A Guide for Developing a Smaller Learning Community

Overview of Smaller Learning Communities

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, which includes a component on the purpose of Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs). The law allows eligible large public high schools (defined as schools that include grades 11 and 12 and enroll at least 1,000 students in grades 9 and above) to competitively apply for funds for the following:

1. Studying the feasibility of creating SLCs;
2. Researching, developing, and implementing strategies for creating SLCs;
3. Providing professional development for school staff in the teaching methods that would be used in SLCs; and
4. Developing and implementing strategies to include parents, business representatives, community-based organizations, and other community members in the activities of the SLCs.

Federal SLC grants provide LEAs with funds to plan, implement or expand SLCs in large high schools of 1,000 students or more (the goal is no more than 600 students in a learning community). Strategies may include 9th grade houses, instituting personal adult advocates, developing teacher advisory systems and other innovations designed to create a more personalized high school experience for students and improve student achievement and performance.

The Shift to Smaller Learning Environments

Approximately 70% of American high school students attend schools enrolling more than 1,000 or more students; nearly 50% of high school students attend schools enrolling more than 1,500 students. Research on smaller schools and SLCs suggests that:

- An effective size for secondary schools is in the range of 400-800 students (Williams, 1990).
- Smaller learning environments are a condition for boosting student achievement (Williams, 1990).
- Enrollment size has a stronger effect on learning in schools with large concentrations of poor and minority children (Cotton, 1996).
- School size has positive effects on student outcomes as evidenced by students' attendance rates, frequency of disciplinary actions, school loyalty, use of alcohol or drugs, satisfaction with school and self-esteem (Raywid (1995) and Klonsky (1995)).
- Smaller schools are safer and more productive because students feel less alienated, more nurtured and more connected to caring adults, and teachers feel that they have more opportunity to get to know and support their students (Fowler & Walberg, 1991; Gregory, 1992; Stockard & Mayberry, 1992).
The Context for SLCs in LAUSD

Driven by the standards-based instruction movement and State accountability mandates, LAUSD adopted standards-based instructional reforms. Beginning in 2000, LAUSD has worked to develop standards-based instructional guides specifying curricular scope and sequence at each grade level and for each core academic 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 funded site-based 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 instruction first at the elementary level which has since expanded to the secondary level. According to LAUSD’s 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 improved over the last five years. Unfortunately, these improvements were not 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.

The Key Intentions and Goals of SLCs

The central goal of Smaller Learning Communities is the creation of structures and strategies that create personalize instruction in ways that support equitable access of all students to rigorous, standards-based academic content. Specifically, the implementation of SLCs should result in:

- Student attachment to adults who help students plan and prepare for post-high school success;
- Enhanced student access to high academic standards including programming into the A-G course necessary for public postsecondary eligibility in California;
- Increased student engagement in learning resulting in increased percentages of high school graduates.

On a school-wide basis, the expectation is that SLCs will be available to students “wall-to-wall” within three years. In other words, ALL students must have the opportunity to participate in a SLC. It is essential to recognize that SLCs have existed in LAUSD at the secondary level for more than two decades. School-within-a-school programs such as magnet schools, career academies (including California Partnership academies), and Humanitas programs have provided a subset of students with rigorous, personalized,
thematic and interdisciplinary instruction. The challenge now is to scale up these existing specialized programs so that all students benefit from participation in SLCs.

LAUSD Attributes

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.

No matter which SLC approach your team is working on implementing, the SLC must work toward implementation of the LAUSD Attributes. The Attributes function as benchmarks to determine whether SLC implementation is successful in terms of increased student achievement, engagement and personalization.

1. Unified Vision

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

2. SLC Identity

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

3. Rigorous Standards Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

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

4. Equity and Access

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

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

6. Accountability and Distributed Leadership

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

7. Collaboration, Parent and Community Engagement

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

8. Professional Development

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

Professional development is monitored and assessed regularly for effectiveness and implementation to ensure continuous school improvement.

TWO COMMON SLC APPROACHES

There are many different approaches to implementing SLC on a school-wide basis. In some schools, the SLC approach is to divide a grade level into smaller schools (horizontal slice) where a ninth grade class of 900 becomes three schools of 300. This approach is typically called the “house” approach where students and teachers are group together in SLCs with a group identity in order to increase personalization. This approach can be implemented at any grade level, but is typically implemented at the 9th grade.

A second approach is the Academy or Pathway SLC where student chose a thematic pathway at the 10th grade after completing a 9th grade house. Pathways or Academies typically include 10th-12th graders in a SLC comprised of 300-500 students. The curriculum provides students access to A-G coursework with a thematic approach such as visual and performing arts, health, transportation or other academic/occupational theme.

The Academy or Pathway SLC approach can begin at the 9th grade, but would then require a much stronger middle school recruitment component in order for students to select a thematic Academy/Pathway before arriving at high school.
This guide has been designed for use in creating an individual SLC plan for multiple types of SLCs including Houses, Academies, or Pathways.

**CREATING A VISION**

Creating a vision for your SLC is a crucial starting point for planning because it lays down the philosophical foundation of the SLC. A written vision clarifies your SLC’s aspirations, expectations and theme; it answers the question “What do you want your SLC to be and stand for?”

Creating this vision requires thinking about what students should know and be able to do after completing high school. In addition, it requires you to think about a number of key principles that will provide the foundation for their SLC. A vision is created by combining these two components into a coherent strategy that will guide the planning and decision-making process.

**ENVISIONING YOUR IDEAL STUDENT**

**Individual/Group Exercise**

**Directions:** Envision the “ideal” graduate of your SLC. What should students know and be able to do after completing high school? Consider broad student outcomes, rather than outcomes related to specific course content.) Discuss these issues with your group and write down the knowledge and skills students should possess.

**Examples**

Graduating students will be capable of discovering, managing, analyzing, and creatively applying information in a broad range of contexts.

Students will be able to solve problems, work with others, think abstractly, and employ technological skills.

The ideal student graduating from this program should be able to...

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
Group Exercise

Now that you have discussed what your students will have accomplished after they have completed your SLC. You are ready to create its vision.

**Directions:** Use the following process with your group to create your vision SLC.

- Prioritize selected phrases from your group’s vision of an ideal student.
- Build these into a sentence or paragraph that describes an ideal future.
- Involve each person in the process of writing the vision.
- Gain consensus (or rewrite the vision until you can then reach consensus).

**Examples**

Students in the Computer Technology SLC are prepared for life-long learning: They are capable of discovering, managing, analyzing, and creatively applying information in a broad range of contexts.

The integration of academic and thematic education in the Computer Technology SLC will provide students with a strong academic and technological base of knowledge and personalization that they will use in their careers or postsecondary experiences.

**Our SLC vision is...**
**SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR SLC**

Goals represent a concrete way of working toward fulfilling your vision. Your vision represents answers to the question *What* (What kinds of students do we want as a result of participation in the SLC)? The goals help you with the question *How* (How do we get students there from here)? Goals appear in a variety of forms. They may be embedded in mission statements, statements of purpose, or objectives.

### EXAMPLE SLC GOALS

**Measurable Objectives**

- 80% of students will graduate from high school within four years eligible for postsecondary education.
- Every high school graduate will leave high school with a coherent plan for postsecondary education, further training, or employment.

**Key practices**

- Increasing access to challenging, standards-based curriculum and instruction that meets A-G course requirements.
- Providing students with opportunities to exercise autonomy, interaction, and choice as part of an interactive, and project-based interdisciplinary curriculum so that all students are actively engaged in the learning process.
- Increasing access to academic studies that teach the essential concepts from the college preparatory curriculum through functional and applied strategies that enable students to see the relationship between course content and future roles they envision for themselves.
- Having an organizational structure and schedule that enables teachers to have the time to plan and to provide integrated instruction aimed at teaching academic content in real-life contexts so that students see relevant applications of learning.
- Involving each student and his or her parent(s) in career guidance and individualized advisory system aimed at ensuring the completion of an accelerated program of study leading to a post-high school action plan.
- Regularly using student assessment and program evaluation data to continuously improve curriculum, instruction, school climate, organization, and management to advance student learning.
GOAL CRITERIA

In order for goals to be effective, goals should be…

- **Meaningful and realistic.** A goal is meaningful if it is clear and if it strives to produce educated students. A goal is realistic if it can feasibly be achieved over time.

- **Agreed to by all stakeholders.** All persons who have a stake in the educational process or who will be responsible for helping to achieve the goals should be familiar with and support the goals.

- **Measurable.** A goal is measurable if it suggests outcomes that could feasibly be measured or action steps that could be monitored to determine progress toward the goal.

- **Complementary.** Goals are complementary if each one contributes to the overall vision. Any goal that conflicts with others should be re-examined.

- **Assigned clear priorities among themselves.** Because limited resources may prevent pursuing all goals simultaneously or with equal attention, clear priorities should be set among the various goals.

**Goals that meet these criteria are more likely to be effective in bringing about desired change.**

### Setting Goals

Work independently with your small group to develop a set of goals.

- Select one person from your group to be a recorder/presenter for your group.

- Think individually about what you believe to be the most important goals for your SLC and write them down.

- With your group, take turns sharing the goals you have identified.

- Work as a group to finalize and write a consensus list of goals.

- Check your goals to the Goal Criteria. Revise where needed.

- After identifying a list of goals, your group should establish priorities among them. Use the boxes on the right side of this page to insert priority numbers. The highest priority goal should have a #1 beside it.
ELEMENTS OF SLC STRUCTURE

After establishing a vision and goals, you can begin defining the structures needed to support your vision and goals. SLCs have some key elements that must be included in your structure planning:

Basic SLC Structure:

♦ A defined set of grade-levels served and possible theme of your SLC.

♦ A sequence of courses that allow for heterogeneous groupings for services to varying types of students.

♦ A plan whereby 300-500 students will share the same group of teachers.

♦ Identification of how students will take most or all of their course work within the SLC (i.e., specific courses that can be identified on the school’s master schedule).

♦ Provisions that allow common preparation time and professional development for teachers within the SLC.

♦ A description of how your SLC will “localize” decision-making linked to instruction & assessment, professional development, personnel/staffing, resource allocation, facilities, student conduct, parent outreach, etc.
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♦ A plan for how your SLC will provide guidance and counseling services so that each student enrolled in the SLC has a personal (written) plan for high school graduation and postsecondary education.

REMEMBER ON TYPICAL SLC APPROACHES

**House:** the SLC approach is to divide a grade into smaller schools (horizontal slice) where a ninth grade class of 900 becomes three schools of 300. This approach is typically called the “house” approach where students and teachers are group together in smaller schools with a group identity in order to increase personalization. This approach can be implemented at any grade level, but is typically implemented at the 9th grade.

**Academy/Pathway:** a SLC where student chose a thematic pathway at the 10th grade after completing a 9th grade house. Pathways or Academies in this model include 10th-12th graders in a 300-500 size small learning community. The curriculum provides students access to A-G coursework with a thematic approach such as visual and performing arts, health, transportation or other theme. The Academy or Pathway SLC approach can begin at the 9th grade, but much has a strong middle school recruitment component in order for students to select their thematic Academy/Pathway before arriving at high school.

**DEFINING YOUR SLC STRUCTURE**

Structural issues such as retention policies or recruitment strategies are up to your team to decide, taking into account what is best for your SLC. The following structural issues that should be addressed when developing a SLC:

- Target student population
- Master Schedule/Courses
- Recruitment strategies and standards
- Personnel/Staffing
- Facilities/Physical Space
- Exit/Retention policy
- Resource management

Read through the following sets of descriptions and questions. Determine which questions apply to your SLC. As you discuss your SLC structure, keep your vision and goals in mind so that the structure supports achieving your vision and goals.

**Target Student Population**

Defining your student population must be carefully considered. There are issues to consider such as which grade levels to include, the number of students at each grade level, and the characteristics of the students to be included. The SLC should be open to all interested students. In a single grade level House, the students maybe to randomly selected. Consider the following questions:
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➢ What grade levels will the SLC serve?

➢ How many students will be in the SLC at each grade level (or single grade level)?

➢ Will your SLC have any entrance requirements or prerequisites? If yes, what are they and why?

➢ How will your SLC ensure equitable representation of the entire school based on gender, socioeconomics, English language proficiency, Special Education, race/ethnicity?

➢ How will you ensure equity based on academic competencies so that there is a heterogeneous mix of students?

Master Schedule/Defining Courses

High Schools are governed by the Master Schedule and the A-G course requirements. Begin with the sequence of courses that are aligned to the A-G course requirements. Remember to include both academic and elective/vocational courses at each grade level. Consider the following questions:

➢ What courses will be included in the SLC at each grade level? In other words, where will students in the same grade level be scheduled into classes together (cohort scheduling)?

➢ What courses will be required of students, but taught outside of the SLC at each grade level? Will students take these courses as a group or be integrated into the larger school population?

➢ Will all students take the same courses in all subject areas? What degree of structure, sequencing, and adaptation to the needs of individual students (i.e., students with special needs) may be necessary?

➢ How will you work with the administrator/counselor in-charge of the master schedule to advocate for your SLC’s needs?

Recruitment Strategies and Standards

You may need to develop a recruitment strategy for your SLC. Especially when a SLC is first started, students within and outside the school will need to understand what the SLC is about and what the entrance requirements are, if any. Consider the following questions:

➢ At what grade level will recruitment efforts take place?

➢ What are the local area(s) or school(s) that students will be recruited from, or is there a target group within your school to focus on? Will one or more groups from the area be targeted for recruiting; if so, what criteria define them?
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➢ How will the recruiting be done and who will do it?
➢ How many students are you hoping to obtain through recruitment strategies?
➢ Is parental permission/consent needed for students to be recruited to the SLC?

Personnel/Staffing

Finding committed staff who would like to begin a SLC around a particular thematic area may influence the size of the SLC, the courses to be taught, and the scope of the SLC. It is important to start with a small, highly motivated group of teachers who are willing to work together. In a SLC, the team of teachers selected must teach a block of courses with the same group of students at each grade level. Consider the following questions:

➢ Which teachers are interested in participating in the SLC currently? Which subjects do these teachers represent?
➢ From which remaining subject areas do you need to recruit teachers? How will recruitment be conducted? What are the potential barriers to recruitment in your school or district?
➢ How many periods per day or week will each teacher teach in the SLC? Will they be dedicated to the SLC or teach outside of the SLC as well?
➢ Will teachers have a common planning period in their schedule to coordinate instruction, discuss student problems, and develop SLC activities?
➢ Will staff members be required to have special backgrounds or credentials for teaching in various areas or subjects?
➢ How will the size of student groups affect the staffing needs within the SLC? What will your teacher-student ratio be?
➢ What changes will be needed to achieve your ideal class size or to make the best use of the current ratio?
➢ Will team teaching or other teaching techniques be used? If yes, will it alter the ratio of students per teacher? How?

Facilities/Physical Space

Planning the physical space of the SLC is an important step in the development process. Often it is easier for teachers to consistently work together on curriculum and student problems if they are physically located near each other within the school. The idea of an SLC is to create a separate school for a group of students. Consider the following questions:
Is there enough space to support the expected number of students?

Are the teachers’ classrooms in the SLC located as close to each other as possible?

Will new equipment or studios/laboratories in the SLC require additional space? Is a security system needed for expensive equipment?

Is there any school space that can be used more efficiently?

What physical space is available at surrounding schools, businesses, community centers, or other facilities that could support student learning and SLC activities?

Exit/Retention Policy

Establishing and disseminating the rules for students to stay in or exit from the SLC at the outset will solve (or prevent) many problems later on. Develop a set of expectations of what is required and communicate it to the students. Consider the following questions:

For what reason (and how frequently) will a student be allowed to exit a SLC? Where will they exit to?

How will the SLC handle natural attrition (i.e., students who change schools)? Will the students be replaced?

What strategies will be put in place to prevent students from dropping out of the SLC?

Resource Management

Organizing a SLC requires that you examine how you currently allocate resources. New scheduling or staffing configurations may not cost more money, but many require shifts in funds. As you open your doors to the community, additional resources may come into the school, or resources such as physical space may be offered that offset costs at the school site. It is essential that your SLC take the necessary time to plan, budget, and manage resources so that your resources support your priorities and goals.

How do existing resources support your goals for your SLC?

How will school administrators be assigned to the management of your SLC (counselors, assistant principals etc.)?

How will you fund new scheduling and staffing arrangements? How will teachers receive the essential planning time needed to help implement the SLC?

How can categorical funds such as Title 1, School Improvement, Perkins, Career Academies, etc. support the SLC?
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- How can supplemental state funds for activities such as professional development, technology, and math and science support SLC?

- Are there community groups, employers, or foundations that would be willing to support your SLC? How?

- What are the ongoing costs and one-time costs of the SLC? Will you need start-up funds? Where will you get these funds?

- Who is ultimately in charge of managing a budget for the SLC?

REACHING CONSENSUS ON STRUCTURE

Group Exercise

**Directions:** After the group has discussed some of the structural issues involved in developing the SLC, record the results of these discussions. If you divided the issues, it is important to share with each other, as some of the issues will overlap. In this case, you might need to discuss these issues further and negotiate to resolve any decisions that may not be in agreement.

- **Target Student Population**

- **Master Schedule/Defining Courses**
Group Exercise (continued)

- Recruitment Strategies and Standards

- Staffing

- Physical Space

- Exit/Retention policy
Resource Management

The following structural issues were unanswered, require more information, or require additional efforts toward resolution:
SELECTING SLC STRATEGIES

Curriculum and Assessment

It is critical that the organization of instruction in SLCs support the larger instructional mandate of aligning teaching and learning to State content standards. SLCs provide a more personalized (and potentially innovative) set of learning strategies based on the expectation that all students will learn and perform at high levels. The variety of curricular and assessment strategies to choose from in designing your SLC include the following:

• **Project-Based Learning**: Interdisciplinary teams of teachers work together to develop integrated projects. Projects integrate the skills and knowledge students will need to work in a particular industry. Projects may vary in duration from one day to a few weeks.

• **Career Thematic Integration**: Such integration involves reforming traditional academic and vocational curricula that are taught separately by organizing curriculum around an occupational theme or themes.

• **Student-Directed Learning**: Teachers in effective work-oriented SLC rely more on coaching strategies, in which they encourage students to think independently and analytically, than they would on traditional lecturing or practice drills. Teachers might also structure classroom activities differently, by teaming students in pairs or small groups or assigning self-directed learning.

• **Team Teaching**: Two or more teachers pool their knowledge to plan and offer a single integrated course. Although a number of combinations are possible, an integrated approach must involve both academic and elective/vocational teachers.

• **Senior Project**: Over the course of a school year, typically in their senior year, students write a research paper, plan a final project, and give an oral presentation of their findings. Usually, the project involves a student-selected topic, and links concepts students have learned both inside and outside of school.

• **Portfolios**: A portfolio is a collection of work that demonstrates a student’s skills, interests, talents, and ambitions. The collection may include such items as work samples (of both writing and physical products), letters of recommendation, and a completed resume or job application.

• **Articulation**: Formalized agreements that connect secondary and postsecondary coursework including options such as dual or concurrent enrollments as well as prerequisite or credit agreements.
Personalization

Various support activities facilitate students’ continuing engagement in school and their connections to their teachers and classmates. The support aims to help students plan their school experiences to enable them to engage in school and transition to the next level. These activities also include efforts that “connect” partners involved in creating a seamless system such as parents, teachers and employers.

- **Teacher Advisory:** In this type of support structure, the school assigns one teacher to “follow” a student throughout the four years of high school. Advisory staff members might provide additional guidance and counseling related to future careers, resources, course selection, and even personal matters. Usually advisory periods occur during the school day, but the frequency of these periods varies. Some schools have advisory periods every day, while others offer them less frequently, perhaps once a week or month.

- **Guidance and Counseling:** Counselors help students think and learn about education (secondary and postsecondary) and career options and opportunities. Guidance and counseling also assist students with school-related and personal issues. The guidance and counseling model varies based on the needs of the type of SLC to be implemented.

- **Professional Development:** Professional development provides teachers with opportunities to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to organize education for rigorous academic achievement, personalization, and overall student engagement. Teachers need opportunities to learn new strategies and become expert master schedulers.

- **Parent Involvement:** Parents work with counselors and teachers to provide guidance to the student in planning and decision-making. Involving the parent(s) in the guidance program seeks to raise students’ aspirations and to increase their motivation, focus, and achievement.

- **Partnership Building:** Strengthen partnerships by bringing together educators, employers, students and parents working to create a strong SLC.

Workplace/Community Connections

Work-based learning and/or work experience are opportunities for students to understand and practice the relevance of academic learning. Potential strategies to consider include the following:

- **Studio/Lab:** Studios and laboratories are appropriate rooms/equipment and curricular activities that allow students to work independently and in teams to complete projects and hands-on activities.

- **Service Learning:** All students in LAUSD are now required to participate in at least one certified service learning experience while in high school in order to graduate.
from high school. According to the Los Angeles Board of Education resolution, “Service Learning is a teaching/learning strategy in which students learn and develop through active participation in high quality service that meets the needs of a community... Service learning is aligned with State standards, fosters civic responsibility, and provides structured time for student reflection.”

- **Internship:** Internships are paid or unpaid work experiences that are integrated into a student’s curriculum. They can occur over the summer or throughout the school year. Internships provide an overview of the business/industry as well as a true sense of everyday work life.

- **Job Shadowing:** Students observe workers at the workplace as they perform everyday work activities. The time and duration of these experiences vary as well as how much of the scope of the industry is observed.

- **Mentoring:** A student is paired with an adult worker from the student’s selected industry of field. This person is able to explain to students how what they learn in the classroom is linked to what they will do on the job. Mentors can assist students with career-related decisions and their transition form school to work. Mentoring relationships can last the duration of high school.

- **Guest Speakers/Field Trips:** Guest speakers are representatives from business and industry who visit the school and present speeches or demonstrations on a topic related to a career or occupation. Field trips use the same principle of providing firsthand exposure to an industry or business; however, students actually go to the workplaces to observe and discuss tasks being performed.

### SELECTING SLC STRATEGIES

**Group Exercise**

**Directions:** Having defined your vision, goals and structure, you are ready to choose the key strategies for your SLC. Identify and reach consensus on the components of your SLC by answering the following set of questions:

⇒ *What curriculum and assessment strategies should be included in the SLC?*
What personalization strategies should be included in the SLC?

⇒ What workplace/community connections should be included in the SLC?
Developing Action Plans

Now that you have developed a vision and goals and selected a SLC structure and strategies, you are ready to begin planning and implementing your SLC. Implementation begins with developing a series of action plans, which keep progress on track toward achieving the goals you have established. It is important to avoid assigning implementation tasks to people not sitting at the planning table. If you assign a task to a person not present, it is unlikely to be accomplished.

Action Plan Worksheet

Include the following on the Action Plan Worksheet for:

♦ Structure
♦ Strategies
♦ Meeting the SLC Attributes

Answer the following questions on your Action Plan Worksheet:

⇒ What specific actions need to occur (in Year 1 and Year 2)?

⇒ Who will be responsible for ensuring their completion?

⇒ What resources are needed (including other people/groups)? Specify which other people need to take which particular actions.

⇒ What are the signs of progress or success that can be tracked fairly easily?

Check-In on Action Plans

Once you action plans have been developed, you will want to devise a series of follow-up “check-ins” to assess progress in each area. The “check-in” involves answering the following questions:

⇒ Are the actions still supporting the goals of your program?

⇒ Have you or your committee been able to devote the necessary planning and development time to this action?

⇒ What are the barriers to implementation? How can they be overcome?

⇒ Are sufficient mechanisms in place for giving/receiving feedback and for ensuring accountability on actions? Do all the people who need to report, give feedback, or check on progress understand their roles?
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**SLC ACTION PLAN**

School:

Team Members:

*Describe the Following:*

Structure of the SLC (include grades served, courses, and theme if relevant):

Primary Strategies of the SLC

Now you are ready to complete the SLC Readiness/Self-Assessment Checklist. This tool will assist you in further refining your SLC proposal so that you are organized to meet the LAUSD Attributes. Submission of this checklist is the next step in moving forward with your SLC proposal.