these student subgroups.[27]

Another source of potential inequity relates to the vagaries of the year-round track system. For example, some students expressed the fact that they chose an SLC based on their assigned calendar track rather than from all of the SLC options available at the school. At

[25] Magnet programs are subject to a different set of compliance mandates regarding student recruitment and placement, as well as subject to a court desegregation decree which set a formula for ethnic/racial designation based on demographic in LAUSD in the late 1970s. It is important to note that magnet programs are not receiving USDE SLC grant funds but are counted as SLCs because they meet the definition of a cohort of students who share teachers and at least three courses per term.

[26] For example, in 2007-08, there were large and statistically significant inequities in the area of Gender (11 schools), Ethnicity (five schools), English Learners (15 schools), Special Education (13 schools), and GATE (8 schools). In 2008-09, the corresponding figures were Gender (12 schools), Ethnicity (two schools), English Learners (11 schools), Special Education (four schools), and GATE (four schools).

[27] At some schools English Learners (especially ELD levels 1-3) or Special Education students (especially Special Day School populations) were still being housed together in one or two SLCs because of their programmatic needs and compliance mandates, which decreased the chances of heterogeneous groupings in those SLCs.

other schools, students were placed in calendar tracks based on their zip codes. Since zip codes often overlay with socioeconomics and ethnicity, in certain schools the track system may be dividing the school into ethnic or socioeconomic groupings that created issues around equity and access. However, data suggest this is occurring at only a small number of schools (see Appendix E).

Equity in Staff Distribution Across SLCs

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Reaching consensus on the reorganization of SLC model: Due to the move from year round calendar to a traditional calendar, **Franklin High School** had to downsize the number of SLCs at the school. The administrators involved the leadership from all of the respective SLCs in order to reach a decision on which SLC would be terminated or merged with other SLCs. While the process was painful, the school was able to reach consensus on a new SLC model. By allowing all of the necessary stakeholders to be involved in a transparent process, staff was able to reach a decision that was best for the school, rather than feel as if the administration imposed a new SLC model on them.

This evaluation was unable to collect data on the characteristics (e.g., credential status, years teaching experience, etc.) of faculty assigned to the different SLCs. When asked about this during evaluation site visits, school-based stakeholders were mainly unable to answer these questions because, apart from a few exceptions, they had not taken this into consideration during SLC and master schedule design. Nonetheless, this is an important consideration and we urge schools to begin analyzing this component to ensure that all SLCs roughly mirror the characteristics of the faculty as a whole. Indeed, at some schools, students were able to categorize SLCs in terms of teacher quality. This dynamic becomes especially problematic when SLCs with increased concentrations of resistant or inexperienced teachers also have concentrations of struggling students with the greatest needs.

Culturally Relevant and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy

Research refers to culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy as a theoretical framework in education that attempts to confront the reality that teachers will continue to come into contact with students whose cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds differ from their own. Specifically, teachers must be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students' social and cultural realities in order to integrate the cultures of different racial and ethnic groups into the overall academic program. The central elements[28] of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy include:

- **Communication of High Expectations**. Rejecting deficit-based thinking in favor of an authentic belief that students from culturally diverse and low-income backgrounds are capable learners. High expectations must be consistently communicated based upon genuine respect and belief in student capability.

[28] For this framework, we have borrowed heavily from the typology from The Knowledge Loom (www.knowledgeloom.org). For the research and theoretical foundation of these approaches see for example, Gloria Ladson Billings (1994) in *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers and "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" (1995) in *Theory Into Practice* (34:3), pp. 159-165. Another good reference is Tyrone C. Howard, "Culturally relevant pedagogy: ingredients for critical teacher reflection," in *Theory Into Practice* (Summer 2003)

- **Cultural Sensitivity**. Gaining knowledge of the cultures and languages represented in their classrooms and translate this into instructional practice. Teachers harness diversity for intellectual exploration by "bridging" learning experiences so that students "choose" academic excellence.
- **Culturally Mediated Instruction**. Ensuring that students develop and/or maintain cultural competence through connection to community, national, and global identities. Instruction is characterized by the use of culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situations for learning, and culturally valued knowledge in curricular content.
- **Reshaping the Curriculum**. Providing students with experiences that showcase academic success by legitimizing students' real-life experiences as part of the official curriculum.
- **Active Teaching Methods**. Believing that the co-construction of knowledge is the foundation of the teacher-student relationship. Instruction must engage students in active roles in crafting curriculum and developing learning activities.
- **Small Group Instruction**. Providing students with more collective, collaborative learning experiences, as well as options for demonstrating mastery of skills and standards in learning groups.
- **Teacher as Facilitator of Dialogue**. Developing students' critical thinking skills through reflective discussions and learning experiences that challenge the status quo (i.e., to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities).
- **Student Controlled Classroom Discourse**. Providing students with the opportunity to control some portion of lessons, so that teachers gain insights into the way that speech and negotiation are used in the home and community.

Based on site visits to the SLC grantee schools, there was scant evidence of overt changes aimed at making instruction culturally relevant or culturally responsive in line with the principles above. Few stakeholders could articulate a common definition or list of pedagogical techniques associated with this approach apart from general references to small group instruction or more real-life examples as part of lessons. Selection of culturally relevant literature was mentioned at many schools as evidence of the curriculum becoming more attuned to the cultural backgrounds of students. Nonetheless, the vast majority of school-based interviewees and focus group participants confirmed that cultural relevance and linguistically responsive pedagogy had not been a focus of professional development or serious discussion in the last few years. Several of those interviewed characterized it as a district mandate lacking sufficient focus, guidance, or support to become a reality in the classroom.

The lack of evidence in this area may be linked to the fact that many SLCs have only just begun to enact changes and modifications to instructional delivery aimed at infusing curriculum with thematic connections and relevance. Alternatively, it could be that school-based stakeholders are implementing some of these strategies but these are piecemeal, inconsistent, and/or done in isolation rather than as a coherent SLC or school-wide approach. In any case, much more remains to be done in this area to meet the benchmark of this SLC attribute.

Summary and Recommendations

The transition to SLCs has expanded student access by broadening student choice in the selection of more distinctive educational programs. However, access and equity are not synonymous. Indeed, the expansion of access (choice) can come at the expense of equity. Providing students with access to SLCs involves making sure any student can enroll in any SLC program, free of any explicit or subtle pre-requisites, as well as providing a range of SLC choices on all tracks. Data suggests that SLCs have become more equitable over time, apart from the distribution based on gender and English Learner status. We can infer that more schools are taking a school-wide view of SLC placement, examining data from student choices carefully and ensuring SLCs are "balanced" in terms of student placement and heterogeneity. Data on equity in staff allocation was unavailable. Although structural aspects of equity have improved, the classroom dimension of equity expressed as culturally relevant and linguistically responsive pedagogy remains a work in progress. Little evidence exists that schools have incorporated these approaches in a systematic way. Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations to schools regarding equity and access:

1. **Create school-wide recruitment practices that ensure all students and parents develop a comprehensive understanding of their SLC options.** Further efforts need to be made to ensure that students *and parents* understand their SLC options and see their choices as an important step in meeting educational goals. Students *and their parents* must have the information and exposure needed to make informed choices, particularly when such choices impact their entire high school experience and exposure to postsecondary options. These concerns are especially acute at schools that utilize a 9^{th}-12^{th} SLC structure and, as such, rely upon middle school articulation to inform and recruit students into SLCs.

2. **Continue to monitor and balance staff and student placement into SLCs.** Schools need to continue to make efforts to ensure the master schedule process is balanced to ensure equitable distribution of students and staff. Student choice is not a sufficient mechanism to achieve equity on its own. Additional data need to be collected to ascertain the extent to which SLCs fairly represent the school's instructional staff in terms of credentials and teaching experience.

3. **Provide schools with Local District support to ensure heterogeneous groupings of students and address student intervention needs.** Local Districts should monitor master schedules and work with schools to ensure heterogeneous grouping of students. Local Districts can also help schools restructure time to support intervention, personalization and advisement needs of SLCs. Schools need help understanding how to leverage "smallness" to better meet student needs.

4. **Prioritize the development of strategies to embed culturally relevant and linguistically responsive pedagogy.** Professional development and teacher collaboration should incorporate discussion and reflection on how best to incorporate the key elements of this pedagogical approach. At a minimum, each SLC needs to arrive at a common definition and set of expectations in terms of how curriculum, instruction, and assessment will be modified to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

Area 6: Personalization

Evaluation Benchmark: *Demonstration of sustained and mutually respectful personal relationships where every student is well known by a group of educators who advise/advocate for them and work closely with them and their families over time. The size of the Small School Learning Community is appropriate to its vision and mission, generally ranging from 300-500 students.*

Average Rating:

▼3.0 (Cohort 5)
▼3.3 (Cohort 6)
▼3.3 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

For many schools, personalization is at the heart of the move toward SLCs. With the typical grantee high school enrolling nearly 3,000 students, it is easy to understand how students can get "lost" in the system. By taking large, impersonal comprehensive high schools and breaking them up into smaller communities of learners, it is believed that stronger adult-student relationships can develop and students can get the attention they need to achieve. Creating SLCs within large campuses increases the chance that all students receive the attention and targeted support they need to stay in school, graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

However, simply knowing students is not sufficient to create a truly personalized learning environment. Personalization is about creating a learner-centered environment *in the classroom*, with an emphasis on individual learning needs and student-directed learning. Personalized education means that schools systematically help students assess their own talents and aspirations, plan a pathway to meet their own purposes, work cooperatively with others on challenging tasks, maintain a record of their explorations, and demonstrate their learning against clear standards in a wide variety of media, all with the close support of adult mentors and guides. Furthermore, in a personalized learning environment, teachers play a dual role as both subject-matter coaches and student advisors (Keefe, 2007). In order for this to occur, differentiation to meet individual student needs must be a focus. With that in mind, roles and responsibilities of teachers would have to change accordingly.

As shown by the ratings above, all three cohorts have achieved early implementation status on this attribute. In the past three years, Cohort 5 schools made more progress in reaching a level personalization akin to that among schools in Cohort 6. Cohort 8 schools showed high initial ratings on this attribute after only one year of SLC implementation.

Creating a More Personalized High School Experience

As they implement SLC designs, many schools quickly discovered that size alone did not create "community." SLCs realized that it took hard work to cultivate collaborative cultures where students and teachers know each other and work together toward common goals. Whether SLC teams set aside regular meeting time to discuss students and strategize

solutions or SLC teams created SLC-specific activities to reach out to students, schools were clearly focused on establishing stronger student-teacher connections. The most active SLCs scheduled meetings regularly to talk about students, review student grades and attendance, and create individual plans for at-risk students.

Table 24: Staff Perceptions of Personalization

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
Students have opportunities to work with one or more teachers over multiple years (e.g., "looping" and "student advisories").	48%	55%	63%	65%	17%
All students at this school have an adult advocating for their academic and personal needs.	39%	42%	49%	53%	14%
There is a clear process for referring a student for academic intervention.	52%	53%	58%	60%	8%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
Students have opportunities to work with one or more teachers over multiple years (e.g., "looping" and "student advisories").	NA	60%	65%	67%	7%
All students at this school have an adult advocating for their academic and personal needs.	NA	44%	51%	56%	12%
There is a clear process for referring a student for academic intervention.	NA	58%	63%	64%	6%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=348)	NA
Students have opportunities to work with one or more teachers over multiple years (e.g., "looping" and "student advisories").	NA	NA	NA	61%	NA
All students at this school have an adult advocating for their academic and personal needs.	NA	NA	NA	50%	NA
There is a clear process for referring a student for academic intervention.	NA	NA	NA	58%	NA

As shown in Table 24 above, schools have begun to plan SLC activities that foster adult-student relationships. Looping (i.e., teachers staying with the same students across two or more consecutive years) became more common (61%-67% agreement), with in Cohort 5 schools (17% increase since 2006).

Both Cohort 5 and 6 have experienced increased agreement percentages over the span of the grant (14% and 12%, respectively) on shifting the faculty/staff role to mentoring and advocacy. However, after all that time and effort only 53%-61% of staff agreed that students have an adult advocate for their academic and personal needs. By way of comparison, Cohort 8 schools showed 50% agreement on this survey item after one year in the SLC grant process. These percentages were consistent with findings from the

evaluation site visit. Overall, nine schools (three in Cohort 5, four in Cohort 6, and two in Cohort 8) provided clear evidence of students feeling known and having adult mentors across all SLCs. Another ten schools (six in Cohort 5 and four in Cohort 6) showed partial evidence of personalization, typically with personalization occurring in some but not all SLCs on campus.

With the focus on personalization, high schools should be more attuned to the specific learning needs of struggling students. As shown in Table 24, 58%-64% of staff at the grantee schools agreed that there were clear processes for referring students to academic intervention. These percentages have steadily increased at Cohort 5 (8% improvement) and Cohort 6 (6%) improvement. However, evaluation site visits suggest that schools have been slow to link academic intervention programs and services to SLCs as only a handful of schools offer intervention through SLCs. Instead, these programs and services tended to be offered on a school-wide basis.

Personalizing Instruction

As shown in Table 25 below, higher percentages (70%-74%) of staff agreed that, "students experience personalized instruction that is based on diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences." Modest improvements occurred at Cohort 5 (6%) and Cohort 6 (3%) schools but the differences by cohort were negligible. Evaluation site visits suggest partial implementation of personalized pedagogy geared to diverse learning styles occurring at eleven schools (six in Cohort 5, three in Cohort 6, and two in Cohort 8).

Similarly, there have been steady increases (6%-8%) in the proportion of staff agreeing that, "students experience personalized instruction that blend academic rigor with project that reflect students' interests, life experience, and culture." Cohort 6 school showed the highest percentage (76%) on this survey item in 2009, followed by Cohort 5 (72%) and Cohort 8 (69%) schools.

Faculty participating in evaluation focus groups were more critical about the extent of personalization found in classroom instruction. While some individual SLCs at grantee schools could point to evidence of how classroom instruction had changed to incorporate student experiences and cultures, these practices were rarely implemented on a school-wide basis. The single biggest barrier to personalized instruction cited by teachers was the district focus on compliance with curricular pacing (Instructional Guides) and formative assessments measuring delivery of LAUSD's intended curriculum (Secondary Periodic Assessments). The general consensus was that the level of prescription in the District's instructional guides imposed a model of learning that makes it difficult to integrate more student-centered learning activities or applications of content knowledge. Teachers repeatedly voiced a desire for more curricular flexibility to enable them to design and deliver lessons that were differentiated based on student needs. Overall, only half (11 schools – six Cohort 5, three Cohort 6, and two Cohort 8) provided partial evidence of changes aimed at personalizing instruction during the evaluation site visits.

Table 25: Staff Perceptions of Personalized Instruction

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
Students experience personalized instruction that is based on diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences.	64%	65%	70%	70%	6%
Students experience personalized instruction that blends academic rigor with projects that reflect students' interests, life experiences and culture.	64%	66%	69%	72%	8%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
Students experience personalized instruction that is based on diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences.	NA	71%	73%	74%	3%
Students experience personalized instruction that blends academic rigor with projects that reflect students' interests, life experiences and culture.	NA	70%	72%	76%	6%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(348)	NA
Students experience personalized instruction that is based on diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences.	NA	NA	NA	71%	NA
Students experience personalized instruction that blends academic rigor with projects that reflect students' interests, life experiences and culture.	NA	NA	NA	69%	NA

Student Perceptions of Personalization

During evaluation site visits, students spoke positively about improved student-teacher relationships. Student noticed that teachers were having discussions about them, and appreciated the benefits of "smallness" accruing from SLCs in terms of more individualized attention.

Survey data suggests that personalization is more apt to be felt by seniors compared to sophomores. As shown in Tables 26 and 27 below, 10th graders when compared to 12th graders, were much less likely to agree that they had an adult they could go to for school and personal support (54% vs. 70%). Sophomores were also less likely to feel safe at school (65% vs. 71%). However, schools did a good job of informing students about tutoring services that are available to them regardless of grade level (an average of 87% for both 10th and 12th).

In sum, the survey results strongly suggest that more work is needed to address personalization earlier in each student's high school experience. Emphasizing personalization efforts among 9th and 10th graders increases the likelihood the schools will have more students who feel more supported and safe at school, which could decrease dropout rates and improve graduation rates.

Table 26: 10th Grade Student Perceptions of Personalization

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=4823)	(N=5117)	(N=5314)	(N=4442)	-381
I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	53%	54%	56%	57%	4%
I feel safe when I am at school.	60%	59%	61%	65%	5%
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	87%	87%	88%	88%	1%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=4939)	(N=5203)	(N=3943)	-996
I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	NA	56%	59%	57%	1%
I feel safe when I am at school.	NA	60%	61%	62%	2%
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	NA	88%	89%	89%	1%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(N=1363)	NA
I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	NA	NA	NA	48%	NA
I feel safe when I am at school.	NA	NA	NA	67%	NA
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	NA	NA	NA	84%	NA

In sum, the survey results strongly suggest that more work is needed to address personalization earlier in each student's high school experience. Emphasizing personalization efforts among 9th and 10th graders increases the likelihood the schools will have more students who feel more supported and safe at school, which could decrease dropout rates and improve graduation rates.

Table 27: 12th Grade Student Perceptions of Personalization

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=3373)	(N=3737)	(N=4370)	(N=3519)	146
I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	70%	69%	72%	71%	1%
I feel safe when I am at school.	66%	63%	65%	69%	3%
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	87%	88%	89%	89%	2%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=3486)	(N=3828)	(N=3036)	**-450**
I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	NA	68%	71%	70%	2%
I feel safe when I am at school.	NA	62%	65%	68%	6%
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	NA	86%	87%	88%	2%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	(N=1020)	**NA**
I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	NA	NA	NA	67%	NA
I feel safe when I am at school.	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	NA	NA	NA	83%	NA

Student Advisories

Despite many discussions across schools, only two schools had a full-fledged Advisory Period to enhance personalization. An additional nine schools instituted a partial (i.e., some but not all grade levels and/or some but not all SLCs) form of Advisory to personalize the educational process. Advisories generally seek to ensure that every student has a personal advocate (advisor) who knows his or her characteristics, attitudes, knowledge, skills and learning styles and facilitates the on-going development of his or her talents and interests. Advisors usually help students establish a personal plan for progress, follow student attendance and academic progress, and make provide guidance on adjustments as needed. In sum, advisories provide a regular, set aside period where adults get

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Personalization Through Advisory: For the last four years, **Monroe High School** has provided a daily advisory period which provides a forum for relationship building between faculty and students, as well as personalized guidance for students tied to success in high school and preparation for life beyond high school. Teachers were able to draw on sample lessons and activities from a binder assembled by the school to meet the needs of each grade level (i.e.: Seniors receive college information, work on portfolios, have guest speakers; Juniors work on writing; etc.). Many teachers have been trained in Franklin Covey's model of The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens so that they can "coach" students during advisory. Counselors use the advisory period as an opportunity to connect with students and help them in goal setting and monitoring of academic progress.

to know students better as they guide students through the high school experience, ensuring both student and school goals are met.

Focus group discussions with staff revealed that some adults at the school sites have mixed emotions on developing stronger personal connections with students. Part of that reluctance is related to lack of clarity about how personalization looks like in practice. Although many examples of advisory guidelines and modules with advisory activities exist, teachers in focus groups worried that an advisory would degenerate into "study hall" or force them to function as a *de facto* social worker. Additionally, some teachers objected to doing an advisory because they viewed it as an extra preparatory period that they would not be paid for even though the advisory would occur during the regular school day. Until schools clearly define what personalization is supposed to look like, and how it is prioritized at their school through advisories, this strategy for personalization will continue to be underutilized.

9th Grade Transition

A total of twelve schools (five in Cohort 5, six in Cohort 6, and one Cohort 8) implemented a freshman transition into high schools through a house structure or freshman academy. Most of these programs dedicated a particular geographic area on campus for the freshman program, separated from the rest of the school. Several provided a Summer Bridge program for incoming 9th graders that showed signs they were falling behind in middle school based on CST data, or recommendations from the previous middle school.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

9th Grade Transition: **At Bell High School**, faculty assigned to the 9th Grade House meet regularly to ensure that students received a consistent set of instructional strategies across the core curriculum. Teachers pride themselves on making their motto of "Attitude, Attendance, Achievement" a reality for freshman. At **Los Angles High**, the 9th Grade House goal is to decrease the number of dropouts by providing a nurturing and supportive environment. Teachers have come to see their role as child advocates, helping guide students to make good choices, become active learners, and prepare for the best futures possible.

At the schools with 9th grade SLC structures, there was a high level of staff cohesion as teachers in the 9th grade structures coalesced around the needs of helping students transition to high school. Ninth grade SLC teams were more likely to report regular team meetings and/or common conference periods for planning activities and strategies. In addition, 9th grade SLC teams were much more likely to provide evidence of targeted remediation, particularly in Mathematics (Algebra I) and writing skills as part of the instructional program.

Distributive, Personalized Counseling

Ensuring all students receive counseling throughout each school year is an important component of personalizing the high school experience. SLC teams, in conjunction with the counselor and administrator assigned to the SLC, must share information about students, and use these data to work with the student and family members on solutions and to monitor student progress. In a distributed model of counseling, the roles of teachers and counselors are less functionally distinct; rather all adults in the SLC must know and work together, interacting frequently in order to advocate for individual students as needed

and make sure students are on the right path toward graduating and preparing for college.[29] Essentially, the distributed counseling model allows school to weave in more threads into the proverbial "safety net" for students alienated from the educational process, and more apt to drop out of school.

A key to success is planning for it. Many successful students have been able to matriculate through high school onto postsecondary because they meet regularly with an adult (parent, sibling, other family member, counselor teacher, or other) to help plan postsecondary life. Students are also aided by career planning activities such as career inventories and assessments, job shadowing opportunities, field trips, and career fairs. Table 28 below shows that 71%, 75, and 68% of Cohort 5. Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 schools, respectively, agreed that career exploration and planning activities were taking place. However, Cohort 5 and 6 have only experienced limited (4%-5% improvement) growth on this survey item.

Written Learning Plans

LAUSD created the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP)[30] to help students plan for their future. Essentially, the IGP mandates (at least) an annual review of student transcripts to direct high school and post-high school planning. Despite the fact that all students must develop an IGP, only about half (53%-55%) of staff agreed that counseling around a defined, *written* plan for high schools and beyond is occurring. While this percentage has improved over time (particularly at Cohort 5 schools), it remains rather low across all grantee schools.

Evaluation site visits to SLC grantee schools indicated that four schools (one in Cohort 5 and three in Cohort 6) showed a high level of teacher involvement in the IGP process, with another four schools (two in Cohort 5 and two in Cohort 6) showing moderate levels of teacher involvement in this kind of distributed, personalized counseling and guidance. At the remaining eleven schools, SLC teachers were rarely provided with access to the information on the IGPs and largely remained uninvolved in the IGP process.

[29] For the term "distributed counseling," this report drew from Jacqueline Ancess, "Small Alone is Not Enough: How can educators recover the purposes of small schools?" *Educational Leadership*, Volume 65, Number 8 (May 2008).

[30] District mandates an Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) for every student. Counselors are responsible for completing "four-year plan" with each student in 9th grade. In addition, a formal IGP must be completed by 10th grade in a meeting with both parents and students. The IGP is then updated each subsequent year of high school. IGP meetings between counselors and students make students aware of graduation requirements and provide students with an annual summary of units completed and units needed for on-time graduation. Planning for life beyond high school (i.e., postsecondary education or further training) is another requirement under the IGP process.

Table 28: Staff Perceptions of Personalized Counseling/Guidance

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
Students receive career planning and guidance in the form of career inventories and assessments; job shadowing opportunities; field trips; and career fairs	67%	67%	73%	71%	4%
Students complete a written educational plan that encompasses goals for high school and postsecondary education with teachers and/or counselors	43%	47%	52%	55%	12%
Students receive verbal counseling regarding their secondary and postsecondary course plan from teachers and/or counselors.	70%	72%	77%	79%	9%
Students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the instructional day including after-school programs, college courses, internships, etc	79%	82%	84%	86%	7%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	-211
Students receive career planning and guidance in the form of career inventories and assessments; job shadowing opportunities; field trips; and career fairs	NA	70%	75%	75%	5%
Students complete a written educational plan that encompasses goals for high school and postsecondary education with teachers and/or counselors	NA	47%	54%	55%	8%
Students receive verbal counseling regarding their secondary and postsecondary course plan from teachers and/or counselors.	NA	76%	81%	82%	6%
Students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the instructional day including after-school programs, college courses, internships, etc	NA	79%	83%	85%	6%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(348)	(NA)
Students receive career planning and guidance in the form of career inventories and assessments; job shadowing opportunities; field trips; and career fairs	NA	NA	NA	68%	NA
Students complete a written educational plan that encompasses goals for high school and postsecondary education with teachers and/or counselors	NA	NA	NA	53%	NA
Students receive verbal counseling regarding their secondary and postsecondary course plan from teachers and/or counselors.	NA	NA	NA	78%	NA
Students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the instructional day including after-school programs, college courses, internships, etc	NA	NA	NA	80%	NA

Student survey results support the notion that students have received increased support from counselors (and to a much lesser degree, teachers) over the course of the SLC grant. As shown in Tables 29 and 30 below, 14% more 10th graders in Cohort 5 schools and 5% more 10th graders in Cohort 6 schools stated that they had worked with a counselor to develop a *written* educational plan organized around student needs and interests. Still, this represented less than half of the 10th grade student survey respondents for counselors and only about one-third with teachers, suggesting that the IGP process is either not occurring or is not "anchored" by students as a written educational plan for high school and beyond.

Table 29: 10th Grade Student Perceptions of Personalized Counseling

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=4823)	(N=5117)	(N=5314)	(N=4442)	-381
I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	27%	26%	27%	41%	14%
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	31%	30%	37%	45%	14%
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	33%	30%	33%	35%	2%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=4939)	(N=5203)	(N=3943)	-996
I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	NA	27%	32%	39%	12%
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	37%	44%	42%	5%
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	33%	36%	32%	-1%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	**(1363)**	**NA**
I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	NA	NA	NA	44%	NA
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	NA	NA	44%	NA
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	NA	NA	32%	NA

Survey data suggest that little or no gain was made in increasing the proportion of seniors in agreement about working with a counselor or teacher on a written educational plan (see Table 30). Cohorts 5 and 6 have continued produce agreement percentages close to 50% over the years. In fact, both cohorts experienced a decrease in teacher interactions from the previous year with this survey item.

Table 30: 12th Grade Student Perceptions of Personalized Counseling

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=3373)	(N=3737)	(N=4370)	(N=3519)	146
I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	47%	46%	48%	55%	8%
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	50%	50%	53%	51%	1%
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	47%	44%	47%	41%	-6%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=3486)	(N=3828)	(N=3036)	**-450**
I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	NA	46%	50%	56%	10%
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	52%	59%	52%	0%
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	45%	47%	42%	-3%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	**(NA)**	**(NA)**	**(1020)**	**NA**
I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	NA	NA	NA	59%	NA
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	NA	NA	56%	NA
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	NA	NA	NA	46%	NA

These data suggest that the IGP progress is occurring more when students enter high school, but it is not being revisited as a tool to counsel students as they matriculate through high school. In focus group meetings with counselors, many of them stated that the IGP was more of a compliance document rather than a tool used to inform students and parents about academic progress toward a predetermined goal that was established freshman year. Likewise, students were often unclear on the use or purpose of the IGP. Counselors reported a preference for "graduate checks" which focus on credits earned to monitor student progress over time, and students were more knowledgeable about that document as well.

Verbal counseling and informal interactions aimed at providing guidance to students were more common according to staff. The vast majority of SLC staff (79% at Cohort 5 schools, 82% at Cohort 6 schools, and 78% at Cohort 8 schools) agreed that students receive *verbal* counseling from teachers and counselors about their postsecondary course plan (see Table 28). However, less than half of 10th and less than 60% of 12th grade

students reported talking to "my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan."

During the evaluation site visits, it became clear that guidance and counseling services continue to rely upon student volition at many schools. Essentially, the onus is placed on the student to initiate contact with counselors and/or teachers. Because the students who most need advocacy and/or advisement are less likely to seek it out, such a model is bound to result in some students "falling through the cracks." The evaluation site visits also noted significant differences *between SLCs at the same school* in terms of the degree of teacher-counselor interactions in SLC teams. In general, the most active and mature SLCs showed evidence of changed teacher and counselor roles to proactively meet the guidance and counseling needs of students. By contrast, other SLCs at the same school largely continued to "compartmentalize" teacher and counselor functions, and infrequently used SLC team collaboration time to discuss guidance and counseling aspects of personalization. Indeed, counselors were infrequent participants in SLC teaming at many schools despite formal membership in each SLC on campus.

Postsecondary Education

Both students and teachers at a majority of the schools agreed that high school graduation was a higher priority than ensuring that students were prepared to go on to college. During the course of the evaluation site visit focus groups, it was surprising how few students and teachers could articulate or describe accurately the A-G requirements. Many students did not know the prerequisites for college and did not appear to be college-driven. The four most prevalent complaints from students during site visits were that (1) staff were not sending them the message they should go to college; (2) class instruction was not relevant to their lives; and, (3) they were not exposed to sufficient college and career activities; and, (4) SLC theme was not fully realized in curriculum or learning activities.

As shown in Table 31 below, approximately 12%-13% of 10th graders and slightly less than one-third (29%-30%) of 12th graders reported involvement in college fairs in 2009. Fewer students (4%-6%) reported involvement in a "college class." There were no significant differences based on tenure in the SLC implementation grant.

Career Exploration

By contrast, schools receiving SLC implementation grants have improved student access to career-related information. Many more students were exposed to career exploration activities through career fairs (34%-42% of 10th graders and 48%-52% of 12th graders). Moreover, these percentages increased over time (particular at Cohort 5 schools). Similarly, nearly one-in-five of the seniors reported involvement in an internship (19%-21%) or job shadowing experience (15%-22%). Again, these percentages have tended to increase over time. On average, 10% of 10th graders and 20% of 12th graders reported completing a career/interest inventory, with limited change over time.

Table 31: 10th and 12th Grade Student Participation in Selected Activities

Activity	Cohort 5 10th Grade				Cohort 5 12th Grade			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
Postsecondary Preparation								
College class	11%	2%	2%	4%	20%	4%	3%	5%
College fair	10%	10%	9%	13%	22%	33%	29%	30%
Career Exploration								
Career fair	6%	29%	32%	42%	8%	43%	44%	52%
Work experience	11%	4%	4%	7%	28%	9%	10%	12%
Internship	2%	7%	8%	12%	4%	17%	18%	21%
Job shadowing	3%	6%	8%	11%	3%	19%	20%	22%
Career/interest inventory	4%	7%	6%	9%	5%	22%	20%	21%
Other/Extracurricular								
Community service project	15%	1%	1%	3%	24%	5%	4%	4%
After-school program	51%	32%	33%	40%	38%	30%	31%	37%
Field trip	42%	18%	16%	21%	48%	38%	35%	37%
Guest Speakers	23%	2%	2%	3%	43%	3%	2%	3%

Activity	Cohort 6 10th Grade				Cohort 6 12th Grade			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
Postsecondary Preparation								
College class	NA	3%	3%	5%	NA	4%	4%	6%
College fair	NA	9%	10%	13%	NA	33%	26%	30%
Career Exploration								
Career fair	NA	32%	31%	37%	NA	38%	39%	48%
Work experience	NA	5%	7%	13%	NA	7%	10	15%
Internship	NA	8%	10%	13%	NA	15%	19%	20%
Job shadowing	NA	7%	7%	11%	NA	18%	21%	21%
Career/interest inventory	NA	7%	8%	9%	NA	23%	20%	19%
Other/Extracurricular								
Community service project	NA	2%	4%	5%	NA	5%	4%	5%
After-school program	NA	30%	31%	38%	NA	26%	25%	34%
Field trip	NA	15%	18%	26%	NA	39%	35%	41%
Guest Speakers	NA	2%	2%	4%	NA	2%	2%	3%

Activity	Cohort 8 10th Grade				Cohort 8 12th Grade			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
Postsecondary Preparation								
College class	NA	NA	NA	4%	NA	NA	NA	6%
College fair	NA	NA	NA	12%	NA	NA	NA	29%
Career Exploration								
Career fair	NA	NA	NA	34%	NA	NA	NA	49%
Work experience.	NA	NA	NA	6%	NA	NA	NA	8%
Internship	NA	NA	NA	10%	NA	NA	NA	19%
Job shadowing	NA	NA	NA	6%	NA	NA	NA	15%
Career/interest inventory	NA	NA	NA	9%	NA	NA	NA	19%
Other/Extracurricular								
Community service project	NA	NA	NA	3%	NA	NA	NA	4%
After-school program	NA	NA	NA	34%	NA	NA	NA	35%
Field trip	NA	NA	NA	20%	NA	NA	NA	33%
Guest Speakers	NA	NA	NA	4%	NA	NA	NA	4%

Other/Extracurricular Activities

Student survey data suggest that student participation in community service projects was rare (3%-5% of students), despite the service learning requirement for high school graduation. Guest speakers, whether for college or career exploration, were similarly rare (3%-4% of students).

Many more students reported involvement in field trips (18%-21% of 10th graders and 33%-41% of seniors) in 2009. After-school programs had the highest levels of involvement in 2009 (34%-40% of 10th graders and 34%-37% of 12th graders). Typically, after-school programs were school-wide in nature and included CAHSEE prep, Beyond the Bell/Saturday School, and after-school tutoring. When asked about student participation and success with such services, many teachers and students agreed that tutoring was not well attended and that, participation was left to student initiative. Only two schools (both in Cohort 6) were identified as has made a firm commitment at providing substantive learning opportunities after the school day (after-school programs, college courses, internships, etc.). An additional fifteen schools (including all Cohort 5 schools) were making efforts to increase student participation.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Polytechnic High School instituted the Advantage Program across all grade levels in 2008-09. This program is responsible for raising student awareness of college and providing academic rigor to the high school curriculum through access to college courses while in high school. Because Polytechnic has a 4x4 block schedule, students making grade level progress have additional opportunities for college enrichment courses. In the last four years, student participation in college courses has improved nearly six-fold, from approximately 300 students to 1700 students."

In sum, findings from the evaluation site visits suggest clear and unassailable evidence of only three schools (two in Cohort 6 and one in Cohort 8) taking actions and implementing innovative strategies in order to provide <u>all</u> students with substantive career and college planning activities and information. However, most other schools (nine Cohort 5, five Cohort 6, and two Cohort 8 schools) were making efforts to make career and college available to more students, regardless or grade level, student volition, or parental encouragement.

Summary and Recommendations

Most schools cited personalization as their number one focus. Evidence exists to suggest that relationships between adults and students have been enhanced through the implementation of SLCs. However, the findings on personalization were quite mixed. On the positive side, looping of staff with students has become more common, and more staff appeared to be accepting a role in mentoring and advocating for "their" students. At the same time, very few schools had established advisory periods to structurally support personalization and this enhanced adult: student relationship. Similarly, it was encouraging to note that student interactions with counselors were improving around postsecondary and career preparation. However, the IGP process has not been especially helpful or resonant with students, and teacher interactions tied to the IGP were rare. Widespread awareness of academic intervention exists among staff and students, but these programs tend to be school-wide (rather than linked to SLCs) and remain reliant on student volition. Participation in career preparation activities increased markedly, but postsecondary

preparation has not increased over time. Instead, personalization focused on student motivation and/or creating a sense of belonging. In sum, personalization serves as an example of "half full" findings. As such, Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations regarding personalization:

1. **Move beyond relationship building to personalized instruction.** Evidence from this evaluation suggests that relationship building is a necessary but insufficient condition for effective personalization**.** Strengthened student-teacher relations must translate into a more tailored learning process that meets students' interests, needs and capacities. More SLCs, and both teachers and counselors, need to meet with students regularly to talk about goals, academic progress, college preparation, and career exploration. SLCs need to focus more on restructuring the learning environment to support students.

2. **Continue to include goal-setting and the on-going management of student goals tied to post-high school plans as key aspects of personalization.** Students, parents and teachers need accurate information about high school graduation requirements and pre-requisites for four-year colleges and universities. Parent involvement and knowledge is admittedly weak in this area. In lieu of the establishment of advisory periods at more grantee schools, additional information regarding high school graduation and postsecondary requirements (i.e., A-G requirements) could be integrated during SLC recruitment efforts and middle school articulation, and then followed up during the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) process now a mandated aspect of student counseling. In addition, SLCs should provide a structure to regularly review Individual Graduation Plans and provide post-secondary counseling.

3. **Provide more systematic and data-driven intervention thru SLCs that is less reliant on student initiative.** It may be more effective to have SLCs provide and manage intervention rather than continue with school-wide approach to intervention. Either way, offering intervention is not sufficient when student participation is voluntary and/or weakly enforced. Academic intervention remains insufficiently integrated with school-based systems capable of identifying students who clearly need additional help to master rigorous standards. In general, academic intervention continues to be reactive rather than proactive.

4. **Expand extended learning opportunities beyond the walls of the high school campus.** In order to help students connect their education to the future, SLCs need to continue to find ways to connect standards-based instruction to the thematic orientation of SLC via community service projects, service learning, internships, etc, while simultaneously addressing the need for embedding cultural relevance into the educational experience.

Area 7: Accountability and Distributed Leadership

Evaluation Benchmark: *Members of the Small School Learning Community work together, share expertise, and exercise leadership to ensure that student achievement is the intended result of all discussions. They retain primary responsibility, appropriate autonomy, and are accountable for making decisions affecting the important aspects of the small learning community.*

Average Rating:

▼2.7 (Cohort 5)
▼3.3 (Cohort 6)
▼3.0 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

The sustainability of effective SLCs depends on shared and distributed leadership. In this way, high school restructuring can overcome turnover and sustain momentum for change. Moreover, the involvement of leaders at multiple levels of the school organization is better equipped to support and monitor the accountability for implementation in a timely fashion. In order to maximize SLC implementation, resources need to be developed to effectively train emerging leaders to make collaborative, data-driven decisions about the direction and pace of high school reform. As shown in the rating above, Cohort 6 schools scored highest (early implementation) on this attribute, follow closely by Cohort 8 schools (also early implementation). Cohort 5 schools lagged despite the longest tenure of the grant, averaging a rating in the advanced stages of planning for implementation.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership moves away from a reliance on the traditional high school hierarchy toward shared practice that embodies the following qualities:

- Leadership is shared among people in different roles.
- Leadership is situational rather than hierarchical.
- Authority is based upon expertise rather than formal position.[31]

In other words, leadership in SLCs must become the responsibility of everyone in the school. The responsibility for sustaining school improvement must be shared among a broad group of school community members, rather than owned primarily by formal leaders at the top of the organizational chart. Findings from the evaluation site visits revealed that 13 out of 21 grantee sites (six Cohort 5, six Cohort 6, and one Cohort 8) had been successful in forming distributed and active leadership groupings linked to SLC implementation.

As schools establish a strong vision for SLCs that is clearly focused on teaching and learning, a wider group of leaders begin to play a more central role in the governance of the school. Teacher and counseling expertise is valued, and representatives of these stakeholder

[31] From a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Report, Distributed Leadership: Moving from High School Hierarchy to Shared Responsibility by Catherine A. Wallach et al (Fall 2005).

groups begin to make important decisions tied to SLC implementation. Leadership plays a key role in cultivating distributed leadership, particularly through actions that grant autonomy to SLCs in specified areas.

In eleven schools (six Cohort 5, four Cohort 6, and one Cohort 8), the entire administrative team demonstrated strong, engaged, and positive leadership for the SLC initiative. At these schools, administrative roles became more decentralized, centering mostly on support and monitoring of their SLC. These schools tended to have established decentralized administrative offices by SLC so that an administrative presence was evident to staff, students, and parents.

These schools showed a much high propensity for distributed leadership allowing staff to: a) be able to articulate the overall school vision and rationale for school restructuring; b) understand the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder groups in implementing SLCs; and c) regularly work together under collaborative norms to achieve desired results. Additional evidence of increased collective responsibility for SLCs included development of school-wide forums to encourage SLC communication and data sharing, and membership expansion on school-wide SLC decision-making teams.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Empowering SLC Lead Teachers: At **Sylmar High School**, SLC Lead Teachers have the freedom and responsibility of planning their own professional development. They credit their principal in allowing them the freedom to "discover" what they needed and this, they say, caused them to own the development of their SLC. One SLC Lead Teacher remarked, "A lot of professional development is what I initiated and looked for. I would go to the principal with an idea about what I wanted to learn. The principal would find money for us to go." Another SLC Lead Teacher credited this freedom and support as allowing his SLC to develop a strong intervention program at the 9th grade level. Another SLC Lead Teacher remarked, "We're our own experts. When people get out of our way, we discover how to do this!"

Nearly all of the schools have created a leadership team for each SLC consisting of a Lead Teacher, a dedicated counselor and an administrator. However, the functioning of this "triad" was more developed at some schools and included regular interactions and planning to represent teacher, counselor, and administrative perspectives.

Across schools, the SLC lead teacher was the most active and involved member of the triad. To empower and build the capacity of SLC leads teachers often receive one dedicated period for common conference with all SLC lead teachers/coordinators that serves as a forum for SLC lead teachers to discuss common issues, coordinate activities, learn from one another, as well as organize and coordinate SLC development.

While the leadership triad was present at nearly all of the grantee sites (20 out of 21), schools and SLCs varied in terms of whether the counselor assigned to the SLC participated as an *active* member in SLC planning, professional development, decision-making, and coordination. In some schools/SLCs, counselors were firmly integrated into SLC teams and functioned as active participants and proponents of SLC instructional reforms. In other schools/SLCs, the counselor role was purely structural in nature, with counseling duties largely unaffected by the reassignment to a SLC team and limited evidence of counselors working collaboratively with teachers or altering the nature of interactions with students in line with SLC principles of personalization.

Similarly, the administrative component of the triad varied depending on school and SLC. Approximately half (11 schools) of schools showed clear, explicit evidence of all site administrators revising their duties to prioritize participation, active engagement, and promotion of SLC team structures. Of particular concern was the ill-defined role of assistant principals in supporting SLC development. In site-based interviews, administrative staff at some schools conceded that the shift to responsibility for a SLC was awkward and overly dependent on the personality of the individual administrator because there was little training or guidance from either central or local districts on how to balance SLC responsibilities with departmental oversight and/or functional (e.g., intervention, discipline, etc.) job duties.

Barriers to Distributed Leadership

One barrier frequently cited at the SLC grantee schools was lingering distrust about either administrative support for SLCs or a perception that an administrative agenda was the driving force behind decisions on the pace and direction of SLC implementation. As previously discussed in the SLC Vision section of the report, less than half of the staff at grantee sites agreed that they had a say in school decisions. Moreover, less than half of Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 staff agreed that there was trust for one another at their respective schools (Cohort 8 was at 59%). Teachers in schools with strong communication systems, where information and decision-making has been discussed regularly and openly, expressed greater support of SLC reforms. Schools that have defined clear areas where SLCs exercise some degree of autonomy appear to show the highest levels of distributed leadership. In schools where administrators were not transparent about important decisions impacting SLCs and reluctant to devolve decision-making to SLCs, teachers were less likely to support SLCs.

Administrative turnover was frequently correlated with less distributed leadership. Turnover among principals has been particularly detrimental. For example, none of the Cohort 5 schools have the same principal in place at their school when the SLC grant was written. Cohort 6 only has three principals in place from when the grant was written. One year into the grant, one Cohort 8 schools has a new principal in place for Year Two. It is important to note that change in administration does not necessarily translate into a detrimental effect on SLC implementation. There have been occurrences when new leadership has increased vision and buy-in for SLCs. When local districts make deliberate, well thought out decisions regarding the placement on principals, schools can get a needed boost. However, there are also instances when new administrators are hired who do not support or not knowledgeable of SLC reform. When that occurs, momentum for change tended to grind to a halt as various interest groups at the school attempted to lobby for changes or postponement of SLC reforms.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making: Franklin High School is committed to soliciting teacher input tied to SLCs. Lead teachers are elected positions who represent their SLC teams on the school's Building Council. For example, the Building Council devoted an entire day to discussing how best to alter the school's SLC design, a change necessitated by declining student enrollment. Policy recommendations from the Building Council are regularly forwarded to both the School Site Council and the Shared-Decision Making body.

Tension between department chairs and SLC teacher leaders was another commonly cited

obstacle. In a few schools where SLCs have made gains in autonomy, department chairs expressed feeling marginalized by the momentum surrounding SLCs. Moreover, the lack of firm language in the UTLA contract regarding SLC responsibilities for teachers and teacher-leaders was a point of contention at several schools.

Schools that have made that relationship work have essentially agreed on departments continuing to determine *what* is taught (according to the standards) and the SLC decides on *how* it is taught. In the majority of schools, the struggle was simply one of sharing and balancing time for collaboration between SLC teams and departments. Indeed, faculty from the most active and functional SLCs often cited the need to meet voluntarily after school, lunchtime, on Saturdays, or during intersession. Meeting outside the regular school day was necessitated because very few schools had some form of common conference periods for teachers to meet. As a result, SLCs and subject area departments at many schools were both competing for time during the regular school day and/or on the school's professional development calendar. This matter is further complicated if a school is preparing for WASC accreditation. Schools often abandoned SLC collaboration in order to organize themselves into subject area departments for WASC.

Another commonly cited problem was the persistence of perceived or actual preferential treatment. During site visit interviews, some stakeholders pointed to "powerful teachers" or "star SLCs" on campus that were perceived to exercise more authority and autonomy than others on campus. Schools with large magnet programs were especially prone to disputes of this nature.

Data-Driven Decisions

In 2006-07, the LAUSD Office of School Redesign (now defunct) provided explicit guidelines on how schools should be using student achievement data as part of school planning. Schools were urged to:

1) *Disaggregate significant student data according to the SLCs and record the analysis of that data by the SLCs. Performance/assessment data should generally be shared among SLCs, and between SLCs and core departments for the benefit of all students. SLCs are not only consumers, but are collectors, organizers, and presenters of data. Members of these organizational structures are mutually accountable for student progress and may offer each other additional perspectives for understanding student learning results. Through meaningful collaboration, these shared perspectives will certainly supplement, and may complement the school wide efforts to analyze relevant data and take coordinated action.*

2) *Include members from each SLC on committees and school wide teams whose task is to analyze student outcome data. Establish a training-of-trainers model for the benefit of all SLCs; SLCs must be capable of performing critical data analysis and establishing a system of continuous improvement in order to work effectively as an autonomous educational unit. Personalization structures and strategies which result in deep teacher-student relationships should facilitate the individualized analysis of assessment data, student-centered interpretations, modification of the teaching/learning process, and the establishment of a focused professional development program in each SLC.*

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Data-Driven School Improvement: **Polytechnic High School** formed a school-wide Data Team comprised of 15 staff members. This group meets regularly with external technical assistance from Dr. Cox, a well-known expert on data-driven instruction. The Data Team has been successful in identifying quantifiable measures tied to school success and shaping staff professional development around affecting these key outcome measures. For example, the Data Team correlated 9th grade CST and CAHSEE scores to provide staff with data and accompanying instructional strategies for serving at-risk students effectively in the classroom.

Although all sites reported "flagging" student records in the Student Information System (SIS) so that student data could be disaggregated by SLC, site visits revealed that the review of student data by SLC was a common practice at only about half (10 schools) of the grantee sites. These schools were able to provide evidence of how data were regularly disaggregated and disseminated to improve implementation of SLCs (e.g., examining 10th grade CAHSEE pass rates by SLC) and/or to assist teachers and counselors with access to timely data for advisory and course planning. One of those schools created an SLC Data Team that makes monthly reports to the faculty (see Best Practice box). At some schools, data usage was limited to a few of the SLCs on campus who requested and/or extracted data themselves. In sum, many schools and SLCs continue to not take advantage of the potential for applying data-driving planning to SLC implementation. When probed, school stakeholders cited one of three reasons for the lack of data use: 1) lack of expertise/capacity to extract data by SLC; 2) insufficient time/manpower to run data by SLC; and 3) unwillingness to share data in this manner for fear of provoking intra-faculty discord.

Local District Support

In 2006-07, Superintendent Brewer announced that local districts would exercise direct administrative purview for SLC support and monitoring. Staffing of the central Office of School Redesign was significantly reduced, with only one full-time and one part-time position assigned to the SLC grantee schools. In 2008-09, the district no longer provided a support office to help with SLC implementation. Henceforth, technical assistance and support functions would primarily be exercised through the high school directors and other local district officials. Central office functions were confined to grant reporting and accountability, with some coordination of district-wide professional development.

Since this change, schools have reported wide disparities in the level of support and monitoring of SLC implementation from local districts. The most common areas of local district support reported by schools in 2008-09 included:

- Revising SLC implementation plans based on changing conditions (e.g., declining enrollment, new schools opening, etc.)
- Shaping professional development topics linked to SLC implementation (e.g., personalization, instructional strategies, data analysis, etc.)
- Providing coaching and dialogue with principals tied to SLC goals and objectives
- Reviewing school master schedules for alignment to SLC priorities

SLC BEST PRACTICE

9th Grade Intervention Audit: The School Improvement Facilitator for Local District 2 conducted an audit of strategic intervention programs targeting 9th graders with Ds and Fs in A-G classes. In addition to the audit, each high school was interviewed to assess their knowledge of intervention programs on site. This local district effort was aimed at furthering the ability of schools to implement Response to intervention (RTI) or Pyramid of Intervention, a district-wide initiative. In particular, the report's findings suggested a larger role for professional development on RTI.

- Facilitating visitations to other schools further along in implementing SLCs
- Developing Professional Learning Communities as a model for teacher collaboration
- Providing coaching and oversight of subject specific initiatives (e.g., monitoring English/Language Arts pacing)

However, schools' perception of Local District Support was quite mixed. Only seven schools (three each in cohorts 5 and 6, and one in Cohort 8) cited strong and regular local district support. Most other schools characterized local district support as helpful but infrequent, and largely dependent upon school request or crisis/emergency situations, with little proactive monitoring or support from local districts.

Summary and Recommendations

Schools have experienced mixed results in terms of distributing leadership. Some have moved forward and been able to strengthen leadership capacity and sustainability characterized by: a) broad understanding of the overall school vision and rationale for school restructuring; b) clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder groups in implementing SLCs; and c) regular collaboration to achieve desired results. Others have languished, with the traditional structure, based on hierarchy, custom and policy, resilient and resistant to change. Common barriers included administrative turnover, SLC/departmental tensions, and lack of transparency leading to perceptions of preferential treatment.

In terms of becoming more data-driven, about half the schools are taking advantage of the availability of data disaggregated by SLC to inform decision-making. Despite the wholesale move to local district oversight and support of SLC implementation, most schools have not experienced much proactive support from local districts. Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations in the area of accountability and distributed leadership:

1. **Provide time for SLC teams to meet during the regular school day.** To the extent possible, schools should provide common conference periods for teachers by SLC to institutionalize common planning and regular interdisciplinary interactions tied to rigor, relevance, and relationships. In lieu of common conferencing, schools should dedicate time for SLC teams to collaborate at least twice monthly during banked time Tuesdays or other professional development.

2. **Clarify SLC roles of site-based personnel and local districts.** The SLC responsibilities of out-of-classroom personnel assigned to SLCs (assistant principal and counselor) need further definition and leadership training, along with those of the department chair vis-à-vis SLC lead teachers. Likewise, there is a need to clarify the role of Local District offices and build the capacity of Local District personnel to

adequately assist schools as they encounter implementation challenges and to provide appropriate oversight and support to foster and develop SLC reforms.

3. **Support schools and teachers in the use of data openly and regularly and disaggregated by SLCs.** Data is more available and accessible than ever before. Schools have formative and summative data about student achievement and they have the capacity to access and manipulate data as needed. However, only half of the grantee schools are making widespread use of data, especially data disaggregated by SLC. Schools will benefit from clear performance targets, such as an increase in CAHSEE pass rates or decrease in ninth grade retention tied to SLC implementation. When crafted carefully and with input from multiple stakeholders, success indicators provide clarity about expectations, motivate behavior, foster a shared vision, and promote more honest dialogue about student achievement.

Area 8: Collaboration, Parent & Community Engagement

Evaluation Benchmark: *All members of the Small School Learning Community are viewed as critical allies and are significantly included in the school community (i.e., students, teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, business and community partners). An ongoing partnership is aimed at supporting continuous improvement of student achievement. Authentic engagement leads to sustained participation in critical school decisions and implementation of school efforts.*

Average 2008-09 Rating:

▼2.7 (Cohort 5)
▼2.6 (Cohort 6)
▼1.3 (Cohort 8)

1	2	3	4	5	6
No evidence of implementation	Planning for implementation	Early implementation	Developmental implementation	Solid implementation	Full implementation

High performing SLCs understand and value the power of collaboration and see parents and external partners from business, community, and postsecondary institutions as integral to student success. SLCs that authentically engage parents to support students and teachers in this work have the potential to more effectively reach their desired goals. Similarly, when partners from the community, local employers, and post-secondary institutions get involved in SLCs, student access to mentoring, internships, job shadowing, field trips, guest speakers, etc. is expanded. When these activities are integrated into the student learning experience, inside and outside the classroom, students become more actively engaged in their education and begin to see the relevance of pursuing further education after high school.

As shown by the ratings above, SLC grantee schools have made limited progress on this attribute. Schools that have been implementing SLCs for 3-4 years under the USDE grant remain at the advanced stages of planning for implementation. Cohort 8 schools after one year of implementation have largely not addressed this attribute. In sum, parent/community engagement has been little affected by the implementation of SLC reforms.

Parent Outreach and Participation

Engaging parents in SLC planning and decision-making continues to be the aspect of SLC implementation where LAUSD high schools have made the least progress. Almost none of the schools provided evidence that they had significantly connected parents to SLC implementation efforts. In other words, there had not been any significant changes at a school-wide level designed to involve parents in decisions related to SLC selection, curriculum planning, student activities, or modifications to SLC design.

As a whole, parent involvement tended to rely on school-wide parent initiatives already underway to create home-school connections. Most had only one or two parent events per year and plans to connect these to SLCs remained a future goal. For example, one Cohort

5 school organized a drive to increase the student participation rate for CAHSEE testing, enlisting parents to provide food and prizes to students in SLCs that met or exceeded the targeted participation rate. While not linked to SLC development, per se, this effort showed how involving parents through SLCs could be beneficial.

Surprisingly, parent centers on these campuses were not involved in informing or enlisting parents around SLC issues. Parents were largely informed about student selection or placement into SLCs *after the fact*, and staff often characterized parent involvement as an insurmountable challenge at the high school level.

This is not to say that some SLC had not sought to increase parent involvement. However, these efforts were confined to only a small number of parents and/or restricted to parents of one of the more active SLCs on campus. Indeed, the absence of *school-wide* strategies for involving parents at the majority of SLC grantee schools prompted several individual SLCs to organize their own efforts. For example, some individual SLCs at a handful of school initiated student-led conferences as a way to encourage students to take ownership of their learning and their progress. Other SLCs provided updates at monthly parent meetings or distributed monthly newsletters to parents.

Some grantee schools referred to their school Website as tool to communicate SLC information (mission, goals, faculty, course offerings, and connection to A-G or CTE) and upcoming events. However, less than a third of the grantee sites had fully functional Web pages that were easily accessible from the school's homepage. Ten schools had links to SLC pages but offered scant information about the SLCs on campus. The remaining schools invested no time or resources to include SLC reform to disseminate information about the school priorities to parents, community based organizations, potential business partners, and students

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Expanding opportunities to aid parents and students in SLC selection: **San Pedro High School** had administrators and counselors conduct Parent Application Nights at the feeder middle schools in late February and early March. The SLCs presented information that informed students about the essence of each SLC. Counselors returned in early April to program students into classes. Later in the month, an Open House was held at San Pedro High School for 8th graders and their parents. At which time, parents were able to meet with SLC Lead teachers and counselors. Parents and students were provided with more information about the instructional programs and the clubs related to each SLC.

Staff and student survey data paint a more optimistic picture than the one described above. As shown in Table 32, SLC staff was in agreement that they needed to make a more concerted effort to involve parents in SLCs. According to staff survey responses, 55% of Cohort 5 staff, 60% of Cohort 6 staff, and 53% of Cohort 8 staff agreed that parents were considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community. Moreover, staff perceptions of parent involvement increased slightly (5%-6%) over time for Cohort 5 and 6 schools.

Table 32: Staff Perceptions of Parent and Community Engagement

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=1280)	(N=1273)	(N=1302)	(N=1202)	-78
This school encourages partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement SLC.	51%	54%	60%	60%	9%
Community partners, employers and businesses are involved in the development of SLC.	32%	33%	40%	40%	8%
Parents are considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community.	50%	52%	52%	55%	5%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(N=N/A)	(N=1285)	(N=1218)	(N=1074)	
This school encourages partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement SLC.	NA	55%	59%	62%	7%
Community partners, employers and businesses are involved in the development of SLC.	NA	38%	42%	43%	5%
Parents are considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community.	NA	54%	57%	60%	6%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(348)	NA
This school encourages partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement SLC.	NA	NA	NA	57%	NA
Community partners, employers and businesses are involved in the development of SLC.	NA	NA	NA	37%	NA
Parents are considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community.	NA	NA	NA	53%	NA

For their part, students surveyed at the Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 high schools were quite positive about parental support for learning and parental comfort with school staff. As shown in Table 33 and 34 below, approximately 80% of the 2009 10th and 12th grade students agreed that they "have support at home to complete my homework and do well in school" Likewise, at least 69%-74% of 2009 student survey respondents agreed that their parents "feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information." In sum, the survey data paints a picture of students who feel that conditions are good for strengthening school-home connections. If one is to juxtapose the notion that students believe that home-school relationships are satisfactory, yet the school staff expresses frustration with the levels of parent involvement at the school site; these findings present an issue that needs further study.

Table 33: 10th Grade Student Perceptions of Parent Support

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=4823)	(N=5117)	(N=5314)	(N=4442)	-381
I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school	NA	81%	81%	79%	-2%
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information	74%	75%	76%	72%	-2%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(N=4939)	(N=5203)	(N=3943)	-996
I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school	NA	81%	83%	80%	-1%
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information	NA	78%	76%	71%	-7%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(348)	NA
I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school	NA	NA	NA	79%	NA
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information	NA	NA	NA	69%	NA

Table 34: 12th Grade Student Perceptions of Parent Support

Cohort 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
	(N=3373)	(N=3737)	(N=4370)	(N=3519)	146
I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school	NA	83%	83%	82%	-1%
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information	74%	73%	75%	73%	-1%
Cohort 6	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(N=N/A)	(N=3486)	(N=3828)	(N=3036)	-450
I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school	NA	85%	85%	82%	-3%
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information	NA	74%	76%	74%	0%
Cohort 8	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**Net Change**
	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(1020)	NA
I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school	NA	NA	NA	79%	NA
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information	NA	NA	NA	70%	NA

Community Partnerships

School staff was more positive about their efforts to engage community partners in their SLC work. Approximately 60% of SLC staff survey respondents agreed that schools encouraged partnership with employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement SLCs (Table 30). Moreover, this percentage has increased 7%-9% among Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Augmenting Parent and Community Partnerships: **Sylmar High School**, is making efforts to expand upon efforts to connect parents and business partners to the school, and more specifically SLCs. Sylmar partnered with Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP) to create the Sylmar Neighborhood Partnership, which is coalition of students, parents, teachers, staff, community groups, post-secondary schools, business groups, and on campus service providers that is working to increase the number of students who stay in school, graduate and are prepared for college or other postsecondary educational opportunities. The collaborative has four main goals: increasing parent involvement in their children's education; increasing communication and service coordination among agencies, schools, and community members, increasing college awareness, access, and eligibility; increasing student academic skills through academic enrichment

Data collected from the Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools to document external partnerships resulted in the following findings:

- Fourteen schools had relationships with community-based organizations. These partners were quite varied, representing museums, Boys & Girls Clubs, foundations, and other types of associations or non-profits.
- Nine schools had relationships with local governmental organizations. Several of these involved partnerships with local LAUSD elementary schools for SLCs organized around a Public Service or Education focus. Others government entities included neighborhood councils, Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles Fire Department, Los Angeles Superior Court, etc.
- Thirteen schools had established business/employer to support SLC themes and/or goals. Industry sectors represented included financial services, aviation/aeronautics, legal, health care, environment, automotive, retail, engineering, and manufacturing.
- Thirteen schools forged partnerships with postsecondary institutions (see Best Practice below), most typically with community colleges around dual/concurrent enrollment.

SLC BEST PRACTICE

Promoting College Readiness through Postsecondary Partners: **Manual Arts High School has** established ties with a number of postsecondary institutions in order to raise academic expectations and persuade students to consider high education. Postsecondary partners include Los Angeles Trade Tech, Los Angeles City College, California State University, Los Angeles, and USC. In addition, a few SLCs have involved community-based organizations also linked to college access/readiness including the Fulfillment Fund and the Neighborhood Academic Initiative.

More than half of the partnerships cited by Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools involved long-standing relationships involving pre-existing SLCs (e.g., magnet programs, Humanitas, California Partnership Academies). In addition, the linkages between external partners and SLCs were either restricted to one or two SLCs on campus or a more generalized partnership with the school as a whole. These findings are buttressed by the fact that far fewer (approximately 40%) staff survey respondents agreed that community partners, employers and businesses were actively involved in fostering the development of SLCs (see Table 32 above).

In general, external partnerships were seen as a vehicle for providing students with real-world experiences, college exposure and enrichment opportunities. It is clear many SLCs focused on motivating students through increased academic relevance and expanded access to resources through these external partnerships. The next step may be to find ways to involve both partners and parents in the development of SLC academic programs and SLC decision-making, such as SLC advisory boards.

Summary and Recommendations

Most schools continue to struggle with parent engagement, particularly connecting parent involvement and outreach to SLC development. School-wide efforts to link parent involvement and outreach to SLCs have largely not come to fruition. Traditional efforts to inform parents and encourage participation persist with no significant change in parental outcomes. In response, some individual SLCs have undertaken actions to develop partnerships with parents. Schools were more likely to develop external partnerships with business/industry, community-based organization, local government, and postsecondary institutions. Nonetheless, these external partnerships were largely restricted to a minority of SLCs on campus or not linked to SLC implementation. Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations in the area of parent and community engagement:

1. **Develop more systematic ways to involve parents up-front in the design of SLCs and on into SLC implementation.** The tendency is for schools to delay connections until students are being placed in SLCs, such as the signing off of student SLC preference forms, or after students are placed in SLCs. Involving parents in the design and construction of SLCs ensures ownership and reinforces the importance of parent involvement from the beginning.

2. **Give Parent Centers a higher profile in SLC implementation.** Train parent center representatives to inform parents about the school's SLC offerings. Involve parent center representatives in advisement activities, college awareness campaigns, and academic support strategies. Parent Centers can become "parent advisors" as SLCs support students to meet increased academic expectations.

3. **Create SLC advisory boards for parents and external partners in order to link these stakeholders more concretely to the development and expansion of SLCs**. SLC advisory boards comprised of parent and partner representatives could assist schools in outreach, provide opportunities for participation in SLC decision-making, and showcase school commitment to altering the status quo. At a minimum, the SLC advisory boards might provide an opportunity for schools to enlist outside voices in crafting outreach to parents and community which addresses misconceptions about college and career preparation and equip families with skills needed to chart a post-high school pathway for their children.

4. **Develop school Websites to include information about SLC reform.** Schools must do a better job of informing stakeholders about the structure and progress of SLC reform at their school. School and/or SLC websites offer an opportunity to disseminate information in a more targeted fashion. Platforms of dissemination of such information exist but few schools have adequately updated these to include information on SLCs beyond a general description of the options available at the school.

PART V—STUDENT AND SCHOOL OUTCOMES

This section of the report documents the student and school outcomes at Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools. Because nearly all (96% of students at Cohort 5, 97% at Cohort 6, and 99% at Cohort 8 schools) of the students were enrolled in SLCs in 2008-09, the analyses in this section of the report are school-wide numbers rather than a comparison between SLC students and Non-SLC students. In effect, the "control" or comparison group of students has "disappeared" at these schools with the scale-up of SLC implementation efforts.

Table 35: Academic Performance Index and Adequate Yearly Progress by School/Cohort

	2006 Growth Score	2007 Growth Score	2008 Growth Score	2009 Growth Score	API Change	2009 School Wide ELA	2009 School Wide Math	Program Improvement Status/Year
Cohort 5								
Canoga Park	641	*NA	654	659	18	37.5	43.5	Yes/2006-07
Grant	647	625	642	651	4	40.0	41.6	Yes/2004-05
Huntington Park	546	543	564	568	22	26.8	23.4	Yes/1997-98
Lincoln	576	594	608	587	11	28.6	39.0	Yes/1997-98
Los Angeles	523	549	*NA	564	41	26.7	35.2	Yes/1998-99
Manual Arts	522	514	*NA	536	14	22.9	25.1	Yes/1997-98
Marshall	637	653	647	665	28	47.1	46.7	Yes/2008-09
San Pedro	628	639	682	676	48	45.8	41.0	Yes/2006-07
Sylmar	588	587	620	622	34	34.6	37.9	Yes/2001-02
Washington Prep	500	*NA	*NA	517	17	21.6	15.9	Yes/1998-99
Cohort Average	***581***	***588***	***631***	***604.5***	***23.7***	***34.4***	***35***	***100% /PI***
Cohort 6								
Bell	579	580	592	640	61	30.2	51.9	Yes/1997-98
Chatsworth	697	704	704	706	9	46.6	45.4	Yes/2009-10
Franklin	600	601	603	639	39	35.4	39.1	Yes/1997-98
Monroe	608	610	618	655	47	31.7	40.2	Yes/2001-02
Polytechnic	609	608	635	649	40	59	59.4	Not in PI
Roosevelt	542	557	551	577	35	31.1	33.7	Yes/1997-98
Van Nuys	656	670	723	728	72	55.3	62.1	Yes/2007-08
Westchester	615	589	603	629	28	37.4	36.7	Yes/2007-08
Cohort Average	***601***	***603***	***616***	***653***	***41.3***	***41***	***46***	***88% PI***
Cohort 8								
Fairfax	647	668	694	733	86	45.5	58.5	Yes/ 2003-04
Reseda	624	653	703	729	105	46.4	51.8	Yes/ 2003-04
South Gate	602	565	611	640	38	36.3	37.1	Yes/ 2003-04
Cohort Average	***624***	***629***	***669***	***701***	***76***	***42.7***	***49.1***	**100% PI**
District Average	**649**	**658**	**664**	**694**	**34**	**40.8**	**45.8**	**Yes/2004-05**

Source: California Department of Education
*School failed to test a representative population (95%) of students

Composite Measures of Student Achievement

All public schools in California are subject to separate accountability targets emanating from the State and Federal government. At the State level, schools must show growth on the Academic Performance Index (API), a composite of student achievement on the California Standards Tests (CSTs) in grade 9-11 English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, as well as the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which tests 10th graders in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. In the analysis of composite state and federal accountability, this report displays data 2007-2009 for all schools, irrespective of when they received SLC grant funding. All other tables in this report are comprised of data from baseline (the year prior to SLC grant or first year of SLC implementation) to current year.

As shown in Table 35 above, the growth API has increased an average of nearly 24 points since 2006 at Cohort 5 schools and 37 points at Cohort 6 schools. API scores increased the most (in rank order) at San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Sylmar in Cohort 5 and at Van Nuys, Bell, and Monroe in Cohort 6. The API Change average for Cohort 8 increased dramatically at Reseda and Fairfax, and averaged nearly twice that of Cohort 6, and over three times that of Cohort 5.[32] Across all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest API growth score gains occurred (in rank order) at Reseda, Fairfax, Van Nuys, Bell, San Pedro, and Monroe.

In terms of Federal accountability under the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measure, which measures the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced, Cohort 5 schools performed well below district-wide averages. Only one school was able to meet AYP in both ELA and Math. However, both Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 exceeded the district average in ELA and Math. Three school met AYP in Cohort 6, while two of the three Cohort 8 schools met AYP in ELA and Math.

On average, schools in Cohort 5 increased an average of 2.7% in the proportion of students meeting proficiency on ELA AYP. Los Angeles and Sylmar scored best on this measure. For Cohort 6, the average improvement was 7.3% with Polytechnic, Van Nuys, Franklin, and Westchester showing the most improvement. Increases were highest among Cohort 8 schools (average increase of 10.3%) with large increases at both Reseda and South Gate. Across all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest ELA AYP growth occurred (in rank order) at Polytechnic, Reseda, South Gate, and Franklin (see Table 36 below).

In Mathematics, schools in Cohort 5 increased an average of 4.7% in the proportion of students meeting proficiency on ELA AYP. Sylmar, Los Angeles, and Manual Arts scored best on this measure. For Cohort 6, the average improvement was 7.3% with Polytechnic and Van Nuys showing the most improvement. Increases were highest among Cohort 8 schools (average increase of 12.3%) with large increases at both Fairfax and Reseda. Across

[32] It is important to note that Cohort 8 has less variability in the number of low and high performing schools in the cohort, hence gains made by high achieving schools are not ameliorated by low performing school when computing the cohort average. Both Fairfax and Reseda are setting the bar for the cohort. They have exceeded the district average for API the last four years. Both Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools performed well below the district average API both in terms of the actual growth score and the rate of improvement over the last three years. However, the district-wide API includes all schools (K-12) and is not reported separately for grades 9-12. As such, the district-wide average may overstate the actual gains at high schools because it factors in larger gains among elementary and middle schools.

all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest Math AYP growth occurred (in rank order) at Polytechnic, Reseda, Sylmar, Fairfax, Van Nuys, Franklin, and Westchester (see Table 36 below).

For high schools, this indicator reports the percentage of 10th grade students who attain "proficiency" on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in English/Language Arts and Mathematics the first-time the exam is administered (generally Spring of the sophomore year). The "cut score" for proficiency on the CAHSEE for proficiency is 380, compared to the score of 350 necessary to simply pass the exam. Again, the district-wide AYP factors in K-12 schools; at elementary and middle schools AYP is based on the California Standards Tests rather than the CAHSEE and has its own set of "cut scores" to yield proficiency. Ironically, even the schools that are making "progress" (exceeding district averages and meeting AYP) are still in Program Improvement status. As schools continue to increase academic achievement school-wide, they are often failing to garner the needed proficiency levels from numerically significant subgroups (e.g., English Learners and Students with Disabilities) to exit Program Improvement.

Table 36 Adequate Yearly Progress by Cohort (% Advanced and Proficient)

	English/Language Arts						Math					
	AYP Goal 22.3%		AYP Goal 33.4%		AYP Goal 44.5%		AYP Goal 20.9%		AYP Goal 32.2%		AYP Goal 43.5%	
Cohort 5	AYP 2007	Met AYP 2007	AYP 2008	Met AYP 2008	AYP 2009	Met AYP 2009	AYP 2007	Met AYP 2007	AYP 2008	Met AYP 2008	AYP 2009	Met AYP 2009
Canoga Park	36%	Yes	42%	Yes	38%	No	40%	Yes	46%	Yes	44%	Yes
Grant	37%	Yes	42%	Yes	40%	No	41%	Yes	37%	Yes	42%	No
Huntington Park	25%	Yes	28%	No	27%	No	20%	No	26%	No	23%	No
Lincoln	33%	Yes	30%	No	29%	No	40%	Yes	35%	Yes	39%	No
Los Angeles	25%	Yes	30%	No	27%	No	27%	Yes	30%	No	35%	No
Manual Arts	18%	No	21%	No	23%	No	18%	No	20%	No	25%	No
Marshall	43%	Yes	46%	Yes	47%	Yes	43%	Yes	44%	Yes	47%	Yes
San Pedro	43%	Yes	51%	Yes	46%	Yes	38%	Yes	44%	Yes	41%	No
Sylmar	29%	Yes	32%	No	35%	No	23%	Yes	28%	No	38%	No
Washington Prep	18%	No	22%	No	22%	No	13%	No	16%	No	16%	No
Cohort 6												
Bell	26%	Yes	30%	No	30%	No	44%	Yes	53%	Yes	52%	Yes
Chatsworth	44%	Yes	54%	Yes	47%	Yes	48%	Yes	55%	Yes	45%	Yes
Franklin	27%	Yes	34%	Yes	35%	No	28%	Yes	31%	No	39%	No
Monroe	28%	Yes	30%	No	32%	No	30%	Yes	31%	No	40%	No
Polytechnic	31%	Yes	42%	Yes	49%	Yes	42%	Yes	52%	Yes	57%	Yes
Roosevelt	25%	Yes	27%	No	31%	No	27%	Yes	28%	No	34%	No
Van Nuys	44%	Yes	55%	Yes	55%	Yes	49%	Yes	56%	Yes	62%	Yes
Westchester	33%	Yes	38%	Yes	37%	No	26%	Yes	29%	No	37%	No
Cohort 8												
Fairfax	40%	Yes	52%	Yes	46%	Yes	45%	Yes	50%	Yes	59%	Yes
Reseda	31%	Yes	57%	Yes	46%	Yes	37%	Yes	61%	Yes	52%	Yes
South Gate	26%	Yes	37%	Yes	36%	No	29%	Yes	31%	No	37%	No

Source: California Department of Education

It is also worth noting that all of the Cohort 5 schools have been designated at Program Improvement schools, seven of the eight schools in Cohort 6 are Program Improvement schools, and all three of the Cohort 8 schools are in Program Improvement. In addition, LAUSD entered district Program Improvement status in 2004-05.

As schools continue to increase academic achievement school-wide, they are often failing to garner the needed proficiency levels from numerically significant subgroups (e.g., English Learners and Students with Disabilities) to exit Program Improvement. It is also worth noting that all of the Cohort 5 schools have been designated at Program Improvement schools, seven of the eight schools in Cohort 6 are Program Improvement schools, and all three of the Cohort 8 schools are in Program Improvement. In addition, LAUSD entered district Program Improvement status in 2004-05.

Student Achievement at SLC Grantee Schools

To examine the performance of schools in terms of student achievement, analyses focus on the percentage of students who improved at least one proficiency level annually. Specifically, the evaluation calculated the percentage of students who improved from Far Below Basic, Below Basic, and Basic in the years 2005-2009.[33] These results were calculated using student level data provided by LAUSD, and categorized into four groups of schools (ten Cohort 5 schools, eight Cohort 6 schools, three Cohort 8 schools, nine schools previously funded by USDE with SLC implementation grants in Cohorts 3 and 4, and all other comprehensive high schools in LAUSD). These results excluded students in magnet programs and magnet schools, as well as small, autonomous and/or specially themed high schools that enrolled less than 500 students grades 9-12. In this way, the evaluation aimed to compare large, urban high schools funded to implement SLCs to other large, urban high schools not funded but still subject to the requirements of Bulletin 1600 which require all students to be enrolled in SLCs within 3-5 years.

The data included below is school-wide in nature rather than a comparison between SLC and Non-SLC students because nearly all students at Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools were enrolled in a SLC by 2008-09. Similarly, the vast majority of students at the previously funded grantees were in a SLC in 2008-09. It is safe to assume that some of the students at the "other" LAUSD high schools also participated in a SLC during 2008-09 but in lieu of SLC rosters from these schools, the evaluation was unable to provide a percentage of SLC enrollment at these schools. Table 37 below, provides the percentage of students in SLCs at the Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools who were included in the analyses that follow.

[33] For Cohort 5 schools, 2005 was the baseline year prior to receipt of the grant. For Cohort 6 schools, 2006 was the baseline year. As such, 2005 data were not reported below for Cohort 6 schools.

Table 37: SLC enrollment by year, Cohort 5, Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 schools

Cohort	School	% in SLC				
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
5	Canoga Park	11%	31%	42%	65%	98%
5	Grant	12%	20%	19%	80%	100%
5	Huntington Park	3%	43%	68%	99%	98%
5	Lincoln	6%	75%	87%	100%	97%
5	Los Angeles	6%	14%	49%	100%	94%
5	Manual Arts	13%	83%	83%	96%	93%
5	Marshall	11%	25%	31%	83%	96%
5	San Pedro	13%	39%	41%	100%	99%
5	Sylmar	15%	75%	80%	93%	98%
5	Washington Prep	19%	42%	84%	100%	92%
	C5 AVERAGE	**10%**	**44%**	**59%**	**93%**	**97%**
6	Bell	NA	21%	56%	98%	98%
6	Chatsworth	NA	5%	32%	16%	97%
6	Franklin	NA	14%	25%	97%	97%
6	Monroe	NA	60%	83%	100%	99%
6	Polytechnic	NA	44%	57%	97%	95%
6	Roosevelt	NA	76%	69%	100%	96%
6	Van Nuys	NA	33%	58%	100%	99%
6	Westchester	NA	16%	37%	100%	99%
	C6 AVERAGE		**41%**	**57%**	**90%**	**98%**
8	**Fairfax**	NA	NA	NA	NA	**99%**
8	**Reseda**	NA	NA	NA	NA	**99%**
8	**Sought Gate**	NA	NA	NA	NA	**99%**
	C8 AVERAGE					**99%**

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch and school provided SLC rosters

Student Achievement in English/Language Arts (ELA)

As shown in Table 38 below, Cohort 6 showed the most growth (10%) in the percentage of Far Below Basic students in ELA who improved, compared to all SLC cohorts and other LAUSD high schools. Both Other LAUSD High Schools and Previous USDE Grantee Schools (Cohorts 3 and 4) only improved the scores of 2% of Far Below Basic students in English/Language Arts, respectively. Overall, only Cohort 6 was able to make sizeable improvement in the movement of Far Below Basic students between 2006 and 2009. It should be noted that all groups, with the exception of Cohort 8, were impacted by a significant decrease in the percentage of Far Below Basic students moving a proficiency level when comparing 2008 to 2009. All four groups of schools improved the scores of 39% (Cohort 5) to 48% (Cohort 8) of Far Below Basic students in 2009.

Table 38: ELA CST, Improvements by Proficiency Level, 2005-2009

FBB Improvement (Movement out of Far Below Basic)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	39%	31%	49%	51%	39%	0%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	31%	46%	52%	41%	10%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	48%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	39%	30%	48%	52%	41%	2%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	37%	31%	49%	50%	39%	2%
BB Improvement (Movement out of Below Basic)						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	23%	19%	30%	30%	25%	2%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	19%	29%	30%	31%	12%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	35%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	22%	17%	29%	31%	26%	4%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	23%	19%	31%	32%	25%	2%
B Improvement (Movement out of Basic)						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	13%	12%	19%	19%	13%	0%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	12%	19%	20%	17%	5%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	22%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	13%	11%	19%	19%	15%	2%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	14%	13%	22%	21%	14%	0%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Across all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest increases in the proportion of Far Below Basic students advancing at least one proficiency level occurred (in rank order) at: Roosevelt, Fairfax, Franklin, San Pedro, and Bell. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Compared to baseline, Cohort 6 showed the most growth (12%) in the percentage of Below Basic students in ELA who improved, compared to both Cohort 5 (2%), previous SLC cohorts (4%), and other LAUSD high schools (2%). On average, all four groups of schools improved the scores of 25%-35% of Below Basic students in 2009. All four groups of schools improved the scores of 25% (Cohort 5 and Other LAUSD schools) to 35% (Cohort 8) of Below Basic students in 2009.

Across all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest increases in the proportion of Below Basic students advancing at least one proficiency level occurred (in rank order) at: Fairfax, Roosevelt, San Pedro, Bell, Franklin, and Westchester. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

While Other LAUSD schools posted no improvement in the percentage of Basic students moving at least one proficiency level 2005-2009, Cohort 6 showed a 5% increase and previous (Cohort 3 and 4) grantees showed a 2% improvement. On average, all four groups of schools improved the scores of 13% (Cohort 5) to 22% (Cohort 8) of Basic students. Across all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest increases in the proportion of Basic students advancing at least one proficiency level occurred (in rank order) at: Fairfax, Roosevelt, Bell, Westchester, San Pedro, Reseda, and South Gate. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

As shown in Table 39, improvements in the 10th grade ELA CAHSEE pass rate were highest among Cohort 6 schools (11%) and lowest for Cohort 5 schools (6%). Cohort 8 showed the highest ELA CAHSEE pass rates in 2009 (79%), with Cohort 5 schools with the lowest overall average pass rate (69%).

Among Cohort 5 schools, the following schools showed the largest increases in ELA CAHSEE pass rates: Canoga Park, Los Angeles, and Sylmar. For Cohort 6 schools, the largest increases occurred at: Van Nuys, Polytechnic, Franklin, and Roosevelt. Reseda had the largest increase among Cohort 8 schools. Across all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest increases in ELA CAHSEE pass rates occurred (in rank order) at: Reseda, Van Nuys, Polytechnic, Franklin, Roosevelt, and Canoga Park. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 39: ELA CAHSEE 10th Grade Pass Rates, 2005-2009

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
Cohort 5(N=10 schools)	63%	64%	64%	70%	69%	6%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	64%	63%	72%	75%	11%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	79%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	65%	67%	63%	72%	73%	8%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	64%	63%	62%	70%	73%	9%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Student Achievement in Mathematics

For the analyses of California Standards Test (CST) in Mathematics, the evaluation examined course performance in Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II at the high school level. Students are tested based on their course of enrollment, rather than grade level 9-11 like other CST exams.

As shown in Table 40 below, Cohort 6 was the only group to show any growth in the percentage of students moving upward from Far Below Basic, increasing 2% compared to all other groups of schools, which showed declines of 7%-12% (not including Cohort 8). At the individual school level, schools most likely to move students out of Far Below Basic in Math (in rank order) included: Fairfax, Bell, Chatsworth, Reseda, Manual Arts, and Roosevelt. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Compared to baseline, Cohort 6 also showed the most growth (4%) in the percentage of Below Basic students in Mathematics who improved, compared to all other groups of schools, which showed improvements of 1%-2%. All but Cohort 6 (18%) scored similarly in 2008, with improvements among 12%-13% of Below Basic students. At the individual school level, schools most likely to move students upward from Below Basic in Math (in rank order) included: Bell, Canoga Park, and Reseda, Roosevelt, Fairfax, and San Pedro. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 40: Mathematics CST, Improvements by Proficiency Level, 2005-2009

FBB Improvement (Movement out of Far Below Basic)	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	48%	39%	45%	43%	36%	-12%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	45%	49%	51%	47%	2%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	46%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	49%	42%	48%	45%	42%	-7%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	52%	42%	45%	44%	41%	-11%
BB Improvement (Movement out of Below Basic)						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	10%	9%	11%	12%	10%	0%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	14%	16%	18%	15%	1%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	14%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	12%	10%	13%	14%	12%	0%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	12%	9%	12%	13%	11%	-1%
B Improvement (Movement out of Basic)						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	8%	7%	8%	9%	10%	2%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	10%	12%	14%	14%	4%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	10%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	8%	8%	9%	10%	10%	2%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	8%	7%	10%	11%	10%	2%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

There was virtually no growth in the percentage of Basic students in Mathematics who improved, among the comparison groups (range 1 to -1). In 2009, all groups of schools experienced zero to negative growth between 2008 and 2009. Also, Cohort 6 outpaced all other groups in consistently moving students from one proficiency level to the next highest level in Mathematics in 2009. At the individual school level, schools most likely to move students upward from Basic in Math (in rank order) included: Bell, Canoga Park, and Reseda. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

As shown in Table 41, improvements in the Mathematics CAHSEE pass rate varied from 13% (Cohort 5) to 18% (previous Cohort 3 and 4 schools). The highest rate of Math CAHSEE passage in 2009 occurred at Cohort 8 schools (80%), followed closely by Cohort 6 (78%) and previous USDE grantees (75%).

Among Cohort 5 schools, the following schools showed the largest increases in ELA CAHSEE pass rates: Sylmar, Lincoln, and Los Angeles. For Cohort 6 schools, the largest increases occurred at: Polytechnic, Franklin, Roosevelt, and Van Nuys. Reseda had the largest increase among Cohort 8 schools. Across all schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest increases in Math CAHSEE pass rates occurred (in rank order) at: Reseda, Polytechnic, Sylmar, Franklin, Fairfax, Roosevelt, and Van Nuys. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 41: Mathematics CAHSEE 10th Grade Pass Rates, 2005-2009

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
Cohort 5 -SLC Students (N=10 schools)	56%	58%	59%	67%	69%	13%
Cohort 6 -SLC Students (N=8 schools)	NA	61%	63%	73%	78%	17%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	57%	62%	60%	71%	75%	18%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	57%	58%	57%	68%	72%	15%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Pupil Attendance

Improvements in pupil attendance were roughly similar for all groups of schools and varied by 1%-4% depending on grade and group of schools. Attendance rates in 2008-09 also were similar (within 2% of each other) for the four groups of schools under comparison (Table 42). Detailed individual school results may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 42: Attendance Rates by Grade, 2005-2009

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net Change
Grade 9						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	89%	88%	89%	91%	92%	3%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	89%	90%	92%	93%	4%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	93%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	89%	89%	90%	92%	93%	4%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	89%	88%	90%	92%	93%	4%
Grade 10						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	90%	89%	90%	92%	93%	3%
Cohort 6 (N=8 schools)	NA	90%	91%	92%	94%	4%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	95%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	90%	90%	91%	93%	94%	4%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	89%	89%	91%	92%	93%	4%
Grade 11						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	90%	89%	90%	92%	93%	3%
Cohort 6 (N=9 schools)	NA	90%	91%	92%	94%	4%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	94%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	91%	90%	92%	93%	94%	3%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	89%	89%	91%	92%	93%	4%
Grade 12						
Cohort 5 (N=10 schools)	91%	91%	91%	92%	92%	1%
Cohort 6 (N=9 schools)	NA	92%	92%	93%	93%	1%
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	NA	NA	NA	NA	93%	NA
Previous USDE SLC Grantees (N=9 schools)	92%	91%	92%	93%	94%	2%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	91%	90%	91%	92%	93%	2%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

School Dropout, Graduation, and UC/CSU Eligibility

In 2006-07, California altered the way in which dropout rates were calculated to take into account longitudinal tracking of individual students over time. This was the second year in which this was done, so the comparable data to analysis was made for the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years (2008-09 data will likely be available in May-June of 2010).

As shown in Table 43 below, the adjusted one-year dropout rate at all four groups of schools ranged from 4.2% (Cohort 8) to 6.5% (Cohort 5) in 2007-08. One-year dropout rates increased 0.6% at Cohort 5 schools in 2007-08 compared to 2006-07. By contrast, one-year dropout rates decreased 1.4% among Cohort 6 schools.

The four-year derived dropout rates in 2007-08 were lowest among previous Cohort 8 grantees (17.7%) and highest at Cohort 5 schools (26.7%). Cohort 6 schools, previous grantees, and non-grantee high schools performed in between these averages (20%-24%). All SLC grantee schools did better than Other LAUSD schools apart from Cohort 5 on this measure in 2007-08. In addition, the four-year derived dropout rate increased 2.2% among Cohort 5 schools, but decreased significantly (6%) among Cohort 6 schools, and also decreased among previous USDE grantees by 1.4% from 2006-07 to 2007-08.

Across schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest decreases in the four-year dropout rate occurred (in rank order) at: Reseda, Roosevelt, Bell, Westchester, Lincoln, Grant, Van Nuys, and Chatsworth. Detailed individual school results may be found in **Appendix F**.

The NCES graduation rate was highest at prior Cohort 3 and 4 grantees and Cohort 8 (82%), and lowest at Cohort 5 (72%). Cohort 6, and non-grantee high schools performed in between these averages (78%). Graduation rates increased 1% among Cohort 5 schools, 6% among Cohort 6 schools, and 7% among previous USDE grantees between 2006-07 and 2007-08. Across schools, irrespective of cohort, the largest increases in the graduation rate occurred (in rank order) at: South Gate, Reseda, Grant, Van Nuys, Los Angeles, Roosevelt, Monroe, and Marshall. Detailed individual school results may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 43: Average School Dropout, Graduation, and UC/CSU Eligibility Rates, 2007-08

School	Enrollment 9-12	Adjusted 1-Year Derived Dropout Rate (9-12)	Adjusted 4-Year Derived Dropout Rate (9-12)	NCES Graduation Rate	# Graduates	Graduates with UC/CSU Required Courses
Cohort 5	3,271	6.5%	26.7%	72%	498	23.5%
Cohort 6	3,377	4.8%	20%	78%	532	26%
Cohort 8	2,841	4.2%	17.7%	82%	465	23.7%
Previous SLC Grantee	3,716	5.1%	21.6%	82%	595	27%
Other LAUSD HS	2,517	5.2%	24.4%	78%	397	24%
State Total/Average	2,013,687	4.9%	18.9%	80.2%	376,393	33.9%

Source: California Department of Education

In 2007-08, the proportion of 12th grade graduates meeting UC/CSU eligibility was highest at previous grantee schools and Cohort 6 schools, 27% and 26%, respectively.

Cohorts 5 and 8 achieved just under the rate of Other LAUSD high schools. Individual results by school for these data indicators may be found in **Appendix F**.

Summary

Across the various indicators, the achievement data included in this report consistently point to higher performance among Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 schools both in terms of improvement over time and level of attainment reached in 2009. Cohort 5, on average, performs at the lowest level on most of the achievement indicators.

Schools were more likely to show gains on the API, which rewards growth out of the lowest proficiency levels. Schools were less likely to meet growth targets under AYP, which measures attainment of proficiency. With the continued rise in the goals for AYP attainment, this is cause for concern as schools that were able meet AYP targets two or three years ago, have not been able to sustain success and increase the number of Advanced and Proficient students.

In English/Language Arts, Cohort 6 schools showed the most improvement in moving students upward and out of Far Below Basic, Below Basic, and Basic on the CST. Put another way, Cohort 6 schools (which were disproportionately Program Improvement schools) are performing at a level that is higher than other schools in the district in 2009. Cohort 8 outpaced all of the comparison groups on ELA movement to a higher proficiency level in 2009. On the ELA CAHSEE, improvements occurred among all groups of schools under examination, with a slightly higher rate of improvement among Cohort 6 schools. Cohort 8 schools scored best in 2009 across all groups of schools.

In Mathematics, Cohort 6 schools again showed the most improvements in moving students upward and out of Far Below Basic, Below Basic, and Basic. Cohort 5 and the other LAUSD (non-grantee) schools showed the least improvement with regard to moving students out of the Far below Basic category, in both 2009 and over time. Apart from Cohort 6, which did significantly better, the other groups of schools were roughly similar in the propensity of students to improve on the CST in Mathematics. Cohort 8 performed nearly as well as Cohort 6 in 2009 movement of students in the Far below Basic and Below Basic proficiency levels. On the Math CAHSEE, improvements occurred among all groups of schools under examination, with a slightly higher rate of improvement among Cohort 6 schools. Cohort 8 schools scored best in 2009 across all groups of schools.

In terms of pupil attendance, there were no significant differences in the performance of schools. Attendance rates have improved 1%-4% with more gains in grades 9-11 compared to students in grade 12.

Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 performed best in terms of the one-year adjusted and four-year derived dropout rates. A similar pattern held for school-wide graduation rates, with Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 more likely to achieve a higher graduation rate compared to Cohort 5 or unfunded LAUSD comprehensive high schools. Cohort 6 and previous SLC grantees from cohorts 3 and 4 did slightly better in terms of the proportion of graduates eligible for four-year public colleges and universities in California.

Across all indicators, the individual schools with the highest propensity for *improvement* included one Cohort 5 school (San Pedro), four Cohort 6 schools (Roosevelt, Bell, Franklin, and Van Nuys), one Cohort 8 school (Reseda). All of these schools exceeded the overall SLC grantee average for improvement on at least six of thirteen measures of performance.

SECTION VI—CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The high schools included in this evaluation are members of a growing movement to break up large comprehensive high schools into SLCs that deliver a more personalized and relevant educational experience to augment standards-based instructional reforms aimed at ensuring high academic expectations and rigor for all students. This section of the report summarizes differences tied to cohort and the variation among SLC grantees, followed by a review of key accomplishments and on-going challenges at the SLC grantee sites. Throughout, the conclusions and recommendations included within focus on lessons learned that could help to steer the schools and LAUSD in a direction that will result in furthering high school restructuring to meet student achievement goals.

School Level Variation and Cohort Differences

This report focused on presenting SLC implementation ratings by cohort in each of the eight SLC attributes adopted by LAUSD. As shown in Table 41 below, Cohort 6 schools had the highest ratings in most attributes. Despite the longest tenure in the grant, Cohort 5 schools tended to have among the lowest ratings. By contrast, Cohort 8 schools (the newest grantees) either exceeded or equaled ratings of Cohort 5 schools. To explain these cohort differences, it is helpful to reiterate that a) Cohort 6 schools included three schools who were repeat grantees from Cohort 3 (i.e., these schools have been implementing SLCs under the grant for six years); b) Cohort 5 schools tended to be directed into the grant by local or central district recommendation as a response to Program Improvement (i.e., many of these schools were not selected on the basis of "readiness" or desire to implement SLCs); and c) Cohort 8 schools were subject to a much more rigorous screening process and higher federal expectations for potential grantees and all three schools had begun SLC redesign prior to receipt of the grant. These factors go a long way toward explaining cohort level differences.

Table 41: 2009 SLC Attribute Ratings (scale 1-6) and Ranges by Cohort

SLC Attribute	Cohort 5		Cohort 6		Cohort 8	
	Rating	Range	Rating	Range	Rating	Range
Unifying Vision	3.1	1-5	3.9	2-6	3.3	3-4
SLC Identity	3.3	2-5	3.6	3-6	3.0	2-4
Curriculum/Instruction	2.7	2-4	3.0	2-5	2.7	2-3
Equity/Access	2.7	1-5	3.1	2-5	2.3	1-4
Personalization	3.0	2-4	3.3	2-5	3.3	2-4
Leadership/Acct.	2.7	1-5	3.3	1-5	3.0	3.0
Parent/Community Involvement	2.7	2-4	2.6	1-4	1.3	1-2
Professional Development	2.6	2-4	2.6	1-5	1.7	1-2

In addition, Table 41 shows the range of ratings by attribute. These figures demonstrate that some schools have made significant progress in implementing SLCs on a school-wide

basis. Indeed some schools in Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 earned scores of 5 or 6 indicating solid or full implementation in 2009. Moreover, some schools in Cohort 8 posted scores of 4 (developmental implementation) after only one year of grant implementation. At the same time, a number of schools remained mired in difficulties, earning scores of 1 (no evidence of implementation) or 2 (planning for implementation). As such, the average ratings coalesced around a rubric score of 3 (early implementation) for most attributes in all cohorts.

Key Accomplishments

SLC Enrollment and Participation

The schools included in this evaluation have been quite successful in terms of involving staff and students in SLCs. In 2008-09, fully 96% of the students at Cohort 5 schools, 97% of the students at Cohort 6 schools, and 97% of students at Cohort 8 were enrolled in a SLC. Even seniors, the grade level least likely to be assigned to a SLC in previous years, achieved a 98% SLC enrollment rate in Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools in 2008-09. Significantly, SLC schools have succeeded in boosting enrollments of subgroups historically underrepresented in SLC structures; SLC enrollments now match overall school demographics at the aggregate (i.e., school-wide) level. Based on evaluations of other SLC initiatives in other urban school districts that have pursued a much more incremental and piecemeal approach to SLC implementation, this is a **major** accomplishment. The challenge now lies in maximizing the educational opportunities available to students under the SLC reforms.

Distributed Leadership

Despite a high level of principal turnover at most SLC grantee sites, SLC reforms have continued and even accelerated at some schools. This suggests that leadership for SLC restructuring has been distributed to a larger group of stakeholders. In fact, the schools in this evaluation have demonstrated success in terms of empowering teachers to establish SLCs with clear and/or emerging educational identities. SLC implementation has provided many more opportunities for teachers to assume leadership. Teachers (and to a lesser degree counselors) have played pivotal roles on SLC steering committees responsible for creating the foundation of the SLC design process and informing teachers about different SLC options. At most sites, SLC lead teachers have led the way in transforming SLCs from ideas into reality. Increasingly, SLCs are developing concrete identities manifest as a distinctive educational experience for the students who participate in them. Virtually all of the schools had the "triad of support" in place (SLCs comprised of a lead teacher, counselor, and administrator). At some schools, SLC teams have begun to take on a larger decision-making role with regard to master schedule, student programming, and in some cases, the selection of new staff.

Personalization

Among the 3R's of SLC restructuring, schools have been most likely to embrace the need for enhancing adult: student relationships though personalization. Relationship building is manifest as activities for "bonding" between school staff and students, as well as "branding" activities designed to connect students to their SLCs. These efforts have

connected more students to school and provided them with access to a more personalized educational experience. Indeed, the evaluation found evidence that most students at the SLC grantee site were likely to feel connected to school and to view their teachers as advocates and mentors responsible for challenging them academically. Students in SLCs were likely to feel that school staff was working to prepare them for postsecondary education and, significantly, SLC students (especially seniors) were being exposed to activities and experiences conductive to college preparation and career exploration. Indeed, student exposure to career preparation increased markedly in 2008-09.

Master Schedule Alignment to SLC

The grantee schools have made significant headway in terms of adapting their school master schedules to accommodate SLCs while also maintaining equity and access for all students. The adaptation of the master schedule posed a significant challenge among prior SLC grantee schools because the departmental organizational model was quite resilient to change. Indeed, many of the standards-based instructional reforms and accountability mandates enshrine academic content as the primary orientation of school improvement. The master schedule was also a challenge due to the existence of contractual rules regarding staff assignments, as well as constraints posed by compliance requirements for special student populations (e.g., placement of Special Education and English Learners, scheduling Advanced Placement students and students more than two years below grade level enrolled in the district's Developing Readers and Writers course). In sum, the master schedule has often been designed to reinforce homogeneous grouping tied to academic ability.

Nevertheless, many schools have begun to work collaboratively to devise schedules that place more priority on heterogeneous grouping based on student interests and needs. As part of this process, these schools have had to balance the needs of SLCs (i.e., common coring of students in multiple academic and elective course offering) with mandates related to standards-based instruction, intervention courses for students, equity and compliance issues for special populations, etc.

In addition, the district instituted two changes, which if taken advantage of, provided the basis for schools to reach a more equitable "balance" of potentially competing objectives. The first change required all schools to assign 9th and 10th graders to a "default" A-G curriculum. As such, all students essentially need access to the same "menu" of core academic coursework. Second, the SLC plan approval process adopted by the district (i.e., Bulletin 1600) provided a roadmap for integrating individual SLCs with a larger school-wide improvement plan. Taken together, these have provided direction for schools on how to redesign the school master schedule to enhance equity and access to the A-G curriculum, as well as personalization (i.e., defined SLC teams with identifiable cohorts of students that take the same sequence of courses). In the last three years, staff survey respondents in Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools were less likely to identify master schedule as a top barrier to SLC implementation.

Equitable Distribution of Students to SLCs

The majority of SLC grantee high schools have made significant progress in ensuring equity of student placement to SLCs. In previous years, there was clear evidence that some SLCs were less "representative" compared to school-wide demographic averages. Although not

perfect, the vast majority of schools have succeeded in *reducing* within school inequity. Analyses of students assigned to various SLCs indicate that imbalances based on gender and the proportion of English Learners remains problematic in about half of the schools. However, inequitable distributions based on race/ethnicity, Special Education, and GATE diminished at most schools when magnet programs are excluded from the analysis.[34]

Focusing on the 9th Grade Transition

More schools focused on the 9th grade year as a pivotal phase in student development, with 12 of 21 schools implementing a 9th grade/freshmen house structure as part of their SLC design. In the 9th grade house model, freshmen receive a personalized educational experience aimed at easing the transition to high school and addressing the academic intervention needs of incoming high school students. As 10th graders, these students typically then select from a menu of 10th-12th grade theme-based SLCs. It is important to note that schools with this structure achieved higher ratings in terms of SLC identity, professional development, curriculum/instruction, vision, distributed leadership/accountability, personalization, and parent outreach/involvement. At the risk of oversimplification, the success of the 9th grade/Freshmen house model may be revealing the structural weakness of middle to high school articulation throughout the district. In other words, 9th grade houses address the lack of healthy articulation by providing an interim step for students in transitioning to high school. As such, schools with 9th-12th grade SLCs could do a better job by emulating pieces of the 9th grade house model *if articulation with feeder middle schools is also pursued aggressively.*

Key Issues and Challenges

The key challenge for schools implementing SLC restructuring continues to hinge on the extent to which SLCs will become a significant unifying and organizing force *for instructional change* at each high school. Essentially, schools have been more successful in developing the infrastructure to support SLCs, but have not systematically infused SLC reforms into classroom teaching and learning. While, some schools continue to struggle in terms of connecting the rationale for SLC restructuring to instructional initiatives aimed at increasing academic rigor and closing achievement gaps, the larger issue at most schools is moving from "pockets" of SLC implementation to wholesale changes in classroom teaching and learning.

Educational Identity of SLCs

Although all schools now have several SLCs with a strong or emergent academic focus tied to their theme or orientation, the drive to improve standards-based rigor has not been well integrated with *school-wide* SLC efforts to deliver a personalized and relevant high school education. At the whole school level, SLC efforts have tended to produce changes in school structures with less systemic impact in the area of instruction. When asked to identify the top barriers to SLC implementation, a high proportion of staff cited "staff resistance to change" (33% in Cohort 5 schools, 29% in Cohort 6 schools, and 39% of

[34] Data assembled for this evaluation confirms earlier data from prior evaluations in LAUSD which show that magnet programs tended to under-represent male, Hispanic, English Learner, and Special Education students, and to over-represent White and GATE students relative to school-wide demographics. See Appendix E of this report for data on individual SLCs (including magnet programs).

Cohort 8 schools), implying that changing the educational paradigm is resisted or at least delayed by some school staff who prefer the status quo to the uncertainty of restructuring reforms aimed at changing how students (and staff) experience high school. To address this issue squarely, individual schools, local districts, and LAUSD (central) district must do a better job of disseminating the message on how standards-based instruction is reinforced through SLCs. The message must showcase how and why students who have struggled to demonstrate mastery of state content standards will benefit from pedagogy that supplements academic rigor with relationships (i.e., personalized pedagogy via overt scaffolding and instructional differentiation) and relevance (i.e., culturally relevant and responsive education and project-based constructivist lessons).

SLC Autonomy

Although SLCs have taken on semi-autonomous roles in other areas, the distribution of leadership to SLCs has not translated into greater autonomy for SLCs in key areas such as curriculum, assessment, or control over discretionary fiscal resources. The lack of clear SLC autonomy is largely a consequence of a misinterpretation of district mandates tied to instructional guides and formative assessment, which have been interpreted by many as a *de facto* limitation on the flexibility of SLCs. There continues to be a widespread, faulty perception among school staff that the district directive to move forward with SLCs is at odds with LAUSD's interpretation of standards-based instruction and academic rigor embodied in the instructional guides. This perception has persisted despite changes in district policy which allow SLCs to "waive" certain curricular mandates if SLCs can provide sufficient evidence of a standards- and research-based approach to addressing State content standards and meeting the needs of students in an innovative way.[35] Indeed, district leadership has clarified that the instructional guides are truly "guides" and not a lock-step program that governs instruction. Deviation from the guides is allowable and even recommended as long as it involves re-sequencing of standards to meet SLC needs and includes common, formative assessments of student learning relative to the standards.

Personalization

SLC reforms have convinced many staff members to take a more active role in mentoring and advocating for "their" SLC students. However, very few schools had established advisory periods to structurally support personalization and this enhanced adult: student relationship. Similarly, student interactions with counselors improved, but the structure for high school planning, the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) has not been especially helpful or resonant with students, and teacher interactions tied to the IGP were rare. Widespread awareness of academic intervention exists among staff and students, but these programs tend to be school-wide (rather than linked to SLCs) and remain reliant on student volition. These findings suggest that the *structures* to support personalization may are tenuous and may not be able to sustain personalization over the long term.

Professional Development

At most schools, SLC-related professional development has not been adequately integrated into the regular school-wide professional development calendar. In particular,

[35] For example, Humanitas SLCs were allowed to waive certain mandates through proof of a coherent interdisciplinary approach to delivery of State content standards.

faculty would benefit from regular opportunities for collaboration and professional development, which connect SLCs directly to district-wide instructional priorities. Few schools have allocated a common conference period for SLC teams to meet. Instead, schools typically allocate time to SLC teams once or twice per month at the end of the school day. "Collaboration among staff" was cited as a top barrier by 27%-28% of staff survey respondents at Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools over the last three years, and has not diminished over time as a perceived or actual barrier. Moreover, professional development within SLC teams tended to focus on structural issues about how SLCs function and personalization activities rather than helping teachers deliver classroom instruction linked to the thematic orientation of their SLC or common instructional practices that unite all SLC teachers on a team. Many schools continued to struggle with reconciling the subject-specific orientation of instructional guides and formative assessments in the core content areas with SLC reforms aimed at personalizing the high school educational experience *across* content area disciplines. Similarly, new efforts to institute Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have not been connected to SLC reforms and instead have tended to bypass interdisciplinary groupings of SLC teachers altogether. As such, professional development and collaboration within SLC teams is only beginning to infuse instructional delivery with SLC themes and/or develop common instructional approaches within SLCs. Again, some SLCs at some schools have been more successful in these changes but only a small number of schools have instituted these kinds of changes for all SLC teams on-campus.

Parent/Community Engagement

Evaluation data confirms the weaknesses of schools in terms of engaging parents and other external partners *in the work of SLC implementation.* Although some individual SLCs were engaged in innovative approaches to parent involvement and schools were seeking to inform parents about SLC options, there is very limited evidence of wholesale change in how schools conduct outreach to parents or the degree to which parents are involved in either decision-making tied to SLC design or supporting the educational reforms under SLC implementation. Indeed, parent/community involvement has consistently rated among the top barriers (30%-31%) among survey respondents in each of the last three years at Cohort 5 and Cohort 6 schools. While most schools could point to examples of external partners representing community-based organizations, business/employer groups, postsecondary institutions, and some local government entities, the vast majority of these partnerships were with pre-existing SLCs or other programs. Moreover, few have been concretely connected to SLC decision-making or on-going efforts to restructure classroom teaching and learning.

Summary of Student Achievement at SLC Grantee Schools

The evaluation data on student and school outcomes at Cohort 5, Cohort 6, and Cohort 8 schools do not show a strong correlation between the rating of SLC implementation by attribute and improvements in student achievement. This is perhaps unsurprising in light of the previous findings on the absence of systemic, *school-wide* changes tied to classroom teaching and learning at the grantee schools. Because the instructional impact of SLC implementation continues to be restricted to a few SLCs on each campus, the results largely suggest a pattern of improvement equal to that occurring at district high schools not receiving additional grant funds for restructuring into SLCs.

This is not to say, however, that student achievement has not improved. In fact, all of the grantee cohorts schools have experienced growth on the Academic Performance Index (API), albeit growth lower than the district average in the last three years, except for Cohort 8. Similarly, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results at grantee cohort schools show improvement but yielded a percentage of proficient students slightly below district-wide averages in 2009. Keep in mind that the federal AYP targets are increasing approximately ten percent each year. School may have met AYP in two to three years ago, but if they did not continue to make sizeable improvement they failed to meet AYP. Only six schools across all of the cohorts were able to meet AYP on both ELA and math.

On the California Standards Tests (CST) for grades 9-11 in English/Language Arts, Cohort 8 schools showed the most improvements in moving students out of the lowest proficiency levels (Far Below Basic and Below Basic), followed closely by Cohort 6. However, at the aggregate level, nearly all groups of the schools (Cohort 5, previous grantees from Cohorts 3 and 4, and all other comprehensive high schools in LAUSD) were roughly similar in the propensity of students to improve. Put another way, Cohort 5 schools (which were disproportionately Program Improvement schools) performed at a level equivalent to other schools in the district in regard to improving student proficiency on the English/Language Arts CST.

On the CST in Mathematics, Cohort 6 and Cohort 8 schools showed the most improvements in moving students out of Far Below Basic, Below Basic, and Basic levels of achievement. Apart from Cohort 6 and Cohort 8, which did significantly better, the other groups of schools were roughly similar in the propensity of students to improve on the CST in Mathematics. However, Cohort 5 schools showed the least improvement in moving Far Below Basic students to the next achievement level.

There were no significant differences in the performance of schools in terms of the one-year adjusted dropout rate in 2007-08 (the most recent year for which data are available). However, Cohort 8 did better than all of the other categories of schools on the four-year derived dropout rate. With regard to school-wide graduation rates, Cohort 8 and previous SLC grantees (Cohort3 and Cohort 4) were more likely to achieve a higher graduation rate compared to all other groups. Similarly, Cohort 6 and previous SLC grantees out performed all of the other groups on percentage of UC/CSU eligibility.

Recommendations to Schools

In order to provide concrete guidance to schools involved in SLC restructuring, Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following key recommendations for schools to implement in each of the eight LAUSD SLC attribute areas:

Unified Vision

Continue to communicate the school-wide vision for SLC implementation to all staff. Implementing SLCs on a school-wide basis is a revolutionary paradigm shift in how high school education ought to be organized. It is critical to continually communicate the "big picture" of this school restructuring effort, as well as information on SLC progress during school-wide faculty meetings, professional development, school newsletters, Websites, and

other communication methods. More staff must be able to articulate how SLC implementation is influencing staffing, student programming, and professional development. In particular, staff needs to know how the implementation of SLC will impact them *personally* on a daily basis, in and out of the classroom.

Improve transparency and the inclusionary aspects of school decision-making. Staff at many of the grantee schools have mixed opinions about the degree of communication and transparency at their schools, as well as questions about school leadership and capacity to implement the kind of far-reaching reforms implied by SLC restructuring. The increase in the number of school-based leaders (e.g., SLC lead teachers) highlights the importance of transparent, responsive governance structures capable of supporting school-wide communication and coordination during the transition to SLCs. Furthermore, school decision-making bodies should have SLCs properly represented.

SLC Identity

Continue to focus on establishing a strong academic identity for each SLC that is evident in what students are learning in the classroom. Nearly all schools have established several SLCs with strong academic identities. However, the academic identity of SLCs has been slow to emerge on a *school-wide* basis. In general, SLC identity has focused strengthened adult-student relationships and unique activities and events, which constitute personalization, rather than an identity based on an academic or curricular emphasis that is evident in the classroom. These are positive first steps, but not sufficient to solidify a strong academic identity that impacts what students are learning. Students should understand, from the beginning, each SLC's distinct approach to learning evident in thematic linkages, specific instructional strategies, personalization strategies, or assessment methods. As SLCs come together, stakeholder groups should be expected to clearly communicate the academic identity and distinctiveness of each SLC in terms of an academic instructional program.

Define autonomy locally while district struggles to balance centralized and decentralized functions. SLCs are exercising some degree of autonomy in design of master schedules, some involvement in staff hiring/personnel assignments, and in shaping professional development. However, SLC have not taken advantage of opportunities (and have in some cases been discouraged from) to adjust curriculum, instruction, or assessment in line with SLC principles. Schools must overcome the self censorship that which developed as a results of past experiences with top-down curricular mandates, and move forward with plans to redesign teaching and learning so that each SLC has a distinct "academic" identity. In addition, schools need to establish their own clear boundaries regarding SLC autonomy in the area of budget, staff selection, master schedule development, and student discipline. Once decided, these areas where SLCs are able to exercise some degree of autonomy must be clearly communicated to all staff.

Rigorous, Standards-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Focus SLC efforts on changing classroom instruction. Data analyzed as part of this evaluation indicate that SLC implementation is <u>not</u> a driving force in changing classroom teaching or learning. While individual SLCs are moving in this direction, only a small number of schools showed evidence of *school-wide* changes to the core academic

instructional program. As such, most schools have continued to focus on standards-based academic rigor in accordance with a narrow interpretation of district instructional mandates, with limited evidence of changes to instruction aimed at infusing curricular relevance (whether defined as cultural relevance or constructivist learning approaches) or personalizing instruction to meet individual student needs. This instructional approach has not yielded a discernable influence on student achievement at the grantee sites above or beyond the overall district pattern of incremental improvement. The need for changed pedagogy is illustrated by the fact that over time fewer schools have been able to keep up with AYP targets as they increase each year. The efforts of the schools with the longest tenure in the SLC grants (i.e., Cohort 3 grantees refunded in Cohort 6) as well as the most mature, pre-existing SLCs demonstrate that SLCs can embody an overt academic focus predicated on academic rigor that is authentically augmented by relevance and personalization. This is difficult and time-consuming work but not impossible to achieve when SLC leaders (SLC lead teachers, administrators assigned to SLCs, and dedicated counselors) work together to plan and implement standards-based lessons (rigor) that also integrate the thematic orientation of the SLC in applications (relevance) and differentiated support for students (relationships).

Consider employing SLCs as a vehicle for the delivery of academic intervention. Academic intervention at most high schools continues to be unsystematic. It relies largely on student volition (i.e., students volunteering to attend after-school tutoring or Saturday School) and is typically reactive and not proactive in orientation (e.g., mandates for CAHSEE preparation courses for 12th grade non-passers). Given these conditions, SLCs may well be better-positioned to develop and manage student intervention (during the school day or in extended day programs) more effectively than school-wide programs by taking a role in organizing student referral/intake, monitoring intervention attendance, providing differentiated instruction for intervention courses/programs, and conducting parent outreach tied to student participation in intervention. With the mandate for Response to Intervention (RTI), there is an opportunity to rethink academic intervention and define a role for SLCs in ensuring it occurs.

Professional Development

Support SLCs with set-aside time for collaboration. Schools need to consciously and explicitly balance collaboration time for SLC teams and subject matter departments. Although collaboration has increased, particularly within SLCs, too little of the professional development within SLC teams focused on helping teachers deliver classroom instruction linked to the thematic orientation of their SLC or common instructional practices that unite all SLC teachers on a team. In addition, school-wide (whole faculty meetings) professional development lacked sufficient focus and/or was not sequenced sufficiently to impart a coherent blueprint for how teachers might increase rigor and improve student achievement results in line with SLC implementation. SLC teams need more time built into the regular school day for planning SLC activities, curricula, and strategies for providing personalized counseling and guidance support to students. Ideally, common planning time would be built into the master schedule (i.e. common conference periods by SLC), or revisions would be made to the bell schedule (i.e. banked time) to allow additional time to meet the collaboration needs of both SLC teams and academic departments.

Reorient school-based professional development to highlight the instructional component of SLC reforms. At many schools, school-wide professional development continues to consist of multiple foci, unsequenced and rarely connected. Schools should provide instructional leaders (SLC leads and department chairs) with training on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and work with faculty to develop an annual professional development plan that sequences topics, providing teachers time to apply, reflect and collaborate on instructional strategies and to analyze student data/work samples. Schools also need to do a better job of "filtering" external mandates through the prism of school-based instructional priorities tied to SLC implementation. For example, school staff would likely benefit from professional development on what personalization looks like in the classroom, how to effectively utilize opportunities for common planning, how to utilize protocols for examining student work and data, and what an effective student advisory period provides. Likewise, schools must ensure that teachers and students have the resources, training, and tools necessary to help many more students meet the academic rigor of the mandated A-G curriculum. Professional development of this sort will serve to move schools from structural reform to instructional change if on-going support and follow-up are forthcoming.

Equity and Access

Prioritize articulation with feeder middle schools to improve SLC recruitment and placement. Students must have the information and exposure needed to make informed choices, particularly when such choices impact their entire high school experience and exposure to postsecondary options. Nearly half of the grantee high schools have chosen 9th -12th grade SLC structures, consciously improving middle school articulation must become a priority. Information about SLCs should be disseminated to students and parents in a proactive fashion, well in advance of the traditional late Spring "road show" for 9th grade programming. To that point, middle school staff is often ignorant to what is occurring at high school they serve as a feeder school. Efforts should focus on beginning the SLC "conversation" earlier during the 8th grade year. In this way, students will be able to make truly informed choices about their high school program of study. As part of the improvement of middle to high school articulation, the transfer to data on middle school students to high school staff must become timelier so that high schools are able to determine who their clientele is and to allocate students to SLCs in a balanced and equitable manner.

Continue to monitor and balance SLC placement. Most schools have implemented policies to make SLC selection open, accessible, and linked to student interest. In addition, there have been significant improvements in the equitable distribution of students to SLCs. Gender and English Learners were the two areas that require further equity at about half of the schools. Therefore, schools should continue to allow choice via preference sheets, but then examine data from these first preferences to determine whether second or third choices need to be employed to achieve equitable balance. The evaluation data also suggest that schools have not yet examined staff distribution as a factor in ensuring equity across all SLCs and all tracks. All SLCs should strive to fairly represent the school's instructional staff in terms of credentials and teaching experience.

Personalization

Move beyond relationship building to personalized instruction supported by defined structures and strategies. Evidence from this evaluation suggests that relationship building is a necessary but insufficient condition for effective personalization. Strengthened student-teacher relations must translate into a more tailored learning process that meets students' interests, needs and capacities. SLCs need to connect standards-based instruction to real world issues and realities through on-going involvement of students in project-based learning, service learning, and work-based learning (e.g., job shadowing and internships). Similarly, SLCs need to provide regular and on-going scaffolding, differentiation, and culturally relevant pedagogy tied to research-based instructional strategies. At many schools, there is limited evidence that professional development has prioritized these topics or that structures exist to ensure that this happens. The absence of advisory periods at most schools in this evaluation points up the lack of structures for ensuring that personalization is enshrined as a regular part of the high school experience. All schools must do a better job of defining personalization, creating structures and/or strategies to ensure that personalization occurs, and then training staff. Without these elements, there will be limited success in infusing personalization into the high school structure on a long term, sustainable basis.

Connect the SLC initiative's emphasis on personalized instruction to a broader delivery of counseling and guidance services. The SLC initiative at each school can and should address the lack of adequate proactive counseling and guidance by providing personalized instruction and regular interactions between students and faculty and other staff regarding high school success, postsecondary planning, and career preparation. For example, additional information regarding high school graduation and postsecondary requirements (i.e., A-G requirements) could be integrated during SLC recruitment efforts and middle school articulation, and then followed up during the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) process now a mandated aspect of student counseling. Above and beyond IGP compliance, SLC teachers and counselors need to meet jointly to assist students in developing and articulating goals for life beyond high school, and then regularly follow up with students about academic progress as vehicles for college preparation and career exploration.

Accountability and Distributed Leadership

Reinforce the commitment to distributed leadership through definition of roles and leadership development. SLCs are a type of professional learning community (PLC) that unites administrators, teachers, and counselors (the SLC "triad" comprised of SLC lead teachers, counselors assigned to SLCs, and administrators assigned to SLCs) around a common commitment to improved student learning. Developing effective SLCs requires empowering the "triad" to reorient high school education around the 3 R's – rigor, relevance, and relationships. In order to cultivate, collective responsibility for student learning, schools need to provide opportunities and training for SLC teams to work and learn collaboratively, honestly analyze student data and work samples, and become fully integrated into school decision-making structures. Unfortunately, many schools and individual SLCs continue to experience slowed down or delayed SLC implementation because the roles/responsibilities of the entire "triad" are unclear and/or personnel are not working collaboratively in a consistent fashion in all SLCs. Leadership development,

defined support, and accountability linked to SLC goals/objectives are missing on a systematic level for each of these three key positions. Moving forward, distributed leadership must be tied to questions about authority, responsibility, and accountability, and evident in key areas tied to SLC identity and autonomy (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment, staffing/personnel, budgets, student conduct and discipline).

Make better use of available data, disaggregated by SLC, to drive school improvement decisions. Most schools have used local fields available through their database systems to identify students (and staff) by SLC placement. However, despite access to data disaggregated by SLC, few schools are regularly using these data to drive school improvement decisions. Schools need to utilize extant data in a purposeful manner to ensure balance and equity in terms of SLC student and staff assignments. Similarly, schools should move in the direction of analyzing and presenting data on student outcomes by SLC. For example, staff should receive information on the number of students meeting A-G requirements, attendance data, D/F rate data and graduation rate data by SLC. Dissemination of these data will likely showcase SLC accomplishments to staff who might otherwise remain unaware, while also highlighting areas in need of further investigation and/or focus.

Parent & Community Engagement

Develop more systematic ways to involve parents up-front in the design of SLCs and on into SLC implementation. The tendency is for schools to delay connections until students are being placed in SLCs, such as the signing off of student SLC preference forms, or after students are placed in SLCs. Involving parents in designing SLCs ensures ownership and reinforces the importance of parent involvement from the beginning. Schools should consider training parent center representatives to inform parents about the school's SLC offerings, college awareness campaigns, and academic support strategies. In this way, Parent Centers can become "parent advisories" as SLCs support students to meet increased academic expectations.

Create SLC advisory boards for parents and external partners in order to link these stakeholders more concretely to the development and expansion of SLCs. SLC advisory boards comprised of parent and partner representatives could assist schools in outreach, provide opportunities for participation in SLC decision-making, and showcase school commitment to altering the status quo. At a minimum, the SLC advisory boards might provide an opportunity for schools to enlist outside voices in crafting outreach to parents and community which addresses misconceptions about college and career preparation and equips families with skills needed to chart a post-high school pathway for their children.

Recommendations to Local Districts

In 2006, primary responsibility for SLC oversight and support was devolved from the LAUSD Office of School Redesign to local districts. While some local districts have filled this vacuum, others were unsure what their role might entail and were overly dependent on schools to ask for help. In sum, our evaluation results highlight a need for greater clarity in terms of how Local District offices should provide oversight and support schools in

addressing SLC implementation challenges. In this context, Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following key recommendations for local districts to implement:

Continue to monitor and provide oversight of school master schedules. Although there has been improvement in terms of establishing "pure" classes (i.e., course sections where all or nearly all of students belong to the same SLC), this is a concern at a number of grantee sites. In addition, few sites have provided SLC teachers with common conference (prep) periods as a structural support for teacher collaboration. These findings indicate a need for local districts to monitor (and provide support to) school master schedules for evidence of a commitment to the principles of reform embodied in the SLC initiative. Specifically, district oversight should include examination of class rosters for SLC purity (i.e., do classes group students by SLC?), content coverage (i.e., do students stay within their SLC for most or all subjects?) equity and access to SLCs (i.e., are students grouped heterogeneously across the different SLCs?), and high expectations (i.e., what percentage are enrolled and being successful in A-G courses?). Local Districts can also help schools restructure time to support intervention, personalization and advisement needs of SLCs. Schools need help understanding how to leverage "smallness" to better meet student need.

Assist schools in the alignment of school improvement plans. Many schools function with multiple school plans, mandated by a variety of funding sources that do not coherently communicate a unified instructional vision for school improvement. It is increasingly necessary that schools map out reform efforts across these plans in order to create coherency and communication of a vision for instructional improvement that cuts across multiple compliance mandates and reporting structures (e.g., WASC, SAIT, etc.). In this way, SLCs can function as a true "umbrella" for high school reform. Local districts are well positioned to assist schools in making connections across the multitude of district reform efforts. High school directors should work with site-based leadership teams to effectively "filter" and "translate" external mandates for change into a coherent instructional improvement plan that makes sense to the classroom teacher. At a minimum, this means clarifying school priorities and showing how SLC implementation is intended to complement, not supplant, standards-based instructional reforms.

Minimize site administrative turnover. As administrators change, SLC implementation stalls. In some cases, principals were the SLC visionaries that drove reforms. When they left, SLC implementation suffered. At other schools, assistant principals were instrumental in SLC implementation. Local districts responsible for administrative assignments should consider policies that would ensure continuity and stability within key leadership positions such as a minimum of a three-year term for high school administrators.

Assist schools in designing and allocating professional development time to support school improvement priorities. Simply dividing time 50-50 between SLCs and Departments does not necessarily reflect a coherent plan based on priorities. "Equally" sharing time between departments and SLCs is not necessarily sufficient to foster professional collaboration and ensure the best use of time. Schools that have taken the time to sequence and connect professional development topics have been more successful at maximizing the time and providing faculty with a coherent message about school reform efforts. Local districts could play a valuable role in helping schools strategically identify professional development and common planning time topics, sequencing how these topics are delivered, and then choosing the most appropriate group (SLCs, departments, grade-

level teams or school-wide faculty) for this to occur. Local district might also provide schools with training, templates, facilitation, and/or data needed to effectively diagnose student needs and strategize SLC efforts around improved academic achievement. In this way, local district would play a more overt role in ensuring that professional development activities are connected to school priorities.

Support schools and teachers in the use of data openly and regularly and disaggregated by SLCs. Data is more available and accessible than ever before. Schools have formative and summative data about student achievement and they have the capacity to access and manipulate data as needed. However, few schools are making widespread use of data, especially data disaggregated by SLC. Local districts should play a role in establishing annual performance targets for all high schools that they oversee that go beyond state/federal accountability measures. For instance, local districts should set annual expected increased in CAHSEE pass rates and decreases in ninth grade retention (9Rs). These types of success indicators provide clarity about expectations, motivate behavior, foster a shared vision, and promote more honest dialogue about student achievement. In order to enhance accountability and reinforce the instrumental nature of the SLC reforms (i.e., it is intended to improve student outcomes), local districts should articulate annual student outcome goals for each high school. At a minimum, schools should have annual measurable goals that specify: a) the number/percentage of students who must meet UC/CSU eligibility requirements; b) the expected increase in CAHSEE pass rates; and, c) a goal for decreasing the student dropout rate at each grade level (i.e., how many fewer 9th grade dropouts).

Recommendations to LAUSD (Central District)

SLCs require teachers and administrators to engage in entrepreneurial and creative approaches to interdisciplinary curricula and instruction that is based squarely on student learning needs. The evaluation findings conclusively demonstrate that many schools incorrectly perceive that efforts to create a map of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for thematic curricula will be unacceptable to central and local district staff charged with oversight of instruction. While the district's senior leadership has encouraged schools to move forward with thematic, contextualized learning (i.e., SLCs) within the standards-based instructional paradigm, many schools and some local districts have continued to assume that there is little flexibility in how instruction can be delivered. In sum, more district direction is needed in clarifying how SLCs are a vehicle for blending standards-based instruction with greater curricular relevance and personalized instruction. In this context, Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following key recommendations for LAUSD to consider:

Define what the transition from SLCs to Small Schools will entail, prioritizing the commitment to standards-based instructional reform augmented by curricular relevance and personalized relationships. Although the Los Angeles Board of Education adopted a resolution on the phased transition to small, autonomous secondary schools, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the field about how this will occur. Will each SLC become a small school? What will autonomy consists of? Is the instructional agenda for change different under small schools? All these and many more are the kind of questions that schools are asking. Each implies a need for a stronger statement from LAUSD on the role/function of SLCs during a transition to small schools. Therefore, we urge LAUSD to

disseminate a vision for change that brings together district directives on standards-based instruction, dropout prevention, and school-wide accountability that includes SLCs as the primary vehicle for high school restructuring with a set of benchmarks for how these entities will become effective and accountable small, autonomous schools.

Publicize SLC autonomy in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Explicit direction from LAUSD on the appropriate autonomy of SLC teams (and ultimately small schools) in redesigning curriculum, instruction and assessments should be disseminated to high schools and local district. Indeed, incorrect assumptions about the limits of SLC autonomy have handicapped SLC implementation at many schools. Other schools have defined SLC autonomy in the local context but then encountered difficulties with district staff charged with oversight. Given the Board adopted policy requiring all secondary schools to move toward SLCs and now small schools, there must be a clearer statement from the district on where SLC autonomy is necessary and expected. Moreover, the district should disseminate its vision of how the instructional guides are merely a "guide" and not a prescribed mandate for instruction.

Ensure that SLCs are staffed with highly qualified teachers in all core academic areas and assigned to a specific SLC. The district has a role to play in attracting qualified staff (particularly Math and Science teachers) and in maintaining NCLB compliance. With the implementation of SLCs, there is an additional challenge of ensuring that teachers are assigned to a SLC (at least three of their five courses) and that course rosters are "pure" in that students taught in a particular course section belong to the same SLC. At some schools, these twin desires have highlighted the inadequacy of the current "norm tables" for school staffing. Schools implementing SLCs (and moving to small schools) may need additional flexibility in staffing, including new norm tables or district willingness to apply for State waivers so that teachers are able to teach a course section or elective out-of-subject.

Provide district-wide leadership development for SLC Lead Teachers, Department Chairs, Counselors and Assistant Principals. The move toward distributed leadership has placed greater demands on teacher leaders, counselors, and assistant principals assigned to SLCs. Many are grappling to define their new roles and responsibilities. LAUSD should invest in comprehensive capacity building by offering training in a number of key areas including master schedule development, understanding school budgets, facilitation skills, college and career preparation, and how to analyze and use student data/work samples to drive instructional decision-making. LAUSD should visibly demonstrate that it is committed to building the capacity of front-line staff to serve as instructional resources and agents of change.

Examine the longitudinal performance of SLC students in a new manner now that all schools are engaged in SLC restructuring. Previous evaluation reports focused on examining achievement differences between SLC and Non-SLC students. Now that virtually all students are enrolled in a SLC, there are almost no Non-SLC students to serve as a point of comparison. In addition, the other, unfunded comprehensive high schools do not provide a logical "control" group because they too, are required to transform their schools on the basis of SLCs and all schools have been approved under Bulletin 1600. As such, new analytic techniques and/or research questions are worth considering to adequately assess the quantitative impact of SLC implementation on school and student

outcomes. For example, it may be worthwhile to look at the impact of SLC tenure as an explanatory variable (i.e., SLCs with longer period of time more likely to show gains in performance). Alternatively, student "dosage" may be a more compelling factor influencing student achievement (i.e., students who stay in a SLC for 2-3 years accrue the most benefits). Such questions were beyond the scope of this evaluation because the federal guidelines insist upon school (not SLC) as the level of analysis. Regardless, of the specifics, the time has come for reconsidering how best to measure quantitatively whether or not SLCs are living up to their promise as a vehicle for improving student achievement.