Knowing & Being Known:

Personalization as a Foundation for Improving Student Learning

Observations from the first year of a three-year study of small high schools in Washington State

Autumn 2004

By

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with

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Small Schools
PROJECT

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NOTES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The purpose of this three-year study is to understand aspects of the development of small schools and associated processes of change. The study focuses on a small group of Washington high schools that received reinvention grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In this study, we provide an initial account of the work in seven small schools in Washington State gleaned from interviews and repeated observations on-site in the various schools (for more information about the research protocol, see Appendix A). Six of these schools are located within recently converted large comprehensive schools (hereafter called "conversions") that have been reconfigured as collections of small schools; one additional school was "already-small" by our definition (under 400 students).

This study has three primary goals: 1) studying and documenting the development of small schools within six conversions; 2) studying and documenting the development and changes in school leadership structures and responsibilities as small schools replace large, comprehensive schools; and 3) understanding and documenting the changes in already-small high schools that have received Gates Foundation grants.

Pursuit of these three research goals creates several avenues for potential contribution to the knowledge base on school redesign. First, if theory and emerging empirical evidence about small schools are correct, the conversion of large comprehensive high schools into collections of smaller schools will enable greater individual attention to students and closer faculty collaboration on matters of teaching and learning, as well as a stronger sense of community within each small school.

Second, the study seeks to understand leadership in the context of the conversion process. Early evidence suggests that the creation of multiple small schools out of one existing large school may require new forms of leadership, more distributed in nature, featuring new roles for teacher-leadership focused on the continual improvement of teaching and learning.

Finally, the study seeks to understand the experience of already-small high schools engaged in redesign projects in the Gates initiative. Smaller size is only one structural aspect of what is a larger and more comprehensive set of changes in teaching, learning, and the development of professional community. In concept, already-small high schools may have an edge in making progress on various issues related to improving teaching and learning, given that they do not face the same structural challenges of their larger counterparts in creating new collections of small learning communities. A key issue in already-small schools is how the school community comes to view smallness as an asset, rather than a deficit, and how that affects school culture, leadership, and teaching practice.

We will produce three reports annually. We hope these reports will provide schools, districts, other technical assistance providers, foundations, and researchers with useful information in understanding what happens as schools redesign—including raising expectations for all students, changing teacher practice, and expanding leadership roles and structures.

Small School Grants

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promotes the development of new small schools in Washington State through three major strategies: *district grants*, *school grants*, and the *Achievers Program*. Unlike its national grants, which go to technical assistance providers or other outside agencies, grants in Washington are awarded directly to schools or districts, and go to rural, exurban, suburban, as well as urban areas.

The foundation identified *Attributes of High Achievement Schools* and *Essential Components of Teaching and Learning* from the body of school research (see Appendix B). All grantees are expected to use both the attributes and components to guide their school redesign work. Graduating all students "college-ready" is another central tenet of the redesign work. High schools have long performed a sorting function and this criterion of the Gates grants means increasing expectations for those students whom American high schools have historically underserved.

One of the schools in this study is part of a *model district grant*. These were awarded to increase the capacity of eleven school districts and all their schools to improve academic achievement, infuse technology into the learning environment, increase professional development opportunities, and strengthen home and community partnerships. A major focus of these five-year grants, which were awarded in spring 2000, is to change district operations in ways that more clearly support school-level work. District grant guidelines were not explicit about the foundation's expectations for small schools or conversions.

One of the schools in this study received a *model school grant*, which supports high-achievement schools—which have a common focus, high expectations, data-driven decisions, and time for teachers to collaborate—that are better prepared to help all students achieve. Over fifty elementary, middle, and high schools have received three-year grants to create and implement new designs. The first school grant to a Washington high school was awarded in March 2001.

Five of the study schools received Achievers five-year grants. The *Washington State Achievers Program* works on school redesign within sixteen high schools serving large populations of low-income students. The program's resources are focused on improving college access for low-income students and combine academic readiness with scholarship opportunities. Students from low-income families are eligible to apply for one of five hundred Achievers scholarships given annually to graduates of Achiever high schools.[1] The sixteen Achiever high schools received their five-year grants in April 2001.

[1] This thirteen-year scholarship program is administered by the Washington Education Foundation as a result of a $100 million gift from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The seven small schools included in this report were selected for study because of their innovative design and likelihood for success. Each also receives technical assistance from the Small Schools Project and school coaches provided by the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative. We did not collect data specific to the role of school coaches, since our focus was on the work of the schools.

Case Study Schools

The following school descriptions provide a snapshot of the building demographics and the history of each school's redesign process.² This information is summarized in Figure A on page vi. For a discussion on the context of school reform in Washington State, see Appendix C.

Elm is one of seven small schools in a rural high school that is part of a district-wide grant. The building houses 1,650 students, almost all Caucasian. It is the only high school in the district. About 40 percent of the student body passed three sections (reading, writing, and math) of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) standardized test in 2004 and 12.9 percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch.

Soon after the district received the Gates grant, the high school teachers formed research teams to look at topics of personalization, technology, accountability, instruction, job-embedded staff development, and individual student transition plans. Their number one recommendation for moving forward as a building was to create small schools. Teacher teams designed the schools with specific content themes.

Elm serves approximately 315 students, and has a staff of 14 teachers, including two teacher-leaders. The student population is over 75 percent male, possibly due to a strong focus on hands-on projects involving technology, math, and science.

The school and district administrative leadership has remained constant since the grant was awarded. The school board has been supportive of the building's work throughout the restructuring effort.

Alder is one of five small schools in a building that received a model school grant. The building has the largest population of the four comprehensive high schools in this suburban district with 94 teachers and 1,750 students. The majority of students are Caucasian. Approximately 40 percent of the students passed three sections of the WASL in 2004 and 20 percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch.

Teachers at this comprehensive high school began researching small schools one year before being awarded the Gates grant. They held small group discussions during school in-service days to explore concepts such as size, autonomy, student choice, a sense of belonging, and intellectual focus. Because of this prior work, teachers had the opportunity to discuss and then vote as a staff to accept the Gates grant. A leadership committee comprised of elected teachers and the administrative leadership team directed the restructuring work, but the small schools were designed by teachers and decided upon through a "request for proposal" (RFP) process and several rounds of focus group feedback. The staff was assigned to small schools based on preference, experience, and expertise; teachers then had an additional year to plan for implementation.

Alder has approximately 360 students and 15 teachers, including all three industrial technology teachers in the building. Because of this focus and the school's vocational image, the student population was primarily male in the first year of implementation.

The district has been fairly hands-off throughout the conversion work, which school staff members interpret as being unsupportive. The superintendent and

building principal retired in July 2004 and one assistant principal accepted a position in another district.

Fir is a rural already-small school that received an Achievers grant. It is comprised of grades 6–12, though the grant only impacts grades 9–12. The school has 150 high school students, with a majority of Caucasians and a growing population of Hispanic students. One-third of the students passed three sections of the WASL in 2004 and over one-third qualified for free or reduced price lunch.

Receiving the Gates grant coincided with a desire to redesign this small, rural school to a block schedule in an effort to "go deeper" with instructional practice. During their initial grant years, staff formed a site council, de-tracked their math curriculum, and researched block schedule options. A key step for teachers at Fir was accomplished when they gained district and board approval to move ahead with schedule changes and the addition of advisory periods.

The superintendent has been supportive of the changes at Fir and small school design considerations directed the design of a new building that will open in the fall of 2005. The school principal left in the spring of 2004 to pursue a different job opportunity.

Chestnut is one of six small schools in an Achievers high school. The building houses 1,750 students, more than half of whom represent minority populations. Fewer than 20 percent of the student body passed three sections of the WASL in 2004 and over two-thirds qualified for free or reduced price lunch. Two-thirds of the high schools in this urban district received Achievers grants.

A small group of teachers worked on the initial grant proposal. Teachers formed a leadership team to research small schools and developed an RFP process. The small schools served grades 9–10 in the first year of implementation, except for Chestnut, which was allowed to implement 9–12 after a student survey showed they would have enough juniors and seniors sign-up. Other juniors and seniors maintained their existing high school experience in a separate small school that will phase out as each class graduates. In the first year of implementation, one of the small schools dissolved due to lack of cohesion, but another is scheduled to open in the coming academic year.

During the first year of implementation, Chestnut served approximately 180 students, well over half of whom were freshmen and sophomores, with nine full-time teachers. Chestnut was the only small school to advertise Advanced Placement courses, thereby attracting high achieving students to the upper grades.

The principal retired in July 2004.

Cedar is one of six small schools at an Achievers high school in a smaller suburban district. The building is one of two comprehensive high schools in the district, serving a working class neighborhood consisting of 1,950 students, two-thirds of whom are Caucasian. Approximately 24 percent of the student body passed three sections of the WASL in 2004 and 40 percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch.

The beginning of the building's conversion process coincided with a district initiative to study school reform. The staff met to identify ways to increase student achievement and concluded that small schools were a viable option. A small leadership committee comprised of the principal and several interested teachers

put together the grant proposal and met weekly to create small schools based on career-based themes. Teachers were assigned to the schools based on their preference and eventually re-designed the schools to reflect curriculum-based themes.

Cedar has international, global studies, communications, and technology themes, and serves 394 students with 17 full- or part-time teachers.

The building principal and superintendent accepted positions in other districts during the grant's second year.

Hemlock is one of three small schools at an Achievers high school—the only high school in the district, an urban fringe district with a highly transient immigrant population. The building houses 750 ethnically diverse students. Approximately one-quarter of the student body passed three sections of the WASL in 2004 and almost half of the students qualified for free or reduced price lunch. The school has been a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools since 2000.

Prior to receiving the grant, the school had established a leadership committee to guide the staff in looking at school-level data and creating a common vision for the future. Teachers developed small school designs through an RFP process. The leadership committee chose the academies and assigned staff based on teacher preferences.

Hemlock has 320 students and 16 staff, including all of the building's visual and performing arts teachers. The staffing is a reflection of the school's intended arts focus.

The district's longtime and supportive superintendent left the district early in the grant's third year and was replaced with an interim until a new superintendent was hired at the end of that year. The school board developed and passed a policy in support of small schools during the second year of the grant.

Birch is one of five small schools at an Achievers high school, which is located in a large urban fringe district. The building has a diverse student population and is one of four comprehensive high schools in the district, serving 1,300 students in grades 10–12. The ninth grade will join the high school in the coming year, as the junior high schools convert to middle schools. Approximately one quarter of the student body passed three sections of the WASL in 2004 and almost half of the students qualified for free or reduced price lunch.

A core group of teachers at Birch has been planning the conversion process for three years. They have focused on developing a common focus and responding to district goals related to the conversion process. Birch will open in the fall of 2004 with about 200 ninth and tenth graders—all of whom will be new to the high school. Currently, there are 12 to 14 teachers assigned to Birch, but several more staff will join them as the school's population grows in succeeding years.

The superintendent aims to treat all schools in the district equally and not allow one school to move ahead of others in terms of school reform. All high schools in the district will be forming small learning communities for ninth and tenth grades during the 2004–2005 school year, but teachers at Birch intend to extend their small school through the eleventh and twelfth grades.

Figure A: An Overview of Redesigned Small Schools 2003–2004

	Elm	Alder	Fir	Chestnut	Cedar	Hemlock	Birch
Grade levels served in 2003–2004	9–12	9–11	9–12	9–12	9–12	9–12	No students until Fall 2004
Number of students & percent of building enrollment	315 (19%)	360 (21%)	150 (100%)	180 (10%)	394 (20%)	320 (43%)	No students until Fall 2004
Number of teacher FTE	11.6	15	18.5	7	16	14.7	13
Number of teachers	14	16	19	11	17	16	13
Number & percent of new staff members in 2004–2005	3 (21%)	2 (13%)	1 (5%)	3 (27%)	1 (6%)	3 (19%)	12[†] (57%)
Is counselor part of the staff?	Yes	Yes	*	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is special education integrated into the school?	Yes	Yes	*	Yes	Yes	No	No
Do students "crossover" between schools?	Yes	Yes	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	No students until Fall 2004
Other noteworthy characteristics			*	Only school in building serving grades 9–12		Transient population	Only 9th & 10th grade students will participate

[*] Fir is an already-small school

[†] Staff will grow to 21 teachers in the fall of 2004

M s. Diamonte sits at her desk, already exhausted, and it's only the third week of school. During sixth period on Friday afternoon, she has told her freshman students they have the remaining time to work on their algebra homework for Monday. The students are quiet. Thank heaven. They are tired, too. Some are at work on the problems she has assigned.

She notices Danielle has her head on the desk. Danielle is sinking fast in this class; she has four missing assignments, and she failed the first quiz. "I wonder what's happened? She seemed so eager and alert the first week."

Ms. Diamonte sees that Eddy appears to be tuned in to his iPod. His head nods in rhythm. "Oh, well. He's a good student and I know he has finished his work. In fact, I don't know why he's in this class. He said he had algebra last year in middle school. I've been meaning to let his counselor know, but both of us are so busy. She works with 400 students and I haven't had a chance to get in to see her."

In the last row Celeste has her mirror out and is carefully attending to her eyeliner, black and heavy to match her dyed hair and black clothes. "What is her mother thinking, letting a girl come to school in that outfit? I wish I knew her parents. I'm sure we would have a lot to talk about."

These and 30 other students round out the student load of 150 students Ms. Diamonte sees every day. She knows almost everyone's name by now, but not much else about her students. As she scans the rows of seats, she is reminded there are already three empty desks in her classroom. One of the missing students has been absent all week. She doesn't know why. The other two formally withdrew. Have they dropped out? Or are the families moving? At least she got their textbooks back. Now all 150 will have a book.

Throughout the semester as her students turn in work and take tests, Ms. Diamonte will sort out who the good math students are and encourage them, try to bring the others along, and feel sad for those who probably won't make it. At the beginning of the next semester she may have a different group of 150 to sort. "You know, I really do care about my students, but there's only so much I can do. And I feel the need to concentrate my efforts where there's a chance of success."[3]

[3] Ms. Diamonte is a fictitious teacher whose experiences in this vignette are based on observations of teachers in large, comprehensive high schools.

Introduction

In spite of the good intentions of teachers like Ms. Diamonte, in a large, comprehensive high school, the organizational structure often gets in the way of teachers knowing and caring about students. Comprehensive high schools are typically organized so that teachers have as many as 150 different students in a school day. Students are scheduled into six different, probably unrelated, classes every day, and possibly, into six entirely different classes with different teachers at the mid-year term. These conditions, coupled with large numbers of students in big high schools, make it easy for some students to get lost in the shuffle, to drift through high school unnoticed, and for too many, to drop out or fail. Still others graduate unprepared for further education.

"So if the kids are put in smaller environments where we get to know each other better, teachers have a chance to connect with our students, and they with us…if they feel more a part of school, they are more apt to succeed."

Principal of Cedar School

The students who succeed find a way to make connections. These students are often high-performing students in special classes with challenging curricula, talented athletes who are carefully coached, and students in select school activities such as band, orchestra, the school paper, and drama. In other words, many of the successful students experience the benefits of personalization in their special programs, which are often unrelated to academics.

Because of the success of these students, teachers and parents alike already realize students do better when adults and other students in the school know them and care about them. That common-sense contention has been convincingly demon-

[4] Raywid, 1996; Cotton, 2001; Wasley, 2000

strated in extensive research over the past 40 years.[4] Drawing on that research, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in its grants to high schools endorses personalization as one of seven Attributes of High Achievement Schools—attributes strongly advocated for in the redesigned small schools the foundation supports (see Appendix B).

Again and again, educational writers and researchers emphasize that the context provided by smallness invites teachers and students to know and trust one another. Research and practice point to the size of a learning community as a core factor, demonstrating that small schools are more likely to create the right conditions for student connection, equity, and high achievement.[5]

[5] Davidson, 2002

Researchers are clear, however, that closer relationships are not in themselves enough to improve student learning. According to small school researcher Jackie Ancess, "If all these new schools are is small and humane, that will not be enough. And if the opportunity to develop close relationships with students and know them well is not leveraged on behalf of improving opportunities for their intellectual development, achievement and success, the promise of these new small schools will be squandered."[6] Or as small school supporter Michelle Fine says, "Small … will produce a sense of belonging almost immediately, but hugging is not the same as algebra. Rigor and care must be braided together, or we run the risk of creating small, nurturing environments that aren't schools."[7] It's not enough for teachers to know their students better. That knowledge ought to point to informed instructional decisions and better instructional practices.

[6] Ancess, 1997

[7] Gewertz, 2001

Accordingly, for purposes of the study, we define personalization as making a difference when three conditions (shown in the sidebar) occur. Personalization, in this sense, informs instructional practice.

PERSONALIZATION We define personalization as making a difference when these conditions occur:
- Adults in the school know kids (and often families) so well that instruction and learning opportunities can be tailored to individual students based on that knowledge.
- Students in small schools are known and have a sense of belonging that sustains mutual trust between the teacher and the student.
- Students trust teachers sufficiently to grant their teachers the moral authority to make greater demands on them as learners.

In this report, we offer an account of what is happening as seven small high schools in Washington State—six of which were redesigned from formerly large schools—intentionally develop a more personalized school community. These seven schools have embarked on an unprecedented effort to deliberately and systemically change high schools to focus on making strong personal connections between and among students, parents, and other staff members as a way of advancing teaching and learning. What follows provides a snapshot of the schools' progress in early efforts towards personalization as these efforts were documented in spring 2004.

The first section, "What We're Seeing," reports on our early observations of personalization in the seven study schools by identifying four stages of personalization we see emerging. These progressive stages form a personalization continuum along which we are able to observe the progress of each of the schools based on the data collected to date. As we examine each school's movement along the continuum, we seek to understand the methods, structures, and strategies teachers use to get to know their students better and ultimately how they personalize instruction.

In the second section, "What We're Wondering About," we share the concerns of teachers, administrators, and students. We wonder, as the school's educators do, how they will sustain the work they are doing and leverage the progress they have made so far in personalizing schooling to inform and improve instructional decisions and practices.
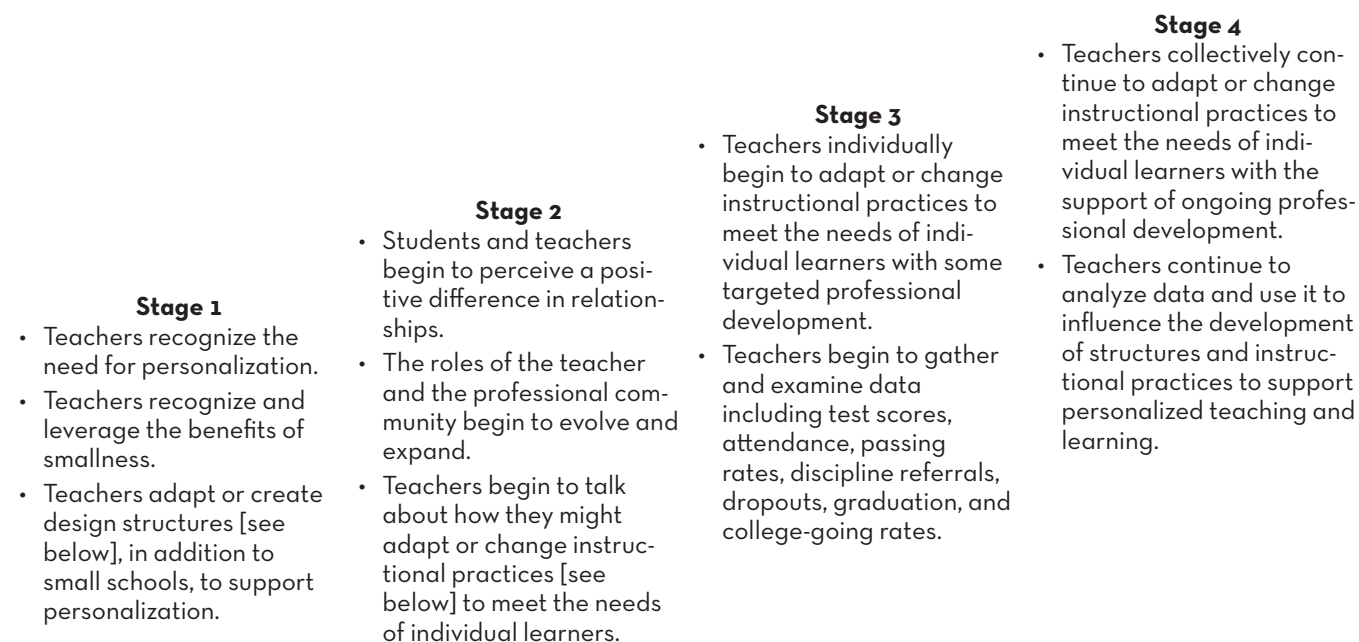
The Personalization Continuum

In the first year of data collection, we are seeing that personalization does not emerge suddenly as a result of high school redesign. Instead, our data point to four evolutionary stages along a personalization continuum (see Figure B, page 5). This conceptual framework leads us to anticipate that schools will work through the stages of the continuum until personalization is fully realized and measurably effective in advancing high levels of teaching and learning. We recognize that not all schools will go through the stages in precisely the order we describe. Some will leap ahead in certain categories; others will remain for a time in earlier stages to develop fully foundational elements.

In **Stage One**, a foundational stage, school staff recognize the need for personalization, begin to leverage the benefits of smallness, and start to develop and extend structures to support personalization. All seven schools have exhibited the indicators in Stage One.

In **Stage Two**, staff continue to design and adapt supportive structures; both teachers and students begin to perceive positive differences in relationships; the roles of the teacher and the professional community begin to evolve and expand; concurrently, teachers begin to talk about how they might adapt or change their instruction to meet the needs of learners. Six of the schools in our study exhibit Stage Two characteristics.

Stage Three builds on each of the characteristics of Stages One and Two as individual teachers begin to practice instructional changes to meet learners' individual needs, often with the support of professional development. Moreover, school staff begin to gather and examine quantifiable data including test scores, attendance, passing rates, discipline referrals, dropouts, graduation rates, and college entrance. None of the schools are fully in Stage Three, although four schools are beginning to exhibit some of the Stage Three characteristics.

School staff members in **Stage Four** design and adapt structures to support personalization as they are needed. Teachers and students continue to acknowledge the effects of positive relationships; the roles of individual teachers and their professional community continue to expand and evolve; and teachers collectively create instructional practices to meet the needs of individual learners, supported by ongoing professional development. Moreover, data analysis influences the development of teaching practices and structures to support personalization. So far, none of the schools are operating at this level.

Figure B: Personalization Continuum

Stage 1
- Teachers recognize the need for personalization.
- Teachers recognize and leverage the benefits of smallness.
- Teachers adapt or create design structures [see below], in addition to small schools, to support personalization.

Stage 2
- Students and teachers begin to perceive a positive difference in relationships.
- The roles of the teacher and the professional community begin to evolve and expand.
- Teachers begin to talk about how they might adapt or change instructional practices [see below] to meet the needs of individual learners.

Stage 3
- Teachers individually begin to adapt or change instructional practices to meet the needs of individual learners with some targeted professional development.
- Teachers begin to gather and examine data including test scores, attendance, passing rates, discipline referrals, dropouts, graduation, and college-going rates.

Stage 4
- Teachers collectively continue to adapt or change instructional practices to meet the needs of individual learners with the support of ongoing professional development.
- Teachers continue to analyze data and use it to influence the development of structures and instructional practices to support personalized teaching and learning.

Design Structures to Support Personalization

Teaching & Learning
- Advisory
- Block schedule
- Year-long classes
- Looping or multi-year, multi-grade curriculum
- Placement of students with the same teachers for more than one class
- Special education inclusion
- Limitations on student crossovers to other small schools
- Before, during, and after school tutoring for students

Working with Families
- Sharing of information about students of concern via e-mail
- Regular meetings to discuss students of concern
- Process in place to develop, implement, and follow-up on plans for individual students of concern
- Implementation of the same three-step process (above) for all students
- Student-led conferences with teachers and parents

Formal and Informal Policies
- Small school policies that reflect school culture and values

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Instructional Practices to Support Personalization

- Active inquiry/essential questions
- Project-based learning
- Performance assessment
- Differentiation
- Internships
- Community-based learning
- Cooperative learning
- Portfolios
- Student mentors
- Journaling

Stage One

In the first stage, teachers recognized the need for personalization, began to leverage the benefits of smallness, and started to develop and extend structures to support personalization.

Teachers Recognized the Need for Personalization

From the very beginning of the redesign process, school staff in our study recognized small schools would allow them to know their students better and presumably, as a result, be able to effect an improvement in student achievement. Nearly all the teachers we talked to in the seven small schools understood early on that small schools and the chance for more personalization could be the way to rescue struggling high schools and the unsuccessful students that showed up in the schools' data. Not only did we find that staff members recognized a need for personalization early in the process, but in large buildings before the redesign, some believed that personalization was reason enough to convert to smaller schools. "The reason we are [going to small schools] is personalization." A teacher from Elm said personalization alone could account for important changes: "[Students] are going to feel that there are people watching out for them and caring for them, whether they like it or not. They are going to be able to buy into their education because they are part of a smaller group and everybody is interconnected." The principal of Cedar put it this way:

> We have a high at-risk population with a very transient community. We have a large number of non-English speaking households and a very diverse cultural community…a lot of dropouts and a lot of kids not succeeding…So if the kids are put in smaller environments where we get to know each other better, teachers have a chance to connect with our students, and they with us. If they feel more a part of school, they are more apt to succeed.

A teacher from Cedar told us that previously, teachers were so busy "jumping through hoops, different preps, different kids," they felt they were flying and never touching down. She said, "We lost touch with the kids." According to this teacher, the reason for moving to the small school "is to get us slowing down, get us back in touch with the kids and able to make some better connections and…make them more successful." At Elm, one teacher saw that students were "falling in the cracks." For this teacher, the small school becomes a way "to make the school more intimate, more important on a daily basis for students. [We] felt if there were connections with some adults, there would be a safety net for those students who may be at risk."

The widespread acknowledgement of the need for personalization was reinforced when administrators and teachers examined their own schools' data in preparation for writing their Gates grant proposals. The data they saw exposed the extent of low test scores, too many attendance and discipline problems, low graduation rates, and failing grades.

While some students (up to a third in some schools) appeared to do well and go on to further education after high school, many more were just drifting along, barely passing courses, failing, or dropping out altogether. Data from the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) underscores this fact. In 2004, none of the buildings where the seven schools are housed had more than 40 percent of its students passing the WASL.

The school data helped teachers acknowledge how poorly their students were doing: "We had a relatively high failure rate, relatively high [rate of] students not passing the WASL and everybody knew something had to be different." A teacher at Cedar summed it up: "We have a lot of what I would call ghosts…who go through…and are not connected to anything. There's no sport, there's no club, there's no class or teacher they…identify with so they just drift aimlessly through without any sort of direction."

> "We have a lot of what I would call ghosts…who go through… and are not connected to any-thing. There's no sport, there's no club, there's no class or teacher they…identify with so they just drift aimlessly through without any sort of direction."
>
> *Teacher at Cedar School*

Teachers expressed optimism about the effects personalization could have in addition to improved student achievement. A teacher from Elm said personalization also becomes a way for teachers to be at their best: "We want all of our kids to succeed at high levels. We are not there yet but [those are the goals] we have. There is [another] goal—that we all want to teach really to the best of our ability; we want to be teachers at high levels." At Birch, planning to convert to a small school in 2004, one teacher spoke hopefully about what to expect: "I definitely think [relationships will change]. The longer you have them, the more growth and achievement there is and that's convincing enough for me."

In spite of some reservations—"Part of me says there are some kids you just can't reach"—nearly every teacher we talked to in every small school could point to personalization as a goal worth striving for and as a reason for moving to smaller schools. Even those who were skeptical about reaching every student saw the value in knowing students better. And those who resisted the conversion to small schools altogether could recognize that making closer connections with students could affect their schooling in a positive way.

Thus, the schools' own data about success and failure, the adults' experiences and hopes, the literature about small schools, and the emphasis on personalization in the Gates grant requirements all helped teachers recognize the value of personalization and strengthen their resolve to put it in place. Recognizing the importance of personalizing schooling is where all other reforms in small schools start; we see it as fundamental to their success.

Teachers Leveraged the Benefits of Smallness

For six of the schools, the redesign itself, from large and comprehensive to small and intimate, constitutes a major structural change—a change that provides a hospitable environment for personalization. The already-small school in the study (Fir) has a head-start familiarity with this environment, so its challenge is to capitalize more fully on the possibilities for personalization that smallness offers. But in all cases, school staff are learning how to take advantage of the built-in potential of small schools and to build that advantage into more opportunities for personalization.

Some aspects of personalization appear to flow naturally from the smaller configurations even before the staff begins to pay attention to designing and implementing additional supportive structures, such as advisories or block schedules. The context of smallness offers at least three inherent structural benefits that schools are learning to exploit. First, the number of students in each of the schools (fewer than 400) makes knowing every student in the school a likely reality, especially

when those same students return year after year. Second, teachers in each school share many of the same students on a regular basis, so it is easier for teachers to have frequent, informal conversations about students they all know. Finally, some of the schools have made an effort to cluster the classrooms of each school in one location to provide the benefits of proximity. In these arrangements, people in the same small school see one another on a daily basis. In conversations with people at the schools, we learned how they are responding to these three conditions.

- *Limited Number of Students*   Alder teachers reported that making connections seems easier when there are fewer students in the school, especially if one knows that students will be coming back for three more years. One of the Alder teachers claimed to know students better just because of the redesign: "I don't think I anticipated how much I would find out about my students just by making this change." Another difference an Alder teacher saw was a stronger commitment to contacting parents because there will be long-term relationships with students: "Before, if you had 150 kids and you knew you would never see them again, why would you want to call their parent? It's not that you don't care…." Another Alder teacher said she has closer relationships with students, even those not assigned to her class: "I may not have a [particular] student in class. I may have never known them, but now I know them better and they are coming to me for math help." When there are fewer students to keep track of, teachers can detect and head off potential problems: "All these things (drugs, fights) were going on in this building before, but we just didn't know it because we didn't know the kids as well."

  At Elm, a teacher reported that because of the connections smallness makes possible, there is a difference in students' motivation: "Students buy into their education more when they are part of a smaller group. Everybody is interconnected and there is a better relationship than there was before." And an Elm student acknowledged students are better known: "One of the things the small school has really done for a lot of kids I know is [that teachers get to] know the kid a lot more." Moreover, because students at Elm see one another more frequently, "It was a quicker process as far as the kids getting to know each other."

- *Teachers Share the Same Students*   When teachers share students, they can keep track of individuals who need extra attention in an informal way. An Elm teacher described how that works: "It's easy to keep tabs on a specific student's performance or behavior. We have a girl right now we are very much concerned about because of poor grades due to excessive absences…There are two other staff on this girl's tail because she is absent so much. At lunch, we talk. 'Was she here today? So how is she doing?' …She knows that basically we're watching out for her." This kind of concern can be addressed in the normal course of the day without formal meetings or conferences. At Chestnut, a teacher observed that there is more informal discussion about students and that the teachers have a "common language when we talk about why we want kids to do things."

- *Clustered Classrooms*   In the redesigned buildings, an effort has been made to cluster each school's classrooms in the same general area within the larger building, so teachers and students in that school see one another and get to know one another simply because of the proximity and because teachers share many students who are scheduled into the same school for the entire year. At

Cedar, most classrooms are located in a new wing of the building: "We kind of have our own little world out here." A teacher there explained, "When I walk outside my classroom, I pretty much know all [the] kids." Moreover, the teachers can interact easily in their common space: "If I want to work with a teacher to try and integrate some curriculum, it's real easy to do that because I don't have to hunt all over to find them. I just walk right across the hallway." A teacher from Alder talked about the inevitability of the interaction closeness provides: "We are a tighter, smaller group and to me it is just logical that we are going to be bumping into each other more."

Teachers Adapted or Created Design Structures to Support Personalization

Building on the advantages that an intimate environment provides, school staff members in each of the seven small schools are in the process of implementing or adapting design structures already in place, in addition to small schools, to support personalization. These structures include advisories, block schedules, strategies for sharing information about students, special education inclusion, and methods for interacting with families of students (see Figure C, page 14).

In Stage One, we see teachers adapting or designing one or two structures to support their efforts to personalize schooling. So far, much of the initial energy from school staffs has been centered on designing advisories and working with block schedules, and we emphasize those structures in this paper. However, we also mention a number of other structures that are on the drawing board or in the beginning stages of implementation.

ADVISORY The advisory occurs during a time period when small groups of students are assigned to meet with one adult who keeps track of and encourages personal growth and academic progress and is the student's advocate at school. Advisories can be single or mixed grades, and students usually stay with the same group and teacher during their entire high school experience.

Advisory   The Small Schools Project and the Coalition of Essential Schools, organizations that offer regular professional development opportunities to the Gates Foundation grantee schools in Washington State, have emphasized in their meetings, workshops, and publications the important role advisories can play in personalizing instruction. Advisories are highly recommended because they provide ideal settings for helping students set high expectations for themselves. Moreover, in advisories, teachers can foster strong community involvement and provide positive reinforcement to individuals for their achievements.

All seven of the small schools have experimented with or continued some form of advisory. Even Birch, not yet in operation as a small school, has students in advisories and is planning how its staff will adapt advisories to its projected new configuration. In four schools, the advisory is a regularly scheduled class period where small groups of students are assigned to one adult who keeps track of and encourages personal growth and academic progress and is the student's advocate at school. In the other two schools, advisories are scheduled irregularly or on an "as needed" basis, but always with the same adult. In all cases, advisories are scheduled for the entire building, but each small school takes responsibility for the form and content of its own advisory.

In our conversations with teachers and administrators, we learned that the form advisories take varies widely from school to school and from teacher to teacher.

Some schools are struggling to make advisories effective; others seem satisfied with the direction their advisories are taking. For example, at Elm, where teachers meet advisees twice a week for 30 minutes, teachers shared several examples of how advisories are working to support students. In one teacher's freshman advisory, the teacher can respond to how a student is doing in advisory and follow up with that student in academic classes: "If they're having a bad day in [advisory], I kind of keep it in mind in class, touch base, say 'okay how are things going now?' It also allows me to ride them a little bit more if their grade in class drops from missing assignments. I can pull them aside in [advisory and ask], 'What's going on? How can I help? How's this going?'" Moreover, it is easier to keep track of a student's progress through advisory: "We do bi-weekly progress reports they bring me from all classes for my records. So I can say, 'Gee, what's going on here?'".

There is also more opportunity to be in touch with parents. Reported an Elm teacher: "I've got a little more contact with their parents. Before, if I didn't have them in class, I wouldn't know how to contact the parents or even if the parents were aware." Another Elm teacher told us parent contact has increased through advisories: "I'd say a positive thing is that in the advisory I have had several occasions where I've really been able to help parents who don't understand the school and help them navigate in the best [interest] of their kid."

Because they know students in advisory, teachers are also able to act as their advocates. An Elm teacher described a typical episode. The teacher was aware of a student who failed a test in another class. She really knew the material, but there were problems at home. "I said, 'Go in and tell him you'd like to retake it, but not for points. Just so you can show yourself and him that you know the material.' I stepped in and said [to the teacher], 'She wants to be able to prove to herself and to you that she does know it.' She aced it. That was a very good experience for her because she definitely knew that people were there to help her."

> "If you see your [advisory] teacher two times a week or sometimes more, you really get to know [him] and you really feel comfortable talking to [him]. [He is] not a stranger."
> *Student at Elm School*

An Elm student described how seeing an advisory teacher frequently makes it easy to talk to that teacher: "If you see your [advisory] teacher two times a week or sometimes more, you really get to know [him] and you really feel comfortable talking to [him]. [He is] not a stranger."

On the other hand, Alder teachers are struggling to make advisories work for all students. "My personal frustration is we have the personalization stuff set up potentially but we are not capitalizing on it like we should. There is so much more that we should do," reported one Alder teacher. In this school, advisories are new structures that began with the redesign process, and so far not all Alder teachers agree that advisories are the best way to focus on personalization. One teacher claimed relationships seem to be built during class, passing in the halls and being in a small area together, rather than primarily through advisory. Another Alder teacher felt that relationships with kids were better in settings other than advisory: "I don't feel that I am at all closer with advisory kids. As a matter of fact, it is more difficult to pull them aside. [I prefer] spend[ing] a bit of time talking to that student who is resistant and having problems in school [when] no one in the room knows what you two are talking about."

However, Alder teachers agree that one notable success was the process of student registration through advisory when teachers were able to help students individually select appropriate classes. For the first time, teachers were able to recognize who was not on track: "We are able to catch those kids that are having difficulties, where they would get lost in the sea of kids before. I had one kid who said, 'I didn't know I wasn't on track.' They would have been lost in the whole system." Building from that success, Alder teachers continue to tinker with a format for advisories that all can agree is effective.

At Cedar, the advisory period, also initiated during the redesign process, was lost mid-year because its addition, in combination with a block schedule, violated a union contract provision. In this school, teachers remembered a successful advisory where teachers made significant connections with students: "[The advisory] was the perfect time for acknowledging the kids and building that one-to-one relationship." Another teacher saw advisories as a way to recognize individual students: "When we were having the advisee group, once a month we would get together and each [advisory] teacher would hand out an award for whatever our theme was for that month." The advisory is not lost altogether, but "now [the advisory] meets only occasionally for special needs such as registration. Registration week, [the advisory] met three times so advisors could help students plan for next year's registration." Cedar teachers report that they are working on a plan to reinstate the regular advisory period, since it was a central feature of their personalization efforts prior to it being abandoned.

The already-small Fir began advisories two years ago with small groups of mixed-age students assigned to one teacher. After polling students, the staff agreed the advisories were not working as they had planned. In the 2003–2004 school year, advisories were reorganized around activities dictated by teacher or student interests, and students were permitted to choose their own advisory.

Clearly, advisories in these schools are in various stages of development. They also reflect a variety of purposes, configurations, and expectations. Just how significant a role they will play in personalizing school is yet to be determined.

BLOCK SCHEDULE A block schedule encourages personalization by providing teachers and students more uninterrupted time for instructional guidance, one-on-one instruction, and closer supervision of student projects. Both teachers and students benefit from being with fewer numbers of students during the school day. At this stage, even when the longer time period is relatively new, both students and teachers in schools where block schedules are implemented expressed an enthusiasm for it.

Block Schedule Even before receiving the Gates Foundation grants, Hemlock and Fir had already moved to block schedules as a way to improve instruction. Cedar and Alder implemented blocks as part of the redesign. Block schedules allow longer class periods and require fewer classes per day. For example, in one of the schools in the study, six classes meet in three 103-minute blocks twice a week. On Mondays, all six classes meet for 50 minutes. Other schools in the study operate variations of this configuration.

Cedar began the school year with the traditional six period day, but converted mid-year to the block schedule. One teacher expressed the feelings of several in welcoming the challenge: "I have time to actually look at every student's work that day…I don't quiz as much because I have other avenues of finding out what they're doing and not doing." One Cedar teacher credited going to a block schedule as having made a major difference in her teaching: "The big-

gest improvement in my classes and my [teaching] life has been the block schedule. I am able to go around and actually talk to the students and help them on a one-on-one basis." Yet another Cedar teacher saw a positive effect on the small school's staff: "I think I see my fellow staff members trying new things, trying to do more than just stand and deliver, trying to make it more student-centered learning [rather] than teacher directed."

Some of the students at Cedar who consider themselves honors students were bored when the long block classes conformed to old instructional patterns and didn't seem to take their individual needs into account: "Listening to one teacher for a long time, it gets annoying and stuff." And another student said: "They just keep talking and talking and talking and halfway through I am asleep."

But these same students had a different opinion of block scheduling when they judge the teacher to be skilled at using the time: "My Spanish teacher. She's got a game plan. You get to get up and move around and stuff like that. It is not always sitting down. She has activities planned and not just worksheets." According to another Cedar student: "My English teacher is good at this block scheduling. He knows how to use the time and we are not just sitting around doing nothing." Many Cedar students do value the extra time: "I like art. Now I have an hour and a half to work on my project and not worry about [whether] I'm going to finish it on time." Another Cedar student summed it up: "You have more time to think about things without having to completely change your mindset and go on to another class." An Alder student also agrees there is value in having more time: "I love the longer periods. I don't feel as rushed to get my work done. I feel like I have time."

Structures for Sharing Student Information   An advantage of small schools is that student information is readily accessible, and teachers can take advantage of their more intimate knowledge of students to confer frequently about student progress.

> "We will send out an e-mail, 'I have this particular student in my class and if anybody has them, what do you see that's going on? Here's my concern.' And I get responses back from all the staff."
>
> *Teacher at Cedar School*

Several of the schools in the study have set up regularly scheduled teacher meetings convened expressly to talk about students of concern. A Chestnut teacher reported: "We talk at our Wednesday morning meetings about who's in trouble, who we should be looking out for. When we did scheduling for second semester, we knew of cliques of kids who didn't do well in class together so we were able to separate them." These scheduled meetings also help teachers deal with special needs students in a collaborative way: "I think the small school meetings once a week obviously help because often the special kids' names come up as a focus of concern. They are starting to be seen as [small school] kids."

Because in the small school many teachers have students in common, it is convenient to have e-mail conferences about a particular student. A Cedar teacher explained, "We will send out an e-mail, 'I have this particular student in my class and if anybody has them, what do you see that's going on? Here's my concern.' And I get responses back from all the staff."

Special Education Inclusion   Two schools reported they have changed the way special education programs are structured. Instead of working in isolation in a

pull-out method of serving special education students, special education teachers in these small schools now serve in a reconfigured role that places them in the classroom where more special education students are included in the general student population. In these situations, special education teachers have the flexibility to decide how to meet individual needs. A special education teacher at Alder appreciated the new flexibility:

> The regular ed teachers are very comfortable with allowing me to use my time—some days I may be meeting with a probation officer or a therapist…and the school [says] yes, do whatever as long as you are helping the students. It is just that flexibility that allows you to immediately address the issue…I can move out of one classroom and immediately move to another one if they need me there. It is really helping me be more successful.

A special education teacher at Chestnut feels more successful in this new structure: "I really get a good sense of where the kids are, to track them, and am able to go out to the classroom with some of them."

Several Chestnut special education teachers told us that instruction for special needs kids has improved in the small school setting. One said basic education teachers have become more sensitive and more communicative about individual students' needs. There is a recognition of special education kids and teachers are more willing to individualize assignments. It also helps special education students, indeed all students, to see the same group of teachers several times in their schedule.

Other Structures that Support Personalization   Other structures that support personalization are now in place or in the planning stages in several of the schools. They include orientation activities for new and entering students, regularly scheduled parent meetings, staff meetings that focus on one or two students each month, parent-student conferences, and agreement on grading, attendance, and behavior policies.

Chestnut has added a number of structures, including behavior, grading, and attendance policies. In this school, the closeness of the staff makes it easy to set standards for student behavior: "We have certain standards for kids, behavioral expectations, so the kid can't come across the hall and say, 'She lets me wear a hat in her class.' They know. Don't bother asking." In addition to agreement on acceptable behavior, teachers here also use similar grading and attendance policies, which are posted in every room. They offer after-school tutoring every day on a rotating basis, by subject. When grades come out at the end of a semester, teachers confer about the students they have in common. Chestnut has also experimented with parent conferences, using a model called partnership conferencing where the teacher, student, and parent outline students' career interests and future educational goals.

Another example of a support structure is the intensive tutoring program at Cedar, instituted as part of the teachers' contracted day. Every morning before first period, students may choose to come in for help, or teachers may assign them to tutoring. During this time teachers are available to help students with schoolwork and to help them prepare to take the WASL.

Taken together, these structural changes pervade the redesign of the seven schools. They are potentially groundbreaking, often innovative, but sometimes frustrating as both students and staff adjust to new ways of schooling. Designing

the structures is the easy part. Making them work to support a personalized education takes time for planning and implementation, creativity and effort on the part of staff members, and financial and professional development support from the administration. Considering the short amount of time the small schools in the study have had to design and implement new structures or adapt old ones, it is premature to predict their eventual impact on personalization.

Figure C: Design Structures to Support Personalization in Each Small School

	Elm	Alder	Fir	Chestnut	Cedar	Hemlock	Birch[8]
Teachers see the same students on a regular basis (via looping, teachers teach more than one subject)	X					X	
Regularly scheduled advisory	X	X	X	X			X
Block schedule		X	X		X	X	
Teachers share information about students of concern via e-mail	X	X		X	X	X	
Teachers meet to discuss students of concern	X	X		X	X	X	
Teachers have a systematic process to communicate regularly with families (via phone calls, letters/e-mails)	X	X	X	X			
Student-led conferences with teachers and parents	X			X		X	
Regular before and after school tutoring for students		X	X	X	X		
Small school policies that reflect school culture and values			N/A	X	X		
Classrooms clustered in one area of the school	X		N/A	X	X	X	

[8] Birch will not implement small schools until fall 2004 and as a result, many of these structures were not in place during the first round of data collection in the spring of 2004.

Stage Two

In this stage, students and teachers reported positive differences in relationships. Teachers talked more about how they will change instruction as a result of personalization. Finally, the roles of both the individual teacher and the professional community began to evolve and expand.

Students Perceived a Positive Difference in Relationships with Teachers

In six of the study schools, students acknowledged that relationships between adults and students are different in small schools. Students described relationships as deeper, more personal and caring, and more focused on their academic success.

Some of the students credited the small schools structure with helping to support teachers' getting to know them and creating a caring climate. At Elm, a student said: "The fact that there are small schools and as we go through school, we are going to have the same teachers…so they get to know us and know how we act as students and have a personal relationship with all the students. They get to push you academically. It is a nice relationship to have." Students also reported that in small schools they developed more one-on-one relationships with their teachers. A Fir student reported: "I like how the teachers get one-on-one with you and it makes them proud of you."

Students described their relationships with teachers as being different because their teachers are getting to know them on a personal level and talk with them about what is happening in their lives outside of school. At Alder, a student said, "You can talk to some of them about things that don't have to do with your schoolwork…so you know that they're not just talking to you because there is schoolwork involved."

In three of the schools, students described how the teachers check on them and communicate with them via e-mail, phone calls, and informal meetings and conversations outside of class. At Cedar, a student described one teacher who encourages students to come in before or after class: "if you have a question on your paper or just [want] to talk about anything, your life, or explain your problems."

At Alder, a freshman reported teachers feel comfortable approaching students in informal settings:

> They want you to do good and they like talk to you even when it's like not class.… Like if you're not doing good in the class and you're sitting there playing cards during lunch, they just might come and talk to you and tell you that you need to, you know, work during lunch…and then they'll tell all your friends to get you to work.

As part of teachers' enhanced communication outside of the classroom, students at two schools also observed that teachers are talking more with their parents and family members. Typically, but not always, this occurs when there are issues of concern about a student's academic progress. Recounted three students:

> I am a good student and so they don't contact them unless you are doing something wrong or you are failing a class. Sometimes, and it is kind of rare, sometimes they will call home and let your parents know how well you are doing.

> If you are doing bad, I am pretty sure the teacher is going to contact the parents and the parents are going to know. Ms. H will contact. She sure will. She will call three times a day.

> If I am not doing good at all she will ask what's going on in my home situation and she will help me with it…she calls my family or she sets up times to come over and get my work done.

As a result of these deeper, more personal relationships, it was not surprising to hear students describe how they know their teachers care about them and look out for them. At Alder, students reported they know the teachers care about them because the teachers tell them. They say, "I care about you." Similarly, students at Chestnut reported they know teachers care about them because "the teachers talk about us. All of the time." When asked how they know this, the students responded: "They tell us."

For students in four of the schools, the sense of teachers' caring about them is demonstrated by the teachers providing additional academic support and assistance, believing in them, or merely being accessible when the student needs help. An Elm freshman shared that teachers are available before and after school: "They really take time…working to help you with assignments and making sure you understand." A student at Fir expressed surprise and seemed grateful when a teacher offered unexpected help: "One of my files was eaten up on the stupid laptops…so I went to her because she can type really fast, so she just typed up my essay for me and I was like, 'oh man!'" When a Hemlock student was not living up to even her own expectations, she reported how her teacher "sees the quality of my work and even though it might not be in the best form, she still wants to put me in honors and she cares about me and I don't know why." An Alder junior summed it up, "It feels good that people are looking out for you."

But not all the students reported closer relationships with their teachers, a fact heard most clearly from students at Cedar: "They are stressing the fact that you can get closer to your teacher and have more one-on-one time. I still have not seen that." These students also reported that their teachers have had little contact with their families and they would like to see it increase, especially when there is good news to report. One student expressed disappointment when teachers don't call: "A lot of teachers, at the beginning of the year, ask for your parents' phone number. I'm expecting them to call them when you do something good. But does that ever happen? No!" Added another student: "I want them to call my parents and tell them, 'Your daughter is doing very well in school.' If you do something bad, then they jump on the phone."

Teachers Perceived a Positive Difference in Relationships with Students

Similarly, teachers in the study schools reported a difference in relationships with students. They talked about how they know their students better as people, know their educational situations more deeply, and are more committed to their academic success. Teachers also shared that these deeper relationships are reciprocal and that students are getting to know their teachers better as well, a situation that they believe creates a positive difference.

Like the students, teachers credited the small school structure with supporting their efforts to create stronger, more personalized relationships with students. "I always thought I had pretty good relationships with my kids; I have even better relationships now." A teacher from Elm reported that in the small school structure, students appear to be reaching out more to their teachers: "This kid, who

looked so tough and so angry when you see him walking down the hall, will all of a sudden come up and try to make a connection."

Administrators also believe that the small school structure has helped the adults in the school get to know a core group of students on a deeper level, as expressed by an administrator from Alder:

> I believe we have a better handle on the core group of kids than we ever have before academically. We know who they are, we have better conversations about the kids because we all have the same group of kids, so that personalization piece in terms of knowing kids, we've taken a huge step forward.

But at least one teacher from Hemlock worried that the structural changes implemented in her small school will negatively impact her relationships with students: "I think the relationships I have with kids now are better than I had before, but I don't think I know as many. So my knowledge of the kids is deeper, but I know fewer of them."

"So for [both] the kids who are struggling, and the kids who don't have problems and are good students…we know how we can challenge them better and get them to learn and grow and stretch that way and that definitely didn't happen in the big school."

Teacher at Alder School

Other teachers said having students for multiple and consecutive semesters, and eventually years, makes a big difference in helping them know more about their students' educational situations—their skill level and abilities—as well as the content that has previously been covered. Teachers believe this knowledge helps them serve their students better, and as a result, there is a noticeable difference in their students' skill level. An Alder teacher summarized this observation:

> The kids in this small school are being served now better than they were in the bigger school. We have talked a lot about that as teachers…it's nice when the trimester changes, and we have new classes, we know the kids already. So for [both] the kids who are struggling, and the kids who don't have problems and are good students…we know how we can challenge them better and get them to learn and grow and stretch that way and that definitely didn't happen in the big school. [Previously], you would have different kids every trimester and you never knew if you were going to see any of those kids again and it was hard to invest time and energy into individuals if you didn't know if you were going to have them in a class again.

As a result of knowing students better and knowing their personal and educational circumstances more thoroughly, teachers are more concerned about students' academic success, which can be summarized by: "We want you to be successful and we are not going to take no for an answer." For some teachers, this commitment to students' success is the result of knowing that they will be seeing the students—and their parents—for more than one class, one semester, or one year. According to an administrator at Alder, "[there is a] sense of commitment—if you are having trouble with a freshman, you know they are with you three more years."

The teachers in the study schools also said that students are getting to know them better, as teachers and as people. These better reciprocal relationships lead to a higher level of trust and respect. "Because the students know they're going to have me again for chemistry and physics, they are getting to know me. The level of respect…is different," said a teacher from Cedar. More important, teachers who teach multiple disciplines reported that although their class size remains the same, as a result of having students for more than one class, they have to get to know fewer students and fewer "personalities." According to a teacher at Hemlock:

That allowed me to get to know the students a lot better and it also allowed the students to get to know me a lot better as well. I think they realized how much work I had to do as a teacher. I wasn't just this person out of a vacuum for 85 minutes [who] then disappeared out of their lives again. They kind of followed me in my day a little bit, so that helped us to get to know each other a lot quicker.

Roles of the Teacher and the Professional Community Evolved and Expanded

Teachers in the seven small schools also reported that their individual and collective roles as members of a professional community are evolving and expanding. As a result of this change, students, teachers, and parents can now expect teachers in small schools, individually and collectively, to play a different role—a role that includes a set of new and expanded responsibilities.

The Individual Teacher's Role   For the individual teachers, these evolving and expanding responsibilities include academic counseling, helping with registration, leading advisories, and assisting students with long-term academic and career planning. For many teachers, this is a challenging, yet exciting, time. Some teachers report they are finally getting to do the kinds of things they hoped they would get to do when they became a teacher many years ago. This was expressed by a teacher at Elm: "I'm allowed [to be a] mentor, parent, counselor, as opposed to I was a math teacher for 25 years, just pumping out problems and trying to get a personal approach to issues, but really never finding time within my day to address a kid's needs. Now I'm able."

For other teachers, the additional demands placed on them, and the uncertainty of their new roles, are creating tensions and stress. Teachers express frustration over being asked to take on more responsibilities and feel some of these tasks, such as calling home, will have a limited impact, if any at all. The teachers also reported that there are few, if any, structures in place to support these new and expanded roles.

Following are examples of four additional roles—advisor, stand-in parent/guardian, advocate, and facilitator—that individual teachers are beginning to play.

- *Teacher as Advisor*   In some instances, teachers are increasingly taking on academic advising, traditionally the purview of guidance counselors, to assist students with academic planning and course selection. Students at Chestnut recounted how some of the teachers put in long hours to assist with scheduling to ensure they got the courses they needed: "[Our school] knew what classes and schedules we had and all the other schools [in our building] didn't know. And we got the classes we wanted. This year [was the first one] I didn't have to change a single thing. They even looked at our transcripts to see what we needed. It was awesome." According to the teachers, this new advisor role also makes it possible to catch struggling students who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

- *Teacher as Guardian*   In other instances, the teacher role appears to be that of a stand-in parent or guardian who looks out for the student, provides a moral compass, and helps steer him clear of trouble. A student at Fir recounted that when Mrs. S knew that one of her students was heavily using drugs, "She and his best friend went to his house and dragged [him] to school because if he missed one more day he wouldn't graduate. And she made him

come to her house every day after school for three hours and helped him with his work and then she took him back home." In this stand-in parental role, teachers may ask about students' academic progress, as they do at Alder: "I think one of the things they like…is when I get to see their progress reports. I just bring them up to the front desk here and sit with them and ask them about their grades and how they're doing. They really like that attention. They really like it because it's special. I'm looking at them only. I'm not talking to anyone else."

- *Teacher as Advocate*   Some of the teachers in our study play an advocacy role, helping students represent and articulate their interests and needs to other adults, including parents or other teachers in their small school. A student at Elm recounted:

> I had a problem with my English teacher, so I sat down and talked to my advisory teacher and he got a meeting with me, my mom and her and she kind of lightened up a lot and every now and then we will have a meeting, and she will help me out and we will figure out what we can do to keep me going.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Do you do better in that class?
>
> I'm doing a lot better in that class. My lowest grade ever before this year was probably a C at the lowest, and I was probably getting a D minus—almost failing—in her class and now it is up to a B."

In another instance, an Elm teacher demonstrated his commitment to a student's success by helping a colleague understand some of the student's personal dilemmas.

> [A student] was in my advisory and he was getting this F in Mr. S's art class. So, I said "What's going on?" and so he started talking and it turned out, his mother is always gone—she's a stewardess—and his father wouldn't get him his supplies for art. The kid was really upset. So, I was able to go over to Mr. S and say, "You know so and so is really hurting and this is what's happening." Well, that broke Mr. S's heart, too, and he went out and bought the materials and the kid got his act turned around. Now, in the old days, neither of those problems would have been addressed and the parents would have been unhappy and the kid would have flunked.

- *Teacher as Facilitator*   Some of the teachers in our study described an emerging role as facilitator. In this capacity, teachers work to ensure that students and/or their colleagues have an opportunity to be heard and contribute to the conversation. In some cases, this may mean facilitating a student advisory session. In another, it may involve facilitating a conversation among teaching colleagues who are part of a Critical Friends Group[9] or study group. It could also include facilitating a student-teacher-parent conference. Or, as the example below illustrates, the teacher facilitates a heated conversation between a teaching colleague and a parent:

> I sat down with them all; I said our goal here is to find a workable solution for everyone because we are in this community together. We want you to succeed as a student, the teacher to succeed as a teacher, and the parent to feel like your kid is in a place that is safe and a learning environment. The parent wanted to go straight to the principal and make a complaint against the teacher and I said, "Is it possible for us to work it out?" The assistant principal was there just in case, but he didn't really say much because he didn't need to.

The Teachers' Professional Community   The role of the teachers' professional community is also evolving and expanding to include assuming a collective responsibility for each student's success. Teachers reported they are now meeting together to talk about students of concern or e-mailing each other to check up on

[9]   Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) are typically groups of six to eight colleagues who agree to meet regularly and to look closely at one another's practice and at student work. Members of these groups usually develop agreements about what constitutes good teaching and learning, visit each other's classrooms, and gather evidence of what works best for student learning. For more information about CFGs, see Kathleen Cushman's article in the May 1998 edition of *Horace*.

a particular student. At Hemlock, the teachers exchanged e-mails about a student of concern who was skipping some of his classes. In order to keep him in school, the teachers jointly developed the following plan as recorded in this e-mail from one of the teachers:

> I called Joe's mother yesterday, because he has been regularly missing two or three days a week. I have not seen him at all this week and he was absent three days last week.
>
> Apparently, Joe has been skipping his third and fourth period classes.
>
> The tentative agreement I made with his mother is Amy (Joe's second period teacher) will let Joe pick up his lunch and then deliver him to me.
>
> I'll eat lunch with Joe in my classroom and then keep him through third period. At the end of third period, I'll deliver him to John [for fourth period].

To read more about the changing nature of the professional community in small schools, we recommend *Elevating the Conversation: Creating Professional Community in Small High Schools*,[10] which is also based on the seven small schools in our study.

Teachers Began to Talk about Changing Instructional Practices

Almost every teacher we spoke to accepted the notion that increased personalization and the consequent improvement of teaching and learning were the primary reasons for converting to small schools. Nevertheless, at this point, there were few reports of extensive changes in specific teaching practices. However, in six of the schools, teachers were beginning to *discuss* how increased personalization and the structures that sustain it could help them develop the kinds of teaching practices that lead to more powerful teaching and learning. We heard a number of teachers vow to focus more intently on teaching and learning next year.

We learned that Cedar teachers are talking about instruction more than ever before: "Not a lot of people did a lot of change in instruction. They're saying that next year they will, and they really want to." Even if practices have not changed dramatically at Cedar, there's a new conversation about [instructional strategies, such as] "Socratic questioning, Understanding by Design, and technology. [That's] huge." Our further conversations with the Cedar staff confirmed this desire to consider alternative instructional strategies: "We're coming up with creating a culture of projects, culminating exhibits." This has led to greater discussion of and experimentation with the integration of subjects: "We want to work together. The teamwork is pretty good, and the desire to integrate is pretty strong."

At Alder, one teacher reported that it's hard to get the "professional learning piece" on the agenda: "But when we do, it's night and day better [when] there are 15 to 18 people around a table." This teacher claimed there has been more of this kind of conversation than in the five previous years. At Alder, some teachers are visiting one another's classroom, and "there is conversation among us about common themes and ideas."

The conversation about changing classroom practices was just beginning at Birch, planning to open for the 2004–2005 school year: "They're starting to talk about integrated curriculum, how and what it means. Does it mean skill-based? For instance, [are we] all going to do something that has to do with Africa?" A Birch teacher told us, "Next year we are all going to be a lot more focused on teaching practices. It definitely will happen next year."

[10] This report, also published by the Small Schools Project, discusses the unique characteristics of professional communities that are emerging and examines how these communities are changing teachers' expectations for their practice and supporting the creation of new norms for professional interaction. It can be downloaded from http://www.smallschoolsproject.org; look under "Small Schools In Action/What We Are Learning."

The principal at Hemlock commented, "People are talking about teaching and learning for the first time in my career." A Hemlock teacher observed changes among colleagues: "[The redesign] is forcing more teachers to look at integration and connections to other places, to think more globally."

Stage Three

In this stage, individual teachers are beginning to implement changed instructional practices (see Figure B and the box titled "Instructional Practices to Support Personalization," page 5), sometimes with the help of targeted professional development. Teachers in these schools have begun to gather and examine data, including test scores, attendance, passing rates, discipline referrals, dropouts, graduation, and college-going rates.

Teachers Began to Change Instructional Practices to Meet the Needs of Learners

[11] Questions represent one way to organize a class, with the course content reflecting the answers. Asking questions as a way of organizing content also serves to strengthen students' sense of their own authority over the content. Essential questions, a strategy developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools, are provocative and multilayered questions that reveal the richness and complexities of a subject or discipline.

Cedar staff members reported changing instructional practices to reflect increased personalization. For example, the staff agreed on an all-school essential question,[11] "What is Culture?" for the school year. The idea was to help students see a unifying theme for their learning and make connections between subjects. "One of the big reasons for essential questions is they start integrating information for the kids even without being in the same classroom at the same time," said one of the staff members. Another Cedar teacher reported opportunities for students to connect their learning when teachers share a common vision and a common vocabulary: "When a kid goes from period to period, it's not all separated chunks of knowledge, but to a kid it's going to begin to look like it's all part of the big picture."

Another teacher claimed Cedar teachers can respond better to individual differences when "[There is] more hands-on learning, more experiences for kids to get really in-depth in their projects, more focus on kids." That kind of instruction appears to be leading towards consideration of performance-based assessment as well: "They [students in technology] do portfolios now at the end of the first semester. They have to show their portfolios and present them. I am trying harder to do different ways of assessment. I ask them to explain their answers more."

Our exchanges with students from Cedar revealed some other examples of the beginnings of changed instruction to personalize learning. Students claimed they were seeing connections between subjects as a result of teachers' collaborating: "I notice our teachers work together and they have conversations. My English and U.S. History teachers are working on the same thing. We were learning about the 1920s in my history class, and in my English class we read a book that took place in the 1920s, so it kind of…all works together."

Cedar appears to have had access to targeted professional development to support personalized instruction throughout the school year. There were five sessions on Teaching in a Block Schedule. Other professional development topics included Understanding by Design, Differentiated Instruction for Secondary Teachers, Socratic Seminar in the Block Schedule, and Helping Students Design Their Own Projects.

At Alder, teachers told us they are helping students put things together by focusing more on integration. In the faculty work area there is an "integration board." "Each person has a name and space for their classes and what you are doing that month, and then if you can make some connections, you do." The "integration

board" is another example of how teachers are intentionally planning to help individual students connect the dots throughout the curriculum. A freshman from Alder described a project-based strategy geared to individuals: "You have to design stuff…everything's design…it's a different style of teaching. You can do the same thing a bunch of different ways. You can like come up with your own ideas during an assignment…With the experiment in science class, we could choose what we wanted to do instead of just having him give us an assignment or tell us exactly what to do."

Teachers at Elm cited examples of how they changed instruction to tap the needs and interests of particular students: "I had a kid who wasn't responding to anything at all, but he was really good at history. So, you start talking. Can he do some kind of project? Now that kid who wasn't doing his assignments is doing an independent study for [credit] as a math/history project." Knowing a student better and feeling comfortable talking to him helped another Elm teacher motivate that student: "'So I hear you're pretty smart and I hear you have some pretty good thinking skills going on.' So, you know, ever since then, he's turning in late work, he's asking about doing extra credit." Another Elm teacher was concerned about a straight A student who was very shy. This teacher told the student, "Part of what I am going to help you do is to learn to advocate for yourself. I am not going to let you leave this school not having that skill."

> "I had a kid who wasn't responding to anything at all, but he was really good at history. So, you start talking. Can he do some kind of project? Now that kid who wasn't doing his assignments is doing an independent study for [credit] as a math/history project."
>
> *Teacher at Elm School*

At Hemlock, a teacher described what happens when he teaches in greater depth. Instead of just "covering" the material, students are given the flexibility to explore a topic fully:

I always felt pressure to get through "X" amount of curriculum and am now currently about four weeks behind. But I have been able to justify that with myself because my kids now know the stuff that we have covered at a better depth than my [earlier] kids have ever known.

Simply knowing students better has made teachers more aware of individual needs and made it possible for teachers to see how tailoring instruction to meet those needs leads to both their own higher expectations and greater student success.

Teachers Began to Gather and Examine Data

In a few of the study schools, teachers began to gather and examine data, which included attendance, passing rates, discipline referrals, dropouts, graduation rates, and test scores. At the end of their first semester, Hemlock teachers examined student grade distribution data that was disaggregated by grade-level, ethnicity, and gender. After examining their student data, the teachers discussed possible ways to address the concerns that were raised from the data. Action items included having further discussions about what constitutes rigor and the implications for teaching and learning, creating a strategy to track and share information about students of concern, developing further a plan for communicating with families, and lastly, examining and clarifying the school's attendance and discipline policies.

Stage Four

Although none of the schools we studied are at this stage, the work they have done in the earlier stages appears to be leading steadily towards the more fully realized personalization and personalized teaching we anticipate seeing in this stage. For example, the conversations about changing instruction to meet individual needs have begun to lead to more personalized teaching practices in some classrooms. The next logical step is for the professional community in each school to cooperate in developing those practices that lend themselves to school-wide implementation. We also anticipate that teachers will continue to analyze and use data to influence the development of structures and instructional practices to support personalized teaching and learning.

The first year of this three-year study revealed that six[12] of the schools are beginning to see some positive results from knowing students and their learning needs more deeply. However, as we assess the schools' progress, we are left with a number of questions, listed below, about the support structures and sustainability of each small school's efforts to personalize instruction.

As the structures to support personalization become institutionalized within the small schools, will teachers be freed up to focus more attention on teaching and learning issues?

All of the schools have begun to implement design structures—such as advisory, block schedule, student-led conferences, and special education inclusion—to support personalization. These efforts have taken substantial amounts of staff time and energy. We anticipate that as these structures become embedded in the daily life of the school and become part of the shared culture, teachers will spend less and less time on the nuts-and-bolts issues surrounding their creation and implementation. Some schools may instead choose to put in place more efficient and less time-consuming methods for making many of the decisions concerning structural issues. We wonder what alternative strategies schools may choose to implement so that their teachers will be free to devote more of their time to collaborating with colleagues, integrating across subject areas, meeting with parents, and ultimately changing instructional practices to meet the needs of individual learners.

How will the teachers be supported in their efforts to adapt or change instructional practices to meet the needs of individual learners?

We identified ten instructional practices (see Figure B, page 5) such as differentiation of instruction and project-based learning, that teachers are beginning to talk about, and in a few instances to try out, to support their efforts to personalize. For many teachers, these practices are new and will need to be tried again and again with the support of their colleagues and professional community. To meet these new demands, teachers in each of the small schools are developing creative ways to find time to collaborate and plan together. However, in order for these developing instructional changes to be sustainable, teachers need concentrated amounts of time to meet with their colleagues and participate in ongoing learning opportunities, such as Critical Friends Groups and lesson study.

We note that during the first year of this study, none of the schools had a coherent, systematic professional development plan that was embedded into the daily or weekly lives of the teachers. Only one school came close by offering teachers targeted professional development throughout the school year on topics and practices that support personalization. We wonder how schools will address this issue in the future. We also wonder about the strategic and long-term planning that is taking place in each school, the role of goal setting, how it connects to their professional development plans, and how the staff in each school sees their work becoming sustainable beyond the life of the grant from the Gates Foundation.

How will teachers be supported in their new roles?

In the "What We're Seeing" section, we identified four additional roles—advisor, guardian, advocate, and facilitator—that teachers in the small schools are begin-

ning to play. Many of the teachers are learning on the job and from each other how to manage these new roles. Some of the teachers reported tensions arising from these new roles and from the expectations that come with them for working with colleagues, students, and families. We wonder what structures and professional development the small schools will put in place to support teachers in these expanding roles.

How will teachers in small schools begin (or continue) to collect data by small school and use this information to make instructional decisions?

A number of schools have accumulated small school baseline data, including attendance, grades, passing rates, standardized test scores, and graduation rates, from 2003–2004 and earlier to which they can compare newly collected data. This process and the analysis it implies can be significant in letting teachers know how they and their students are doing as a result of increased personalization. Teachers may also choose to look at teacher assignments and student work, which can point to instructional areas that need attention in each small school, in each classroom, and for each student.

How are small schools involving parents on a systematic basis?

Four of the schools have a systematic process in place to communicate regularly with families via phone calls, letters, and e-mails. Three schools have student-led conferences with teachers, students, and parents. While these activities are commendable, it is not clear the degree to which these strategies are really helping teachers create more personalized learning environments. These activities are for the most part tools for communicating information *to* parents and families. There seems to be little to no recognition by teachers that parents and families are critical allies who can answer the question, "What do I need to know about helping your child learn?" We wonder what other types of activities might be implemented to encourage parent, family, and community involvement in each small school and how these activities can be supported so that they become a routine part of each school's culture.

How are the central office and union supporting the work of the small schools?

In each of the districts, the central administration has taken steps towards supporting the schools' restructuring efforts. These steps include providing time for teachers to meet and collaborate, providing substitutes so that teachers can visit successful small schools across the country, sharing updates with the school board and community, and in one district, developing a small schools policy.

As the small schools continue their redesign efforts beyond the first year of implementation, we wonder how the existing policies at the district level will support or constrain new small school practices, and in particular, those practices aimed at personalizing instructional practices. As each small school negotiates its autonomy[13] within the larger building, we wonder what policies, at the building and district level, may need to be adapted to better support these decisions. Will districts recognize each small school within a building as an autonomous entity with a separate budget and diploma, or will the multiple small schools located within a building continue to be treated as programs of the comprehensive high school?

[13] The Small Schools Project identifies six autonomies—budget, curriculum, staffing, schedule, leadership, and space.

To date, the role of the union in each school's restructuring efforts has been minimal or non-existent. In one district, the teachers reported that advisory was eliminated because its addition, along with a block schedule, violated a union contract provision regarding teacher planning time. It is worth noting that in other communities across the country, including Boston and New York City, unions have played a positive role in supporting similar school change efforts. In the future, we wonder how the union can be included in the schools' redesign efforts in a meaningful way so that they are critical partners.

The work these schools have embarked on is an unprecedented effort to change high schools intentionally and systemically to focus on making strong personal connections between and among students, parents, and other staff members as a way of graduating all students college-ready. In order to be successful, everyone—the board, central office, building-level administration, and teachers—must re-examine and reconsider their role.

This report documents the work of seven small schools in Washington State that have received reinvention grants from the Gates Foundation. The first year of this three-year study revealed that the schools are beginning to see some positive results from knowing students and their learning needs more deeply. Progress to date includes teachers recognizing the need for personalization, adapting or designing structures—in addition to the small school configuration—to support personalization, perceiving (along with students) positive differences in relationships, and beginning to talk about, and in a few instances, implementing changed instructional practices to meet the needs of individual learners. During the next two years, we will continue to study, document, and report back on the progress and challenges faced by these small schools.

Between fall 2003 and spring 2006, the Small Schools Project research team will conduct on-site observations, interviews, focus groups, and document review. Our spring 2004 data collection included the following methods:

Interviews

- Superintendent or district administrator from each district
- Building principal
- Assistant principal or administrator assigned to each small school
- Teacher-leader from each small school
- Six to eight teachers from each small school, representing approximately 50 percent of the staff and including teachers from the core academic areas, electives, vocational, special education, and counselors
- School coach from each small school

Focus Groups

- Freshman student focus groups in each school to capture impressions of students who are new to the small school
- Junior student focus groups in each small school to capture impressions of students who straddle the school restructuring work

Observations and Document Review

- Observations of teacher work groups, and curriculum and program planning
- Review of small school documents, policies, procedures, schedules, professional development plans, etc.

Gates Foundation Seven Attributes of High Achievement Schools

- Common Focus
- Time to Collaborate
- High Expectations
- Performance Based
- Technology as a Tool
- Personalized
- Respect & Responsibility

Gates Foundation Essential Components of Teaching and Learning

- *Active Inquiry*   Students are engaged in active participation, exploration, and research; activities draw out perceptions and develop understanding; students are encouraged to make decisions about their learning; and teachers utilize the diverse experiences of students to build effective learning experiences.

- *In-Depth Learning*   The focus is competence, not coverage. Students struggle with complex problems, explore core concepts to develop deep understanding; and apply knowledge in real world contexts.

- *Performance Assessment*   Clear expectations define what students should know and be able to do; students produce quality work products and present to real audiences; student work shows evidence of understanding, not just recall; assessment tasks allow students to exhibit higher-order thinking; and teachers and students set learning goals and monitor progress.

Washington's public schools, like those in most other states, are embedded in an ongoing statewide effort to reform and improve student achievement. In Washington, the reform effort both supports and constrains serious work at school redesign. After a decade of uncoordinated efforts following the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, Washington State reform took serious hold with the passage of House Bill 1209 in the Spring of 1993.[14]

[14] U.S. Department of Education, 1983.

The state reform effort is known informally as "1209"—as in "1209 requires us to…"—and is notable for its intention to move the state to a standards- and per-formance-based system of K-12 education. When passed, House Bill 1209 contained provisions for substantial professional development to accompany the move to a standards-based system, charged the superintendent of public instruction (an elected position) with developing a system of assessment that would provide the state's citizens with evidence that schools and districts were indeed educating students well, and required the state's institutions of higher education to admit students on the basis of competencies, as well as credits.

As required by House Bill 1209, the state developed, over the past decade, a set of standards known as Essential Academic Learning Requirements (infor-mally called "EALRs") in reading, writing, communication, math, science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. Similar to standards in other states, the EALRs are now widely used, especially in elementary and middle schools. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction also recently created K-10 Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) which will be used to create new reading and math assessments for grades three through eight and ten beginning in 2006, as required by the federal "No Child Left Behind" legislation.

House Bill 1209 also created what is now known as the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, or WASL, a test that would be administered to virtually all students in grades four, seven, and ten, and provides the state with a "snapshot" of how the state's schools are doing. The WASL has been phased in over the past several years, with the science test making its debut in the spring of 2003.[15]

[15] The science WASL is administered in grades five, eight, and ten.

During the 2003 legislative session, the Washington State legislature approved the requirements for the Certificate of Academic Achievement (formerly the Certifi-cate of Mastery), which requires the class of 2008 to pass the WASL in reading, writing, and math in order to graduate.[16] Students in the class of 2010 will also have to pass the science WASL. Students who do not pass the WASL the first time around will have up to four opportunities to retake it.

[16] In addition to earning the Certificate of Academic Achievement, students must also complete a culminating project, craft a high school and beyond plan, and meet credit requirements in order to graduate.

While the WASL will not be "high stakes" until 2006, when the class of 2008 takes and must pass the 10th grade test, the results are already widely reported in the media, and, in some districts, principal evaluations are based in part on improving WASL scores. The 2003 WASL results show that 64 percent of stu-dents met the standard in reading, 65 percent met the standard in writing, and 44 percent in math. However, only 38.9 percent of the students passed all three sec-tions of the test.[17] Without dramatic improvement, six out of ten students will not graduate from Washington high schools in 2008.

[17] Office of the Superinten-dent of Public Instruction website, **http://reportcard. ospi.k12.wa.us**; look under "State Results"

The Washington State Board of Education is on record as believing that the cur-rent high school graduation system, based on seat time and credits, acts as an impediment to standards-based reform. The Board has repeatedly and publicly indicated that it will be pleased to entertain requests for waivers from schools,

particularly high schools, engaged in substantial reform. Two Gates grantees requested an array of waivers, and they were granted without delay. To date, these two schools, plus a school that does not have grant support from the Gates Foundation, are the only schools in Washington to request waivers related to school reform.

In the spring of 2004, the Washington legislature passed—and Governor Gary Locke signed—legislation to allow for the creation of 45 new public charter schools to serve primarily educationally disadvantaged students during the following six years. Following the law's passage, the Washington Education Association led a signature drive to create Referendum 55, a statewide initiative which put the issue before the voters during the 2004 elections law. In the November 2004 elections, R-55 was overwhelmingly voted down—the third time charter schools have been rejected by Washington voters.

If you are interested in learning more about personalization and how to create personalized learning opportunities for students in your school, we encourage you to review the following articles and resources:

Changing Systems to Personalize Learning

Published by the Education Alliance at Brown University, this six-volume professional development resource is designed to help secondary school change teams increase their understanding of personalization. The topics include Personalized Learning, the Power of Advisories, Teaching to Each Student, Integrating Curriculum to Meet Standards, Flexible Systems and Leadership Roles, and Engaging the Whole Community. More information can be found at http://www.alliance.brown.edu.

Planning Resources for Teachers in Small High Schools

Published by the Small Schools Project, this four-volume series includes a collection of promising curricular resources and pedagogical practices that promote powerful teaching and learning in small high schools. Resources include practical tools, school profiles, sample classroom activities, and critical readings on these topics. Volume one addresses advisories. More information can be found at http://www.smallschoolsproject.org under "Tools/Classroom Resources."

Horace

Published by the Coalition of Essential Schools, this quarterly journal combines educational research with resources and examples of innovative and effective practices from CES schools around the country. There are numerous articles on personalization and advisories. More information can be found at http://www.essentialschools.org.

"Between Hope and Despair"

Tom Vander Ark and Tony Wagner, Education Week, June 21, 2000

This commentary describes high schools that work. Small high schools designed around relationships—relationships between students and their work, relationships between the students and teachers, and relationships among the adults in the school.

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