Orange County
Smaller Learning Communities Consortium
2009-10 Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

Smaller Learning Communities Context

Since 2000, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) has provided Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) planning and implementation grants to high schools with 1,000 or more students in order to implement SLCs. The grants support a range of strategies including creating schools-within-schools with varying degrees of autonomy,[1] restructuring the school day to allow for scheduling a cohort of students together and more consistent student-adult interactions, and formal adult mentoring and advisory programs.[2] Implementation of these structural changes share the goals of a more personalized high school experience for students in smaller schools or more autonomous units within schools to improve student achievement and performance.

This report provides the results of the final year (conducted in the 2009-2010 school year) of a five-year evaluation grant to seven comprehensive high schools in Orange County that received US Department of Education Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) Implementation Grants. The Orange County Smaller Learning Communities Consortium (OC SLC Consortium) hired Public *Works*, Inc., a non-profit headquartered in Pasadena, California, to conduct a third-party evaluation of the efforts in the Cohort V SLC schools. The seven schools in 2009-2010 consortium include:

- Brea-Olinda High School in the Brea-Olinda Unified School District
- Fullerton High School in the Fullerton Joint Union High School District
- Costa Mesa and Estancia High Schools in the Newport Mesa Unified School District
- Century, Santa Ana, and Valley High Schools in the Santa Ana Unified School District

Smaller Learning Communities Grant Overview

As enrollment has grown over the past decade in the seven high schools, there has also been an increase in the number of minority students, students from low socioeconomic status households, and an influx of students whose native language is one other than English. To address the needs of a growing diverse student population, the OC SLC consortium convened partner schools to develop a comprehensive consortium plan with specific plans for each school, embedding and integrating its primary goals. The OC SLC Consortium goals are:

1) Increase student academic performance in literacy and mathematics.
2) All students will have access to rigorous classes.
3) Improve instructional practices among teachers.
4) Personalize the educational experience for students' success.
5) All students will have career, technical and technology skills.

[1] 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.
[2] 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.

The OC SLC Consortium, a countywide partnership, provides professional development, promotes efforts to build continuous support within the community, and an opportunity for partner schools to share out and learn from their individual experiences with the initiative.

Public *Works,* Inc. Evaluation and Report

As required by USDE, districts receiving Cohort V SLC implementation grants were required to hire a third-party evaluator. The OC SLC Consortium hired Public *Works,* Inc., a 501c(3) corporation headquartered in Pasadena, California with a wide range of experience conducting evaluations in the area of Public Education and School Reform. The following questions have been used to gauge SLC implementation and effectiveness and improved student achievement: 1) How are schools meeting the intentions of the legislation implementing downsizing activities that restructure large high schools and include strategies that make schools "feel" smaller? 2) How are schools meeting local goals and objectives? 3) What are effective practices schools are implementing in SLCs? 4) How are SLC students performing as compared to Non-SLC students? 5) To what extent has the implementation of SLCs improved student achievement? 6) To what extent has the implementation of SLCs increased student eligibility and preparation for postsecondary education and careers?

Research Methods

The evaluation of the OC SLC Consortium Cohort V grant encompasses two dimensions: (1) a qualitative dimension measuring progress with regard to program implementation and (2) a quantitative dimension measuring the impact of the grant on student achievement. The evaluation is an annual process over the five-year grant cycle. This report presents information from the last year of a five-year grant.

To collect data on the progress of the SLC grantee high schools in 2009-10, the evaluation included data from multiple sources including: a review of relevant research literature, surveys of school staff; surveys of all 10th and 12th grade students; a follow-up survey with 12th grade graduates 3-4 months after graduation; and focus groups with various stakeholders, interviews, and observations during annual site visits to each school. In order to examine student achievement and school performance at the seven grantee high schools, statistical analyses were performed on multiple achievement indicators including: California Standards Test (CST), English Language Arts and Mathematics, California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), English Language Arts and Mathematics, Pupil attendance, Dropout and Graduation rate data, and UC/CSU (A-G) course enrollment and completion rate disaggregated by demographics.

Key Accomplishments

Academic Intervention

Through the SLC initiative, the grantee schools have expanded intervention services and have tailored aspects of the SLC initiative to meet greater numbers of students needs academically and to support them in their transition to high school. Several schools offer double blocks of English Language Arts (ELA) interventions and double block math interventions where students are placed if their CST scores are Far Below Basic and Below Basic. Schools have implemented intervention curriculum or programs such GRAD 9/GRAD 10, ALEKS, CAHSEE Prep courses and software. Counselors and teachers are also involved with identifying student needs and assigning appropriate intervention services and in some instances conducting home visits for struggling students. Several SLCs reported specific strategies they had implemented to make sure that students are on track with their grades and academic progress.

Rigorous Curriculum

The academic performance across the seven schools ranges from the high-500s to above 800. Despite this wide range, all seven schools hold their students to rigorous academic standards. On average, the consortium increased 23 points on the API from Baseline to Year 5 of grant. In an effort to hold all stakeholders accountable for students' comprehension and retention of class material, schools have created common assessments (sometimes created by the district) in order to monitor students' achievement in relation to California State Standards. Most districts and schools are using common assessments. In addition, many SLCs have developed other assessments that test students' strengths in different areas.

Professional Development

Professional development provided by school districts to several schools was most commonly related to district student assessment data software use, accessing student performance data, and examining student data. SLC staff received professional development on interdisciplinary projects, project-based lessons, teacher discipline plans, and writing and preparation for the CELDT. The OC SLC Consortium continued to host monthly SLC Coordinators/ Principals focused on networking for site leader and sharing of site best practices, which continued to emphasize momentum within participating schools. The county office also provided professional development and training for the SLC schools including leadership development, data driven decision-making, technical assistance (e.g. master schedule), project-based learning, interdisciplinary instruction counselor and guidance support. The county provided PD in key topics such as SLCs coordination, counselor support, academy advisory boards, reading in the content areas and Career Technical Education (CTE) classes, 9th grade transition strategies, project-based learning strategies, interdisciplinary instruction, Data Driven Dialogue, Adaptive Schools, and ICLE workshops to help schools plan for common core standards.

Adult-Student Relationships

The OC SLC Consortium schools have focused on improving personalization with students through the creation of Houses and Academies/ Pathways, particularly with 9th and 10th graders. The House structures have delivered identity and personalization through adult-relationships. The schools have several mentoring programs in place (e.g. IMPACT. Freshman Mentoring Program). In addition, some students "loop" with their teachers over multiple years, which provides for the development of deeper connections between teachers and students.

Achievement Outcomes

Academic achievement increased in English/ language arts and mathematics among students involved in SLC restructuring. Freshman SLC student percent proficient or advanced on CST ELA and CST Algebra I increased 11% from Year 1 to Year 5. Also, English Learners appear to benefit from participation in SLC restructuring with 23% of SLC EL 9th graders performing proficient or advanced on the CST Geometry.

- SLC Participation: Roster analyses demonstrate great discrepancy between the percent of students participating in an SLC and the percent of students who fulfilled the initiative requirement of three common courses within the assigned SLC. Thirty-eight percent (5,527) of 14,703, students attending the seven grantee schools met the three common classes or more, the SLC requirement established by USDE. Freshman students had the highest concentration of SLC enrollment with common three or more courses (44%) and 38% of sophomores. Both eleventh and twelfth grade showed lower percentages of students with three or more common classes (33% and 34%). In addition, there was great variation in enrollment from school to school.

- California Standards Tests: Given that participation in SLCs is greatly concentrated in the 9th Grade, CST scores in English/Language Arts and Mathematics for ninth graders has shown gains. Compared to Baseline Year, 9th grade proficient or advanced on ELA increased more than 10% in Year 5 (45%). Advanced or Proficient on CST Algebra improved 11%, from 9% in 2004-05 to 20% in 2009-10. In addition, CST Geometry results indicate freshman advanced or proficiency increased from 36% to 50%, increasing 14% across the schools.

- Academic Performance Index: Over time, schools have been trying to meet accountability targets for Hispanics, English Learners and Economically Disadvantaged (NSLP) students. The number of schools meetings API targets has fluctuated over the last five years. However in recent years, a greater number of schools have met majority of growth targets. SLC grantee schools continue to meet state school-wide accountability targets; however, Hispanic, English Learner and Economically Disadvantaged student groups were least likely to meet API growth targets and only one school met the Special Education target.

- Dropout/Graduation Rates: Comparing Year 4 of the grant with the previous year (Year 5 data not yet available), the adjusted one-year dropout rates increased at all seven grantee schools from the previous year, ranging from 0.9% to 5.3%. While

most schools increased their adjusted one-year dropout rate approximately 1% or less, the rate at one school increased by more than 4%. Five of seven schools showed an increase adjusted four-year graduation rate from the prior year (ranging from 0.1% to a 5.7% increase), obtaining an 85% graduation rate or more. In addition, five of the seven schools surpassed the statewide graduation rate (78.5%), which had decreased by 1.7% from the prior year.

- UC/CSU Eligibility: In Year 4 (2008-09) of the grant (Year 5 data not yet available), the percent UC/CSU eligible ranged from 17%-58% across the schools. Three of the participating schools experienced an increase in the percentage of students meeting UC/CSU eligibility requirements upon graduation. Consortium-wide, 1,002 of 2,755 graduating students met the A-G criteria (36%), similar to the statewide rate.

Key Issues and Challenges

Master Schedule

The key structural issue among the Orange County SLC Consortium continues to be adapting the school master schedule in order to prioritize SLC enrollment and promote equity. At most schools, the master schedule has continued to follow the departmental organizational model, which does not necessarily promote the distribution of staff and assignment of students into coherent SLCs where at least half of the courses are shared or "cored" by SLC. Many teachers continue to resist changes associated with the master schedule because it will affect what and whom they teach and when they will teach it. Indeed, adapting the master schedule and resistance to change to SLCs were identified as the most significant barriers by staff survey respondents.

The lack of fundamental changes to the master schedule is most apparent in the on-going inequity regarding the federally defined SLCs participation, meeting three or more courses in an SLC. Although 72% of students across the consortium are in enrolled in at least one SLC course, a considerably lower 38% truly meets the federal requirement of enrollment in three or more SLC classes. In addition, there are more 9th (44%) students in SLCs meeting the requirement than 10th (38%), 11th (34%) and 12th (38%) graders. Schools continue to struggle to reorganize the master schedule to prioritize and address SLC requirements.

Staff Collaboration

The expansion of SLC structures originally spurred teachers to work together in collaborative teams, seeking to develop an academic identity for their SLC and to reach consensus on what a personalized high school experience will mean for the students enrolled in "their" SLC. However, SLC teams' collaboration has generally decreased since the first years of the grant.

Survey results found eighty-two percent of staff agree or strongly agree that teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public. Lower levels of agreement were found for survey questions about SLC-based collaboration and professional development.

The intention of common planning time is to develop interdisciplinary projects and common assessments, creation of intervention courses and mentoring programs for struggling students, solicitation of community partners, and organization of parent outreach, but this did not happen across all schools. Rather, schools who did have allotted meeting time stated during the site visits that they were not meeting regularly to discuss students they had in common, rather, teachers were utilizing their prep period for other tasks and so forth.

Since common preps are challenging for schools to implement in the master schedule especially in the current budget crisis, they are not common across the consortium. Even when they are in place, consortium schools have seen that they do not always lead to increased collaboration, identity and personalization for the SLC. In some cases, schools without common preps have succeeded in developing identity, personalization, student interventions by houses. It is important to keep in mind that SLCs function best under a collaborative team of teachers who are continuously working together.

English Learner Intervention

While intervention services have expanded across the consortium, there is great need for specialized English Learner interventions, given that many of the schools have a large EL student population. Only one school has a specialized EL intervention program and two schools indicated utilizing SDAIE strategies. Approximately 70 % of 10th and 12th grade students indicated on student survey that teachers are aware of students' academic strength and areas of improvement. Results indicate there is need to focus on approximately 30% of students who feel their specific academic needs are not well understood. In addition, site visits support the need for specific interventions based on the challenges of English Learners.

SLC Data

Very few schools have local fields available through their database systems to identify students (and staff) by SLC placement. Schools need to utilize existing data in a purposeful manner to ensure balance and equity in terms of SLC student and staff assignments. For example, sites need to run data on student and staff characteristics prior to finalizing master schedules to ensure adequate balancing. Similarly, schools should move in the direction of analyzing and presenting data on student outcomes by SLC. For example, staff should receive information by SLC on the number of students meeting A-G requirements, attending school, earning D/F grades, and successfully graduating. Dissemination of these data will likely showcase SLC accomplishments to staff that might otherwise remain unaware, while also highlighting areas in need of further investigation and/or focus.

Recommendations to Schools

The primary focus of the SLC grant has been on school-level structural change and strategies intended to include all students in an SLC by the end of the grant period; in Orange County, the grant ended in 2010. In addition to the structural changes noted above, Public *Works*, Inc. continues to recommend that schools:

- Strengthen existing 9th grade house models to further develop academic intervention strategies and identify students in need of support.
- Build 10th-12th grade models that are focused on student interest and school engagement.
- Continue to use what has been learned from SLCs to promote equity in school master schedules.
- Continue to make solid connections between SLC to standards-based instructional reforms and accountability mandates.
- Continue to connect the SLC initiative's emphasis on personalized instruction to a broader delivery of counseling and guidance.

Recommendations to the Districts and County

At the District and County levels, the SLC initiative has required a commitment to on-going technical assistance, training, and support to strengthen SLCs at this level and support sustainability. In order to provide direction following the end of the grant, Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations to the four districts and OC SLC Consortium to implement through each district and the county with follow-up support and oversight to schools.

- Continue to assist schools in the alignment of school improvement plans and accountability mandates.
- Continue to assist schools in designing and allocating professional development time to support school improvement priorities.
- Use the lessons learned from SLC implementation to provide guidance on master schedules that meet challenges and promote equity, particularly in the 10th-12th grades.
- Assist schools in organizing information data systems to allow schools to extract and examine data by SLC.

Part I—Introduction

Smaller Learning Communities Context

With the leadership of the Gates Foundation to create 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 to adults and other students (*Relationships*). As such, SLC reform involves changes that offer the possibility for curricular change, meaningful collaboration, and systemic student support.

This report provides results from the last year (conducted in the 2009-10 school year) of a five-year evaluation of a US Department of Education Cohort V Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) Implementation Grant. The Orange County Smaller Learning Communities Consortium (OC SLC Consortium) hired Public *Works*, Inc., a non-profit headquartered in Pasadena, California, to conduct a third-party evaluation of the efforts in the OC SLC schools. The seven schools participating in 2009-2010 include:

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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 implement 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 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 or more autonomous units within schools with improved student achievement and performance. Continued under the Bush Administration's NCLB, the program now provides five-year

[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.
[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.

(originally three-year) SLC implementation grants ranging from $250,000 to $550,000 per school.

In the 2004 federal funding cycle, OC SLC Consortium received $8,449,498 in implementation funding for nine high schools[5] for five years of implementation. In total, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded approximately $1,096,749,720 through fiscal year 2009 to schools across the nation. The high schools receiving U.S. Department of Education grant funds that are the subject of this report constitute Cohort V in the federal funding cycle.

Background to the SLC Approach

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.

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

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 (Cotton, 2001). However, authors Lee, Ready, and Welner found, found that small schools often attempted to replicate the more comprehensive curriculum of larger high schools with faculty teaching out of their specialties and often had selective entrance criteria (Lee, 2002).

[5] Nine schools participated at the commencement of the grant. However, in 2008-09 two of the original grantee schools were no longer a part of the consortium. This same year, Estancia High School was incorporated into the consortium and served as the seventh grantee school.

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 (e.g. reorganization of student placement and staff assignments) and strategies (e.g. 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. Listed below are a few common SLC approaches:

- *Small Schools and Schools-within-Schools:* Small school or school-within-a-school refer 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 and may focus on a specific theme (Small Schools Project, 2001a).

- *Academies:* Academy schools organize the curricula and education program for a subset of 10^{th} –12^{th} grade students (usually ranging from 200-400 students) around one or more themes, typically career or occupationally related. Students are grouped with a team of teachers who provide interdisciplinary and personalized curriculum. In addition, career academies partner with postsecondary institutions and other community groups to provide internships, service learning and other extracurricular opportunities.

- *House:* 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 to transition freshman into the larger high school. Often, houses can contain a sequence of career-related and/or academic courses that lead toward graduation (Cotton, 2001).

- *Other "Small" Strategies:* Comprehensive high schools are devising additional strategies aimed at forming significant attachments among adults and their peers. Some schools provide advanced courses for high-achieving students, newcomer schools for immigrant students new to a school system, and modifications to the high school schedule.

Complementary Reforms to Support Smaller Learning Communities

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 being 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 support credit attainment and on time graduation (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 to judging effectiveness based on results (DuFour, 2004).

9th Grade Support Systems

More school districts are focusing on 9th graders because students who fail to earn sufficient credits to matriculate to 10th grade are much more likely to dropout. The *Talent Development* high school model from Johns Hopkins, 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), readiness for college-prep courses via study skills (semester one) and the use of supplemental materials developed by Johns Hopkins University (semester two) (Toch, 2007). Students taking this sequence outperformed their peers in comparison schools and even students who started with higher-than-average achievement benefited.

In its evaluation of *First Things First* (a 9th to 12th grade model of theme-based SLCs implemented in Kansas City, Kansas) and *Talent Development* high schools (that incorporate a 9th grade Success Academy with career academies in the 10th to 12th grades), MDRC found that both structures played a positive role in increasing attendance and reducing dropout rates (Quint, 2006). The evaluation cautioned that simply increasing the amount of time in English and math classes for freshmen did not necessarily result in higher student achievement.

Implementation Issues for Smaller Learning Communities

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 (AIR/SRI, April 2003).

Impact of SLCs on Student Achievement

Many SLC schools have made progress in a key reform area—improved school climate. However, there is less conclusive evidence of the impact on student achievement. 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 found 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.[6] However, their study found poor rigor in mathematics assignments at new and redesigned high schools (AIR/SRI, 2005). Despite these mixed results related to specific academic content areas and SLCs, the early MDRC study of Career Academies found reduced dropout rates, improved attendance, and increased likelihood of on-time graduation among Career Academy students, especially those most at risk off dropping out (Kemple, 2000).

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. 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. 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,

[6] 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, 2005b).

2002). 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. 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 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). Some strategies for managing the master schedule in converted high schools include: more autonomy and identity for each SLC, reducing the number of student and teacher "cross-overs" between SLCs, and allowing for flexibility in the master schedule (e.g. not maintaining a common bell schedule). In addition, reducing the number of small, specialized programs may also contribute to SLC purity. Some research has found that block schedules may result in fewer discipline problems and failures and opportunity for students to earn more credits with the 4X4 block schedule. (Phi Delta Kappa International, Topics & Trends, November 2006, Volume 6, Issue 4).

Reform Context in Orange County

Orange County encompasses an area of 798 square miles south of Los Angeles County and borders 42 miles of the Pacific coastline, experiencing a large population growth over the last few decades growing to the county with the second largest population in California.

The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) provides programs and services to over half a million students in twenty-eight school districts servicing grades K through 12, and is the Local Educational Agency (LEA) for the Smaller Learning Communities Implementation Grant. *Orange County Smaller Learning Communities Consortium* (OC SLC Consortium) was established as the umbrella organization central to the leadership, support, and oversight of grant implementation to the seven Cohort V grantee high schools. The seven Cohort V grantee schools in this study are from four of Orange County's twenty-eight school districts: Brea-Olinda Unified, Fullerton Joint Union, Newport-Mesa Unified, and Santa Ana Unified.

- Brea-Olinda Unified School District serves about 5,950 students grades K-12. The SLC participant in Cohort V is Brea-Olinda High School, which enrolls 2,004 students.

- Fullerton Joint Union High School District is located in Northern Orange County and serves about 15,130 students in grades 9-12. The SLC participating school in Cohort V is Fullerton High School, which enrolls 2,071 students.

- Newport-Mesa Unified School District currently serves about 21,720 students in grades K-12. The participating high schools include: Costa Mesa HS, which enrolls 1,752 students in grades 7-12 and 1,102 students in grades 9-12; and Estancia HS, which enrolls 1,249 students.

- Santa Ana Unified School District is the fifth largest district in the state of California, serving approximately 56,940 students in grades K-12. SAUSD has three participating high schools: Century enrolling about 2,377 students, Santa Ana enrolling 3,435 students, and Valley High Schools, enrolling at 2,465 students.

The OC SLC Consortium convened partner schools to develop a comprehensive consortium plan with specific plans for each school, embedding and integrating its primary goals. The OC SLC Consortium, a countywide partnership, provides professional development, promotes efforts to build continuous support within the community, and an opportunity for partner schools to share out and learn from their individual experiences with the initiative. The OC SLC Consortium goals include:

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5) All students will have career, technical and technology skills.

Public *Works*, Inc. Evaluation and Report Organization

As required by the US Department of Education, districts receiving Cohort V Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) Implementation Grants are required to hire a third-party evaluator. The evaluation conducted by Public *Works*, Inc. (PW) focuses on how the SLC initiative affects the following related research areas: academic achievement (*Rigor*) with curricular approaches that bring meaning and application to students (*Relevance*) along with enhanced personal connections to adults and other students (*Relationships*).

Following this introduction, Part II provides a more detailed methodology of the evaluation. Part III includes an analysis of the qualitative data regarding program implementation across the seven schools based on site visit and survey results, organized by the original project goals listed above. Part IV provides an analysis of quantitative student outcome data from Baseline year through Year 5 of grant. Part V is a conclusion that includes recommendations for the consortium and for the high schools. Appendices include a map of participating schools, bibliography, staff survey results, student survey results, the site implementation checklist used to summarize data collected for each school, and a description of each school along with their SLC approaches.

Part II—EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation of the OC SLC Consortium Cohort V grant encompasses: (1) a qualitative dimension measuring progress with regard to program implementation and (2) a quantitative dimension measuring the impact of the grant on student achievement. At the beginning of implementation, the OC SLC Consortium convened partner schools to develop a comprehensive consortium plan that included specific plans for each school, embedding and integrating the consortium's primary goals. The evaluation assesses the extent to which the OC SLC Consortium's grant goals were attained by the seven participating high schools. The OC SLC Consortium grant goals include:

1) Increase student academic performance in literacy and mathematics.
2) All students will have access to rigorous classes.
3) Improve instructional practices among teachers.
4) Personalize the educational experience for students' success.
5) All students will have career, technical and technology skills.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collected for this evaluation includes a staff survey and three student surveys, each of which is collected annually. In addition, Public *Works*, Inc. staff conducted a one-day site visit with students, staff, and administrators from each of the seven high schools in spring 2010 to assess the status of SLC implementation in 2009-10.

Surveys

Public *Works*, Inc. developed four surveys of key stakeholders for this evaluation, one for school staff, one for sophomores, one for seniors, and a follow up survey of seniors conducted during the fall after graduation. Each school is provided with the results of the surveys for their school and combined across all seven high schools. Combined survey frequencies are included in **Appendix C.**

Staff Survey

The staff survey asked about knowledge and involvement in the school's SLC initiative. The survey is administered during a spring staff meeting and all members of the staff participating in the school's faculty meeting are asked to complete a survey. In order to calculate a response rate, Public *Works*, Inc. uses the California Department of Education (CDE) reported number of certificated staff to estimate the number of staff at each school. The following table displays the response rate for the staff survey for each school based on the number of completed surveys (Table 1). In total, Public *Works*, Inc. achieved an 84% response rate to this survey.

Table 1: Staff Survey Response Rates 2009-10

High School	# of certificated staff*	# of completed surveys	Response rate
Brea-Olinda HS	89	74	83%
Century HS	121	103	85%
Costa Mesa HS	76	56	74%
Estancia HS	66	53	80%
Fullerton HS	94	83	88%
Santa Ana HS	138	114	83%
Valley HS	111	103	93%
TOTAL	**695**	**586**	**84%**

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.
***Source: California Department of Education**

Student Surveys

In order to collect student opinions and information about their 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 if they currently participate in an SLC and their participation in activities such as after-school programs, college courses, internships and the like. The survey also included demographic questions including grade, sex, race-ethnicity, highest-level math class and plans after graduation. To assess the impact of the initiative over time, Public *Works*, Inc. administers the surveys to 10th and 12th graders. Response rates for this survey are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Student Survey Response Rates 2009-10

High School	10th grade enrollment*	# of surveys completed	Response rate	12th grade enrollment*	# of surveys completed	Response Rate
Brea Olinda HS	549	454	83%	465	418	90%
Century HS	642	524	82%	557	540	97%
Costa Mesa HS	270	244	90%	259	204	79%
Estancia HS	339	293	86%	265	229	86%
Fullerton HS	480	475	99%	469	419	89%
Santa Ana HS	838	674	80%	844	562	67%
Valley HS	618	420	68%	584	277	47%
TOTAL	**3,852**	**3,084**	**80%**	**3,443**	**2,649**	**77%**

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.
***Source: California Department of Education**

Public *Works*, Inc. administers a senior follow-up survey in the fall after graduation in order to find out about postsecondary enrollment, employment and other activities after high school. To meet federal reporting requirements, Public *Works*, Inc. administered an annual follow-up telephone survey. For 2009-10, the follow-up survey began in September 2010[7] to seniors who provided contact information during the spring 2010 student survey administration. The survey gauged initial outcomes and 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 school or college after high school. The response rate across the seven high schools was about 67% (1,172 follow-up

[7] Follow-up phone surveys were conducted through December 2010.

surveys out of 1,157 total surveys with contact information) (Table 3). This is approximately 34% of total seniors enrolled (3,433) in 2009-10 as reported by CDE.

Table 3: Graduate Follow-up Survey Response Rates, Fall 2010

High School	# of surveys completed	# of graduate surveys*	# of Follow-up surveys completed	Response rate
Brea Olinda HS	418	302	230	76%
Century HS	540	373	183	49%
Costa Mesa HS	204	149	83	56%
Estancia HS	229	80	47	56%
Fullerton HS	419	276	269	95%
Santa Ana HS	562	344	214	62%
Valley HS	277	233	146	63%
TOTAL	**2,649**	**1,757**	**1,172**	**67%**

***Includes only those surveys with complete contact information**
Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Site Visits

In order to provide qualitative information regarding the implementation of SLC at the school level, Public *Works*, Inc. conducted site visits to each of the seven schools receiving Cohort V implementation grant funds. Site visits were scheduled by Public *Works*, Inc. staff and coordinated by each school's designated implementation coordinator. 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 and other key administrators
- Teachers involved in SLC
- Teachers not involved in SLC
- Counselors
- Department Chairs
- Students participating in SLC (e.g. 9th Grade Houses and Partnership Academies)
- Students not participating in SLC
- SLC Advisory Committee or Team – including community partners

To prepare for the site visit, Public *Works*, Inc. met with the schools and gathered initial information for all the current and planned smaller learning communities at each site. 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 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 and a review of the protocols developed specifically for the site visits.

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 were summarized in the checklists completed

for each site. The checklist is included in **Appendix D**. **Appendix E** provides a description of each of the schools participating in the grant.

The Site Visit Checklist is intended to assess an overall average rating of the status of implementation for individual areas within the initiative. The seven areas rated on the checklist for the SLC grants included:

- Vision, Leadership & Management
- Professional Learning Communities
- Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum & Instruction
- SLC Identity including Equity and Access
- Accountability and Continuous Program Improvement
- Community Support for SLC
- Personalization

The following rating scale was used to provide a gauge of the level of implementation of individual components of smaller 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.

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 Collection

Part IV of this report summarizes student outcome data that is available for the schools participating in the grant. Student level data from 2008-09 and 2009-10 for all students at the high schools participating in the SLC grant were collected from the district in the fall of 2010. In addition, data available online through the California Department of Education (CDE) has also been used in many of the tables prepared for this report.

In order to assess the impact of SLCs on student achievement, this report presents 2005-06 (Year 1), 2006-07 (Year 2), 2007-08 (Year 3), 2008-2009 (Year 4) and 2009-2010 (Year 5) student achievement data for the high schools participating in the Cohort V grant. Most of the aggregate school level data was collected through the California Department of Education (CDE) Website. In addition, participating school districts provided standardized test and attendance data at the individual student level that can be disaggregated by demographic characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, English language status, and socio-economic status).

Efforts to improve data availability at the individual student level that can be disaggregated by participation in smaller learning communities continue at several of the participating sites. The distinction between school level data and student level data is important to the discussion about how SLC implementation impacts student outcomes. With improved identification of students participating in a particular SLC, the OC SLC Consortium could conduct a more robust analysis of student outcomes. In lieu of being able to systematically identify SLC participation for individual students and SLCs and given that the analysis of student rosters collected from the seven grantee schools indicated the majority of SLC implementation was concentrated at 9th and 10th grades, a separate analysis of data available for freshman and sophomores has been conducted for the evaluation.

The student outcome analysis across the schools participating in the initiative includes:

- Demographics
- SLC Enrollment and participation
- Dropout and graduation rates
- UC/CSU graduate eligibility
- Academic Performance Index (API)
- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Data for 9th and 10th graders includes:

- 9th Grade attendance compared to school wide
- 9th Grade California Standards Test (CST) English language arts proficiency
- 9th Grade California Standards Test (CST) mathematics proficiency
- 10th Grade California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) first-time test taking results

PART III—STATUS OF SLC IMPLEMENTATION

This part of the report provides an analysis of SLC program implementation across the seven schools organized by the original project goals and is based on site visits and surveys:

1) Increase student academic performance in literacy and mathematics.
2) All students will have access to rigorous classes.
3) Improve instructional practices among teachers.
4) Personalize the educational experience for students' success.
5) All students will have career, technical and technology skills.

Where appropriate, examples of strategies employed by individual schools are described to illustrate the variety of approaches taken to implement SLC strategies and to provide an opportunity to share information among the schools. As a summary of implementation, Table 4 provides a list of SLC structures in place during 2009-10 across the seven SLC grantee schools.

Table 4: SLC Structures in place in Year 5 (2009-10)

School	Year 5-2009-10
Brea-Olinda	**9th & 10th Grade Houses combined** **Career Pathways** (*Applied Arts and Humanities, Applied Science)*
Century	**9th Grade Houses, 10th Grade Houses, 9/10th Grade House** **Academies** *(Business & e-Commerce, Human & Public Service)*
Costa Mesa	**Freshman Academy** **Academies** (*Business and Leadership, Creative Expression, Academy of ZOE*)
Estancia	**Pathways** *(Digital Media Arts, Hotel & Hospitality, and Construction Technology)*
Fullerton	**Digital Arts Academy**
Santa Ana	**9th Grade Houses,** **10th Grade Houses,** **Pathways** (*Arts & Communications, Business and Public Service, Health Sciences and Technologies, and Engineering Science and Technologies)*
Valley	**9th Grade Houses** **Academies** (*Global Business, Health Care & Culinary Arts, Engineering, Construction & Manufacturing, Automotive Transportation & New Media*)

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Status of Implementation by Project Goals

Goal 1: Increase student academic performance in literacy & math

Objective: Expand intervention services for all students. Develop PLCs at the consortium and school site levels. Develop school wide Literacy and Math plans.

Academic Performance of Participating Schools and Expectations for Students

The implementation of SLCs at the group of schools in the OC SLC Consortium occurred at a time of increasing accountability mandates for high schools at the state and federal levels. Through NCLB legislation, high school accountability is currently measured by success on the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which incorporates California's Academic Performance Index (API), but primarily focuses on measuring English language arts and mathematics. Among the seven schools participating in the OC SLC Consortium, there is a wide range of student demographics and academic performance on these outcome measures with a pattern closely associated with the nature of the community where the school is located.

For example, the two schools in the north, located in more affluent communities with higher levels of parent education, have high levels of academic performance and are not under the federal Program Improvement (PI)[8] mandate. The three schools in the larger, more central urban community have lower school performance, are all in PI, and on the state's list of the lowest-performing 5% of schools in the state. The two schools in the more suburban south have higher performance but are in PI in order to address the performance of subgroups of students. The Academic Performance Index (API) for participating schools in 2009-10 ranges from 588 to 854, with a consortium average of 712.[9]

In order to blend the SLC initiative—which largely focuses on reorganizing how students are grouped in order to receive personal support for academic and social success—with state and federal mandates for immediate and substantial growth in English language arts and mathematics performance, the OC SLC Consortium convened to develop a comprehensive plan with specific goals in these areas. For example, the three schools with the lowest academic performance implemented SLCs as one of the PI-mandated choices for school restructuring. In the others, SLC implementation was not necessarily tied as closely to academic reorganization and was viewed as one option of many to reach students, in turn, requiring the development of substantially more buy-in from staff in order to be implemented.

For context related to the implementation of SLCs, Table 5 provides a summary of the schools that met API growth targets in the first and last year of the grant period, providing a general perspective on the academic performance of the school as a whole, accounting for

[8] Schools that do not meet federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets for two consecutive years enter Program Improvement (PI) as required under No Child Left Behind. Making AYP targets for two consecutive years results in exit from PI.

[9] The API was created in 1999 to hold schools accountable for progress in improving student achievement relative to state content standards in core academic areas. For high schools, the API is a composite measure based largely on the California Standards Tests in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. It also includes achievement from the English and Mathematics portions of the California High School Exit Exam. Schools are accountable for closing 5% of the distance annually between their current API score and the threshold of 800 established by the State. The 5% goal includes both school-wide and subgroup targets.

the core content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and socials studies; performance on the high school exit exam, and closing of the achievement gap. A more detailed analysis of school performance on the API and the AYP is provided in Part IV, the student outcome section of the report. As noted in the table, the grantee schools academic performance varies greatly across the seven schools.

Over time, as described more fully in the student outcome section, schools in the OC SLC Consortium have been struggling to meet accountability targets for subgroups such as Hispanics, English Learners and Economically Disadvantaged (NSLP) students. The number of schools meeting API targets has fluctuated over the last five years. However, in recent years, a greater number of schools have met the majority of their growth targets. In 2009-10, five schools met the school wide API growth target. These same schools obtained the Hispanic and NSLP subgroup growth target for 2009-10 (Table 5).

The OC SLC Consortium schools' goal to increase student academic performance in literacy and mathematics has improved at most schools. For example, the number of schools meeting the Hispanic and economically disadvantaged subgroup growth targets for 2009-10 increased. Special Education and English Learner subgroups continue to be an area of need at nearly all seven schools in 2009-10 (Table 5).

Table 5: School Meeting API Growth Targets 2005-06 & 2009-10

2006 – Year 1	School-wide	Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged	English Learners	Students w/ Disabilities
Brea-Olinda HS	√	√	√	N/A	√
Fullerton HS	√	√	√	√	√
Costa Mesa HS					N/A
Century HS					
Santa Ana HS	√	√	√	√	√
Valley HS					
2010- Year 5					
Brea-Olinda HS	√	√	√	√	N/A
Century HS					
Costa Mesa HS	√	√	√		√
Estancia HS	√	√	√	√	
Fullerton HS			√		
Santa Ana HS	√	√	√	√	
Valley HS	√	√	√	√	

√ = Met API
*** Baseline year**
NA= Status not available
Source: California Department of Education

Organizing Academic Intervention to Meet Student Needs

In the implementation of SLCs in the OC SLC Consortium, most of the qualitative data collected indicates that the schools were most likely to embrace the idea of SLCs for 9th and 10th graders, where the evidence is particularly strong that academic intervention and a smoother transition to high school can have many benefits to students and to the school's efforts to meet accountability requirements. In order to successfully reach more students in these grades and to target intervention, schools in the OC SLC Consortium found a more natural fit between the idea of heterogeneous groupings of incoming students with a smaller core group of teachers to make sure that students are not "lost" in the shuffle of transitioning from middle school. In contrast, SLCs such as academies and career pathways that are more dependent on student and faculty interest and less tied to the traditional

structure of core content areas and which are typically implemented for juniors and seniors have had less resonance in many of the participating schools. Despite this struggle, some progress has been made, which is described more fully in the SLC identity section of the report.

However, despite a lack of the development of SLC structures in some schools and at some grade levels, the emphasis on freshmen and sophomores has resulted in a broader recognition of the need to intervene early on and to focus on data and results to make these decisions. The staff survey from 2009-10 indicated that 88% agreed that all children can learn and 86% agreed that curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels.

Three of the schools reported a staff focus on the use of data in department meetings, and one of the two has adopted a district initiative to set a "Measurable Math/ELA Objective: Non-negotiable" policy. In this case, all 9th grade Algebra I/ELA students are expected to raise their California Standards Test (CST) scores by 10 points in 2010, and 70% of these same students were expected to obtain a C or better grade by June of 2010. At the March site visit, the percentage was at 68% with a C or better—very close to the original goal.

Through the SLC initiative, stakeholders reported that intervention services have expanded across the grantee schools providing courses to prepare for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and CSTs, tutoring, and home visits. Three schools reported that teachers in SLC houses identify struggling students using attendance and behavior and conferences are held with those students. At one of those schools, staff reported that at the next grading period, over 60% of those students improved their overall GPAs.

Some schools have their personnel make calls and visits to the home. Counselors have also created an intervention form that is used to monitor students' grades, citizenship and attendance. This increased monitoring has decreased truancy. Counselors at another school do home visits to follow-up on D and F students. Another school has extensive parent conferences convened by their SLC house teams, and has developed an advisement period during which teachers meet with students to review their transcripts, check progress towards graduation, assist them with homework and complete CAHSEE practice tests.

One school with a large population of English Learners offers many levels of ELA courses (from multiple English Learner transitional course levels to Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) to Transitional to College Prep to Honors to AP). Based on the students' 9th grade CST scores, the school uses this data to place students they think may be unlikely to pass the exam in an individualized reading program. Several schools have double blocks of English Language Arts (ELA) interventions and double block math interventions for students scoring Far Below Basic and Below Basic on the CSTs. Some schools use well-known intervention curricula such as GRAD 9/ GRAD 10, an ELA support as well as Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS), an online math support.

Three schools have credit recovery options including an online credit recovery program. In addition, numerous schools offer CAHSEE prep courses for 11th and 12th grade students who have not passed the exam. One school uses *Chariot*, a computer program designed to prepare students for both the math and ELA portion of the CAHSEE. This same school developed an extensive and coherent CAHSEE intervention program strategy that targets all students at risk of not passing, closely analyzing results and predicting the pass/fail rate.

Many grantee schools have implemented some sort of homework assistance. Another school has special programs to immediately complete homework not turned in by having the student attend an after-school or lunch session the same day the homework was not turned in. Another has mandatory 7th period study hall, with credit, for students with two or more Fs. Schools have multiple tutoring opportunities including during the school day, such as one school's senior-freshmen tutoring sessions for all freshmen during the school's daily Sustained Silent Reading period. Another school had a tutoring time during a school-day advisory period twice a week.

The percent of English Learners attending the seven schools in 2009-10 averaged 27% with a broad range on a school-by-school basis. Survey data from staff at all particpating schools indicate a high percentage (88%) agree or strongly agree that school-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of EL students. However, site visits did not reveal the systematic presence of specific intervention strategies for ELs with students at nearly all grantee schools placed in intervention courses soley by scoring Far Below Basic or Below Basic on their CSTs rather than other measures related to English language development. Further, there is less agreement by staff in 2009-10, with only 68% agreeing or strongly agreeing that there is a clear process for referring a student for academic intervention.

While structured intervention opportunities have increased generally, SLCs themselves have provided limited direct intervention designed to meet their particular SLC students. Rather, intervention is more likely to be organized at the department level. Tenth and twelfth grade student surveys, administered to students attending the seven grantee schools in 2009-10, indicate there is room for growth in this area. While 70% and 74% agreed that teachers know a student's academic strengths and where that student could improve academically and 73% and 72% agreed that teachers demonstrate that they are interested in student academic success, there is a sizeable group (about one quarter to a third) who disagree with these statements.

Goal 2: All students will have access to rigorous classes

Objective: Implement structures & strategies for all students to have access to A-G courses. Group students heterogeneously in SLCs. Provide support structures & strategies for students to achieve at grade level. Place all ninth graders in Algebra 1 or above.

College Readiness

Over 80% of students surveyed in 2009-10 in OC SLC Consortium schools agreed that teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level, that teachers provide them with information on how they can become a higher-achieving student, that they can get tutoring and other help if they are having trouble in school, and that they will be prepared to enter college when they are finished with high school. However, only 54% of tenth graders and 57% of twelfth graders agreed that they have been encouraged to take AP and honors courses.

The highest performing school in the consortium (with the highest API and that also continues to meet its AYP targets), reported having strong curricular alignment with state standards and rigorous A-G course offerings and had an impressive 34 point gain in API in 2010 from the previous year. This school has a culture of high expectations and a strong student guidance program. The second northern school, which also has high alignment with A-G course offerings for all students, enrolls all 9th grade students in Algebra 1 but does provide a second semester Pre-Algebra course for those failing. This school's math department makes in-depth use of a common student assessment data system to study student performance on its common midterm and final exams. Its English department has a school-wide focus on its grade level benchmark essays, which it scores and then uses the results to adjust instruction in the classroom.

The districts of the three urban schools in the consortium adopted University of California and California State University course requirements (known as the A-G requirements) as the default curriculum for all students and 240 credits as the graduation requirement a few years ago. The district has since dropped the credit requirement to 220 but the A-G course requirements remain. One of these schools, the lowest performing school in the consortium, increased its API by an impressive 47 points in 2010, indicating increased expectations and significantly higher California Standards Test (CST) scores. The new principal has credited the use of after-school academic programming as one of the factors in the school's large increase. The other four schools had API increases ranging from 12 points to 19 points, indicating small to moderate increases in CST scores.

University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) eligibility requirements are a guiding principle in the development of curricular practices and in programming courses for students at high schools throughout California. Because it is based on enrollment in UC and CSU eligible courses, what is tracked at the state level does not necessarily provide an accurate gauge of students who are actually competitive in the application process. However, it does provide some guidance regarding student access to the courses accepted by these university systems.

Table 6 provides the percentage of seniors who completed UC/CSU courses in the participating schools in Year 1 through Year 4 (Year 5 data is not yet available) of the grant. There was substantial variation (range of 17%-58%) across the schools in 2008-09, the last year for which data is available.

Three of the participating schools experienced an increase in the percentage of students meeting UC/CSU eligibility requirements upon graduation. This may explain the precipitous decline in UC/CSU eligibility from Year 1 to Year 2. It is also important to note that Santa Ana USD (Century, Santa Ana, and Valley high schools) adopted A-G and 240 credits as the graduation requirement for all students a few years ago, and later decreased the requirement to 220 with the A-G requirement in place. In Year 4, state graduates increased to 383,643 with 35% UC/ CSU eligible. Across the seven schools, 1,002 of 2,755 graduating students (36%) met the A-G criteria. Grantee schools' UC/CSU eligibility percentages should exceed statewide averages and among all sites the statewide percentage was met. Two high schools' graduating seniors met UC/CSU eligibility by over 40%. One school dropped by half from the prior year (Table 6).

Table 6: UC/CSU Graduate Eligibility, 2005-2009[11]

School	Baseline: 2004-05		Year 1: 2005-06		Year 2: 2006-07		Year 3: 2007-08		Year 4: 2008-09	
	Total Graduate	UC/CSU	Total Graduate	UC/CSU	Total Graduate	UC/CSU	Total Graduate	UC/CSU	Total Graduate	UC/CSU
Brea-Olinda	471	186 (39.5%)	443	195 (44%)	452	229 (51%)	262	154 (59%)	487	282 (58%)
Century	440	74 (16.8%)	353	353 (100%)	310	65 (21%)	331	68 (21%)	397	91 (23%)
Costa Mesa	247	137 (55.5%)	244	89 (37%)	235	66 (28%)	235	61 (26%)	238	64 (27%)
Estancia[10]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	258	109 (42%)
Fullerton	393	179 (45.5%)	411	220 (54%)	439	116 (26%)	448	138 (31%)	456	77 (17%)
Santa Ana	560	132 (23.6%)	577	577 (100%)	568	140 (25%)	575	178 (31%)	540	290 (54%)
Valley	442	84 (19.0%)	372	371 (99%)	371	37 (10%)	336	144 (43%)	379	89 (23%)
All Sites	**2,553**	**792 (31.0%)**	**2,400**	**1,805 (75%)**	**2,375**	**653 (27%)**	**2,187**	**743 (34%)**	**2,755**	**1,002 (36%)**
STATE	**355,275**	**125,068 (35.2%)**	**349,074**	**125,308 (36%)**	**356,641**	**126,516 (36%)**	**376,393**	**127,594 (34%)**	**383,643**	**135,379 (35%)**

Source: California Department of Education

SLC Coherence & Identity

The development of SLCs across the participating schools has been gauged by a number of qualitative data collection strategies including site visits and surveys as well as the outcome measure of actual student enrollment from analysis of student rosters and the schools' master schedules. This section of the report provides information on the development of

[10] Estancia HS was joined the grant in 2008-09, data is not available on CDE.
[11] 2008-09, 2009-10 UC/CSU Data not available on CDE.

SLC structures over time and the considerable variation from school to school and grade to grade in terms of what is available to students as of 2009-10. Table 7a shows the progression of development from baseline to the final year of the grant and Table 7b provides a summary of the kinds of SLCs currently in place at all of the schools.

Prior to initiating the five-year grant, a number of schools had established SLC structures that existed prior to 2004-05. For example, Fullerton had a Digital Arts Academy; Costa Mesa had a California Partnership Academy (CPA) (Education and Business), and Valley had a CPA (Global Finance). Student enrollment in these SLCs represented only 10% of total enrollment. In the first year (2005-06) of implementation, the focus was on the planning of freshmen house structures, in which students are "cored" with at least three common teachers. In Year 1, enrollment in SLCs increased slightly (13%) with a pilot 9th grade program at one school and the additional academy students in existing structures.

During the second year of the grant, participating high schools in the OC SLC Consortium involved 39% of students in grades 9-12 in an SLC, an increase of 26% from the previous year. Most of the increase was due to the rollout of 9th grade (freshman) house structures. All six participating schools at that time had freshman Houses in place. Two schools also established 10th grade level house structures and a third piloted one that same year.

In Year 3 (2007-08) of the grant, 60% of students in grades 9-12 across the SLC grantee high schools in Orange County participated in an SLC. The implementation of 9th grade houses across nearly all the schools, 10th grade level houses/academies, and 11th-12th grade academies at a few schools increased the SLC enrollment in the third year of the grant by 34% of students to a total of 60%. The majority of SLCs implemented in Year 3 remained focused on freshman and sophomore grade houses, including single grade structures as well 9th – 10th grade house structures.[12] For example, in 2007-08, Fullerton High School added one additional 9th grade house for a total of five houses. At the SAUSD schools, Century High School incorporated one additional 9th/10th grade house and two 10th grade houses; Valley High School incorporated three 9th grade houses and five 10th-12th grade houses; and Santa Ana strengthened their 9th and 10th grade houses. Brea-Olinda added 10th graders to their 9th grade houses. During 2007-08, two schools expanded SLC structures at the upper grades (11th and 12th grade). Costa Mesa, in addition to the Freshman and Sophomore Academy also implemented four career-themed academies for junior and senior students.

In 2008-2009, Year 4 of the grant, the seven schools involved 57% of students in grades 9-12. While some schools merged or removed SLCs, other schools expanded structures in the upper grades. For example, Brea's 9th/10th grade houses continued but the 12th grade house was not implemented. Santa Ana continued the 9th and 10th grade house model. Costa Mesa continued with the Freshman Academy and three 10th-12th grade academies resulting in wall-to-wall SLCs. Estancia HS started fall 2008 with three career academies: Digital Media Arts, Hotel Hospitality, and Construction Technology. Century implemented five 11th-12th-grade career academies/pathways were implemented. The 9th and 10th grade houses continued and merged two houses. Valley continued with 9th grade houses and implemented six academies at the 10th-12th grade level, funding through the High School Inc grant. However, in 2008-09, Fullerton's successful 9th grade houses were dismantled due to an unexpected level of 9th grade enrollment.

[12] Sonora HS and Newport Harbor HS withdrew from the grant at the end of Year 3.

In 2009-10, SLC structures and strategies varied across the consortium (Table 7b). Three schools have well-defined 9th and 10th grade houses with teacher teams sharing common students who are in the SLC for at least 50% of their school day (for three or more courses in the SLC). Two more schools have well-defined 9th grade houses with teacher teams sharing common students in at least three courses. The strength of these house identities depends on the proximity of house teachers (two schools have intentional house team proximity including one with a Freshman Village); the frequency with which the teams meet, and the leadership of the team leaders— all of which varies across the schools. At one school, common prep periods were removed by the administration because teachers were not using them productively. At another there are common preps, but teachers are not meeting with one another during that time.

These five schools plus a sixth school have "academies" or "pathways" spanning 10th through 12th grades. In five of these six schools, the students have three courses, including a career pathway-related elective, within the pathway. The strength of the identity of these pathways varies depending on how long they have been in place, the corresponding clarity and stability of teacher assignments, the frequency of staff meetings and how strong the partnerships are with local businesses and institutions. Pre-existing California Partnership Academies (CPAs) that form the core of a pathway at several schools have strong identities often based on many years of operation.

Table 7a: SLCs Structure, Baseline to Year 5

School	Year 1 2005-06	Year 2 2006-07	Year 3 2007-08	Year 4 2008-09	Year 5 2009-10
Brea-Olinda	Not Applicable	9th Grade Houses	9th & 10th Grade Houses combined	9th & 10th Grade Houses combined	9th & 10th Grade Houses combined, Career Pathways (*Applied Arts and Humanities, Applied Science)*
Century	Teach & E-Business Academies, Homogeneous 9th House (Fundamental/Concept Teams), Pilot 10th House	9th Grade Houses	9th & 10th Grade Houses combined	9th Grade Houses 9th & 10th Grade House 10th grade Houses Academies *(Business & e-Commerce, Human & Public Service)*	9th Grade Houses, 10th Grade Houses, 9/10th Grade House, Academies *(Business & e-Commerce, Human & Public Service)*
Costa Mesa	Academy of Business, Finance, and Technology	Freshman Academy, Sophomore Academy	Grade-level Academies (*Freshman & Sophomore)*, 11th-12th grade Career-interest Academies	***Freshman Academy, Academies*** *(Business, Finance, Technology & Leadership; Creative Expression; and Academy of Science/ZOE)*	Freshman Academy, Academies (*Business and Leadership, Creative Expression, Academy of ZOE*)
Estancia	--	--	--	***Pathways*** *(Digital Media Arts and Hotel & Hospitality)*	***Pathways*** *(Digital Media Arts, Hotel & Hospitality, and Construction Technology)*
Fullerton	Digital Arts Academy	9th Grade Houses	9th Grade Houses	Digital Arts Academy	Digital Arts Academy
Santa Ana	Not Applicable	9th Grade Houses, 10th Grade Houses	9th Grade Houses, 10th Grade Houses	9th Grade Houses, 10th Grade Houses	9th Grade Houses, 10th Grade Houses, Pathways (*Arts & Communications, Business and Public Service, Health Sciences and Technologies, and Engineering Science and Technologies)*
Valley	Global Academy of Finance 9th Pilot House (semester 2)	9th Grade Houses 10th Pilot House	9th grade Houses, 10-12th grade Houses	9th Grade Houses, Academies *(Global Finance, Health Care, Manufacturing, Engineering & Construction, and Automotive & Transportation)*	9th Grade Houses Academies (*Global Business, Health Care & Culinary Arts, Engineering, Construction & Manufacturing, Automotive Transportation & New Media*)

-- School not yet participating in grant.
Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Table 7b: SLC Structures and Strategies, Year 5

School	Academies	Career Pathways	Advisory Systems	Common Prep Period	Houses	Interdisciplinary teacher teams	Separate building space
Brea-Olinda		✔			✔	✔	✔
Century		✔			✔	✔	
Costa Mesa	✔	✔			✔	✔	
Estancia		✔		✔		✔	
Fullerton	✔			✔		✔	
Santa Ana		✔			✔	✔	
Valley	✔			✔	✔	✔	✔

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

SLC Enrollment and Student and Staff Identification with SLCs

As described in the previous section, two participating schools have had upper grade pathways/career academies for more than one year, and can be said to be truly wall-to-wall. Two others have had their first year of pathways in the upper grades and are wall-to-wall on paper, with some teachers and students unsure about which SLC they are in. One school has two pre-existing CPAs that are SLCs in the upper grades but has no other upper grades in SLCs. Another school has three SLCs from 10th to 12th grade but the SLCs do not include significant parts of the student body. The seventh school failed to implement any SLCs and only has one pre-existing SLC and academy-like programs on campus.

While grantee schools have made considerable progress in implementing SLC structures at the 9th and 10th grade and have expanded SLCs in the 11th and 12th grades, an analysis of enrollment and student rosters at the consortium schools demonstrate that a majority of SLC participants do not yet meet the common three courses within an SLC, the federal definition of an SLC. This roster analysis indicated a large range of SLC participation meeting this federal definition from 0% to 81% (Brea-Olinda) across the seven schools. About half of student enrollment at two other schools met this criteria (Table 8). Part IV elaborates on this as a student outcome of SLC implementation.

Table 8: Summary of SLC Enrollment by School using the federal 3-common course definition of SLC

School	Year 1 2005-06	Year 2 2006-07	Year 3 2007-08	Year 4 2008-09	Year 5 2009-10	2009-10 Met SLC Criteria*
Brea-Olinda	0%	25%	47%	47%	97%	81%
Costa Mesa	7%	50%	90%	90%	99%	52%
Estancia	--	--	--	19%	29%	1%
Fullerton	3%	34%	29%	8%	5%	0%
Century	86%	42%	57%	74%	95%	65%
Santa Ana	0%	51%	35%	49%	89%	19%
Valley	6%	42%	89%	83%	93%	45%
All Sites	**14%**	**41%**	**55%**	**57%**	**72%**	**38%**

***These numbers are based on students enrolled in at three or more SLC common course and reflect the federal definition of an SLC participant.**
-- School not yet participating in grant.
Source: Public Works, Inc.

As further evidence of the need to more fully develop SLCs and engage students and staff in the selection and assignment process, the student survey in 2009-10 indicates that many students did not self-identify the SLC/Academy to which they were currently assigned. Based on the student survey responses, 56% of sophomores and 24% of seniors indicated which SLC/ Academy they were assigned to currently; the remaining respondents did not identify any assignment (Table 9).

Table 9: % Student Self-Reporting Assignment to SLC 2009-10

Grade Level	Identify SLC	Did not Identify SLC
Sophomores (n=3,084)	56%	44%
Seniors (n=2,649)	24%	46%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

One question on the staff survey asked respondents to self-identify whether they were currently assigned to an SLC by checking from a list of SLC options (see question 6 in staff survey in Appendix C). Based on the survey responses in 2009-10, about 40% of staff across the sites said that they were <u>not</u> assigned to an SLC and 60% said they were assigned, increasing 6% from the previous year (2008-09) (Table 10). Costa Mesa High School staff reported the highest levels of assignment to an SLC (88%). Only 14% of Estancia High School staff reported that they were assigned to an SLC in 2009-10.

Table 10: % Staff Self-Reporting Assignment to SLC by Type[13] 2009-10

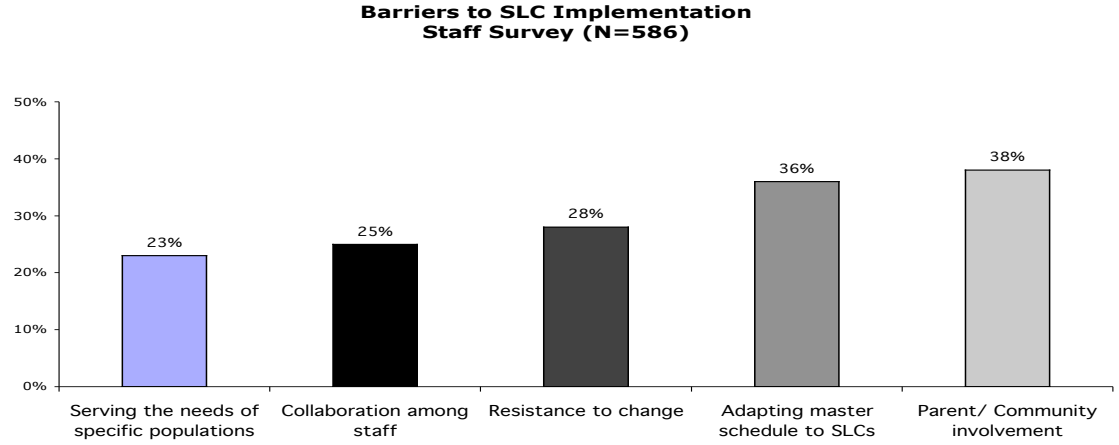
High School	Assigned to SLC	Not Assigned to SLC
Brea Olinda HS (n=74)	75%	25%
Century HS (n=103)	82%	18%
Costa Mesa HS (n=56)	88%	13%
Estancia HS (n= 53)	14%	86%
Fullerton HS (n=83)	35%	65%
Santa Ana HS (n=114)	42%	58%
Valley HS (n=103)	74%	26%
TOTAL (N=586)	**60%**	**40%**

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

As indicated by the analysis of enrollment and in interviews during the site visits, the master schedule continues to be rated as one of the biggest barriers to SLC implementation. At three of seven grantee schools, students continue to be tracked by ability, with no AP or honors courses in SLCs or are concentrated in specific SLCs. Also, in many cases, 11th and 12th grade SLCs were assigned to pre-existing California Partnership Academies (CPAs), with no real teacher teaming or coherent programs beyond what existed before the grant. While changing the master schedule is difficult and requires many levels of negotiation and accommodation, parent and community involvement and resistance to change are the next two largest barriers to SLC implementation identified in the staff survey, which further undermine efforts to change the status quo (Figure 1).

[13] Respondents could check multiple options.

Figure 1: Top Five Barriers to SLC Implementation, 2009-10 Staff Survey



Source: Public Works, Inc.

Equity & Access

Four of the grantee schools have committed to heterogeneous 9th and/or 10th grade houses where students are placed randomly or by choice/interest. All course levels from EL to AP courses are available to students within the 9th and/or 10th grade houses at these schools. Special education and EL students are throughout all houses. One school has homogeneous 9th and 10th grade houses by ELA ability level, with different houses for ELs, SDAIE students, College Prep students and Honors/AP students.

While, in general, schools have made significant progress in 9th and 10th grade, schools have struggled to implement schoolwide 11th and 12th grade structures. Amongst the five schools that have committed to three-course 10-12th grade pathways/academies, the two schools that have implemented them for more than one year have heterogeneous SLCs. For the two schools that just initiated them, it is too early to tell. Another school has three 10th-12th grade pathways but they do not include EL or AP/Honors students.

Staff survey results indicate only 59% agreed in 2009-10 that SLCs at their school have an educational philosophy that is shared by students, staff, families and community partners. Seventy-three percent of staff agreed that admission to SLCs is open and inclusive, and 70% agreed that SLCs include heterogeneous groupings of students and are not tracked by student ability. While staff saw curricular access and equity as a small (ranking it the lowest of 16 possible choices for barriers) barrier to SLC implementation, they saw serving the needs of specific populations as the fifth-highest barrier to SLC implementation.

Goal 3: Improve instructional practice among teachers

Objective: Staff will collaborate & plan. Implement school-wide standards-based instruction. Develop structured PD plans for grantee schools. Implement PLCs at schools. Implement school site and Consortium PLCs.

Staff Collaboration

SLC teams' collaboration has generally decreased since the beginning years of the grant. For example, one school's administration removed common prep periods as they felt teachers were not using them well, so team meetings are not convened. Instead the SLC/team lead receives a extra duty pay to coordinate SLC. Another school has common prep periods for most the teams but interviews indicated that the teams still are not meeting on a regular basis. One school has had trouble assigning dedicated teacher teams to its SLCs and has developed houses that contain multiple teams in order to draw from more teachers. One school does not have common preps but had a full day before the year started for houses to plan and to choose when to meet during the year. This school's houses have to turn in meeting agendas to its SLC coordinator. Interestingly, this school has active 9th grade house teams, which foster a strong identity via awards assemblies and student recognition.

Eighty-two percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed in 2009-10 that teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public. Lower levels of agreement were found for survey questions about SLC-based collaboration and professional development. Seventy-two percent of staff agreed that SLCs meet regularly, 42% agreed that there was sufficient time for teachers to discuss student work in SLC meetings, 60% agreed that professional development for the SLC initiative was designed by teachers specifically for their school, 66% agreed that SLC topics were a regular feature of school-wide professional development, 64% agreed that SLCs had adminstrators or teacher-directors who led a cohesive faculty and 72% agreed that most staff at the school trust one another.

Since common preps are challenging for schools to implement in the master schedule, they are not common across the consortium. During the site visits, schools shared that one major reason for the lack of common prep was the current economic instability and lack of resources to schedule such planning periods. Even when they are in place, consortium schools have seen that they do not always lead to increased collaboration, identity, personalization, and the like for the SLC, and in some cases, schools without common preps have succeeded in developing identity, personalization, and student interventions at the house level, primarily because of faculty commitment to these ideas for student support.

Implementation of School Site and Consortium Professional Development

School District-provided professional development (PD) at several schools was most commonly related to how to use district student assessment data software to access a teacher's students' performance data and examining accessible student data.

The school that provided professional development in SLC teams had broader offerings such as team building, writing across the curriculum, interdisciplinary projects, project-based lessons, character development, positive behavior intervention system, teacher discipline plans, lesson/homework/syllabus design, writing and preparation for the California English Language Development Test (CELDT).

Orange County Smaller Learning Communities Consortium (OC SLC Consortium) provided professional development for the SLC schools included monthly meetings and networking for site leaders, including rotating the monthly meetings to different school sites so that the schools could see each other's SLCs in operation. The professional development provided the consortium included many different trainings: leadership for site teams, school action plans based on school data, SLC Coordination, master scheduling, counselor support, academy advisory boards, reading in the content areas, reading in CTE classes, 9th grade transition strategies, school site coaching, project-based learning strategies, reflective thinking and writing and interdisciplinary instruction, Data Driven Dialogue, Adaptive Schools, and ICLE workshops to help schools plan for common core standards.

Eighty-six percent of staff surveyed in 2009-10 agreed that curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels. Seventy-nine percent agreed the professional development promotes greater alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements. These high levels of agreement likely reflect the nature of collaboration at grantee schools, which are content department efforts that focus on student assessments, driven by school district initiative.

SLCs are really only fully developed in the 9th and 10th grades so it might be expected that 60 to 70% of staff are knowledgeable enough to agree with statements about SLC meetings, SLC professional development, and SLC leadership on the staff survey. Staff have also indicated on the same survey that staff collaboration and teacher teaming have been a barrier to the SLC implementation. One possible explanation is that staff recognize that some colleagues do not support the SLC initiative but teachers who are on the teams have experienced working together without difficulty.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) structures exist at most schools, but are focused on departmental content and issues as opposed to SLC. PLCs are content department PLCs that meet regularly and some schools reported participating in district-wide PLCs. The work done in PLCs at many schools is largely the creation and revision of common periodic assessments and pacing guides, the scoring of these benchmark assessments, the examination of standardized (CST, CELDT, CAHSEE) assessment data and discussion of which areas of the curriculum that the data show need more instructional emphasis. There are unique initiatives at some schools, such as benchmark essays for each grade level that are scored by the English department.

At one school, SLC teams meet as PLCs and/or participate in SLC professional development. In addition, the consortium's use of monthly meetings and networking opportunities created a consortium-wide PLC for the SLC leadership teams at each school. The OC SLC Consortium provided time for grantee schools to network and share site best practices, and collaborative participation in professional development.

Goal 4: Personalize the educational experience for students' success

Objective: Improve tracking of student outcomes including post-graduation activity. Increase connections between school, student safety, & well being.

Although all schools have varied in terms of level of effort and successes in implementing SLC structures, all schools have improved in implementing strategies to personalize educational experiences for students. Implementation of strong SLC structures would help to further deepen the personalization strategies. Three schools have well-defined 9th and 10th grade houses with teacher teams sharing common students who are in the SLC for at least 50% of their school day (for three or more courses in the SLC). Two more schools have well-defined 9th grade houses with teacher teams sharing common students in at least three courses.

There are fewer SLC structures at the 10th through 12th grade and include career or interest-based "academies" or "pathways". Personalization in these structures focuses on student interest, relationship with teachers, and smaller groups of students getting to know one another better. The strength of the identity of these pathways varies depending on how long they have been in place, the corresponding clarity and stability of teacher assignments, the frequency of staff meetings and how strong the partnerships are with local businesses and institutions. Pre-existing California Partnership Academies (CPAs) that form the core of a pathway at several schools have strong identities from often many years of operation.

Advisories are another structural means to infuse personalization. One consortium school experimented with an advisory period a couple times a week but discontinued it. Another school has just voted to implement advisories for the 2010-2011 school year. Another school has a daily Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) period that is used for advisory-type mentoring for freshmen.

Personalizing Instruction

There has been a mixed response to the SLC initiative's goal of developing personalized instruction. Personalized instruction is in use at half of the schools that implemented SLCs, as three schools show wide use of interdisciplinary projects including student-choice/interest-based projects. These show the uniqueness of a school's houses and academies. One of these schools' freshmen seminar course included a service-learning project and local issue projects and its business academy had students create a virtual enterprise involving several academic disciplines. The second school had an SLC project where students identified their own solutions for societal challenges. The third school had a senior exit portfolio requirement. A fourth school had not developed interdisciplinary projects in its 10th-12th grade academies, but its 9th grade college and career planning course used hands-on activities and projects to purposefully expose students to the various careers relating to the school's 10-12th grade academies.

Sophomore and senior students surveyed in 2009-10 agreed that they have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics (73% and 75%), that the assignments show them that teachers want to connect learning to students' life experiences and culture(69% and 68%).

Students feel that they belong to a school-wide community (69% and 69%) and that they feel safe at school (76% and 78%). The responses were about the same for 10th and 12th graders surveyed.

Advocacy, Mentoring and Continuous Relationships

The SLC initiative has led to a wide embrace among grantee schools about the need for positive adult relationships. Six schools reported intentional strategies and programs to mentor students. Three schools practiced looping with their teachers and students over multiple years, which provides for the development of deeper connections between teachers and students. Two schools have specific mentoring programs after school each day that offer homework assistance, academic enrichment, gender-based discussions, test prep and college exposure. Another school has a Freshmen Mentoring program four days a week during the school's SSR period, where upperclassmen meet with a group of 9th graders to help them with assignments and discuss high school issues. Another school has monthly school-wide advisement and peer mentoring IMPACT days during its SSR period with curriculum provided by the SLC coordinator that covers grades, standardized tests, Career Day, Pathway Day, Clubs, etc.

About half of students surveyed in 2009-10 agreed they have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects their needs and interests (44% of sophomore students and 52% of senior students). About two-thirds of sophomores (64%) and 75% of seniors agreed in 2009-10 that there is an adult at their school that they can go to for help with school and for personal support. About half to a little more than half agreed that they were assigned to a teacher, counselor or other staff member to help them plan their education after high school (48% for sophomore respondents and 59% for senior respondents).

These are positive results given that most of the schools are not using formal advisory periods/classes within the school day, as evidenced by the 83% (10th graders) and 86% (12th graders) who indicated they were not in such a period. Still, all of the levels of agreement on the educational planning items are less than 60%, indicating that over 40% of the students do not feel that their educational planning fully reflected their needs and interests.

Counseling & Guidance

The response of school counseling models to the SLC initiative has been mixed. Three schools have counselors assigned to SLCs and can assist with student needs in a variety of ways. One school has counselors attend SLC team meetings and has a dedicated 9th grade counselor assigned to the Freshmen Village to provide support, supervision at lunch, advisement (socio-emotional and academic, post-secondary prep) and a role model. Another school's houses have large numbers of parent conferences during the school day that counselors attend. A fourth school has a counselor who runs a homework make-up session during lunch. About half of the schools in the consortium did not appear to have changed the organization of counseling including counselor assignments or practices/roles much during the grant period.

For several student survey items in 2009-10, agreement was noticeably higher for 12th grade students than for 10th grade students. This likely reflects increased staff focus on students as they get closer to their normal graduation date. For example, meeting with their counselor to plan for college was 27% for 10th graders and 61% for 12th graders, as would be expected. The percentage of students who agreed that they talk to their teachers or a counselor regularly about their high school educational plan was 37% for sophomores compared to 52% of seniors.

Staff survey results in 2009-10 generally aligned with these student survey results, as only 50% of staff agreed that there is sufficient time for teachers to support students' academic and personal needs and to help them plan for the future, only 56% of staff agreed that students complete a written educational plan that encompasses goals for high school and postsecondary education with teachers and/or counselors, only 49% agreed that all students at their school have an adult advocating for their academic and personal needs, and only 56% agreed that students have opportunities to work with one or more teachers over multiple years via looping or student advisories. Paradoxically, staff doesn't seem to see student counseling and guidance as a large barrier to SLC implementation, ranking it as the second-lowest of 16 possible choices of barriers.

Postsecondary Placement

It is difficult to isolate postsecondary placement and career preparation improvements through the SLC initiative. Three schools developing SLCs had direct ties to local businesses and institutions such as local community colleges and another was strengthening a pre-existing CPA's connection to a local community college via a new grant. Another school has started holding large career expo days, with career panels and then expositions with approximately 50 local employers and organizations participating. Field trips are used at a few schools to expose students to career opportunities. Two schools have college and career planning curriculum/courses for their freshmen students.

There appears to be some inverse correlation between school efforts to expand these connections and API, with the higher-performing schools simply continuing the career-related programs they had before the SLC grant, and the lower-performing schools making efforts to expand these connections to increase the relevance of the school's offerings for students.

Based on the results of a follow-up survey conducted on 1,172 June 2010 graduates from all seven grantee schools in the six months following graduation, 92% reported to have graduated, of those 92%, 77% reported attending a college or university. Sixty-eight percent indicated attending school full time and thirty-two percent attend part-time. Of the students attending a post-secondary institution, 32% attended a four-year university, 64% attended a community college and 4% attended a private or vocational school. Approximately half of respondents felt their classes prepared them well for their current educational path or job, Science 51%, History, Math and English 52%. Students suggested they would have liked "more academically rigorous (college prep) courses" (41%) and "more counseling and guidance related to college preparation" (41%).

Goal 5: All students will have career, technical, and technology skills

Objective: Establish academies, themes, & or pathways around career interests. Increase the number of career & technical classes meeting A-G requirements. Use technology to explore post secondary options.

Career Interests & Preparation

The state of California has had a declining emphasis on career, technical, and technology education. However, the SLC initiative acknowledges its importance to expand student interest, make curriculum more relevant, and focus on future postsecondary plans. Six of the seven grantee schools have established academies or pathways around career interests. These academies or pathways vary in the substance of the curriculum and the strength of their identity among students and staff based on the number of years they have been in place and whether the students share at least three classes.

The academies or pathways themes vary among the seven grantee schools. The most popular career themed academies or pathways among the consortium include: the arts (e.g. digital, new media), business, health science and engineering programs. The less frequent programs among the grantee schools include: culinary arts, communications, and an automotive program.

The most career-aligned SLC effort is taking place at the lowest-performing school, which has embarked on a formal district-sponsored partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce to develop academies that match the workforce and career opportunity needs of the local businesses. The Chamber has a board that promotes this initiative, which is called High Schools, Inc. (HSI), and that works with the district leadership to support the efforts at this school. These efforts include installing "field replicas" of workplaces at the school, including professional tools for classroom activities and remodeling of classrooms via HSI grants. Because all students are in one of these academies in grades 10-12, it is likely that more CTE classes will be offered, although whether they are compliant with A-G requirements is not yet known.

Another school formed career-related academies based on student interests that were known from pre-existing, smaller academy structures. This school has active partnerships with local businesses and with a local community college to support its academies. The school's freshmen students complete an online career interests assessment before entering the career-interest related academies in grades 10-12. Another school has three career and local business-related SLCs with good local partnerships to a community college and to industry, but they do not include all students as they exclude AP and EL students.

Three more schools have students technically assigned to career-related or general interest academies in grades 11 and 12 but they are new and not yet fully organized. Students have three classes at two of the three sites but at all three schools there are no teacher teams formed or common student placement. There is no real change in students' experiences yet just opportunities for students to take pre-existing CTE electives while taking their core academic courses as well.

Staff survey results from 2009-10 indicated that 76% agreed that students receive career planning and guidance in the form of career inventories and assessments, job shadowing opportunities, field trips, and career fairs. Eighty-eight percent agreed that students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the instructional day including college courses and internships. With regard to the implementation of SLCs, the results showed a smaller level of CTE exposure and involvement with 68% agreeing that their school encourages partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions, and others necessary to implement SLCs, and only 49% agreeing that community partners, employers, and businesses are involved in the development of SLCs.

Response from the sophomore and senior student survey across the seven schools in 2009-10 show low levels of exposure to career options. The highest response was in the area of field trips with 52% of 12th grade students and 31% of 10th graders reported participating in field trips. Forty-one percent of 12th graders and 29% of 10th graders reported participating in a career fair. Twenty-four percent of 12th graders and 7% of 10th graders participated in job shadowing. Thirteen percent of 12th graders and 9% of 10th graders had work experiences, while 19% of 12th graders and 10% of 10th graders had internships. Only 18% of 12th graders and 8% of 10th graders reported doing a career/interest inventory.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents on the follow-up survey conducted in winter 2010 reported being employed, of which 20% work full-time and 80% work part-time. Results indicated that students thought high school teachers (58%) were more helpful to preparing students in finding a job or career path than a school counselor (51%). Students suggested they would have liked "more career-related or work-based activities (job shadowing, internships)" (31%) and "more career-related, technical, vocational (ROP) courses" (36%).

These results show a large disconnect between what levels of career exposure staff think students are getting and what students think they are getting once they leave high school. This may reflect the fact that for the most part, course offerings have not changed and academies have not really fully established. Students are still getting this exposure through extra-curricular activities such as career fairs, job shadowing, work experience and internships. These are probably largely optional activities and not a requirement like work experience hours are in many CPAs.

Indeed the small percentages of students reporting participation in "linked learning" type of activities such as job shadowing, work experience and internships may reflect the percentage of consortium students who are participating in pre-existing CPAs. If schools under academic oversight/program improvement accountability have discontinued college and career planning courses in order to put more remedial academic courses into the master schedule, that would also explain the low levels of reported participation in these kinds of activities.

Part IV—Student Outcome Analysis

This part of the report summarizes the status of student outcomes through 2009-10 for the Cohort V grantee high schools (Brea-Olinda, Century, Costa Mesa, Estancia, Fullerton, Santa Ana, and Valley) representing four of Orange County's 28 school districts: Brea-Olinda Unified, Fullerton Joint Union, Newport Mesa Unified, and Santa Ana Unified.

Results in this report are derived from performance in 2009-10 school year, the final year of a five-year evaluation. Most of the aggregate school level data was collected through the California Department of Education (CDE) Website. School-level data was available for the following measures:[14]

- School Demographics
- SLC Participation and Enrollment
- Dropout and graduation rates
- Academic Performance Index (API)
- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Given that roster analysis from the seven grantee schools has indicated a majority of SLC implementation is concentrated at the freshman and sophomore level, 9th and 10th grade student-level data was analyzed separately. Freshman and sophomore data was available for the following measures:

- Attendance
- California Standards Test (CST) English language arts proficiency
- California Standards Test (CST) Mathematics proficiency
- California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

School Demographics

Table 11 includes information about the racial and ethnic composition of each school in 2009-10. Racial and ethnic composition of schools has remained fairly consistent over the grant period. On average, participating schools enrolled approximately three-fourths Hispanic students (range of 24% to 98% in 2009-10). White students were the second largest group of students averaging approximately one-quarter of all students attending the seven schools participating in the grant (range of 1%-51% in 2009-10).

[14] Note that UC/CSU eligibility data has been presented in Part III as has some of the measures related to overall school progress on outcomes related to state and federal accountability measures for high schools.

Table 11: School Demographics by Ethnicity, 2009-10

Overall School Demographics						
	Enrollment	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White	Other
2009-2010 – Year 5						
Brea Olinda HS	2,004	1.8%	21.2%	24.4%	50.8%	1.8%
Century HS	2,377	0.0%	3.4%	96.3%	0.2%	0.0%
Costa Mesa HS	1,102	2.5%	14.2%	56.6%	26.4%	0.3%
Estancia HS	1.195	1.9%	3.3%	74.8%	20.0%	0.0%
Fullerton HS	2,071	2.6%	5.4%	58.5%	30.9%	2.6%
Santa Ana HS	3,435	0.4%	0.6%	98.2%	0.7%	0.0%
Valley HS	2,465	0.8%	1.7%	96.6%	0.7%	0.2%
All Sites	**14,649**	**1.2%**	**5.9%**	**76.9%**	**15.3%**	**0.7%**

Source: California Department of Education

Table 12 provides information about the percentages of students who are English Learners (EL), students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and are enrolled in special education. On average, the percentage of English Learners was 27% of the enrollment at the seven schools (range of 5% to 47% in 2009-10). On average, more than 60% of the students at these schools met federal criteria for the NSLP but the range varied from 16% to 87% in 2009-10 across the schools. An average of 10% of students were enrolled in Special Education.

Table 12: Enrollment by other student characteristics, 2009-10

Overall School Demographics			
	English Learners	NSLP*	Special Education*
2009-2010– Year 5			
Brea-Olinda HS (n=2,004)	4.9%	16%	6%
Century HS (n=2,377)	41.3%	86%	9%
Costa Mesa HS (n=1,102)	41.7%	61%	11%
Estancia HS (n=1,195)	35.6%	68%	14%
Fullerton Union HS (n=2,071)	15.3%	49%	8%
Santa Ana HS (n=3,435)	14.2%	87%	10%
Valley HS (n=2,465)	46.8%	81%	13%
All Sites (n=14,649)	**26.8%**	**66%**	**10%**

***Source: Public *Works*, Inc.**
Source: California Department of Education

School-wide Measures of Student Outcomes

SLC Participation and Enrollment

The SLC initiative promotes heterogeneous groupings of students with access to rigorous and relevant common courses lead by a team of collaborative teachers. A priority for the initiative is to "enroll students in a coherent sequence of rigorous English language arts, mathematics, and science courses that will equip them with the skills and content knowledge needed to succeed in postsecondary education and careers without need for remediation," as established by USDE. SLC students are expected to spend at least one half of their school day within an SLC, and thereby, fulfilling the goal of enrollment in three or more common core courses with their SLC peers.

In order to assess implementation and student outcomes from the perspective of participation in an SLC, Public *Works*, Inc. collected rosters from the seven participating schools that identified 9,841 students as SLC participants. The school rosters provided student names, identification numbers, class and teacher names. As measured by enrollment, SLC participation was calculated to have increased at five of the schools, ranging from 29 –99% implementation (Table 13). Across the consortium, 72% of students attending the seven schools were identified as SLC participants. However, each school determined which students to include in the rosters and the criteria that constituted participation in an SLC.

Further analysis of the rosters conducted by Public *Works*, Inc. of all the consortium schools concluded, however, that a majority of SLC participants identified by the schools do not meet the common three courses within an SLC, as defined by the USDOE. Using the USDE definition, there was a wide range of SLC participation across the high schools (from 0% to 81%). While 81% of students at Brea-Olinda High School met the federal definition of an SLC, about half of students enrolled at three other schools also met the federal criteria (Table 13). Three of the high schools with very low participation in SLCs meeting the federal criteria (0%, 1%, and 19%) mask substantial progress toward full implementation at the remaining high schools in the consortium (Table 13).

At the conclusion of the grant, 5,527 or 38% of the 14,703 total enrollment in 2009-10, met the three or more common class requirement. Freshmen had the highest concentration of SLC student with common 3 or more courses (44%). Thirty-eight percent of sophomores were enrolled in SLCs meeting the three-course requirement. Both eleventh and twelfth grade showed the lowest percentages of students with three or more common classes (33% and 34%), though again, substantial progress had been achieved at several schools in these grades too (Brea-Olinda, Costa Mesa, Century, and Valley) (Table 13).

As indicated in the majority of site visits conducted, negotiating what needs to be included in the master schedule is the biggest challenge to implementing true wall-to-wall SLC implementation in accordance with the common core course requirement. The master schedule continues to be a key structural issue in implementation reflecting many of the issues related to prioritizing SLC enrollment and heterogeneous groupings of all students within these structures.

Table 13: Enrollment in Smaller Learning Communities by Grade Level, 2009-10

Overall School Enrollment by Grade Level*					
	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	Total
Brea Olinda HS	514	549	476	465	2,004
Century HS	577	642	601	557	2,377
Costa Mesa HS	286	270	287	259	1,102
Estancia HS	336	339	309	265	1.249
Fullerton HS	642	480	480	469	2,071
Santa Ana HS	867	838	886	844	3,435
Valley HS	630	618	633	584	2,465
All Sites	**3,852**	**3,736**	**3,672**	**3,443**	**14,703**
% Enrolled in SLCs as Indicated by School Rosters					
Brea Olinda HS	98%	95%	94%	99%	97%
Costa Mesa HS	100%	100%	95%	99%	99%
Estancia HS	1%	41%	31%	47%	29%
Fullerton HS	0%	10%	4%	8%	5%
Century HS	100%	96%	89%	96%	95%
Santa Ana HS	95%	95%	85%	79%	89%
Valley HS	100%	98%	92%	79%	93%
All Sites	**74%**	**75%**	**71%**	**69%**	**72%**
Met 3 (or more) Common Class Requirement as Indicated by PW Analysis					
Brea Olinda HS	65%	86%	80%	96%	81%
Costa Mesa HS	85%	39%	40%	42%	52%
Estancia HS	0%	3%	1%	0%	1%
Fullerton HS	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Century HS	87%	70%	49%	55%	65%
Santa Ana HS	31%	12%	14%	18%	19%
Valley HS	55%	49%	48%	27%	45%
All Sites	**44%**	**38%**	**33%**	**34%**	**38%**

***Source: CDE**
Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Dropout and Graduation Rates

Tables 14 and 15 provide dropout and graduation rates as calculated by the California Department of Education (CDE). The dropout rate is the rate used for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) purposes and is described as a "one-year dropout rate" calculated based on the number of students who enroll at each grade level compared to those who not enrolled at the end of the year. Dropout and graduation data for 2009-10 are not yet available from the California Department of Education (CDE).

In 2008-09, the adjusted one-year dropout rates increased at all seven grantee schools from the previous year, ranging from 0.9% to 5.3%. The median increase among the schools was 0.8%, similar to the state net change in 2008-09. The dropout rate at the majority of schools increased approximately 1% or less. However, one schools' dropout rate increased by more than 4% (Table 14). Although the one-year dropout rate at the state level has increased to 5.7%, the dropout rates at the seven schools continue to fall below the California average. [15]

[15] Note that, to some extent, statewide increases in the dropout rate reflect improvements in the longitudinal tracking of individual students. In other words, dropout statistics prior to 2006-07 tended to understate the number of dropouts.

Table 14: Adjusted Grade 9-12 One-year Dropout Rate, Baseline – Year 4

	2004-05 Baseline	2005-06 Year 1	2006-07 Year 2	2007-08 Year 3	2008-09 Year 4	Net Change from Previous Year
Brea-Olinda	0.0	0.0	0.3 (+)	0.3(=)	0.9 (+)	0.6
Century	3.3	9.6	2.1 (-)	4.1(+)	5.0 (+)	0.9
Costa Mesa	0.5	2.0	1.7 (-)	2.4(+)	2.8(+)	0.4
Estancia	--	--	--	2.5	2.6 (+)	0.1
Fullerton	0.1	0.6	1.8 (+)	1.0(-)	1.6 (+)	0.6
Santa Ana	3.3	0.4	1.8 (+)	0.5(-)	4.7 (+)	4.2
Valley	3.3	4.3	3.9 (-)	4.0(+)	5.3 (+)	1.3
STATE	**3.0**	**3.4**	**5.5 (+)**	**4.9(-)**	**5.7 (+)**	**0.8**

(+/-) Indicate change from previous year
-- School not yet participating in grant.
Source: California Department of Education

Table 15 provides graduation rates over the same period of time. The graduation rate used for this table is based on the National Center for Education Statistics definition, which incorporates the number of graduates in the current year, and accounts for students dropping out in grades 9, 10 and 11. Five schools showed an increased graduation rate from the prior year (ranging from 0.1% -5.7% increase). Given that most of the schools in the OC SLC Consortium focused on enrolling 9th graders in SLCs, high school graduation data is an important outcome to measure but does not yet provide much information on the impact of SLC implementation. In 2008-09, five schools attained an 85% graduation rate or more. In addition, five of the seven schools surpassed the statewide graduation rate (78.5%), which decreased (1.7%) from prior year (Table 15).

Table 15: NCES School Graduation Rates, Baseline – Year 4

	2004-05 Baseline	2005-06 Year 1	2006-07 Year 2	2007-08 Year 3	2008-09 Year 4	Net Change from Previous Year
Brea-Olinda	97.7	99.3	99.8 (+)	99.6(-)	97.4 (-)	-2.2
Century	82.6	74.6	71.1 (-)	66.3 (-)	71.5 (+)	5.2
Costa Mesa	96.1	90.7	90.7 (=)	90.0(-)	92.2 (+)	2.2
Estancia	--	--	--	89.2	89.3 (+)	0.1
Fullerton	98.7	98.3	95.6 (-)	95.7(+)	97.0 (+)	5.7
Santa Ana	82.8	88.2	88.6 (+)	91.0(+)	85.0 (-)	-6.0
Valley	68.1	62.5	68.7 (+)	71.3(+)	73.7 (+)	2.4
STATE	**85.1**	**83.4**	**80.6 (-)**	**80.2(-)**	**78.5(+)**	**-1.7**

Source: California Department of Education

Academic Performance Index Measure

One measure of the academic expectations at a school is the school's API score. The Academic Performance Index (API) is the gauge developed in California to rank schools by their performance based on a formula of students' performance on California Standards Tests including the relative performance of subgroups such as English Learners and students with disabilities. A few other measures are also incorporated in the API formula.

Across the consortium, APIs show a clear pattern correlated with the nature of the community where the school is located. The two schools in the north, located in more affluent and educated communities, have high (788 and 854) APIs and are not under Program Improvement (PI)[16] because of subgroup performance not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. The three schools in the large, more central urban community have lower (612, 627, 648) APIs and are all in PI and on the state's list of the lowest-performing 5% of schools in the state. These schools implemented SLCs as one of the PI-mandated choices for school restructuring. The two schools in the more suburban south have higher (745, 747) APIs although one is in PI because of subgroup performance.

Table 16 provides the API growth score by school from 2005 through 2010.[17] In 2009-10, five schools met the school wide API growth target. These same schools also met the Hispanic and NSLP subgroup growth target for 2009-10. In the last few years more

[16] Schools that do not meet federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets for two consecutive years enter Program Improvement (PI) as required under No Child Left Behind. Making AYP targets for two consecutive years results in exit from PI.

[17] The API was created in 1999 to hold schools accountable for progress in improving student achievement relative to state content standards in core academic areas. For high schools, the API is a composite measure based largely on the California Standards Tests in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. It also includes achievement from the English and Mathematics portions of the California High School Exit Exam. Schools are accountable for closing 5% of the distance annually between their current API score and the threshold of 800 established by the State. The 5% goal includes both school-wide and subgroup targets.

schools have been meeting the federal requirements. However, students enrolled in Special Education and English Learners subgroups continue to be an area to continue to focus efforts at nearly all seven schools.

Fullerton (53 points) and Brea-Olinda (49 points) received the highest 2010 Growth APIs. Brea-Olinda reported having strong curricular alignment with state standards and rigorous courses (Table 16). Fullerton received the highest API and also provides a wide variety of A-G course offerings for all students. These improvements are unlikely to have been a result of SLC implementation as they are the schools with the fewest students enrolled in SLCs either by the federal definition or by their own school's definition. The three SAUSD schools that adopted A-G and 240 credits as the graduation requirement and then dropped it to 220 credits showed the least improvement on the API over this time period. The lowest performing school in the consortium increased its API by only 2 points. Valley achieved a 612 Growth API in 2010, dropping 13 points from Baseline (Table 16).

Table 16: API Growth, 2005 - 2010

High School	2005 Base API	2006 Growth API	2007 Growth API	2008 Growth API	2009 Growth API	2010 Growth API	Gain/Loss from Baseline
Brea Olinda HS	805	808	801	804	820	854	49
Century HS	586	587	584	574	592	588	2
Costa Mesa HS	712	713	731	720	737	747	35
Estancia HS	--	--	714*	694	724	745	31
Fullerton HS	735	751	732	768	782	788	53
Santa Ana HS	642	662	622	618	634	648	6
Valley HS	625	606	585	555	564	612	-13

***2007 API Base**
-- School not yet participating in grant.
Source: California Department of Education

Adequate Yearly Progress Measure

The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the federal accountability measure from NCLB, is a series of annual academic performance goals established for each school. [18] To meet the AYP in California, schools and LEAs are required to meet or exceed requirements in test participation rate, percent proficient and advanced, API, and graduation rate requirements. In addition, schools and their subgroups are required to meet percent proficient targets, Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in ELA and mathematics.[19]

As shown in Table 17, in Year 1 of the grant (2005-06) four grantee schools met all AYP criteria as well as the AYP. After the first year, the number of schools meeting AYP and all or most of the AYP criteria consistently decreased reflecting the increasing thresholds embedded in NCLB legislation. By Year 5 of the grant (2009-10), only one school met all

[18] The possible values are "Yes," "No," or "Pending." The report displays a "Yes" only if the school, LEA, or state met all of its AYP criteria for 2010, including requirements for numerically significant subgroups. "No" means results for at least one or more criteria were below the 2010 targets. "Pending" means that the school or LEA with grade twelve students met all AYP criteria other than the graduation rate on the September report. A final determination for these schools will be posted after the graduation data become available.
[19] The assessments used were the 2010 CSTs, grades two through eight; 2010 California Modified Assessment (CMA), for students who have an Individualized education Program (IEP) grades three through eight; 2010 California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) for students with severe cognitive disability, grades two through eight and ten; and 2010 CAHSEE, students in high school, specifically grade ten.

possible AYP criteria (22 of 22) and holds a pending status. This same school is the only grantee school to have met the AYP and its criteria throughout the grant.

The state-negotiated federal proficiency targets were consistently increased during this time period. For three consecutive years, (2005 - 2007) the state expected schools to obtain 22.3% proficiency or advanced in ELA and 20.9% in math. By 2009-10 (Year 5), state percent proficient targets more than doubled, set at 55.6% (ELA) and 54.8% (Math).

AMOs for the grantee schools, state targets for proficient or advanced percentage in ELA and mathematics, are provided in Table 17. During the grant's baseline year (2004-05) all six participating school met the state percent proficient target of 22.3% in ELA and 20.9% in mathematics, ranging from 24%-76% math proficiency and 27%-74% ELA proficiency. In addition, the percent proficient or advanced across participating students in 2004-05 was 41% in both ELA and math, about double the state target.

In Year 3, 2007-08 state percent proficient targets increased to 33.4% in ELA and 32.2% in mathematics. During the same year, five of the seven schools met both the mathematics and ELA state targets. Percent proficient or advanced ranged from 28%-80% in ELA and 31%-77% in mathematics. The percent proficient or advanced across the consortium increased four percent (45%) in ELA and three percent (41%) in math, surpassing state targets by ten percent. In Year 5, the AMOs state targets were set at 55.6% in ELA and 54.8% in mathematics. Only two grantee schools met these same targets, ranging from 60%-70%. These same schools met both state proficiency targets throughout the grant.

Table 17: AYP – Annual Measurable Objectives (ELA and Math)

AYP- AMOs % Proficient or Advanced												
	Baseline: 2004-05		Year 1: 2005-06		Year 2: 2006-07		Year 3: 2007-08		Year 4: 2008-09		Year 5: 2009-10	
School	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
Brea-Olinda	76%	74%	77%	75%	75%	77%	80%	77%	73%	73%	75%	71%
Century	24%	27%	28%	30%	20%	28%	31%	31%	27%	31%	29%	33%
Costa Mesa	46%	37%	43%	41%	46%	39%	45%	42%	47%	45%	51%	43%
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--	52%	42%	48%	45%	45%	52%
Fullerton	51%	51%	61%	61%	57%	62%	69%	60%	63%	67%	61%	61%
Santa Ana	32%	37%	33%	38%	27%	34%	35%	39%	29%	40%	35%	40%
Valley	30%	34%	27%	33%	21%	31%	28%	31%	21%	34%	26%	36%
All Sites	**41%**	**41%**	**42%**	**44%**	**38%**	**42%**	**45%**	**44%**	**40%**	**45%**	**45%**	**46%**
State % Proficient Target	22.3%	20.9%	22.3%	20.9%	22.3%	20.9%	33.4%	32.2%	44.5%	43.5%	55.6%	54.8%

-- School not yet participating in grant.
N/A= Information not available
Source: California Department of Education

9th and 10th Grade Student Outcome Data

From the beginning of implementation, schools from the OC SLC Consortium have heavily focused on implementing structures and strategies that primarily impact 9th and 10th graders. Within the five years of the grant, student participation at the 9th and 10th grade has remained stable providing an opportunity for analysis of student outcome data for these students. The Freshman Houses/ Academies and Freshman/ Sophomore Houses have provided a personalized educational experience for students, with the goal of facilitating an easier transition to high school and addressing academic needs. Given that the 9th and 10th grades have been impacted the most from SLC implementation in comparison to the upper grades, Public *Works*, Inc. gathered and analyzed achievement data for 9th and 10th graders participating in SLCs. Measures in this section of the report include attendance rates for 9th graders compared to school wide attendance, 9th grade CST performance, and 10th grade CAHSEE performance.

9th Grade School Attendance

Table 18 displays freshman students in SLCs were slightly more likely to attend school, increasing from 93% in Baseline to 94% Year 5. Additionally, school wide attendance across the grantee schools increased 2% from 92% to 94% in 2009-10. Ninth grade SLC students were slightly more likely to show increases in average daily attendance rates over the last five years. However, the pattern of attendance was similar for 9th grade SLC students as that of the school as a whole when rates are examined for each of the schools though there are slightly more positive attendance rates at Valley High School for freshmen compared to overall attendance rates throughout the grant period (Table 18).

Table 18: Attendance Rates, 9th Grade SLC Participants & School wide, Year 1 – Year 5

SLC- 9th Grade	2005-06 Year 1		2006-07 Year 2		2007-08 Year 3		2008-09 Year 4		2009-10 Year 5	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Brea-Olinda			97%	494	97%	459	97%	513	97%	504
Century	93%	400	94%	793	93%	634	92%	655	94%	577
Costa Mesa			95%	311	95%	337	96%	287	96%	287
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--			93%	2
Fullerton			96%	520	96%	445	97%	91		
Santa Ana			93%	941	94%	608	92%	797	93%	825
Valley	93%	161	91%	833	91%	675	92%	577	93%	642
All Sites	93%	561	94%	3,892	94%	3,158	94%	2,920	94%	2,837
School wide										
Brea-Olinda	96%	1,583	96%	2,009	96%	2,014	96%	2,118	97%	2,156
Century	90%	2,795	91%	2,453	91%	2,463	91%	2,444	92%	2,286
Costa Mesa	95%	1,297	95%	1,342	95%	1,155	95%	1,089	95%	1,239
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--	94%	1,227	94%	1,408
Fullerton	96%	2,126	96%	2,032	96%	1,848	96%	1,940	96%	1,859
Santa Ana	92%	4,136	92%	3,554	92%	3,422	91%	3,285	93%	3,135
Valley	90%	3,190	89%	2,754	89%	2,532	89%	2,511	92%	2,389
All Sites	92%	15,127	93%	14,144	93%	13,434	93%	14,614	94%	14,472

-- **Not participating in grant**
Source: California Department of Education

9th Grade Performance on the California Standards Tests

The next section describes 9th grade student performance on the California Standards Test (CST) in English Language Arts and Mathematics for at each site and consortium-wide. This section examines 9th grade Advanced or Proficient performance on CST ELA, Algebra I, and Geometry, summarized in Table 19 and English Learners performance in Table 20.

Compared to Baseline, consortium 9th grade performance on English/ Language Arts increased more than 10% in Year 5 from 34% (Baseline) to 45% (Year 5). Across all schools, the schools with the highest ELA proficiency include: Brea-Olinda (83%), Fullerton (55%) and Estancia (52%) (Table 19). While only nine percent of freshman English Learners across the sites performed proficient or advanced in 2009-10 (Table 20).

Advanced or Proficient performance on the CST Algebra I improved from 9% in 2004-05 to 20% in 2009-10 (increasing 11%). Fullerton (23%) and Estancia (22%) showed the largest improvement from their Baseline data. In contrast, Costa Mesa decreased by 12% from baseline during the grant period (Table 19). Across sites, 9th grade English Learner proficiency improved 8%, with gains ranging from 5% to 16% (Table 20).

As shown in Table 19, improvements in CST Geometry among 9th grade students improved from 36% to 50% (increasing 14%) across the sites. Three schools nearly doubled the percentage of 9th grade students performing proficient or advanced in Geometry. In 2009-10, not all seven grantee schools tested a significant number of English learners as in prior years. Among the four schools with a significant number of freshman students in Geometry, there is a 6% gain. However, two of the four schools with a significant number of freshman students in Geometry did not show a gain, decreasing 1% and 9% (Table 19). Ninth grade English Learner students at Valley improved 21% from Baseline (12%) to Year 5 (33%) (Table 20).

Table 19: CST Proficiency in ELA, Algebra I, Geometry in 9th Grade (% Proficient or Above)

	Baseline: 2004-05		Year 1: 2005-06		Year 2: 2006-07		Year 3: 2007-08		Year 4: 2008-09		Year 5: 2009-10		% Net Change
	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	
CST ELA Proficiency													
Brea-Olinda	569	71%	562	73%	507	74%	496	66%	534	75%	483	83%	12%
Century	736	22%	835	19%	803	24%	697	25%	647	23%	561	26%	4%
Costa Mesa	330	41%	341	52%	312	49%	338	48%	289	48%	264	48%	7%
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--	318	43%	339	48%	336	52%	9%
Fullerton	617	41%	710	45%	648	41%	531	51%	557	54%	507	55%	14%
Santa Ana	1,294	27%	1,003	27%	1,000	26%	932	23%	822	29%	831	32%	5%
Valley	870	22%	820	19%	827	22%	682	14%	597	18%	595	36%	14%
All Sites	**4,416**	**34%**	**4,271**	**35%**	**4,097**	**35%**	**3,994**	**35%**	**3,785**	**40%**	**3,577**	**45%**	**11%**
CST Algebra I Proficiency													
Brea-Olinda	192	21%	168	25%	150	22%	157	21%	152	44%	119	40%	19%
Century	484	2%	644	5%	674	11%	519	3%	569	8%	422	5%	3%
Costa Mesa	82	69%	288	33%	271	23%	138	26%	102	51%	69	57%	-12%
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--	127	8%	113	26%	126	30%	22%
Fullerton	465	4%	544	6%	499	5%	415	18%	399	24%	450	27%	23%
Santa Ana	815	7%	733	6%	805	5%	670	9%	571	17%	548	13%	6%
Valley	580	8%	673	5%	616	4%	483	4%	456	16%	361	25%	17%
All Sites	**2,618**	**9%**	**3,050**	**9%**	**3,015**	**9%**	**2,509**	**10%**	**2,362**	**19%**	**2,095**	**20%**	**11%**
CST Geometry Proficiency													
Brea-Olinda	252	53%	261	49%	238	42%	221	52%	223	63%	230	69%	16%
Century	104	17%	136	14%	96	24%	116	5%	50	10%	109	8%	9%
Costa Mesa	26	69%	44	68%	31	74%	46	55%	32	82%	32	75%	6%
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--	88	24%	79	51%	93	57%	33%
Fullerton	144	41%	147	49%	131	49%	105	56%	142	48%	78	77%	36%
Santa Ana	306	27%	239	19%	173	19%	148	19%	136	13%	158	22%	5%
Valley	152	28%	134	23%	144	10%	107	33%	77	54%	111	58%	30%
All Sites	**984**	**36%**	**961**	**34%**	**890**	**30%**	**813**	**32%**	**739**	**46%**	**811**	**50%**	**14%**

-- Not participating in grant
Source: California Department of Education.

Table 20: CST Proficiency in ELA, Algebra I and Geometry for English Learners in 9th Grade (% Proficient or Above)

	Baseline: 2004-05		Year 1: 2005-06		Year 2: 2006-07		Year 3: 2007-08		Year 4: 2008-09		Year 5: 2009-10		% Net Change
	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	Total # Tested	% Advanced or Proficient	
EL CST ELA													
Brea-Olinda	43	40%	23	30%	34	18%	34	15%	37	22%	21	14%	-26%
Century	450	6%	509	4%	471	5%	379	5%	340	6%	292	7%	1%
Costa Mesa	80	6%	79	9%	95	5%	87	8%	78	10%	76	8%	2%
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--	117	11%	128	12%	109	6%	-5%
Fullerton	119	7%	165	16%	167	12%	109	19%	122	11%	73	12%	5%
Santa Ana	738	9%	619	9%	633	11%	543	3%	456	9%	459	9%	0%
Valley	472	3%	485	3%	491	5%	414	2%	352	3%	291	10%	7%
All Sites	**1,902**	**7%**	**1,880**	**7%**	**1,891**	**8%**	**1,683**	**5%**	**1,513**	**8%**	**1,321**	**9%**	**2%**
EL CST Algebra I													
Brea-Olinda					11	27%							
Century	354	0%	442	3%	432	5%	327	1%	306	3%	256	5%	5%
Costa Mesa			76	12%	94	9%	30	13%	18	28%	11	18%	6%
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--	46	7%	29	3%	31	23%	16%
Fullerton	111	2%	143	1%	158	1%	99	6%	112	9%	83	16%	14%
Santa Ana	514	4%	516	4%	575	4%	419	3%	346	11%	330	9%	5%
Valley	355	4%	441	3%	409	1%	302	2%	290	8%	177	20%	16%
All Sites	**1,334**	**3%**	**1,618**	**4%**	**1,679**	**4%**	**1,223**	**3%**	**1,101**	**8%**	**888**	**11%**	**8%**
EL CST Geometry													
Brea-Olinda	14	50%			11	55%							5%
Century	22	9%	32	6%	17	6%	13	0%	11	0%			-9%
Costa Mesa													
Estancia	--	--	--	--	--	--							
Fullerton			18	39%									
Santa Ana	87	14%	93	6%	44	11%	29	3%	19	11%	23	13%	-1%
Valley	17	12%	31	10%	28	4%	30	13%	14	21%	21	33%	21%
All Sites	**140**	**17%**	**174**	**10%**	**100**	**13%**	**72**	**7%**	**44**	**11%**	**44**	**23%**	**6%**

-- School not yet participating in grant.
Source: California Department of Education

10th Grade Performance on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

Tables 21 and 22 presents the percentage of 10th graders passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, respectively[20] for all consortium students from Baseline Year through 2009-10 by site, consortium-wide and for key subgroups.

Seventy-three percent of students attending the consortium schools passed the ELA portion of the CAHSEE, increasing three percent from Baseline Year. CAHSEE ELA pass rate among the schools ranged from 59% to 94% in 2009-10. The following schools showed the largest increase on the ELA CAHSEE school wide pass rate: Fullerton (7%) and Estancia (5%). Estancia (20%) and Brea-Olinda (18%) had the largest increase among English Learners and economically disadvantaged (11% and 13%) (Table 21).

Among economically disadvantaged students, 67% of students passed ELA CAHSEE on the first-time testing in 2009-10, increasing 7% from 2004-05 (Table 21). Among EL first-time test takers at all consortium sites, 39% passed in 2004-05 (baseline) and slightly increased to 42% in 2009-10 (Year 5), showing improvements at six schools. Special education pass rate indicates a 5% decrease from baseline year on the ELA portion of the CAHSEE. In 2009-10, only three schools showed an improvement from Baseline Year, on special education students first time testing on CAHSEE ELA by 2009-10 (Table 21).

Seventy-seven percent of consortium-wide student passed the mathematics portion of the CAHSEE (Table 22). The CAHSEE math pass rate among the schools ranged from 64% to 95%. Seventy-two percent of economically disadvantaged students passed the math portion of the CAHSEE on the first time taking the test in 2009-10, improving 3% from Baseline. Fifty-three percent of EL first-time test takers in Year 5 decreased one percent from Baseline Year. Special Education students' pass rate showed a 6% decrease from Baseline Year to Year 5 (Table 22).

Across all schools, the largest increases in school wide Math CAHSEE pass rates occurred at: Fullerton (7%), Estancia (5%), and Century (4%). The largest net gains among the English Learner subgroup took place at Brea-Olinda (17%), Fullerton (12%) and Estancia (10%). Special Education performance decreased consistently throughout the grant and among the grantee schools (Table 22).

[20] Passing is equal to a score of 350 on a scale of 200-650. Students must pass both the ELA and Mathematics portion of the CAHSEE to graduate.

Table 21: CAHSEE ELA Pass Rate (10th grade, 1st time test takers)

CAHSEE First Time Test Taking Pass Rate- ELA	Baseline: 2004-05	Year 1: 2005-06	Year 2: 2006-07	Year 3: 2007-08	Year 4: 2008-09	Year 5: 2009-10	% Net Change
All Students							
Brea-Olinda	95%	94%	94%	94%	91%	94%	-1%
Century	58%	63%	58%	61%	60%	62%	4%
Costa Mesa	78%	80%	85%	79%	80%	81%	3%
Estancia	--	--	--	71%	78%	76%	5%
Fullerton	81%	86%	85%	90%	89%	88%	7%
Santa Ana	63%	68%	62%	67%	62%	67%	4%
Valley	60%	56%	56%	56%	52%	59%	-1%
All Sites	**70%**	**73%**	**70%**	**71%**	**69%**	**73%**	**3%**
English Learners							
Brea-Olinda	47%	N/A	53%	63%	54%	65%	18%
Century	37%	42%	36%	37%	37%	37%	0%
Costa Mesa	46%	41%	51%	44%	53%	49%	3%
Estancia	--	--	--	30%	54%	50%	20%
Fullerton	46%	41	50%	67%	62%	54%	8%
Santa Ana	41%	51	38%	43%	40%	43%	2%
Valley	32%	36	34%	27%	30%	36%	4%
All Sites	**39%**	**44%**	**38%**	**38%**	**39%**	**42%**	**3%**
Economically Disadvantaged							
Brea-Olinda	75%	84%	85%	85%	75%	86%	11%
Century	55%	63%	57%	60%	60%	62%	7%
Costa Mesa	69%	71%	75%	69%	73%	76%	7%
Estancia	--	--	--	65%	75%	73%	8%
Fullerton	70%	75%	71%	80%	86%	83%	13%
Santa Ana	60%	67%	60%	65%	60%	66%	6%
Valley	58%	56%	55%	55%	52%	58%	0%
All Sites	**60%**	**64%**	**60%**	**63%**	**62%**	**67%**	**7%**
Special Education							
Brea-Olinda	74%	66%	76%	76%	67%	61%	-13%
Century	18%	20%	3%	14%	15%	5%	-13%
Costa Mesa	33%	50%	46%	34%	35%	42%	9%
Estancia	--	--	--	24%	60%	40%	16%
Fullerton	37%	44%	49%	48%	42%	46%	9%
Santa Ana	20%	26%	15%	25%	20%	17%	-3%
Valley	18%	15%	14%	13%	15%	12%	-6%
All Sites	**31%**	**32%**	**29%**	**31%**	**30%**	**26%**	**-5%**

-- School not yet participating in grant.
Source: California Department of Education

Table 22: CAHSEE Mathematics Pass Rate (10th grade, 1st time test takers)

CAHSEE First Time Test Taking Pass Rate- Math	Baseline: 2004-05	Year 1: 2005-06	Year 2: 2006-07	Year 3: 2007-08	Year 4: 2008-09	Year 5: 2009-10	% Net Change
All Students							
Brea-Olinda	95%	95%	94%	94%	93%	95%	0%
Century	60%	65%	55%	62%	64%	64%	4%
Costa Mesa	79%	79%	86%	79%	79%	81%	2%
Estancia	--	--	--	75%	76%	80%	5%
Fullerton	81%	87%	83%	86%	91%	88%	7%
Santa Ana	73%	77%	65%	72%	71%	72%	-1%
Valley	71%	64%	59%	61%	64%	67%	-4%
All Sites	**75%**	**77%**	**70%**	**73%**	**74%**	**77%**	**2%**
English Learners							
Brea-Olinda	64%	N/A	73%	81%	81%	81%	17%
Century	44%	49%	37%	42%	46%	44%	0%
Costa Mesa	59%	53%	64%	48%	54%	56%	-3%
Estancia	--	--	--	45%	55%	55%	10%
Fullerton	54%	55%	58%	65%	69%	66%	12%
Santa Ana	58%	67%	49%	56%	57%	55%	-3%
Valley	54%	50%	42%	43%	50%	53%	-1%
All Sites	**54%**	**56%**	**45%**	**49%**	**53%**	**53%**	**-1%**
Economically Disadvantaged							
Brea-Olinda	85%	91%	86%	87%	86%	87%	2%
Century	59%	66%	54%	62%	64%	65%	6%
Costa Mesa	72%	71%	79%	72%	74%	76%	4%
Estancia	--	--	--	71%	73%	77%	6%
Fullerton	70%	78%	72%	77%	86%	84%	14%
Santa Ana	73%	77%	63%	71%	71%	72%	-1%
Valley	70%	64%	58%	62%	65%	67%	-3%
All Sites	**69%**	**71%**	**61%**	**68%**	**70%**	**72%**	**3%**
Special Education							
Brea-Olinda	73%	70%	76%	78%	64%	60%	-13%
Century	18%	16%	13%	13%	22%	5%	-13%
Costa Mesa	43%	40%	50%	43%	36%	50%	7%
Estancia	--	--	--	38%	44%	48%	10%
Fullerton	44%	50%	41%	44%	42%	36%	-8%
Santa Ana	19%	38%	17%	26%	28%	19%	0%
Valley	32%	20%	10%	14%	21%	20%	12%
All Sites	**35%**	**37%**	**30%**	**33%**	**33%**	**29%**	**-6%**

-- School not yet participating in grant.
Source: California Department of Education

Part V—Conclusion and Recommendations

The high schools included in this evaluation were part of an effort to break up large comprehensive high schools into smaller learning communities (SLC). The Orange County SLC Consortium grantee schools have made great progress in implementing SLC structures over the last five years (2005-10) but some challenges remain at the conclusion of the grant. This part of the report summarizes key accomplishments and challenges across the participating schools in Year 5 of the grant.

Key Accomplishments

Academic Intervention

Through the SLC initiative, the grantee schools have expanded intervention services and have tailored aspects of the SLC initiative to meet greater numbers of students needs academically and to support them in their transition to high school. Several schools offer double blocks of English Language Arts (ELA) interventions and double block math interventions where students are placed if their CST scores are Far Below Basic and Below Basic. Schools have implemented intervention curriculum or programs such GRAD 9/GRAD 10, ALEKS, CAHSEE Prep courses and software. Counselors and teachers are also involved with identifying student needs and assigning appropriate intervention services and in some instances conducting home visits for struggling students. Several SLCs reported specific strategies they had implemented to make sure that students are on track with their grades and academic progress.

Rigorous Curriculum

The academic performance across the seven schools ranges from the high-500s to above 800. Despite this wide range, all seven schools hold their students to rigorous academic standards. On average, the consortium increased 23 points on the API from Baseline to Year 5 of grant. In an effort to hold all stakeholders accountable for students' comprehension and retention of class material, schools have created common assessments (sometimes created by the district) in order to monitor students' achievement in relation to California State Standards. Most districts and schools are using common assessments. In addition, many SLCs have developed other assessments that test students' strengths in different areas.

Professional Development

Professional development provided by the school districts was most commonly related to district student assessment data software use, accessing student performance data, and examining student data. SLC staff received professional development on interdisciplinary projects, project-based lessons, teacher discipline plans, and writing and preparation for the CELDT. The OC SLC Consortium continued to host monthly SLC Coordinators/ Principals focused on networking for site leader and sharing of site best practices, which continued to emphasize momentum within participating schools. The county office also provided professional development and training for the SLC schools including leadership development, data driven decision-making, technical assistance (e.g. master schedule), project-based learning, interdisciplinary instruction counselor and guidance support. The

county provided PD in key topics such as SLCs coordination, counselor support, academy advisory boards, reading in the content areas and Career Technical Education (CTE) classes, 9th grade transition strategies, project-based learning strategies, interdisciplinary instruction, Data Driven Dialogue, Adaptive Schools, and ICLE workshops to help schools plan for common core standards.

Adult-Student Relationships

The OC SLC Consortium schools have focused on improving personalization with students through the creation of Houses and Academies/ Pathways, particularly with 9th and 10th graders. The House structures have delivered identity and personalization through adult-relationships. The schools have several mentoring programs in place (e.g. IMPACT. Freshman Mentoring Program). In addition, some students "loop" with their teachers over multiple years, which provides for the development of deeper connections between teachers and students.

Achievement Outcomes

Academic achievement increased in English/ language arts and mathematics among students involved in SLC restructuring. Freshman SLC student percent proficient or advanced on CST ELA and CST Algebra I increased 11% from Year 1 to Year 5. Also, English Learners appear to benefit from participation in SLC restructuring with 23% of SLC EL 9th graders performing proficient or advanced on the CST Geometry.

- SLC Participation: Roster analyses demonstrate great discrepancy between the percent of students participating in an SLC and the percent of students who fulfilled the initiative requirement of three common courses within the assigned SLC. Thirty-eight percent (5,527) of 14,703, students attending the seven grantee schools met the three common classes or more, the SLC requirement established by USDE. Freshman students had the highest concentration of SLC enrollment with common three or more courses (44%) and 38% of sophomores. Both eleventh and twelfth grade showed lower percentages of students with three or more common classes (33% and 34%). In addition, there was great variation in enrollment from school to school.

- California Standards Tests: Given that participation in SLCs is greatly concentrated in the 9th Grade, CST scores in English/Language Arts and Mathematics for ninth graders has shown gains. Compared to Baseline Year, 9th grade proficient or advanced on ELA increased more than 10% in Year 5 (45%). Advanced or Proficient on CST Algebra improved 11%, from 9% in 2004-05 to 20% in 2009-10. In addition, CST Geometry results indicate freshman advanced or proficiency increased from 36% to 50%, increasing 14% across the schools.

- Academic Performance Index: Over time, schools have been trying to meet accountability targets for Hispanics, English Learners and Economically Disadvantaged (NSLP) students. The number of schools meetings API targets has fluctuated over the last five years. However in recent years, a greater number of schools have met majority of growth targets. SLC grantee schools continue to meet state school-wide accountability targets; however, Hispanic, English Learner and

Economically Disadvantaged student groups were least likely to meet API growth targets and only one school met the Special Education target.

- Dropout/Graduation Rates: Comparing Year 4 of the grant with the previous year (Year 5 data not yet available), the adjusted one-year dropout rates increased at all seven grantee schools from the previous year, ranging from 0.9% to 5.3%. While most schools increased their adjusted one-year dropout rate approximately 1% or less, the rate at one school increased by more than 4%. Five of seven schools showed an increase graduation rates from the prior year (ranging from 0.1% to a 5.7% increase), obtaining an 85% graduation rate or more. In addition, five of the seven schools surpassed the statewide graduation rate (78.5%), which had decreased by 1.7% from the prior year.

- UC/CSU Eligibility: In Year 4 (2008-09) of the grant (Year 5 data not yet available), the percent UC/CSU eligible ranged from 17%-58% across the schools. Three of the participating schools experienced an increase in the percentage of students meeting UC/CSU eligibility requirements upon graduation. Consortium-wide, 1,002 of 2,755 graduating students met the A-G criteria (36%), similar to the statewide rate.

Key Issues and Challenges

Master Schedule

The key structural issue among the Orange County SLC Consortium continues to be adapting the school master schedule in order to prioritize SLC enrollment and promote equity. At most schools, the master schedule has continued to follow the departmental organizational model, which does not necessarily promote the distribution of staff and assignment of students into coherent SLCs where at least half of the courses are shared or "cored" by SLC. Many teachers continue to resist changes associated with the master schedule because it will affect what and whom they teach and when they will teach it. Indeed, adapting the master schedule and resistance to change to SLCs were identified as the most significant barriers by staff survey respondents.

The lack of fundamental changes to the master schedule is most apparent in the on-going inequity regarding the federally defined SLCs participation, meeting three or more courses in an SLC. Although 72% of students across the consortium are in enrolled in at least one SLC course, a considerably lower 38% truly meets the federal requirement of enrollment in three or more SLC classes. In addition, there are more 9th (44%) students in SLCs meeting the requirement than 10th (38%), 11th (34%) and 12th (38%) graders. Schools continue to struggle to reorganize the master schedule to prioritize and address SLC requirements.

Staff Collaboration

The expansion of SLC structures originally spurred teachers to work together in collaborative teams, seeking to develop an academic identity for their SLC and to reach consensus on what a personalized high school experience will mean for the students enrolled in "their" SLC. However, SLC teams' collaboration has generally decreased since the first years of the grant.

Survey results found eighty-two percent of staff agree or strongly agree that teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public. Lower levels of agreement were found for survey questions about SLC-based collaboration and professional development.

The intention of common planning time is to develop interdisciplinary projects and common assessments, creation of intervention courses and mentoring programs for struggling students, solicitation of community partners, and organization of parent outreach, but this did not happen across all schools. Rather, schools who did have allotted meeting time stated during the site visits that they were not meeting regularly to discuss students they had in common, rather, teachers were utilizing their prep period for other tasks and so forth.

Since common preps are challenging for schools to implement in the master schedule especially in the current budget crisis, they are not common across the consortium. Even when they are in place, consortium schools have seen that they do not always lead to increased collaboration, identity and personalization for the SLC. In some cases, schools without common preps have succeeded in developing identity, personalization, student interventions by houses. It is important to keep in mind that SLCs function best under a collaborative team of teachers who are continuously working together.

English Learner Intervention

While intervention services have expanded across the consortium, there is great need for specialized English Learner interventions, given that many of the schools have a large EL student population. Only one school has a specialized EL intervention program and two schools indicated utilizing SDAIE strategies. Approximately 70 % of 10th and 12th grade students indicated on student survey that teachers are aware of students' academic strength and areas of improvement. Results indicate there is need to focus on approximately 30% of students who feel their specific academic needs are not well understood. In addition, site visits support the need for specific interventions based on the challenges of English Learners.

SLC Data

Very few schools have local fields available through their database systems to identify students (and staff) by SLC placement. Schools need to utilize existing data in a purposeful manner to ensure balance and equity in terms of SLC student and staff assignments. For example, sites need to run data on student and staff characteristics prior to finalizing master schedules to ensure adequate balancing. Similarly, schools should move in the direction of analyzing and presenting data on student outcomes by SLC. For example, staff should receive information by SLC on the number of students meeting A-G requirements, attending school, earning D/F grades, and successfully graduating. Dissemination of these data will likely showcase SLC accomplishments to staff that might otherwise remain unaware, while also highlighting areas in need of further investigation and/or focus.

Recommendations to Schools

The primary focus of the SLC grant has been on school-level structural change and strategies intended to include all students in an SLC by the end of the grant period; in Orange County, the grant ended in 2010. In addition to the structural changes noted above, Public *Works*, Inc. continues to recommend that schools:

- ***Strengthen existing 9th grade house models to further develop academic intervention strategies and identify students in need of support.*** There has been substantial progress in terms of development and implementation of the 9th grade House model. However, all Houses within a school are not equal in terms of quality or cohesiveness in terms of teaming. Most were successful in implementing structural supports for SLC like staff allocations, cored classes in at least three subjects for students, and support system such as peer mentoring. The level of collaboration among staff and personalization strategies utilized was largely dependent on staff initiative and buy-in. There is a need to focus on consistency in the 9th grade house structures across the sites. Schools should continue to strengthen their house structures by improving SLC teams.

- ***Build 10th-12th grade models that are focused on student interest and school engagement.*** Originally, schools were attempting 9th and 10th grade houses and an 11th-12th grade vertical structure; however, most schools found it more feasible to core 9th grade students in a house and implement vertical academies at the 10th grade level. Schools must clarify and communicate to all stakeholders the details (i.e., structural and strategic) for continued staff and student involvement. Involvement of more staff and students in SLCs will assist in promoting coherence within the school master schedule and maintaining what has been accomplished through the grant.

- ***Continue to use what has been learned from SLCs to promote equity in school master schedules.*** Schools need to forgo minor alterations to the master schedule and engage in comprehensive reform aimed at promoting heterogeneous groupings of students, at all grade levels, who are grouped into classes that share students/staff from their assigned SLC. As part of this effort, schools must move from an access standpoint, toward an equity lens for school restructuring. Put another way, expanding student choice is not a sufficient mechanism to achieve school-wide equity. SLC restructuring requires "de-tracking" to ensure that the master schedule process does not unfairly give preference regarding staff assignments, class size, and access to Advanced Placement and/or Honors programs. All SLCs must fairly represent the school's instructional staff in terms of credentials and teaching experience. All SLCs must fairly represent the student body in terms of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and academic performance levels. To achieve this, schools should continue to allow choice via student preference along with other data equity.

- ***Continue to make solid connections between SLC to standards-based instructional reforms and accountability mandates.*** Like the recommendation above, schools have substantial "marketing" to do among their own staff regarding what has been learned from the instructional basis of SLC reforms. It must be made clear to all stakeholders that standards-based education is available and accessible to all students, not just for the highest achieving students (e.g., GATE, AP/Honors, etc.). Solid connections are especially important, as not all core academic departments have bought into the

relevance and sustainability for the SLC initiative. All staff must be shown how and why SLC will deepen standards-based instruction by providing personalized, relevant pedagogy to a wide proportion of students.

- ***Continue to connect the SLC initiative's emphasis on personalized instruction to a broader delivery of counseling and guidance.*** Student survey results collected over the last five years as part of this evaluation indicate irregular access to personalized counseling and guidance during high school from both teachers and counselors. Student surveys suggest a need for improving the systems for ensuring that students a) develop a written four-year plan for high school graduation and beyond that reflects their needs and interests and b) meet regularly with teaches and counselors to review, modify, and adjust this plan based on changing conditions. 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.

Recommendations to the Districts and County

At the District and County levels, the SLC initiative has required a commitment to on-going technical assistance, training, and support to strengthen SLCs at this level and support sustainability. In order to provide direction following the end of the grant, Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following recommendations to the four districts and OC SLC Consortium to implement through each district and the county with follow-up support and oversight to schools.

- ***Continue to assist schools in the alignment of school improvement plans and accountability mandates.*** 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. In this way, what is best about how SLCs were implemented can function more as an "umbrella" for high school reform. District and/or County leaders can 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.

- ***Continue to assist schools in designing and allocating professional development time to support school improvement 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. Districts and the County 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. The district and/or County 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.

- ***Use the lessons learned from SLC implementation to provide guidance on master schedules that meet challenges and promote equity, particularly in the 10th-12th grades.*** To be able to maintain what has been accomplished for freshmen and to a lesser extent in the 10th to 12th grades in terms of SLC offerings, schools will continue to need technical support on how to develop a master schedule, which simultaneously meets SLC objectives for coherent interdisciplinary teams, common planning time, and equitable distribution of shared students with the host of instructional demands and compliance mandates. Although schools have made good progress on developing 9th grade structures in the master schedule, most schools have struggled with 10th – 12th grade SLC structures and pathways.

- ***Assist schools in organizing information data systems to allow schools to extract and examine data by SLC.*** While all can agree that educators should make decisions that are informed by student achievement data, easily identifying students involved in an SLC continues to be a challenge. To maintain participation in SLCs and to be able to distinctly identify how students are performing and the instructional support they need, an SLC identifier in the data system continues to be important. Moreover, unless data of this sort is available, school decision-makers and leaders of SLCs will be hard-pressed to differentiate instruction and deliver academic intervention tied to the needs of students identified as part of an SLC.