UNITE-LA College and Career Success 2008-09 Evaluation Report

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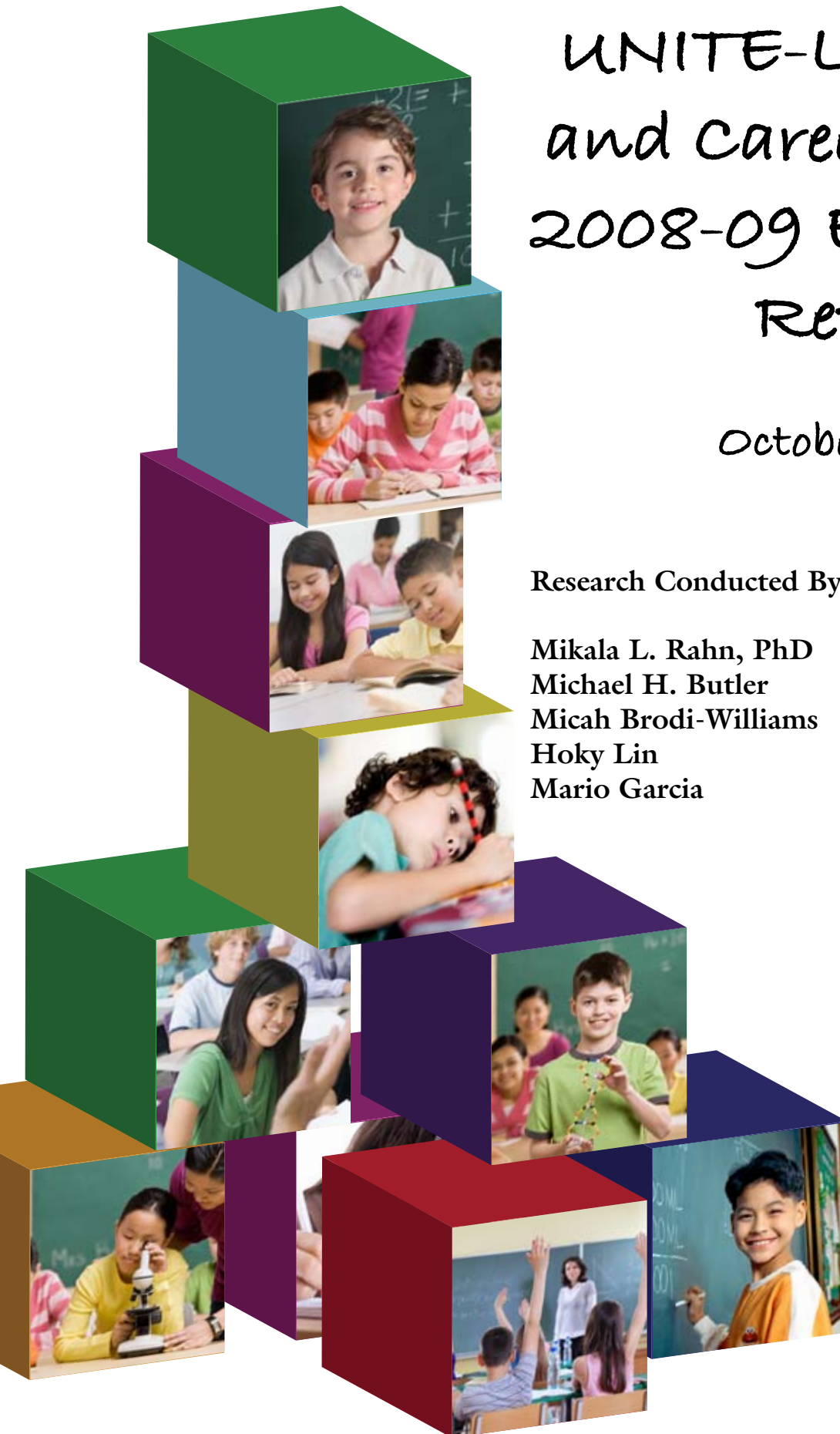
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UNITE-LA College & Career Success (C&CS)

Abstract

Since 1996, UNITE-LA, an intermediary organization in the Education & Workforce Development Division of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, has been committed to improving the education and workforce development of youth in the Los Angeles area. Through their College and Career Success (C&CS) Network of Schools, UNITE-LA has been working with a subset of schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to foster the development of Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs) and Small, autonomous schools (SS) that provide a more academically rigorous, relevant and personalized education to LAUSD's disadvantaged high school students in line with Los Angeles Board of Education resolutions and policies for SLC and SS implementation. UNITE-LA received financial assistance to deepen its work in these schools from the James Irvine Foundation, W.M. Keck Foundation, and AT&T.

The C&CS schools in 2008-09 included a "portfolio" of schools deliberately chosen to target improvement in areas of the district with extremely low levels of student achievement. These C&CS schools include a) three autonomous small schools working with the New Technology Foundation to implement a model of project-based learning and instructional use of technology in small, 9-12 high school settings (Los Angeles School of Global Studies, Jordan New Tech, and Student Empowerment Academy) b) three new comprehensive high schools that opened with the expectation that all students would be enrolled in SLCs (Miguel Contreras, Roybal, and Bernstein); and c) three pre-existing comprehensive high schools which have reorganized into SLCs (Belmont, Franklin, and Jefferson).

This report focuses on the results of this initiative through a collaborative evaluation between Public Works, Inc. and MPR Associates. Public Works, Inc. is a nonprofit education consulting firm in Pasadena, which focused on the qualitative data collection and analysis. MPR Associates is a consulting firm in Berkeley, which focused on the student outcome or quantitative data analysis. Together, both evaluation organizations developed this report to present findings for school year 2008-2009. This report was funded by a combination of grants from the Keck Foundation, the Irvine Foundation, and AT&T.

The results of this study illustrate that small autonomous schools have demonstrated the highest degree of implementation in the areas of: developing unified vision and identity: exercising autonomy to provide innovative curriculum, instruction, and assessment; providing curricular relevance; aligning professional development to school foci; distributing leadership; personalizing the high school experience; and preparing students for life beyond high school. New high schools, which opened with SLCs, have experienced the most change in the areas of distributed leadership and structural autonomy for SLCs, as well as increased focus on personalization. Pre-existing high schools show the least progress, largely due to greater staff reluctance to embrace wholesale changes in the core academic instructional program, as well as a pervasive skepticism regarding the exercise of autonomy and decentralized management. However, it is important to note that the SLC implementation was uneven and mixed at both new and pre-existing high schools, with some SLCs taking much longer to redesign the high school experience for student in both settings. Parent/Community engagement and systemic academic interventions remain part of the unfinished agenda at most new and pre-existing high schools.

In terms of attainment across various measures of student achievement and school accountability (e.g., API, AYP, CAHEE pass rates, etc.), the C&CS sites with the highest levels of performance were two of the small autonomous schools (SEA and LASGS), one new high school (MCLC), and one pre-existing high school (Franklin). In terms of growth from 2007-2009 on these indicators, the greatest propensity for growth occurred at the same two autonomous small schools (SEA and LASGS), as well as one pre-existing high school (Jefferson).

I.   Introduction

This section of the report charts the development of policies aimed at downsizing the comprehensive high school into small autonomous schools and/or smaller learning communities in LAUSD.   As such, it sets the context for the changes intended at the C&CS schools. This section of the report also includes a description of the C&CS schools.

Creating Small Autonomous Schools in Los Angeles Unified

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

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

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

The persistent and high dropout rate across the nation also began to receive more attention, especially as researchers pinpointed the problems existing in so-called "dropout factories" characteristic of many urban school districts. As the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and state accountability strategies such as exit exams have raised the profile of the number of students who don't complete high school, a key study by Robert Balfanz at the Center for Social Organization of Schools based at Johns Hopkins University identified approximately 2,000 schools in 15 states (including California) that account for 80 percent of high school dropouts located primarily in urban areas, the South, and the Southwest (Balfanz, 2004 and Samuels, 2007).

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

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

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

Downsizing High Schools

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

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

The 3Rs of SLC Reform

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

As shown in **Figure 1** below, SLCs are an "umbrella" for high school reform impacting all three Rs – Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. In the traditional high school, increasing academic rigor has been the primary emphasis of educational reform. Standards-based instructional reforms have focused attention on the need for a guaranteed, viable curriculum for all students. Many districts have developed instructional guides in the academic core areas specifying curricular pacing to address key standards, as well as suggested model lessons and practice assessments. Many districts have also implemented a system for formative assessments in the core academic areas intended to provide teachers with data on student academic progress "along the way" tied to the curriculum taught. Site-based academic content coaches and mandated participation in State-approved professional development tied to State-adopted texts are additional manifestations of the emphasis accorded to academic rigor in the last 5-7 years.

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

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

Figure 1: The 3Rs of Smaller Learning Communities

	Rigor *Standards-based Instruction*	**Relevance** *Student Engagement*	**Relationships** *Personalization*
Structures	Instructional Guides	Thematic Contextualized Learning	Freshman/9th grade house
	Secondary Periodic Assessments	Career Technical Education (CTE)	Advisory periods
	State-adopted materials	Interdisciplinary curricula	Assignment of counselors to SLCs
	Content-specific coaching	Connections to prior knowledge and student background	Looping
	Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)		Adult advocates/mentors

Strategies	Differentiated/Scaffolded teaching	Project-based learning	Student-centered pedagogy
	Research-based instructional strategies	Performance assessment	Culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy
	High level discussions and questioning (Accountable Talk)	Service learning	Student goal setting (Individual Graduation Plans)
	Targeted academic intervention	Work-based learning	Relationship building (field trips, guest speakers, recognition assemblies)
	Culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy	Culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy	Proactive counseling
			Student leadership and enrichment opportunities

Outcomes	High academic expectations and college readiness manifest as increased:	Increased student engagement and retention of knowledge manifest as:	Student connections to school and individual teachers/counselors manifest as:
	CST	Student attendance	Student attendance
	CAHSEE	College/career exposure	Decreased suspensions/expulsions
	College eligibility (A-G completion)	Increased graduation rates/lower dropout rate	Increased graduation rates/lower dropout rate
	EL reclassification	Completion of Individual Graduation Plans (IGP)	Completion of Individual Graduation Plans (IGP)

Reform Context in LAUSD

Driven by the standards-based instruction movement and State accountability mandates, LAUSD adopted standards-based instructional reforms. Beginning in 2000, LAUSD developed standards-based instructional guides specifying curricular scope and sequence at each grade level and subject area. LAUSD also adopted the *Principles of Learning* developed by the University of Pittsburgh as a guiding force for assessing teaching practices and student learning. As part of this effort to deepen the alignment of instruction with state content standards, LAUSD also funded schools with literacy and math coaches and prioritized professional development for teachers on standards-based instruction. In addition, LAUSD has implemented a system of periodic (formative) assessments to help teachers differentiate English/Language Arts instruction at the elementary level, as well as in English, Mathematics, and Science at the secondary level. According to its 2005 SLC position paper, these reforms were part of the first stage of developing equity and excellence in LAUSD schools.

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

Bulletin 1600

In October of 2004, the Los Angeles Board of Education moved further in the direction of supporting the Smaller Learning Communities through the approval of Bulletin 1600. This policy memorandum called for the establishment and development of SLCs across all high schools within the district. Significantly, Bulletin 1600 reiterated support for eight essential SLC attributes including:

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

As outlined in Bulletin 1600, all new and existing secondary schools must submit a proposal to the central SLC committee after which is submitted to the superintendent. This proposal must first contain evidence that school stakeholders have developed a vision for SLCs that meets local needs. Each SLC at a school must submit a request for proposal (RFP) that outlines how the SLC will embody the eight attributes. Second, schools must show evidence that their SLC design has considered the impact of how a multitude of SLCs will co-exist within a larger high school structure through a school-wide impact report. In

essence, the Bulletin 1600 approval process is designed to force SLC teams and schools to really think through the changes they intend to implement as part of SLCs.

SLC structures include academies, houses (grouping students in semi-autonomous structures—for instance, freshmen houses), schools-within-schools (with a higher degree of autonomy than a house structure) and magnet programs. Strategies include freshmen transition programs, multi-year groupings, alternative scheduling, adult advocate systems (such as formal mentoring programs) and teacher advisory systems (in which small groups of students are paired with a teacher during an advisory period to support individualized attention and personalization of the counseling function).

Despite the variety of ways in which the grants can be used to support SLCs, it is expected that SLCs will be available to students "wall-to-wall" within 3-5 years. In other words, all students must have the opportunity to participate in a SLC. It is essential to recognize that SLCs have existed in LAUSD at the secondary level for more than two decades. School-within-a-school programs such as magnet schools, academies (including California Partnership academies), and Humanitas programs have provided a *subset* of students with rigorous, personalized, thematic and interdisciplinary instruction. The challenge now is to scale up these existing specialized programs so that all students benefit from participation in SLCs.

Federal Funding for Smaller Learning Communities

Beginning in 2003-04, the U.S. Department of Education awarded LAUSD SLC implementation grants.[1] In Cohort 3, five LAUSD high schools received three-year grants to implement SLCs. Grant awards were based on school size with nearly all LAUSD schools receiving the maximum awards (total grant awards ranged from $550,000 to $1 million depending on year of funding) for multi-year implementation. In 2004-05, an additional seven LAUSD high schools in Cohort 4 were awarded SLC implementation grants. Beginning in 2005-06, LAUSD secured SLC implementation grants for an additional ten high schools. These Cohort 5 schools were the first under an extended grant period of five rather than three years. In 2006-07, nine LAUSD schools were funded under Cohort 6. Three of these nine schools were repeat grantees from Cohort 3. In 2007-08, LAUSD applied for but was unsuccessful in obtaining SLC implementation grants. However, three schools were funded in 2008-09 as part of Cohort 8. In sum, a total of 31 comprehensive high schools have been awarded federal funding to implement SLCs since 2003.

Facilities Investment and Modernization Funding

The movement toward SLCs and Small Schools (see section below) received additional momentum from a large-scale facilities and modernization effort funded through public bonds. The need for facilities construction and modernization was apparent. Approximately half of LAUSD schools were on year-round calendars due to overcrowding, and 410 of the 700 campuses and administrative complexes in LAUSD were at least 45

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[1] Previous grants to Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 were awarded directly to schools, bypassing the district. USDE changed the application process based on poor accountability and, beginning with Cohort 3, required districts to apply on the behalf of schools and to hire a third-party evaluator.

years old.[2] In June 1998, LAUSD prepared a master plan, which called for 78,000 new classroom seats within six years.

In November 1998, the voters of California passed State Proposition 1a for $4 billion in new school construction. LAUSD responded by publishing a Strategic Plan with budgets and schedules for 80 new schools and 79 modernizations. These plans received additional momentum from passage of Local Measure K and State Proposition 47 in November 2002, which provided $3.35 billion and $13.05 billion, respectively. In March 2004, Local Measure R and State Proposition 55 were passed by voters providing another $3.87 billion and $12.3 billion, respectively. Lastly, Local Measure Y passed in November 2005 providing another $3.985 billion for new school construction, modernization, and repair.

Based on this influx of bond funding, LAUSD adopted a plan to eliminate the Concept 6 year-round calendar by 2012.[3] Moreover, the infusion of facilities funding resulted in the first large-scale addition of high schools in LAUSD in 35 years, as well as significant improvements to existing high schools to adapt architecture and design to the SLC principle of personalization and ultimately, for construction of new, small autonomous high schools.[4]

Small Schools Resolution

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

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

Belmont Zone of Choice/Pilot Schools

Another component of the move to SLC/SS within LAUSD was the establishment of the Belmont Zone of Choice. This is a network of theme-based SLCs and Pilot Schools in the Pico Union area of LAUSD's Local District 4. Students and their families who live within the schools' attendance area can select a school based on students' interests and needs rather than simply geography (LAUSD news release July 24, 2006). The movement toward

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[2] http://www.laschools.org/historic-survey/historic-context.pdf
[3] Concept 6 schools employed a longer school day but fewer (163) school days on three calendar tracks to cope with student overcrowding. By eliminating Concept 6, LAUSD committed to a school year of 180 days for all students.
[4] For background on the facilities aspect of school redesign, the authors recommend Bergsagel, Victoria et. al. (2007), *Architecture for Achievement: Building Patterns for Small School Learning*, Architects for Achievement (Mercer Island, WA: Eagle Chatter Press).

the Belmont Zone of Choice began in 2004 when the Civitas School of Leadership received a Small School Network planning grant from the Coalition of Essential Schools.[5] The movement developed over the following two years through collaboration between stakeholders from LAUSD, the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles (AALA), the Belmont Education Collaborative, a group of over 40 local community-based organizations, and the Boston-based Center for Collaborative Education (CCE). The efforts of this partnership culminated in the concept of the Belmont Zone of Choice, announced in mid-2006 and formalized in early 2007 (Nesoff). In addition to six Pilot Schools, high school students can choose from 13 SLCs at four schools and a New Technology High School.

The Pilot Schools in the Belmont Zone of Choice are modeled after the Boston Pilot Schools Network, a group of 20 small, non-traditional schools in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) system that as a collective have outperformed their traditional counterparts on all indicators of academic achievement. Students at Boston Pilot Schools score higher on state assessments, have higher attendance rates and lower grade-level retention rates, and send more students to postsecondary education within one year of high school graduation (pilot school guide 2). High school students at Boston Pilot Schools have half the suspension rate of their BPS counterparts, and have a school year that is on average two weeks longer.

The Pilot School movement began in Boston in 1995 partly as a response to the increasing number of charter schools opening in the area. BPS stakeholders sought a way to more systemically improve urban public schools and in doing so also retain human and financial resources within the public school system. The Boston and Los Angeles Pilot Schools share a philosophy of "[providing] schools with maximum control over their resources in exchange for increased accountability, all within the economies of scale of an urban school district," as well as four key features: small size, autonomy, accountability, and equity.[6]

Pilot Schools have caps on student enrollment and are thus small in size. Boston Pilot Schools each have an ideal maximum student enrollment of 450, and the Pilot Schools in the Belmont Zone of Choice have a maximum enrollment of 400 students. High schools in the Boston Pilot Schools Network have an average student-teacher ratio of 14:1.

Pilot Schools have five areas of autonomy: staffing, budget, curriculum and assessment, governance, and schedule. Pilot Schools have the authority to hire their own staff to meet the specific needs of each school and staff sign an "elect-to-work-agreement," a document that is revised and re-signed annually. Pilot Schools have budget autonomy as well. Each school receives a one-time start-up sum as well as a yearly lump sum per pupil comparable to traditional schools' budgets and can spend that money as it sees fit. Additionally, Pilot Schools have the option of purchasing discretionary services from the central district office or opting out and receiving a per-pupil equivalent dollar amount. Pilot Schools have the autonomy to develop their own curricula and assessments, as long as they are comparable in rigor to those of the district and include state and federal tests such as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Pilot Schools create their own systems of

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[5] For information on the evolution of the Boston and Belmont Zones of Choice, the authors are indebted to Nesoff, Jeremy (2007), "The Belmont Zone of Choice: Community Driven Action for School Change," *Horace*, Vol. 23, No. 4

[6] *Weighted Student Formula Notebook* (2009), Belmont Pilot Schools Network, Reason Foundation.

governance, which usually consist of governing boards composed of the principal and representatives from school staff, students, families, and the community. Finally, Pilot Schools have autonomy with respect to schedules. They have the authority to lengthen the school year, change start and end times in high schools, and set aside time for planning and professional development for faculty.

Pilot Schools share a system of accountability, which consists of both internal and external review components that each school conducts every five years. In the internal review, schools conduct a self-study and produce a portfolio that assesses performance in five focus areas. The external component consists of a "School Quality Review" (SQR) a three-day site visit conducted by a review team, which includes classroom observation, interviews and focus groups, and a written report that summarizes findings from the site visit and provides recommendations for improvement to the school. Pilot Schools in Los Angeles have an additional review component of a yearly "walk-through," a one-day site visit conducted by internal and external stakeholders each year in which there is no SQR.

Finally, Pilot Schools share a commitment to equity. Students are not selected based on prior academic achievement and are representative of the school district's student population. This commitment to equality also entails developing curricula that are culturally relevant to students, hiring a diverse faculty who receive professional development on topics relating to diversity and inclusion, and using disaggregated student data.

A recent (release of May 2009) Request for Proposal (RFP) process utilized in the Belmont Zone of Choice illustrates how new schools and/or existing SLCs adopt Pilot status. Potential pilot schools were instructed to submit an application narrative of 25 pages organized and weighted as follows:

- Overview of School
- School Vision (8 points)
- Curriculum and Assessment (40 points)
- Schedule/Calendar (8 points)
- Professional Development and Support (8 points)
- Staffing (12 points)
- Governance (12 points)
- Budget (8 points)
- Student Support (12 points)
- Family and Community Engagement (8 points)
- Design Team Profile and Planning Process (4 points)

Proposals were due in August 2009 and subject to review by review teams. Semi-finalist design teams were then interviewed by the Local District 4 Pilot Schools Steering Committee which recommended proposals to the Local District Superintendent and LAUSD General Superintendent. Final approval was dated for September 2009, followed by a year-long start-up planning process from October 2009 thru August 2010. The new pilot school will open in September 2010.

The College and Career Success Network of Schools

UNITE-LA is an intermediary organization now in its 13th year of operation committed to improving the education and workforce development of youth in the Los Angeles area. Working with both its own staff and through the Education & Workforce Development Division of the Los Angles Area Chamber of Commerce UNITE-LA is focused on:

- Influencing and participating in Small School/Smaller Learning Communities (SS/SLC) reforms.
- Sustaining School-to-Career (STC) and Career Technical Education (CTE) activities.
- Advocating for STC, SS/SLC, and CTE and related policy areas.
- Sustaining and expanding college and career access activities, including Cash for College and LA Youth at Work.

UNITE-LA advocates for change, building and fostering partnerships, while using its organizational capacity to steward reform.   In particular, UNITE-LA centers on coordinating and brokering systemic reform by:

- Instilling secondary education with rigor AND relevance through contextualized and thematic learning that emphasizes the completion of courses leading to postsecondary eligibility.
- Addressing the urban dropout crisis by instituting reforms that personalize the educational experience and build in safety nets and increased student engagement
- Providing students with opportunities for career exploration, service learning, and work-based learning.

Through UNITE-LA, each C&CS school has been provided with the following:

1. School process coach, an externally funded off-norm staff person, who provides organizational and technical assistance in terms of leadership development, professional development, and business/community outreach
2. Access to career exploration and work-based learning experiences (job shadowing, internships, guest speakers, etc.) through the extensive network of business and community partners organized through the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.
3. Funding for college preparation activities such as field trips to local colleges and universities, assistance in completing financial aid applications (*Cash for College*), etc.
4. District-level advocacy for authentic SS/SLC autonomy in terms of budget, staffing, facilities, etc.

The C&CS schools in 2008-09 included three autonomous small schools working with the New Technology Foundation to implement a model of project-based learning and instructional use of technology in small, 9-12 high school settings. These three schools include Los Angeles School of Global Studies, Jordan New Tech, and Student Empowerment Academy.   Each of these schools opened in Fall 2006 with 9th and/or 10th graders and has since expanded to grades 9-12. In addition, the C&CS schools include three new comprehensive high schools that opened with the expectation that all students would be enrolled in SLCs (Contreras in Fall 2006 and Bernstein and Roybal in Fall 2008). In addition, UNITE-LA is working with three pre-existing comprehensive high

schools, which have reorganized, into SLCs (Belmont, Franklin, and Jefferson). A list of all UNITE-LA C&CS schools is shown in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: List of 2008-09 C&CS Schools and SLCs

Small School/SLCs	Year Opened or Joined C&CS	2008-09 Student Enrollment	Grade Levels Served	Relief School[7]
New Autonomous Small High Schools				
Los Angeles School of Global Studies (LASGS)	2006-07	380	9-12	Belmont
Jordan New Technology (JNT)	2006-07	242	9-12	Jordan
Student Empowerment Academy (SEA)	2006-07	392	9-12	Jefferson
New High Schools implementing SLCs				
Bernstein • Arts, Media, and Entertainment (SLC) • Business, Technology, and Labor Relations (SLC) • Science, Technology, and Medicine (SLC) • Diploma Plus (pilot)	2008-09	1,139	9-11	Hollywood and Marshall
Miguel Contreras Learning Center (MCLC) • Academic Leadership Community (pilot) • Social Justice (SLC) • Travel Tourism & Culinary Arts (SLC)	2006-07	934	9-12	Belmont
Roybal Learning Center (RLC) • International School of Languages (SLC) • Activists for Social Empowerment (SLC) • Business and Finance Academy (SLC) • Computer Science Academy (SLC) • Civitas School of Leadership (pilot school) • School for Visual Arts and Humanities (pilot school)	2008-09	1,712	9-12	Belmont
Conversion high schools implementing SLCs				
Belmont • LA Academy of Medicine and Public Service (SLC) • Multimedia Academy (SLC) • School of Awareness and Global Education (SLC) • Teacher Preparation Academy (pilot)	2008-09	1,475	9-12	n.a.
Franklin • Academy of Business and Sports Science (SLC) • American Studies Academy (SLC) • Arroyo Seco Academy (SLC) • Health and Human Services Academy	2006-07	2,646	9-12	n.a.

[7] Comprehensive high school that students would have attended if school had not been opened (i.e., main high school attendance area from whence students came).

(SLC) • Media, Entertainment, and Graphic Arts Academy (SLC) • Math, Science, and Technology (magnet)				
Jefferson • Academy of Business and Communication (SLC) • Creative Arts and Expression (SLC) • Global Outlook through Active Leadership (SLC) • Los Angeles Trade Tech (SLC) • Teacher Prep Academy (SLC)	2006-07	1,970	9-12	n.a.

Autonomous Small Schools

Los Angeles School of Global Studies

Los Angeles School of Global Studies (LASGS) is a small autonomous school on the on the second floor of the campus of Miguel Contreras Learning Complex (MCLC). In addition to LASGS students at MCLC may enroll in the Academic and Leadership Community SLC, Business and Tourism, or the School of Social Justice. LASGS is one of three New Tech models in LAUSD focused on project based learning and instructional use of technology. The LASGS is committed to providing all students with rigorous learning and personalized relationships to ensure their successes as responsible, globally-conscious citizens.

Jordan New Technology

Jordan New Technology (JNT) is a small school located on the campus of David Starr Jordan Senior High School. It is important to note that JNT was unable to serve 9th graders in 2008-09 as required by the New Tech model because Jordan High School has a 9th grade house which groups freshmen together for one year on the main campus before students select from a menu of options including JNT, the Academy of Performing Arts (STARR), Legal Studies, Health Sciences, and Technology Enriched Curriculum (TEC). JNT is situated in the comprehensive high school, which limits autonomy over master schedule, student recruitment/placement, bell schedule, discipline, or budgets.

Student Empowerment Academy

The New Technology High School for Student Empowerment opened in the fall of 2006 on the campus of Thomas Jefferson Senior High School. Since renamed the Student Empowerment Academy (SEA), it functions as a small autonomous school. The school's emphasis is on providing a personalized educational experience strengthened by project-based learning as well as learning through technology.

New High Schools Implementing SLCs

Helen Bernstein High School

Helen Bernstein High School is a traditional calendar high school. Bernstein opened in the fall of 2008 to relieve overcrowding at the Hollywood High School and Marshal High School campuses. It is located in Hollywood, north of downtown Los Angeles. Bernstein is divided into three SLCs: Arts, Media and Entertainment (AME), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medicine (STEM), and Business, Technology and Labor Relations (BTLR). A pilot school, Diploma Plus, is also housed on the Bernstein campus.

Miguel Contreras Learning Complex

Miguel Contreras Learning Complex (MCLC) is a traditional calendar high school, located just west of downtown Los Angeles. MCLC opened in Fall 2006 with three SLCs—School of Business and Tourism (non-pilot), Academic Leadership Community (pilot), and School of Social Justice (non-pilot). The three SLCs at MCLC were transferred from Belmont High School. Belmont students had the choice of staying in their SLC, which meant moving to MCLC, or staying at Belmont and no longer being a part of their SLC. Students reported that most students who elected to stay at Belmont did so in order to remain on athletics because MCLC did not have athletic facilities upon opening.

Edward R. Roybal Learning Center

Edward R. Roybal Learning Center is a traditional calendar school opened in the fall of 2008 to relieve overcrowding at Belmont High School. It is located just northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The campus is divided into four non-pilot SLCs – International School of Languages (ISOL), Activists for Educational Empowerment (AEE), Business and Finance Academy (BFA), and Computer Science Academy (CSA) – and houses two pilot schools, Civitas School of Leadership (Civitas SOL) and the School for Visual Arts and Humanities (SVAH).

Conversion High School Implementing SLCs

Franklin High School

Franklin High School is a comprehensive school located northeast of downtown Los Angeles. After years of being on a year round calendar, Franklin transitioned to a traditional calendar in 2008-09. Franklin's SLC structure has changed quite radically from year to year over the last five years, but they have settled into six SLCs: American Studies, Media Entertainment and Graphic Arts (MEGA), Arroyo Seco, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Business and Sports Science (BSS) and one Math, Science, and Technology Magnet.

Jefferson Senior High School

Jefferson Senior High School is a comprehensive school located south of downtown Los Angeles. In 2005-06 Jefferson transitioned from a three-track, year-round calendar to a traditional calendar with four non-pilot SLCs: Creative Arts and Expression (CAE),

Teacher Prep Academy (TPA), Academy of Business and Communication (ABC), and Global Outlook through Academic Learning (GOAL). There is also an off-site credit recovery program located on and named after Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC).

Belmont Senior High School

Belmont High School is a comprehensive school located south of downtown Los Angeles. In 2007 it was a multi-track, year round high school of 4,205 students. After the implementation Belmont Zone of Choice (began in 2004), Belmont opened as a traditional calendar school of 1,475 students in Fall, 2008. Belmont includes three non-pilot SLCs: LA Academy of Medicine and Public Service, Multimedia Academy, and Science, Art, and Global Environment). There is one pilot school on the campus: Teacher Preparation Academy. The Belmont Campus also houses Sal Castro Middle School, which was dedicated in June 2010.

II. Implementation of Small Schools/Small Learning Communities

UNITE-LA's initiatives are aligned with secondary reform efforts the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) already has underway. The goal of the College and Career School (C&CS) Network is to facilitate existing efforts in order to deepen the impact and sustain the work of implementing Small Schools (SS) and Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs). Therefore, in order to align the C&CS evaluation with ongoing evaluations of SLCs, the evaluation used a modified version (collapsing some categories) of the LAUSD attributes for SS/SLCs referred to in the introduction:

- Unified Vision and Identity
- Rigorous Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
- Professional Development, Distributed Leadership & Accountability
- Personalization
- Parent & Community Involvement

Because UNITE-LA's work through C&CS has focused on a "portfolio" of schools representing different starting points and context for reform, the implementation approach has varied. Each school has an assigned Process Coach that is given the necessary flexibility to contextual the reform efforts depending on the type of effort. These efforts are summarized in the matrix below which categorizes the C&CS schools by both SS/SLC and New/Conversion status:

	Small Schools[8]	Smaller Learning Communities
New Schools	• Los Angeles School of Global Studies	• Miguel Contreras Learning Complex • Helen Bernstein High School • Edward Roybal High School
Conversion Schools	• Student Empowerment Academy • Jordan New Technology	• Jefferson Senior High School • Belmont Senior High School • Franklin Senior High School

This section of the report describes the implementation of SLC/SS attributes at the nine schools in the C&CS network drawing primarily on site visit and student survey data collected by Public *Works,* Inc. in 2008-2009. Please see Appendix A for qualitative methodology. For each attribute, the evaluation summarizes the experiences of small, new and conversion high schools, and describes differences based on type of efforts.

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[8] It is important to note that all of the small, autonomous high schools in the UNITE-LA C&CS are implementing the New Technology Model. In other words, there were no small schools involved in the study that were implementing an alternative to the New Tech model.

Unified Vision and Identity

Evaluation Benchmark: *A shared vision has been created by a group of educators, support staff, students, parents and community who comprise the school learning community. These stakeholders assume responsibility for the learning of every student through a distinctive and focused standards-based curriculum. Each fully implemented SLC/SS has an educational philosophy and approach that is known and shared by students, staff, families and community partners. SLCSS have a unique academic identity, distinct and heterogeneous groups of students, distinct physical boundaries and an administrator or teacher leader that leads a cohesive faculty team. SLC teams make decisions related to: curriculum, instruction and assessment; budget, personnel and facilities; master schedule and student programming; and student conduct and issues of community safety.*

The vision for C&CS network is to create small, autonomous SLCs and schools that provide a personalized and relevant instructional program that engages students and increases student achievement on rigorous, standards-based assessments. Based on the site visits, all schools are working toward this vision. Autonomy, personalization, and the creation of distinctive identity are all part of the shared vision staff at the C&CS schools are working toward. However, SLC/SS varied considerably in developing distinct identity that builds on student interest and expands educational choices. Although all SLC/SS have themes, but the clarity and strength of identity varied considerably across schools.

Establishing a strong school vision and identity is a critical first step in establishing successful SLC/SS. Fulfilling the vision, requires a strong team of teachers committed to the to theme to create identity. In the case of the C&CS network, some of the SLC/SS were long-time, well-established teams with articulated thematic orientation. In other cases, they were brand new. The three types of schools in the C&CS network showed different trends in developing SLC/SS efforts:

Conversion High Schools: The initial vision and identity of large comprehensive high schools converging into multiple SLCs is to reduce overcrowding, move to a traditional calendar, and break into smaller school subunits. The goal is for each SLC to have distinct vision and identity that recruits students and helps them feel a sense of belonging. The commitment level of the SLC team, as well as use of collaboration time appear to correlate with the development vision and identity and influenced the degree of variation within schools.

New High Schools: New high schools implementing autonomous SLCs have been very successful in terms of developing a coherent vision and distinctive SLC identity. For the most part, there was a rigorous planning processes prior to opening, hiring was done to complement SLC vision and identity, and students were recruited with the SLC vision and identity in mind.

Small, Autonomous Schools: The autonomous small schools in the C&CS have been given a vision through the New Technology Foundation. The team creates identity within the context of the school they are situated in and the students they are recruiting. Two of the schools have accomplished strong identity, and one has struggled within its context.

Vision and Identity for New Technology Schools

The vision was strong at the three autonomous small schools in the C&CS network (LASGS, JNT, and SEA) due, in part, because they had been given an initial vision the New Technology Foundation and identity to operate from. Schools teams were trained by New Technology Foundation in the vision and actual program for a week prior to opening and assigned a coach. Therefore, staff quickly coalesced around a distinct vision for how the school is intended to deliver curriculum and improve student achievement.

At the three small autonomous schools, there is a strong vision for providing a rigorous instructional program tailored to meeting the needs of underrepresented students. The vision includes empowering students to become active learners through participation in a technology based, standards-based, and project-based learning curriculum. Expectations

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New Tech Network (www.newtechnetwork.org)

Three of the schools have been given a Vision and Identity to begin with by joining the New Tech Network. The New Tech model has three key elements that set their schools apart.

A new instructional approach that engages learners.
Project-based learning (PBL) is at the heart of our instructional approach. PBL uses technology and inquiry to engage students with issues and questions that are relevant to their lives. In New Tech classrooms, teachers design rigorous projects aligned to state and district standards and customize them to their location and the interests of students. Students then work in teams to acquire and apply knowledge and skills to solve problems. New Tech's approach to PBL fundamentally changes the role of teacher and student. Instead of traditional one instructor to many students, teachers become facilitators and coaches who guide students to take charge of their own learning, invent their own solutions and develop self-management techniques. New Tech invests deeply in process through ongoing training and support to ensure all teachers can become effective in this transformative approach to learning. Students become active learners and doers who take responsibility to complete projects. They develop the tools to handle long, complex tasks and manage their time. They work in teams to create products such as presentations, designs, plays, short stories and prototypes. Students acquire not only subject-matter knowledge, but also the skills they need to thrive in college, career and life.

A culture that empowers students and teachers.
Trust, respect and responsibility are the hallmarks of our culture. At New Tech schools, students and teachers alike have exceptional ownership of school administration and the learning experience. Students acquire a level of responsibility similar to what they would experience in a professional work environment. Working on projects and in teams, students are accountable to their peers, while taking individual responsibility to get work done. In this trusted, respectful environment, students decide how to allocate their time, team roles and how to collaborate. Students also have a voice in campus leadership and policy. Teachers model a team-based collaborative approach. In addition to helping set school administration and policy, they have flexibility to customize classrooms and projects to meet the individual needs of the student.

Fully applied technology that supports deep learning.
Smart use of technology supports our innovative approaches to instruction and culture. All classrooms have a one-to-one computing ratio. With access to Web-enabled computers, every student becomes a self-directed learner who no longer needs to rely primarily on teachers or textbooks for knowledge and direction. A proprietary Web-based system — New Tech Learning Platform — unifies students' learning experiences, enabling them to share projects online, collaborate, communicate, research and create new knowledge. With the learning platform, our 40 schools are literally and figuratively networked together to share learnings, successful projects, resources and best practices. The system provides a structure for teachers to confidently manage a new approach to learning, transforming themselves into project-based coaches.

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for staff and students are high and increasingly embody a commitment to developing a "college-going school culture" so that high school learning experiences prepare students to leave high school with a concrete plan for postsecondary education and/or training. Although the three schools were required to participate in Network professional development and coaching, technology and software, and commit to project-based learning, all three schools have developed a distinct identity with different goals for students in terms of interest and relevance. Within their differing school and neighborhood context, the three different school teams developed three different schools under the New Tech umbrella: Los Angeles School of Global Studies, Jordan New Technology and Student Empowerment Academy. All three schools have a different identity and flavor in their approach including the problems focused on in the problem-based learning model.

Vision and Identity for SLCs in New and Conversion Schools

SLC Identity/Themes
Bernstein
Arts, Media, and Entertainment
Business, Technology, and Labor Relations
Science, Technology, and Medicine
Contreras
Academic Leadership Community
Social Justice
Travel Tourism & Culinary Arts
Roybal
Activists for Social Empowerment
Business and Finance
Computer Science
International School of Languages
Leadership
Visual Arts and Humanities
Belmont
Awareness and Global Education
Medicine and Public Service
Multimedia Academy
Teacher Preparation Academy
Franklin
American Studies
Arroyo Seco
Business and Sports Science
 Health and Human Services
Media, Entertainment, and Graphic Arts Academy
Math, Science, and Technology
Jefferson
Business and Communication
Creative Arts and Expression
Global Outlook through Active Leadership
Los Angeles Trade Tech
Teacher Prep Academy

Vision and identity were evident in new and conversion schools. In the new schools, it was clear that extensive planning was dedicated to opening the school in line with SLC principles. The luxury of "new" in terms of facilities, staff, students, and identity all supported the vision to open an engaging school focused on student achievement and intended to provide more personalization. Facility design around SLCs supported the notion of small schools and autonomy and allowed for distinct identities of SLCs. For example, set-aside buildings on campus or floors of multi-story buildings were constructed assuming that a SLC or SS would occupy this space and function semi-autonomously. In sum, SLC teams within new schools planned and implemented a vision and identity like a charter school might do prior to opening.

In the conversion high schools, the first level of the vision was to reduce overcrowding, move to a traditional calendar, and break into SLCs. The vision started from what was "not working" and moved toward what might work to improve student achievement. Schools moved quickly to create and/or expand existing SLCs and to assign staff and students to SLCs. Conversion schools did not have quite as strong school-wide vision as new schools, but there was success in terms of establishing and new kind of vision for what a high school might become. For example, Belmont High School essentially "restarted" as a new schools moving from 4,205 students to 1,475 students and reorganizing remaining staff and students into SLCs.

In both new and conversion schools, SLCs have separate locations on campus and school leaders have focused on ensuring that the school's master schedule increasingly embodies a

high level of SLC "purity" such that 80%-100% of the students in a given course belong to the same SLC. In addition, each SLC has a lead teacher, counselor, and administrator who collectively make up the leadership "triad" for their individual SLCs. In this way, the structural aspects of vision and identity are largely in place and thereby provide the basis for delivering a qualitatively different high school learning experience to students.

Whether students and teachers choose a particular C&CS school because of its thematic focus or are randomly placed in one with core academic courses in common, SLCs have taken on distinct characteristics and personalities. With time, successful SLCs are able to clearly differentiate themselves through one or more of the following: thematic focus, pedagogical emphasis, set of core values, established mission or goal, and/or co-curricular offerings. When a shared sense of purpose is clearly understood and embraced by students and teachers alike, SLCs become powerful vehicles for increased academic success.

It is, however, important to note that SLC development is uneven at most schools. Because these schools are larger and include multiple SLCs, decentralization has resulted in more diverse paths in the degree to which individual SLCs accept and embody the principles, which form the basis for SLC implementation. While some SLCs teams quickly coalesced, others experienced more difficulties in developing a unifying vision for how teaching and learning would be different. Staff buy-in for thematic instruction and commitment to team time were areas where implementation and identity has been uneven depending on the SLC.

Conversion high schools have also experienced challenges in integrating SLC implementation with the host of multiple "initiatives" and mandates tied to overall school accountability including mandates tied to high school accreditation (WASC) as well as corrective actions that associated with accountability (i.e., Program Improvement (PI), School Assistance Intervention Team (SAIT), and High Priority Schools (HPS) status). In some cases, SLC vision and identity were less fully developed because staff struggled to connect internal reform processes to external directives on how and what to change as part of overall school improvement.

SS/SLC Autonomy

Autonomy is strongest in the following order: small, autonomous schools (New Tech), new high schools, and then conversion high schools.

The three autonomous small schools implementing the New Technology model were granted their own CDS code from the State, which provides direct autonomy in terms of staffing, budget, and accountability targets. In addition, their curriculum delivery through project-based learning and instructional use of technology helped to clearly provide teachers with autonomy over curriculum, instruction, and assessments. School leaders at these small schools demonstrate a determination to take advantage of autonomy to deliver instructional experiences quite different from the "typical" LAUSD high school. As such, students at the small schools are exposed to a distinctive educational experience to students that departs significantly from the managed curriculum approach found in most LAUSD schools.

Although all of the three small schools possess structural autonomy, SEA and LASGS are further along in terms of exercising autonomy. For example, SEA has its own bell schedule and makes its own master schedule apart from Jefferson HS. Students wear uniforms three days out of the week and ID cards, which also identify them from students at the larger Jefferson campus. In addition, students are required to dress professionally on Tuesdays.

Similarly, LASGS functions as an autonomous small school on the campus of MCLC, with guidelines regulating shared responsibilities/space with the larger campus.   Students in LASGS are clearly identifiable (by dress and lanyards with student IDs) and have a separate sense of identity within the larger campus.   Although lunch period is shared with the main complex, LASGS adopted its own bell schedule.

Autonomy has been problematic at JNT, but seemed to improve in 2008-09. Despite having signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the New Technology Foundation, leaders from Jordan High School and LAUSD Local District 7 had not allowed JNT to function completely autonomously. Structurally, JNT was not allowed to operate as a 9th-12th grade school (a requirement of the New Technology model). Instead, JNT students enter as 10th graders after participating in a 9th grade house through Jordan High (9th grade was added in 2009-10). Moreover, JNT has had limited autonomy or even inclusion in school-wide decisions related to student recruitment/assignment, bell schedule, or master schedule development. This lack of autonomy is likely a factor in explaining why JNT has had four principals in its short history. Moreover, staff acknowledged that circumscribed autonomy has complicated and even frustrated the development of the school's identity particularly as they evaluate school progress in relation to a "school success" rubric provided by the New Technology Foundation. Despite some progress, autonomy has effectively been "stunted" for JNT.

In the new schools, there was evidence of some autonomy exercised by SLCs. New schools hired principals to serve as facilitators of SLC development and cultivation of SLC lead teachers. In many ways, the principals at these new high schools serve as managers who coordinate facility use and communication around school-wide issues such as safety. Lead SLC teachers serve a representatives to school-wide governance forums with the result that the new high schools feel very decentralized with regard to facilities, budget, master schedule, and curriculum. It is critical to note that SLCs have largely achieved SLC purity for most academic courses due to exercise of control over master schedule development. Typically, SLCs only coordinate or share courses and staffing for students in physical education.

In one case, SLC autonomy was so strong, that one of the SLC broke from the school to become a Pilot school—Academic Leadership Academy at Contreras. While the shift to pilot status caused some disruption, UNITE-LA viewed this development as a victory insofar as the SLC demonstrated a maturation of autonomy, from semi-autonomous SLC at a new high school to a fully autonomous small school committed to charting its own path to delivering a quality education.

By contrast, conversion comprehensive high schools struggled more with autonomy because old ways were hard to change. Principals still operated more like traditional principals with "managed" and centralized decision-making in the areas of curriculum and instruction, budgetary allocations, personnel, counseling, and student conduct/discipline.

As a result, there was less "bottom up" involvement of SLCs in setting the direction and pace of SLC implementation. To some extent, high school staff at the conversion schools remained cautious in terms of exercising autonomy (i.e., they want upfront guidance on what they can and cannot do autonomously versus the new schools where autonomy is assumed unless otherwise specified). Expectations for distributed leadership and autonomy often conflicted with federal, state, and district mandates for rapid improvements in student achievement and directives for how these schools were intended to function in a high stakes accountability climate.

The one exception to these trends was Jefferson High Schools that, due to external accountability pressure, was required to develop a Public School Choice (PSC)[9] plan in Winter 2009. In this plan, all SLCs were placed on a pathway towards becoming autonomous small schools in line with LAUSD's Small Schools Resolution. It is interesting to note that Jefferson's PSC plan was the only high school plan approved "without reservation" and noted for a focus on bold, innovative plans for school restructuring. Support from UNITE-LA was instrumental in recharting a path for Jefferson to move toward greater exercise of autonomy.

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[9] For newly constructed and chronically underperforming schools, the Los Angeles Board of Education mandated participation in PSC for the first time in Winter 2009. Schools were, in effect, open to the possibility of being operated by external not-for-profit vendors. The schools themselves, as well as internal groupings within schools, were allowed to develop their own plans for innovation and improved student achievement. A panel of recommendations from the Office of the Superintendent were forwarded to the Board for approval.

Rigorous Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

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

Given the low academic performance of C&CS schools and schools in the surrounding area, the number one goal is improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps. Academic goals include increasing scores on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and California Standards Tests (CSTs), as well as increasing UC/CSU eligibility. All C&CS schools are committed to high academic expectations for all students, resulting in college and career readiness upon high school graduation through thematic, contextualized learning within a rigorous and standards-based instructional program that imparts both relevance and personalization for students.

Despite some positive growth trends and individual SS/SLC improvements (see Section III of this report), the overall level of academic attainment at the C&CS schools remains very low. The sites with both better than average levels of attainment and growth were concentrated among LASGS and SEA, the two small autonomous high schools that have shown the greatest fidelity to the promises of autonomy and the New Technology model. MCLC, a new high school which began with a strong vision for semi-autonomous SLCs, also showed relatively high levels of both attainment and growth on key measures of student achievement and school performance. Other sites tended to perform well in terms of attainment (e.g., Franklin) or growth (Jefferson), but not both. In addition, many of the C&CS sites are simply to new (e.g, Bernstein, Royball) to or have been wholly reconfigured (Belmont) to establish clear trends in terms of improving student achievement. Overall, the largest conclusion that can be reached is that all C&CS schools need to do more to translate school improvement efforts into objective measures of increased student achievement, working toward exceeding LAUSD and meeting or exceeding State averages on these key measures.

Rigor through Themes: Small Learning Communities

Apart from a few SLCs, most instruction in SLCs emphasized departmental priorities rather than thematic instruction linked to SLC theme. Rarely was curriculum interdisciplinary, but some teachers had begun to integrate English and History around projects. Instead, thematic linkages occurred within content (i.e., course-based) with teachers enhancing standards-based curriculum with some connection to SLC theme or application of learning.

Some new and conversion high schools began to focus on coaching around project-based learning (PBL) but these efforts were nascent during the 2008-09 school year.

In many schools, curricular and instructional reforms have centered less on thematic linkages than on deepening the capacity of teachers to consistently use a common battery of research-based instructional strategies such as instructional scaffolding and differentiation that recognizes multiple learning styles/modalities. Staff articulated ongoing challenges in implementing the curricular mandates required by LAUSD given low levels of student engagement and mastery of prerequisite skills and knowledge. Staff turnover/retention and student transience were common factors identified to explain persistently low levels of student achievement on the California Standards Test (CST) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

Innovation through Project Based Learning (PBL): New Technology Schools

> **Los Angeles School of Global Studies**
>
> LASGS shows a common commitment to an educational philosophy organized to support thematic, project-based, and interdisciplinary learning, as well as emphasis on exposing students to real-world scenarios and work-based learning opportunities. Co-teaching or teaming is becoming a norm at the school with only three courses not delivered in an interdisciplinary fashion. Students consistently articulated the schools' educational philosophy as one based on teamwork, oral presentations of learning, writing across the curriculum, use of technology, and college preparation. Students also said that their classes are emphasizing the importance of personal responsibility, self-advocacy, leadership skills, and collaboration with others.

Of the models under study, the three New Tech Schools provide the most innovative approach to curriculum delivery. The emphasis of the model on project-based learning (PBL) at the small, autonomous schools is a marked departure from the instructional program in place at most other LAUSD high schools. Rather than structuring lessons on the basis of district Instructional Guides and Secondary Periodic Assessments that specify what, when, and how to teach, all the small schools have largely moved toward their own backwards mapping of standards with explicit scaffolding of thematic lessons. Students work in collaborative, small groups to complete projects designed to provide a more constructivist (hands-on and active) approach to learning aimed at making the curriculum more relevant and engaging for students.

Under PBL, students are involved in teaching and learning that emphasizes real-world applications of learning, and cooperative learning opportunities organized on the basis of integrated lesson templates from the New Technology Foundation. Teachers continue to be committed to developing lessons that bundle multiple standards into a given project and provide students with performance tasks linked to standards mastery. PBLs occurred on a monthly basis and drew on a library of existing projects (from the New Technology Foundation), which C&CS faculty adapted for use in their classrooms.

The rigorous curriculum is student-centered with an emphasis on investigations and inquiry through collaborative grouping of students assigned to projects. Group projects employ "contracts" specifying roles and responsibilities of students as they complete different components of the project. Although students initially struggle with the shift toward collaborative work, over time, they learn to work effectively in small groups through

practice and exposure. Indeed, students viewed PBL as preparation for the workplace where they will need to work on teams to complete tasks.

Instructional use of technology was clearly evident at the small autonomous schools. Indeed, there is a 1:1 student to computer ratio and students use computers on a daily basis in the classroom. Technological applications were integrated into most projects for both research and presentation purposes.   For example, LASGS students regularly access "Lotus Notes" a software program for PBL, to explore how best to use technology to showcase learning of lesson concepts and standards. In addition, training on ethical uses of the technology is integrated into the behavioral expectations of the students. Faculty with digital media expertise expand the knowledge base of students through media club and overall exposure to techniques functional within their other class/subject projects.

Two key challenges continue to impact the efforts of the small schools to deliver curriculum and instruction. First, ninth grade students struggle to automatically engage in PBL instructional delivery because it is not what they are use to from all their past instructional experiences. The first year is difficult. Second, students enter not performing at grade level. The PBL lesson plan templates provided by the New Tech Foundation have required substantial modification to adequately scaffold instruction for students who often lack grade-level mastery of foundational skills.   Thus, projects in the New Tech "library" have had to be adapted to access prior student. Third, all the small schools have struggled with using the district's Secondary Periodic Assessments (SPA) as a tool for evaluating student learning. The SPAs have proven inadequate in terms of accurately assessing student progress in meeting the expectations of PBL and the timing of the district's assessments do not match the cycle of lessons delivered under PBL. Although, PBL is standards driven and covers academic content, the pacing plan is not the same.

Student Perceptions of Classroom Learning

As shown in Table 2 below, student perceptions of academic rigor were positive. Of all survey items, students were most confident that they could get tutoring or other help if they were having trouble in school (10th-88% and 12th-90%). Most students agreed that teachers taught academic subject matter at a high level (10th-80% and 12th-86%). Similarly, most agreed that teachers were clear about what they expected (10th-79% and 12th-85%), and that teachers fairly graded student progress (10th-71% and 12th 88%).

12th grade students were more likely to say that they had the opportunity to do assignments/projects about interesting topics (10th-71% and 12th-88%), as well as the propensity for classes to provide useful and beneficial learning (10th 74% and 12th – 85%). Most also agreed that they would be prepared to enter college when they finished with high school (10th-77% and 12th-80%).

Students were less positive (particularly 10th graders) when asked whether teachers knew their personal academic strengths/weaknesses (82% of 12th compared to 68% of 10th graders). In addition, only half of the students felt they had been encouraged to take Advanced Placement (AP) and advanced classes (10th-50% and 12th-56%).[10]

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[10] It is important to note that LASGS School of Global Studies does not offer AP courses; instead students are concurrently enrolled in postsecondary education.

Table 2: Student Perceptions of Academic Rigor and Classroom Learning (% Agreement)

Student Survey Item	10th N=1112	12th N=551
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	88%	90%
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	80%	86%
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	79%	85%
I have the opportunity to do assignments/projects about interesting topics.	77%	87%
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	77%	80%
My classes show how what I learning will be useful and beneficial.	74%	85%
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	71%	88%
Teachers know my academic strengths and where I could improve	68%	82%
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	50%	56%

Professional Development, Distributed Leadership, and Accountability

Evaluation Benchmark: *SLC/SS demonstrate implementation of central and local district training and resources. Continuous professional learning is focused on improving practices and performances as a vehicle for school improvement and program coherence. Members of the SLC/SS work together, share expertise, and exercise leadership to ensure that student achievement is the intended result of all discussions. They retain primary responsibility, appropriate autonomy, and are accountable for making decisions affecting the important aspects of the small learning community. This is accomplished through collaboration, reflection, the analysis of student work and data, and a review of pedagogy. Common planning time is provided for teachers to gain in-depth knowledge of their content standards to work on lesson design, review student work and performance data. Professional development is monitored and assessed regularly for effectiveness and implementation to ensure continuous school improvement.*

Professional development is a key component of school restructuring. Training and collaboration time is needed to build both teacher capacity and to develop leadership skills appropriate for school restructuring. With more collaboration and targeted professional development, faculty and staff in SS and SLCs work together to improve curriculum quality, including personalizing the instructional program, analysis of student assessment data, and developing more effective methods for actively engaging students in the learning process.

Professional Development Structures and Foci

Professional development at three conversion and three new high schools varied considerably from site-to-site. New schools were focused on overall school and SLC start-up in terms of teaming, schedule, identity, facilities, and other school issues. Because new and conversion schools have more staff members and multiple SLCs, professional development tended to be oriented towards more global concerns, with opportunities for SLCs to select more specific topics. At most schools, professional development focused on making academic rigor and standards alignment consistent across the entire school. Professional development priorities include:

- Preparing WASC or implementing WASC recommendations
- Implementing district standards-based pacing plans
- Reviewing the Principles of Learning and Bloom's Taxonomy
- Reaching consensus on classroom management techniques
- Developing personalization activities

In some SS/SLC, professional development utilized the Critical Friends Group (CFG) protocol for sharing lesson plans prior to delivery in the classroom. The CFG protocol was credited with building teacher teams and creating a culture where teachers regularly share promising practices and seek input on how to continuously improve, using guidelines that ensure that feedback on lesson design is constructive rather than prescriptive. The CFG protocol also set the stage for the development of co-teaching and interdisciplinary lesson plans.

However, at the new and conversion schools, there were limited overall plans for professional development. It was difficult to understand the priorities for school-wide or SLC professional development. Efforts seemed to be more directed at ensuring collaboration time or establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as opposed to setting an agenda for changing classroom teaching or learning in an explicit manner. Many staff in conversion schools, in particular, felt that the school's professional development priorities had advanced a school-wide agenda for instruction that eclipsed SLC autonomy in setting decentralized goals for improving student achievement. While some interdisciplinary SLC teams worked together in regular meetings to plan joint lessons, review student data or discuss student concerns, other SLCs struggled against a professional development calendar that prioritized subject area (departmental) collaboration.

External Support: Roybal High School

At Roybal, the principal and the SLC leads have benefited from having two outside organizations work with the school—Coalition of Essential Schools and UNITE-LA. The Coalition assigned a Facilitator to work with the Principal to coach in terms of governance and overall school structure in this critical start-up phase. UNITE-LA assigned an experienced retired principal as the Process Coach to work directly with one of the SLC leads in leadership, curriculum, and bringing in outside partners to support the students in learning experiences. Together, the support has been critical to the success of the opening the school, reflecting on first year strengths and areas to improve, and building new types of leadership in the context of autonomous SLCs.

These findings contrast sharply with those at the three autonomous C&CS small schools where there is required professional development and coaching for all new and continuing teachers as part of the New Tech Network. In 2008-09, teams continued to focus on helping teachers learn to implement PBL activities in the classroom and overall software enhancements and additions. Coaching from New Technology Foundation in 2006-07 set the stage for teachers to develop and adapt standards-based course-specific projects and to employ the use of technology in the classroom and has continue every year after that.

At the three small schools, professional development is a "bottom up" endeavor that actively enlisted the support and input of faculty in both the design and delivery of ongoing professional development. Typically, professional development was offered on a weekly basis, with a strong emphasis on collaboration and inquiry tied to student achievement where teachers set the agenda and administrators provided guidance and support.

In addition, professional development or collaboration time at the New Tech schools has centered on creation of rubrics to evaluate student work, as well as opportunities for collaboratively analyzing and scoring student work samples. Many of the teachers identified "authentic assessment" as an appropriate and necessary component of professional development in order to accurately capture student learning under the PBL model. In addition, the focus on student work served as a catalyst for intra-faculty discussions of individual students and how best to structure advisory periods devoted to personalization.

Distributed Leadership

Overall, the schools in the C&CS network have demonstrated unprecedented distributed leadership. Some schools and teams are stronger in the area of distributed leadership, but overall there has been extensive movement in implementing a new model for governance and leadership. Teacher leaders have emerged and are exercising extensive responsibilities. Some counselors and administrators have also taken on new responsibilities. Although conversion schools are the most traditional in approach to administration and governance, strides have been made to be more inclusive and distributive in leadership. Decision-making is moving toward a more decentralized approach, often complemented by the hiring of administrators who understand and embrace the principles of SS/SLC.

Accountability

Accountability essentially comes down to measurable academic achievement in the context of federal, state and district accountability systems. One key difference between small schools (New Tech) and high schools (new and existing) implementing SLCs is the unit of analysis used to hold schools accountable. Autonomous small schools generate their own API and AYP. As such, accountability is clear and data is collected at the unit of analysis where it can be used to guide school improvement efforts. For the larger high schools, "high stakes" accountability is only provided at the school-wide level, often masking variation in achievement across multiple SLCs in the same school. As a result, it is critical that high schools disaggregate and use data *by SLC* to determine trends and patterns in achievement. LAUSD's data information system makes this possible but few schools were systematically utilizing data in this way.

Personalization

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

Personalization is at the heart of the move toward SLC/SS to engage students in school to increase academic achievement. With some LAUSD comprehensive high schools enrolling 3,000+ students or more each year, it is easy to understand how students get "lost" in the system. By taking large, impersonal comprehensive high schools and breaking them up into smaller communities of learners, it is believed that stronger adult-student relationships can develop and students can get the attention they need to achieve. Personalized instruction means that schools systematically help students assess their own talents and aspirations, differentiation instruction based on this knowledge about their students, and assist students in planning a pathway to meet their own purpose. Positive adults in the lives of student such as the close support of adult mentors, tutors, teachers, and counselors are essential to student success. Furthermore, in a personalized learning environment, teachers play a dual role as both subject-matter coaches and student advisors.

Advisory Periods to Increase Personalization

The advisory period at SEA uses loose structure of log checks and work on portfolio (Monday), ELA focus on current events, writing, vocabulary (Tues), Math focus on remediation (Wed), grade checks (Thurs), and student empowerment projects (Friday).

At LASGS, the advisory period was offered daily and focused on interpersonal skills, postsecondary preparation, career exploration, and relationship-building via discussions of current events and "hot topics" (e.g., homosexuality/transgender students, immigration debate, how much progress has been made in racial equality, etc.).

The advisory periods at MCLC were organized around the grade-level needs of students. At MCLC this is defined as life skills and introduction to career pathways in 9th grade, 10th binder checks and work on portfolios in 10th grade, SAT preparation and mentoring in 11th grade, and college preparation in 12th grade.

Relationship Building

The relationship building aspect of personalization is goal at all SS/SLCs and was particularly evident at the three autonomous small schools and new high schools implementing SLCs. Small schools size combined with an energetic faculty helped develop a new school cultures oriented toward personalization.

In these SS/SLC, students felt that teachers really knew about them personally and academically, treated students with respect and went out of their way to help students succeed. On multiple occasions, students characterized their schools as providing a "family atmosphere" where teachers were expected to take a holistic view of the student, including their families and community interactions. In many SS/SLC, teachers were very involved in helping students with their work, tutoring, listening to personal problems, and coaching on future plans.

Advisory periods are another way schools are creating deeper relationships between adults and students connected to curriculum and future

planning. Nearly half (47%) of 10th grade students surveyed reported being in an Advisory and 43% of 12th graders. SEA and MCLC reported the highest levels of participation in Advisory (80% each), followed by Roybal (67%) and Bernstein (64%).

The implementation of personalization strategies was uneven at conversion schools, with widely varying strategies from teacher-to-teacher. Few conversion schools had implemented an Advisory and tended to depend on teachers to craft personalization. Similarly, the role of counselors in personalization under SLCs varied widely within these conversion schools. While some counselors have embraced a new role in working through SLCs, others remained largely disconnected from the "work" of SLCs, focusing on programming and feeling overwhelmed with large student: counselor ratios.

Based on student perceptions (see Table 3), most students by 12th grade felt that they belonged to a school-wide community (74%) and that they had an adult at this school that can go to for help for school (72%). The percentage was substantially less at the 10th grade. In fact the responses at the 10th grade about regular interactions with teachers or counselors were extremely low (37% and 34%).

Schools differed widely on degree of belonging, ranging from a high of 82% at LASGS (82%) to 63% at MCLC. The highest sense of belonging among 10th grade students was at SEA (70%). Seniors at LASGS (79%) and Belmont (78%) were most likely to report that they had an adult they could go to for help, with the lowest agreement at Roybal (57%) and MCLC (54%). Tenth graders reported similarly across schools with the highest levels of agreement at SEA (68%).

Table 3: Student Perceptions of Belonging/Adult Connections (% Agreement)

Student Survey Item	_10th_ N=1112	12th N=551
I feel safe when I am at school	65%	77%
I feel that I belong to a school-wide community	63%	74%
I have an adult at this school that can go to for help for school	60%	72%
I talk to my teachers or counselor regularly about my high school	37%	59%
This school year, were you assigned to teacher, counselor, or other adult	34%	60%

Curricular Relevance

Creating relevance for students or personalized instruction that builds on students' interests, background and culture has started to occur at some C&CS schools. Teachers bring it into the classroom through projects, lessons, and guest speakers. Teachers take students into the community to make relevant, personal connections between classroom and community-based learning. Teachers have taken students on field trips to UCLA, Pasadena, City Walk, even downtown Los Angeles in order to move students beyond the segregation and isolation of their neighborhoods. Teachers at LASGS also started a "global

Internships/Job Shadowing

At MCLC, 11th and 12th grade students are participating in job shadowing and internships that local businesses provide through LA Chamber of Commerce. Students can also participate in MCLC's Pathways program designed to showcase the relevance of high school learning for future careers. Similarly, some of the SLCs at Jefferson have been successful in starting partnerships with external agencies and employers to provide internships and job shadowing experiences for students.

pen pal" program with students writing to peers in Central America, Africa, Asia, and Native Americans living on reservations.

UNITE-LA has been critical in helping link schools to community and businesses for guest speakers, job shadowing experiences, internship and other community classroom environments (see next section). Based on the student survey, students reported participating in multiple experiences. In all but after-school participation, 12th grade students were more likely to report all experiences compared to 10th graders.

As shown in Table 4, the highest reported experience was fieldtrips (10th-61% and 12th-72%), followed by participation in after-school programs (10th - 50% and 12th -43%). Guest speakers from the community were also a prominent feature for some students (10th – 29% and 12th – 36%). Similarly, both College Fairs (10th – 17% and 12th – 44%) and College classes (10th – 15% and 12th - 31%) impacted a subset of students.

Community service was much more likely among 12th graders and likely linked to the district's Service Learning graduation requirement. Similarly, 12th graders were more likely to report work experience and participation in Career Fairs.

Few students reported involvement in job shadowing, internships, or career interest surveys. Given UNITE-LA's community and business connections, increases should be targeted in these areas.

Table 4: Student Participation in Experiences

	10th N=1112	12th N=551
Fieldtrip	61%	72%
After-school program	50%	43%
Guest Speaker in Your Class	29%	36%
College Fair	17%	44%
College class	15%	31%
Community Service Project	14%	46%
Work Experience	9%	23%
Career Fair	9%	23%
Job Shadowing	5%	9%
Internship	4%	9%
Career Interest Inventory	3%	7%

Academic Intervention

All SS/SLC reported providing academic interventions based on students' individual needs. One indicator of success is that 89% of seniors and 88% of sophomores reported that they could get tutoring and other help when having trouble

> **Mandatory, Systemic Intervention**
>
> At SEA, all students have a mandatory 8th period CAHSEE prep class after-school learning lab. Students are also assigned to an after-school Learning Lab based on their progress in class. Students are able to get assistance from the teacher in completing projects and making up schoolwork in learning lab.

in school. Schools are providing in-school and after-school support to increase number of students passing the CAHSEE and passing classes. However, very few SS/SLC have a *systematic* program for providing academic intervention during both the regular school day

and after-school. Set-aside academic intervention has a stronger emphasis at conversion high schools, but given the low academic performance of all SS/SLC, more emphasis needs to be placed on targeted systems of intervention that are directive (rather than voluntary) in nature.

Post-High School Planning

Personalization has also begun to address postsecondary preparation and career planning. Counselors and teachers meet with students each semester to inform students (and parents) about credit accumulation and progress toward meeting A-G requirements. Increasing student access to postsecondary education is a focus through Cash for College, an initiative coordinated by UNITE-LA in Los Angeles County (see box above). In addition, both LASGS and SEA enrolled students in dual credit courses at local community colleges (e.g., LATTC, LACC, ELACC). All schools acknowledge a need for better information and activities for students who will be better served in two-year colleges or in trade/vocational postsecondary training.

Cash for College

Cash for College is a statewide initiative focused on increasing the number of underserved youth eligible for and enrolling in postsecondary education. In particular, the *Cash for College* campaign seeks to increase the number of students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by increasing student awareness of financial aid options. UNITE-LA is the intermediary organization that organizes the Cash for College in LA *Cash for College* works with Los Angeles County students in five ways:
1. Providing information to both parents and students through a half day Cash for College Convention (Fall)
2. Offering specific technical assistance to completing the FAFSA application in follow-up workshops (Winter)
3. Supplying incentive scholarships through a drawing of students who complete the FAFSA (Spring)
4. Working with surrounding high school counselors who counsel students for college (on-going)
5. Disseminating information to the public, school community and students on FAFSA.

Student perceptions based on the student surveys were that they are encouraged and prepared for postsecondary education and work after high school. Indeed, the vast majority (see Table 5) of students agreed that they had been encouraged to consider education after high school. Likewise, most students in both 10th and 12th grade agreed that they would be prepared to enter college and/ore employment after high school.

Smaller proportions of students reported working with teachers or counselors to develop a written education plan. Interestingly, 10th grade students were more likely to report working with a teacher than a counselor, with the opposite true among 12th graders.

Table 5: Student Perceptions of Future Planning (% Agreement)

Student Survey Item	*10th* N=1112	12th N=551
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school	76%	87%
I will be prepared to enter college which I am finished with high school	75%	80%
I will be prepared for employment when I am finished with high school	73%	84%
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written education plan	64%	55%
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written education plan	30%	49%

Parent & Community Engagement

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

Given the effort to create identity organized around themes and pathways, all SS/SLCs were reaching to their community for help creating relevance for their students. Schools made progress in terms of connecting with external partners from business/industry, community-based organizations, and postsecondary institutions. Efforts tended to focus on expanding options for students and enhancing curricular relevance through work-based learning opportunities. In this evaluation area, UNITE-LA Process Coaches are crucial in beginning, expanding and sustaining community partnerships. UNITE-LA serves as the intermediary organizations connection relationships outside to inside the school.

Efforts to connect parents to the school were less visible, and relied mostly on individual staff (teacher) outreach to parents. SLC high schools were less likely to emphasize the need for qualitatively changing the connections between home and school. Small autonomous C&CS schools deepened linkages to parents through enhanced communication, as well as increased personalized contact between school staff and parents.

> **Education & Workforce Development Committee: LA Chamber of Commerce**
>
> *Linking the community to schools*
>
> **Pillars Business Partnership:** Chamber's initiative to provide assistance to help transform high schools as well as businesses with theme-based learning programs in areas like media, finance and health. Strengthen the relevance of curriculum and increase work-based learning opportunities.
>
> **Job Shadow Day:** The Chamber partners with Junior Achievement to match high schools with businesses for a day of job shadowing, which is intended to help students understand the importance of classroom curriculum, going to college and setting career goals.
>
> **Principal for a Day & Executive for a Day:** The Chamber connects hundreds of business executives and public school principals each year for a day of hands-on exchange to help foster an understanding about opportunities and challenges of leading a public school. Allows for relationships to be built between local businesses and schools.

At LASGS, external partnerships were also leveraged to expand the reach of the school. For example, some partners increased opportunities for students to participate in tutoring homework completion, and enrichment activities after-school. Other partners working with LASGS assisted the school in conducting outreach to the largely immigrant parent population. Still others provided social services for students and their families in mental health, substance abuse, etc.

Another area of growth centered on relationships between the small schools and postsecondary institutions. For example, many juniors and seniors at SEA took advantage of opportunities to enroll concurrently in elective courses at Los Angeles Trade Technical College while in high school. These types of articulation agreements were also in place at LASGS.

Connecting Parents

SS/SLC have focused on ensuring regular communication to parents via multiple dissemination methods (e.g., phone, fliers, website, etc.) Strategies of connecting were most prominent among the autonomous Small Schools and included:

- Personalized contact with parents through advisory teachers. SEA suggests that advisory teachers meet with parents each semester
- More personalized Back-to-School Night meetings or conferences
- Advisory teachers make home visits (LASGS)
- Regular events for parents in order for them to get to know administrators and teachers, as well as network among themselves.
- Train parents to use the "Grade Portal" system that allows computerized access to students' assignments and course grades.   Teachers upload grades onto "Grade Portal" an online system for logging classroom assignments, grades, and behavioral concerns (SEA, LASGS, JNT only).
- Provides online access to student and school information through Ed-Connect (LASGS)
- Regular "coffee house" meetings with parents where staff and parents could talk informally over coffee
- Invited parents to student demonstrations and presentations where they could see firsthand the results of student learning
- Schools also hosted parent events such as picnics, potlucks, etc.

Connecting with Parents

LASGS initiated a Parent Alliance group devoted to building parental awareness of A-G requirements, the Grade Portal system, student study skills, and homework completion.

At SEA, the requirement that parents perform 20 hours of community service is intended to connect parents to the life of the school and to participate in their child's educational experience.

Students expressed that parents were very well informed. However, students suggested that schools could do more outreach to parents on college preparation, including workshops on financial aid for college.

More efforts are also needed in helping parents support and reinforce learning in home settings so that students receive a consistent message about the path to academic success which translates into persistence, follow through, and accountability for their own learning. Parents also need more help in order to take advantage of tutoring and intervention options and assist their children in moving toward postsecondary education and/or training after high school.

In general, there was less emphasis on parent involvement at conversion SLC high schools, however parent engagement does vary by SLC. At risk of oversimplification, parental involvement was not fundamentally changed or even prioritized at these schools. Instead, these schools have largely focused on addressing intra-school challenges associated with SLC implementation. Parents, while welcome and appreciated, have not been meaningfully linked to the reform process underway at these schools.

Two survey questions were dedicated to parent involvement (see Table 6). Student perceptions were high in agreement relates to parent support and interaction with teachers.

Table 6: Student Perceptions of Parents (% Agreement)

Student Survey Item	_10th_ N=1112	12th N=551
I have the support I need to at home to complete my homework	79%	82%
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have a question	74%	81%

UNITE-LA's Role in SS/SLC

UNITE-LA has advocated on behalf of small school issues with local and central district (e.g., exposing district school improvement facilitators with efforts at the site and attending their meetings). They have also educated LAUSD and City policy-makers on the difference between small schools and smaller learning communities. Significantly, UNITE-LA was instrumental in ensuring that the three autonomous small schools implementing the New Technology model were granted their own CDS code from the State, which provides direct autonomy in terms of staffing, budget, and accountability targets.

Through UNITE-LA, each C&CS school has been provided with the following:

5. School process coach, an externally funded off-norm staff person, who provides organizational and technical assistance in terms of leadership development, professional development, and business/community outreach
6. Access to career exploration and work-based learning experiences (job shadowing, internships, guest speakers, etc.) through the extensive network of business and community partners organized through the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.
7. Funding for college preparation activities such as field trips to local colleges and universities, assistance in completing financial aid applications (*Cash for College*), etc.
8. District-level advocacy for authentic SS/SLC autonomy in terms of budget, staffing, facilities, etc.

UNITE-LA

UNITE-LA is an intermediary organization focused on:
- Influencing and participating in Small School/Smaller Learning Communities (SS/SLC) reforms.
- Sustaining School-to-Career (STC) and Career Technical Education (CTE) activities.
- Advocating for STC, SS/SLC, and CTE and related policy areas.
- Sustaining and expanding college and career access activities, including Cash for College and LA Youth at Work.

UNITE-LA advocates for change, building and fostering partnerships, while using its organizational capacity to steward reform. In particular, UNITE-LA centers on coordinating and brokering systemic reform by:
- Instilling secondary education with rigor AND relevance through contextualized and thematic learning that emphasizes the completion of courses leading to postsecondary eligibility.
- Addressing the urban dropout crisis by instituting reforms that personalize the educational experience and build in safety nets and increased student engagement
- Providing students with opportunities for career exploration, service learning, and work-based learning.

The process coaches' role differed at every school given the context and needs to the school, and the skills and personality of each Process Coach. Process Coaches play a part in helping shape the vision and identity of overall schools and particular SLCs, develop and implement curriculum, design and deliver professional development and work in collaborative teams, assist in the use of data and accountability systems, and involvement parent and community.

The process coaches hired by UNITE-LA have played a more overt role in shaping vision and identity at the conversion high schools especially with connecting individual SLCs to external resources and partners.   In these schools, process coaches served almost like an assistant principal. By contrast, the development and opening of autonomous small schools has been more organic and grassroots in nature. The process coach is a true coach or advisor to various stakeholders. Now that the New Tech model has been established, UNITE-LA process coaches played a more background, coordinating and/or advisory function vis-à-vis local school stakeholders.

Process coach reported and were observed conducting many types of activities such as:
- Conducting professional development or facilitating collaboration time
- Connecting relationships—serving as an intermediary
- Supporting and coaching principal and assistant principal and lead teachers
- Working with infrastructure of school and then within specific SLCs
- Helping provide data for data-driven decision-making
- Serving as the "outsider" voice or critical friend
- Assisting in recruiting or connecting for events like Cash for College, Principal for a day
- Developing project-based learning and other curriculum

UNITE-LA contributed to the development of personalization at the C&CS schools by encouraging schools to adopt strategies related to relationship and relevance including advocating for an advisory period. The UNITE-LA process coach worked to increase student participation in internships, the Work Readiness Certification program, and Cash for College events and activities. UNITE-LA process coaches also assisted schools in developing relationships with postsecondary institutions (e.g., LATTC) organizing college fairs, and promoting awareness on postsecondary options and financial aid through the annual *Cash for College* Convention.

UNITE-LA did not play a prominent role in shaping parent involvement at the C&CS schools. By contrast, UNITE-LA has played an especially strong role in helping schools reach out to business/industry, community-based organizations, and postsecondary partners. UNITE-LA process coaches brokered relationships with businesses and helped "open doors" for discussions about how best to connect external partners to small schools and SLCs.   UNITE-LA has also successfully leveraged its extensive experience and contacts to help schools make work-based learning (e.g., job shadowing, internships, guest speakers, etc.) a reality.

III. Student Achievement and School Performance Indicators

One part of the evaluation of the College and Career Success (C&CS) initiative addresses student performance on a number of standardized assessments of academic achievement. While none of these assessments is a perfect tool for measuring student learning, each is commonly used and recognized as a lens through which to view student achievement and programmatic success. In this section, we discuss student performance on the California Standards Test (CST) and the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) as well as school-level performance on the Academic Progress Index (API) and the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and explore student enrollment and attendance patterns as levels of student exposure to the C&CS program. In general, the data are presented by Small School (SS) or Smaller Learning Community (SLC) where possible. We do not compare C&CS students and schools to others, but rather present each SS/SLC's data for the most recent year or longitudinally over the course of C&CS funding as appropriate for each site.

The data used for these analyses were shared with MPR Associates by Public *Works*, Inc. The file included anonymous student-level records from 2006-07 through 2008-09 for 25 SS/SLCs.[11] The variables included students' demographic information, the schools they attended for the three previous years, scale scores and proficiency rates on the CST math and English language arts assessments, scale scores and pass status on the CAHSEE, and the number of school days enrolled and present at school.

A few caveats must be kept in mind while reviewing these data: (1) The C&CS intervention was implemented at different sites at different times, so some SLCs have longitudinal data and some do not. Where possible, we present three years of data at the SLC level (2006-07 to 2008-09); (2) Data are suppressed in all instances when the analysis included fewer than 10 students. This level of suppression is consistent with the California Department of Education's suppression rule for the STAR tests[12].

Even taking into account these limitations in the data, their interpretation in the context of the initiative is far from straightforward. The key conceptual question, "What would have happened at these schools and SLCs in the absence of C&CS?" cannot be definitively answered by analyses of these data. No standard benchmark exists for improvement for an entire school or SLC under any intervention, particularly in the short period of three or fewer years. Perhaps it is reasonable to assume that three years of the C&CS intervention would yield improvement in CST and CAHSEE results. Or it might be plausible that such a major programmatic shift, with the disruptive effects of new and altered administrative structures, would be followed by a short-term decrease in student performance on assessments. In addition, it is not possible to know how much these results were influenced by the initiative's decision to deliberately target schools with very low levels of student achievement in the first place. Ultimately, one may say that these results reveal general patterns of outcomes that are suggestive of the initiative's efficacy but are not conclusive.

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[11] See Appendix C for the full list of SS/SLCs included in these analyses.
[12] "Understanding California's Standard Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program". Ed-Data. March 30, 2010 <http://www.eddata.k12.ca.us/articles/Article.asp?title=Understanding%20the%20STAR>.

A recently published evaluation of New York City's "small schools of choice," which share some characteristics with C&CS SLCs, suggests that other indicators of student performance may be more appropriate measures of student growth in the small school setting. The authors of that report found that students in those schools were more likely to be on track for graduation (measured in terms of credit accumulation) by the end of their first year and were more likely to graduate than a control group. These results, however, cannot be compared directly to C&CS SLCs. New York City had a much larger number of small schools, 123 in total, compared to 23 SLCs for C&CS. Moreover, the students in New York were assigned by lottery, allowing for a more meaningful basis for comparison, whereas assignment to C&CS SLCs is primarily determined by geography. Because the New York schools opened as early as 2002, the researchers were able to track students from 9th through 12th grade, whereas a maximum of three years of data were available for C&CS SLCs in this study.[13] In spite of these differences, future study of small school performance using indicators beyond standardized state assessments seems appropriate.

Who attended C&CS Small Learning Communities?

Before delving into student achievement results, we were interested in the demographics and background of the students participating in the C&CS initiative sites.

Gender

The student populations of roughly half of the 25 SLCs we included in our analyses were gender-balanced. However, three SLCs were more than 55 percent female in 2009-10 and 10 were more than 55 percent male in 2008-09.[14]

The career areas of those SLCs that were more than 55 percent female were:
* American Studies
* Health and Human Services
* Business and Tourism

The career areas of those SLCs that were more than 55 percent male were:
* Multimedia/Graphic Arts/Design
* Arts, Business and Sports Science
* Business/Finance/Communication
* International/Global Studies/Multicultural Awareness
* Technology

Race/Ethnicity

Hispanic students comprised more than 85 percent of the student body at 22 of the 25 SLCs. The racial/ethnic composition of the remaining students at each SLC varied, however. Within some SLCs, Asian students were the second-most common group, while at others, African American students were.

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[13] Bloom, Howard S., Saskia Levy Thompson, and Rebecca Unterman, with Corinne Herlihy and Collin F. Payne. 2010. *Transforming the High School Experience: How New York City's New Small Schools Are Boosting Student Achievement and Graduation Rates*. MDRC. <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/560/full.pdf>.
[14] See Appendix C for the full set of tables.

Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program

Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is often used as an indicator of student poverty.[15] For the 2008-09 school year, students whose household income was equal to or less than 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines were eligible for free lunch at school. Those whose household income was equal to or less than 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines were eligible for reduced-price lunch at school.

The percentage of students eligible for NSLP varied across SLCs. S.A.G.E. at Belmont High School had the highest percent of eligible students, with 91 percent in 2008-09. The Teacher Preparation Academy at Jefferson High School had the lowest percent of eligible students, with 28 percent in 2008-09. In general, within a high school, the rate of NSLP eligibility was consistent across SLCs, plus or minus a few percentage points. Jefferson High School's SLCs had the greatest variation in NSLP eligibility among SLCs, with a 14 percentage point spread. It should be noted that eligibility for NSLP as a proxy for student poverty status is generally less reliable at the high school level than at elementary and middle levels. In general, high schools students and their parents are less likely to complete the paperwork for participation in the program due to a variety of factors, including fear of social stigma.[16]

English Learners

In 2008-09, a very high percent of students at all C&CS sites were or had been English Learners. At all but four of the 25 SLCs analyzed, less than 20 percent of the students in 2008-09 were English-only speakers at home. The School of Languages at Roybal had the smallest share of English-only students, 3 percent of their student body. The Media and Graphic Arts Academy at Franklin had the highest percent of English-only students, 23 percent. The Math, Science and Technology Magnet at Franklin High School had the smallest percent of English Learners, 5 percent, which is dramatically smaller than at all other SLCs included in these analyses. The Math, Science, and Technology Magnet also had the highest rate of "Reclassified Fluent English Proficient" students, with 68 percent. The Teacher Prep Academy at Jefferson High School had the highest percent of English Learners, with 61 percent.

How did C&CS students perform on the California Standards Test (CST)?

The State of California administers the CST in English Language Arts to students in grades 2 through 11, including a writing component in grades 4 and 7. Students also take the CST in Mathematics in grades 2 through 11. From grades 2 through 6, students take the same grade-level math test. For grades 7 through 11, students take the "end-of-course" Mathematics CST that corresponds to the particular math course in which they are enrolled (e.g., Algebra I, Geometry, etc.).

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[15] Harwell, Michael and Brandon LeBeau. "Student Eligibility for a Free Lunch as an SES Measure in Education Research." Educational Researcher, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 120-131. <http://er.aera.net>.
[16] Mirtcheva, Donka and Lisa Powell. "Participation in National School Lunch Program: Importance of School-level and Neighborhood Contextual Factors." Journal of School Health. Vol. 79, No. 10, pp. 485-494.

The California State Board of Education set five benchmark scale scores on each assessment to indicate students' levels of proficiency in each subject at each grade level. These levels are "advanced", "proficient", "basic", "below basic", and "far below basic."[17] The State considers those who score "proficient" or "advanced" to have passed the test, although districts may use other definitions of passing to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind.[18] In this analysis, we define "passing" as reaching the proficient or advanced levels.

Educational researchers generally consider the CST a limited measure of student learning and program effectiveness. The limitations stem from the fact that the assessment is not vertically scaled, meaning one cannot compare an individual student's performance from year-to-year to measure growth.[19] Rather, one may use a student's performance on the CST only as a snapshot of her knowledge on a single day in a given year. In the absence of a measure of student learning commonly administered district- and state-wide that allows for longitudinal measurement of student growth, the CST remains the best available instrument for measuring student achievement in California.

For our analyses, we examined student performance at each Small School (SS) or SLC on the ELA and Math CST over the three most recent years (or for as many years as the SS/SLC had been in operation if fewer than three years). The appendix tables present the percent of students scoring proficient and above and at the basic level each year. We did not compare C&CS student performance to students from other schools for a number of reasons. Of primary concern was the great variation in the implementation of reform initiatives among potential comparison sites and local districts over the three years of study. Constructing a fair comparison group for the C&CS sites in light of this variation was simply not possible at the time of these analyses.

In general, more students at C&CS sites performed better on the ELA CST assessments than on the Math CST, as measured by 9th and 10th grade scores in 2009. More than 50 percent of 9th graders scored basic or better on the ELA CST in 2009 at 21 of the 25 SS/SLCs included in the analyses (see Appendix C for detailed SLC results). More than 50 percent of 10th graders scored basic or better on the ELA CST in 2009 at 17 of the 25 SS/SLCs. However, more than 50 percent of 9th graders scores basic or better on the Math CST in 2009 at 2 of the 25 SS/SLC, and only 1 of the 25 SS/SLCs for 10th graders.

Among the SLCs analyzed, the three SS/SLCs with the highest 9th grade pass rates on the ELA CST in 2009 were the Math, Science, and Technology Magnet (67 percent), LASGS (41 percent), and STEM (39 percent). Among 10th graders, the highest rates of passage on the ELA CST in 2009 were Math, Science, and Technology Magnet (69 percent), American Studies Academy (38 percent), and Health and Human Services (33 percent). In Math, the highest rates of passage among 9th graders on the CST in 2009 were the SEA

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[17] "Understanding California's Standard Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program". Ed-Data. March 30, 2010 <http://www.eddata.k12.ca.us/articles/Article.asp?title=Understanding%20the%20STAR>.
[18] "STAR Help". California Department of Education. June 1, 2010
<http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2009/help_scoreexplanations.asp>.
[19] Patz, Richard J. "Vertical Scaling in Standards Based Educational Assessment and Accountability Systems". The Council of Chief State School Officers. June 1, 2010
<http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/VerticalScaling.pdf>.

(36 percent), Math, Science, and Technology Magnet (19 percent) and the Arroyo Seco Academy (19 percent). The majority of these higher performing SLCs are at Franklin High School.

How did C&CS Students Perform on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)?

Since 2001, California has administered the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The CAHSEE has two parts: English-language arts (ELA), addressing content standards through grade 10, and mathematics, addressing content standards in grades 6-7 and Algebra 1. In addition to using passage of both parts of the CAHSEE as a graduation requirement, the spring CAHSEE administration is used to calculate the Academic Performance Index for state accountability purposes and Adequate Yearly Progress for federal accountability purposes.[20]

For the purposes of assessing student performance at C&CS sites, we used the 10th-grade administration of the CAHSEE only. This is the first opportunity students have to take the CAHSEE, and the majority of students who ultimately pass the assessment do so at this point. While this approach does not reflect the final rate of passage for each cohort by the end of the 12th grade, it does give us a snapshot of student achievement on the CAHSEE at a common point in time across SLCs without the complications of tracking student mobility (both in and out of each SLC) and retesting.

Looking at the rates of passage of the CAHSEE assessment at the school level in 2009, more than half of all 10th graders at every school passed the English/Language Arts (ELA) assessment. More than half of all 10th graders at every school also passed the Mathematics assessment, with the exception of Jordan New Technology High School, where only 46 percent passed.   For both assessments, the highest percentages of students passing in 2009 were at the Student Empowerment Academy.

Students at Bernstein High School passed the English/Language Arts exit exam at the lowest rate. Statewide, 79 percent of 10th graders passed the ELA CAHSEE and 80 percent of 10th graders passed the Mathematics CAHSEE in 2008-09.[21]

When we examine CAHSEE pass rates at the SLC level, we see variation within each school site. The SLC with the highest rate of passage on the ELA CAHSEE and the Math CAHSEE in 2009 was the Math, Science, and Technology Magnet (90 and 92 percent, respectively) at Franklin. The lowest rates of passage on both assessments were among students at the Business, Technology, and Labor Relations SLC at Bernstein High School (43 percent ELA, 38 percent Math).[22]

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[20] "Overview of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)". California Department of Education. March 29, 2010 <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/overview.asp>.
[21] "CAHSEE 2009 Reports". California Department of Education. March 29, 2010 <http://cahsee.cde.ca.gov/reports.asp>.
[22] See appendix for CAHSEE results at the SLC level.

Table 7. Passage Rates on the ELA CAHSEE by C&CS school site: 2007-2009

Sites	% Passed			Number tested		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Small Autonomous High Schools						
Jordan New Tech (JNT)	53	51	57	108	65	51
LA Student of Global Studies (LASGS)		78	70		85	89
Student Empowerment Academy (SEA)		81	87		62	76
New High Schools with SLCs						
Bernstein High			53			285
Miguel Contreras Learning Center (MCLC)	64	76	73	298	236	209
Roybal Learning Center (RLC)			67			225
Pre-Existing High Schools implementing SLCs						
Belmont High		55	62		464	257
Franklin High		78	76		319	494
Jefferson High	40	55	56	423	240	348

note: Blank cells indicate data were not available or were suppressed due to small N (N<10 students).

Table 8. Passage Rates on the Math CAHSEE by C&CS school site: 2007-2009

Sites	% Passed			Number tested		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Small Autonomous High Schools						
Jordan New Tech (JNT)	51	45	46	108	67	50
LA Student of Global Studies (LASGS)		68	70		85	89
Student Empowerment Academy (SEA)		81	84		63	75
New High Schools with SLCs						
Bernstein High			52			281
Miguel Contreras Learning Center (MCLC)	55	67	76	303	235	207
Roybal Learning Center (RLC)			73			227
Pre-Existing High Schools implementing SLCs						
Belmont High		72	76		318	496
Franklin High		61	63		462	262
Jefferson High	34	56	58	453	239	347

note: Blank cells indicate data were not available or were suppressed due to small N (N<10 students).

How did schools with C&CS sites perform on the Academic Performance Index (API)?

The cornerstone of California's state-level school accountability system, the Academic Performance Index (API), is based primarily on results from the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program including the CST, CMA[23], and CAPA[24] assessments and the CAHSEE. The state weights CST results most heavily in each year's calculation of schools' API scores.[25] Academic Performance Index scores at the high school level are based on grades 9-11 CST results in ELA and Mathematics, CAPA results for grades 9-11, and CAHSEE pass rates in grades 10, 11, and 12.[26]

The California Department of Education set an API target of 800 out of 1,000 for all schools in the state. For each year a school has an API below 800, the state sets an improvement target of 5 percent of the difference between the current score or 5 points, whichever is greater.[27] None of the schools included in these analyses has reached that state target. The range in 2009 API at sites included in these analyses was 509-640.

The average growth for all sites from 2007 to 2008 and 2008 to 2009 was equal, 19 points each year. However, among the various school sites, API performance varied quite a bit. Of the seven schools for which multiple years of data were available, six sites experienced positive growth in API from 2007 to 2008, ranging from 3 to 59 points. The API for the Los Angeles School for Global Studies, however, fell 22 points from 2007-2008. From 2008 to 2009, however, two of the seven sites experienced very small negative growth. The range of growth among the schools with positive API growth from 2008 to 2009 was also wider than the previous year, from 13 to 78 points change. Roybal and Bernstein were not included in change calculations due lack of prior years' data.

The state compares API results in two ways. First, it creates a statewide API decile ranking for each school. API scores statewide are divided into 10 equal groups (deciles) at each school level (elementary, middle, and high). For each school level, 10 percent of the schools are placed in each decile group. The groups are numbered from 1 (lowest APIs) to 10 (highest APIs). A school's statewide rank corresponds to the decile into which it fell.[28] All seven of the school sites in the C&CS analyses are in the bottom decile in the state for API performance except SEA.

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[23] California Modified Assessment, a modified assessment taken by students with disabilities as an alternate to the CST.

[24] California Alternate Performance Assessment, an alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive impairment, who cannot participate in either the CST or CMA even with accommodations.

[25] "Understanding California's Standard Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program". Ed-Data. March 30, 2010 <http://www.eddata.k12.ca.us/articles/Article.asp?title=Understanding%20the%20STAR>.

[26] "Overview of California's 2009-10 Accountability Progress Reporting System". California Department of Education. June 1, 2010 <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/documents/overview10.pdf>

[27] Ibid.

[28] "Understanding the Academic Performance Index". Ed-Data. June 1, 2010 <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/articles/Article.asp?title=understanding%20the%20API>

Table 9. Annual Base and Growth API Scores, Statewide Rank, and Similar Schools Rank by school site: 2007-2009

	2007 base	2008 growth	Change in API	2008 base	2009 growth	Change in API	2009 Statewide API decile*	2009 Similar Schools API decile*
Small Autonomous High Schools								
JNT	501	510	9	510	509	-1	1	1
LASGS	613	591	-22	591	604	13	1	1
SEA	638	669	31	669	712	43	3	8
New High Schools with SLCs								
Bernstein					542			
MCLC	561	574	13	574	594	20	1	3
RLC					572			
Pre-Existing High Schools implementing SLCs								
Belmont	524	540	16	540	618	78	1	3
Franklin	601	604	3	604	640	36	1	6
Jefferson	457	516	59	516	515	-1	1	2
C&CS Average	**541**	**560**	**19**	**567**	**586**	**19**	**1.3**	**3.4**

note: Because of annual changes to calculation of API, Base and Growth API can only be calculated within a single reporting cycle, and only API growth can be consistently compared across years. Blank cells indicate data were not available or were suppressed due to small N (N<10 students). Average results are weighted by school enrollment. Because of changes in school enrollments, weighted average 2008 growth API does not equal weighted average 2009 base API. Highest performing decile = 10, lowest performing decile = 1.

The California Department of Education also compares schools to 100 other schools with similar demography, opportunities, and challenges[29] (known as the Similar Schools Index).[30] We see greater differentiation in the performance of UNITE-LA school sites using this Index. While JNT and LASGS remained in the bottom decile, the other five sites improved their standings moderately. Only SEA and Franklin High School reached the top half of the rankings, however.

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[29] Factors included in the SSI include socioeconomic indicators; percent of students who are English learners (ELs) or have been redesignated as fluent English proficient (RFEP); race/ethnicity mix; percent of students with disabilities; percent of students in Gifted and Talented Education; level of teacher credentialing; average class size; student mobility rates, percent of students in Migrant Education Program, percent enrollment by grade span.

[30] "Understanding the Academic Performance Index". Ed-Data. June 1, 2010 <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/articles/Article.asp?title=understanding%20the%20API>

Did schools with C&CS sites achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

When Congress established a federal accountability system in 2002 with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, California was already using the API to measure students' level of proficiency and year-to-year growth on standardized assessments of ELA and mathematics. California built the new federal performance measure required by NCLB, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), into the existing state accountability system. The state uses results from English language arts and mathematics sections of the CAHSEE administered to 10th graders, as well as the 10th grade CAPA results, at the high school level for AYP.[31] These tables indicate the percent of students at each school site who made "adequate yearly progress" or "AYP" over the last three years. As with the API measure, in general, students at school sites participating in the C&CS initiative demonstrated low performance in meeting AYP targets.

Table 10. Percentage of Students Meeting AYP in ELA by year and school site: 2007-2009

ELA	2007 AYP	2008 AYP	2009 AYP	Net change
Small Autonomous High Schools				
JNT	10	14	9	0
SEA	25	28	40	15
LASGS	34	25	32	-3
Bernstein			21	
New High Schools with SLCs				
RLC			23	
MCLC	24	25	29	5
Pre-Existing High Schools implementing SLCs				
Belmont			22	
Franklin	27	34	36	8
Jefferson	13	18	19	6
C&CS Average	**20**	**24**	**26**	**6**

note: blank cells indicate data were not available or were suppressed due to small N (N<10 students). Net change calculations were performed on unrounded AYP values.

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[31] "Understanding California's Standard Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program". Ed-Data. March 30, 2010 <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/articles/Article.asp?title=Understanding the STAR>; "Overview of California's 2009-10 Accountability Progress Reporting System". California Department of Education. June 1, 2010 <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ay/documents/overview10.pdf>.

Table 11. Percentage of Students Meeting AYP in Math by year and school site: 2007-2009

Math	2007 AYP	2008 AYP	2009 AYP	Net change
Small Autonomous High Schools				
JNT	17	21	7	-10
LASGS	41	27	36	-5
SEA	39	37	54	15
New High Schools with SLCs				
Bernstein			20	
MCLC	21	21	36	14
RLC			32	
Pre-Existing High Schools implementing SLCs				
Belmont			28	
Franklin	28	31	40	12
Jefferson	13	20	23	10
C&CS Average	**21**	**24**	**30**	**9**

note: blank cells indicate data were not available or were suppressed due to small N (N<10 students).

In 2009, the site with the lowest percent of students meeting AYP for both English Language Arts and math was JNT. Over the period 2007 to 2009, JNT and LASGS were the also the only sites to experience zero or negative average growth over the three-year period. Over the same time period, SEA experienced the greatest average growth in students meeting AYP in both English Language Arts and Math. SEA also had the highest percent of students meeting AYP in both disciplines in 2009.

How did C&CS sites using the New Technology model perform?

Three C&CS sites, Jordan New Technology High School (JNT), Los Angeles School for Global Studies (LASGS), and Student Empowerment Academy (SEA) are also participants in the New Tech Network. This model, originally based on the New Technology High School in Napa, CA, emphasizes three core elements: project-based learning as the core instructional approach, a culture of trust, respect and responsibility, and applied technology to support learning.[32] Because these three schools share this model and have participated in the C&CS initiative for multiple years, we conducted additional analyses to compare their performance on a number of measures: exposure to the C&CS intervention, 9th grade recruitment, longitudinal performance on the CST, and longitudinal performance on the CAHSEE.

Exposure to the C&CS Intervention

We examined the "exposure" of students at JNT, LASGS, and SEA to the UNITE-LA C&CS intervention during the 2008-09 academic year. Attendance data collected at the school sites are based on the number of days students were enrolled at a site and the

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[32] "New Tech Network". New Tech Network. June 1, 2010. <http://www.newtechnetwork.org/>.

number of days students were present. Using this measure, we see consistently high rates of enrollment at all three schools, well above 90 percent. This suggests that among students who were enrolled in these SLCs at the end of the academic year, most had been in attendance for the entire year (as opposed to joining the SLC part-way through the academic year). Whether this high rate of enrollment is due to some feature of these schools, such as enrollment policies banning or discouraging students from joining these SLCs after the start of the academic year, is not known.

Table 12: Average number of days students at JNT, LASGS, and SEA were enrolled and were present at school: 2009

	Average number days enrolled	Average % days enrolled	Average number days present	Average % days present	Number of students
JNT	171.6	95%	154.2	86%	234
LASGS	178.5	99%	170.9	95%	364
SEA	178.3	99%	172.7	96%	348

We also examined the average number of days students were present during the 2008-09 academic year. Here we saw more differentiation among the three sites. SEA demonstrates the highest rate of student attendance, at 96 percent, while SEA students average attendance rate was nearly as high at 95%. JNT students attended an average of 86 percent days in 2008-09, markedly lower than the other New Tech sites.

9th Grade Recruitment

In an attempt to explore the question of whether JNT, SEA and LASGS attracted higher-performing 8th graders than other SLCs receiving UNITE-LA support, we examined average student performance on the 8th grade English/Language Arts and Math CST assessments for the incoming class of 9th graders in the fall of 2008. We then compared these averages to the average 8th grade performance of all other 9th graders at Unite-LA-funded C&CS sites.

Table 13. Among 9th grade students who attended JNT, SEA, LASGS and all other C&CS sites in 2009, average scale scores on ELA CST: 2008

	8th graders' 2008 score	Average of all other C&CS schools	Difference	Number of students tested 2009
JNT	273	303	-30	29
LASGS	320	303	17	87
SEA	314	303	11	131
All other C&CS schools	**303**	**303**	**0**	**4059**

Note: Results based only on students enrolled in LAUSD in 2008 and C&CS in 2009.

Table 14. Among 9th grade students who attended JNT, SEA, LASGS and all other C&CS sites in 2009, average scale scores on Math CST: 2008

	8th graders' 2008 score	Average of all other C&CS schools	Difference	Number of students tested 2009
JNT	259	288	-29	27
LASGS	309	288	21	89
SEA	295	288	7	131
All other C&CS schools	**288**	**288**	**0**	**4034**

Note: Results based only on students enrolled in LAUSD in 2008 and C&CS in 2009

We found that, on average, students entering JNT in the 9th grade in the fall of 2008 had lower scores on the CST ELA and Math assessments as 8th graders than their counterparts at the other C&CS schools. Entering 9th graders at SEA in 2009 had lower average ELA CST results and higher average math CST results as 8th graders the previous year. LASGS 9th graders, however, had higher average scores on both CST assessments in 8th grade than students at the other sites. The average scores for these students were not significantly higher than the average scores for freshmen entering all other C&CS schools in the fall of 2009. Overall, these results suggest that the students entering these three SLCs as freshmen in the 2008-2009 year were not substantially different than those at other C&CS sites based on 8th grade CST performance.

Performance on California Standards Test

To get a sense of how students at these three SLCs performed on the CSTs, we wanted to focus on those students who had the most intense "dosage" of the C&CS intervention. So we examined the CST performance at each proficiency level for those 11th and 12th graders who had attended JNT, SEA, and LASGS for three consecutive years (2006-07 to 2008-09).

Table 15. Among 11th grade students who attended LASGS, and SEA for three years, percent of students scoring at each proficiency level on the ELA CST: 2009

	% Scoring FBB and BB	% Scoring B	% Scoring P and A	Total	Number tested
LASGS - 2009	46.3	31.9	21.7	100	69
SEA - 2009	39	30.5	30.5	100	59

Note: Jordan New Tech: No 11th grade Reading CST results available

Table 16. Among 11th grade students who attended LASGS and SEA for three years, percent of students scoring at each proficiency level on the Math CST: 2009

	% Scoring FBB and BB	% Scoring B	% Scoring P and A	Total	Number tested
LASGS - 2009	78	16.2	5.9	100	68
SEA - 2009	86	14	0	100	57

Note: Jordan New Tech: No 11th grade Math CST results available

We found that among 11th graders who had attended one of these sites since 9th grade, SEA had the higher percent of students scoring proficient or better on the ELA CST assessments in 2009. However, among these same students, a greater percentage scored proficient or better at on the Math CST at LASGS.

Among 12th graders who had attended one of these sites since at least 10th grade, SEA had the highest rate of students meeting or exceeding proficiency on the ELA CST in 2008, the most recent year these student participated in the CST. A slightly larger share of LASGS students reached proficiency on the math CST in 2008 than at SEA or JNT.

Table 17. Among 12th grade students who have attended JNT, LASGS, and SEA for three years, percent of students scoring at each proficiency level on the ELA CST: 2008

	% Scoring FBB and BB	% Scoring B	% Scoring P and A	Total	Number tested
JNT - 2008	64.2	26.4	9.4	100	53
LASGS - 2008	48.7	31.6	19.8	100	76
SEA - 2008	29.1	45.5	25.4	100	55

Table 18. Among 12th grade students who have attended JNT, LASGS, and SEA for three years, percent of students scoring at each proficiency level on the Math CST: 2008

	% Scoring FBB and BB	% Scoring B	% Scoring P and A	Total	Number tested
JNT - 2008	97.8	2.2	0	100	46
LASGS - 2008	80.3	14.5	5.3	100	76
SEA - 2008	87.3	10.9	1.8	100	55

JNT students were the weakest performers on the CST in 2008. About 10 percent of 12th graders who had attended since at least the 10th grade scored proficient or better on the ELA CST in 2008. None of the 12th graders who had attended since at least 10th grade scored proficient on the Math CST at JNT in 2008.

It should also be noted that among 11th graders who attended one of these sites for three years, the percent of students who scored far below basic and below basic on the CSTs increased at SEA and LASGS sites from 2007 to 2009. Among 12th graders, the percentage of students scoring at far below basic and below basic also increased for all three sites for the Math CST from 2007 to 2009. On the ELA CST, a slightly smaller share of students scored far below and below basic at JNT from 2007 to 2009. The same share scored far below and below basic at SEA over this period. The share of these lowest performers on the ELA CST grew at LASGS from 2007 to 2009.

Performance on CAHSEE

We also examined the rates of passage on the CAHSEE among student who had 3 consecutive years of exposure to the C&CS initiative at JNT, SEA and LASGS. We used rates of passage on the 10th grade administration of CAHSEE, the first attempt students may make, as the benchmark for these analyses. Among 11th graders who had attended SEA and LASGS for three years, the rates of ELA CAHSEE passage at the two sites were nearly identical in 2008. A larger percent of SEA 10th graders passed the Math CAHSEE in 2008 than at LASGS.

Table 19. Among 11th grade students who have attended LASGS and SEA for three years, percent of students passing the ELA and Math CAHSEE in 10th grade: 2008

	% Passed ELA	% Passed Math	Number tested ELA	Number tested Math
LASGS	79.7	69.6	69	69
SEA	80.7	82.8	57	58

Note: Jordan New Tech has no CAHSEE results for 11th grade students in 2008.

Twelfth grade SEA and LASGS students demonstrated relatively stronger ELA CAHSEE pass rates, as well. Among 12th graders who had attended one of these three SLCs for three years, 78 percent of those at both SEA and LASGS passed the ELA CAHSEE as a 10th grader. As with 11th graders, a greater share of 12th graders at SEA passed the Math CAHSEE as 10th graders than at the other sites. JNT was, again, the weakest performer.

Table 20. C&CS results: Among 12th grade students who have attended JNT, SEA, and LASGS for three years, percent of students passing the CAHSEE in 10th grade: 2007

	% Passed ELA	% Passed Math	Number tested ELA	Number tested Math
JNT	58.6	59.6	58	57
LASGS	78.1	67.1	73	73
SEA	78.4	76.5	51	51

What was the effect of opening Miguel Contreras and Roybal Learning Centers on student school selection?

We explored the attendance patterns of students at Belmont High School, Miguel Contreras Learning Center, and Roybal Learning Center from 2007 to 2009. Until recently, Belmont High School suffered from perennial over-crowding. In the fall of 2006, Miguel Contreras opened its doors in part to relieve that crowding. In the fall of 2008, Roybal opened and further re-distributed students who once fell into Belmont's attendance catchment.

Table 21. Enrollment at Belmont, MCLC, and Roybal by year: 2007-2009

	2007 enrollment	2008 enrollment	2009 enrollment
Belmont	1,166	1,826	1,118
Roybal	0	0	1,483
MCLC	610	1,090	1,633

By the 2008-09 year, one can see that the enrollment at all three sites had largely stabilized, with each enrolling roughly 1,100-1,600 students. Miguel Contreras experienced steady growth over the three years, and Roybal took on nearly 1,500 students in its first year of operation.

Beyond just the raw enrollment numbers, we explored where students who had been enrolled at Belmont in 2007-08 chose to attend once Roybal opened in the fall of 2008. We observed that slightly more than half of students left Belmont and enrolled at Roybal. This rate of transfer was consistent across the grade levels, with slightly more than half of 9th, 10th, and 11th graders in 2007-08 moving to Roybal in 2008-09. Whether these rates of transfer were naturally occurring or the result of school or district attendance policy is unknown at the time of this analysis.

Finally, we examined average rates of proficiency on CST assessments among student attending Belmont, Miguel Contreras and Roybal.

Table 22. Percent of students scoring basic or better on the ELA CST: 2007-2009

	% basic or higher 2007	Number of students tested 2007	% basic or higher 2008	Number of students tested 2008	% basic or higher 2009	Number of students tested 2009
Belmont	45%	454	47%	726	60%	850
Roybal		0		0	55%	1,102
MCLC	34%	557	44%	1,043	42%	1,343

note: Blank cells indicate data were not available or were suppressed due to small N size (N<10 students).

Table 23. Percent of students scoring basic or better on the Math CST: 2007-2009

	% basic or higher 2007	Number of students tested 2007	% basic or higher 2008	Number of students tested 2008	% basic or higher 2009	Number of students tested 2009
Belmont	22%	433	16%	665	25%	764
Roybal		0		0	19%	1,082
MCLC	11%	541	12%	1,036	9%	1,334

note: Blank cells indicate data were not available or were suppressed due to small N size (N<10 students).

While very few students demonstrated proficiency on either the ELA or Math assessments at any of the three schools, student performance at Miguel Contreras stands out due to its extremely low passage rates. Students at Belmont and Roybal had marginally higher rates of proficiency on these assessments. When we examine student performance at the "basic or higher" category, we see that Belmont experienced growth in the percent of students scoring at this level in reading from 2007 to 2009, and student score growth stagnated for Miguel Contreras. On the math assessment, however, the percent of students scoring basic or better dropped for both Belmont and Miguel Contreras from 2007 to 2009. Because it opened in the fall of 2008, we only have one year of data for Roybal. Overall, these analyses reveal that Belmont students performed at a higher level on the CSTs than students at Miguel Contreras over the three most recent years, and better than those at Roybal in the most recent year.

Outcome Summary

Student Demographics
- Gender: Approximately half of C&CS sites (small schools and SLCs) showed gender imbalances in 2009.
- Race/Ethnicity: The vast majority of students at C&CS sites were Hispanic/Latino. Apart from a magnet at one site and two SLCs at another site, the racial/ethnic balance approximated school-wide averages.
- Socioeconomics: Data on NSLP eligibility showed limited variation within schools with multiple SLCs other than one site (Jefferson) where the qualitative evaluation suggests NSLP eligibility was probably under-represented.
- English Learners: There was significant variation within and across sites in terms of the proportion of English Learners. Put another way, EL students were concentrated in certain SLCs at some sites AND the proportion of EL students varied a great deal from school-to-school.

Student Achievement
- API: On average, C&CS sites increased 38 points on the API between 2007 and 2009. Three schools did significantly better than average – Belmont (94 points), SEA (74 points) and Jefferson (58 points). SEA was the only school with an API score above 700 in 2009, as well as the only site with a decile rank greater than 1 (all other sites scored in the lowest 10% of high schools in California). However, of

the seven schools with three years of API data, five were ranked higher on the API similar schools ranking compared to their overall comparison to State high schools.

- AYP: AYP was highest in ELA at SEA, Franklin, and LASGS. Improvement in the proportion of students achieving proficiency in ELA was greatest at SEA (15% gain), followed by Franklin (8%), Jefferson (6%), and MCLC (5%). In Mathematics, rates of proficiency were greatest at SEA, Franklin, LASGS, and MCLC. Math improvements were concentrated at SEA (15%), MCLC (14%), and Franklin (12%).
- CST – ELA vs. Math: In general, more students at C&CS sites performed better on the ELA CST assessments than on the Math CST, as measured by 9th and 10th grade scores in 2009. More than 50 percent of 9th graders scored basic or better on the ELA CST in 2009 at 21 of the 25 SS/SLCs included in the analyses (see Appendix C for detailed SLC results). More than 50 percent of 10th graders scored basic or better on the ELA CST in 2009 at 17 of the 25 SS/SLCs. By contrast, more than 50 percent of 9th graders scores basic or better on the Math CST in 2009 at only 2 of the 25 SS/SLC, and only 1 of the 25 SS/SLCs for 10th graders.
- CST data over time: Most SS/SLCs with multiple years of data demonstrated growth in CST passage rates from 2007 to 2009 among 9th graders with three years of data. Less frequently, we saw growth in the rates of passage among 10th graders from 2007 to 2009 with three years of data.
- CAHSEE pass rates: Students at SEA, Franklin, and LASGS passed the ELA CAHSEE at the highest rates. Gains in the last 2-3 years were greatest at Jefferson (16%), MCLC (9%), and Belmont (7%). In Math, CAHSEE pass rates were highest at SEA, MCLC, Belmont, and LASGS. Gains in Math CAHSEE pass rates were greatest at Jefferson (24%) and MCLC (21%).
- New Schools in 2008-09: Once Roybal opened to relieve crowding at Belmont, roughly half of 9th, 10th, and 11th graders chose to leave Belmont for Roybal. Students at Belmont have since performed at a higher level on the CSTs compared to students at Miguel Contreras or Roybal.

New Technology Schools
- Mobility: There were low rates of student mobility at the three New Technology schools - students who enroll, stay enrolled. Among JNT, SEA, and LASGS, more than 90% of students attended more than 75% of the academic year at that SLC.
- Pupil Attendance: Apart from JNT, which posted relatively low rates of pupil attendance (86%), both LASGS and SEA achieved significantly higher average attendance rates (95%-96%) compared to other LAUSD high schools.
- Student Recruitment: LASGS and SEA were more likely to receive slightly "higher performing" students as incoming 9th graders compared to other C&CS sites. However, the difference in ELA and Math CST scale scores among incoming 9th graders was not statistically different from the other C&CS sites. As such, the New Technology sites cannot be accused of "creaming" in terms of student recruitment based on the 2008-09 CST data.
- Achievement Data: Among students with the longest exposure to the C&CS intervention, SEA students consistently scored best on ELA CST, followed by LASGS, and then JNT. Similarly, LASGS consistently scored best on Math CST, followed by SEA, and then JNT. On CAHSEE (both ELA and Math), SEA students were most likely to pass as 10th graders, followed by LASGS and then JNT. JNT tended to show the lowest rate of progress on all standardized test measures.

IV. Summary & Conclusions

Since 1996, UNITE-LA, an intermediary organization in the Education & Workforce Development Division of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, has been committed to improving the education and workforce development of youth in the Los Angeles area. Through their College and Career Success (C&CS) Network of Schools, UNITE-LA has been working with a subset of schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to foster the development of Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs) and small, autonomous schools (SS) that provide a more academically rigorous, relevant and personalized education to LAUSD's disadvantaged high school students. This report focuses on the results of this initiative through a collaborative evaluation between Public *Works,* Inc. and MPR Associates.

The C&CS schools in 2008-09 included three autonomous small schools working with the New Technology Foundation to implement a model of project-based learning and instructional use of technology in small, 9-12 high school settings. These three schools include: Los Angeles School of Global Studies, Jordan New Tech, and Student Empowerment Academy. Each of these schools opened in Fall 2006 with 9th and/or 10th graders and has since expanded to grades 9-12. The C&CS schools also include three new comprehensive high schools that opened with the expectation that all students would be enrolled in SLCs (Contreras in Fall 2006 and Bernstein and Roybal in Fall 2008). In addition, UNITE-LA is working with three pre-existing comprehensive high schools, which have reorganized into SLCs (Belmont, Franklin, and Jefferson).

This "portfolio" of schools was deliberately selected by UNITE-LA owing to student need. Put another way, UNITE-LA purposefully chose to work with new and existing schools in areas of Los Angeles with some of the lowest levels of student achievement in LAUSD. Against this backdrop, UNITE-LA's efforts to link schools with an external entity that assists in redesign and restructuring to increase academic rigor, address the need for curricular relevance, and enhance adult: student relationships through personalization should be seen as pioneering. In the paragraphs below, the evaluation has tried to capture the main areas of strength and weakness evident in data from the UNITE-LA C&CS schools.

<u>**Clear Evidence of Change**</u>: Many schools in the UNITE-LA C&CS network have made considerable progress in the areas of distributed leadership, identity, and exercise of autonomy. There is a palpable sense that these schools are committed to "breaking the mold" of the comprehensive high school in favor of a more distinct, personalized model of education. Modernized facilities and reorganization of physical space have enhanced the SLC/SS as the focus of the educational transformation. School decision-making is moving toward a more decentralized and distributive approach, often complemented by the hiring of administrators who understand and embrace the principles of SS/SLC, as well as the cultivation of strong teacher leaders at the head of change efforts. Although progress is uneven, SS/SLC have begun to develop a clear sense of identity that differentiates the instructional program through one or more of the following: thematic focus, pedagogical emphasis, core values, established mission or goal, and/or co-curricular offerings. As such, SS/SLC are maturing into powerful vehicles for increased academic success at many of the UNITE-LA C&CS schools.

The Success of the New Technology Model: The New Technology model has provided an effective framework for development of autonomous small schools with a firm instructional vision and coherent process for changing classroom instructional practices. The focus on Project-based Learning (PBL) allows teachers design rigorous projects aligned to state and district standards and customize them to their location and the interests of students. PBL engages students in rigorous academics, while providing students with opportunities to work in collaborative teams on the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills to solve problems. These pedagogical experiences serve to empower both teachers and students to exercise choices and innovate in a manner that raises academic expectations and also personalizes the educational experience. Moreover, the built-in autonomy of these schools (which UNITE-LA advocated for successfully) has helped these schools take advantage of the instructional flexibility of the New Tech model and develop innovative ways to design professional development, connect with parents, and provide academic intervention services to students.

Focusing on Academic Achievement: Despite some positive growth trends and individual SS/SLC improvements, the overall level of academic attainment at the C&CS schools remains very low. The sites with both better than average levels of attainment and growth were concentrated among LASGS and SEA, the two small autonomous high schools that have shown the greatest fidelity to the promises of autonomy and the New Technology model. MCLC, a new high school that began with a strong vision for semi-autonomous SLCs, also showed relatively high levels of both attainment and growth on key measures of student achievement and school performance. Other sites tended to perform well in terms of attainment (e.g., Franklin) or growth (Jefferson), but not both. In addition, many of the C&CS sites are simply to new (e.g., Bernstein, Roybal) to or have been wholly reconfigured (Belmont) to establish clear trends in terms of improving student achievement. Overall, the largest conclusion that can be reached is that all C&CS schools need to do more to translate school improvement efforts into objective measures of increased student achievement, working toward exceeding LAUSD and meeting or exceeding State averages on these key measures.

Professional Development: At the new and conversion high schools, the legacy of the comprehensive high school has not created an adequate "sense of urgency" in terms of redesigning professional development for a new educational paradigm. Many of these schools have essentially continue to utilize a "shotgun" approach to professional development and teacher collaboration that has not yielded a specific agenda for changing classroom teaching and learning. While set-aside time for collaboration, data analysis, and the establishment of structures such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are commendable, more focus on specific, research-based instructional strategies is needed. Interdisciplinary SLC teams need to reach consensus on how professional development will enhance their identity and translate into pedagogy that defines and enhances the kind of distinctive thematic instruction at the heart of SLC restructuring. Moreover, more clarity is needed to clearly demarcate the professional development focus of SLCs from the focus of collaboration when teachers meet in departmental forums.

Parent Involvement: New and conversion high schools were less likely to emphasize the need for qualitatively changing the connections between home and school. This contrasted markedly with the efforts underway at the autonomous small schools to mount a concerted

school-wide campaign to link parents to the school's foci and services available to students and parents. In particular, schools should focus on informing and assisting parents so that they can support and reinforce learning in home settings. In this way, students will be more likely to receive a consistent message about the importance of persistence, follow through, and accountability for their own learning. Parents also need more help and information in order to take advantage of tutoring and intervention options and assist their children in moving toward postsecondary education and/or training after high school.

<u>Focusing UNITE-LA's Resources</u>: The role and accountabilities of the Process Coaches that UNITE-LA provides to C&CS schools needs additional definition and clarity. At present, the responsibilities of Process Coaches vary considerably from school-to-school. Some Process Coaches have been instrumental in helping these schools with alignment of school master schedules to SLC structures. Others have helped organize and deliver professional development, or focused on connecting to external resources and partners. Given the uneven development of SS/SLCs and the common need for more attention to improving student academic achievement, it is appropriate to draft a clear set of guidelines for the provision of external support that centers on the need for measurable academic improvements with concrete milestones and indicators of progress to document the contribution of Process Coaches.

<u>Next Steps to Leverage Systemic Change</u>: The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and UNITE-LA recently entered into the L.A. Compact, a collaborative group of K-16 education, business, and civic stakeholders focused on transforming education in Los Angeles. The L.A. Compact has articulated a clear set of goals and measurements aimed at improving graduation rates, college access, and pathways to sustainable jobs and careers for the youth of Los Angeles. UNITE-LA's contribution to the Compact centers on building overall program and advocacy capacity in the areas of: a) increasing partnerships to expand work and career-based learning and employment; b) developing a system of qualitative measures of school accountability; c) increasing student awareness and use of financial aid for college; d) articulating an agenda for 21st century skills, knowledge, and expertise, along with multiple measures and authentic assessments to better assess these skills and applied academic knowledge; and f) advocating for greater funding and resources for high need schools and students.