Smaller Learning Communities
2010-11 Final Evaluation Report
Los Angeles Unified School District

Cohort 8, Year 3
(Grant # V215L052108)

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Research conducted by:

Michael Butler
Mario Garcia
Hoky Lin
Arleene Rodriguez
Albert Chen
Rosario Menjivar
Mikala Rahn, Ph.D.

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

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Part I—Introduction and Literature Review

This report provides the evaluation results from 2010-11 for three comprehensive high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) that received U.S. Department of Education Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) implementation grants.[1] LAUSD hired Public Works, a non-profit headquartered in Pasadena, California, to conduct a third-party evaluation of the Year 3 SLC efforts at the following Cohort 8 schools:

- Fairfax High School
- Reseda High School
- South Gate High School

See **Appendix A** for a map of the Cohort 8 schools in LAUSD.

About the US Department of Education Grants

Since 2000, the U.S. Department of Education's SLC grant program has provided planning and implementation grants to high schools with 1,000 or more students in order to plan, implement, or expand SLCs. The grants support a range of strategies including creating schools within schools with varying degrees of autonomy,[2] restructuring the school day to allow for cohort scheduling and more consistent student-adult interactions, and formal adult mentoring and advisory programs.[3] Implementation of these structural changes share the goals of a more personalized high school experience for students in smaller schools within schools and to improve student achievement and performance.

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

[1] The U.S. Department of Education has awarded funds on an annual basis. Cohort 8 schools received five-year grants with implementation funding beginning in 2008-09.
[2] School-within-a-school refers to an autonomous school that, while it may be in its own building or in a building with another school, is organizationally, fiscally, and instructionally independent.
[3] Advisory systems place students under the guidance and care of a teacher or administrator for their entire school experience on a regular (daily or weekly) basis.

Background to the SLC Approach

High School Student Performance

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

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

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

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

The 21st Century Take on High School Reform

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

The actions of the nation's governors followed many years of commission reports, conferences, and research identifying the anonymity, apathy and alienation so prevalent among our nation's youth combined with the overriding consensus that it was driven in large part by the very structure of high school education embodied in large, comprehensive high schools. Launched in 2000, the Gates Foundation five-year high school initiative provided over a billion dollars in funding on a range of fronts—at the individual school

level to break up large schools or start new schools, for researchers and policymakers to learn more about effective practices, and most recently, to build capacity at the district level to sustain widespread change.

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

Lessons Learned About the Impact of School Size

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

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

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

Common Approaches to Implementing SLCs

Under the US Department of Education's SLC grant program, implementation grants are provided to high schools with 1,000 or more students in order to implement and expand SLCs. The grants support a range of structures (i.e., reorganization of student placement and staff assignments) and strategies (i.e., techniques and measures to provide interdisciplinary, personalized instruction and guidance to students) including creating

schools-within-schools, career academies, restructuring the school day, formal adult mentoring and advisory programs. Listed below are a few common SLC approaches:

- *Small Schools and Schools-within-Schools:* Small school or school-within-a-school refer to an autonomous school that, while it may be in its own building or in a building with another school, is organizationally, fiscally, and instructionally independent and may focus on a specific theme (Small Schools Project, 2001a).
- *Academies:* Academy schools organize the curricula and education program for a subset of 10^{th} –12^{th} grade students (usually ranging from 200-400 students) around one or more themes, typically career or occupationally related. Students are grouped with a team of teachers who provide interdisciplinary and personalized curriculum. In addition, career academies partner with postsecondary institutions and other community groups to provide internships, service learning and other extracurricular opportunities.
- *House:* A house contains classrooms for teachers of core subjects who function as a team to instruct a small group of students (ranging from 100-500) (Sammon, 2000). In some models, students can take additional subjects elsewhere in the school, though not always with the same students in their house. Some schools have used the house model to transition freshman into the larger high school. Often, houses can contain a sequence of career-related and/or academic courses that lead toward graduation (Cotton, 2001).
- *Other "Small" Strategies:* Comprehensive high schools are devising additional strategies aimed at forming significant attachments among adults and their peers. Some schools provide advanced courses for high-achieving students, newcomer schools for immigrant students new to a school system, and modifications to the high school schedule.

Complementary Reforms to Support Smaller Learning Communities

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

College Prep Curriculum for All

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

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

However, emerging research indicates that may not necessarily be the case and that the combination of rigorous coursework with relevance is supportive of students graduating.

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

Professional Learning Communities and Distributed Leadership

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

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

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

"Family" of High School Reforms

There are three major reform models that constitute what MDRC refers to as the family of high school reform—Career Academies, the oldest, followed by *Talent Development* and *First Things First.* Career Academies, initially developed in 1969, exist in approximately 2,500 schools throughout the country. According to the Career Academies Support Network, the attributes of career academies include: 1) students enrolled in classes together for at least two years, which are taught by a interdisciplinary teaching team; 2) a curriculum that prepares students for college through a career theme, which allows students to learn how their academic courses are related to the workplace; and 3) the development of strong relationships between employers, the community, and postsecondary institutions that allows them to provide resources to boost student achievement. *Talent Development,* a

high school model from Johns Hopkins implemented first in Philadelphia and in other districts across the nation focused on providing 9th graders with accelerated "catch-up" courses in reading and math. *Talent Development* high schools offer a double dose of math and English for an entire year (90 minutes each). "During the first semester, they take classes designed to give them the academic and study skills necessary to handle college-prep courses later on; during the second semester, teachers follow the district's regular curricula for English and algebra, supplemented with special materials developed by Johns Hopkins University (Toch, 2007, p. 436)." Students taking this sequence outperformed their peers in comparison schools and even students who started with higher-than-average achievement benefited. *First Things First* programs were created in the mid 1990s. Quint (2005) stated that this model has three components: 1) SLCs in which students are grouped together for 4 years, and take core classes with a finite number of teachers; 2) a "family advocate system" that pairs each student with a faculty member that meets with them weekly and their family at least twice a year to discuss their progress; and 3) staff must be provided professional develop that to help improve their understanding of instruction, and how it relates to engaging students in rigorous work that is aligned with state standards. While each of the reforms aim to increase student success, the process is different in each of the models. The most critical difference between the models is concerning the concentration of school's efforts address the middle school to high transition.

Ninth Grade Transition

Ninth grade is the linchpin grade level to ensuring high school success. It is the "last place along the K-12 pipeline where a large number of students are retained before dropping out of school completely (West, 2009, pg. 9)." The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University examined the first time 9th grade retention. The center created a "first time ninth grade estimate (calculated by dividing the number of first-time 9th graders by the total number of students enrolled in 9th grade)." The study collected self-reported data from the NCES' National Education Surveys Program, and achievement data from six states in various regions of the country over nine different years of data collection spanning 1991 to 2007. It should be noted that the only factor that was shown to decrease 9th grade retention was urban school setting. Data showed the more rural the school setting (smaller schools), the greater number of first time 9th grader students in attendance. More school districts have focused on 9th graders because students who fail to earn sufficient credits to matriculate to 10th grade are much more likely to dropout.

Implementation Issues for Smaller Learning Communities

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

Conversions vs. Start-ups

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

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

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

Mixed impact of SLCs on Student Achievement

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

The evaluations of Gates-funded new and converted high schools indicated that the introduction of curricular relevance under SLCs could not be correlated with the quality of student learning. While there were some improvements in reading and language arts especially in high schools that had implemented the Foundation's Attributes of High-

Performing Schools to a higher degree,[4] the study showed lower levels of rigor in Mathematics assignments at new and redesigned high schools (AIR/SRI, 2005b). In a more recent evaluation report (AIR/SRI, 2007), which examined a sample of 12 large high schools in the first or second year of a reconfiguration into 38 SLCs, the authors concluded that:

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

Although the AIR/SRI evaluation included caveats on the time lag between the introduction of new curricula and quantitative results, and also urged more research on the measurement of classroom instructional practices and the correlation between student work quality and achievement testing, the results of this evaluation clearly presented a mixed picture of the impact of SLCs on student achievement.

Previous research on the impact of SLCs found positive results in the areas of reduced dropout rates, improved attendance, and increased likelihood of on-time graduation (Kemple, 2000). Similarly, a recent MDRC (2010) report found that students in small autonomous high schools in New York City had an increased likelihood of credit accumulation and ultimately high school graduation when compared to a comparable group of students attending traditional comprehensive high schools. Nonetheless, the lack of demonstrable, unequivocal results at schools implementing SLCs in improving test scores within a short period of time led many to conclude that the "silver bullet" proposed by SLC restructuring had missed the mark (Ravitch, 2008).

De Jure versus De Facto SLC Implementation

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

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

Autonomy

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

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

Size

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

Tracking

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

it is to implement programs that consciously allow students to select programs based on their interests rather than being "selected or directed" based on their past achievement, where they are assumed to be going after high school, or their perceptions of the level of difficulty of the courses in a given SLC (2007).

Managing the Master Schedule

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

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

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

Time for Collaboration

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

Physical Space

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

Reform Context in LAUSD

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

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

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

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

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

For this report these eight attributes were reconfigured to address the four key goals from the Cohort 8 USDE SLC grant application:

1. Structural Implementation
2. Student Achievement
3. Personalization
4. Professional Development

The implementation grants received by the three comprehensive high schools included in this evaluation can be used to support a variety of SLC structures and strategies. Structures include academies, houses (grouping students in semi-autonomous structures—for instance, freshmen houses), schools-within-schools (with a higher degree of autonomy than a house structure) and magnet programs. Strategies supported by the grant include freshmen transition programs, multi-year groupings, alternative scheduling, adult advocate systems (such as formal mentoring programs) and teacher advisory systems (in which small groups of students are paired with a teacher during an advisory period to support individualized attention and personalization of the counseling function). The specific strategies and structures under development in each of the high schools included in this evaluation are described in more detail in Goal 1 in Section III of this report.

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

Figure 1: Small Learning Communities Graphic Illustration

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

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

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

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

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

In October of 2004, the Los Angeles Board of Education moved further in the direction of supporting the Smaller Learning Communities through the approval of Bulletin 1600. This policy memorandum called for the establishment and development of SLCs across all high schools within the district. Significantly, Bulletin 1600 reiterated support for the eight essential LAUSD attributes and established a formal procedure for complying with the attributes. As outlined in Bulletin 1600, all new and existing secondary schools must submit a proposal to the central SLC committee after which is submitted to the superintendent. This proposal must first contain evidence that school stakeholders have developed a vision for SLCs that meets local needs. Each SLC at a school must submit a request for proposal (RFP) that outlines how the SLC will embody the eight attributes. Second, schools must show evidence that their SLC design has considered the impact of how a multitude of SLCs will co-exist within a larger high school structure through a school-wide impact report. In essence, the Bulletin 1600 approval process is designed to force SLC teams and schools to really think through the changes they intend to implement as part of SLCs. At the time of this report writing, all of the 10-grantee sites included in the evaluation have been approved under this process.

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

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

Public Works Evaluation and Report Organization

As required by the U.S. Department of Education, districts receiving SLC Implementation grants are required to hire a third-party evaluator. In 2003, LAUSD hired Public Works, a 501c(3) corporation headquartered in Pasadena with a wide range of experience conducting evaluations in the area of public education and school reform. Public Works began evaluating the Cohort 8 schools in 2008-09.

Following this introduction, Part II of this report presents the methodology used to complete the evaluation. Part III contains analysis of SLC implementation in relation to the grant application SLC goals, integrating data from site visits, surveys, school/district documentation, student achievement outcomes, and school performance data. Part IV includes conclusions and recommendations.

PART II—EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation conducted by Public Works encompassed two primary analytic approaches: quantitative (improvement in student and school outcome indicators) and qualitative (progress in implementing SLCs in relation to grant goals). In addition, the evaluation examined the kinds of technical assistance and/or support needed to effectively implement SLCs at large, urban high schools. In this way, the evaluation design allowed the district and individual schools to use the data collected for the evaluation to improve program implementation throughout the grant period.

In order to frame the current evaluation, Public Works worked with LAUSD to develop a set of categories to be used in data collection and to organize the analysis. The categories employed by the evaluation used both the eight LAUSD SLC attributes, as well as the goals contained in LAUSD's application for Cohort 8 SLC funding.

Qualitative Evaluation Approach

Three primary qualitative data collection methodologies were used for the analysis contained in the report:

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

Literature Review

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

Surveys

Public Works developed four surveys of key stakeholders for this evaluation, one for school staff and three for students. Each school has been provided with the results of the surveys individually and for the group of three schools funded by the grant on an annual basis. The staff and student survey results summarized across the three Cohort 8 high schools are contained in **Appendix C**.

Staff Survey

The staff survey asks school staff about their knowledge and involvement in the SLC initiative at their school. The survey provides information about the percentage of school staff self-reporting that they are currently involved in planning or assigned to an SLC and opinions about various aspects of SLC implementation at their school. Staff surveys were

administered to staff (teachers, counselors, and administrators)[5] at the three high schools between March and June 2011.

Table 1: Staff Survey Response Rates, Spring 2011

Cohort 8 Schools	# of Certificated Staff*	# of Completed Surveys	Response Rate
Fairfax	110	99	90%
Reseda	103	93	90%
South Gate	156	143	92%
Total/Average	**369/123**	**335/112**	**91%**

***Source: School reported**

In order to ensure a high response rate, the surveys were administered in several ways including at faculty meetings where all staff was present, during department meetings and through individual follow up completed by the schools' designated SLC coordinator, or Assistant Principal with oversight of SLCs. Table 1 (above) displays the response rate for each school based on the number of completed surveys. Overall, Public Works achieved an average response rate of 91%. This was an increase of 16% over Year 2, which yielded a 75% response rate, and a 9% increase over Year 1, which yielded an 82% response rate.

Table 2: % Staff Self-Reporting Assignment to SLC (N=335), Spring 2011

Cohort 8 Schools	Are you in an SLC?	
	Yes	No
Fairfax	94%	6%
Reseda	96%	4%
South Gate	99%	1%
Average	**96%**	**4%**

Source: Public Works

Based on self-reported survey results, a vast majority (96%) of staff selected or was assigned to a SLC in Cohort 8, as seen in Table 2. This was an increase over both Year 1 (93%) and Year 2 (95%) levels.

The analysis of the staff survey included overall frequencies and area means as well as results compiled for each school. In addition, Public Works examined cross-tabulations of results by the number of years of teaching and by self-reported subject/content area. Chi-square tests were performed on the cross-tabulations in order to determine statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Student Surveys

In order to provide an assessment of student opinions and experiences in high school, 10th and 12th grade students were surveyed with regard to their expectations for learning,

[5] Respondents were primarily classroom teachers (85%), followed by counselors (6%), coordinators (4%), administrators (3%) and content/instructional coaches (1%).

classroom instruction, counseling and guidance, and personalization. Students were also asked to identify whether or not they participated in a SLC, as well as participation in extracurricular activities. The survey concludes with questions tied to student demographic characteristics.

Public Works administered the surveys to all 10th and 12th graders at the three Cohort 8 schools in the period March-June 2011. Overall, Public Works achieved an average 79% response rate for sophomores and a median response rate of 78% for seniors (see Table 3 below). Compared to Year 2, 10th grade response rates decreased slightly (4% decrease), while 12th grade response rates increased slightly (7% increase). Compared to Year 1, 10th grade response rates decreased 1%, while 12th grade response rates increased 5%.

Table 3: Student Survey Response Rates, Spring 2011

Cohort 8 Schools	10th Grade Enrollment*	Completed Surveys	Response Rate	12th Grade Enrollment*	Completed Surveys	Response Rate
Fairfax	500	378	76%	479	395	82%
Reseda	425	348	82%	466	373	80%
South Gate	763	593	78%	687	495	72%
Total/Average	**1688/563**	**1319/440**	**79%**	**1632/544**	**1263/421**	**78%**

***Source: School Reported Enrollment**

The analysis of the student surveys included overall frequencies and area means as well as results compiled for each school. In addition, Public Works examined cross-tabulations of results by gender, ethnicity, frequency of counselor interaction, and highest Mathematics course taken. Chi-square tests were performed on the cross-tabulations in order to determine statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Graduate Student Follow-Up

In order to comply with federal reporting requirements for the SLC grants regarding postsecondary enrollment, Public Works also conducted follow-up phone interviews with graduates (Class of 2011) from the three Cohort 8 grantee sites to gather data on self-reported postsecondary outcomes of students. Between September and December of 2011, telephone surveys were conducted with seniors who provided contact information during the Spring 2011 survey administration.[6] The survey explored student opinions related to student activities since high school, the value of student experiences in high school for later life, and future plans of graduates not currently enrolled in postsecondary education after high school. As shown in Table 4, the average response rate across the three high schools was about 76%. Compared to Year 2, the response rate for the follow up survey increased slightly (3%) from Year 2.

[6] Across all schools, total of 74% of the seniors provided contact information. Of these, the evaluation successfully contacted and obtained follow-up surveys for 64%.

Table 4: Graduate Follow-up Survey Response Rates

Cohort 8 Schools	# of Phone Surveys Completed	# of Graduate Surveys	Response Rate
Fairfax	160	197	85%
Reseda	162	221	73%
South Gate	311	444	70%
Total/Average	**633/211**	**862/287**	**76%**

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Site Visits

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

- √ SLC Grant Coordinator/Administrator
- √ Principal and other Administrators
- √ Teachers
- √ Counselors
- √ Students (9th thru 12th graders)
- √ SLC Leadership Committee, Council, or Team

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

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

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

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

SLC Checklist Rating Scale

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quantitative Data Measures and Sources

In order to evaluate the grantee schools on variety of objective indicators, Public Works collects the following student-level quantitative data from LAUSD for 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Demographic Data

- Student identification number
- Gender (Male/Female)
- Grade Level (by credits accumulated)
- Class Year
- Ethnicity
- Free/Reduced Meal eligibility or National School Lunch Program (Yes/No)
- Calendar Track (if applicable)
- Special Education (Yes or No)
- Gifted and Talented (GATE) (Yes/No)
- English Language proficiency (EO, IFEP, EL, RFEP)
- ID 01 SLC Codes from Field 140[7]

Achievement data

- Number of days attended and days enrolled
- California High School Exit Exam Status (Pass/Fail) and Scaled Scores in English/Language Arts & Mathematics[8]

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

- California Standards Test (scaled scores and proficiency levels) English Language Arts and Mathematics[9]

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

- Adjusted 1-year and 4-year dropout rates[10];
- Graduation rates[11]; and,
- Percentage of graduates meeting UC/CSU eligibility.[12]

The quantitative section of the report focuses documents the changes in student outcomes from baseline (2007-08) through Year 3 (20010-11) for Cohort 8 schools. For standardized test scores, this report compares Cohort 8 schools to "other" LAUSD comprehensive high schools that have not received a USDE grant. The data under analysis excluded: 1) magnet schools and programs and 2) small, autonomous schools under 500 students. For a complete list of schools included in analyses, please consult **Appendix F**.

[8] Since 2005-06, student pass both the English/Language Arts and Mathematics portions of CAHSEE in order to receive a public high school diploma. For this study, Public Works used both the passing score of 350, as well as more rigorous cut scores established by CDE to meet NCLB proficiency requirements (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress). These cut scores more accurately reflect CST performance levels and signify 10th grade achievement of proficiency in English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

[9] The CST is administered every Spring to LAUSD students and scored as part of the State's Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR). Based on their performance, students are assigned one of the following five proficiency levels: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic and Far Below Basic. A student who performs at or above the Proficient level is considered to have met the State standards.

[10] Data on this indicator was "adjusted" for the first time in 2006-07 to reflect more accurate tracking of the number of students at high schools over time.

[11] Based on the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) definition required for reporting under the No Child Left Behind Act.

[12] This indicator reflects the proportion of 12th grade graduates who complete the A-G sequence of courses, which lead to eligibility at public, four-year colleges and universities in California.

PART III—IMPLEMENTATION OF SLC GOALS

This section of the report focuses on the status of SLC implementation in terms of four key categories, encompassing both the goals in the district's Cohort 8 USDE SLC grant application and the eight LAUSD SLC attributes. The evaluation was not intended to rate or score individual SLCs within a high school. Where appropriate, examples of innovative strategies or approaches employed by individual schools are described to illustrate the variety of approaches and to share information on best and promising practices.

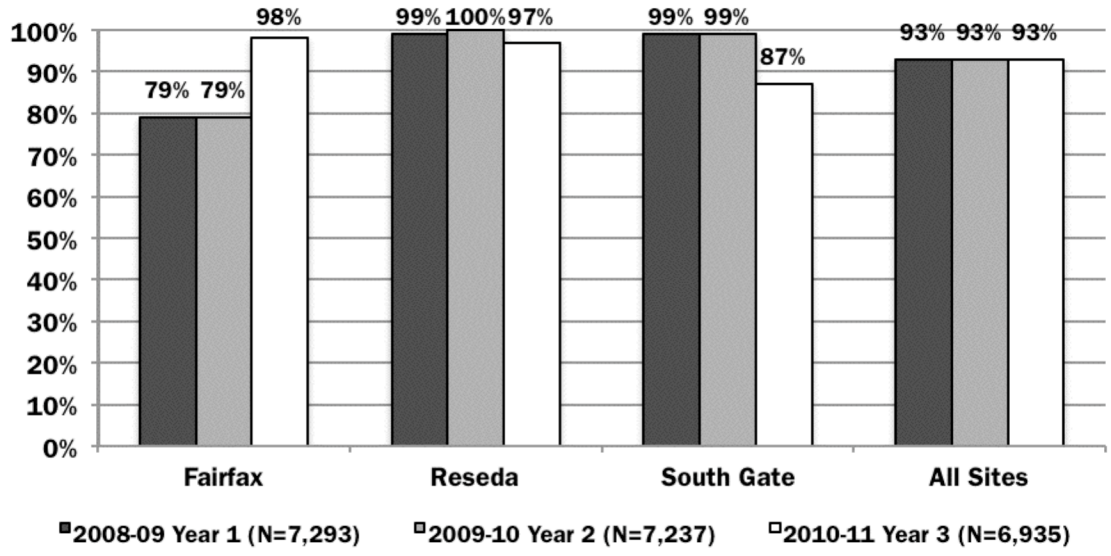
Category 1: Structural Implementation of SLCs

Transform each school into SLCs of 300-500 students with "wall-to-wall" implementation of SLCs by 2010-2011, when all SLCs will be institutionalized and operating at full enrollment.

SLC Participation

Of the 7,844 students at Cohort 8 schools at baseline (2007-08), 93% (7,293 students) were identified as SLC participants.[13] In 2010-11 (Year 3), 93% of Cohort 8 students were in an SLC, with schools varying from 87% to 99% (see Figure 2). Detailed information on SLC enrollment may be found in **Appendix E**.

Figure 2: Cohort 8 Schools, SLC Participation of Students by Year



Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

As seen in Table 5 below, SLC participation includes all grade levels with no grade reporting less than 90% SLC enrollment across the three Cohort 8 schools in Year 3 of grant implementation. Prior evaluation reports have shown greater benefits derived from a more rapid restructuring plan in terms of master schedule coherence and sending a clear message on the importance of aligning school structures and strategies with SLC principles

[13] At baseline, SLC enrollment was confined to magnet programs and defined academy programs.

rather than an incremental approach. All of the Cohort 8 grantee sites had implemented some form of SLCs prior to the grant; as such, there was less variation in terms of the pace of SLC implementation (all moving fairly rapidly) compared to earlier cohorts of grantee schools.

Table 5: Cohort 8 - SLC and Non-SLC Student Enrollment by Grade (% in SLC)

Grade Level	Enrolled in SLC			
	Baseline (N=7,293)	Year 1 (N=7,782)	Year 2 (N=7,237)	Year 3 (N=6,935)
9th Grade	2,596 (99%)	2,500 (98%)	2,131 (93%)	2,073 (94%)
10th Grade	1,780 (99%)	1,905 (99%)	1,820 (92%)	1,657 (91%)
11th Grade	1,651 (100%)	1,641 (99%)	1,637 (94%)	1,611 (94%)
12th Grade	1,266 (72%)	1,736 (99%)	1,649 (94%)	1,594 (94%)
Total	**7,293 (93%)**	**7,782 (99%)**	**7,237 (93%)**	**6,935 (93%)**

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

SLC Structures and Strategies

One school, Reseda, has implemented a 9th grade house as a transitional freshman structure (Table 6). These students then matriculate into thematically organized SLCs in grades 10-12. The other two schools in Cohort 8 schools enroll students directly into a thematic SLC beginning in 9th grade. This second model continues the legacy of pre-existing SLCs such as magnet and career academy programs, which have always been organized on a 9-12 basis (although California Partnership Academies or CPAs are funded for grades 10-12).

Table 6: SLC Structures and Strategies, 2009-10

Cohort 8 Schools	% SLC	Freshmen House/ Academy	Advisory Period	Career Pathway SLC	Other Themed SLC	Magnet Program or College Prep SLC	Common Planning by SLC
Fairfax	79%	○	○	●	●	●	○
Reseda	100%	●	○	●	●	●	○
South Gate	99%	○	○	●	●	●	○

Source: Public Works evaluation site visits and school-provided documentation
● = Complete ◗ = Partial ○ = Not occurring

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

All of the Cohort 8 schools have themed SLCs such as social justice, math/science, Humanitas, global studies, international studies, environment studies, and leadership. These SLCs have an overarching interdisciplinary theme, albeit one that does not fit neatly

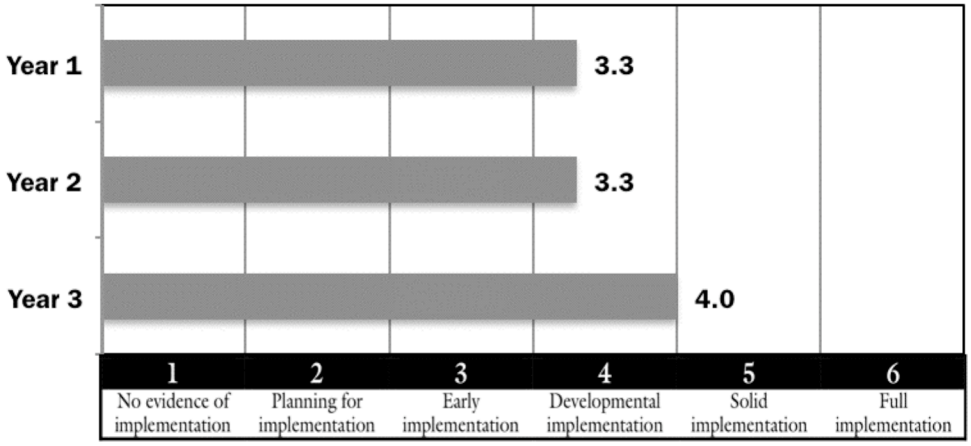
into a career pathway. In addition, all of the grantee schools have either a magnet program and/or SLCs that explicitly reference a college preparation orientation. Many of the magnet programs have a career pathway theme (marine science, communications & media, music and performing arts, medicine, aerospace, law enforcement, transportation, etc.), while others reflect an academic orientation (e.g., math/science/technology, etc.).

None of the grantee schools had implemented an advisory period as a structure for enhancing personalization. Similarly, none of the Cohort 8 schools has reorganized their master schedule to allow a common conference/prep period for teachers by SLC.

Unifying Vision for SLC Implementation

Comprehensive high schools undergoing a conversion to SLCs must initially develop a shared vision for change that allows for the development of SLCs with unique identities and autonomy in various aspects of decision-making. For these new structures to take hold during the SLC conversion process, stakeholders must understand the reasons for change, the direction that the school is headed, and clear set of expectations for what constitutes successful implementation.

Figure 3: Cohort 8 - Unified Vision Average Ratings



As shown in the rating in Figure 3 above, Cohort 8 schools made progress in Year 3 and advanced from Early to Developmental Implementation. Site visit focus groups revealed that Cohort 8 schools were more likely to have developed a shared vision for school improvement, with a defined role for SLCs in helping them meet these goals.

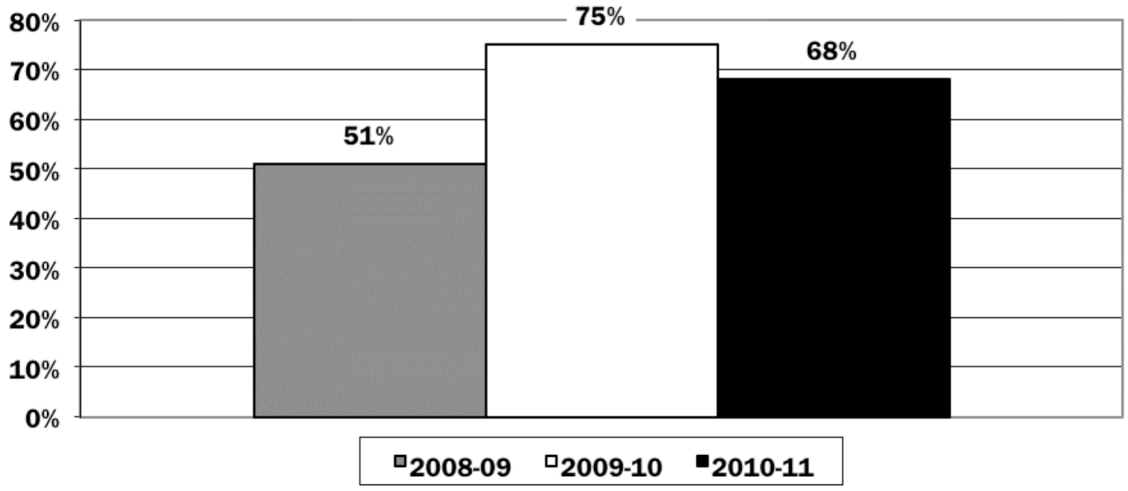
Stakeholders described several external forces as the major impetus for converting to SLCs. These included LAUSD's Board Resolution on SLCs (Bulletin 1600),[14] other district mandates related to lowering dropout rates and closing achievement gaps, Program

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

Improvement (PI) requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB),[15] and pressure from local community organizations to improve student achievement and programmatic offerings for students.

Over time, however, school staffs have begun to develop more compelling reasons to restructure their high schools that reflect their particular needs and school context. In particular, site visits in 2011 demonstrated that Cohort 8 schools have largely developed a vision for SLC implementation that links to larger school improvement aims (e.g., freshman transition, creating a college-going culture, personalized intervention, etc.). Despite some administrative changes, schools have managed to maintain momentum for the SLC reforms, and site visits revealed that the schools continue to view SLC reforms as a path toward improving student outcomes.

Figure 4: Staff perceptions of Vision, Leadership and Management



As shown in Figure 4 above, staff responses have been more positive in Year 2 and Year 3 of the grant, although Year 3 responses did show a decline from Year 2. Still, 68% staff responses to Vision, Leadership and Management survey items were positive in Year 3, an increase of 16% from Year 1. In particular, 76% of staff respondents in 2011 reported that school decisions are better communicated to school staff, up 17% from year 1. The vast majority (71%) in 2011 believed that staff members trust one another, an increase of 24% from Year 1. Additionally, 75% of 2011 staff believed the school had a strong SLC leadership team, up 19% from Year 1. For detailed survey responses, please refer to **Appendix C**.

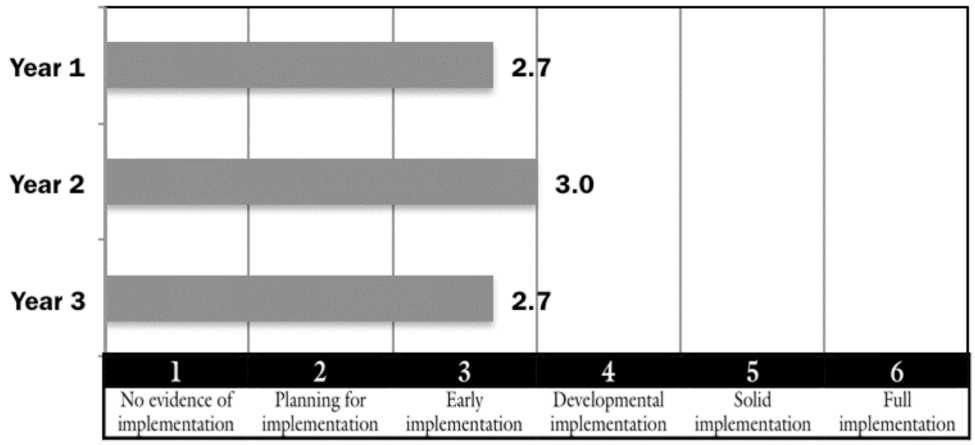
[15] All schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are identified for PI under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Schools with three or more years of PI status must implement one of the following corrective actions: replaces school staff; implement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

Equity and Access

In response to Bulletin 1600 which required equitable participation in SLCs, grantee schools have attempted to increase equity and access to SLCs. Schools were urged to redesign student their recruitment and placement strategies in order to balance student access (choice) to SLCs, with an equitable distribution of students (and, to a lesser degree staff) across the different SLCs at each site. Ensuring equity (heterogeneous groupings of students) is at the core of LAUSD SLC policy, because a perception that SLC implementation is "tracking" under a different name would seriously undermine the basis for the restructuring effort. In addition to student placement, this attribute hinges on the provision of culturally relevant and linguistically responsive instruction in order to equitably close achievement gaps.

As shown in the ratings in Figure 5, Cohort 8 has not shown sustained progress in regards to increasing equity and access for students. Although SLC grantee schools have increased the degree of equity in student assignment to SLCs, schools have made minimal progress in explicitly changing instructional delivery in line with Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education (CRRE).

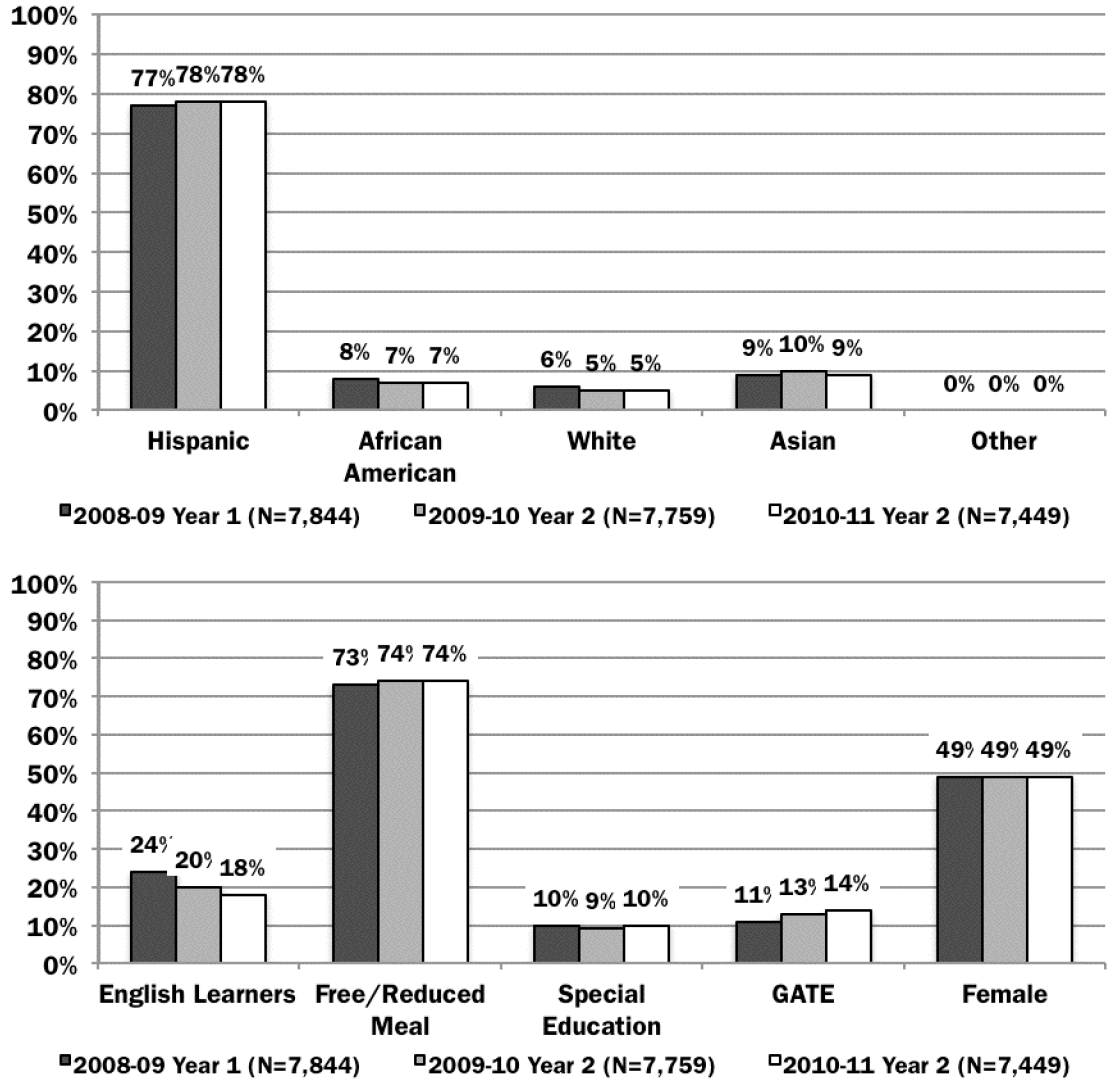
Figure 5: Equity Attribute Ratings



Student Demographic Characteristics

In 2010-11, an average of 2,139 students were enrolled in Cohort 8 schools (see Figure 6). Students were predominantly Hispanic/Latino (78%), followed by Asian (9%), African Americans (7%), and White (5%). Of these students, 74% were eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) also known as Free/Reduced Meals program. Nearly one-in-five (18%) were English Learners (EL), with 9% in Special Education and 14% in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs. Slightly less than half (49%) of students were female. Over the course of the grant, Cohort 8 schools have seen a 6% decline in English Learners and 3% more GATE. Other demographic characteristics have remained largely unchanged over the course of the SLC grant.

Figure 6: Cohort 8 Schools, Student Demographic Characteristics



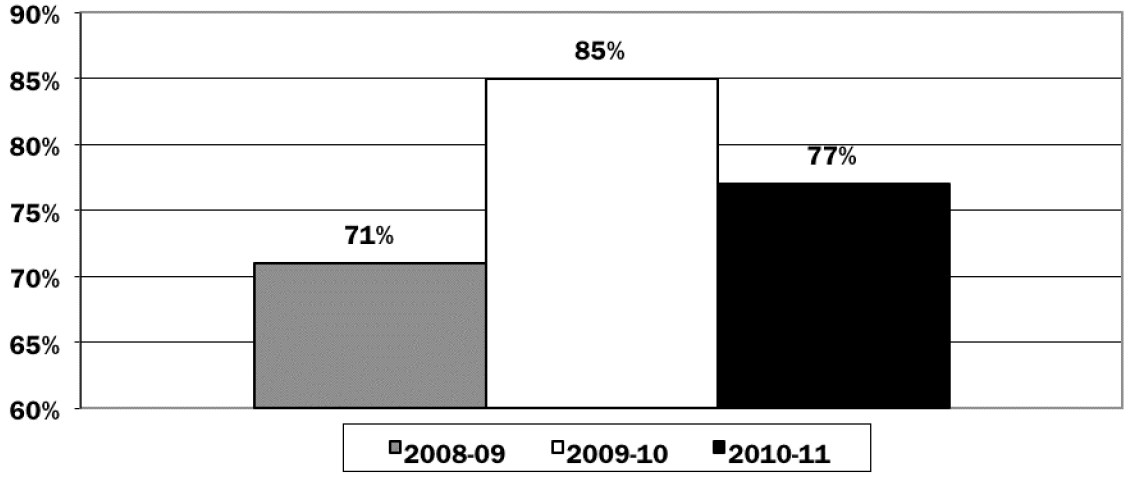
Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Data on the distribution of students by school and by SLC is included in **Appendix E** of this report. These data indicate that student equity has improved. Excluding the magnets on campus, the most common inequity among SLCs related to gender (all schools) with significant under-representation or over-representation of female or male students within particular SLCs. Other imbalances were idiosyncratic, typically affecting only one SLC on campus.

On-going gender inequities may reflect the prioritization on student choice (i.e., males may be more inclined to choose some kinds of SLCs and vice versa). Similarly, EL (and Special Education) concentrations may be attributed, in part, to teacher credentialing requirements for teaching these student subgroups.

Staff has become more positive about Inclusive Programs and Practices (see Figure 7). On average, the 77% of staff were positive about this, an increase of 6% since Year 1. However, positive responses once again declined in Year 3. For example, while 73% of staff agreed that admission to SLCs is open and inclusive, an increase of 6% since Year 1, 80% of staff agreed to that same survey item in Year 2. Likewise, 83% of staff agreed that SLCs include heterogeneous groupings of students and are not tracked by student ability, a 9% increase over year 1. However, this is a decline from Year 2, where 87% of the staff agreed to that item.

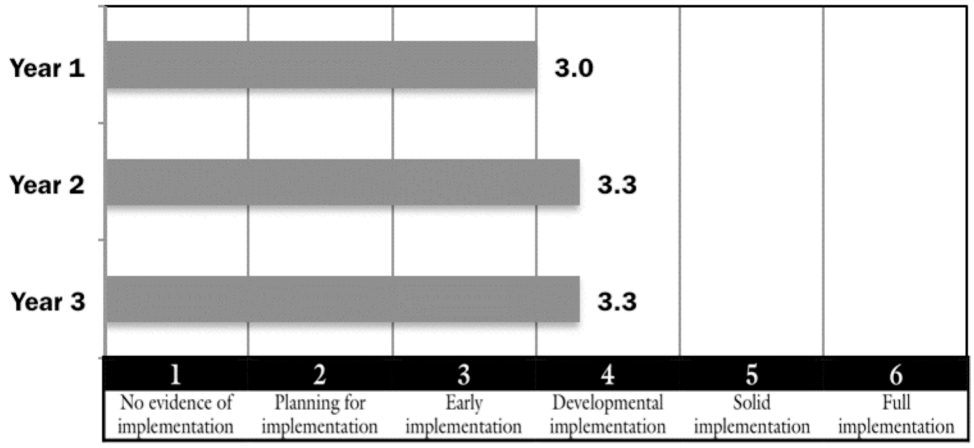
Figure 7: Staff perceptions of Equity



SLC Identity

Establishing a strong educational identity is a critical first step in establishing a successful SLC. With time, successful SLCs are able to clearly differentiate themselves from other SLCs or campus programs, through one or more of the following: thematic focus, pedagogical emphasis, a set of core values, established mission or goal, and/or co-curricular offerings. When a shared sense of purpose is clearly understood and embraced by students and teachers, SLCs can become powerful vehicles for increased academic success. As shown in the ratings in Figure 8 below, the *school-wide* SLC Identity implementation rating for Cohort 8 schools has improved incrementally since Year 1.

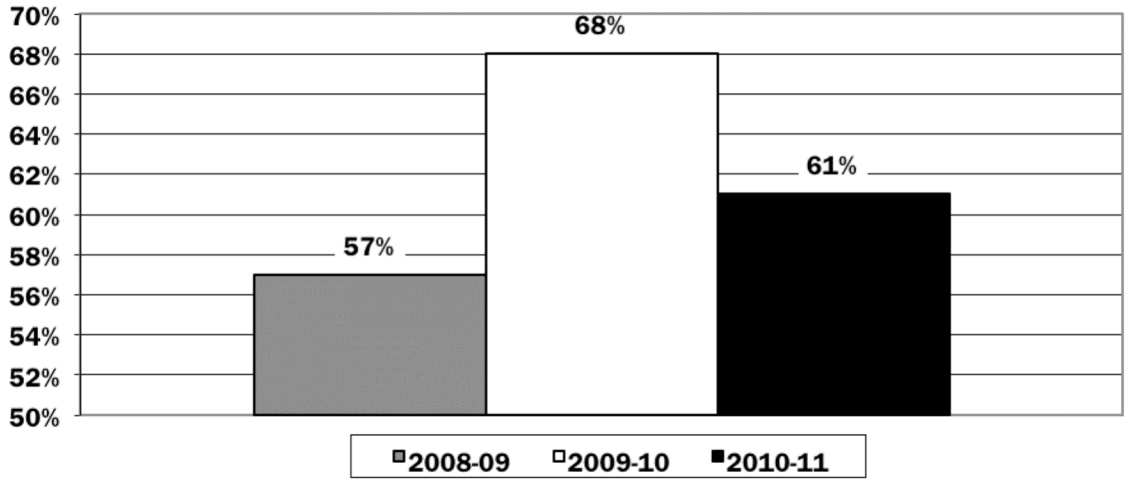
Figure 8: SLC Identity Implementation Attribute Ratings



Over the three years of the grant, school staff has become more positive about SLC identity (see Figure 9 below). On average, 61% of staff survey responses in Year 3 were positive, a 4% improvement from Year 1. For detailed results, see **Appendix C.** Overall, most (71%) of staff agree that SLCs have "unique academic identities," a level of agreement essentially unchanged since the start of the grant.

Staff reported the most growth in SLCs having distinct physical boundaries (59% agreement in Year 3; 14% improvement from Year 1). All three Cohort 8 schools have wall-to-wall SLC structures, and they have all completed some type of school reorganization plan to meet SLC needs. However, this item had much higher agreement in Year 2 (71%) than in Year 3.

Figure 9: Staff perceptions of SLC Identity



Staff responses were also highly positive about SLC leadership. The overwhelming majority (83%) of staff in Year 3 reported that SLC administrators or teacher directors lead a

cohesive faculty, a 14% increase from Year 1. Staff survey respondents were also quite positive about the exercise of SLC autonomy with regards to student conduct and discipline; 65% of 2011 respondents felt that SLCs are able to make decisions related to student conduct and issues of community safety, a 13% increase since the start of the grant.

In other areas, however, SLCs have not been as successful in gaining autonomy. Only 37% of staff reported that SLCs are able to make decisions regarding budget, personnel and facilities (5% decrease from Year 1). In the current economic climate, it has clearly been difficult for schools to cede budget autonomy to SLCs.

Evaluation findings from the site visits suggested that "educational identity" of SLCs was largely correlated with SLC team cohesion, prioritization of SLCs in school-wide professional development, and master schedule alignment to "core" SLC students in at least three of their courses per semester (also know as SLC "purity" of course rosters). However, only half (51%) of 2011 staff reported that SLCs make decisions related to the master schedule and student programming (6% decrease from Year 1). Likewise, only 56% of 2011 staff reported that their school's master schedule supports SLCs (1% decrease from Year 1).

Furthermore, the percentage of staff citing "adapting the master schedule to SLCs" as a key barrier to SLC implementation has increased 10% over the three grant years, from 32% in Year 1 to 42% in Year 3. Adapting the master schedule is necessary in order to group students into course sections comprised primarily of students from the same SLC. This so-called "purity" encourages and enables teachers to make thematic linkages in the curriculum. A survey of Cohort 8 SLC Lead Teachers in 2009-10 and 2010-11 revealed that the core academic subjects most likely to that were likely to be rated "pure" within the SLCs (characterized as 85-100% SLC purity) were: English and History/Social Studies. Mathematics and Science courses were much less likely to group students by SLC.

Summary

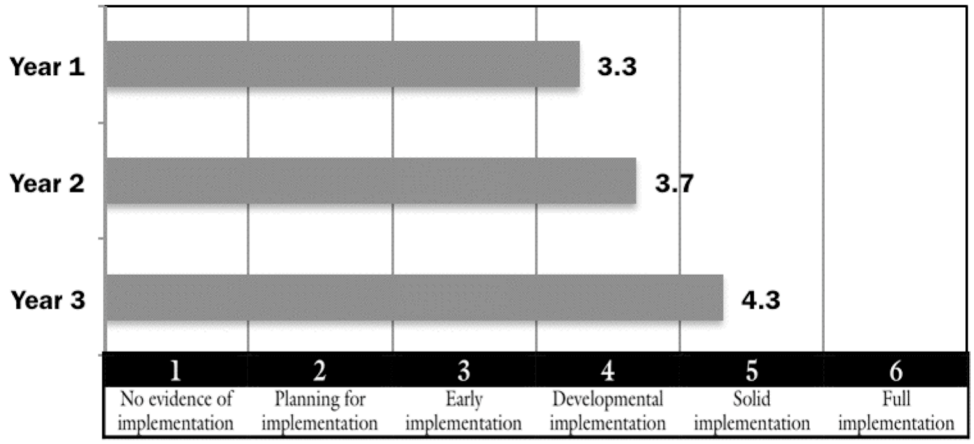
Cohort 8 grantee schools have successfully involved the vast majority of staff and students in SLCs that meet the district's guidelines for SLC implementation. Schools have also distributed students to SLCs on campus in a manner that is more equitable; only gender continues to be a major factor with concentrations of male or female students common in many SLCs. At the same time, SLC identity is developing apace, with individual SLCs carving out an increasingly distinctive educational approach. For this goal, defining areas for SLCs to exercise some degree of autonomy, and restructuring school master schedule to ensure a greater degree of SLC purity in course rosters continue to be the most significant challenges at Cohort 8 schools.

Category 2: Personalization

Each SLC will personalize the educational experience for students. Personalization will encompass structures and strategies (e.g., freshman academies, block scheduling, advisories, Summer Bridget programs, etc.) that result in more on-time matriculation to each grade level, increased attendance, reduced dropout rates, decreased student suspensions.

For many schools, personalization is at the heart of the move toward SLCs. With the typical grantee high school enrolling approximately 2,600 students, it is easy to understand how students can get "lost" in the educational system. By taking large, impersonal comprehensive high schools and breaking them up into smaller communities of learners, it is believed that stronger adult-student relationships can develop and students can get the attention they need to achieve. Creating SLCs within large campuses increases the chance that all students receive the attention and targeted support they need to stay in school, graduate and become eligible for postsecondary education.

Figure 10: Personalization Attribute Ratings



However, simply knowing students is not sufficient to create a truly personalized learning environment. Personalization is also about creating a learner-centered environment *in the classroom*, with an emphasis on addressing individual learning needs and moving toward a student-centered learning environment. Personalized education means that schools systematically help students assess their own talents and aspirations, plan a pathway to meet their own purposes, work cooperatively with others on challenging tasks, maintain a record of their explorations, and demonstrate their learning against clear standards in a wide variety of media, all with the close support of adult mentors and guides. Furthermore, in a personalized learning environment, teachers play a dual role as both subject-matter coaches and student advisors/advocates (Keefe, 2007).

As shown in Figure 10 above, Cohort 8 has reached the early stages of Developmental Implementation on this attribute. In the third year of the grant, Cohort 8 schools continued to emphasize personalization.

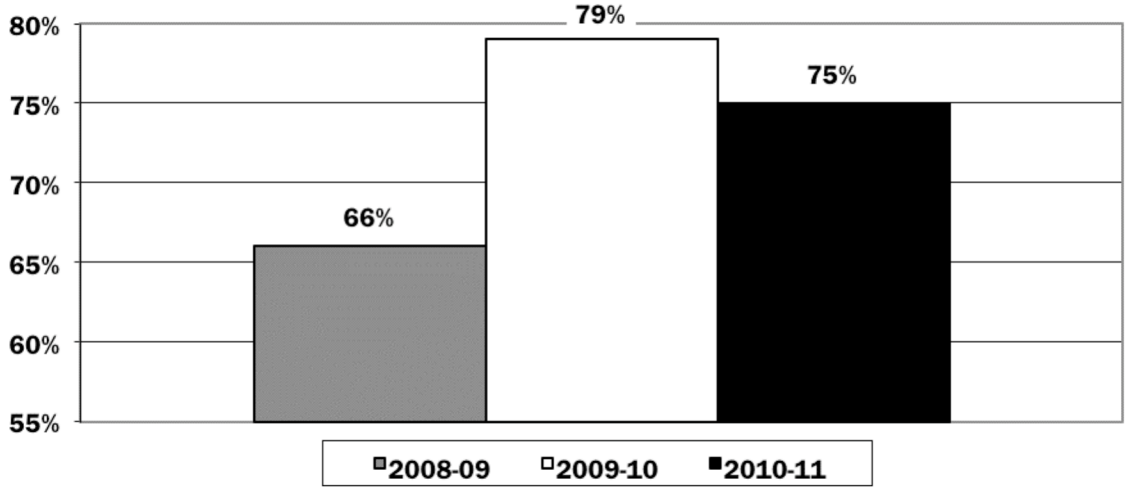
Personalization Activities and Perceptions

In order to deepen their identification and connection to the adults and peers that were in their community, schools have organized peer mentoring programs, identified dedicated staff that could respond to student needs, and found ways to foster SLC pride and identification.

Many of the school have attempted to prioritize personalization among incoming 9th graders. For example, one school in Cohort 8 has implemented a freshman house structure to ease the transition from middle to high school. Another school has focused on targeted intervention for 120 incoming 9th graders based on middle school grades, test scores, and teacher recommendations. Although several have considered advisories as a vehicle for personalization, none of the current Cohort 8 schools have established Advisory periods.

Over the three years of the grant, school staff has become more positive about Personalization (see Figure 11). On average, 75% of staff survey respondents were positive in 2011, an improvement of 9% since Year 1 (for detailed results, please consult **Appendix C**).

Figure 11: Staff Perceptions of Personalization

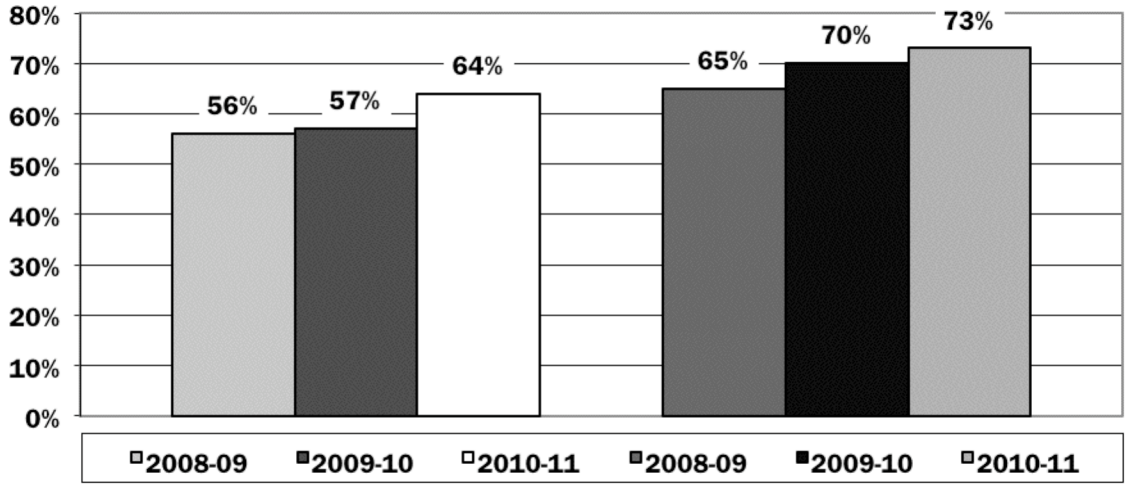


Staff perceptions of personalization were highest in terms of (in rank order): a) opportunities for students to participate in extended day learning; b) students receiving verbal counseling regarding postsecondary planning; and c) provision of personalized instruction. Each of these areas indicated approximately 80% or higher staff agreement in 2011.

The highest areas of growth over the grant period were in regards to adult-student relationships and academic intervention referral. Since Year 1, there has been an 11% increase in staff agreeing that students at their school have an adult advocating for their needs. Similarly, there was a 9% increase in staff in agreement that there was a clear process for referring students for academic intervention.

Cohort 8 schools also showed evidence that students' perceptions of belonging to a school-wide community increased through their participation in SLCs (Figure 12). On average, student ratings of Relationships have increased 8% among both 10th graders (64% in 2011) and 12th grade students (73% in 2011).

Figure 12: Student Perceptions of Relationships



Personalization is improving in terms of connecting students to a sense of community. For example, 10th grade students reported an 11% increase in belonging to a school-wide community; while 12th grade students reported a 9% increase that indicator.

Cohort 8 schools were also able to increase students' perceptions of safety. Students in grade 10 experienced a 14% increase in perceived campus safety to 79%, with 12th grade students reporting an 8% increase in this indicator to 78% in 2011. During the same time period, staff reported a 19% increase (92% agreement in 2011) in safety, as well as a 24% increase in staff agreeing that, "student discipline is not a major problem area at this school."

Data from the evaluation also suggest that there were improvements in student perceptions of guidance and counseling services at Cohort 8 schools. At the beginning of the grant, only 35% of 10th graders reported that they had spoken to a counselor to develop a written educational plan. In Year 3, 47% of 10th graders reported that they had done so, an increase of 12%. Twelfth graders also reported an increase in this behavior, with 65% reporting this activity in 2011, up from 56% in Year 1. In fact, evaluation site visits suggest that staff at Cohort 8 schools view personalization through SLCs as a way to increase college and career readiness. For example, one school implemented a "Career Project" where 9th grade students were assigned an essay that details their career choice. In order to have the necessary information to complete the essay, students attend college field trips, use a Career Cruising website, and review documents that show college costs. To increase personalization and expose students to college and career options, another school linked every student to a club or extra-curricular activities, with some SLCs offering incentives for participation and recognizing improvements in academics, behavior, or attendance.

It is interesting to note that 10th and 12th grade students who reported interacting with a counselor three or more times annually were statistically more likely to agree with all survey items tied to Relationships in 2011. In other words, counselor interaction was good (and statistically significant) "predictor" of students perceiving their school or SLC as offering a personalized educational experience.

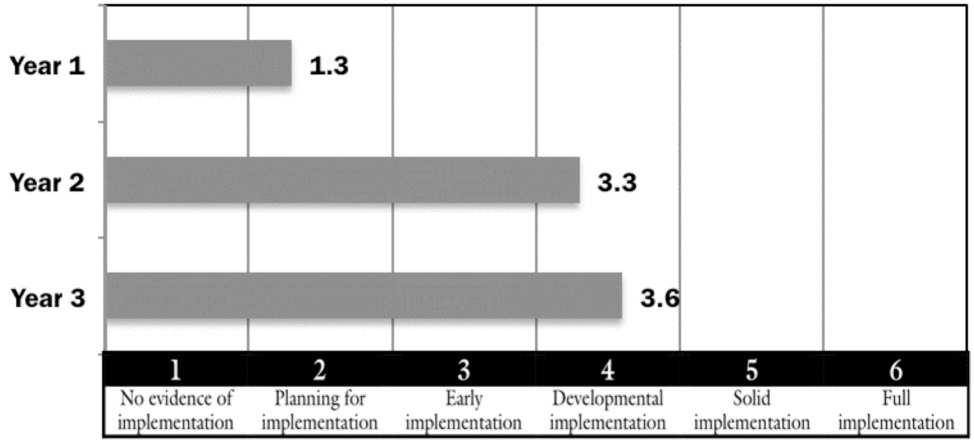
In addition, both 10th and 12th grade Hispanic students were statistically more likely to be positive compared to non-Hispanics on nearly all Relationship survey items in 2011 (six of nine for 10th graders and seven of nine among 12th graders). Statistically significant differences based on gender were rare (two of nine among 10th graders and four of nine among 12th graders). In all cases, females were more positive than males about personalization.

Parent and Community Outreach

High performing SLCs understand and value the power of collaboration and see parents and external partners from business, community, and postsecondary institutions as integral to personalization and efforts to boost student success. SLCs that meaningfully engage parents to support students and teachers in this work are more likely to reach their desired personalization goals. Similarly, when partners from the community, local employers, and post-secondary institutions get involved in SLCs, student access to mentoring, internships, job shadowing, field trips, and guest speakers, is expanded, leading to more college and career preparation. When these activities are integrated into the student learning experiences, inside and outside the classroom, students become more actively engaged in their education and become more likely to stay in school and pursue postsecondary education.

As seen in Figure 13 below, Cohort 8 schools made some progress in Year 3 of the grant as compared to Year 2. In Year 1, schools had not really done any significant work in this area, but the past two year have made strides in improving this attribute.

Figure 13: Cohort 8 – Parent and Community Engagement Average Ratings



Site visits revealed that schools had improved some aspects of parent outreach. One school in particular was able to improve parent outreach with incoming students. They first sent a brochure to feeder schools to send home to parents, and then held a cookout/orientation that was fairly well attended. At the cookout, students and parents were able to tour SLCs, and staff was on hand to help guide families through the selection process.

Data collected from the three Cohort 8 schools indicate the following external partnerships:

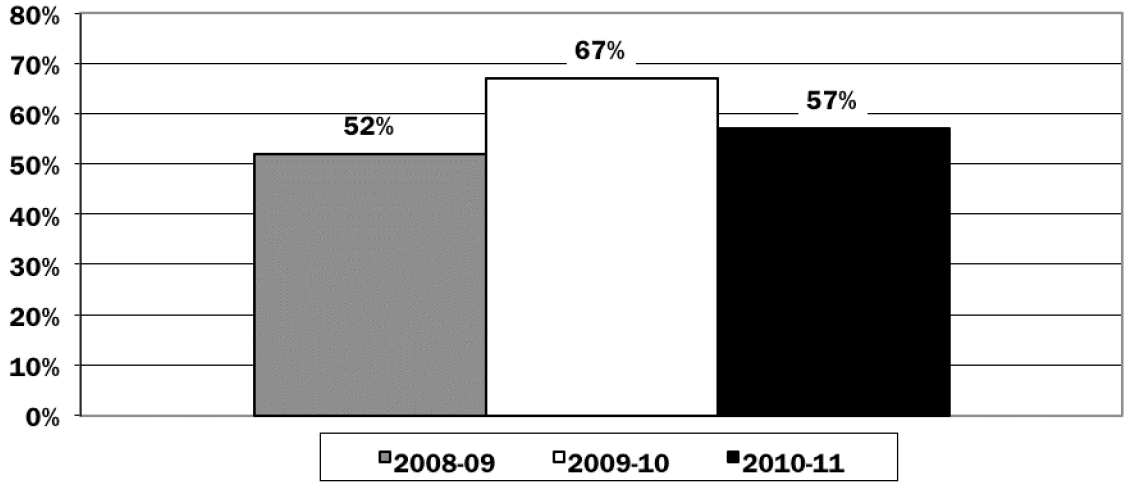
- All schools had relationships with community-based organizations. These partners were quite varied, Humanities organizations, foundations, and other types of associations or non-profits.
- One school established a partnership with a local LAUSD elementary school, where students in one SLC tutored elementary students.
- All schools had established businesses/employers to support SLC themes and/or goals. Industry sectors represented included financial services, aviation/aeronautics, health care, retail, engineering, and manufacturing.
- Two of the three schools had at least one SLC that forged a partnership with a postsecondary institution, most typically with community colleges around dual/concurrent enrollment.

Most of the partnerships cited by Cohort 8 schools involved long-standing relationships involving pre-existing SLCs (e.g., magnet programs, Humanitas, California Partnership Academies). In addition, the linkages between external partners and SLCs were either restricted to one or two SLCs on campus or a more generalized partnership with the school as a whole.

In general, external partnerships were seen as a vehicle for providing students with real-world experiences, college exposure and enrichment opportunities. It is clear many SLCs focused on motivating students through increased academic relevance and expanded access to resources available through these external partnerships.

Staff perceptions of parent and community involvement increased an average of 5%, from 52% in Year 1 to 57% in Year 3 (Figure 14). A majority (67%) of staff agreed that parents were seen as key collaborators and contributing members of the school community, a 12% net increase from Year 1.

Figure 14: Staff perceptions of Parent and Community Engagement



The vast majority (81%) of both 10th and 12th grade students surveyed agreed that their parents would be comfortable asking questions or requesting information from teachers, 9% and 11% increases for 10th and 12th graders, respectively. As reported above, certain student characteristics showed a statistically significant correlation. Namely, students who saw their counselor more frequently (10th and 12th grade), females (12th grade only), and Hispanics (12th grade only) were more likely to rate parent connection or comfort more positively.

Pupil Attendance

Pupil attendance is one proxy indicator for personalization in that students who are connected to school tend to attend school. Attendance rates have improved 1%-2% at the Cohort 8 schools since Year 1 of the grant in all but 10th grade. On average, Cohort 8 schools reported an average of 95% pupil attendance. However, there were no appreciable differences in the rate of improvement in pupil attendance comparing Cohort 8 and non-grantee schools. Attendance rates in 2010-11 also were similar (within 1% to 2% of each other) for the two groups of schools. Detailed individual school results are provided in **Appendix F**.

Table 10: Attendance Rates by Grade, 2009-2011

Grade 9	2009	2010	2011	Net Change
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	93%	95%	95%	2%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	93%	93%	94%	1%
Grade10				
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	95%	95%	95%	0%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	93%	93%	95%	2%
Grade 11				
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	94%	95%	95%	1%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	93%	93%	95%	2%
Grade 12				
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	93%	96%	95%	2%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	93%	93%	94%	1%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

School Dropout

Dropout rates provide another quantitative proxy measure of school efforts to implement Personalization. In 2006-07, California altered the way in which dropout rates were calculated to take into account longitudinal tracking of individual students over time. This was the third year in which this was done, so the comparable data to analysis was made for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years (2009-10 data will likely be available in November of 2011).

As shown in Table 11 below, the adjusted one-year dropout rate at Cohort 8 schools decreased 0.5% from 2008-09 to 2009-10 (the most recent year of data available). On the other hand, LAUSD schools not receiving the grant decreased the dropout rate by 2.3%. The statewide average dropout rate also decreased, by 1.1%. Cohort 8 schools in 2010 had a lower one-year derived dropout rate (4.4%) than LAUSD schools not receiving grants (5.4%) and the statewide average (4.6%).

The four-year derived dropout rates among Cohort 8 schools decreased 3.3% in 2009-10 (17.1%) compared to the rate in 2008-09 (20.4%). Among LAUSD schools not receiving grants, the rate decreased 7.8%. The statewide average rate also decreased in 2009, by 4.3%. Cohort 8 also had a lower four-year derived dropout rate than both LAUSD high schools not receiving the grant and the statewide average. Detailed individual school results may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 11: Average School Dropout Rates, 2008-09 through 2009-10

School	2008-09			2009-10		
	Enrollment (9-12)	Adjusted 1-Year Derived Dropout Rate (9-12)	Adjusted 4-Year Derived Dropout Rate (9-12)	Enrollment (9-12)	Adjusted 1-Year Derived Dropout Rate (9-12)	Adjusted 4-Year Derived Dropout Rate (9-12)
Cohort 8	2,651	4.9%	20.4%	2,646	4.4%	17.1%
Other LAUSD HS	2,216	7.6%	30.8%	2,187	5.4%	23.2%
State Total/Average	***2,013,686***	***5.7%***	***21.7%***	***1,999,684***	***4.6%***	***17.4%***

Source: California Department of Education

Summary

Cohort 8 grantee schools tended to cite personalization as their number one focus for SLC implementation. Evidence exists to suggest that relationships between adults and students have been enhanced through the implementation of SLCs. More staff appeared to be accepting a role in mentoring and advocating for students in "their" SLC. Improving the transition of 9th graders into high school is another clear focus tied to SLC personalization. Similarly, it was encouraging to note that student interactions with counselors were gradually improving around postsecondary and career preparation. Both parent and community stakeholders are partnering with schools; however, these partnerships tended to involve only a few SLCs on campus or to bypass SLCs altogether as school-wide partnerships. Quantitative indicators of personalization show improvements. For example,

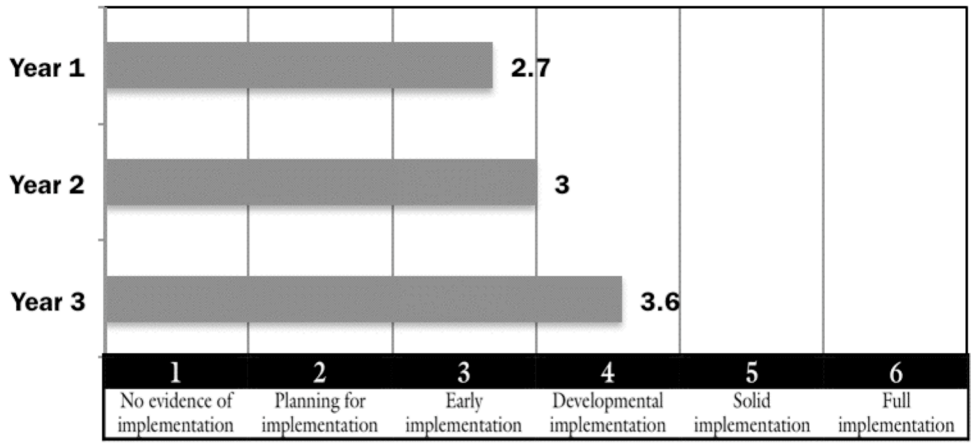
attendance rates have improved, although the rates of improvement are comparable to those at non-grantee LAUSD high schools. Similarly, dropout rates have improved at Cohort 8 schools and are lower, on average, than non-grantee LAUSD high schools. In sum, Personalization is an area where SLC implementation is having an impact and yielding benefits.

Category 3: Student Achievement

Provide a standards-based educational program, which embodies high expectations for every student so that they achieve grade-level standards, meet high school graduation requirements, college entrance requirements and are prepared for post-secondary experiences and the world of work. Schools will increase student standardized test scores (CST and CAHSEE) and increase UC/CSU eligibility and postsecondary enrollment. Schools will develop explicit strategies (e.g., reading, math, or enrichment programs) to help English Learners and at-risk students meet these targets.

Schools were tasked with using SLCs to improve the rigor of the instructional program, leading to student success on key indicators of student achievement and school performance. In effect, SLCs would augment standards-based rigor with personalized and relevant curricula tied to SLC interdisciplinary themes. As shown in Figure 15 below, Cohort 8 schools have progressed from "Planning for Implementation" to "Early Implementation" in terms of providing a rigorous standards-based instructional program in the past three years of the grant.

Figure 15: Rigor Attribute Ratings



Composite Measures of Student Achievement

All public schools in California are subject to separate accountability targets emanating from the State and Federal government. At the State level, schools must show growth on the Academic Performance Index (API), a composite of student achievement on the California Standards Tests (CSTs) in grade 9-11 English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, as well as the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which tests 10th graders in English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

The API serves as a proxy measure of Academic Rigor insofar as it indicates how successful a school has been in raising the scores of students in key academic areas. Because the API "weights" growth among the lowest-performing students, changes in the API growth score also reflect school progress in serving students performing below grade level. In the

analysis of composite state and federal accountability, this report displays data 2008-2011 for all schools. Other tables in this report are comprised of data from baseline (the year prior to SLC grant or first year of SLC implementation) to current year whenever possible.

Table 12: Academic Performance Index and Adequate Yearly Progress by School

Cohort 8	2008 Growth Score	2009 Growth Score	2010 Growth Score	2011 Growth Score	API Change	Program Improvement Status/Year
Fairfax	694	733	731	730	**36**	Yes/2003-04
Reseda	703	729	740	751	**48**	Yes/2003-04
South Gate	611	640	649	676	**65**	Yes/2003-04
Cohort Average	***669***	***701***	***701***	***719***	***50***	***Yes/2003-04***

Source: California Department of Education

As shown in Table 12 above, the growth API has increased an average of 50 points (ranging from 36-65) since 2008 at Cohort 8 schools. On average, Cohort 8 schools earned an API of 719 in 2011, below the statewide average of 742 among California public high schools serving grades 9-11. Only one Cohort 8 school (Reseda) exceeded the state average, with Fairfax close to the state average. By contrast, South Gate is well below the state average but has experienced the most API growth in the past three years.

For high schools, federal accountability is termed "Adequate Yearly Progress" or AYP, based on the percentage of 10th grade students who attain proficiency[16] on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics the first-time the exam is administered (generally Spring of the sophomore year). AYP provides a measure of Academic Rigor insofar is it provides a snapshot of how many students are going beyond merely passing CAHSEE and, instead demonstrating proficiency against a set of key, standards-based criteria in ELA and Mathematics. In interpreting AYP, however, it is important to keep in mind that the target percentage (i.e., the percentage that must demonstrate proficiency) under AYP has increased markedly over the grant period (increase of 33.3% in ELA and 33.9% in Mathematics).

On average, schools in Cohort 8 increased an average of 6.3% in the proportion of students meeting proficiency on ELA AYP under the SLC grant, a rate of improvement equal to that at non-grantee LAUSD high schools (see tables 13 and 14 below). However, 8% more students achieved Proficient or better on ELA AYP at Cohort 8 schools in 2011 compared to non-grantee LAUSD high schools. ELA AYP is improving and these data indicate an equal or higher level of academic rigor among Cohort 8 schools relative to LAUSD schools not receiving the grant.

[16] The "cut score" for proficiency on the CAHSEE for proficiency is 380, compared to the score of 350 necessary to simply pass the exam.

Table 13: Adequate Yearly Progress (ELA) by School (% Advanced and Proficient)

Cohort 8	AYP Goal 33.4%		AYP Goal 44.5%		AYP Goal 55.6%		AYP Goal 66.7%	
	AYP Target	Met Goal	AYP Target	Met Goal	AYP Target	Met Goal	AYP Target	Met Goal
	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010	2010	2011	2011
Fairfax	51.7%	Yes	45.5%	Yes	58.2%	Yes	58.2%	No
Reseda	56.7%	Yes	46.4%	Yes	55.1%	No	63.8%	No
South Gate	37.0%	Yes	36.3%	No	36.9%	No	42.4%	No
Cohort Average	*48.5%*	*Yes*	*42.7%*	*Yes*	*50.1%*	*No*	*54.8%*	*No*
District Average	*37.1%*	*Yes*	*40.7%*	*No*	*43.4%*	*No*	*47.0%*	*No*

Source: California Department of Education

On average, schools in Cohort 8 increased an average of 1.8% in the proportion of students meeting proficiency on Math AYP under the SLC grant, compared to 8.9% improvement at non-grantee LAUSD high schools. Approximately 3% fewer students achieved Proficient or better on Math AYP at Cohort 8 schools in 2011 compared to non-grantee LAUSD high schools. Although the is improvement on Math AYP, these data indicate a lower level of academic rigor among Cohort 8 schools relative to LAUSD schools not receiving the grant.

Table 14: Adequate Yearly Progress (Mathematics) by School (% Advanced and Proficient)

Cohort 8	AYP Goal 32.2%		AYP Goal 43.5%		AYP Goal 54.8%		AYP Goal 66.1%	
	AYP Target	Met Goal	AYP Target	Met Goal	AYP Target	Met Goal	AYP Target	Met Goal
	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010	2010		
Fairfax	50.3%	Yes	58.5%	Yes	57.8%	Yes	47.7%	No
Reseda	60.5%	Yes	51.8%	Yes	56.1%	Yes	61.6%	No
South Gate	31.3%	No	37.1%	No	33.2%	No	38.0%	No
Cohort Average	*47.3%*	*Yes*	*49.1%*	*Yes*	*49.0%*	*No*	*49.1%*	*No*
District Average	*43.1%*	*Yes*	*45.8%*	*Yes*	*48.0%*	*No*	*52.0%*	*No*

Source: California Department of Education

It is important to note that even the schools that are making "progress" (exceeding district averages and meeting AYP) are still in Program Improvement status. As schools continue to increase academic achievement school-wide, they are often failing to garner the needed proficiency levels from numerically significant subgroups (e.g., English Learners and Students with Disabilities) to exit Program Improvement. It is also worth noting that all of the Cohort 8 schools have been designated at Program Improvement schools, and LAUSD entered district Program Improvement status in 2004-05. In addition, at least 80% of LAUSD high schools are currently in Program Improvement.

Student Achievement at SLC Grantee Schools

To examine the performance of schools in terms of student achievement, analyses focus on the percentage of students who improved at least one CST proficiency level annually. Specifically, the evaluation calculated the percentage of students who improved from Far Below Basic, Below Basic, and Basic in the years 2008-2011.[17] These results were calculated using student-level data provided by LAUSD, and categorized into two groups of schools (three Cohort 8 schools, and other comprehensive high schools in LAUSD not receiving USDE SLC grant funds). These results excluded students in magnet programs and magnet schools, as well as small, autonomous and/or special themed high schools that enrolled less than 500 students grades 9-12. In this way, the evaluation aimed to compare large, urban high schools funded to implement SLCs to other large, urban high schools not funded but still subject to the requirements of Bulletin 1600 which require all students to be enrolled in SLCs within 3-5 years.

The data included below is school-wide in nature rather than a comparison between SLC and Non-SLC students because nearly all students at Cohort 8 schools were enrolled in a SLC by 2010-11. It is safe to assume that some of the students at the "other" LAUSD high schools also participated in a SLC during but in lieu of SLC rosters from these schools, the evaluation was unable to provide a percentage of SLC enrollments at these schools. Table 15 below provides the percentage of students in SLCs at the Cohort 8 schools who were included in the analyses that follow.

Table 15: Cohort 8 % Students in Database for Analysis by Year

School	% in SLC			
	2008 (Baseline)	2009 (Year 1)	2010 (Year 2)	2011 (Year 3)
Fairfax	79%	99%	79%[18]	98%
Reseda	99%	99%	100%	97%
South Gate	99%	99%	99%	87%

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

English/Language Arts (ELA)

As shown in Table 16 below, Cohort 8 showed 7% net growth in the percentage of Far Below Basic students in ELA who improved at least one CST proficiency level, compared to 10% growth at LAUSD high schools not receiving the USDE SLC grant. However, Cohort 8 schools were more likely (6%-9%) to move students out of Far Below Basic, Below Basic, and Basic in each of the past three years.

[17] For Cohort 8 schools, 2008 was the baseline year before receipt of the grant.
[18] The percentage does not capture the number of students who were merged with other SLCs after theirs was eliminated. Those student did not have an SLC code assigned to them in the Student Information System (SIS)

Table 16: ELA CST, Improvements by Proficiency Level, 2009-2010

FBB Improvement (Movement out of Far Below Basic)	2009	2010	2011	Net Change
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	48%	53%	55%	7%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	39%	46%	49%	10%
BB Improvement (Movement out of Below Basic)				
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	35%	38%	41%	6%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	25%	33%	36%	11%
B Improvement (Movement out of Basic)				
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	22%	25%	24%	2%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	14%	22%	20%	6%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Among Cohort 8 schools, the largest increase in the proportion of Far Below Basic students advancing at least one CST proficiency level occurred at Fairfax. Detailed information on the progress of individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Compared to 2009, Cohort 8 showed 6% growth among Below Basic students in ELA who improved. This was less than the improvement at LAUSD high schools not receiving the grant, which showed an average 11% growth from 2009-2011. Among Cohort 8 schools, the largest increase in the proportion of Below Basic students advancing at least one proficiency level occurred at Fairfax.

Cohort 8 showed 2% growth in moving students out of the Basic category. LAUSD schools not receiving the grant showed growth of 6%. The largest increase in the proportion of Basic students advancing at least one proficiency level occurred at Fairfax and South Gate.

As shown in Table 17 below, improvements in the 10th grade ELA CAHSEE pass rate were unchanged at Cohort 8 schools compared to a 4% increase than at LAUSD high schools not receiving a SLC implementation grant. Nonetheless, the Cohort 8 schools did pass an average of 79% of 10th graders in 2011, 2% higher than these non-grantee schools. Among Cohort 8 schools, Reseda showed the most growth in CAHSEE pass rates in ELA and had the highest overall pass rate. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 17: ELA CAHSEE 10th Grade Pass Rates, 2005-2010

	2009	2010	2011	Net Change
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	79%	77%	79%	0%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	73%	73%	77%	4%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

While non-grantee high schools experienced higher levels of net growth during the grant, Cohort 8 out performed non-grantee LAUSD high schools in terms of the overall percentage of students up at least one proficiency level (i.e., out of FBB, BB, and/or Basic) on the ELA CST, as well as in overall CASHEE ELA pass rates. In sum, the rates of improvement suggest less rigor; however, the actual level of performance achieved by students indicates higher rigor relative to LAUSD non-grantee high schools.

Student Achievement in Mathematics

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

As shown in Table 18 below, Cohort 8 schools were more likely (3%-9%) to move students out of Far Below Basic and Below Basic, compared to non-grantee schools. Cohort 8 showed 7% growth in moving Far Below Basic students to another proficiency level. This was better performance than LAUSD high schools not receiving the grant, which showed 3% growth. The school with the most improvement in Cohort 8 was South Gate, while Fairfax had the highest percentage of students moving out of Far Below Basic. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Compared to 2009, Cohort 8 showed more growth (6%) in the percentage of Below Basic students in Mathematics who improved, compared to LAUSD high schools not receiving the grant (5%). The school most likely to move students upward from Below Basic in Math was South Gate.

Table 18: Mathematics CST, Improvements by Proficiency Level, 2005-2010

FBB Improvement (Movement out of Far Below Basic)	2009	2010	2011	Net Change
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	46%	53%	53%	7%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	41%	47%	44%	3%
BB Improvement (Movement out of Below Basic)				
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	14%	20%	20%	6%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	11%	15%	16%	5%
B Improvement (Movement out of Basic)				
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	10%	13%	14%	4%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	10%	13%	13%	3%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Comparing to 2009, Cohort 8 schools improved at a slightly higher rate (4%) as LAUSD schools not receiving the grant (3%) when moving students out of Basic. Reseda was the school most likely to move students upward from Basic in Math.

As shown in Table 19, Cohort 8 showed a slight decline of 1% in 2011 CAHSEE Math pass rates when compared to 2009, compared to a 4% increase among LAUSD high schools not receiving the grant. Nevertheless, Cohort 8 (79%) passed 3% more 10th graders in 2011, compared to LAUSD high schools not receiving the grant (76%). Among Cohort 8 schools, Fairfax and Reseda had the highest Math CAHSEE pass rate. Detailed information on individual schools may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 19: Mathematics CAHSEE 10th Grade Pass Rates, 2009-2010

	2009	2010	2011	Net Change
Cohort 8 (N=3 schools)	80%	78%	79%	-1%
Other LAUSD High Schools (N=21 schools)	72%	72%	76%	4%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Cohort 8 out performed other LAUSD non-grantee high schools in both rate of improvement and in moving a higher percentage of students up at least one proficiency level in all three proficiency levels (FBB, BB, and Basic) under examination on the Math CSTs. On CASHEE Math, however, Cohort 8 schools improved at a lower rate, but achieved higher overall pass rates. In sum, these Math data mostly indicate increasing academic rigor at Cohort 8 schools relative to LAUSD non-grantee high schools.

Graduation and College Eligibility

As shown in Table 20, the NCES graduation rate at Cohort 8 schools increased 0.4% from 2008-09 to 2009-10 (most recent data available). LAUSD high schools not receiving the grant experienced an increase of 3.9%, while the statewide average increased by 2%. Cohort 8 schools had a higher average graduation rate (80.5%) than LAUSD schools not receiving the grant (74.8%) and identical to the statewide average (80.5%). Detailed individual school results may be found in **Appendix F**.

Table 20: Average School Graduation and UC/CSU Eligibility Rates, 2008-09 to 2009-10

School	2008-09 (Year 1)			2009-10 (Year 2)			Net Change
	NCES Graduation Rate	# Graduates	Graduates with UC/CSU Required Courses	NCES Graduation Rate	# Graduates	Graduates with UC/CSU Required Courses	
Cohort 8	80.1%	476	56.4%	80.5%	517	58.5%	0.4%/2.1%
Other LAUSD HS	70.9%	384	50.0%	74.8%	405	56.7%	3.9%/6.7%
State Total/Average	***78.5%***	***383,631***	***35.3%***	***80.5%***	***405,087***	***36.3%***	***2.0%/1.0%***

Source: California Department of Education ***2010-11 data not available**

When compared to 2008-09, Cohort 8 schools experienced an increase of 2.1% in their UC/CSU eligible graduates. LAUSD schools not receiving the USDE SLC grant increased their UC/CSU eligible rate by 6.7%. The statewide average of UC/CSU eligible graduates increased 1%. In 2008-09 and 2009-10, both Cohort 8 and LAUSD schools not receiving the grant schools had more UC/CSU eligible graduates than the statewide average.

Further analysis of UC/CSU and California Community College (CCC) attendance (i.e., the percentage of students who enrolled in four-year public colleges and universities) is detailed in Tables 21 and 22. It shows that Cohort 8 schools experienced a 2% decline in UC/CSU attendance; district average increased 8% in the same time period. Both

graduates of Cohort 8 and LAUSD non-grantee schools were equally likely (in Fall 2010) to enroll in UC or CSU campuses (22%).

Table 21: UC/CSU Attendance Rates, 2008-2010

School	2008-09 (Year 1)			2009-10 (Year 2)			
	UC/CSU Attendees	12th Grade Enrollment	UC/CSU Attendance Rate	2010 UC/CSU Attendees	2010 12th Grade Enrollment	2010 UC/CSU Attendance Rate	Net Change
Fairfax	128	585	21%	114	574	20%	-1%
Reseda	91	491	18%	96	507	19%	1%
South Gate	179	541	33%	173	631	27%	-6%
Cohort Average	**132**	**539**	**24%**	**128**	**571**	**22%**	**-2%**
District Total/Average	***4040***	***29700***	***14%***	***8152***	***37184***	***22%***	***8%***

Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission, California Department of Education 2010-11 not available

As shown in Table 22, enrollment in California Community Colleges also declined (4% among Cohort 8 schools and 8% among LAUSD as a whole) from 2008-09 to 2009-10. However, Cohort 8 graduates were 9% more likely to enroll in two-year public colleges in Fall 2010 compared to graduates in the district as a whole.

Table 22: CCC Attendance Rates, 2008-2010

Schools	2008-09 (Year 1)			2009-10 (Year 2)			
	CCC Attendees	12th Grade Enrollment	CCC Attendance Rate	2010 CCC Attendees	2010 12th Grade Enrollment	2010 CCC Attendance Rate	Net Change
Fairfax	280	585	47.8%	270	574	47.0%	-0.8%
Reseda	212	491	43.1%	171	507	33.7%	-9.4%
South Gate	207	541	38.2%	223	631	35.3%	-2.9%
Cohort Average	**233**	**539**	**43%**	**221**	**571**	**39%**	**-4%**
District Total/Avg	***11302***	***29700***	***38%***	***11,701***	***38,805***	***30%***	***-8%***

Credit Completion

With so much attention being paid to high school graduation and college eligibility, the evaluation assembled data on credit accumulation at SLC grantee sites. Adequate credit completion refers to students on pace to earn credits that would make them graduate on time.[19] Table 23 indicates that Cohort 8 students at all grade levels performed slightly higher in terms of overall 2010-11 percentage of students "on pace" for graduation, with

[19] For 9th graders, adequate credit accumulation was set at 55 credits (i.e., passing all but one course with a letter grade of "D" or better). The cut points were set at 110 credits for 10th graders, 165 credits for 11th graders, and 220 for 12th graders.

lower levels of improvement since 2007-08 at all but grade 9 compared to LAUSD schools not receiving the grant. As such, the performance of Cohort 8 schools on this indicators mirrors the patterns seen for other performance outcomes in this report.

Table 23: % of Students Earning Adequate Credits Toward High School Graduation

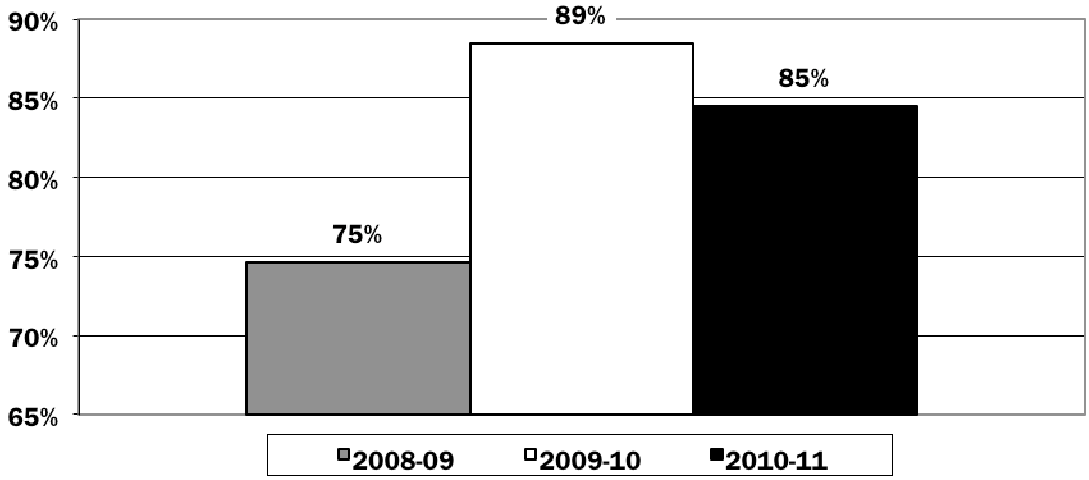
Cohort 8	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Net
9th Grade	55%	60%	57%	62%	7%
10th Grade	63%	65%	61%	60%	-3%
11th Grade	60%	63%	63%	67%	7%
12th Grade	65%	67%	69%	71%	6%
Other LAUSD Schools					
9th Grade	54%	57%	59%	59%	5%
10th Grade	57%	62%	59%	59%	2%
11th Grade	52%	61%	64%	65%	13%
12th Grade	58%	63%	69%	73%	15%

Source: LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research Branch

Perceptions of Academic Rigor

Over the first three years of the grant, school staff became more positive about Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction (Figure 16). On average, 85% of staff survey respondents were positive in 2011, an improvement of 16% (for detailed results, please consult **Appendix C**).

Figure 16: Staff Perceptions of Rigor

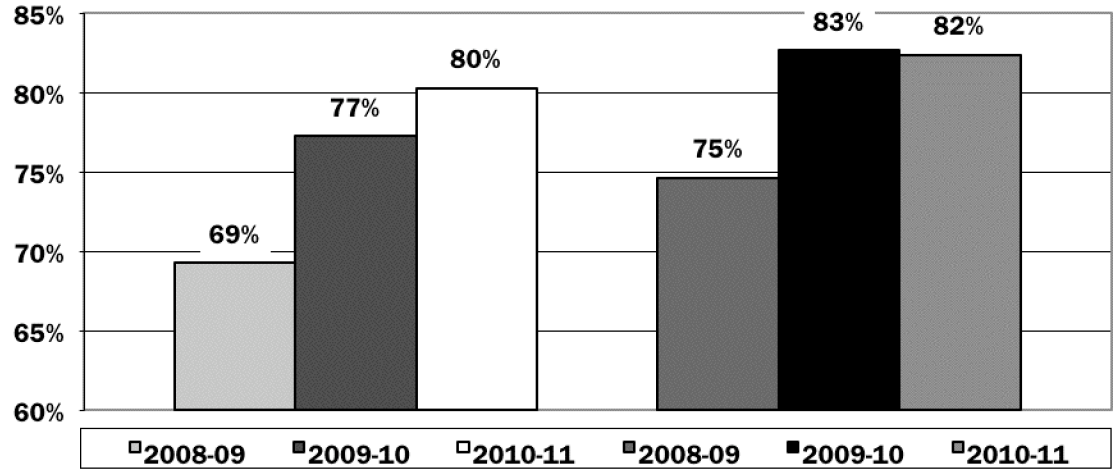


Both survey data and site visit findings suggest high levels of staff satisfaction with the quality of the instructional program. Staff were consistently most positive about students understanding academic expectations (89% agreement in 2011; increase of 8%) and responsiveness of instruction to needs of English Learners (89% agreement in 2011; an increase of 11%). The greatest improvements, according to staff survey respondents, were in the development of models for monitoring student progress (79% agreement in 2011;

increase of 12%) and examination of disaggregated student assessment data (76% agreement in 2011; increase of 16%).

Students also expressed high levels of satisfaction with the rigor of the instructional program at their schools (see Figure 17). On average, agreement to survey items increased 11% from 69% to 80% among 10th graders and increased 8% among 12th graders (from 75% to 82%) in the past three years.

Figure 17: Student Perceptions of Rigor



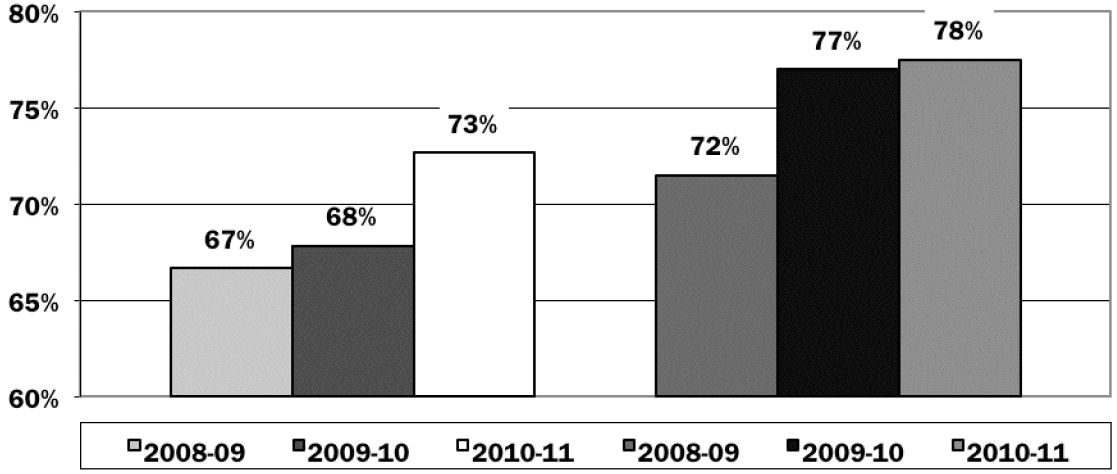
Students in both grades 10 and 12 were consistently most positive about access to tutoring (90%-91% in 2011; increases of 7% each). Students were also quite positive about preparation for college (88% of 10th graders in 2011; increase of 10% and 87% of 12th graders in 2011; increase of 5%).

In terms of improvement over time, 10th and 12th grade students saw more teachers providing them with information on how to become a better student (83% and 85% in 2011; increases of 15% and 12%, respectively). Large increases also occurred in clarity of teacher expectations, particularly for 10th graders (84% agreement among 10th graders in 2011; 13% improvement).

Students also expressed high levels of satisfaction with the relevance of the instructional program at their schools (see Figure 18). On average, 10th and 12th grade agreement to survey items increased 6% (from 67% to 73% among 10th graders and from 72% to 78% among 12th graders). Students in both grades were most positive about encouragement to consider postsecondary education (84% and 88% agreement among 10th and 12th graders, respectively, in 2011). In addition, approximately 80% of students also believed that they would be prepared for employment upon completion of high school (4% increase among students at both grade levels).

Students were least positive about "teachers knowing something about my goals and aspirations for the future" (51% of 10th graders and 64% of 12th graders in 2011), although this improved 9% and 5%, respectively).

Figure 18: Student Perceptions of Relevance



It is interesting to note that 10th grade students who reported interacting with a counselor three or more times annually were statistically more likely to agree with all survey items tied to Rigor in 2011 and Relevance in each of the past three years. In other words, counselor interaction was good "predictor" of 10th grade students perceiving their school or SLC as offering a more rigorous, and a more relevant instructional program. Among 12th graders, frequency of counselor interaction was statistically significant for most of the survey items on Relevance in 2011 but less than half of the items on Rigor.

In addition, both 10th and 12th grade Hispanic students were statistically more likely to be positive compared to non-Hispanics on most Rigor and Relevance survey items in 2011 *except* encouragement to enroll in AP courses where the reverse was true among 10th graders.

Statistically significant differences based on gender were rare among 10th graders (only two survey items under Relevance showed a pronounced difference), but more common among 12th graders (three items in Rigor and four items in Relevance). In all cases, females were more positive about Rigor and Relevance compared to male students.

However, these staff and students survey findings were somewhat at odds with data from the evaluation site visits which indicated a lack of clear evidence that curriculum and instruction had been reorganized under SLC implementation *on a school-wide basis* to ensure that all students were exposed to a more rigor or relevance *delivered by and/or though SLCs.* Instead, most Cohort 8 schools were characterized by uneven attempts to implement interdisciplinary units and/or projects. Put another way, a subset of SLCs have begun to plan common lessons/units tied to SLC themes, integrate project-based learning activities in classroom teaching, and/or reach some degree of consensus on a common set of instructional strategies or practices which would be implemented throughout their SLC.

Academic Intervention

The three Cohort 8 schools approached academic intervention in different ways. All schools had tutoring available for students, both mandatory and optional. Two schools mentioned that individual SLCs had begun to target students who were identified as "at-risk". These students would receive extra help, whether individually or in groups. One school mentioned that at-risk students met in small groups during teacher conference periods. Additional intervention methods included double-block periods of English and Mathematics, APEX Online Credit Recovery, and sheltered classes (all core academic subjects) for English Learners.

Schools noted that interventions were becoming harder to implement in certain cases. For example, due to the loss of teachers, fewer sheltered classes were being taught. Other intervention classes were also being cut, due to teacher attrition. At one school, it was noted that due to loss of clerical staff, it had become more difficult to conduct timely follow-up with interventions for at-risk students, as paperwork took more time to be filed appropriately. One school was forced to do away with a 20-minute, daily intervention period due to budget issues, and noted that it has had a noticeable impact on both student motivation and success.

Summary

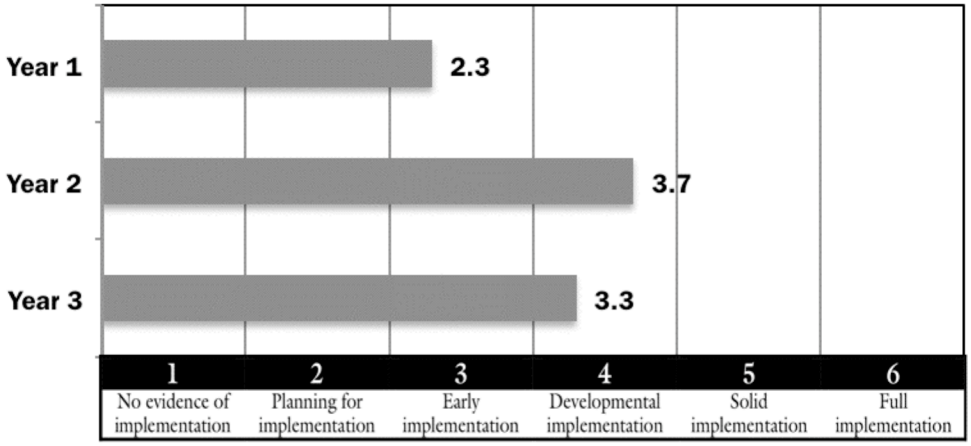
Student achievement data indicate that Cohort 8 schools were successful in improving the scores of low-performing students on the California Standards Tests and California High School Exit Exam. Cohort 8 schools also succeeded in improving four-year cumulative graduation rates. On these indicators, Cohort 8 schools tended to outperform (i.e., show a higher overall level of performance) comparable non-grantee LAUSD high schools. At the same time, Cohort 8 schools have shown lower *rates of improvement* on these indicators, compared to non-grantee LAUSD high schools. In addition, there are a number of achievement and performance indicators, which show only moderate improvements. For example, efforts to enhance academic rigor in terms of credit accumulation and postsecondary eligibility have fallen short, compared to non-grantee schools. One possible explanation is that most SLC grantee schools have struggled to integrate ongoing demands for delivery of rigorous standards-based instruction with an interdisciplinary agenda that places SLCs at the forefront of an agenda of instructional change. To the extent that substantive instructional changes have occurred they were confined to a subset of SLCs within schools. When queried about this, most schools cited "personalization" as a more prevalent SLC focus, with curricular and instructional changes further down the line.

Category 4: Professional Development

Goal: Professional Development. School will focus on effective research based instructional strategies to improve student achievement, especially, those below grade level. School staff and stakeholders will have the opportunity to develop the skills needed to participate effectively in the implementation of SLCs.

Effective, targeted professional development is an essential component of SLC implementation. Historically, school-based professional development has been organized around a combination of district mandated topics, school-wide foci, and departmental needs. The evaluation data assembled for this report indicates that Cohort 8 increased implementation for this attribute from "Planning for Implementation" to "Early Implementation" by the end of Year 3.

Figure 19: Cohort 8 - Professional Development Average Ratings



Content and Focus of Professional Development

Cohort 8 schools have focused on a wide range of professional development topics. Typically meeting once per month in SLCs and twice monthly in course or departmental groupings (sometimes termed Professional Learning Communities or PLCs), one common topic for professional development has been a focus on instructional strategies for lesson planning. For example, Cohort 8 schools have offered training and support on project-based learning (PBL), interactive notebooks, student-led conferencing, teacher questioning, among other strategies.

All schools directed teachers to collaborate around the analysis of summative and formative assessment data. This type of collaboration tended to be concentrated in course and departmental meetings but also appeared as a focus for some SLC collaboration time. Data analysis was sometimes tied to referral and monitoring of students assigned to academic interventions (e.g., CAHSEE prep). In other cases, data analysis drove the focus

of teacher support. For example, one school emphasized coaching tied to support of English Learners based on analysis of assessment data.

Site visits and documentation assembled from the SLC lead teachers at Cohort 8 schools indicate that the most common topics discussed within SLC teams included: interdisciplinary and thematic unit lesson planning; building a college-going culture among students; designing personalization activities/experiences for students; and, reviewing student conduct and discipline, and planning response to intervention.

In a few cases, professional development provided a "framework" for planning instructional changes. For example, one school has embraced Essential Elements of Effective Instruction (EEEi). Another school has developed an "effective professional development" checklist for the basis of planning all professional development. Lastly, one school also offered training for SLC Lead Teachers in Adaptive Schools, a framework for effective facilitation of teacher collaboration.

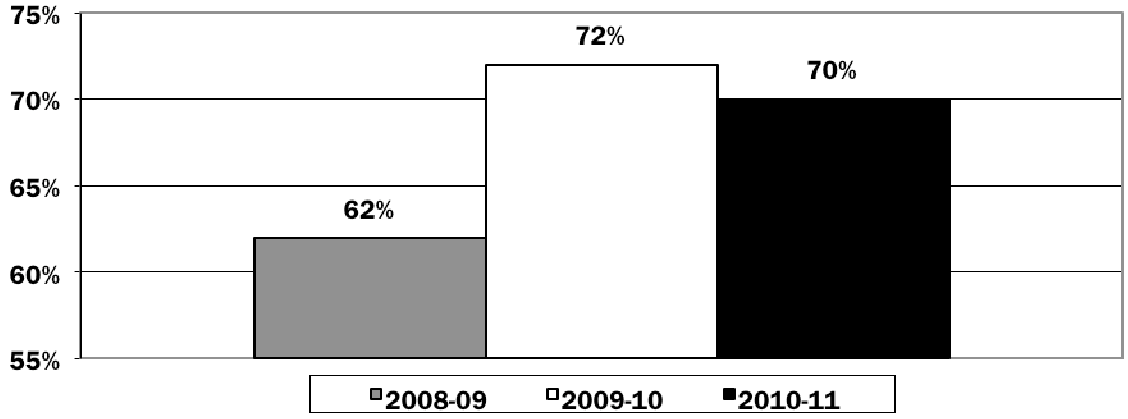
Staff Perceptions of Professional Development

Over the three years of the grant, school staff has become slightly more positive about Professional Development. On average, 70% of Cohort 8 staff survey respondents were positive by the end of Year 3, an improvement of 8% (for detailed results, please consult **Appendix C**).

Similar to site visit findings and documentation provided by schools, most (87%) staff at Cohort 8 schools in 2011 agreed that SLC teams met regularly, an increase of 9% over the past three years. Similarly, 80% of the 2011 staff at the Cohort 8 schools agreed that professional development was a public, collaborative forum for teachers, an increase of 6% since the beginning of the grant. Most (70%) of 2011 staff also agreed that SLC topics were a regular feature of school-wide professional development, a modest improvement of 5%.

The largest increase in the Professional Development SLC attribute hinged on the proportion of staff in agreement that professional development promoted the alignment of instruction with academic standards (77% in 2011, an increase of 13%). Survey data also show a large increase in staff perceptions that there was adequate time for teachers to discuss students' academic and personal needs in SLC teams (a 12% increase since Year 1).

Figure 20: Staff Perceptions of SLC Professional Development



Despite these improvements, the fact that only half (50%) of teachers agreed that there was sufficient time for SLCs to discuss and analyze student work, and slightly more than half (56%) of staff who said SLC collaboration was adequate to addressing students' academic and personal needs, suggests room for further improvement.[20]

Consistent with previous evaluation SLC evaluation report for previous cohorts, WASC accreditation tended to displace SLC collaboration at schools going through accreditation. This occurred at one Cohort 8 school in 2010-11. SLC staff felt that meeting time had been sacrificed in order to examine departmental data and instructional strategies for accreditation, and that meeting time was not as prevalent or well used as in previous years. Nonetheless, they did report that SLCs were still given some meeting time.

District-provided Professional Development

LAUSD's Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and School Support: Secondary Programs-Instruction conducted ongoing professional development for SLC lead teachers and administrators. In the early years of the grant, the professional development focused on the planning and coordination of implementation with topics such as: freshmen transition strategies and bridge programs; personalization; student advisories; increasing graduation rates; decreasing dropout rates; increasing student attendance; addressing A-G requirements; and preparing students for postsecondary education.

During the first year of the grant, LAUSD also sought to clarify the administrators' role within the SLCs; therefore, the District provided a professional development to explain how administrators can support and help sustain an SLC. The District also provided counselors with professional development that would assist in developing their leadership roles in an SLC environment.

[20] There were a few statistically significant differences comparing academic core teachers to non-core teachers in 2011. Non-core teachers were much more likely to feel that SLC collaboration provides adequate time for discussion of student work 64% vs. 41%) and to address students' academic and personal needs 74% vs. 46%).

In the later years of the grant, the professional development focused on: providing time for teachers to discuss student and school outcomes and data; examining student work to improve instruction; and training school teams on the district's Response to Instruction and Intervention model to ensure student graduation and postsecondary eligibility. School teams received training from District staff on how to access and utilize student data available in the LAUSD's My Data system. SLC lead teachers received training on effective teacher leadership to equip them with tools to enable them to become effective teacher leaders. Cohort 6 school teams were provided collaborative planning time both on and off site for curriculum planning and to review student data to guide instruction In addition, counselors were provided professional development on creating a pure SLC master schedule.

LAUSD also enlisted the support of outside partners for SLC professional development. For example, the Los Angeles Educational Partnership (LAEP) conducted trainings on Project-Based Learning, Student Led Conferences, Shared Inquiry method, Adaptive Schools seminar. The Wildwood Outreach Center provided school teams professional development on Advisories, Professional Learning Communities, Habits of Mind and Heart, Project-Based Learning, and Critical Friends Group. The integration of the arts across the content areas was facilitated by an ongoing partnership established between the District and the Music Center by the Project Director. Music Center Teaching Artists serve as coaches, and assisted teachers in interdisciplinary planning and integrating the arts into the curriculum using thematic and Project-Based Learning strategies.

LAUSD Career Technical Education (CTE) Office also provided professional development tied to integrating Multiple Pathways/Linked Learning into SLCs, which set the stage for authentic Linked Learning within CTE pathways. The CTE Office provided quarterly professional development training to assist teachers with identifying students for CTE and to ensure administrators were trained to provide master schedule access to Linked Learning pathways. In addition, these trainings were used to disseminate best practices and models for aligning SLC implementation.

Summary

Cohort 8 schools largely continued to organize professional development on a school-wide or departmental basis, with SLC teams typically meeting only once per month. Common planning time and school-based leadership development opportunities to build capacity around SLCs were rare. Nonetheless, Cohort 8 schools have made progress in shaping a professional development agenda for SLC teams that complements the focus on data analysis and instructional strategies occurring within teacher collaboration organized by department/course. In particular, Cohort 8 SLC teams have begun to focus interdisciplinary collaboration around lesson planning, college readiness, and personalization activities. Evaluation data suggest that faculty would like more time within SLC teams for collaboration that emphasizes personalizing instructional support and intervention. District-provided professional development to Cohort 8 schools has emphasized analysis and use of data for instructional planning and targeted intervention, building leadership capacity of SLC lead teachers, and college/career readiness. In addition, district-provided professional development has offered schools opportunities to deepen understanding of thematic approaches to instruction.

PART IV – CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions on SLC Implementation

SLC Attribute Ratings

As shown in the Table 24 below, Cohort 8 sites achieved the highest levels of school-wide SLC implementation in the areas of Equity & Access and Personalization. Cohort 8 schools have shown the greatest growth, in the areas of Accountability & Distributed Leadership and Parent/Community Engagement. After three years of a five year grant, Cohort 8 schools achieved ratings that put them at the "Early Implementation" phase of SLC implementation.

Table 24: SLC Implementation Ratings[21] by Year, Cohort 8 schools

SLC Attribute	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Net Change
Unifying Vision	3.3	3.3	3.7	0.4
SLC Identity	3.0	3.3	3.3	0.3
Rigorous Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2.7	3.0	3.3	0.6
Professional Development	2.7	3.0	3.0	0.3
Equity & Access	3.3	3.7	4.0	0.7
Personalization	3.0	3.3	3.7	0.7
Accountability & Distributed Leadership	1.3	3.3	2.7	1.4
Parent and Community Engagement	2.3	3.7	3.3	1.0
Overall	2.7	3.3	3.4	**0.7**

Source: Public Works

In examining these ratings of SLC implementation, it is important to note that the school is the unit of analysis. In other words, the aggregate school rating may or may not reflect what is occurring within particular SLCs. Indeed, certain SLCs were found to more show higher levels of implementation, but their level of implementation was not necessarily reflected on the school-wide implementation scale. Put another way, SLC implementation is often uneven across different SLCs on the same campus.

[21] Rating used the following scale: 1= No Evidence of Implementation; 2= Planning for Implementation; 3= Early Implementation; 4= Developmental Implementation; 5=Solid Implementation; and 6= Full Implementation.

Key Accomplishments

Restructured high schools to align with SLC principles of school improvement. The vast majority of staff (teachers, counselors, and administrators) and students were assigned to an SLC at each of the three Cohort 8 high schools. In Year 3, all grade levels had more than 90% of students enrolled in SLCs with 93% SLC participation school-wide. Data on the distribution of students to SLCs indicate that (apart from magnet programs) schools were largely successful in ensuring equity in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, Special Education, and GATE subgroups. Lingering inequities mostly hinge on gender imbalances in how students select from the menu of available SLCs on campus. In addition, Cohort 8 schools ensured the allocation of time regularly (at least monthly) for SLC interdisciplinary teams to plan and collaborate.

Improved key measures of student achievement. Cohort 8 grantee schools saw an increase in student achievement on the California Standards Test (CSTs) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. In addition, the overall level of achievement among students at Cohort 8 schools was higher than that of students at non-grantee LAUSD high schools:

- CST English/Language Arts: On average, 55% of students at Cohort 8 schools moved out of Far Below Basic (FBB) and 41% moved out of Below Basic (BB) in ELA in 2011 compared to prior year achievement. These percentages represent improvements of 7% and 6%, respectively, compared to Year 1 of the grant. Moreover, the 2011 percentages were 4%-6% higher than those found at non-grantee LAUSD high schools.

- CST Mathematics: On average, 53% of students at Cohort 8 schools moved out of Far Below Basic (FBB) and 20% moved out of Below Basic (BB) in Mathematics in 2011 compared to prior year achievement. These percentages represent improvements of 7% and 6%, respectively, compared to Year 1 of the grant. Moreover, the 2011 percentages were 4%-9% higher than those found at non-grantee LAUSD high schools.

- CAHSEE: On average, 79% of 10th graders passed the CAHSEE in ELA and Math in 2011. In both subject areas, Cohort 8 schools scored slightly higher than schools in LAUSD that had never received the grant.

Improved extent of personalization. Within the SLCs there was an increase in attention to monitoring student progress and sharing data on student achievement across faculty members. SLCs have begun to place an emphasis on the development of the counseling and guidance aspect of personalization, especially the link of personalization to 9th grade transition and, to a lesser degree, college readiness. Cohort 8 schools also showed improvements on quantitative indicators tied to personalization including:

- Graduation Rate: Cohort 8 schools had a higher graduation rate in 2009-10 (80.5%) than that of the state or other LAUSD high schools that never received the grant.

- Dropout Rate: The overall four-year derived dropout rate among Cohort 8 schools was 5.9% lower than both that of LAUSD schools who had never received the grant and the state-wide average.

- Attendance Rate: Student attendance increased by 1%-2% since Year 1 at the Cohort 8 SLC grantee schools, a rate comparable to non-grantee LAUSD high schools.

Implementation Challenges and Barriers

For the Cohort 8 high schools included in this evaluation, five key issues related to SLC implementation loomed largest as challenges. These included: 1) adapting master schedules to prioritize a SLC vision that includes ALL students grouped by SLC in at least 50% of courses; 2) creating adequate time and opportunities for staff to meet and collaborate; 3) linking SLCs more concretely to ongoing efforts to improve instructional practices; 4) defining clear areas for SLC autonomy in order to increase staff ownership of the SLC initiative and true change in school culture; and 5) minimizing faculty and administrative turnover to provide continuity and sustainability of SLC implementation.

Vision and Structural Reform. Cohort 8 schools have not been able to adapt the school master schedules to prioritize a SLC vision that includes all students grouped heterogeneously by SLC in at least 50% of their courses. While progress has occurred, students typically are in two "pure" SLC courses (33%) in a given semester, rather than the 50% or more threshold envisioned under SLC restructuring. In addition, the autonomy of SLCs has not been sufficiently development or defined. As such, SLC leaders continue to struggle to advocate for interdisciplinary teams as a key organizational plank in school improvement efforts. This, in turn, constrains the ability of SLCs to deepen distributed leadership and institutionalize decentralized school cultures.

Rigor and Relevance of the Instructional Program. Data from this evaluation does not support the notion that SLC implementation significantly changed classroom instruction. Cohort 8 schools have made modest progress in adapting and developing curricula aimed at increasing relevancy, constructivist learning approaches, and real world applications of learning tied to SLC themes. In addition, some of the quantitative data assembled for this evaluation indicate a need for more emphasis on college readiness and building a college culture on high school campuses including:

- Postsecondary Eligibility: Despite district-wide emphasis on enrolling all students in an A-G sequence of courses, data suggest that nearly half students are struggling to achieve in these courses. Between 2007-08 and 2009-10, the percentage of graduates with UC/CSU eligibility (i.e., passing all required A-G courses with letter grades of "C" or better) at Cohort 8 SLC grantee schools increased by 2.1% to 58.5% (2010-11 data not available at time of publication). LAUSD high schools that never received federal SLC grant funding showed an increase of 6.7% to 56.7%.

- Course Credit Accumulation: Even at a lower bar of "D" or better, the data assembled for this evaluation show high levels of course failure. The percentage of students meeting the minimal credits for matriculation to the next grade level ranged from 60%-71% (depending on grade level) at Cohort 8 schools. On

average, Cohort 8 schools performed quite similarly relative to LAUSD high schools (range of 59%-73%) that did not receive federal SLC grant funding on this indicator.

- Postsecondary Placement: Data on enrollment of students in postsecondary education also shows cause for concern. Between 2008-09 and 2009-10, the Cohort 8 graduates attending UC/CSU schools decreased by 2% to 22% (2010-11 data not available at time of publication). LAUSD overall showed an increase of 8%, also to 22%. Attendance at California Community Colleges also declined 4% at Cohort 8 schools to 39%, with a steeper decline of 8% district-wide to 30%.

Professional Development. Cohort 8 schools struggled with allocating sufficient time for SLC (interdisciplinary) teams to collaborate given pressures to prioritize course and department-alike groupings of teachers. SLC teams typically met once per month, with none of the Cohort 8 schools able to provide common conference periods for SLC teachers to collaborate.

Staffing and Leadership. Multiple changes in district leadership (Superintendent, Board of Education, and local districts) have affected oversight and extent of support/emphasis place upon the SLC initiative. In addition, high rates of teacher, counselor, and administrative turnover tied to State budget crisis have hampered the continuity and sustainability of SLC implementation.

SLC Lessons Learned by Attribute

In the section below, we have provided a set of "lessons learned" for each of the eight LAUSD SLC attributes. These represent a set of actions and priorities, within each attribute, for enhancing SLC implementation that may be helpful to schools, local districts, LAUSD central office, and the Board of Education.

Unifying SLC Vision:

- **Define what the transition from SLCs to Small Schools will entail, prioritizing the commitment to standards-based instructional reform augmented by curricular relevance and personalized relationships**. Although the Los Angeles Board of Education adopted a resolution on the phased transition to small, autonomous secondary schools, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the field about how this will occur. Will each SLC become a small school? What will autonomy consists of? Is the instructional agenda for change different under small schools? All these and many more are the kind of questions that schools are asking. Each implies a need for a stronger statement from LAUSD on the role/function of SLCs during a transition to small schools. Therefore, we urge LAUSD to disseminate a vision for change that brings together district directives on standards-based instruction, dropout prevention, and school-wide accountability that includes SLCs as the primary vehicle for high school restructuring with a set of benchmarks for how these entities will become effective and accountable small, autonomous schools.

- **Clarify and continually reinforce the rationale, purpose, and direction of SLC reform efforts.** Implementing SLCs on a school-wide basis is a revolutionary

paradigm shift in how high school education ought to be organized, therefore, it is necessary to continually communicate the roles and responsibilities of all staff in carrying out SLC restructuring, as well as information on SLC progress during school-wide faculty meetings, professional development, school newsletters, and other communication methods.

- **Minimize administrative turnover to help project a sense of continuity to SLC restructuring.** As administrators change, SLC implementation tends to stall. LAUSD should consider policies that would ensure continuity and stability within key leadership positions such as a minimum of a three-year term for high school administrators.

- **Create transparent governance structures and work to become more inclusive and communicative.** Developing SLCs requires empowering teachers and cultivating teacher-leaders who are able to demonstrate collective responsibility for student learning. Pre-existing governance, departmental and programmatic structures need to make room for the expansion of school leadership under SLCs.

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

SLC Identity:

- **Publicize SLC autonomy in curriculum, instruction, and assessment**. Explicit direction from LAUSD on the appropriate autonomy of SLC teams (and ultimately small schools) in redesigning curriculum, instruction and assessments should be disseminated to high schools and local district. Indeed, incorrect assumptions about the limits of SLC autonomy have handicapped SLC implementation at many schools. Other schools have defined SLC autonomy in the local context but then encountered difficulties with district staff charged with oversight. Given the Board adopted policy requiring all secondary schools to move toward SLCs and now small schools, there must be a clearer statement from the district on where SLC autonomy is necessary and expected.

- **Continue to focus on establishing a strong identity for each SLC that is evident in what students are learning in the classroom.** Each SLC needs to develop a distinct approach to learning that is evident in thematic linkages, specific instructional strategies, personalization strategies, and/or assessment methods that is clearly understood by staff and students.

- **Nurture collaboration within SLC teams.** SLC teams of teachers, counselors, and administrators (the "triad" of SLC support) need opportunities to collaborate and work together to create an academic SLC identity that should be supported by

school and local district leadership. Furthermore, schools would benefit from clearly delineating the responsibilities of the triad of support.

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

Rigorous Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment:

- **Focus SLC efforts on changing classroom instruction.** It was common for schools to focus on the implementing the structures of SLC redesign and improving the relationships between staff and students rather than aggressively changing instructional practices to encompass curricular relevance or personalized approaches to learning. SLCs must work to modify and adapt instructional delivery based on the their thematic focus and unique student needs. While it is difficult and time-consuming work but not impossible to achieve when SLC leaders (SLC lead teachers, administrators assigned to SLCs, and dedicated counselors) work together to plan and implement standards-based lessons that also integrate the thematic orientation of the SLC in applications (relevance) and differentiated, scaffolded support for students (personalization).

- **Utilize SLCs more effectively as the vehicle for establishing a college-going culture**. Over the course of the grant, student expectations for postsecondary education have been raised, but postsecondary eligibility and actual postsecondary attendance did not increase. SLCs offer the opportunity tailor thematic approaches to learning (in the core academic program) that link high school experiences more concretely to postsecondary pathways and eventual career options. Similarly, SLCs might play a more proactive role in providing students with exposure to note-taking and study skills, as well as increase opportunities for academic dialogue and student research projects of the kind that will be needed for success at the postsecondary level.

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

- **Improve articulation with feeder middle schools.** Middle school articulation should focus on beginning the SLC "conversation" earlier during the 8th grade year rather than the traditional Spring visits to program incoming 9th graders in order to allow students and parents the opportunity to make informed choices about a high school program of study. In addition, transferring middle school student data to high school staff must be provided in a timely fashion so that high schools to allocate students to SLCs in a balanced and equitable manner.

Professional Development:

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

- **Become more strategic in designing and allocating professional development time.** Simply dividing time between SLCs and departments does not necessarily reflect a coherent plan based on priorities. School leaders need to strategically identify topics sequence for the year, choose the most appropriate group (SLCs, departments, grade-level teams or school-wide faculty) for the topic, and ensure that professional development activities are connected to school-wide improvement priorities.

- **Create a coherent professional development plan that markets SLC as an umbrella reform for school improvement instead of one of many initiatives.** Schools need to understand how multiple reform efforts are connected so that they can effectively "filter" and "translate" external mandates into a coherent instructional improvement plan that makes sense to the classroom teacher. Even better, high schools should submit an annual professional development plan to their local district that clearly specifies how professional development will address rigor, relevance, and relationships, allocating this topics between SLC teams, subject area departments, and school-wide professional development forums.

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

Equity and Access:

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

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

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

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

Personalization:

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

- **Continue to include goal-setting and the on-going management of student goals tied to post-high school plans as key aspects of personalization.** Students, parents and teachers need accurate information about high school graduation requirements and pre-requisites for four-year colleges and universities. In lieu of the establishment of advisory periods at more grantee schools, additional information

regarding high school graduation and postsecondary requirements (i.e., A-G requirements) could be integrated during SLC recruitment efforts and middle school articulation, and then followed up during the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) process that is a mandated aspect of student counseling.

- **Provide more systematic and data-driven intervention through SLCs that is less reliant on student initiative.** Academic intervention remains insufficiently integrated with school-based systems that are capable of identifying students who clearly need additional help to master rigorous standards. Allowing SLCs to provide and manage intervention may prove to be more effective than using a school-wide approach to intervention, which could lead to academic intervention becoming proactive rather than reactive.

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

Accountability and Distributed Leadership:

- **Continue to monitor and provide oversight of school master schedules**. Although there has been improvement in terms of establishing "pure" classes (i.e., course sections where all or nearly all of students belong to the same SLC), this is a concern at a number of grantee sites. In addition, none of the Cohort 8 sites have provided SLC teachers with common conference (prep) periods as a structural support for teacher collaboration. These findings indicate a need for local districts to monitor (and provide support to) school master schedules for evidence of a commitment to the principles of reform embodied in the SLC initiative. Specifically, district oversight should include examination of class rosters for SLC purity (i.e., do classes group students by SLC?), content coverage (i.e., do students stay within their SLC for most or all subjects?) equity and access to SLCs (i.e., are students grouped heterogeneously across the different SLCs?), and high expectations (i.e., what percentage are enrolled and being successful in A-G courses?). Local Districts can also help schools restructure time to support intervention, personalization and advisement needs of SLCs. Schools need help understanding how to leverage "smallness" to better meet student need.

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

it is committed to building the capacity of front-line staff to serve as instructional resources and agents of change.

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

Parent and Community Engagement:

- **Develop more systematic ways to involve parents up-front in the design of SLCs and on into SLC implementation.** Schools need to involve parents in the design and construction of SLCs to ensure ownership and reinforce the importance of parent involvement from the beginning. This would decrease the tendency for schools to delay SLC connections until they involved in the SLC placement process (such as the signing off of student SLC preference forms, or SLC orientations).

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

- **Create SLC advisory boards for parents and external partners in order to link these stakeholders more concretely to the development and expansion of SLCs**. Schools should develop SLC advisory boards, comprised of parent and partner representatives that could assist schools in outreach, provide opportunities for participation in SLC decision-making, and showcase school commitment to altering the status quo. That outreach would allow SLCs addresses misconceptions about college and career preparation and equip families with skills needed to chart a post-high school pathway for students.