Smaller Learning Communities
2006-07 Evaluation Report

Petaluma City Schools
Grant# V215L042150

Casa Grande High School
Petaluma High School

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Research conducted by:

Patty O'Driscoll
Mikala Rahn, Ph.D.
Albert Chen
Cindy Bajarias

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

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PART I—INTRODUCTION

Introduction

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

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

This report provides evaluation results for 2006-07, the third year of a three-year evaluation of the two comprehensive high schools in the Petaluma City Schools District (PCS) that received US Department of Education Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) Implementation Grants. PCS hired Public *Works*, Inc., a non-profit headquartered in Pasadena, California to conduct a third-party evaluation of the efforts of Casa Grande and Petaluma High Schools to implement SLCs.

About the US Department of Education Grants

Since 2000, the U.S. Department of Education's SLC grant program has provided planning and implementation grants to high schools with 1,000 or more students in order to implement SLCs. The grants support a range of strategies including creating schools-within-schools with varying degrees of autonomy,[1] restructuring the school day to allow for cohort scheduling and more consistent student-adult interactions, and formal adult mentoring and advisory programs.[2] Implementation of these structural changes share the goals of a more personalized high school experience for students in smaller schools or more autonomous units within schools with improved student achievement and performance. Continued under the Bush Administration's NCLB, the program now provides five-year (originally three-year) SLC implementation grants ranging from $250,000 to $550,000 per school.

[1] School-within-a-school refers to an autonomous school that, while it may be in its own building or in a building with another school, is organizationally, fiscally, and instructionally independent.
[2] Advisory systems place students under the guidance and care of a teacher or administrator for their entire school experience on a regular (daily or weekly) basis.

In the 2003 funding cycle, PCS received $800,00 in implementation funding for its two comprehensive high schools.[3] In total, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded over $734,177,166 through 2006 to schools across the nation, with funding for this program growing each year. The two high schools receiving U.S. Department of Education grant funds that are the subject of this report are considered Cohort IV in the federal funding cycle.

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 high school students 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 (one of which is 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

[3] Funding for Year 1 is $337,195, Year 2 is $250,899 and Year 3 is $211,906 for a total of $800,000

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" (p. 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, p8)."

Common Approaches to Implementing SLCs

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

Table 1: Structures and Strategies for Small Learning Communities

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

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Complementary Reforms to Support Smaller Learning Communities

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

College Prep Curriculum for All

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

Since 2001, 11 states and LAUSD, the second largest school district in the nation, required students to complete a full college-prep course sequence. In addition, 22 states currently require graduation 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, p. 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).

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

Personalized and differentiated instruction offers teachers more flexibility and more options in teaching students based on what works, which includes considerations for learning styles, socio-cultural influences and possible learning disabilities (US Dept. of Education, 1999).

This increased tailoring of education to individual needs contributes to the narrowing of the achievement gap, and at the same time reduces the effects of ethnic minority and poverty, by harnessing group effort and focusing it upon helping all students in the specific areas they need the most (Howley, Strange, and Bickel, 2000).

9th Grade Support Systems

More school districts are focusing on 9th graders because students who fail to earn sufficient credits to matriculate to 10th grade are much more likely to dropout. The *Talent Development* high school model from Johns Hopkins 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.

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

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).

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 is mixed. While many have made progress in a key reform area—improved school climate, there is less conclusive evidence of the impact on student achievement. For instance, the MDRC summary of its evaluations of Career Academies, *First Things First*, and the *Talent Development* model found improvements in eleventh-grade math and reading tests in *Talent Development* schools for students where the interventions had been in place the longest but no effect on achievement within the Career Academies they studied (Quint, 2006). The evaluations of Gates-funded new and converted high schools found some improvements in reading and language arts especially in high schools that had implemented the Foundation's Attributes of High-Performing Schools to a higher degree.[4] However, their study found poor rigor in mathematics assignments at new and redesigned high schools (AIR/SRI, 2005b). Despite these mixed results related to specific academic content areas and SLCs, the MDRC study of Career Academies found reduced dropout rates, improved attendance, and increased likelihood of on-time graduation among Career Academy students, especially those most at risk off dropping out (Kemple, 2000).

Autonomy

The issue of autonomy in SLCs goes to the heart of the reform in the breakup of large impersonal and bureaucratic comprehensive high schools. 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

[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 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, p. 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).

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 Petaluma

Located in Southern Sonoma County, 40 miles north of San Francisco, Petaluma City Schools (PCS) serves about 5,500 students in grades 7 through 12 from the City of Petaluma and surrounding areas. The district consists of two comprehensive high schools of approximately 1,600 and 1,800 students, two comprehensive junior highs of approximately 900 and 1,000 students, four small alternative secondary schools and one independent study center. Students join the district in seventh grade from 22 different elementary schools.

The city of Petaluma's two comprehensive high schools both enjoy a good reputation locally and both high schools ranked 7 out of 10 on the state's Academic Performance Index in 2006. However, there has long been concern at the district and school level to address the disparities among racial and socioeconomic subgroups and a tendency for many students to leave the system between the 10th and 11th grades.

Several years ago, an analysis of the data indicated that at least a fifth of entering freshmen from feeder junior highs were not ready to succeed in meeting challenging 9th grade content standards, particularly in English, Math and Science. Despite the district's many alternative education options, this analysis led to an increased awareness of the need for more specialized support for students at risk of failure in the comprehensive high school programs.

During the 2003-04 school year, both comprehensive high schools developed four year plans to transform their campuses so that all students would perform at grade level by the end of 10th grade, ready to access classes to prepare them for postsecondary success. A variety of initiatives have supported the efforts to transform educational systems in Petaluma for high school students.

In 1999, the California Department of Education (CDE), New Ways to Work (NWW), and PCS established the first initiative, Communities and Schools for Career Success (CS^2). As one of five districts participating in the initiative in California, PCS partnered with a local nonprofit (Petaluma People Services Center) and the City of Petaluma to develop systems to increase academic achievement, career and life skills and support the social and emotional health of students.

Since the CS^2 initiative, change agents known as "School/Community Entrepreneurs" have worked with various individuals and organizations to spur local educational improvement and school and community connections. Beginning in 2001, entrepreneurs have assisted the sites with a wide range of initiatives including expanding the scope of Senior Projects at Casa Grande High School, developing career pathways, creating after school programs for at risk students, and creating a system to support students in work-based learning experiences.

The second key initiative focused on transformation of the high school experience, built upon the partnerships established under CS^2 and resulted in the commitment of the high schools to undertaking a Smaller Learning Community approach to reform on both comprehensive high schools.

Under a California High School Pupil Success Act grant funded during the 2003-04 school year, PCS launched a planning process that resulted in over 1,000 interviews with youth, business, schools and community members about the direction of high school reform. In addition, PCS held teacher study groups and administrative planning sessions to form a community vision and commitment to work together to support student success. At the end of this process, PCS applied for a federal SLC Cohort IV implementation grant.

Implementation of the SLC grant began during the 2004-05 school year. Both Petaluma and Casa Grande High Schools planned to create environments in which a core group of teachers and other school staff know each student well, monitor progress and provide

academic and other support that individual students need to succeed. Initially focused on developing structures to support freshmen, each high school's plan for SLCs has evolved during the implementation period. At Casa Grande, students are now placed in freshmen and sophomore houses complemented by six career clusters in grades 11 and 12 that include both academic and elective courses with a common theme. At Petaluma High School, freshmen and sophomores are placed in an interdisciplinary team. In grades 11 and 12, students select from five career clusters.

About the Evaluation

As required by the grant, PCS hired a third party evaluator to conduct an evaluation of grant implementation. PCS hired Public *Works*, Inc. (PW), non-profit evaluation company headquartered in Pasadena, CA to encompass two primary analytic approaches: quantitative and qualitative in order to assess both improvements in student outcomes and progress with regard to program implementation. This report summarizes progress made during the third year of the grant, which occurred during the 2006-07 school year and includes both a qualitative and quantitative section. The following chart summarizes the district's goals and strategies developed for implementation of the grant.

PCS GOALS FOR SLC IMPLEMENTATION

(1) Improve student achievement and close the achievement gap among subgroups.
(2) Ensure that every student is prepared with the skills necessary to participate successfully in postsecondary experience, education, training and/or employment.
(3) Ensure a personalized learning experience for every student.
(4) Ensure that teachers have structured opportunities for collaboration resulting in rigorous and relevant curriculum and a personalized learning experience for all students.

PCS STRATEGIES FOR SLC IMPLEMENTATION

- **Family and Community Connections:**
  - Engaged and involved parents, business and community members
  - Improved school climate and safety
- **Authentic Curriculum:**
  - Modification of instruction and the delivery of curriculum
- **Personalization:**
  - Personalized learning environment for students
- **Improved Student Outcomes and Achievement:**
  - Improved student achievement, eligibility and preparation for career and postsecondary education, and student enrollment in postsecondary options and employment
- **Structures for Collaboration and Teaching and Learning Teams:**
  - Structured opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams to collaborate and work with small groups of students

- Support for teacher collaboration in the development of authentic curriculum
- Collaboration among staff to increase personalization

Report Organization

Following this introduction, Part II provides the methodology used for the preparation of the report. Part III provides an update on the status of implementation and summarizes student and teacher survey results collected during spring 2007. Part IV provides an update of student outcome data and includes information for the whole grant period and a comparison from the Baseline Year (2003-04) through Year 3 (2006-07). Part V provides a conclusion and recommendations. Appendices include a map of participating schools, smaller learning communities bibliography, staff survey results, student survey results and the implementation checklist used to assess progress in implementation.

PART II—METHODOLOGY AND DATA OVERVIEW

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation of the PCS SLC Cohort IV grant encompasses two dimensions: (1) a quantitative dimension measuring the impact of the grant on student achievement and (2) a qualitative dimension measuring progress with regard to program implementation. The evaluation has been an annual process over the three-year grant cycle. This report presents information from the third and final year of the grant.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collected for this report includes a staff survey, freshmen survey, senior survey, and senior follow up survey collected during fall after graduation from high school. These surveys are collected annually. In addition, Public *Works*, Inc. staff met with staff from both high schools and the school district in order to assess the status of implementation in fall 2006 and in the fall 2007 after the conclusion of the grant.

Surveys

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

Staff Survey

The staff survey was developed to ask all school staff about their knowledge and involvement in the SLC initiative at their school. The survey is administered during a spring staff meeting and all members of the staff participating in the school's faculty meeting are invited to complete a survey. In order to calculate a response rate, Public *Works*, Inc. uses the CBED's reported number of certificated staff to estimate the number of staff at each school. The following table displays the response rate for each school based on the number of completed surveys.

Table 2: Staff Survey Response Rates, 2006-07

High School	# of staff*	# of completed surveys	Response rate
Casa Grande	104	71	68.3%
Petaluma	88	65	73.9%
TOTAL	**192**	**136**	**70.9%**

***Source: California Department of Education**

Student Surveys

In order to collect student opinions and information about their experiences in high school, students were surveyed with regard to their expectations for learning, classroom instruction, counseling and guidance, and personalization. Students are also asked to identify if they currently participate in a smaller learning community and their participation in activities such as after-school programs, college courses, internships and the like. The survey concludes with demographic questions including grade, sex, race-ethnicity, highest-level math class and plans after graduation in order to track student responses to smaller learning community implementation over time. To assess the impact of the initiative over time, Public *Works*, Inc. administers the surveys to 9th and 12th graders. Public *Works*, Inc. administers a senior follow-up survey in the Fall after graduation in order to find out about postsecondary enrollment, employment and other activities after high school.

Table 3: Student Survey Response Rates, 2006-07

High School	9th grade enrollment*	# of surveys completed	Response Rate	12th grade enrollment*	# of surveys completed	Response Rate
Casa Grande	558	442	79.2%	389	294	75.6%
Petaluma	417	267	64.0%	346	253	73.1%
TOTAL	**975**	**709**	**72.7%**	**735**	**547**	**74.4%**

***Source: California Department of Education**

Table 4: Graduate Follow-up Survey Response Rates, 2006-07

High School	# of surveys completed	# of graduate surveys	Response Rate
Casa Grande	120	181	66.3%
Petaluma	137	184	74.5%
TOTAL	**257**	**365**	**70.4%**

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Student Outcome Data

Part IV of this report summarizes student outcome data that is available for the two schools participating in the grant. Student level data from 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2006-07 for all students at the two PCS schools participating in the SLC grant were collected from the district in Fall 2007. In addition, data available online through the California Department of Education (CDE) has also been used in several of the tables prepared for this report. Student level data is available for the following measures:

- Demographics (including participation in an SLC)
- California Standards Test (English language arts and math)
- High School exit exam (CAHSEE)[5]

[5] High school students must score a 350 or higher in English language arts and Mathematics to pass CAHSEE. For this study, Public *Works*, Inc. used both the passing score of 350, as well as more rigorous cut scores, established by CDE to meet NCLB proficiency requirements (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress). These rigorous cut scores more accurately reflect CST performance levels and are set at a level of 380 to signify 10th grade achievement of proficiency in English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

Demographic data allowed us to examine subgroup differences among students linked to ethnicity, socio-economic status, English language proficiency, as well as for students identified as special education or gifted or talented (GATE). Some data were not available at the student level. School level data is available for the following measures:

- SAT Scores
- ACT Scores
- Graduation rate

The distinction between school level data and student level data is important to the findings on how SLC implementation impacts student outcomes. Without data available at the student level, Public *Works*, Inc. is unable to set a baseline for determining the longer-term impact of SLC implementation on different targets of students. At best, aggregate school level data can only be described as they exist. Data available at the student level allow for tests of significance to determine differences in demographic and student outcomes between students participating in SLCs and those not participating.[6]

Defining an SLC Student

During the 2003-04 school year, the baseline year for this report, only one smaller learning community existed at either high school, Casa Grande High School's Health Careers Pathway, which in 2005-06 (year 2) enrolled 61 students. The Health Careers Pathway blocked students in core academic courses and a health careers elective. Petaluma High School established the Student Transition Program in year 1 of the grant for freshmen identified as in need of extra support as they articulated from middle school. This program continued for a group of freshmen and sophomores in year 2 of the grant but was discontinued in year 3 as the school implemented the 9th Grade Success Academy for a larger group of students. At the end of the three-year grant period, both schools failed to enroll 100% of their students in a SLC.

Table 5: SLC Enrollment by School Year, 2004-05 Compared to 2006-07

School/SLC Identified	Year 1 2004-05 N	% of School Enrollment Year 1	Year 3 2006-07 N	% of School Enrollment Year 3
Casa Grande (total number of SLC students)	**32**	**2%**	**950**	**50%**
Health Careers Pathway	32	2%	207	11%
Visual and Performing Arts Pathway	NA	NA	193	10%
9th Grade Houses	NA	NA	550	29%
Petaluma	**38**	**3%**	**386**	**24%**
Student Transition Program (STP)	38	3%	NA	NA
9th Grade Success Academy	NA	NA	386	24%
TOTAL	**70**	**2%**	**1,336**	**38%**

Source: Annual Performance Reports submitted to the U.S. Department of Education

[6] Statistical significance is an inference, based on a statistical test, indicating that the results obtained for a research sample can be generalized to the population that the sample represents. Put another way, a value is statistically significant when its probability that a finding is not the result of sampling error but reflects the characteristics of the population from which the sample was drawn. Statistical significance, therefore, means that the result is not random and that we would be likely to get the sample result a high percentage of the time if the same procedures were used. Using Chi-square tests, this report establishes statistical significance at the .05 level, the typical threshold used to determine whether or not a result is statistically significant. At this threshold, we would predict the same result 95% of the time.

PART III—STATUS OF SLC IMPLEMENTATION

This part of the report summarizes the qualitative data collected during the third year of the evaluation. The first section describes the status of implementation of smaller learning community structures at both high schools and includes data regarding enrollment. The second section summarizes survey data collected from teachers and students and is organized under eight areas used for the qualitative analysis of implementation. For each area, Public *Works*, Inc. has included a benchmark, which describes what a fully implemented high school organized around SLCs for all students would look like.[7] The eight areas include:

- ✓ Vision, Leadership & Management
- ✓ Teaching and Learning Teams
- ✓ Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum & Instruction
- ✓ Inclusive Programs and Instructional Practices (SLC Structure)
- ✓ Accountability and Continuous Program Improvement
- ✓ School/District Support for SLCs
- ✓ Personalization
- ✓ Parent and Community Engagement

Status of Smaller Learning Community Structures

When the two Petaluma high schools applied for the SLC grant, each high school proposed an approach that would result in environments in which a core group of teachers and other school staff would know each student well, monitor progress and provide the academic and other support needed to succeed. Each school planned a different approach using the resources, experience, and expertise of existing staff and administrators.

After analyzing data that indicated over 20% of freshmen entering Petaluma High and Casa Grande High were not ready for 9th grade content standards in English, Math and Science, each high school proposed an SLC structure to improve the 9th grade experience and move all students to performing at grade level by the end of 10th grade. Both schools had also identified a goal of increasing the achievement of specific subgroups such as English Learners, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students.

In the original application for SLC funding, the initial focus was to implement a model of support for 9th graders and then to address SLC support in other grades. Petaluma High planned to implement a Teacher Advisory Program to provide personalization and guidance for all students and a 9th grade Student Transition Program for students who entered the school with reading/language arts and math skills that were significantly below grade level. Casa Grande High School planned to implement 9th grade teams for math, English and science, 10th grade history and English teams, and career academies for 11th and 12th graders.

In order to implement these changes, particularly those planned for 9th graders, the district applied for a waiver to use 9th grade Class Size Reduction money in 9th grade English, math,

[7] See Appendix D for the SLC Site Implementation Checklist.

and science courses so that all have a class size of 23:1. While the waiver was applied for the first year of grant implementation, it was not approved until April 2006 (the end of the second year of the grant), which contributed to the difficulty in scheduling freshmen houses that were a "pure" group of teachers and students. Because the waiver was approved at the end of the grant period, the year following the conclusion of the grant (07-08) was the first year in which the waiver was used in scheduling freshmen at both high schools.

As implementation of the grant has evolved, both high schools have revised their plans to emphasize developing an interdisciplinary support system for freshmen and sophomores at Casa Grande High School (Houses) and at Petaluma High School (Interdisciplinary Teams). SLC structures for the 11th and 12th grades differ slightly between the two schools in terms of the courses offered and the way in which they are organized.

Casa Grande has developed six SLCs that include academic and elective courses with a common theme in which students take themed English and social science courses with topics from the relevant SLC along with elective courses in the SLC. At Petaluma High, students will select from one of five clusters in which there are multiple pathways focused on the elective offerings of the high school. There are plans to develop academies and other approaches that will blend core and elective classes for 11th and 12th graders as these structures become embedded in the school.

As of the 2006-07 school year, the following smaller learning community structures had been put in place in the master schedule: a health careers pathway at Casa Grande High School (which pre-dated the SLC Implementation grant) and freshmen houses at both high schools. Both schools have continued to focus on developing structures for 9th and 10th grade houses in the 2006-07 school year and the enrollment in these programs grew substantially in 2007-08. At both schools, all freshmen and sophomores were scheduled in SLCs in 2007-08 and all 11th and 12th graders were required to select a career cluster.

Table 6 displays the percent of staff self-reporting an assignment to an SLC by the types listed on the survey with the largest percentage of the faculty at Petaluma High (45%) indicating they are part of a house system. About a third of faculty also identified themselves as part of an academy. Seventy percent of faculty at Casa Grande identified themselves as part of a House. Note that faculty could select more than one option. Table 7 summarizes the other kinds of SLC strategies in place at the high schools. Block scheduling, common planning periods, interdisciplinary curriculum, and interdisciplinary teaching teams exist at both of the high schools.

Table 6: Percent Staff Self-Reporting Assignment to SLC by Type, 2006-07 (N=136)[8]

High School	Academy	Career Path/ROP	House	Advisory	Magnet	Assigned to SLC
Casa Grande	8%	24%	70%	5%	5%	51%
Petaluma	33%	33%	45%	4%	0%	77%
TOTAL	**23%**	**30%**	**56%**	**2%**	**3%**	**64%**

Source: Public *Works*, Inc. Staff Survey

Table 7: Summary of SLC Strategies and Structures

SLC Strategies and Structures	Casa Grande Year 1 04-05	Casa Grande Year 2 05-06	Casa Grande Year 3 06-07	Petaluma Year 1 04-05	Petaluma Year 2 05-06	Petaluma Year 3 06-07
Adult Mentors					X	X
Alternative/Block Scheduling	X	X	X	X	X	X
Common Planning Periods		X	X	X	X	X
Counselor Assigned to SLC	X	X	X			
Interdisciplinary Curriculum	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interdisciplinary Teacher Teams	X	X	X	X	X	X
Separate Building Space				X	X	
Career Theme	X	X	X			X
Freshman/Transition Academy			X	X	X	X
Other Structures					X	

Source: SLC schools for Annual Performance Reports submitted to the U.S. Department of Education

Tables 8 and 9 and Figures 3 and 4 summarize the characteristics of enrollment in SLCs at both high schools. At the end of the third year of implementation, 40% of students across the two schools were enrolled in an SLC. Students in SLCs are distributed evenly over the 9th through 12th grades (Table 8). The racial and ethnic composition of SLC students mirrors the general population at both high schools (Figure 3). There are slightly more females and students on free and reduced lunch enrolled in SLCs (Figure 4).

Table 8: Enrollment in Smaller Learning Communities by School

School	Student Enrollment Year 1 04-05	Student Enrollment Year 2 05-06	Student Enrollment Year 3 06-07	SLC Enrollment Year 1 04-05	SLC Enrollment Year 2 05-06	SLC Enrollment Year 3 06-07	SLC % of Student Enrollment Year 1 04-05	SLC % of Student Enrollment Year 2 05-06	SLC % of Student Enrollment Year 3 06-07
Casa Grande	1,733	1,737	1820	32	61	940	2%	4%	52%
Petaluma	1,478	1,530	1514	38	103	386	3%	7%	25%
TOTAL	3,211	3,267	3,334	70	164	1,326	2%	5%	40%

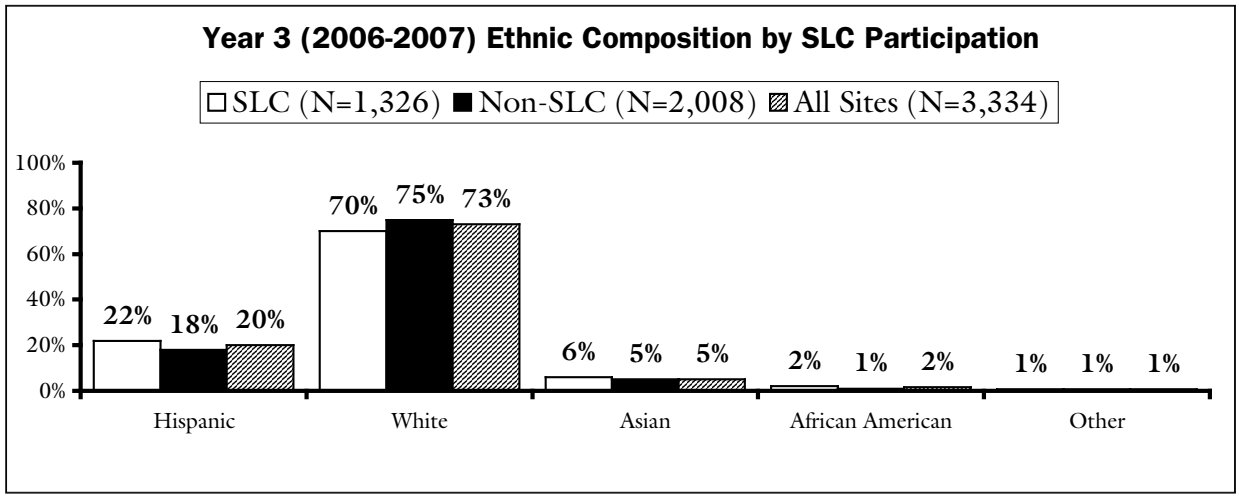
Source: Petaluma City Schools

Table 9: Enrollment in Smaller Learning Communities by Grade Level

Grade Level	Student Enrollment Year 1 04-05	Student Enrollment Year 2 05-06	Student Enrollment Year 3 06-07	SLC Enrollment Year 1 04-05	SLC Enrollment Year 2 05-06	SLC Enrollment Year 3 06-07	SLC % of Student Enrollment Year 1 04-05	SLC % of Student Enrollment Year 2 05-06	SLC % of Student Enrollment Year 3 06-07
9th Grade	981	952	936	38	80	936	1%	2%	100%
10th Grade	854	888	904	0	23	111	0%	1%	12%
11th Grade	744	752	788	32	30	129	1%	1%	16%
12th Grade	632	675	706	0	31	150	0%	1%	21%
TOTAL	**3,211**	**3,267**	**3,334**	**70**	**164**	**1,326**	**2%**	**5%**	**40%**

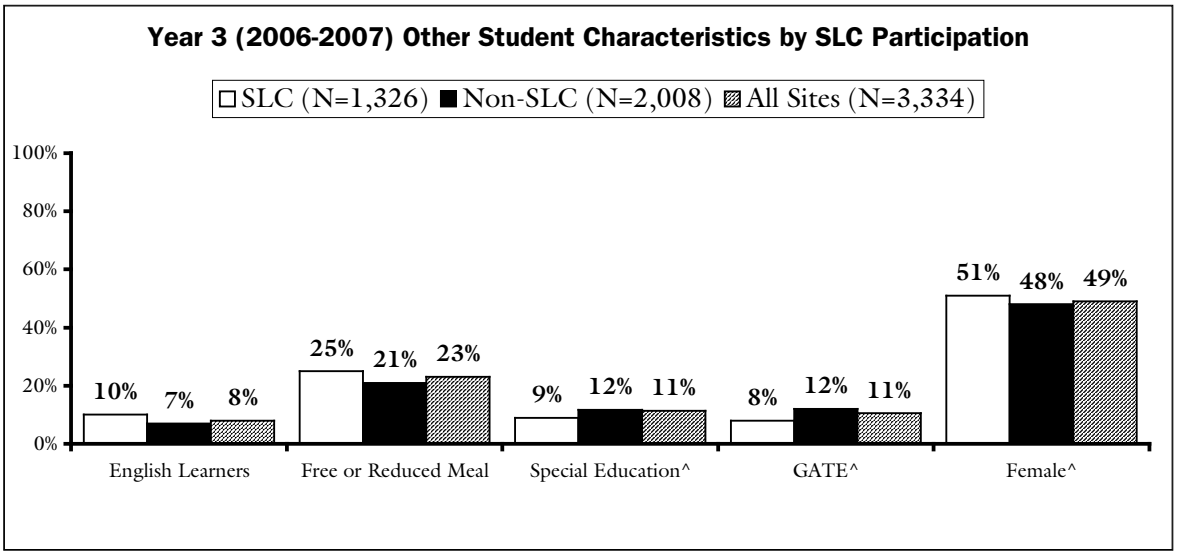
Source: Petaluma City Schools

Figure 3: SLC Participation by Ethnicity, Year 3 – 2006-07



Source: Petaluma City Schools

Figure 4: SLC Participation by Other Student Characteristics, Year 3 – 2006-07



^Statistically significant chi-square at the <.05 level
Source: Petaluma City Schools

Area 1: Vision, Leadership and Management

Evaluation Benchmark: Implementation is characterized by a shared vision created by a group of educators, support staff, administrators, 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.

Both of the high schools in Petaluma continue to implement the Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) initiative through a small but growing group of faculty who function as the school's planning team. These teams continue to include the original members and have grown to include more faculty members as the initiative has progressed. In addition, individual houses and interdisciplinary teams have had more involvement as these structures

began to be implemented in the third year of the grant. The district planning team, which includes district staff, both high school principals, and other members of the faculty continued to function as the overall oversight vehicle in the third year of the grant though most of the decision-making had shifted to the site level. During the 2007-08 school year, the district's assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction regularly convened both of the schools' house, team, and cluster leaders in order to provide information and support regarding implementation of SLCs. This group has met regularly after school and during district days set aside for professional development.

Faculty survey results indicate that a little less than half (48%) agree or strongly agree they have a say in school decisions. More staff (73%) agrees that major school decisions are communicated to all staff and that staff members at this school trust one another (75%). With regard to the specific items related to SLC implementation, less than half (46%) agree that stakeholders are involved in the planning, implementing and problem solving related to the execution of the school's vision for smaller learning communities. However, one fifth responded that they "don't know" (21%). While 52% of staff agree or strongly agree that the schools have strong leadership teams to guide instruction and the implementation of the SLC initiative, over a third (35%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Table 10: Staff Perceptions of Vision, Leadership and Management, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Items	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
All staff members have a say in school decisions.	48%	46%	6%
The results of major school decisions are communicated to all staff.	73%	25%	3%
Most staff members at this school trust one another.	75%	18%	8%
Stakeholders are involved in the planning, implementing and problem solving related to the execution of the school's vision for small learning communities.	46%	33%	21%
This school has a strong leadership team that guides instruction and the implementation of the small learning communities initiative.	52%	35%	13%
The architectural design and/or use of space at this school support the implementation of small learning communities.	23%	53%	24%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Area 2: Teaching and Learning Teams

Evaluation Benchmark: SLC teams have structured opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and learning in order to collaborate and work with small groups of students. SLC teams share no more than 300 students and team members are assigned to SLCs for at least half of their school day. Common planning time and professional development resources are used to support SLC goals and to reflect on student work and performance and to adjust curriculum and instructional strategies.

In order to provide a personalized learning experience that incorporates both rigorous and relevant learning, SLCs are defined by both a team of teachers and a group of students whom they can easily identify. SLCs may be organized through a career or other theme that students choose or students can be randomly assigned to a house or team in which

teachers share a group of students. These structural elements often define the "team" that makes up the SLC. In turn, this structure provides the basis on which a true teaching and learning team is built—one that works collaboratively to plan and to discuss the progress of individual students.

As the schools in Petaluma finalized the plan for structures that involve all students in an SLC, awareness of the initiative grew. Involvement of other teachers in the school site teams is an example of this. In addition, the goal of common planning time for SLC teams continues to be refined in the 2007-08 school year and has been achieved for many of the teams including dedicating one of the district's shortened Wednesday meeting times per month to time for SLC teams.

Efforts to implement the "THINK" program, the configuration of the student advisory at Petaluma High in the second year of the grant, involved a substantial number of faculty allowing awareness of the initiative to grow. In the third year of the grant, Casa Grande High and, to a lesser extent Petaluma High, successfully scheduled freshmen into houses and teams, which allowed some groups of teachers additional planning collaborative time. Because of the late approval of the class-size reduction waiver for freshmen, there were difficulties in adjusting the master schedule at Petaluma High, which was the primary barrier to implementing "pure" freshmen teams during 2006-07. School staff at both schools reported greater success in 2007-08 in achieving this goal, particularly in light of the approval of the waiver.

Staff survey results indicated that many teachers at the high schools had more time for SLC teams to plan and implement their programs perhaps an indication of the more solid plans for SLC structures in place at both schools. For example, more than half of the staff (68%) agreed that SLC team members meet regularly for planning, curriculum and activities (this was up from 42% of staff who agreed with this statement in the second year of implementation). Further, 34% agreed there is sufficient time for teachers to discuss and analyze student work in SLC team meetings (up from only 11% who agreed in the second year of implementation) (Table 11).

With respect to professional development, nearly half (45%) agreed that professional development for the SLC initiative is designed by teachers and is specific for their school. Seventy-one percent agreed that SLCs are a regular feature of school-side professional development (up from 50% who agreed with statement in year 2). These increases are perhaps due to the work of Springboard Schools professional development in both schools around the idea of Professional Learning Communities and cycles of inquiry using student data and focal students. Springboard Schools focused on SLC teams during the 2006-07 school year and is focusing more on supporting departments in 2007-08. The coaching of the SLC teams that began under Springboard Schools has shifted to the district, which is coordinating regular meeting times for house, team, and cluster leaders from both schools after school and during time set aside for the professional development. The work of department teams, which is continuing under Springboard Schools in 2007-08, emphasizes articulation between the district's junior high schools and high schools and developing tools for monitoring student progress in each content area.

Table 11: Staff Perceptions of Teaching & Learning Teams, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Item	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Small learning community team members meet regularly for planning, curriculum and activities.	68%	23%	9%
There is sufficient time for teachers to discuss and analyze student work in small learning community team meetings.	34%	52%	15%
There is sufficient time for teachers to support students' academic and personal needs and to help them plan for the future.	32%	60%	7%
Teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public.	68%	22%	11%
Professional development for the SLC initiative is designed by teachers and is specific for our school.	45%	40%	16%
Professional development promotes greater alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements.	63%	26%	10%
Small learning community topics are a regular feature of school-wide professional development.	71%	21%	8%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Area 3: Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum and Instruction

Evaluation Benchmark: A standards-based educational program embodies high expectations for every student to achieve grade-level standards and meet high school graduation requirements. Students are expected to meet college entrance requirements and are prepared for post-secondary education and training experiences and the world of work. Curriculum is adapted to individual student learning needs and is organized around topics of interest to students. Multiple forms of assessment provide opportunities to reflect personalized learning.

This area is related to rigorous and relevant curriculum and instruction within each SLC and the overall school. With the growth in the numbers of faculty members involved in SLCs, an impact on curriculum and instruction is the next step in implementation. An emphasis on SLCs for freshmen and sophomores organized around core subject areas has been agreed to at both campuses and these structures and environments are moving forward. The career clusters (at Petaluma High) and SLCs (at Casa Grande High) in grades 11 and 12 continue to be refined so in coming years the impact on curriculum and instruction can be better assessed. At Casa Grande, faculty interviewed in the Fall 2007 indicated that English teachers assigned to career clusters had begun to "flavor" their English courses with topics related to the career clusters. In addition, work to integrate social studies is also underway. At Petaluma High, subject area teachers interviewed in the Fall 2007 indicated they are assigned to both an interdisciplinary team and to a cluster and are working to meet the needs of both SLCs.

The schools success at high school literacy efforts and improved articulation with middle schools in both English language arts and Mathematics are the building blocks that are most promising for further integration between SLC efforts and the school's approach to improving student's academic performance as they enter high school with a goal toward increased persistence until graduation. This will further be supported by the anticipated

permanent approval of the waiver that has reduced class size for freshmen in English, math, and science to a ratio of 23:1.

The remainder of the discussion of this area of implementation focuses on an overall summary of the faculty and student survey items related to the area of curriculum and instruction. A large percentage of faculty (86%) agreed that students understand classroom academic expectations and that instruction is culturally responsive and accommodates diverse student interests, learning styles and educational needs (87%). Three-fourths of faculty agreed that (79%) school-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of English Language Learners. While nearly less than half (42%) of staff disagreed that examination of disaggregated student data is a regular part of school planning and assessment, 40% agreed (Table 12). These results are similar to the evaluation of the second year of implementation.

Table 12: Staff Perceptions of Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum & Instruction, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Item	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Students understand classroom academic expectations	86%	8%	5%
Instruction is culturally responsive and accommodates diverse student interests, learning styles and educational needs.	87%	8%	4%
School-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students.	79%	16%	5%
Curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels.	86%	11%	3%
There is a clear, connected and comprehensive model for monitoring student progress.	64%	31%	5%
Examination of disaggregated student data is a regular part of school planning and assessment.	40%	42%	18%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Results from the student survey indicate that most students (75% of freshmen and 75% of seniors) agreed that their classes are interesting and challenging. The follow up survey of seniors in the fall indicated that the academic courses they took in high school prepared them very well or well for further education (86% combined). A little less than half of seniors (49%) agreed that they have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes compared to 43% of freshmen. Nearly three-fourths (72%) of seniors and freshmen (72%) agreed that teachers and administrators encouraged them to challenge themselves. Sixty-five percent of freshmen plan to attend a four-year college or university compared to 52% of seniors.

Nearly all of the seniors responding to the follow-up survey in the fall after graduation were currently enrolled in a school (86%). Less than half were in four-year colleges or universities (41%) and 39% were enrolled in a public community college. Most (89%) attended full time and plan to continue in the following year (97%). Most students are planning to earn a Bachelor's degree (47%) or an Associate's degree (38%). More than half of respondents were unemployed (54%). If working, almost all (88%) considered themselves primarily a student working to meet expenses (Table 13).

Table 13: Student Perceptions of Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum & Instruction, 2006-07

Student Survey Item	9th (N=709)		12th (N=547)	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
My classes are interesting and challenging.	75%	25%	75%	25%
I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	38%	62%	72%	28%
Teachers and administrators encourage me to challenge myself.	72%	27%	72%	28%
I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	43%	57%	49%	51%
My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	73%	27%	77%	22%
My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	70%	31%	78%	21%
Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	76%	24%	78%	22%
My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	81%	19%	84%	17%
I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	81%	19%	81%	19%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Area 4: Inclusive Programs and Instructional Practices (SLC Structure)

Evaluation Benchmark: Each SLC has a coherent educational program and approach that is known and shared by students, staff, families and community partners. SLC membership is based on students' and teachers' interest and choice to ensure equitable access. SLCs have a unique academic identity and include distinct, heterogeneous group of students 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 300 students and students are blocked for at least one half of the school day in an SLC.

SLCs emphasize heterogeneity and student choice. At the same time, both schools are implementing initiatives to support lower performing students such as implementing double blocks of English, presenting challenges to programming students in the master schedule. In 2006-07, both schools decided on a structure of programs for 9th and 10th graders that will transition to a theme-based program at the 11th and 12th grades (SLC, cluster, or pathway). To make a successful transition to "wall-to-wall" implementation of SLCs, both schools have struggled with the configuration of each that will be amenable to staff and appealing to students and parents.

Structuring collaborative time and team planning within SLCs continues to be a struggle though some progress was made in the 2006-07 school year. One area of progress indicated

by the faculty survey is that over half (54%) of faculty agreed that the school's master schedule supports small learning communities (up from 44% in year 2). Sixty-three percent agreed that admission to small learning communities is open and inclusive (up from 47% in year 2) (Table 14).

In response to the staff survey, half (50%) agreed that SLCs included heterogeneous groupings of students that are not tracked by student ability (this was up from 32% who agreed in year 2). Other items in this section of the survey indicate that most staff continued to lack awareness of the details regarding SLC implementation. For example, 51% responded "don't know" to the item regarding SLCs providing information and outreach about their programs to middle school students and parents. Even more (56%) disagreed regarding autonomy over decisions related to budget, personnel and facilities (Table 14). At Casa Grande high school, faculty interviewed in Fall 2007 indicated that freshmen and sophomore houses have been able to address their own rules and expectations, attendance, and tardy policies, which has translated to students in the form of consistent expectations across teachers.

Awareness of SLCs among students continues to be an area of concern. When asked if they are part of an SLC, freshmen (27%) indicated they were not or did not know (27%). Perhaps this could be attributed to the "automatic" scheduling of student into teams as opposed to "choosing" a team. More than a third of seniors (36%) indicated they were not part of an SLC program and 12% indicated they did not know. Forty-five percent of freshmen indicated that no one at the school has told them about the kinds of programs available to them, as opposed to 29% of seniors.

Table 14: Staff Perceptions of Inclusive Programs and Instructional Practices, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Item	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Small learning communities at this school have a coherent educational program and approach that is known and shared by students, staff, families and community partners.	24%	57%	20%
Small learning communities at this school include distinct heterogeneous groups of students based on student interest and choice.	45%	37%	18%
Small learning communities make decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment.	44%	35%	21%
Small learning communities make decisions regarding budget, personnel and facilities.	12%	56%	31%
Small learning communities make decisions related to the master schedule and student programming.	34%	44%	23%
Small learning communities make decisions related to student conduct and issues of community safety.	31%	42%	27%
Small learning communities have administrators or teacher-directors who lead a cohesive faculty.	44%	40%	17%
The school's master schedule supports small learning communities.	54%	25%	21%
Admission to small learning communities admissions is open and inclusive.	63%	17%	20%
Small learning communities include heterogeneous groupings of students and are not tracked by student ability.	50%	30%	19%
Small learning communities provide information and outreach about their programs to high school students and parents.	44%	22%	34%
Small learning communities provide information and outreach about their programs to middle school students and parents.	22%	27%	51%
Most staff at this school are committed to the principle that "all children can learn."	91%	2%	6%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Area 5: Accountability and Continuous Program Improvement

Evaluation Benchmark: Members of the SLC work together, share expertise, and exercise leadership to ensure that student achievement and personal success is the intended result of all decisions. Internal and external sources of school data are used to make decisions. SLC teams retain primary responsibility, appropriate autonomy and are accountable for making decisions affecting the important aspects of the small learning community.

Each of the SLC teams used student outcome data in its decision making and planning processes. For example, Casa Grande analyzed attendance data and information regarding the number of D and F grades assigned in order to assess implementation of freshmen houses in the 2006-07 school year. Petaluma High continues to closely track students related to gains in literacy as part of its literacy across the curriculum program. In addition, both high schools used literacy and testing data of incoming freshmen from feeder middle

schools to place students appropriately. This is supported through the work of Springboard Schools with department-based teams examining articulation and transition between junior high and high school.

Despite these examples of efforts to incorporate the use of data in decision-making, there continues to be a need among the faculty at large to more broadly understand how SLCs fit into improving student performance in conjunction with literacy and other standards-based efforts. A little less than half of faculty (49%) agreed that internal and external school data from multiple sources is used to make decisions (28% responded "don't know") and that decision-making and reporting processes incorporate the use of student data and technology (50% agreed and 27% responded "don't know"). As the schools develop additional SLC teams, it will be important for the data systems to be able to identify students by SLC and to be able to identify SLC courses on the master schedule. A new student information system was purchased by the district and put into use for the 2007-8 school year. This system makes it easier to track SLC students and courses.

Casa Grande High School Data and Accountability Snapshot

In order to assess the initial effectiveness of freshmen houses implemented during the 2006-07 school year, an assistant principal at Casa Grande analyzed the grade distribution of courses taught and the truancy rate over several years. Subjects included in the analysis are English, Physical Science, and math. According to his analysis, after reviewing the distribution of grades over a three year period, the combined percent of students that received a "D" or an "F" grade is on the decline in the subjects of English, Honors English, Physical Science, Honors Physical Science, Physical Science SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English), Algebra 1A, Algebra 1A SDAIE, Geometry, Honors Geometry, and Geometry SDAIE. He attributed these declines partially to the teachers and students having more opportunities to develop working relationships in the freshmen houses where needs are addressed and academic interventions are given. He also attributed the declines to other structural elements of the freshmen houses including increased collaboration among teachers and time to focus on standards, academics, and refinement of common classroom assessments. In addition, preliminary data from 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years shows a decline in unexcused absences during the first six weeks for grades 9, 10, and 12. He found that grades 9 and 10 continued to sustain the reduction of unexcused absences while there was an increase at the 11th and 12th grades providing further support for the new structures put in place during the 2006-07 school year. These results have been shared with school and district personnel as part of the SLC initiative.

Table 15: Staff Perceptions of Accountability and Use of Data, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Item	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Internal and external school data from multiple sources are used to make decisions.	49%	22%	28%
Decision-making and reporting processes incorporate the use of student data and technology.	50%	22%	27%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Area 6: School and District Support for SLCs

Evaluation Benchmark: School and district policies and practices support the implementation of SLCs. School-wide and departmental goals, professional development, scheduling and

staffing align with and support SLC needs. Members of the SLC teams retain primary responsibility, appropriate autonomy and accountability for decisions related to individual SLCs.

The District office in Petaluma has supported the SLC initiative in a variety of ways and has assigned primary managerial responsibility for it to the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction who has brought the two school sites together on numerous occasions to plan and develop the site plans. In the 2007-08 school year, the assistant superintendent facilitated after school meetings and professional development to support house, team, and cluster leaders from both schools. In addition, the district negotiated a stipend for these leaders as a line item in the teachers' contract, which will be supported by district general funds.

The District office has also staffed the SLC grant with an Entrepreneur who works with the high schools and an administrative assistant who has supported the collection of data and other administrative aspects of the grant. The approach to implementation has been inclusive at the district level, with administrators from human resources and student services as well as representation from the teachers' union invited to planning meetings.

When asked about district policies related to the implementation of SLCs, a majority of staff (60%) agreed that district policies support implementation (up from 52% in year 2). Likewise, 45% of staff agreed that department goals align with SLC needs while a sizable proportion (34%) disagreed. When asked if school scheduling and staffing support SLC implementation, 53% of staff agreed (up from 42% in year 2) (Table 16).

Table 16: Staff Perceptions of School and District Support for Small Learning Communities, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Item	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
District policies support the implementation of small learning communities.	60%	19%	21%
Department goals align with small learning community needs.	45%	34%	21%
School scheduling and staffing support the implementation of small learning communities.	53%	28%	19%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Area 7: Personalization

Evaluation Benchmark: Each student's educational experience is characterized by sustained and mutually respectful personal relationships with students, faculty and administrators. Students are known by a group of educators who advise/advocate for them and work closely with the student and his or her family over time. The size of the SLC is appropriate to its vision and mission ranging in size from 100 to 300 students.

During the 2006-07 school year, both schools finalized plans to implement 9th and 10th grade houses and interdisciplinary teams to lead to career pathways at the 11th and 12th grades. The focus of freshmen teams at both schools is to ensure that students from feeder

middle schools are performing at grade level by the time they complete tenth grade, with the same team approach continuing when students are sophomores. Both schools have placed students in these grades in teams.

In addition to the structural elements of SLCs that are in the planning stages at both schools, each school has numerous programs and offerings to draw on as it further develops structures to personalize the educational experience of all students. Many seniors have participated in a variety of experiences to support career exploration and interaction with adults outside of school. For example, relatively high proportions of seniors reported participating in after school programs (27%), career/interest inventory (33%), career fair (44%), college fairs (36%), and field trips (50%). Similarly, high proportions of freshmen reported participating in activities such as college fairs (50%), career fair (22%), after school programs (32%) and field trips (46%).

In fact, when students were surveyed in the Spring 2007, nearly all agreed that they can get tutoring and other help if they are having trouble in school (87% of freshmen and 82% of seniors). Most students also appear to have a personal connection to individual teachers, with nine out of ten freshmen and a majority of seniors (84%) agreeing that their teachers know their name and the names of their friends in class. About 63% of freshmen and 68% of seniors agreed that they have an adult at this school that they can go to for help with school and for personal support. Fewer freshmen and seniors agreed that they have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects their needs and interests in year 3 compared to year 2 (34% of freshmen in year 3 compared to 46% in year 2 and 36% of seniors in year 3 compared to 54% in year 2). Very few (18% of freshmen and 27% of seniors) agreed that they talk to their teachers or a counselor regularly about their high school educational plan (Table 17).

When asked about their experiences with counseling services, 48% of freshmen and 37% of seniors had met with a counselor 1-2 times. About a third of seniors had met with a counselor 3-5 times (34%) and a quarter (21%) had met with a counselor more than five times. For freshmen, 55% of students stated that the reason for meeting with a counselor was to select courses, followed by 18% for help with a personal issue, and 17% for planning for college. For seniors, 65% met with a counselor to select courses, 46% for planning for college, and 14% for help with a personal issue.

Table 17: Student Perceptions of Personalization, 2006-07

Student Survey Item	9th (N=709)		12th (N=547)	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
My teachers know my name and the names of my friends in class.	90%	10%	94%	6%
I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	87%	13%	82%	17%
My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information.	78%	23%	77%	23%
I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	63%	37%	68%	31%
The classes I take incorporate my life experiences and my culture.	42%	57%	50%	51%
I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	34%	66%	36%	64%
I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	22%	78%	28%	72%
I feel safe when I am at school.	79%	22%	84%	16%
I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	18%	81%	27%	73%
I feel that I belong to a school-wide community.	62%	37%	52%	48%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

When surveyed about personalization for students, staff agreed at high levels with the following items: students experience a safe learning environment (96%), students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the school day (78%), students receive career planning and guidance (76%), and that there is a clear process for referring a student for academic intervention (73%). More staff agreed that all students at the school have an adult advocating for their academic and personal needs (40%) compared to 36% who disagreed (Table 18). Results in year 3 were similar to results in year 2 for staff on the questions related to personalization.

Table 18: Staff Perceptions of Personalization, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Item	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Students experience personalized instruction that is based on diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences.	77%	14%	10%
Students experience personalized instruction that blends academic rigor with projects that reflect students' interests, life experiences and culture.	76%	18%	6%
Students complete a written educational plan that encompasses goals for high school and postsecondary education with teachers and/or counselors.	55%	12%	34%
Students receive verbal counseling regarding their secondary and postsecondary course plan from teachers and/or counselors.	73%	8%	18%
Students receive career planning and guidance in the form of career inventories and assessments; job shadowing opportunities; field trips; and career fairs.	76%	10%	15%

All students at this school have an adult advocating for their academic and personal needs.	40%	36%	24%
Students have opportunities to work with one or more teachers over multiple years (e.g., "looping" and "student advisories").	43%	37%	20%
Student discipline is not a major problem area at this school.	72%	22%	6%
Students experience a safe learning environment.	96%	2%	2%
Students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the instructional day including after-school programs, college courses, internships, etc.	78%	10%	12%
There is a clear process for referring a student for academic intervention.	73%	20%	6%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

Area 8: Parent and Community Involvement

Evaluation Benchmark: All members of the SLC are viewed as critical allies and are included in the school community (i.e., students, teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, business and community partners). Ongoing partnerships are aimed at supporting continuous improvement of student achievement and student's personal success. Authentic engagement of school partners leads to sustained participation of partners in decision-making and implementation of school efforts.

Prior to receipt of the SLC grant, the Petaluma community participated in a broad-based effort to involve and gauge support for various initiatives to improve the community's high schools through the planning process supported by the Student Success grant. This effort was primarily organized through the Entrepreneurs and a partnership with the Healthy Communities Consortium. In addition, Petaluma has had a long involvement with the school-to-career initiative and has partnered with the Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) in the development of Tech Prep programs and courses that articulate to the college and its extension campus in Petaluma. These various partnering efforts have helped each of the schools develop different components helpful to small learning communities (such as job shadowing for health careers pathway students, after school tutoring support, and an extensive array of elective courses). Efforts to inform parents about Smaller Learning Communities in the 2006-07 school year included information through newsletters and other forums. In addition, both schools developed brochures for students and parents that described the SLC initiative for selecting courses.

When asked on the staff survey if their school encourages partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement SLCs, 51% of staff agreed, 33% responded "don't know," and 17% disagreed. Likewise, 39% of faculty responded "don't know" when asked if community partners, employers and businesses are involved in the development of small learning communities (25% agreed and 35% disagreed). While 49% of faculty agreed that parents are considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community, 29% disagreed and 23% responded "don't know." Nearly three-quarters of seniors (77%) agreed that their parents feel comfortable with their

teachers if they have questions or need information (See Table 17). Similar percentages of freshmen responded positively to this question as well (78% agreed).

Table 19: Staff Perceptions of Parent and Community Engagement, 2006-07 (N=136)

Staff Survey Item	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
This school encourages partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement small learning communities.	51%	17%	33%
Community partners, employers and businesses are involved in the development of small learning communities.	25%	35%	39%
Parents are considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community.	49%	29%	23%

Source: Public *Works*, Inc.

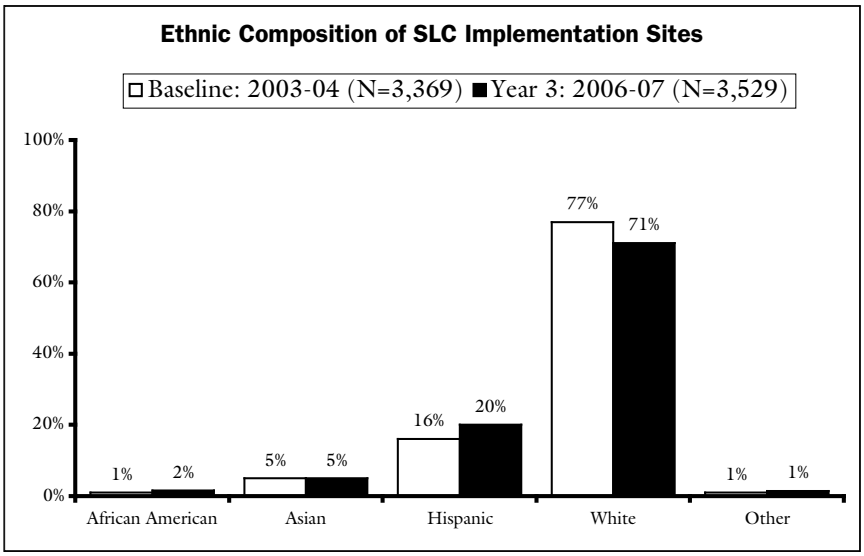
PART IV—STUDENT OUTCOME ANALYSIS

This part of the report summarizes student outcome information available at the student level including performance on the English Language Arts and Mathematics California Standards Test (CST) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The CST data is disaggregated by grade level, subgroup, and participation in an SLC. Because CAHSEE data is not available for the current students enrolled in SLCs, CAHSEE data is disaggregated by grade level and subgroup. This part concludes with data collected at the school level from the California Department of Education Website and includes SAT scores, ACT scores, and graduation rates.

Demographic Profile

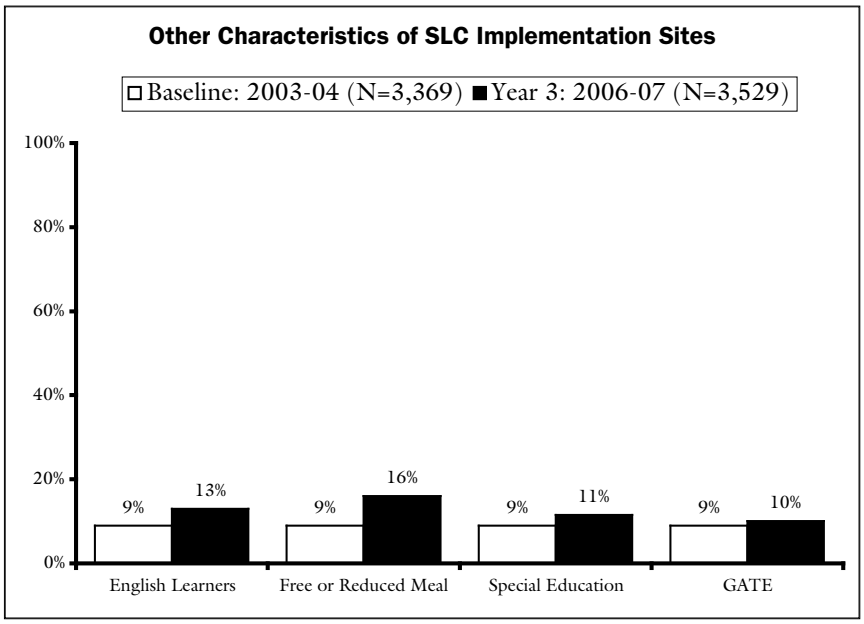
Both high schools have very similar demographic breakdowns. Combined demographic information for the two high schools is displayed in the following two figures comparing the baseline year of 2003-04 to 2006-07, the third and last year of the SLC grant. Approximately three-fourths of students enrolled in the two high schools are White, with the next largest demographic group consisting of approximately 16-20% Hispanic. From the baseline to the third year of the grant, the percentage of English Learners (EL) increased from 9 to 13% of students in the two high schools and the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch increased from 9% to 16% (Figure 2).

Figure 1: District Student Demographic Data



Source: California Department of Education

Figure 2: Other District Student Demographic Data



Source: California Department of Education

California Standards Test

Student performance at the two high schools on the English Language Arts CST has remained fairly consistent from the baseline of the grant to year 3, with between 41% and 59% scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels for grades 9 through 11. More 9th graders, which were the focus of much of implementation during the grant period, performed at the Advanced or Proficient levels on the English Language Arts CST during the third year of the grant compared to baseline (an increase of 9%). Similarly, between a quarter and a third of students scored at the Basic (ranging from 23% to 30%) and Below or Far Below Basic levels (18% to 30%) throughout this time period (Table 20).

Student performance at the two high schools on the Mathematics CST by grade level is also fairly consistent from the baseline to Year 3, however there is more variation from one grade level to the next. Similar to performance on English Language Arts, more 9th graders performed at the Advanced or Proficient levels on the math CST in the third year of the grant compared to the baseline year (an increase of 7%). The smallest percentage of 11th graders scored at the Advanced or Proficient levels (17% at the baseline year, and 21% at Year 3). Between one third and one half of students performed at the Below or Far Below Basic levels in all grade levels from the baseline to Year 3 of the grant (ranging from 32% to 52%) (Table 21).

Table 20: District CST ELA Proficiency Levels by Grade Level

	Baseline 2003-04 (N=2,192)			Year 3 2006-07 (N=2,569)			% Change		
English Language Arts	Gr. 9 (N=875)	Gr. 10 (N=731)	Gr. 11 (N=566)	Gr. 9 (N=922)	Gr. 10 (N=878)	Gr. 11 (N=769)	Gr. 9	Gr. 10	Gr. 11
Advanced or Proficient	50%	50%	41%	59%	48%	48%	9%	-2%	7%
Basic	26%	25%	30%	23%	29%	25%	-3%	4%	-5%
Below or Far Below Basic	24%	25%	30%	28%	18%	27%	4%	-7%	-3%

Source: Petaluma City Schools

Table 21: District CST Mathematics Proficiency Levels by Grade Level

	Baseline 2003-04 (N=2,023)			Year 3 2006-07 (N=2,339)			% Change		
Mathematics	Gr. 9 (N=876)	Gr. 10 (N=680)	Gr. 11 (N=467)	Gr. 9 (N=910)	Gr. 10 (N=820)	Gr. 11 (N=609)	Gr. 9	Gr. 10	Gr. 11
Advanced or Proficient	25%	23%	17%	32%	22%	21%	7%	-1%	4%
Basic	37%	35%	31%	36%	35%	28%	-1%	0%	-3%
Below or Far Below Basic	38%	41%	52%	32%	42%	51%	-6%	1%	-1%

Source: Petaluma City Schools

When CST data is disaggregated by subgroups, there is a large gap between the performance of White students and Hispanic students on both the English Language Arts and the Mathematics CST, though the gap is larger for English Language Arts. For example, 22% of Hispanic students scored Advanced or Proficient on the English Language Arts CST compared to 59% of White students in Year 3 of the grant (a gap of 37%). In contrast, 12% of Hispanic students compared to 29% of White students scored at the Advanced or Proficient levels in Year 3 of the grant on the Mathematics CST (a gap of 17%). While there was little variation from the baseline year to Year 3 of the grant when CST data is disaggregated by enrollment in special education or poverty level, a substantial percentage of English learners scored at the Advanced or Proficient levels on the English Language Arts (52% up from 3% in the baseline year) and Mathematics CST (29% up from 2% in the baseline year).

Table 22: District CST ELA Proficiency by Subgroups

	Baseline 2003-04 (N=2,192)			Year 3 2006-07 (N=2,569)			% Change		
Groups	Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below Basic/Far Below Basic	Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below Basic/Far Below Basic	Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below Basic/Far Below Basic
Ethnicity									
African American	35%	28%	38%	61%	19%	19%	26%	-9%	-19%
Asian/Pacific Islander	55%	32%	13%	62%	21%	18%	7%	-11%	5%
Hispanic	19%	27%	55%	22%	31%	46%	3%	4%	-9%
White	52%	27%	21%	59%	25%	16%	7%	-2%	-5%
Other Ethnicities	33%	7%	60%	55%	23%	23%	22%	16%	-37%
Other Characteristics									
English Learners	3%	18%	79%	52%	38%	11%	49%	20%	-68%
Special Education	17%	21%	62%	11%	22%	67%	-6%	1%	5%
Free/Reduced Meals	19%	24%	57%	29%	33%	38%	10%	9%	-19%

Source: Petaluma City Schools

Table 23: District CST Mathematics Proficiency by Subgroups

Groups	Baseline 2003-04 (N=2,023) Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below Basic/Far Below Basic	Year 3 2006-07 (N=2,339) Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below Basic/Far Below Basic	% Change Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below Basic/Far Below Basic
Ethnicity									
African American	25%	25%	50%	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	35%	38%	27%	39%	36%	25%	4%	-2%	-2%
Hispanic	12%	25%	63%	12%	28%	60%	0%	3%	-3%
White	24%	37%	39%	29%	35%	36%	5%	-2%	-3%
Other Ethnicities	8%	25%	67%	15%	50%	35%	7%	25%	-32%
Other Characteristics									
English Learners	2%	21%	77%	29%	39%	32%	27%	18%	-45%
Special Education	7%	14%	80%	8%	20%	72%	1%	6%	-8%
Free/Reduced Meals	11%	31%	58%	16%	29%	55%	5%	-2%	-3%

Source: Petaluma City Schools

When CST data for students enrolled in SLCs is compared to those who are not, a smaller percentage of SLC students are performing at the Advanced or Proficient levels in Year 1 (29% SLC compared to 53% non-SLC) and Year 3 (55% SLC compared to 49% non-SLC) on the English Language Arts CST. There are similar differences on the Mathematics CST. For instance, 34% of SLC students scored at the Advanced or Proficient levels compared to 50% of non-SLC students in the second year of the grant. However, because of the small numbers of students enrolled in SLCs, these differences cannot be attributed to the SLCs themselves. As a more sizable percentage of students enroll in SLCs, it will be appropriate to compare performance of individual students over time.

Table 24: CST ELA Proficiency Levels by SLC Participation

Year	SLC N	SLC Advanced or Proficient	SLC Basic	SLC Below or Far Below Basic	Non-SLC N	Non-SLC Advanced or Proficient	Non-SLC Basic	Non-SLC Below or Far Below Basic
2004 (N=2,194)	32	47%	38%	16%	2162	47%	27%	26%
2005^ (N=2,490)	68	29%	25%	46%	2422	53%	22%	25%
2006 (N=2476)	128	34%	40%	27%	2348	50%	21%	28%
2007 (N=2,569)	1154	55%	26%	19%	1415	49%	26%	25%

^Statistically significant chi-square at the <.05 level
Source: Petaluma City Schools

Table 25: CST Mathematics Proficiency Levels by SLC Participation

Year	SLC				Non-SLC			
	N	Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below or Far Below Basic	N	Advanced or Proficient	Basic	Below or Far Below Basic
2004 (N=2,023)	31	29%	48%	23%	1992	23%	35%	43%
2005 (N=2,257)	62	19%	50%	31%	2195	26%	37%	38%
2006^ (N=2278)	129	11%	35%	54%	2149	24%	33%	44%
2007 (N=2,339)	1110	29%	36%	35%	1229	23%	31%	46%

^Statistically significant chi-square at the <.05 level
Source: Petaluma City Schools

California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

Beginning in 2005-06 (year 2 of the SLC grant), students do not receive a public high school diploma without passing the CAHSEE, which includes an English Language Arts and a Mathematics portion. The primary purpose of the CAHSEE is to significantly improve achievement in public high schools and to ensure that students graduate with grade level competence in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students begin taking CAHSEE in the 10th grade and have until the 12th grade to pass the exam. High school students must score a 350 or higher in both subject areas to pass the CAHSEE. For this evaluation, Public *Works*, Inc. used both the passing score of 350, as well as more rigorous cut scores, established by CDE to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) proficiency requirements (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress). These rigorous cut scores more accurately reflect CST performance levels and are set at a level of 380 to signify 10th grade achievement of proficiency in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

In Year 3 of the grant, 64% of students from the two high schools scored at the Proficient and Above levels on the English Language Arts portion of the CAHSEE. However, when disaggregated by subgroup, a much smaller proportion of Hispanic students scored at the Proficient and Above level (27% compared to 74% of white students). In addition, a large proportion of Asian (69%) students scored at the Proficient and Above levels. The percentage of Hispanics that scored at the Proficient and Above levels had the highest decline (47% compared to 27% in Year 3). For the Mathematics portion of the CAHSEE, a higher percentage of English Learners scored at the Proficient level and higher (59% compared to 4% in baseline).

Table 26: District CAHSEE ELA Proficiency (1st time test takers)

Groups	Baseline 2003-04 Number Tested	Baseline 2003-04 Number Proficient or Above	Baseline 2003-04 Percent Proficient or Above	Year 3 2006-07 Number Tested	Year 3 2006-07 Number Proficient or Above	Year 3 2006-07 Percent Proficient or Above	% Change Percent Proficient or Above
TOTAL	**721**	**532**	**74%**	**877**	**562**	**64%**	**-10%**
Ethnicity							
African American	7	**	**	14	10	**	**
Asian/ Pacific Islander	38	28	74%	49	34	69%	-5%
Hispanic	95	45	47%	184	50	27%	-20%
White	576	453	79%	621	461	74%	-5%
Other Ethnicities	3	**	**	9	**	**	**
Other Characteristics							
English Learners	49	2	4%	70	41	59%	55%
Special Education	61	10	17%	108	19	18%	1%
Free/Reduced Meals	63	23	37%	240	103	43%	6%

****To protect privacy, asterisks appear whenever scores are based on 10 or fewer students**
Source: Petaluma City Schools

Table 27: District CAHSEE Mathematics Proficiency (1st time test takers)

Groups	Baseline 2003-04 Number Tested	Baseline 2003-04 Number Proficient or Above	Baseline 2003-04 Percent Proficient or Above	Year 3 2006-07 Number Tested	Year 3 2006-07 Number Proficient or Above	Year 3 2006-07 Percent Proficient or Above	% Change Percent Proficient or Above
TOTAL	**727**	**489**	**67%**	**877**	**548**	**62%**	**-5%**
Ethnicity							
African American	7	**	**	14	8	57%	**
Asian/ Pacific Islander	37	28	76%	49	35	71%	-5%
Hispanic	98	40	41%	182	67	73%	32%
White	580	415	72%	623	433	70%	-2%
Other Ethnicities	3	**	**	9	**	**	**
Other Characteristics							
English Learners	49	6	12%	69	50	72%	60%
Special Education	64	9	14%	106	24	23%	9%
Free/Reduced Meals	67	23	34%	238	112	47%	13%

****To protect privacy, asterisks appear whenever scores are based on 10 or fewer students**
Source: Petaluma City Schools

When CAHSEE data is examined using the cut score of 350, which is the passing score for the exam, 87% of students at both high schools passed the English Language Arts portion of the exam, a very high first time test taker pass rate (Year 3). Similarly, 87% of students passed the Mathematics portion of the exam in Year 3. While there is a gap between Hispanic and White students, it is much smaller when CAHSEE is examined in terms of the pass rate. For example, 60% of Hispanic students pass the English Language Arts portion of the exam on the first attempt compared to 93% of White students. A slightly higher percentage (68%) of Hispanic students passed the Mathematics CAHSEE compared to 92% of White students (Year 3). A high percentage of students who are enrolled in special education (48% on English Language Arts and 50% on Math) passed the CAHSEE the first time they took the test. English Learners performed particularly well in the third year of the grant—97% passed

the English Language Arts portion and 97% passed the Mathematics in the third year of the grant up from 31% and 51% in baseline.

Table 28: District CAHSEE ELA Pass Rate (1st time test takers)

Groups	Baseline 2003-04 Number Tested	Baseline 2003-04 Number Passing	Baseline 2003-04 Percent Passing	Year 3 2006-07 Number Tested	Year 3 2006-07 Number Passing	Year 3 2006-07 Percent Passing	% Change Percent Passing
TOTAL	**721**	**658**	**91%**	**877**	**759**	**87%**	**-4%**
Ethnicity							
African American	7	**	**	14	14	100%	**
Asian/ Pacific Islander	38	35	92%	49	43	88%	-4%
Hispanic	95	65	68%	184	111	60%	-8%
White	576	550	96%	621	576	93%	-3%
Other Ethnicities	3	**	**	9	**	**	**
Other Characteristics							
English Learners	49	15	31%	70	68	97%	66%
Special Education	61	34	56%	108	52	48%	-8%
Free/Reduced Meals	63	38	60%	240	175	73%	13%

****To protect privacy, asterisks appear whenever scores are based on 10 or fewer students**
Source: Petaluma City Schools

Table 29: District CAHSEE Mathematics Pass Rate (1st time test takers)

Groups	Baseline 2003-04 Number Tested	Baseline 2003-04 Number Passing	Baseline 2003-04 Percent Passing	Year 3 2006-07 Number Tested	Year 3 2006-07 Number Passing	Year 3 2006-07 Percent Passing	% Change Percent Passing
TOTAL	**727**	**665**	**92%**	**877**	**759**	**87%**	**-5%**
Ethnicity							
African American	7	**	**	14	12	86%	**
Asian/ Pacific Islander	37	36	97%	49	44	90%	-7%
Hispanic	98	75	77%	182	124	68%	-9%
White	580	544	94%	623	571	92%	-2%
Other Ethnicities	3	**	**	9	**	**	**
Other Characteristics							
English Learners	49	25	51%	69	67	97%	46%
Special Education	64	36	56%	106	53	50%	-6%
Free/Reduced Meals	67	45	67%	238	186	78%	11%

****To protect privacy, asterisks appear whenever scores are based on 10 or fewer students**
Source: Petaluma City Schools

Other School Level Measures

The following two tables provides data regarding SAT and ACT scores, tests that are required to apply to four-year colleges and universities. Overall, there were slight increases in the scores of students in the baseline year compared to Year 1 and a slight decline in math scores from Year 1 to Year 2. ACT scores remained steady from the Baseline year to Year 1. Year 3 scores are not yet available for SAT and ACT scores.

Table 30: Average SAT Scores by School

High School	Baseline 2003-04			Year 1 2004-05			Year 2 2005-06		
	Verbal	Math	Number Tested	Verbal	Math	Number Tested	Verbal	Math	Number Tested
Casa Grande	500	521	156	535	552	175	523	539	201
Petaluma	542	533	157	531	541	136	548	536	152
TOTAL	**521**	**527**	**313**	**533**	**547**	**311**	**534**	**538**	**353**

Source: California Department of Education

Table 31: Average ACT Scores by School

High School	Baseline 2003-04		Year 1 2004-05		Year 2 2005-06	
	Average Score	Number Tested	Average Score	Number Tested	Average Score	Number Tested
Casa Grande	23.4	34	22.8	52	NA	NA
Petaluma	24.0	63	23.3	45	NA	NA
TOTAL	**23.7**	**97**	**23.1**	**97**	**NA**	**NA**

Source: California Department of Education

The graduation rate of students from 9th grade through graduation is measured by two standards. The first is based on enrollment at the 9th grade level compared to enrollment of 12th graders four years later. In general, the vast majority of students who stay in school and enroll as 12th graders will graduate that year. Therefore, enrollment data is a good gauge of persistence. However, it is not an entirely accurate measure as it does not reflect students who transfer to and from other schools, who move in and out of the area, or transfer to or from an alternative high school setting. Therefore, it is likely to exaggerate the number of students who are not completing high school and is not an accurate depiction of the dropout rate. On the other hand, the graduation rate that California uses to report to the federal government for No Child Left Behind, which is based on a one-year graduation rate, has been characterized by some as a more conservative representation of the dropout rate. The true rate of students who leave high school likely exists somewhere between the broad enrollment numbers and the technique used to measure graduation rates for NCLB. For comparison, both rates are presented in this report.

The tables that follow summarize the graduation rates at both schools as reported for NCLB and using enrollment data. The NCLB graduation rate for 2006-07 is not yet available (Year 3) so the three previous years are shown (baseline, Year 1, and Year 2). This rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduates in a particular year by the number of graduates plus the number of dropouts for that year and each of the three preceding years. Graduation rates for both high schools are very high with the overall rate approaching 99%. On the other hand, when enrollment data is examined, the four-year graduation rate was 73% in the baseline year compared to 77% in Year 1 and 71% in Year 3 with the increase attributed to an increase in the rate at Petaluma High School.

Table 32: Graduation Rate based on NCES Definition (reported for NCLB)

School	Baseline 2003-04 Graduation Rate	Year 1 2004-05 Graduation Rate	Year 2 2005-06 Graduation Rate	Year 3 2006-07 Graduation Rate
Casa Grande	96.3%	98.9%	96.0%	NA
Petaluma	95.0%	98.0%	99.4%	NA
TOTAL	**95.7%**	**98.5%**	**97.7%**	NA

Source: California Department of Education

Table 33: Graduation Rate based on Student Enrollment

High School	Student Enrollment Grade 9 (00-01)	Grade 12 (03-04)	03-04 Grad. Rate	Student Enrollment Grade 9 (01-02)	Grade 12 (04-05)	04-05 Grad. Rate	Student Enrollment Gr. 9 (03-04)	Gr. 12 (06-07)	06-07 Grad. Rate
Casa Grande	453	327	72%	482	347	72%	543	389	72%
Petaluma	432	321	74%	386	323	84%	489	346	71%
TOTAL	**885**	**648**	**73%**	**868**	**670**	**77%**	**1,032**	**735**	**71%**

Source: California Department of Education

PART V—CONCLUSION

The two high schools included in this evaluation are part of a broad scale movement across the nation to restructure high schools into smaller, more student-focused places that meet the diversity of needs of our nation's high school students. As part of the fourth cohort of Smaller Learning Community grant funding, the high schools in Petaluma had committed to implementing SLCs at all grade levels by the conclusion of the grant.

Over the course of the three years of implementation, both high schools have wrestled with the issues of converting existing high school structures into the smaller sub-units envisioned by high school reform advocates. The high schools in Petaluma have learned, as others across the nation attempting similar reforms have also learned, that conversions take more time to implement than originally envisioned. In fact, the most recent cohorts of SLC funding provide for five years to reach "wall-to-wall" implementation. As the two high school campuses in Petaluma continue to implement SLCs during the 2007-08 school year, the year after grant implementation, it is important to recognize the progress that has been made to solidify the vision for continued modification of both high schools.

At Casa Grande High School, the implementation of freshmen and sophomore houses were institutionalized in the 2007-08 school year and the selection by students of a cluster area at the end of the 2006-07 school year signified the school's commitment to continuing to refine the structure for 11th and 12th graders to blend English and social studies content with career and/or interest-based elective courses that the school offers. The challenge now is for cluster teams to streamline what is offered and manage the master schedule so that students understand the cluster approach and how it will benefit them both academically and as a personal support system they can rely on to transition to postsecondary education and work.

At Petaluma High, the implementation of interdisciplinary teams for freshmen and sophomores during the 2007-08 school year was solidified in the master schedule. Content area teachers were assigned to an interdisciplinary team and also selected one of six career clusters in which to be aligned for 11th and 12th graders. Faculty cluster teams have begun to meet more regularly to solidify how the 11th and 12th grade structure will be blended with English and social studies content. A new administrative team with experience in the SLC approach to high school education has further supported Petaluma High's transition to SLCs in the 2007-08 school year.

What research and evaluation in this field are beginning to uncover is that while conversions are slower, schools *can* make substantial progress in improving opportunities for personalization and support for students at the most risk of academic failure. In addition, schools that can move past the "architecture" of SLC conversions, have a much better chance at successful implementation.

On at least two counts, Petaluma High and Casa Grande High are on the right track. By focusing efforts during the grant period on the crucial transitional freshmen year and supporting students in interdisciplinary teams that also provide for academic catch-up (e.g., the double-English blocks in the Language! program at both schools and support systems

for English Learners), both schools are better positioned to evaluate results and fine-tune instruction within the structures and programs they have developed. In particular, the district can point to progress in test scores among freshmen in both language arts and math over the course of SLC implementation. In addition, the performance of EL students has improved dramatically in both language arts and math.

Secondly, by acknowledging that SLCs alone will not improve instruction, the staff at both schools continues to bring more faculty on board by establishing approaches to 11th and 12th grade that harnesses the unique elective offerings of both campuses. By incorporating a stipend for house, team, and cluster leaders, the district and teachers have signaled the commitment to building SLCs and have acknowledged that the additional work they require needs to be compensated.

With this progress, several of the themes discussed in the introduction to this report will also need to be considered as the schools continue to implement SLCs and increase the visibility of the SLCs among students and parents. Discussions and decisions regarding the extent of autonomy within SLC teams will need to be made in order to fully realize the opportunities for Professional Learning Communities and distributed leadership to grow among faculty that have emerged as leaders in these efforts. The instructional focus within the SLCs has begun to emerge as these teams become more solidified and continue to have the time they need to collaborate, plan curriculum, and get to know the individual needs of their students.

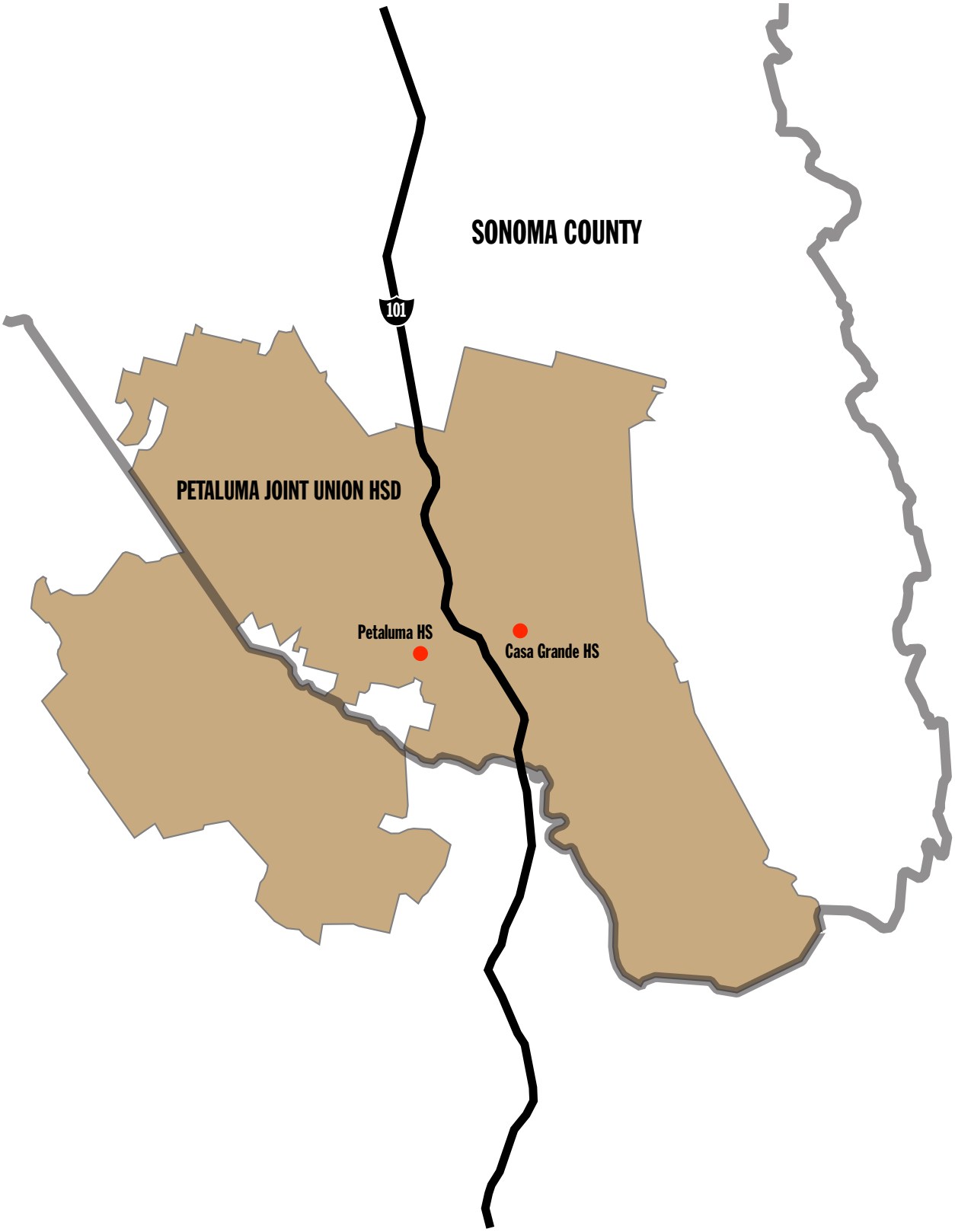
The top three barriers to implementation cited by faculty on the staff survey have remained consistent over the course of implementation and include: (1) adapting the master schedule to SLCs (49%), (2) resistance to change (39%), and (3) collaboration among staff (37%).

The impact of SLCs on the master schedule is the biggest challenge to be met in further implementation. The current structure hinges on a reorganization of what the schools have traditionally offered without a formal "breakup" into smaller, autonomous or semi-autonomous structures, meaning that working within the master schedule will present ongoing difficulties. The approval of the class size reduction waiver for freshmen for English, math, and science to a ratio of 23:1 is an important structural component that has greatly improved implementation and the ability to schedule SLCs in the 2007-08 school year. Department-based teams that are articulated between junior high school and the high school will provide the kind of information about incoming students that will allow for student support in the crucial freshmen year.

Another challenge will be to continue to develop the 11th and 12th grade offerings in ways that do not reinforce the traditional stratification of students in high schools by ability levels, race-ethnicity, or other factors that are often reinforced if selection into an SLC is made solely by student choice or by default in the master scheduling system. With the active involvement of counselors in SLC implementation, particularly at Casa Grande High, the selection of clusters for the 11th and 12th grade, the impact of stratification in high schools by ability level can be lessened in Petaluma high schools. Open discussions among faculty will also be encouraged through the house, team, and cluster structure for faculty members. In addition, efforts to inform parents and students about SLCs have increased and this information is a good starting point for making a selection that is based on student interest, not a perceived notion of what the student may be capable of achieving.

In conclusion, Public *Works*, Inc. recommends that Petaluma continue to provide the district-level support needed to further develop the collaborative teams that have been put in place through the SLC grant. In addition, it will be important to continue to work with both high schools as they implement a master schedule that can support all the structures that have been put in place. Continuing to build staff awareness and buy-in is critical as the houses, teams, and clusters wrestle with integrating these changes into the classroom.

Appendix A:
Map of Participating Schools


SONOMA COUNTY
101
PETALUMA JOINT UNION HSD
Petaluma HS
Casa Grande HS

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Appendix C:
Survey Results

2006-07 Small Learning Communities Staff Survey (N = 136)

District: PETALUMA CITY SCHOOLS
Cohort: IV

Respondent Characteristics

1 Stakeholder Group

4%	Administration
89%	Classroom Teacher
1%	Teaching Assistant
5%	Counselor
1%	Other Classified

2. Years at School

24%	2 years of less
18%	3-5
30%	6-10
27%	More than 10

3. Years Teaching (Teachers Only)

11%	2 years of less
14%	3-5
18%	6-10
58%	More than 10

4 Subject (Teachers Only) (shade all that apply)

21%	English
13%	Social Studies
18%	Math
15%	Science
4%	Special Ed
11%	Career Technical education/ROP
22%	Other

5. Grade Levels Currently Teaching (Teachers Only) (shade all that apply)

60%	9th
67%	10th
71%	11th
64%	12th

The Small Learning Communities initiative is designed to personalize and scale down the educational experiences of students in large, comprehensive high schools. Small learning communities are structured in a variety of ways but typically consist of a group of students (between 100 and 500 students) who have the opportunity to develop personal relationships with small groups of peers and teachers in separate and distinct units within the school.

6 I am currently assigned to work in a Small Learning Community at this school:

64%	Yes
36%	No

If you answered Yes above, which of the following Small Learning Communities are you assigned to (shade all that apply):

24%	An Academy (school-within-a-school organized around a theme)
27%	Pathway (where students take a sequence of courses that lead them to their future college and career goals)
5%	ROP course sequence or program (3 or more courses within a career technical sequence)
59%	House or Teams (where students are divided into groups of several hundred, either across grade levels or by grade level to personalize the educational experience; for example, a freshman house or team)
2%	Advisory (where small groups of students are assigned to a faculty member and meet on a regular basis to provide opportunities to personalize education, support career and college planning, and check in on academic progress)
5%	Other

	Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum & Instruction	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
7	Students understand classroom academic expectations (i.e., they understand what standard they are being held accountable for).	2%	6%	58%	28%	5%
8	Instruction is culturally responsive and accommodates diverse student interests, learning styles and educational needs.	1%	7%	61%	26%	4%
9	School-wide instructional decisions usually take into account the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students.	2%	14%	50%	29%	5%
10	Curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels.	1%	10%	58%	28%	3%
11	There is a clear, connected and comprehensive model for monitoring student progress.	4%	27%	51%	13%	5%
12	Examination of disaggregated student data is a regular part of school planning and assessment.	5%	37%	39%	1%	18%

	Teaching & Learning Teams	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
13	Small learning community team members meet regularly for planning, curriculum and activities.	6%	17%	42%	26%	9%
14	There is sufficient time for teachers to discuss and analyze student work in small learning community team meetings.	13%	39%	27%	7%	15%
15	There is sufficient time for teachers to support students' academic and personal needs and to help them plan for the future.	10%	50%	28%	4%	7%
16	Teachers are part of a professional community of practice that is collaborative and public.	4%	18%	57%	11%	11%
17	Professional development for the SLC initiative is designed by teachers and is specific for our school.	8%	32%	42%	3%	16%
18	Professional development promotes greater alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements.	7%	19%	53%	10%	10%
19	Small learning community topics are a regular feature of school-wide professional development.	4%	17%	46%	25%	8%

	Personalization	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
20	Students experience personalized instruction that is based on diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences.	1%	13%	56%	21%	10%
21	Students experience personalized instruction that blends academic rigor with projects that reflect students' interests, life experiences and culture.	1%	17%	60%	16%	6%
22	Students complete a written educational plan that encompasses goals for high school and postsecondary education with teachers and/or counselors.	3%	9%	43%	12%	34%
23	Students receive verbal counseling regarding their secondary and postsecondary course plan from teachers and/or counselors.	1%	7%	57%	16%	18%
24	Students receive career planning and guidance in the form of career inventories and assessments, job shadowing opportunities, field trips and career fairs.	1%	9%	61%	15%	15%

	Personalization	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
25	All students at this school have an adult advocating for their academic and personal needs.	5%	31%	31%	9%	24%
26	Students have opportunities to work with one or more teachers over multiple years (e.g., "looping" and "student advisories").	4%	33%	38%	5%	20%
27	Student discipline is not a major problem area at this school.	4%	18%	60%	12%	6%
28	Students experience a safe learning environment.	0%	2%	75%	21%	2%
29	Students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the instructional day including after-school programs, college courses, internships, etc.	0%	10%	55%	23%	12%
30	There is a clear process for referring a student for academic intervention.	1%	19%	60%	13%	6%

	Inclusive Programs and Instructional Practices	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
31	Small learning communities at this school have a coherent educational program and approach that is known and shared by students, staff, families and community partners.	8%	49%	22%	2%	20%
32	Small learning communities at this school include distinct heterogeneous groups of students based on student interest and choice.	5%	32%	43%	2%	18%
33	Small learning communities make decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment.	7%	28%	42%	2%	21%
34	Small learning communities make decisions regarding budget, personnel and facilities.	16%	40%	10%	2%	31%
35	Small learning communities make decisions related to the master schedule and student programming.	13%	31%	30%	4%	23%
36	Small learning communities make decisions related to student conduct and issues of community safety.	11%	31%	30%	1%	27%
37	Small learning communities have administrators or teacher-directors who lead a cohesive faculty.	5%	35%	37%	7%	17%
38	The school's master schedule supports small learning communities.	6%	19%	44%	10%	21%
39	Admission to small learning communities is open and inclusive.	5%	12%	48%	15%	20%
40	Small learning communities include heterogeneous groupings of students and are not tracked by student ability.	6%	24%	47%	3%	19%
41	Small learning communities provide information and outreach about their programs to *high school* students and parents.	4%	18%	40%	4%	34%
42	Small learning communities provide information and outreach about their programs to *middle school* students and parents.	3%	24%	19%	3%	51%
43	Most staff at this school are committed to the principle that "all children can learn."	0%	2%	51%	40%	6%

	Vision, Leadership & Management	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
44	The vision and goals for implementing small learning communities are well understood by staff.	13%	41%	37%	4%	5%
45	All staff members have a say in school decisions.	13%	33%	38%	10%	6%
46	The results of major school decisions are communicated to all staff.	6%	19%	60%	13%	3%
47	Most staff members at this school trust one another.	3%	15%	63%	12%	8%
48	Stakeholders are involved in planning, implementing and problem solving related to the execution of the school's vision for small learning communities.	7%	26%	41%	5%	21%
49	This school has a strong leadership team that guides instruction and the implementation of the small learning communities initiative.	9%	26%	44%	8%	13%
50	The architectural design and/or use of space at this school support the implementation of small learning communities.	15%	38%	22%	1%	24%

	Accountability and Use of Data	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
51	Internal and external school data from multiple sources are used to make decisions.	5%	17%	47%	2%	28%
52	Decision-making and reporting processes incorporate the use of student data and technology.	2%	20%	46%	4%	27%

	School and District Support for Small Learning Communities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
53	District policies support the implementation of small learning communities.	4%	15%	56%	4%	21%
54	Department goals align with small learning community needs.	9%	25%	42%	3%	21%
55	School scheduling and staffing support the implementation of small learning communities.	10%	18%	48%	5%	19%

	Parent and Community Engagement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
56	This school encourages partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement small learning communities.	1%	16%	43%	8%	33%
57	Community partners, employers and businesses are involved in the development of small learning communities.	7%	28%	21%	4%	39%
58	Parents are considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community.	5%	24%	44%	5%	23%

Barriers to Implementing Small Learning Communities

Directions: In order to help evaluate the implementation of small learning communities at your school, we would like you to shade the top <u>three</u> areas that you see the biggest barriers to implementation of the school's plan that exist today.

59. Teaching to rigourous academic standards	8%	60. Collaboration among staff	25%
61. Adequate professional development	12%	62. Adequacy of facilities	16%
63. Serving the needs of specific populations	29%	64. Meeting state accountability measures	3%
65. Academic support and intervention for students	10%	66. Parent/Community involvement	12%
67. School governance and decision-making	18%	68. Curricular access & equity	7%
69. School leadership and vision	15%	70. Student guidance & counseling	14%
71. Teacher teaming	14%	72. Resistance to change	36%
73. Adapting master schedule to SLCs	53%		
74. Other (please specify)	13%		

75. What is your opinion of the SLC initiative and your school's progress in implementation?

Thanks again for you participation. Questions regarding the survey should be directed to:

90 North Daisy Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91107
phone # 626-564-9890

2006-07 Small Learning Communities Confidential Student Survey (N = 709)

District: PETALUMA CITY SCHOOLS
Cohort: IV
Grade: 9th

	Section I: Experiences in Your Classes	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	My classes are interesting and challenging.	4%	21%	71%	4%
2	I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	6%	32%	58%	4%
3	Teachers and administrators encourage me to challenge myself.	4%	23%	62%	10%
4	My teachers know my name and the names of my friends in class.	1%	9%	55%	35%
5	I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	17%	40%	32%	11%
6	I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	2%	11%	69%	18%
7	My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	3%	24%	62%	11%
8	My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	5%	26%	61%	9%
9	Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	2%	22%	69%	7%
10	My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information.	4%	19%	64%	14%
11	I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	10%	27%	45%	18%
12	The classes I take incorporate my life experiences and my culture.	11%	46%	37%	5%
13	My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	3%	16%	54%	27%
14	I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	21%	45%	24%	10%
15	I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	22%	56%	20%	2%
16	I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	3%	16%	60%	21%
17	I feel safe when I am at school.	6%	16%	69%	10%
18	I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	26%	55%	16%	2%
19	I feel that I belong to a school-wide community.	8%	29%	57%	5%
20	The classes I take relate to my future college and career goals.	9%	31%	47%	13%
21	I will be prepared for employment when I am finished with high school.	3%	15%	64%	18%
22	I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school.	3%	12%	50%	34%

Section II: High School Learning Experiences

23 Are you currently involved in any of the following program offerings at this school? (mark all that apply)

- 4% An Academy (a program made up of a group of students and teachers who share classes usually organized around a career theme)
- 8% A Pathway (where students take a sequence of courses that lead them to their future college and career goals)
- 10% A ROP class or program (such as business, culinary arts, or drafting)
- 32% A House (where groups of students are assigned to a set of teachers who help them figure out classes, what they want to do after high school)
- 4% A Magnet program (with a specialty core focus such as math, science, creative arts, or a career theme or cluster
- 1% An Advisory program (where groups of students are assigned to a teacher or other faculty member on a regular basis to support planning my school and career decisions)
- 27% None
- 27% I don't know
- 4% Other

24 Has anyone at the school told you about the kinds of programs listed in Question #23 that are available to you at this school?

- 32% Yes
- 45% No
- 23% Don't Know

25 Are you assigned to a teacher or other staff member to help you plan your education in high school and after you graduate?

- 18% Yes
- 55% No
- 27% Don't Know

26 How many times have you met with a counselor this school year?

- 26% None
- 48% 1-2 times
- 19% 3-5 times
- 7% more than 5 times

27 If you met with a counselor this school year, please select the reason or reasons you met. (mark all that apply)

- 55% Selecting courses
- 18% Help with a personal issue
- 17% Planning for college

28 This school year, have you participated in any of the following activities? (mark all that apply)

- 32% After-school program
- 2% Internship
- 1% Community service project
- 9% Career/interest inventory
- 50% College fair
- 2% Guest speakers in your class
- 2% College class
- 8% Work experience
- 2% Job shadowing
- 22% Career fair
- 46% Field trip

29 What ADULT at this school is MOST helpful to you in planning for high school and life after high school? (mark all that apply)

- 49% Teacher
- 2% Principal
- 1% Assistant Principal
- 1% Office staff member
- 10% Coach
- 43% Counselor
- 7% Career center staff
- 1% Library staff member
- 3% Teaching assistant
- 5% Someone else at the school (what is their job)

Section III: About You

30 What grade are you in?

100%	9th
0%	10th
0%	11th
0%	12th

31 Are you:

49%	Male
51%	Female

32 What is your ethnicity?

2%	African American
1%	American Indian or Alaskan Native
4%	Asian American/Pacific Islander
22%	Hispanic/Latino
64%	White/Caucasian
6%	Other

33 Have you taken or are you currently taking an AP class?

8%	Yes
92%	No

34 What is the highest-level math class that you have taken, including any class that you are currently taking?

1%	No math
64%	Algebra I
23%	Geometry
5%	Algebra II
0%	Trigonometry
1%	Calculus
5%	Other

35 What are your plans after high school graduation? (mark all that apply)

3%	Attend a trade or vocational school
17%	Attend a two-year college
65%	Attend a four-year college or university
13%	Find a full-time job
30%	Find a part-time job
7%	Join the military
2%	Become an apprentice
9%	Other
10%	Don't know

36 School is:

12%	Easy
61%	Just right
27%	Hard

37 I am a student in (if your school has tracks):

N/A	Track A
N/A	Track B
N/A	Track C

2006-07 Small Learning Communities Confidential Student Survey (N = 547)

District: PETALUMA CITY SCHOOLS
Cohort: IV
Grade: 12th

	Section I: Experiences in Your Classes	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	My classes are interesting and challenging.	4%	21%	69%	6%
2	I have the opportunity to do assignments and projects about interesting topics in class.	3%	25%	66%	6%
3	Teachers and administrators encourage me to challenge myself.	5%	23%	62%	10%
4	My teachers know my name and the names of my friends in class.	1%	5%	52%	42%
5	I have been encouraged to take AP and advanced classes.	13%	38%	37%	12%
6	I can get tutoring and other help if I'm having trouble in school.	3%	14%	65%	17%
7	My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	3%	19%	67%	10%
8	My teachers are fair about how they grade me.	3%	18%	68%	10%
9	Teachers teach academic subject matter at a high level.	2%	20%	70%	8%
10	My parents feel comfortable with my teachers if they have questions or need information.	3%	20%	64%	13%
11	I have an adult at this school that I can go to for help with school and for personal support.	6%	25%	44%	24%
12	The classes I take incorporate my life experiences and my culture.	11%	40%	43%	7%
13	My classes have encouraged me to consider further education after high school.	3%	14%	53%	31%
14	I have worked with a counselor to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	23%	41%	32%	4%
15	I have worked with a teacher to develop a written educational plan that reflects my needs and interests.	20%	52%	25%	3%
16	I will be prepared to enter college when I am finished with high school.	6%	13%	60%	21%
17	I feel safe when I am at school.	4%	12%	63%	21%
18	I talk to my teachers or a counselor regularly about my high school educational plan.	26%	47%	24%	3%
19	I feel that I belong to a school-wide community.	12%	36%	47%	5%
20	The classes I take relate to my future college and career goals.	9%	30%	49%	13%
21	I will be prepared for employment when I am finished with high school.	5%	20%	58%	17%
22	I have the support I need at home to complete my homework and do well in school.	4%	10%	51%	34%

Section II: High School Learning Experiences

23 Are you currently involved in any of the following program offerings at this school? (mark all that apply)

9%	An Academy (a program made up of a group of students and teachers who share classes usually organized around a career theme)
21%	A Pathway (where students take a sequence of courses that lead them to their future college and career goals)
27%	A ROP class or program (such as business, culinary arts, or drafting)
1%	A House (where groups of students are assigned to a set of teachers who help them figure out classes, what they want to do after high school)
3%	A Magnet program (with a specialty core focus such as math, science, creative arts, or a career theme or cluster
4%	An Advisory program (where groups of students are assigned to a teacher or other faculty member on a regular basis to support planning my school and career decisions)
36%	None
12%	I don't know
4%	Other

24 Has anyone at the school told you about the kinds of programs listed in Question #23 that are available to you at this school?

53%	Yes
29%	No
18%	Don't Know

25 Are you assigned to a teacher or other staff member to help you plan your education in high school and after you graduate?

24%	Yes
63%	No
13%	Don't Know

26 How many times have you met with a counselor this school year?

8%	None
37%	1-2 times
34%	3-5 times
21%	more than 5 times

27 If you met with a counselor this school year, please select the reason or reasons you met. (mark all that apply)

65%	Selecting courses
14%	Help with a personal issue
46%	Planning for college

28 This school year, have you participated in any of the following activities? (mark all that apply)

27%	After-school program	4%	College class
20%	Internship	12%	Work experience
3%	Community service project	17%	Job shadowing
33%	Career/interest inventory	44%	Career fair
36%	College fair	50%	Field trip
15%	Guest speakers in your class		

29 What ADULT at this school is MOST helpful to you in planning for high school and life after high school? (mark all that apply)

58%	Teacher	35%	Counselor
3%	Principal	8%	Career center staff
1%	Assistant Principal	2%	Library staff member
2%	Office staff member	1%	Teaching assistant
9%	Coach	7%	Someone else at the school (what is their job)

Section III: About You

30 What grade are you in?

0%	9th
0%	10th
0%	11th
100%	12th

31 Are you:

51%	Male
49%	Female

32 What is your ethnicity?

4%	African American
1%	American Indian or Alaskan Native
5%	Asian American/Pacific Islander
14%	Hispanic/Latino
70%	White/Caucasian
7%	Other

33 Have you taken or are you currently taking an AP class?

46%	Yes
54%	No

34 What is the highest-level math class that you have taken, including any class that you are currently taking?

1%	No math
9%	Algebra I
14%	Geometry
30%	Algebra II
17%	Trigonometry
15%	Calculus
13%	Other

35 What are your plans after high school graduation? (mark all that apply)

7%	Attend a trade or vocational school
39%	Attend a two-year college
52%	Attend a four-year college or university
11%	Find a full-time job
33%	Find a part-time job
4%	Join the military
5%	Become an apprentice
7%	Other
2%	Don't know

36 School is:

18%	Easy
64%	Just right
18%	Hard

37 I am a student in (if your school has tracks):

N/A	Track A
N/A	Track B
N/A	Track C

Petaluma City Schools Smaller Learning Communities
Confidential Senior Student Follow-up Survey, 2007
Petaluma City Schools (N=253)

Section I. Activities Since High School

1. Did you graduate from high school?
98% Yes
2% No

2. What was the reason you did not graduate from high school?
40% Credit deficient
0% Did not pass CAHSEE
0% Both
60% Other

3. Are you currently enrolled in any school? (*Mark one*)
86% Yes **If you are enrolled, go to Question 4.**
14% No **If you are not enrolled, go to Question 10.**

4. In what type of school are you enrolled? (*Mark one*)
41% Four-year college or university
39% Public community college
20% Less than 2-year private or public vocational or technical school

5. Are you attending school full-time or part-time? (*Mark one*)
89% Full-time
11% Part-time

6. Do you plan to continue attending school next year? (*Mark one*)
98% Yes
2% No

7. What degree(s) or credential(s) do you plan to earn at your current school or college? (*Mark all that apply*)
3% Occupational certificate or license
38% Associate's degree (AA/AS)
46% Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
4% Master's degree (MA/MS)
11% No degree plans, just taking courses to upgrade job skills

8. If you are not currently enrolled in school or college, do you plan to enroll in the next year or two? (*Mark one*)
76% Yes
24% No

9. If you plan to enroll in school or college, what degree or credential do you plan to earn? (*Mark one*)
4% Occupational certificate or license
31% Associate's degree (AA/AS)
15% Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
12% Master's degree (MA/MS
19% No degree plans, just taking courses to upgrade job skills
19% I don't plan to enroll in school or college

10. Are you currently employed? (M*ark one*)
46% Yes **If you are employed, go to Question 11.**
54% No **If you are not currently employed, go to Question 17.**

11. Are you: (*Mark one*)
24% Working full-time (35 hours per week or more)
76% Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)

12. Do you receive benefits (e.g., medical or life insurance, paid time off for holidays, retirement fund, etc.) in your current job? (M*ark one*)
22% Yes
78% No

13. How many months did you spend trying to find a job after high school? (*Mark one*)
78% Less than a month
7% 1 month
4% 2 months
6% **3** months
3% 4 months
2% More than 4 months

14. To what extent is your current job related to what you studied in high school? (M*ark one*)
75% Not related
17% Somewhat Related
8% Highly Related

15. Does your job have good prospects for advancement and learning, or would you say it's a "dead end" job with few prospects for advancement? (*Mark one*)
44% Job has good prospects for advancement
49% "Dead-end" job
7% Don't know/can't say

16. If you are attending school and working, would you say you are primarily a student working to meet expenses, or an employee who decided to enroll in school? (M*ark one*)
88% Primarily a student working to meet expenses
12% Primarily an employee who decided to enroll in school

17. Have you looked for a job, but have not been able to find one? (M*ark one*)
23% Yes, I looked for a job but couldn't find one
77% No, I haven't looked for a job

18. Are you in the military? (*Mark one*)
1% Yes
99% No

19. Are you in an apprenticeship program? (*Mark one*)
2% Yes
98% No

Section II. Value of High School for Later Life

We're interested in learning if the following activities you may have participated in during high school have affected your later education and work experiences. **These high school activities include internships, career fairs, job shadowing, as well as participation in career academies or career pathways (a sequence of courses related to a career area).**

20. Did you participate in any of the following activities in high school? (internships, career fairs, etc.)
24% Yes **62%** No **15%** Don't know

21. Were any of these high school activities beneficial to you in finding your current job or planning for schooling after high school? (*Mark one*)
69% Yes **31%** No

22. Did you participate in any occupational/technical/vocational courses in high school?
19% Yes **74%** No **7%** Don't know

23. How well did the occupational/technical/vocational courses you took in high school prepare you for your current job? (*Mark one*)
22% Very well **20%** Well **13%** Not too well **7%** Not at all **7%** Don't know
33% Not employed **74%** Didn't take any occupational/technical/vocational courses

24. How well did the academic courses you took in high school prepare you for further education? (*Mark one*)
30% Very well **56%** Well **9%** Not too well **3%** Not at all **2%** Don't know

25. Looking back at your high school experiences, which of the following would have been useful in helping you prepare for current education or work? (*Mark all that apply*)
a. More career guidance **18%** Yes
b. More career-related courses **33%** Yes
c. More career-related activities (internships, job shadows, speakers) **24%** Yes
d. More rigorous academic courses in: (*Mark all that apply*)
8% Math **9%** English
8% Science **7%** Social Studies
e. Nothing more needed, high school prepared me well for my current activity **33%** Yes

Section III. Future Plans

23. Thinking ahead, what is the highest degree you hope to obtain? (*Mark one*)
1% Occupational certificate or license **33%** Master's degree (MA/MS)
9% Associate's degree (AA/AS) **11%** Professional degree (Ph.D., MD, DDS, JD, etc.)
35% Bachelor's degree (BA/BS) **10%** I don't plan to pursue any college degrees or certificates

Appendix D:
SLC Evaluation Checklist

Petaluma Small Learning Communities Site Implementation Checklist Cohort IV, Year 3, 2006-07

Petaluma's Research Questions/Focus of Evaluation:

Family and Community Connections:
- Engaged and involved parents, business and community members
- Improved school climate and safety

Authentic Curriculum:
- Modification of instruction and the delivery of curriculum

Personalization:
- Personalized learning environment for students

Improved Student Outcomes and Achievement:
- Improved student achievement, eligibility and preparation for career and postsecondary ed, and student enrollment in postsecondary options and employment

Structures for Collaboration and Teaching and Learning Teams:
- Structured opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams to collaborate and work with small groups of students
- Support for teacher collaboration in the development of authentic curriculum
- Collaboration among staff to increase personalization

Rubric Areas:
- Vision, Leadership & Management
- Teaching and Learning Teams
- Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum & Instruction
- Inclusive Programs and Instructional Practices (SLC Structure)
- Accountability and Continuous Program Improvement
- School/District Support for SLCs
- Personalization
- Parent and Community Engagement

Site:

Team: ☐ PO

Rating Scale

Using rubric of effectiveness of implementation and coverage of school community

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.

School community includes students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community partners as appropriate to the particular strategy.

Site Visit Description:

Dates Visited:

Please attach site visit agenda and who was interviewed.

Description of school and overall SLC implementation strategies:

Names of SLCs/Grade Level Configurations:

Best Strategies/accomplishments:

Need to improve/in need of help:

Vision, Leadership and Management Benchmark

Implementation is characterized by a shared vision created by a group of educators, support staff, administrators, 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.

INDICATORS	Rating (1-6)	Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation
(1) The vision related to implementing SLCs incorporates: • Improved student outcomes and achievement • Authentic & rigorous curriculum • Personalization • Structures for collaborative teams • Family and community connections		
(2) Stakeholders are involved in planning, implementing and problem solving related to the execution of the school's vision for SLCs.		
(3) The vision is periodically revisited and reevaluated based on community input and implementation experience.		
(4) Stakeholders are aware of the vision for converting to SLCs and how each SLC fits together.		
(5) Major decisions regarding SLCs are communicated to all staff and stakeholders. Roles for the implementation of SLCs are clear to stakeholders.		
(6) The principal and administrators demonstrate strong, engaged and positive leadership for the SLC initiative.		
(7) The overall school budget reflects school-wide improvement goals including the implementation of SLCs.		
(8) Architectural design and uses of space support the school's SLC vision and mission.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?

Teaching and Learning Teams Benchmark

SLC teams have structured opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and learning in order to collaborate and work with small groups of students. SLC teams share no more than 300 students and team members are assigned to SLCs for at least half of their school day. Common planning time and professional development resources are used to support SLC goals and to reflect on student work and performance and to adjust curriculum and instructional strategies.

INDICATORS	**Rating (1-6)**	**Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation**
(1) There is flexibility in scheduling that allows SLC teams to plan instruction and develop curriculum to implement SLCs.		
(2) SLC teams have common planning time and regular, ongoing meetings to discuss students, their work and to plan and implement SLC activities.		
(3) Teachers are part of a "professional community of practice" that is collaborative and public.		
(4) Professional development for the SLC initiative is designed by teachers and supports site-specific goals.		
(5) Professional development supports the use of student data and assessment results to inform instruction and to make mid-course corrections in instructional practice.		
(6) Professional development prepares teachers, counselors and other school staff to personalize the educational experience of students through the SLC initiative.		
(7) Professional development supports alignment of instruction with academic standards and accountability requirements.		
(8) Leadership development is included for SLC leads and administrators.		
(9) SLC teams share no more than 300 students in common for instruction.		
(10) SLC team members are assigned to SLCs for at least one half of their schedules.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?

Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum and Instruction Benchmark

A standards-based educational program embodies high expectations for every student to achieve grade-level standards and meet high school graduation requirements. Students are expected to meet college entrance requirements and are prepared for post-secondary education and training experiences and the world of work. Curriculum is adapted to individual student learning needs and is organized around topics of interest to students. Multiple forms of assessment provide opportunities to reflect personalized learning.

INDICATORS	**Rating (1-6)**	**Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation**
(1) SLC course offerings align to district graduation and university admission requirements.		
(2) SLCs share clear expectations that align with state content and performance standards.		
(3) Curriculum and instruction is organized according to individual SLC educational philosophy and may involve thematic, interdisciplinary units.		
(4) Curriculum and instruction is organized so that all students are expected to learn and perform at high levels.		
(5) Multiple forms of assessment reflect personalized learning and offer students opportunities to demonstrate learning.		
(6) Curriculum and instruction is articulated (up to post-secondary and down to middle schools) to provide a coherent educational experience resulting in students moving toward graduation.		
(7) Teachers adapt instruction based on the needs of individual students and attend to all learners including English language learners, standard English language learners, and students with special needs.		
(8) High quality, credentialed teachers teach in all SLCs.		
(9) Structured intervention is designed to meet individual student needs.		
(10) There is an adequate supply of basic classroom supplies, supplemental resources and Board adopted textbooks that are standards aligned.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?

Inclusive Programs and Instructional Practices (SLC Structure) Benchmark

Each SLC has a coherent educational program and approach that is known and shared by students, staff, families and community partners. SLC membership is based on students' and teachers' interest and choice to ensure equitable access. SLCs have a unique academic identity and include distinct, heterogeneous group of students 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 300 students and students are blocked for at least one half of the school day in an SLC.

INDICATORS	Rating (1-6)	Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation
(1) SLCs have a coherent educational program and approach that is known and shared by students, staff, families and community partners. Instruction is flexible and tailored to diverse student needs.		
(2) Each SLC includes a distinct, heterogeneous group of students based on student interest and choice.		
(3) Each SLC has an administrator or lead teacher that leads a cohesive faculty team based on faculty interest and choice. Counselors and teacher specialists collaborate with the teams.		
(4) SLC teams make decisions related to: • Curriculum, instruction, and assessment. • Budget, personnel and facilities • Master schedule and student programming • Student conduct and issues of community safety		
(5) Access to SLCs is open and inclusive. SLCs are designed to be accessible to all subgroups.		
(6) Size of SLCs are appropriate to the vision and mission (range in size from 100 to 300 students).		
(7) Students within an SLC are together for at least 50% of their school day.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?

Accountability and Continuous Program Improvement Benchmark

Members of the SLC work together, share expertise, and exercise leadership to ensure that student achievement and personal success is the intended result of all decisions. Internal and external sources of school data are used to make decisions. SLC teams retain primary responsibility, appropriate autonomy and are accountable for making decisions affecting the important aspects of the small learning community.

INDICATORS	**Rating (1-6)**	**Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation**
(1) Stakeholders display personal and collective responsibility for achieving the vision and mission for SLC vision and mission of success for all students.		
(2) Internal and external school data from multiple sources are used to make decisions.		
(3) Funds, time, personnel, partnerships and facilities are used to support the mission and vision of the school.		
(4) Decision-making and reporting processes incorporate the use of technology.		
(5) Student data is accessible by SLC.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?

School/District Support for SLCs Benchmark

School and district policies and practices support the implementation of SLCs. School-wide and departmental goals, professional development, scheduling and staffing align with and support SLC needs. Members of the SLC teams retain primary responsibility, appropriate autonomy and accountability for decisions related to individual SLCs.

INDICATORS	**Rating (1-6)**	**Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation**
(1) School-wide improvement goals align with SLC needs.		
(2) Department goals align with SLC needs		
(3) School and district professional development plans and resources accommodate SLC needs.		
(4) District policies support the implementations of SLCs including autonomous decision making at the school and SLC levels. District negotiates teacher union contract with provision to support SLC staffing needs.		
(5) School scheduling and staffing support the implementation of SLCs.		
(6) Options for Honors/AP classes are available across all programs.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?

Personalization Benchmark

Each student's educational experience is characterized by sustained and mutually respectful personal relationships with students, faculty and administrators. Students are known by a group of educators who advise/advocate for them and work closely with the student and his or her family over time. The size of the SLC is appropriate to its vision and mission ranging in size from 100 to 300 students.

INDICATORS	Rating (1-6)	Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation
(1) Students are known and valued by their peers and staff and have access to adult mentors/advisors and role models.		
(2) Students experience personalized instruction that incorporates student experiences and cultures. Instruction is based on diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences.		
(3) SLC serves a population of 300-500 students with increased teacher-adult contact and community responsibility.		
(4) Students prepare a written secondary course plan and postsecondary plan with teachers and/or counselors.		
(5) Verbal counseling from teachers and/or counselors is a regular part of student educational programming.		
(6) Students receive college and career planning and guidance in the form of career inventories and assessments; job shadowing opportunities; field trips; and career fairs.		
(7) Adults have available, timely, and comprehensible student data for advisory and course planning.		
(8) Students have opportunities to work with one or more teachers for multiple years in caring, supportive relationships (differing models of advisory, mentoring, dropout prevention)		
(9) Adults conduct parent outreach and conferences on student's personal needs to support students.		
(10) Students have opportunities for learning that extend beyond the instructional day including after-school programs, college courses, internships, etc.		
(11) Students have access to and participate in academic intervention and support services as needed.		

(12) Specific strategies are present to transition freshmen into the school that support them academically, personally and socially.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?

Parent and Community Engagement Benchmark

All members of the SLC are viewed as critical allies and are included in the school community (i.e., students, teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, business and community partners). Ongoing partnerships are aimed at supporting continuous improvement of student achievement and student's personal success. Authentic engagement of school partners leads to sustained participation of partners in decision making and implementation of school efforts.

INDICATORS	**Rating (1-6)**	**Description of Strategies and Status of Implementation**
(1) School encourages partnerships with community members, employers, postsecondary institutions and others necessary to implement SLCs.		
(2) Community partners, employers and businesses are involved in the development of curriculum, activities and other components to support SLCs.		
(3) Parents are considered key collaborators and contributing members to the school community.		
(4) Opportunities are provided for people to gather easily at appropriate times and locations.		
(5) Parents are involved in decision-making for their students including SLC choice, curriculum planning, student activities and future plans.		
AVERAGE RATING:		

1) What is working really well at this site in this area?

2) What needs the most improvement?

3) What technical assistance needs have been identified?