The Urban Education Collaborative

DISTRICTWIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

A Case Study on Improving School Climate

College of Education
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Executive Summary

Over the last 10 to 15 years, a variety of efforts to transform American high schools have gained both public and private support. Significant among these are initiatives to implement Small Learning Communities (SLCs), part of a larger school reform and restructuring effort designed to address a variety of goals, including "downsizing large schools, meeting the needs of at-risk students, solving the problem of failing schools, modeling the process of school restructuring, personalizing education for all students, empowering teachers and extending their roles, preventing dropping out, and finding an equitable substitute for tracking" (Raywid, 1996a, p. 9).

In 2004, the Christina School District (CSD) in Wilmington, Delaware, was awarded a three-year federal grant to implement secondary school reform as outlined in the district's Transformation Plan, which called for the implementation of small learning communities (via theme-based academies) in district high schools. The SLC grant was designed to "substantially improve the academic achievement, climate and potential for success for CSD's high school students." The effort would build on the Ninth-Grade Learning Community (Academy) piloted in 2003–2004 at Christiana High School (CHS) and would, by the end of the grant period, include SLCs, including 9th-grade and career-themed academies at all three district high schools; interdisciplinary teams of core subject teachers across all grade levels ("wall-to-wall" implementation) to foster personalized and continuous relationships between the team of teachers and their students; rigorous curriculum to meet the needs of all children; and provision of high-quality, sustained, intensive professional development in core academic subjects and SLC implementation. The three goals agreed upon by the school teams were to increase academic achievement, create a positive school climate, and increase parent and community involvement and engagement. Glasgow High School (GHS) and CHS added a fourth goal: to decrease the achievement gap. During Year 1 of the grant, each of the high schools developed its own set of three-year goals and annual measurable objectives.

This report on the evaluation of the CSD's SLC implementation provides an overview of the SLC implementation both at the district level and at the three schools—CHS, Newark High School (NHS), and GHS—over the full grant period. Special attention is given to describing efforts to meet goals and their alignment to best practices in SLC implementation and how these best practices may be used to implement SLCs elsewhere.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation study enlists primarily qualitative research methods in the conduct of an implementation analysis particularly focused on school- and district-specific goals, a best practices framework, and the question of long-term project sustainability. A variety of data collection activities, such as interviews, observations, and document review, were conducted over three years. All interview and observation data were analyzed for recurring themes and trends related to the SLC domains of research-based practice and characteristics of school and district implementation. Quantitative data, collected by the state and district, are also analyzed to improve understanding of the local contexts and program outcomes.

This report is largely organized around the five key elements of Oxley (2003, 2004), who builds on the five key elements of successful SLCs established by Cotton (2001) to create a succinct but broadly encompassing set of domains of best practices in SLC implementation: interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams; rigorous, relevant curriculum and instruction; inclusive programs and practices; continuous program improvement; and building/district support.

Results and Recommendations on
Best Practices

Schools and districts pursue SLC initiatives for a variety of reasons, from public pressure for more rigorous and relevant academic programs and a sense of urgency for high school reform to the need for additional school improvement resources. Likewise, schools and districts approach SLC implementation from various levels of commitment and readiness. In CSD, the initial idea for SLCs was developed in response to a specific funding opportunity and absent broad stakeholder support for the approach or involvement in developing the grant proposal. As a result, little attention was paid to what Torrez and Kritsonis (2008) describe as pre-implementation principles for maximizing the success of SLCs in large high schools. They argue the crucial need for establishing clear understanding of the need for the SLCs, a long-term commitment to and plan for supporting and sustaining not just hallmark SLC structures and roles, but also the professional learning communities and practices early in SLC planning and implementation. They found that when time is not spent building staff members' deep understanding of the need for, purpose of, principles of, practices of, and skills required by the SLC model, schools are likely to experience slow and inconsistent change. Similar to Torrez and Kritsonis' first point, Fouts et al. (2006) found that "the schools most successful at converting to SLCs focused considerable attention on a 'moral imperative' to change their practices to better serve their students" (2006, p. 3).

When schools are driven by such a sense of urgency and a clear and consistently articulated commitment to and vision for change, attention to key design principles—not just as structures, but as processes for creating meaningful changes in classroom practice and organizational culture—SLC implementation is more likely to positively affect school and student outcomes.

Building/District Support
Research on school improvement consistently finds that district leadership plays a significant role in the success and sustainability of school-based reform efforts. CSD was limited in its efforts because of high administrative and teacher turnover. In the early years of the grant, such attrition coincided with low teacher, student, and community morale associated with a poorly articulated mission and vision and limited buy-in. Both the role of the SLC coordinator and the purpose of the high school SLC team meetings became less clear, and parents grew skeptical of and impatient with the slow change process.

For the most part, CSD's vision and specific school goals were not widely and purposefully articulated for and developed with input from parents, community members, or

even some teachers. Districts should implement a specific districtwide strategy for reaching out to and informing parents about the reform initiative, the rigor of SLCs, and the design and foci of the various academies.

For successful implementation of SLCs, a **clear and consistent vision for reform** must be reinforced across all organizational levels. Also essential to the successful implementation of SLCs is early and **ongoing community involvement** in determining themes and programs of study, opting into specific programs of study.

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Teams

CSD's high schools made significant progress in adopting many of the core structures of the SLC model, but the new infrastructure both faced challenges in taking hold and, in some cases, introduced potential new problems for the school improvement efforts. Themes were adopted at each school, but the level of student, teacher, and community input and buy-in in both determining the academies and participation in them was mixed. Time was dedicated to planning across subjects, flexibility in the composition of teams was provided, and some investments in professional development on team building were made. Over time, though, as resources dwindled and leadership turned over, frequency of teacher meeting time was reduced, some teams were collapsed together and the "purity" of teams was sacrificed, with teachers working across academies and theme foci diminishing.

Unfortunately, only CHS developed significant enough support and accountability for these teams, and even there, the focus was less on meaningful, integrated instruction and specific instructional strategies. Few cross-disciplinary teacher teams moved to higher levels of mutual accountability and professional learning communities, and designed, implemented, and collectively reflected on truly engaging, rigorous, vertically aligned instruction. CSD teams struggled at meaningfully collaborating in **instructional innovation** and planning. Teachers used much of their shared time discussing individual students, but often more in terms of behavioral problems than learning needs and strategies for differentiating to meet them. Likewise, curriculum discussions often concentrated more on scheduling and logistics than on the challenges of creating opportunities for in-depth, active learning of rigorous content.

Frequent and efficient use of collaborative planning time distinguishes successful schools from unsuccessful ones (Raywid, 1993). Academy themes and shared planning time do not, in and of themselves, transform classroom practices and school climate. In particular, other schools have benefited from a shared vision for teaching and learning and more and better scaffolded **professional development opportunities** for teachers to develop lessons, discuss student progress, observe each other and model lessons, be observed, and receive regular feedback on and support in reflecting on their instructional practices. Such opportunities both foster the development of and are sustained by meaningful professional learning communities (PLCs) that offer great promise for school improvement.

Other school and district priorities, as well as changing resources, often threatened teacher time, while leadership turnover and a poorly articulated vision and limited follow-through on priorities often meant time was not used effectively to drive necessary changes in curriculum and instruction. In uncertain times surrounding budget

deficits, staff attrition, and increasing accountability pressure, districts and schools are encouraged to preserve and make improved use of common planning time, including through both greater professional development supports (from early team building efforts to help using data to inform instruction) and progress monitoring and accountability. It is worth noting that adopting interdisciplinary teacher teams and allocating time and space for their meetings is not the same as fostering communities of practice or PLCs; additional, deliberate work is required.

Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum and Instruction

The three high schools made significant investments in a variety of curriculum and instructional models. Although CSD courses were informed by Delaware's state standards, the presence of a coherent district or schoolwide curriculum was not obvious. Rather, teachers exercised considerable autonomy in determining course content and appropriate performance expectations. In efforts at cross-course collaboration, there seemed to be some retrofitting and a lack of clarity about learning objectives. Marrying engaging instruction with a rigorous, **coherent curriculum** and high expectations for student performance continued to be a challenge.

Likewise, ensuring that school staff have sufficient knowledge and resources to implement the myriad of programs with confidence and fidelity and in coordination requires considerable resources in time and attention, as well as dollars. The mix of programs and their costs need to be considered along with the benefits and costs of implementing programs of study. Efforts should not be seen to be in competition for dollars or teacher or leader time. Teachers, parents, and the community need continuing support in understanding the menu of programs, both individually and as part of a larger, coherent school improvement effort. Most importantly, programs should be seen as supports, not substitutions for high-quality instruction.

Inclusive Programs and Practices

The three high schools took a variety of steps to ensure that the SLC design and implementation effort actively and meaningfully engaged the broader school and district community and that all students were served by and included in the effort. They attempted to correct mistakes made in the first year that made some programs of study seem less inclusive by bringing special education teachers onto SLC teams. However, the transition from the design to implementation phase suggests a continuing need to be more inclusive of other students and staff, particularly to engage them in more significant efforts at instructional improvement.

Improved student **progress monitoring** at the school and team levels would also help teachers who argue a need for more guidance in understanding the needs of their individual students and applying strategies to effectively differentiate instruction to meet those needs.

Some real progress was made in parent engagement, including a broader notion of **parent involvement** to include much more regular and meaningful teacher–parent contact. District and school leaders should take advantage of the developing expertise to help leverage more systemwide improvements and to move some schools and teachers beyond traditional models of parent involvement that focus on school-based special events and calls when students are in crisis.

Continuous Program Improvement

By the end of Year 2, much work had been done to create systems of data and information to support continuous improvement both at the individual school and district levels. However, progress has been much slower at the grade, team, and classroom levels, which might benefit from a planned **cycle of inquiry approach**. However, evidence of thoughtful response to much of what was learned in SLC implementation was responded to less strategically than such an ambitious improvement effort might suggest, and many improvement opportunities were missed.

Conclusion

CSD had some successes in the implementation of SLCs but also encountered some of the typical challenges often seen among districts and schools attempting to implement SLCs. Although more research is warranted to fully appreciate the complexity of implementing SLCs, a few areas for consideration have emerged from this study. Districts and schools implementing SLCs should focus on laying a good foundation for the SLC work by working toward full buy-in from stakeholders, establishing a clear and consistent vision for reform, and ensuring early and ongoing community involvement. Throughout the implementation process, parent involvement, progress monitoring, instructional innovation, interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and a focus on teaching and learning leading to empowered educators are essential to establishing successful SLCs.

In particular, SLC implementation should be understood as more than the adoption of a set of changed structures (e.g., academies, team meetings) or program and curriculum adoptions, but rather a continuous process of communication and engagement, instructional improvement, and assessment and reflection. Consistent with other recent studies of SLC implementation, this study finds that to be both successful and sustainable, SLC implementation efforts must keep a commitment to improving teaching and learning at the center of the work. §

Essential Components
of
Successful Small Learning Communities

Interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams

Rigorous, relevant curriculum and instruction

Inclusive programs and practices

Continuous program improvement

Building and district support

Fundamental changes in teaching and learning norms

Districtwide Implementation of Small Learning Communities

Local Context

The largest public school district in Delaware, the CSD (New Castle County), is an "urban fringe" district serving approximately 19,000 largely minority students across 27 schools. In 2003, similar to what was happening in larger urban districts, CSD confronted a more diverse, high-poverty student population and persistent achievement gaps. This was especially true for CSD's three high schools—CHS, NHS, and GHS. In 2003–2004, about 40% of CSD's students were from high-poverty households, and each high school demonstrated significant achievement gaps between African American/Hispanic and White students, as well as between students from low and middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds. CHS, NHS, and GHS were all perceived to be, to varying extents, large, impersonal high schools (then serving 1,400, 1,925, and 1,500 students, respectively) with struggling school climates, limited parental involvement, and overall student underachievement. In fact, when the SLC work began, all three high schools had been designated "Academic Watch" by the state; they had not met adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more years and had failed to meet state progress determination (SPD). In 2005–2006, CHS was designated the lowest performing Christina District high school under watch for AYP mandated by the No Child Left Behind federal legislation. At the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year, CHS was below targeted progress in the five subject performance categories.

When the SLC grant was first conceived in the CSD, the expectation was that entering 9th-grade students would be assigned to an SLC of no more than 125 students and characterized by interdisciplinary teams of four core subject teachers who would foster personalized and continuous relationships between the team of teachers and their students. Building on the lessons learned from the pilot 9th-Grade Academy at CHS and to ease the transition from middle school to high school, all three schools would have 9th-Grade Academies in place for all entering 9th-grade students in the fall of 2004. By the end of the grant in 2007, all schools would have gone "wall-to-wall" (extending the team concept through all grade levels) with career pathways or programs of study while maintaining the 9th-Grade Academies and supporting the transition to 10th grade. Each school would be allowed to develop its own program with the help of district- and school-based program coordinators and design teams and the expertise of an outside technical assistance consultant. A variety of district and school supports would be provided to ensure effective SLC implementation, including support or

necessary levels and types of collaboration, professional development, and community engagement.

School Goals

The process of designing the project goals and objectives was difficult for the schools, coming as it did halfway through the first year of the grant. The proposal had been written by district personnel who had included districtwide goals (but no measurable objectives) that were in line with the superintendent's transformation plan, and they met early obstacles in identifying reliable evaluation support. As a result, serious work on identifying goals and objectives for each of the high schools was not undertaken until February 2005, when school teams recognized their autonomy from the district and had the time to work together away from the demands of daily life at school. There was discussion and consensus among the school teams on three of the goals: to increase academic achievement, create a positive school climate, and increase parent and community involvement and engagement. GHS and CHS added a fourth goal: to decrease the achievement gap.

In its original project proposal, the district established the broad goal "to substantially improve the academic achievement, climate and potential for success for Christina District's high school students." During Year 1 of the grant, each of the high schools developed its own set of three-year goals and annual measurable objectives (see Appendix A).

Students

Although the high schools face similar challenges, they vary in their size, organization, facilities, staff, and reform readiness and progress and in the students they serve. According to the Delaware School Profiles, whereas CHS's number of students has remained relatively stable (1520, 1562, and 1507 in 2005 through 2007, respectively), GHS and NHS saw slow but considerable declines (1619, 1506, and 1426 for GHS for the same three years; and 1901, 1866, and 1703 for NHS). NHS serves a larger total student population with a smaller—although, similar to the other schools, growing—share of minority students than either GHS or CSD. In the three years, its African American/Hispanic population went from 37.0% to 39.4% to 41.2%, while CHS's percentages for the same period were 57.2%, 59.6%, and 61.0%, and GHS's were 57.4%, 59.8%, and 61.7%.

Teachers

The three schools are relatively similar in terms of teacher characteristics, with GHS and NHS making greater progress in recruiting teachers who represent the racial backgrounds of their students. While CHS went from 28.7% to 29.0% African American/Hispanic teachers between the 2005–2006 school year and 2006–2007, GHS went from 21.9% to 61.7%, and NHS went from 17.3% to 41.2%. Across all three schools, the overwhelming majority of teachers were state certified. But although the percent of classes taught by a "highly qualified teacher" improved steadily over time (see Table 1 in Appendix D), the rates varied by content area and school. Table 2 in Appendix D shows—despite differences in enrollment and students-per-administrator

ratio—similar student-to-teacher ratios at the three schools and positive trends in many areas of school staffing. Despite these, though, the three high schools continue to experience considerable leader and teacher turnover.

Leadership

At the start of the SLC reform effort, the CSD was led by a well-regarded superintendent known for initiating several innovative and research-based practices, including the SLC initiative. Although a small district, CSD also included a significant central office senior leadership team made up of assistant superintendents and directors and school leaders that included both principals and assistant principals. By the grant's midpoint, the superintendent had resigned, and two senior district administrators and one of the high school principals followed. A second principal, who had been named interim principal after the earlier departure of the sitting principal, also resigned in Year 2, as did her sitting SLC coordinator. Another high school principal hired to nurture the SLC implementation resigned just before this, and two of the SLC coordinators were replaced. Soon after, though not related, a considerable budget deficit was discovered.

In April 2006, a $28 million budget deficit led to significant cuts across the district. These included loss of half of all central office staff and the release of 67 teachers. Districtwide, 374 staff were released, a 12% reduction in staff from fiscal year 2006. A nearly $12 million budget deficit in 2007 led to further cuts across the district. As a result, although federal funding ensured some level of SLC implementation support, including protecting against direct program and personnel cuts (e.g., SLC coordinators), other staffing cuts and declining morale threatened school-level implementation as designed (e.g., wall-to-wall implementation). The many turnovers and related transitions were unsettling, giving rise to the feeling that the SLC reform would falter. Reinforcing the vision for the high school transformations and the district's commitment to its pursuit were essential to continuing the work of SLC design and implementation.

As one teacher noted in Year 2, "We haven't had a real leader because our superintendent started and then left mid-year. We just got a new one, but I think a lot of the focus will be on our debt." Contrary to early expectations, though, the new superintendent, who joined the district in April 2006, quickly served to reinforce the district's commitment to the SLC work. The new superintendent's regular communications with principals (and their leadership teams) quickly revealed her pride in and enthusiasm for SLC implementation. She likewise revealed an ongoing effort to monitor and support implementation progress, in part through her commitment to staying in touch with and continuing to fund a SLC expert as external technical assistance provider. However, she failed to articulate a district vision and struggled to set specific expectations for SLC implementation, including clarifying roles and responsibilities across organizational levels. This became increasingly problematic over the life of the project and particularly as the district faced growing instability.

Study Design

The Year 1 report (Sidler, 2006) outlined the specific process and data-collection activities conducted in the second half of the year, provided insights into the progress made by the individual high schools as they implemented their strategies, and offered recommendations for continued progress. The Year 2 report (Urban Education Collaborative, 2007) described the 2005–2006 project implementation within the broader context of the literature on successful SLCs, notably Oxley's (2004) five research-based best practices or domains: interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams; rigorous, relevant curriculum and instruction; inclusive programs and practices; continuous program improvement; and building/district support. The Year 3 report (Urban Education Collaborative, 2008) evaluated the success of the SLC program at CSD, also focusing on Oxley's five domains. This report provides a summary of the three years of this specific SLC project and provides recommendations for the successful implementation of SLCs in general.

Study Questions

Over the three years of implementation and its study, specific study questions evolved to better follow emerging implementation directions and provide more meaningful formative information to CSD and the three high schools. Questions included:

- What progress has been made toward wall-to-wall implementation of SLCs? What factors had the greatest influence on implementation fidelity?
- What evidence is there of attention to best practices?
- Which school-based goals and objectives (included in project plans) were met? What were the greatest challenges?
- What evidence suggests sustainable progress beyond the project grant?
- What lessons were learned and acted on over the project period?

Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation study enlists primarily qualitative research methods in the conduct of an implementation analysis particularly focused on school- and district-specific goals, a best practices framework, and the question of long-term project sustainability. A variety of data collection activities (interviews of school and district administrators, SLC coordinators, instructional leaders, and teachers; observations of CSD School Board meetings, district and SLC team meetings, and school climate; and document review) were conducted. All interview and observation data were analyzed for recurring themes or trends (Krueger, 1988) related to the SLC domains of research-based practice (Oxley, 2004) and characteristics of school and district implementation. Quantitative data, collected by the state and district, are also analyzed to improve understanding of the local contexts and program outcomes.

Elements of Successful Small Learning Communities

SLCs are part of a larger school reform and restructuring effort designed to address a variety of goals, including "downsizing large schools, meeting the needs of at-risk students, solving the problem of failing schools, modeling the process of school restructuring, personalizing education for all students, empowering teachers and extending their roles, preventing dropping out, and finding an equitable substitute for tracking" (Raywid, 1996a, p. 9). Cotton describes the SLC approach (based on Sammon, 2000) as "any separately defined, individualized learning unit within a larger school setting. Students and teachers are scheduled together and frequently have a common area of the school in which to hold most or all of their classes" (Cotton, 2001, p. 8). Oxley (2004) provides the basic definition of a small unit school as one in which "an interdisciplinary team of teachers shares a few hundred (or fewer) students in common and responsibility for their educational progress, provides instruction for a large part of their instructional day in a physical space devoted to this purpose, and exercises maximum flexibility to act on knowledge of students' needs" (p. 1). Early research on SLC transformations, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's *Seven Attributes of High Achievement Schools* (AIR & SRI, 2005), suggests that successful SLC efforts should have a common focus, include time to collaborate, have high expectations, be performance based, use technology as a tool, be personalized, and include respect and responsibility. The Gates Foundation has likewise identified *Essential Components of Teaching and Learning* (AIR & SRI, 2005), which are active learning, in-depth learning, and performance assessment.

Similarly, National High School Alliance (2005) argues that six interdependent core principles must be addressed to create deep and lasting high school change. These are personalized learning environments; academic engagement of all students; empowered educators; accountable leaders; engaged community and youth; and an integrated system of high standards, curriculum, instruction, assessments, and supports.

Additionally, Oxley (2003, 2004) builds on the five key elements of successful SLCs established by Cotton (2001) to create a more succinct but broadly encompassing set of domains of best practices in SLC implementation: interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams; rigorous, relevant curriculum and instruction; inclusive programs and practices; continuous program improvement; and building/district support. (See Appendix B for a list of best practices by domain, as identified by Oxley.) Although this report is written in view of the broad literature on high school reform and the implementation of SLCs, it is largely organized around Oxley's five key elements, which were used by CSD to frame its high school-specific performance objectives.

Readiness and Early Challenges

Given the promise of SLCs and the potential of additional resources for school improvement and despite limited exposure to and expertise in the SLC concept at the district or high school level, CSD pursued the SLC-specific grant opportunity in 2004. Although there was some evidence of attention to promising SLC implementation principles in the middle school levels and at CHS, which had been piloting the Talent Development Model of high school reform, the learning curve for both district and school staff was steep and increasingly complicated by leadership instability at both the district and school levels.

The initial SLC proposal was developed largely by district-level staff and external consultants, with very limited school-level input. In fact, the proposal did not include school-specific goals and objectives, and little effort to engage school staff occurred until several months into the funded project (February 2005) when teams from each school participated in the national grantee conference and began drafting goals for heir individual schools.[1] Throughout these efforts, the three sites and central office were encouraged by district leadership and supported by external evaluation staff and an external technical assistance consultant. After the goals were established, although coordinators worked to develop SLC expertise and build trust among their school staffs, they turned to district leaders and the outside consultant to help set the vision, build the necessary infrastructure, and provide needed resources (e.g., professional development, planning time, access to best practices, budget and organizational guidance) for successful SLC implementation.

As a result, little attention was paid, particularly outside the small working teams, to what Torrez and Kritsonis (2008) describe as pre-implementation principles for maximizing the success of SLCs in large high schools. They argue the crucial need for establishing clear understanding of the need for the SLCs, a long-term commitment to and plan for supporting and sustaining professional learning communities (PLCs), and establishment of PLCs early in SLC planning and implementation. They found that when time is not spent building staff members' deep understanding of the need for, purpose of, principles of, practices of, and skills required by the SLC model, schools are likely to experience slow and inconsistent change. Similar to Torrez and Kritsonis' first point, Fouts et al. (2006), based on their evaluations of Gates Foundation–funded SLC efforts, found that "the schools most successful at converting to SLCs focused considerable attention on a 'moral imperative' to change their practices to better serve their students" (2006, p. 3).

Fouts and colleagues report:

> If the building leadership cannot present a clear case of why change is necessary, and if teachers or the public are not convinced that it is a moral question, conversion to SLCs… will face great difficulty….Those

[1] Each high school sent a team consisting of the principal, vice principal of the 9th-Grade Academy, SLC coordinator, and one or more 9th-Grade Academy team teachers. In addition, the district elected to send two district staff, the technical assistant consultant, and the LSS evaluator.

[school leaders] who began by touting the advantages of SLCs faced an uphill struggle. [L]eaders that did not build a sound and convincing rationale that change is necessary had little long-term success. (p. 11)

CSD's early SLC implementation would have benefitted from more attention to articulating the need for change and preparing stakeholders for it, especially as the district faced considerable leadership turnover across organizational levels.

Implementation of Best Practices

This section uses the set of domains of best practices in SLC implementation identified by Oxley (2003, 2004) to discuss the successes and challenges seen in CSD's SLC implementation.

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Teams

Research has consistently described the isolation of teachers' work, particularly in high schools. However, recent work has demonstrated the important role that professional learning communities (PLCs) may play in establishing norms for teachers' work and their expectations of and interactions with students. Similarly, studies on secondary school reform, including implementation of SLCs, find the important influence of teacher teams, particularly across traditional disciplinary boundaries on teacher beliefs and behaviors. The National High School Alliance (2005) finds that:

Communities of practice are critical mechanisms for empowering educators and for transforming the culture of traditional, comprehensive high schools into a personalized learning environment for all students. They are characterized by the collaborative work of educators who continuously seek, share, and act on their learning in order to improve their practice . . . . Communities of practice help transform school culture by providing ongoing, job-embedded professional development and support . . . and by fostering a sense of collective responsibility for all students' achievement. (p. 5)

Oxley (2004, 2007) offers specific recommendations for supporting the development of these interdisciplinary teaching and learning communities:

- SLC interdisciplinary teams should be organized around no more than a few hundred students.
- The interdisciplinary team remains with students for multiple years of study.
- Teachers have more than half-time assignment to the SLC.
- The interdisciplinary team has common planning time.
- The interdisciplinary team actively collaborates on curriculum, instruction, and student progress.
- Building space is sufficient to create a home base for collaboration.

To further support SLC implementation, the principal at CHS organized both space and staff. Likewise, the school implemented block scheduling and common teacher planning time and was a model for supporting and ensuring accountability for the work of teams. For example, team notebook logs were required and regularly reviewed.

Although some professional development for team building for SLC implementation occurred at the initiation of the program at GHS, its top-down design and delivery did little to build teacher buy-in and was not sustained. At the same time, few structures were sustained to support cross-curricular planning and collaboration. As the leadership moved away from many of the core principles of SLC implementation, an interest in implementing the Pathways to Excellence Plan (PEP) created some momentum around creating a strong student advisory model that would encourage some level of teaming, but at the department, rather than grade, level.

NHS implemented block scheduling. The school had three teacher teams in each grade level—9th; 10th; and, new in Year 3, 11th—consisting of four core teachers (English, mathematics, social studies, and science) and a special education teacher. However, the team development process moved slowly and, over time, the team's 40 minutes a day of common planning time was reduced from every day to every other day. In addition, because of reductions in staff, some teams were collapsed together.

Implementation of NHS's SLC showed promise but was inconsistent because of the many changes in staff and resource allocation. To move along the SLC initiative, NHS primarily focused on team development, development of core course offerings, and professional development. In addition, the teams adopted the names of college mascots to support the creation of team identity and simultaneously raise consciousness around higher expectations for student achievement (a strategy now widespread among secondary school reform models, including in KIPP schools). The teachers, though, had little professional development around collaborative planning, use of common time, or cross-curricular instruction, and there was only limited accountability and support for the effective use of team time.

Infrastructure for Teaming

CSD high schools implemented or attempted to implement several of these recommendations for improving personalization for students and PLCs for teachers. Freshmen were assigned to SLCs of no more than 120 students each shepherded by interdisciplinary teams of four core subject teachers to foster personalized and continuous relationships among teachers and students. Building on the lessons learned from the pilot 9th-Grade Academy at CHS and to ease the transition from middle school to high school, all three schools implemented 9th-grade academies by the fall of 2004 and, to varying degrees, all three had 10th- and 11th-grade teams with career pathways or programs of study by the close of the 2006–2007 school year. A significant obstacle to effective teacher teaming and interdisciplinary planning was the allocation of resources for teacher collaboration, especially time, space, and teacher interests and expertise.

Time

In each school, these interdisciplinary teams met regularly during common planning time, as often as daily in at least one of the schools, and were supported by SLC coordinators and other school and district staff. In addition, teachers at one school were

relieved of cafeteria and hallway duties to provide them with additional time for inter-disciplinary team professional development. Security associates, hired as part of a dis-trictwide model to take care of hallway issues, relieved teachers of hallway duty.

However, it is not only important to schedule common planning time, but also to protect it. As The Education Trust found, while all schools in their study reported pro-tecting academic time, "high-impact schools have more strategies to efficiently use time and are stricter about enforcement" (2005, p. 6). In CSD, teachers at one school expressed frustration over being pulled out of both common planning time and their core courses—time spent with their team students—for professional development that was considered either irrelevant or redundant. Others complained about being required to use team planning time for failure meetings with parents when they had already met with these parents. They reported that such an imposition on their shared planning time was a waste of time. One noted, "Our time isn't being valued as impor-tant as it is to us and to our planning and to our curriculum and all the other things we have to do within a school day."

New block scheduling often meant that interdisciplinary team time was more spread out, with teachers feeling less ability to respond to student issues in a timely way. Likewise, as budget crises and related staffing cuts affected teaching assignments and class size, student and teacher teams became less pure, with teachers working in mul-tiple programs. As one leader explained, "You have team teachers who are teaching on 9th- and 10th-grade teams, but at the same time, they're not able to share and they have students who other team members are not familiar with… But that dilution came about because of the fiscal crisis because they lost anywhere from 8 to 15 positions de-pending on which school you're talking about last year and plus this year. So it has had an enormous impact. Actually, if they want to sustain this, they need to go back and do some team building."

Indeed, as with the district moved to have all schools go "wall-to-wall" (extending the team concept through all grade levels) with career pathways or programs of study by the end of the grant (2007), many compromises were made in the SLC de-sign. As teachers at one school pointed out, "11th and 12th-grade teams are not as pure as the 9th and 10th grade, especially math teachers in the 12th grade." Oxley warns that "teachers who divide their time between their SLC and classes outside their SLC run the risk of short-changing their SLC's requirements for collaboration" (2007, p. 24)

Another challenge to protecting teacher time for collaborating on SLC implementa-tion was the pursuit of other district and school level reforms. For example, a natural tension emerged between time for content-specific teacher work and interdisciplin-ary planning. Indeed, at one school, team planning time was cut in half to accom-modate new content-specific professional learning communities (PLCs). As a result, teachers at this school reported having "less time to focus on individual students" and limited opportunity for shared lesson planning and parent outreach across con-tent areas. Likewise, teachers reported that the scheduling of time to develop con-tent-specific PLCs eliminated the possibility of observing other teachers' classrooms, something they considered the "best kind of individual professional development."

Space

Oxley (2007) also describes the role that physical space plays in affecting the frequency and nature of teacher collaboration, as well as community building among students.

> Research repeatedly finds that physical proximity is instrumental to key small learning community functions. Physical proximity of teachers' classrooms facilitates teacher collaboration, promotes interaction among teachers and students, and helps to establish a separate identity and sense of community among members. (p. 25)

One of the high school campuses includes two separate buildings. Though joined by a walkway, teacher teaming across buildings, as required by the 10th-grade teachers, made ongoing communication and collaboration difficult. As one teacher reported, "Occasionally I touch base with other teachers that are on my team, those I know. [Another teacher] is part of my team, but I don't see him; he's in the other building so I basically communicate with those that are on my team in this building."

As described in the first year of CSD implementation, the chaos at the beginning of the year and continuing space issues did not help to establish team identity. In some cases, classes were so large that there was a fundamental lack of space. "My largest class was 36 and I didn't have desks for four kids…until October. It was hard. I had them sitting up on the heater; I had them sitting back of the table. It was hard to get their attention," one teacher reported. Another noted, "The physical space was daunting, intimidating to incoming 9th graders, from the second floor to the basement… it has to be contiguous space so the students are not up and down…so 40 percent of the teachers moved to the second floor." These changes, according to the teachers, helped to establish team identity and a sense of community while at the same time demonstrating a commitment by the schools. As time progressed, though, such fixes were not always made in the upper grades. For example, while CHS initially chose a Culinary, Hospitality & Business Management program of study, the school did not have the kitchen facilities necessary for 2005–2006 implementation. As one administrator lamented, "How can you run it with five stoves? This will be a major drawback."

Team Membership

Wallach et al. (2004) warn that changes in staff can be a point of stress in small learning communities and, indeed, teacher turnover and changing interdisciplinary teams presented real obstacles for SLC implementation. While many teachers saw stable team membership as a resource that helped their teams "get a better jump on the students earlier in the year," changes in team membership also created new opportunities for leaning and improvement through the cross-fertilization of ideas from more to less successful teams. In other cases, moving from one team to another provided new energy and encouraged renewed teacher commitment to the SLC initiative and interdisciplinary planning. Complementarity of team members, especially a balance of new and experienced teachers, also seems to support idea exchange and teacher confidence.

> Teachers on the same 9th-grade team described their experiences:

> Teacher A: "The whole reason I don't want to teach other grade levels

is because I like my team and I honestly don't know how I would have done my first year without having that kind of group."

Teach B: "[W]e know very well the people on the team that I work with and we're all not the same [kind of] teachers where we go, 'Okay, we like this lesson so I'm going to continue to do it regardless of whether it's good or bad.' We are still constantly looking for ways to reinvent our lesson plans so that they are still fresh… [W]e're still constantly working on making the lessons better and making it better because every year the kids are completely different."

Teacher C: "…I was on the [name] team [the last two years] and there's no longer a [name] team. So this is my first year working on this team and I have to say out of my experience on all the teams, this is truly what I envisioned being the ultimate team placement because of how they constantly meet together and I love the team project at the end. We didn't have a team project when we were on the [name] team…"

CSD teachers likewise described the value of the teaming approach in engaging parents.

Any time we have a conference with a parent we decided as a group that we don't meet just separately, we meet as a team. And the kid comes in and that's every single time we meet with a parent, we meet as a team. When we have a problem with one of the students, let's say something happens in my class, I come down and I say, 'I can't believe so and so acted this way, why did she do that?'… We tell each other these things and having that ability to go to each of the teachers and saying, 'This is the problem. This is what happens.' It is so much easier for us to communicate with the student because they say 'Okay, well, I know what I've done and I have to straighten up.' Or I'll even say, 'Why are you getting an A in [name]'s room, but you can't do that in science?' 'How do you know my grade?' Because we [teachers] talk about these things. So I think, very much [students] see the process that we [teachers] are together… Even the parents send e-mails all at once [to all the teachers on the team] and kids say it's great.

As described in Year 2, how these teams were formed also seems to have had implications for the nature of the team work and teacher satisfaction with it. In some schools and some grade levels, teachers were assigned to teams, while in others, teachers were able to volunteer to participate on particular teams.

One high school administrator noted that implementation of the teaming approach in the 10th grade was made possible by teachers seeing the "benefits to students and teachers in the 9th-Grade Academy."

We were able to mold that group [of 9th-grade teachers] into a nice cohesive unit, for the most part. It's the teacher conversations in the faculty room. It's me going to a 9th-grade teacher and saying I want you to

take on a greater role and possibly do some leadership in the building, and having that teacher say no, wanting to stay with the 9th grade because he enjoys them. Those stories, that's how you get stuff done. It's word of mouth. That was the impetus for the 10th-grade teachers. We didn't have to go out and say we are going to assign you; they came to us willing, wanting to be part of a team.

As one noted, "Choosing team members makes all the difference," along with ensuring a common set of students, closer to 30 rather than the 120–150.

We tried to do 10th-grade teams but the way they were organized didn't make sense. The 10th-grade teachers didn't know about it until I told them. They didn't share the same kids so we'd have to force it. We should have got staff trained last summer so they were prepared. We have a lot to do in professional development to get teacher buy-in.

Another school leader described being especially deliberate in organizing teams with the above opportunities in mind. She noted,

When we set up the teams, you try to set up the teams as diverse as possible because you want to make sure that you're hitting all the facets. … Meaning that we want to make sure—again this always goes back to the students—we want to make sure we offer the best opportunity for success and there's no way you can do that if you have a [teacher] team of entirely veterans or a team of entirely newbies or untenured or some in the middle because everybody has something to bring. Those who have been here for years happen to have a lot to bring because of their experience. Those that come in that are new are creative. They have these new ideas. They're energized. They're excited. So you want to make sure you incorporate that all throughout the entire team, so it could be anywhere. … It's like natural, I always hated forced [teacher] mentoring.

Christina's schools were not afraid to change team membership to improve the functioning of some teams. Among important building-level supports for SLC implementation, several teachers at one school praised administrators for their improved responsiveness to teacher concerns, specifically around nonfunctioning team members. Teachers described being more comfortable in Years 2 and 3 than the first year to "go to the administration and push for things we'd like changed whether with students or members of the team." And several others reported positive results when teachers who didn't share their commitment were moved to other teams.

As one building administrator noted, "We learned [SLC implementation] can't be top down. Some teams came to us and said 'We think so-and-so is a great teacher but as a team [member] s/he doesn't work. Another two came and said they had different philosophies…" The new 10th-grade teams were "half selected, half volunteers; I asked, 'What's your philosophy?' and looked at their strengths. You don't want all the same strengths on the same team." Again, complementarity of team members seemed to be an asset for team productivity and SLC implementation.

Another approach to improving integration of curriculum and instruction strategies emerged through the inclusion of a broader group of teachers. The special education model, where four core content area teachers are matched with one special education teacher to ensure that the needs of the individual child are met, was broadly adopted. The addition of the special education teacher was viewed as "invaluable" by 10th-grade team teachers. One special education teacher compared Year 2 to previous years:

> This year, since they [10th grade] are a team and they have a special ed teacher that is attached to the team, we've been getting lots of good feedback from special ed and general ed teachers because that teacher follows those students and they sit down during the team plan to case manage and talk about issues and make sure everybody is doing what's best for that kid as far as accommodations and modifications or to see if there's patterns, to see if there's a change that we need to work out as far as behavior is concerned, so that works out very well.

With a similar eye to inclusion, 9th-Grade Academy teachers at one school were expecting foreign language teachers to also be added to their teams in Year 3, though such progress was not observed and limited attention to a growing population of English language learners continued.

Teaming

Giving teachers time to adapt to the teaming concept as well as develop skills for participating in teams are also significant to the effectiveness of cross-discipline teams. As described in the Year 2 report, teachers at some schools reported not being told they were on teams until October 2005, and schoolwide team training was not scheduled until March of 2006. There was reportedly no common planning time or collaboration on lessons.

Successful teams need to attend not only to who their members are, but also how they work together. One high school provided professional development on team building for each grade. The effort was designed to strengthen teacher relationships, recognize and appreciate their own strengths and preferences and those of their colleagues, develop an understanding of the implication for working with others—both teachers and students different from themselves—and identify and analyze the characteristics and attributes of high-performing teams. The facilitators also took the opportunity to talk about the SLC reform in both the national and district context, reaffirming that it was here to stay. While teachers were generally engaged in these sessions, they were anxious for more time to work with their teams (at that point, not yet identified). There was the promise of follow-up in the summer, but this did not materialize.

While the impact of less cross-discipline teacher time was felt by students as well as teachers, with some reporting less time for parent–teacher communications, more active teacher teams report increased, coordinated, and systematic contact with parents among the few specific outcomes of teacher collaboration.

Most important in the implementation of interdisciplinary teacher teams, and structures and supports for professional learning communities is the use of shared teacher time. Wallach et al. (2004) find that strong professional learning communities in small

high schools include:

- "A theme or vision held in common.
- Teachers creating shared curricular goals such as 'essential questions.'
- Teachers expressing a sense of professional cohesion" (p. 4).

That is, successful PLCs have clarity about both their purpose and what students are expected to know and be able to do, and are inquiry-minded in their efforts to meet student needs. As such, not all teacher sharing is alike in its value or contribution to effective high school transformations.

As stressed in a professional development workshop on integrated curriculum and the best use of common team planning time, "it's not just about discipline and student problems." Still, achieving elevated conversations—those that "achieve a balance between discussing concrete aspects of teaching practice and more philosophical topics in education" (Wallach et al., 2004, p. 12) including the development of shared curricular goals in the form of essential questions, instructional strategies, and examination of student work—is not easy. One high school extended the teaming concept into 10th grade, where teachers expressed satisfaction with their new roles.

According to one teacher, "The time we have set aside to talk to each other every day about our students I feel is very helpful. Because I know in the past, oh well, maybe I should check with that teacher and see what's going on and then you don't because it's not your top priority." The result is increased personalization for students. "I just feel that I understand them more comprehensively because I don't just know what a student is doing in my class; now I know what he's doing in bio[logy], in social studies, and in math."

Other teachers in the group agreed, adding that they are able to understand how student behavior differs according to class period and teacher. One noted that, "You can find out whether it's a pattern with that student or whether it's something you can change about your class or your teaching style." While some teachers were engaged in reflective discourse about student progress, and some collaborative, interdisciplinary planning around projects took place—including a field trip to Gettysburg and "combined blended project" by the math, history and English teachers—these efforts were largely superficial and not particularly standards-focused.

That individual teachers are largely responsible for determining the curriculum may contribute to this lack of content clarity and depth in attempts at project-based learning and limited evidence of regular and rigorous interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Similarly, schoolwide essential questions around which central themes could be integrated into the curriculum either didn't exist or were poorly articulated at each site. While one district administrator described a few teams as "models for how teams should operate," he voiced real concern over the lack of a "blended curriculum," noting that planning is key, "otherwise [interdisciplinary teaching] happens only incidentally." As a result, while project-based learning and interdisciplinary teaching were dominant themes in describing the purposes and goals of the teacher teams and time for meeting, they had not yet been as widely realized as the rhetoric would suggest.

What Oxley (2007) describes as "functional accountability"—the use of "performance assessment systems that require students to demonstrate their learning and the SLC to demonstrate its success" (p. 2)—was largely absent from the work of the interdisciplinary teams. Absent these processes, norms, and related activities and structures (e.g., critical friends groups, lesson/book study, peer observations) for "analyzing student work and soliciting feedback from students, parents, and SLC partners" (p. 5), teacher and team inquiry into the appropriateness and effectiveness of their practices was made more difficult, and significant improvements in teaching and learning, particularly differentiated instruction, far more elusive. As one informant asserted, "I've observed 50 lessons [in the district] and, in 50 percent of the lessons, teachers had differentiated instruction. Fifty did not. There's a big gap, [even though] (differentiated instruction) is a big push in this district." She reported of the teams' and the district's overall SLC approach, "There's no monitoring and assessment."
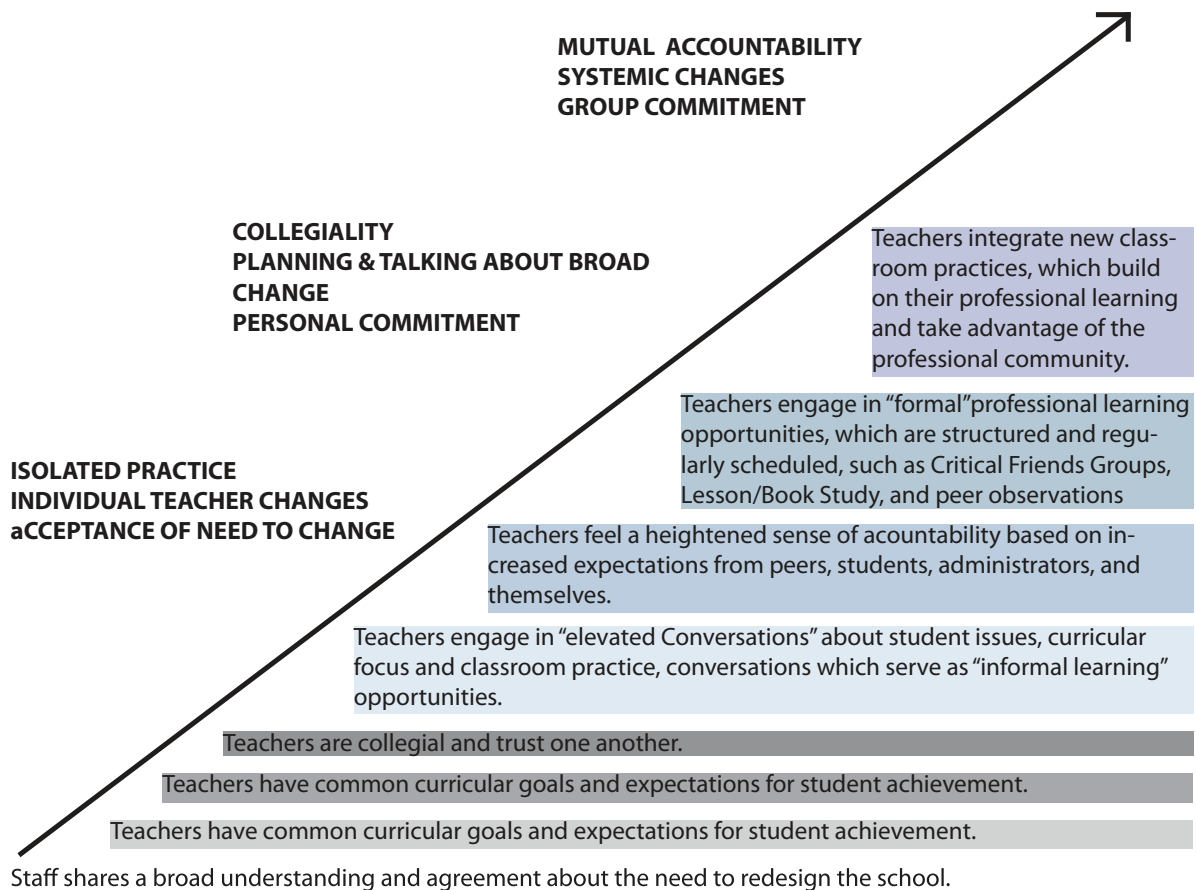
And, contrary to the notion of professional learning communities in small schools, while CSD's SLC teachers are far less isolated than they were before grant and program implementation, their time together does not often include collaboration on problems of instructional practice. As one respondent noted of SLC teachers, "They're wonderful about parent content; they're wonderful about case contacting, different students who are struggling, and strategies to help those kids. When you ask them to sit down and share lessons, or take the lesson and talk about the lesson, you start talking about peer observation, all right, those kinds of things that are really fundamentally the heart and soul of small learning communities" are missing in CSD teams.

Another respondent described progress on cross-curriculum work in teams and individual classrooms in equally limited terms: "They're incorporating, you know, some science here, or some math here, or some English here." Unfortunately, there was little significant, deliberate work on this front.

Similarly, observations of team planning time in Years 2 and 3 revealed little work toward integrating the curriculum or sharing of instructional strategies among team members. In fact, time spent on those activities farther along on the professional community continuum was rarely observed. (See Wallach et al. (2004), for discussion of development of professional community in small schools—from isolated practice to mutual accountability; see also Figure 1 below). Instead, common planning time was focused on student behaviors—primarily spent on discussing student attendance, discipline or academic problems, and parent contact—and field trips logistics.

To ensure more meaningful use of common planning time, accountability for this work was heightened in Year 2, particularly at CHS where new protocols were put in place. This included regular checking by assistant principals and SLC coordinators of team binders that document the way in which the planning time is used and feedback given. As one school administrator noted, "Some are good, some not so good." Another added, "Team planning time is great. We don't ever want to get rid of that but need constant accountability. We are getting more product this year as they know we are checking their binders every week." As one team of teachers described the review-feedback process of the administrator checks, "There's a box [in the binder] we can check that says follow-up suggestions and, when [administrators] sit down and look through that book, if there's something that they really need to follow up on, they do.

Figure 1: Developing Professional Community in Small Schools[*]

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY
SYSTEMIC CHANGES
GROUP COMMITMENT

COLLEGIALITY
PLANNING & TALKING ABOUT BROAD
CHANGE
PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Teachers integrate new class-
room practices, which build
on their professional learning
and take advantage of the
professional community.

Teachers engage in "formal"professional learning
opportunities, which are structured and regu-
larly scheduled, such as Critical Friends Groups,
Lesson/Book Study, and peer observations

ISOLATED PRACTICE
INDIVIDUAL TEACHER CHANGES
aCCEPTANCE OF NEED TO CHANGE

Teachers feel a heightened sense of acountability based on in-
creased expectations from peers, students, administrators, and
themselves.

Teachers engage in "elevated Conversations" about student issues, curricular
focus and classroom practice, conversations which serve as "informal learning"
opportunities.

Teachers are collegial and trust one another.

Teachers have common curricular goals and expectations for student achievement.

Teachers have common curricular goals and expectations for student achievement.

Staff shares a broad understanding and agreement about the need to redesign the school.

[*] Figure from Wallach, C. A., Chraysan, G., Copland, M., Lambert, M. B., & Lowery, L. K. (2004). Elevating the Conversation: Building Professional Community in Small High Schools. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Small School Project.

They leave notes in the binder." One of these notes may have been the communication telling the teachers "to only talk about discipline on, say, Tuesdays"— her response to the amount of time they spent on this area. Of one principal's regular review of teacher team binders, one respondent noted,

> By her looking and making comments, for me to know as a team that my principal is looking at the work, when you have someone at the top…it just makes life very easy. … If she looks through that notebook and doesn't see that you had anything, documentation for parent com- munication, she's going to say… 'Where is the evidence? I'm not seeing that.' So she has to be able to see it.

As reported earlier, the site administrators are also being held increasingly account- able for their school's work on instructional improvement and SLC implementation by the technical assistance consultant. Still, teacher accountability in CSD remains largely focused on formal reporting to superordinates, rather than a shared commitment to one's own professional learning and that of his/her colleagues—mutual accountabil- ity—as Wallach et al. (2004) describe.

Unintended Consequences

While most of the literature on teacher collaboration and interdisciplinary teams describes positive outcomes in terms of improved teacher practice and student learning, fieldwork in CSD suggest some not-so-positive possibilities. That is, while increased teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student interaction is expected to increase teacher knowledge of individual students, their learning needs, and strategies for differentiating instruction and providing customized support to meet those needs, increased teacher talk and shared knowledge about students can reveal information with which many teachers are ill equipped to cope.

CSD teachers now seem to spend more time discussing individual students with each other and know more about the lives of their students. However, observations of team meetings suggest that teacher team time is not well focused on analyzing student work and data and identifying student progress toward the standards. Rather, teacher talk tends toward very general, summative descriptions of students, reports on their home lives, or comparing them to one another. How such exchanges might or do lead to improved teaching and learning is unclear. Even more disconcerting is the potential of one teacher's negative impressions or knowledge of the child's personal life to negatively influence another teacher's perceptions, expectations, or practice.

In some instances, when teachers noted different student behaviors or progress across teachers, there was no effort to explore why such differences might occur or make changes to encourage greater consistency. Likewise, while student progress was noted, there was no effort to learn from the success. As one respondent remarked of the use of team time, "I would like it to be more structured…a lot of it is just time spent talking about kids and stuff, which is okay … For example, I think we should be looking at our lesson plans and how we are spending the 45 or 90 minutes, what are you asking the kids to do? What can you do differently? What is working and what is not working, making weekly assignments, and homework—are we giving enough or too much? What kind of homework, and how do we assess it?…There are all kind of things we could be discussing but we don't. It needs to come from the administration, some kind of plan…I would be willing to even work on this with a few people over the summer and set up plans for each week, what to discuss, how to go through lessons…We need development on how to do that, how to talk to each other, how to break things down, how to criticize a lesson structure, and how we are presenting our lessons. And another professional development I would like to see is integrated curriculum: how to integrate math and science."

Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum and Instruction

Research shows that high-impact schools consistently have high expectations for all students and that barriers to high-level course-taking are removed (The Education Trust, 2005). Access to aligned, rigorous curricula is essential for school improvement and student learning. Oxley (2004) recommends that SLC implementation include:

- rigorous, standards-based curriculum;
- interdisciplinary curriculum organized around topics of interest to students and essential skills and knowledge;

- an interdisciplinary team that actively collaborates on curriculum, instruction, and student progress;
- active, authentic student inquiry;
- a minimum half-day block of instruction; and
- collaboration with community partners.

From the elimination of study halls to make time for more rigorous instruction to adopting new curriculum models and block scheduling, CSD high schools adopted many of Oxley's recommendations. Business Technology, Visual and Performing Arts, and Agricultural Science. At GHS, only the Freshman Academy was organized around aspects of the SLC framework; GHS adopted Positive Behavioral Support (PBS), the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, and Learning Focus School (LFS) to support improved student achievement. NHS's programs of study included Academy of Creative Expression (ACE); Business, Finance and Information Technology (BFIT); Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Media/ Telecom; and Human Services and Leadership, as well as a number of external programs, including Cambridge, Bridges to Employment, AVID, and PEP. (Only PEP centers its objectives within the framework of SLC development.) Despite all of these efforts and related infrastructure improvements, CSD still has considerable progress to make in improving classroom practice.

Curricular and Instructional Models
High-impact schools have early warning systems in place to identify students who need help and provide a variety of supports to ensue these students are provided help "in a way that keeps students on track with college-preparatory requirements" (The Education Trust, 2005, p. 5). Although CSD had no such early identification system in place, it did much to improve access to more rigorous content. As part of the CSD effort, low-level general courses were eliminated and a variety of more rigorous, college readiness-focused curricular programs adopted. There was an increase in the numbers of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered and some training associated with them, resulting in one of the schools making *Newsweek*'s list of the top 500 schools in the nation, which is based on AP offerings.

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program is a college preparation program or "support system for more rigorous coursework" for the least-served students and their teachers. AVID was adopted at one school to provide continuity for incoming 9th graders to ensure vertical alignment of 7th, 8th and 9th grade and continuity for former middle school program participants. At least 10 teachers were trained in 9th-grade implementation in Year 2. Unfortunately, there were considerable doubts about the quality of program implementation and the return on the district's AVID investment. As one principal noted with frustration over the district's ongoing commitment to the program, "Forty thousand dollars of my school budget on 20 kids? That's $40,000 that could be put into a literacy program to impact 100 kids."

One of the schools also began implementation of the Johns Hopkins' Talent Development program for 9th-graders. A research-based model for restructuring large high schools, Talent Development "calls for schools to reorganize into small 'learning communities'—including 9th-grade academies for first-year students and career

academies for students in upper grades" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007). Early implementation of Talent Development was expected to inform and benefit SLC transitions, but that promise has not been fulfilled. As reported by the external consultant, "I would bet that if you even look, that the [Talent Development] implementation is spotty… Where there was implementation, it wasn't done correctly because I saw teachers using the materials incorrectly. …I don't think you got the bang for your buck on that money."

Other district teachers are being trained to support the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, which is getting early high marks. The curriculum writing and training undertaken as part of the IB application process served as well-regarded professional development. Of the IB-led professional development, one teacher noted, "I would say that that staff development is probably one of the top three that I have ever been to. I walked away impressed…It was specific to my content, specific to my needs." Another teacher expressed enthusiasm about her involvement in the new program. Of the professional development, she reported, "It was wonderful to be able to talk to just the math teachers from all over the place and not just the United States..."

Programs of Study

School administrators, in tandem with their SLC design teams, developed upper-level, school-specific programs of study. Consistent with the notion that effective SLC transformations allow for student and teacher choice in their assignment to teams, high school students and teachers were surveyed about their interests, and their ideas were fed back into the design process. Teachers designed courses, submitted them to their design team for consideration, and discussed ways of building team identity. A variety of outreach strategies were then engaged to ensure students and their parents had the necessary information to guide their decisions for choosing a career pathway.

At NHS, the programs of study and academies were introduced to all students in 9th-11th grades, who were then assigned to academies during their course selection sessions with their guidance counselors. Guidance lessons were given to explain to students each academy/program of study and how to select appropriate courses within that academy. The students were given background information on each academy in order to help them with their selections.

Although the schools seemed off to a good start toward achieving their goals for SLCs, in the final year of the grant, the budget crisis and related staffing cuts suggested that schoolwide programs of study would not be implemented as initially conceived, if at all. As a result of a lack of professional development and consensus building, and the ensuing teacher resistance, wall-to-wall expansion and 10th-grade teams at one high school were not implemented in Year 2 as initially planned.

In addition to identifying interest areas for programs of study, building consensus around these, and designing rigorous courses tied to the theme, the transition to programs of study in Grades 10–12 often requires much in terms of the organization of time, space, and other resources. Planned programs of study, for example, included Academy of Creative Expression (ACE); Business, Finance and Information Technology (BFIT); Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Media/Telecom; and

Human Services and Leadership at NHS. At CHS, planned programs of study included Business Technology, Visual and Performing Arts, and Agricultural Science. A culinary arts theme was determined to be impractical to pursue given budget constraints, and plans for housing the district Visual Performing Arts Center (VPAC) at one high school were scuttled when the public referendum, which would have provided the necessary funds for facilities expansion, failed to pass.

One district administrator even expressed concern about "false advertising" around one of the planned thematic courses of study, noting that, even before the budget deficit, there was no money for the capital renovations needed in order for the school implementation. A replacement for that theme was later discussed. The inadequacy of science laboratories also raised questions in teachers' minds about the ability of the SLCs to go wall-to-wall the next year.

Likewise, as with the move to have all schools go "wall-to-wall" (extending the team concept through all grade levels) with career pathways or programs of study by the end of the grant (2007), many compromises in the design emerged. For example, teachers at one school pointed out that "11th- and 12th- grade teams are not as pure as the 9th and 10th grade, especially math teachers in the 12th grade." NHS leaders reported losing their "Sports Medicine and Athletic Administration Academy, along with a few courses in each Program of Study/Academy" and changing their team structures as a result of unit/staff allocation limitations.

Instructional Improvement
In the case of the Christina School District's SLC implementation effort, the more things changed (e.g., the organization of teachers and students, adoption of new programs), the more aware many became of how things stayed the same. Teachers and administrators developed concerns that the supports needed for low-performing students were not in place and both internal faculty and staff and external "auditors"—the USDOE-funded technical assistance team (Zuckerman et al., 2006)—began arguing the need for greater attention to improving instructional practices. A district and school professional development focus on differentiated instruction and more targeted interventions followed.

According to one teacher, at CHS, some teams leveraged the expertise of more experienced teachers who "did some things with them and explained to them different ideas and ways to engage students and ways to actively get students involved in the learning. So we've had a lot of professional development around just to make sure that they are constantly getting reinforced." She added, "What we try to get the staff to do is be more of a facilitator of instruction."

There was also increased district- and school-initiated professional development and training devoted to differentiated instruction, team building, teaching to the block, and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) score use for data-driven instruction. The three high schools also worked to restructure and better use instructional time, including the block schedule and an examination and subsequent removal of "the fluff" from the curriculum at one school. Although there were signs of early improvements in instruction, there was still much to be done to ensure active learning of rigorous content. The lack of a school- or district-specific curricular focus seemed to contribute to

implementation difficulties and demanded more of teacher and team planning time.

Block Scheduling

Although one high school moved to block scheduling in Year 2, all three taught on the block in Year 3, and professional development—for moving from 180 to 90 days of instruction for the same curriculum—was provided. A teacher-consultant who teaches within the block covered 33 different strategies and modeled for both teachers and administrators at least 10 different strategies the teachers could use and the times and content appropriate for their use. She also made constant references to student reactions and the need to differentiate such strategies "so you will know what to expect and how to prevent" certain behaviors. Teachers and administrators were engaged in hands-on, small- and whole-group activities with pairings and small-group composition constantly changing to ensure teachers worked with different colleagues. The modeling and hands-on participant involvement is important for teacher-to-teacher experience (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

Session evaluations confirmed teachers' high levels of satisfaction with the professional development, as well as interest in further PLC development work with the facilitator among most participants (Appendix C). However, as was true with much of the SLC-related professional development work in CSD, and especially after budget crises emerged, there was little follow-up. Administrators also planned "walk-throughs" in classes to look for evidence that teachers were putting their learning into practice.

Inclusive Programs and Practices

Inclusivity in the development of SLCs takes on at least two different equally important questions: (a) How does the design and implementation effort actively and meaningfully engage the broader school and district community to ensure that all interests are heard? and (b) How is the school, its programs, and its teachers and staff organized and prepared to effectively meet the needs of all students? Oxley (2004) suggests that these questions can be best answered by collaborating with parents, providing for student and teacher interest and choice in assignment to SLCs, and ensuring equitable access, including through innovative, flexible use of time and space, tailoring instruction to meet diverse students' needs, and including special education and English language learner (ELL) instructors, as well as counselors, as integral members of SLC teams. In most cases, teacher teams in CSD included only the four core content area teachers and a special education teacher. A few other teams included counselors, but their engagement—similar to those of foreign language, English as a second language, or other specialists—was especially uncommon.

At CHS, the academy themes were chosen partly to reflect a broad spectrum of student and community interests and were developed to ensure inclusivity and fairness—such that no opportunity was closed off to any specific group of students or seen as more focused on a particular group (e.g., honors students). In addition, the principal continued her focus on school climate and support of specific group identities such that all students felt both included and attended to (e.g., making sure every student was known by name by adults in the school).

Driven largely by the SLC-coordinator-turned-vice-principal, an experienced educator in special education, CHS made efforts to better include both special education students and educators, including paraprofessionals. Grade-level teams included teachers from the four core content areas and special education, and there was increased attention to the role of all educators in supporting the success of students with special needs. Other teachers (e.g., art, music, language) remained outside the SLC team framework, as did the needs of the small (but growing) number of ELLs.

At GHS, little effort was exerted or progress made in ensuring greater inclusivity of students and teachers in school programs and practices. This is especially true for special education students who, although more likely to be included in math and English classes, were not as involved in the SLC effort as initially planned or desired. However, special education teachers were expected to be integrated into department teams and co-teaching assignments to be established through PEP implementation. There was some evidence suggesting an increased minority student participation in honors and AP classes at GHS, but the boundaries between such groups and the sense of student tracking remained strong. There was little intentional engagement of parents in the SLC initiative at GHS. The administration was aware of this lack of outreach and engagement, and planned to focus on improving communication and outreach by initiating a number of resources to engage parents in the proposed PEP program.

NHS moved toward including special education teachers on SLC interdisciplinary teams but excluded other teachers (e.g., art, music, English as a second language). NHS made some early efforts to restructure core courses and the class schedule to ensure that all students were offered access to honors and AP courses.

Parent and Community Outreach
Wallach et al.'s (2004) case studies of high school conversions in Washington state revealed the implementation of broader, more innovative strategies for communicating with stakeholders and actively engaging parents and community members in high school transformations. These included making presentations to parents of students in feeder schools, hosting "Dessert with the Principal" events in parents' homes, dinners for the PTA presidents, updates to the school and district websites to make available small schools research, and schoolwide parent information sessions. Washington strategies also included a variety of efforts for getting community input—using the web to solicit community feedback on design and implementation; hosting a series of focus groups with students, parents, and district personnel; surveying students; engaging parent and student participation in planning meetings; hosting annual student summits at which students could air their concerns; and including "youth voices by enlisting students to observe classroom instruction." Washington strategies also included a variety of efforts for getting community input.

Although there was little evidence of a district-coordinated or districtwide strategy to reach out to the community, CSD schools began taking more proactive steps in communicating with parents and students than they did in Year 1, including marketing the SLCs to middle school students, developing a television segment to inform the public about SLCs, and creating individual course selection guides describing the academy selections. Two of the three schools included program of study and academy

information descriptions in the CSD High School Planning Guide for 2006–2007.

There was some expansion of community outreach efforts in Years 2 and 3, including course fairs, more frequent and proactive teacher–parent contact, and school events and ceremonies highlighting student progress to which parents were invited. For example, a breakfast ceremony at one school celebrated improved student behavior:

> [T]he teachers picked various categories and then we also have a grade-level reward breakfast associated with PBS and, in that particular ceremony,… each team nominates five students (one by each teacher)… and then they have to write a description as to why the student was chosen (relative to PBS principles—respectfulness, readiness, and responsibility)… We put that description on a certificate and read it at the ceremony… Parents are invited and we've had fabulous reviews from the parents thus far because they were excited that they were invited to the building for something positive.

Also, student work in their specific academy created a venue for bringing parents and community members into the school. For example, the culminating activity for Christiana's agriculture department is an annual plant sale.

> [The students] have groomed and planted all year in the greenhouse… It's open to the public, so now they're actually running their business phase… Parents come and volunteer and man the stations, work the cash registers and things like that. So it's pretty good.

Also, at least one 9th-grade teacher team engaged in more frequent e-mail communication with parents, increasing parent contacts by 20 to 30 percent. However, for the most part, parent and community engagement efforts were unique to specific schools, grade levels, and teacher teams. There was no articulated district or school plan for parent involvement.

Inclusion of All School Staff

Although the design and implementation of the CSD SLCs included teachers across a variety of teams and leadership positions, many high school staff members were left out of much of the initial planning. However, as schools continued in Year 2 to expand and develop their 9th-Grade Academies, counselors and special education instructors were increasingly included in team meetings, as well as in designing and scheduling programs of study for the upper-grade-level students. In addition, the special education model of five members on the team was introduced into the cross-disciplinary teams. To further support teacher collaboration and the effective inclusion and instruction of all students in the SLCs, inclusion coaches were assigned to each of the three high schools with responsibility for modeling lessons. As one coach described the changing role of special education staff,

> Prior to us coming here I think they played more of a backseat type of a role, and we actively made them become involved in the process. … Even in the classroom itself, I think that historically the inclusion teacher has been the paraprofessional in the room—the paper passer. And

what we tried to do now is make sure that they are involved, meaning that they are responsible for direction within the lesson. In any given classroom, you probably have maybe ten special education students… so you should be dealing with those students… In order for a classroom to work, you need to make sure all parties are involved and everybody knows that everybody's responsible.

However, teacher inclusion was not always the norm in school implementation efforts.

Inclusion of All Students

The first-year organization of the SLCs, as well as misunderstanding of the developing themes and programs of study, created very real concerns about the tracking of students and the provision of equitable access to rigorous content for all students. Some teams had significantly more honors students than others; the imbalance fed a perception of elitism in the distribution on the 9th-grade teams. To remedy this situation, there was a rebalancing of teacher and student teams for the incoming 9th graders at one school. Similarly, programs of study were considered to ensure access for all students According to a school administrator, "the diversity of the teams was a huge issue, a huge lesson from last year; this year the teams mirror each other academically" although the disparity was magnified for those 10th-grade students as more course options at different levels became available. "No smart teams this year," said an administrator at another school. "We went to great lengths this year to see the teams were equitable." Similarly, programs of study have been considered to ensure access for all students. For example, one high school administrator described the development of the Academy for Creative Expression (ACE) as an improvement over the initial plan for a Visual Performing Arts Center (VPAC). The former, he insisted, would be "open to all students; it doesn't discriminate at all. All students can be a part of it. With VPAC we were going to do that, we were going to discriminate based on talents. It would be an audition process;…it wasn't going to be an SLC…That's why we have the ACE program, which is for all kids."

Additionally, a credit recovery system was implemented across all high schools to eliminate the practice of retained students taking classes off their teams. And the elimination of general-level courses provided all students with access to college prep courses, and the schools learned that additional supports were needed to help students with the transition to high school. To that end, programs such as the Freshman Seminar, Advisor–Advisee programs, and staff–student mentoring were introduced at one or more of the schools.

To help students who had trouble participating meaningfully in SLC classes, additional supports were provided—from teacher professional development in differentiated instruction to implementation of Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) program, which rewards students for academic and behavioral achievements. In Year 2, school administrators recognized that guidance counselors were overwhelmed, so the schools brought on additional guidance counselors and disciplinarians and made the distinction between their duties clear.

An additional effort to be inclusive included school-specific celebrations and student awards. As one respondent described a particular celebration, "[The teachers] chose

students by marking periods, [to honor] for various reasons—students who had shown improvement. It wasn't just like the honor roll kids." Observations of team meetings found teachers working hard to ensure that a variety of students were recognized and using the planning of allocation of awards as an opportunity to collectively reflect on individual student progress.

> We have a lot of banquets and awards at the end of the year…We, hypothetically, come up with our own awards. Sometimes we want to make sure that we don't have the same kid. If we're not careful, we could have the same couple of kids getting all the awards. And we try and spread it around somewhat so it's not just their grade point average. Sometimes it's their effort that they put forth.

This team used the opportunity to talk about the school progress of nearly a dozen of their shared students.

Continuous Program Improvement

The district developed an infrastructure- and data-based decision-making orientation that promised much toward ensuring continuous improvement. Administrators and teachers were trained in the use of MAP data, and data requests were responded to quickly. Although changes in district staffing, particularly central office downsizing, seemed to have had some implications for the pace of this work, the biggest concerns lay not at the central office level, but with schools and teams, including their ability to access and make purposeful and appropriate use of available data to inform school and classroom policies and practices.

CSD schools also began to make strategic use of their own developing expertise. Although a hint of competition was still noticeable across schools and some teams, there was also evidence of sharing of strategies and curricula among schools. One district administrator noted the informal strategy sharing between teams, while a school administrator suggested that the schools were beginning to share documents (e.g., course matriculation sheets) and strategies outside of the district's regular SLC meetings. Schools also began to coordinate their professional development efforts and data requests to conserve money and energy, and so that schools were not constantly re-inventing the wheel. Examples of sharing included the Freshman Seminar curriculum, the course matriculation form, and the faculty interest survey. Many of the building administrators had previously worked together at various times and these existing relationships facilitated the process.

Less progress in terms of organizational learning and continuous improvement was made in the design and delivery of professional development and in the specific work of teachers. Despite considerable feedback on existing professional development offerings—that it was not appropriate to teacher needs or interests, lacked follow-up, and was too theoretical— it seemed poorly responded to. As the National Staff Development Council (2001) describes,

> It is essential that staff development assist educators in moving beyond comprehension of surface features of a new idea or innovation

to a fuller and more complete understanding of its purpose, critical attributes, meaning, and connection to other approaches. To improve student achievement, adult learning under most circumstances must promote deep understanding of a topic and provide many opportunities for teachers and administrators to practice new skills with feedback on their performance until those skills become automatic and habitual. Such deeper understanding typically requires a number of opportunities to interact with the idea or procedure through active learning processes that   promote reflection such as discussion and dialogue, writing, demonstrations, practice with feedback, and group problem solving.

Few teacher teams made frequent, active use of the vast, available data to reflect on student learning and their own teaching. Likewise, accountability systems seemed focused more on ensuring that specific activities or discussions occurred rather than examining grade-specific student performance data and using these to inform professional development supports.

Similarly, student and teacher feedback on the differences between 9th- and 10th- to 12th-grade students and teachers was also often neglected. Students reported a loss in a sense of personalization and school safety in the shift from the 9th-Grade Academy to the upper grades. They and teachers reported less coordination and time for parent–teacher communication, as well as coordination in lesson planning and assignment scheduling.

CHS showed considerable progress in collecting and analyzing a wide range of data, including on attendance, suspensions, staff and student morale, and structural and cultural changes occurring at the school level. The use of team notebook logs also provided a source of data. The reflection and use of the data in making decisions and tracking progress was one important key to the success of the SLC implementation process at CHS. In addition, support for an instructional leader who had been in the district for 34 years and was quite adept at the interpretation of data and its connection to teaching and learning practices was a critical element.

Given the lack of leadership stability and limited sustained focus on SLC implementation, there was little evidence of the use of data and evidence to inform SLC-related improvement efforts at GHS.

At NHS, there was a deliberate effort to make use of available student performance data, particularly those of the Delaware State Testing Program (DSTP), to accurately identify areas of need in school improvement. However, progress was limited in the ability to analyze data to identify root causes and responsive interventions or supports.

Finally, both objective data and student and teacher feedback indicated continued school safety issues. Students from the 9th-Grade Academies were vocal about climate and safety issues in two of the three high schools. Although teachers suggested improvements had been made with the addition of a dedicated disciplinarian, they did not deny that problems persisted. Similarly, administrators and observations revealed buildings with breached security.

Supporting continuous program improvement includes not only having more information about school reform progress, but continuously using that information to make improvements.

Building/District Support

Leadership Stability

Research on school improvement consistently finds that district leadership context—clear and consistent vision, stable leadership, and aligned systems and support (e.g., professional development, accountability)—plays a significant role in the success and sustainability of school-based reform efforts. In fact, Waters and Marzano (2006) find a positive relationship between leadership stability—namely, the length of superintendent tenure—and student learning and achievement. They agree with Whittle's (2005) assertion that "if the stability of superintendents was to approximate the stability of CEO leadership . . . the performance of school districts would be enhanced" (p. 21). Unfortunately, CSD experienced stability in few leadership roles across organizational levels, including superintendent, other central office staff, principals, and SLC coordinators. However, a handful of individuals survived the district's many transitions and helped sustain the SLC reform effort.

District Level

Although her role and level of involvement in CSD changed over the life of the grant, the external technical assistance provider proved one of the most stable leadership forces in the SLC transformation effort. She linked CSD staff to best practices to help build their understanding of SLC design and implementation, led the organization of early professional development around block scheduling, helped with summer team building, and provided leadership coaching for the changing cadre of school administrators in a variety of areas.

Universally praised for her contributions, one respondent reported:

> "I have no idea what this would look like without her. Her experience base that she brings to the meetings is invaluable. She gets us focused and off the wrong things. She grounds us. We need that, to stay on point and stick with the long-term plan…She's never forgotten what it's like to be in the principal's chair or to be a teacher or a district office person. [The consultant] is very good."

In unsure times, the consultant also served as a source of stability and program coherence. In the words of one district staff member, the consultant "bridged the gap during the reorganization of the curriculum and instruction department" following additional personnel turnover the previous year. Extending the consultant's contract for Year 3 of the grant was seen by at least one administrator as evidence of the district's commitment to the SLCs.

The district also played an important role in communicating the CSD commitment to

SLC implementation and building site-level capacity. The superintendent brought in consultants to help with the master schedule for the SLC and called for monthly meetings at the district that were convened jointly by a district liaison (in Year 2), and the technical assistance consultant to continue to monitor and support school-level progress. These regular meetings served as opportunities for school teams and district staff to share ideas, concerns, and implementation updates, and to pose questions to the district liaison and technical assistance consultant. Despite this collaborative work, the schools had the autonomy to draft their own SLC goals and objectives and design their own individual programs of study as long as they were aligned with district goals.

Unfortunately, district-level leadership in the SLC effort was inconsistent in the early stages of implementation. The personnel turnover at the district office created confusion and a lack of continuity and support as the high school principals struggled to maintain communication channels and get answers to their questions. As one district leader reported of the district in 2003–2004, "I've never seen a district as dysfunctional as Christina… Almost all the work was being done by the wrong people." As a result, he continued, "Eighty percent of the central office and all of the curriculum and instruction staff are [now] gone." While these changes may have been to the overall, long-term benefit of the district, ongoing turnover left a vacuum in SLC leadership—a lack of a go-to person. As one school-level staffer remarked, "There was no glue person—first it was [XX], then it was [XX], then it was – who? [Leaders] were transient and we were excited but we need continuity in terms of guidelines, deadlines, etc." Another described 2004–2005 as a "tough year in terms of a go-to person. First it was [XX], and then it was [YY] and [ZZ]. [ZZ] organizes the [district] agenda for the meetings, but he is not our go-to person. I don't understand the role. [WW] was news to me. It would be helpful if they would clarify their roles."

In Year 2, the district also designated a liaison from and to the district office to ensure continuity for the high school administrators. However, the SLC was only one of the liaison's multiple responsibilities, and the initial liaison proved unable to respond to school requests as quickly and thoroughly as anticipated. Unlike the role of the consultant, the liaison's role was less widely understood and appreciated and less constant in the early years of implementation. The district staffer was soon reassigned to a school as part of the district reorganization (because of the budget deficit), and a previous (more successful) project liaison returned to the position. In later years, other district staff, including a deputy superintendent, played convening roles, as did the external support provider.

School Level

Although principals and site coordinators were expected to serve as early drivers of the high school transformations, they were disadvantaged in the first year by slow starts and later by leadership instability, including personnel turnover. In addition to the departure of one of the principals mid-year, others assumed the roles of two exiting assistant principals, and two of the three SLC coordinators were also replaced. The people selected to fulfill these positions supported the SLC reform grant and worked hard to continue and build on the work of the previous year. Another assistant principal was not replaced, however, requiring other staff to take on additional duties for most of the year, leading teachers to observe that their administrator was "stretched too thin."

Evidence from district and school team meetings revealed considerable effort on the part of building administrators to drive the reform, including pressing district leaders for information and strategies to strengthen their efforts and encouraging and supporting their teachers through times of change. Among concerns expressed by teachers was what they described as "inconsistent support or lip service only" from a building principal, adding that "the principal needs to buy into and make it an absolute priority instead of one of 37 priorities."[2]

Some supports were provided to help support school-level change, particularly work with teachers and their expectations for SLC implementation. The coordinators assumed their roles at the schools at different points during Year 1 and had different backgrounds and experience. And none had been involved in the initial proposal development. Perhaps as a result of this and because of less-than-stellar communication within the schools, the 9th-Grade Academy team teachers were not always clear about the role the coordinator was supposed to play. There was also some resistance against bringing in outsiders when in-house staff members were interested in the positions. As the months passed, though, the newcomers began to be seen as important resources.

However, by the end of the 2005–2006 school year, all of the three original SLC coordinators hired through the grant had resigned or been replaced. Numerous changes in assistant principals occurred at all three high schools; two of the schools experienced changes in counselors; and, by the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year, of the three principals brought on board to shepherd the SLC reform, only the one at NHS remained, and GHS experienced the arrival of its third principal in two years.

However, despite high levels of uncertainty and turnover, there were many examples of clear and effective leadership across the three sites. The principal at one high school modeled for his staff another method of personalized attention for students as he mentored 10 to 15 students and expected his staff to follow his lead. And personnel turnover at one site meant that NHS's assistant principal, who had major responsibility for the SLC, was named the new CHS principal and began taking an active role in SLC implementation. In another case, an effective SLC coordinator was promoted to an assistant principal position.

Personnel turnover was also prevalent among the teachers. Here again, the consequences of the limited preimplementation work became apparent. Torrez and Kritsonis (2008), for example, argue that consensus for the initiative is needed around key questions, such as the nature of:

- a professional learning community, including individual and team responsibilities to that community;
- interdisciplinary lessons, including how to develop and teach them;
- effective advisory periods;
- supports for individual and student groups; and
- implementation capacity, including team and leadership stability and sustainability.

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[2] This principal later resigned and was replaced.

Unfortunately, little time was given to building such deep knowledge and buy-in among teachers or to preparing them for collaboration. The last-minute hiring and limited orientation of many teachers had implications for SLC implementation, especially in the 9th-Grade Academies. New team members missed summer team-building training activities, and new hires, often first-time teachers and long-term substitutes with the least experience, were assigned to 9th-Grade Academy teams (largely because many veteran teachers were not willing to work with the 9th graders, who were seen as more challenging than upperclassmen) with little preparation. Given these challenges, a common planning team was especially valued by new teachers, even though planning sessions were inconsistently used for collaborative planning and professional development, often focusing on issues of school and classroom discipline instead.

Clear and Consistent Vision for Reform

District Level

The initial SLC effort represented the vision of a few largely central office leaders. School-level leaders and staff were not engaged in goal development and planning until months after the federal grant was awarded. Regular meetings of SLC coordinators, school principals and assistant principals, district leaders, and the external consultant were established to simultaneously reinforce a district vision for SLC implementation, share best practices, and help the three schools develop implementation strategies customized to their individual contexts and needs. Similarly focused meetings of teachers and school leaders were coordinated by SLC coordinators at each high school site. During these monthly SLC design team meetings, and with some community input, much of the planning for the programs of study was done. These team meetings were also a venue for administrators to share information gained from site visits and their monthly district SLC meetings, and in some schools, for parents and teachers to raise questions.

Clarity of purpose and approach were even more absent in external communications; communication with parents and the larger community was limited from the start. The National High School Alliance (2005) emphasizes "to foster ownership in the difficult process of transforming high schools…[s]tate, district, school, community, youth, and municipal leaders must work together to articulate a shared vision for all high school-age youth, and to define accountability at each level" (p. 7). More specifically, the Alliance recommends efforts to "organize and build community capacity—particularly within low-income, minority populations that have been traditionally marginalized in civic and school affairs—to assume a more formal role as active and knowledgeable participants in the process of improving outcomes for all high school-age youth" (p. 8). Raywid (1996b) similarly warns of implementation problems that are likely to occur when a broad consensus about direction, mission, and accountability is lacking.

For the most part, the CSD's vision and specific school goals were not widely and purposefully articulated for and developed with input from parents, community members, and even some teachers. For example, there was little evidence of a specific district-wide strategy for reaching out to and informing parents about the reform initiative, the rigor of SLCs, or the design and foci of the various academies, leaving this work to the individual schools. These limitations helped explain some of the early confusion about the purpose of the SLCs and concerns about its being a further tracking effort.

And indeed, a first-year decision to exclude 9th-grade repeaters from the 9th-Grade Academy and assign them, because of their threat to the success of the program, to separate classes, further confused parents about the goals of the SLC implementation and left many doubting the district's commitment to ensuring achievement of all students rather than interest in creating elite programs for select groups of students.

One district administrator expressed concern about the resulting miscommunication and lack of understanding across sites:

At [one high school] the emphasis seems to be more vocational, and that created resentment among the staff and the community, who said, 'If we'd wanted to send our kids to a vocational school we would have!' We need to do a better job selling this; it's the biggest area of weakness, the marketing of this program. The [career] pathways are rigorous. SLCs are actually for students who are college bound who can then major in whatever. Students sacrifice the academic rigor in the votech because they don't feel they can get their vocational interests in public school. Kids leave the votechs as they don't feel academically challenged.

The schools quickly learned that the district communication was insufficient to answer questions from parents. However, some communication effort was targeted to parents and the broader school community. Individual schools developed a variety of strategies to increase both parent understanding of and involvement in the SLCs, but these strategies were not driven by any explicit district theory of action. No such plan existed, nor did any real forum for creating one.

Continuous changes in central office personnel and the significant confusion that followed, especially in district-sponsored SLC meetings, left school leaders increasingly frustrated by limited leadership, contradictory messages, and limited responsiveness from district staff. District-led SLC team meetings proved less and less valuable to the principals. Over time, the three principals—all of whom were new to their roles and poorly orientated to the district's SLC vision—began regularly sending their vice principals and SLC coordinators alone to the district meetings. (This trend did improve in Year 3.)

By Year 3, though, the central office, largely through the commitment of the new superintendent, began to reemerge as a leader in the district's SLC implementation. Through a variety of approaches, she articulated a clearer vision and signaled continuing support for high school reform in the district, including by renewing and extending the two-year contract of the technical assistance provider for a third year, increasing site-level accountability for implementation, and being deliberate in the assignment and support of new high school principals and assistant principals. Nonetheless, the kind of consistency about working toward common school goals seen among administrators and teachers in high-impact schools was not a regular feature in early SLC implementation efforts.

School Level

The three years of the grant included significant changes in leadership at all three of the schools. In the early years, such attrition coincided with significant teacher

turnover and low teacher, student, and community morale associated with poorly articulated mission and vision and limited buy-in. Inside buildings, both the role of the SLC coordinator and the purpose of the high school SLC team meetings (often focusing more on school discipline than school improvement) became less clear, and outside of the schools, parents grew skeptical of and impatient with the slow change process. By Year 3, leadership teams and norms were more established at the sites, although the articulated commitment to SLC implementation varied considerably across the three schools.

Outcomes

Cotton (2001) synthesized the literature on SLCs to identify several categories of positive outcomes that reformers can expect to achieve when programs are implemented with fidelity:

- student achievement, as measured by both standardized tests and other measures;
- equity, particularly in terms of the implications for the performance of poor and minority children;
- a sense of affiliation or belonging;
- safety and order;
- decreased truancy and dropouts;
- preparation for higher education;
- extracurricular participation;
- parent involvement and satisfaction;
- teacher attitudes and satisfaction;
- curriculum quality; and
- costs.

Although the preceding sections of this report described SLC implementation and some associated indicators, this section examines more quantitative outcomes. Although studies of redesigned high schools suggest that new schools can typically make progress in Year 3 (AIR & SRI, 2005), measureable progress has been more elusive at CHS, GHS, and NHS. Each high school has struggled to improve its student performance, and although GHS did achieve the state designation of Academic Progress in Year 2 after three years of SLC implementation efforts, none of the three schools showed significant gains, and they all remained under Academic Watch. These ratings reflect a combination of AYP and state progress determinations, determined partly by percentages of students achieving proficiency in reading and mathematics in tests administered by the DSTP. Appendix C shows the percentages of students below and achieving proficiency.

Conclusions and Recommendations

CSD had some successes in its implementation of SLCs but also encountered some of the typical challenges often seen among districts and schools attempting to implement SLCs. In particular, the pre-implementation work was not run as smoothly or deliberately as needed for full buy-in by all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents, and for establishing goals and methods of implementation. Additionally, administrative and teacher turnover caused chaos and interfered with full implementation of successful SLCs. The budget deficit also interfered with the process, creating additional tension in the district and giving rise to the feeling that the SLC reform would falter. Reinforcing the vision for the high school transformations and the district's commitment to its pursuit were essential to continuing the work of SLC design and implementation.

Recommendations are provided with an eye toward how other districts attempting to use SLCs may learn from CSD's experience. Although more research is warranted to fully appreciate the complexity of and direct improvements in implementing SLCs, a few areas for consideration have emerged from this study.

Best Practices

Consistent with the larger literature on the effective design and implementation of SLCs, this report has been organized around key design principles developed by Oxley (2003, 2004). In particular, the report has examined CSD's progress in ensuring interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams; rigorous, relevant curriculum and instruction; inclusive programs and practices; continuous program improvement; and building/district support. After three years of effort and considerable leadership and staff turnover, the district made some, although inconsistent, progress across the three high schools. Progress was likewise more evident in setting conditions for improvement than in changing processes and practices, particularly among classroom teachers.

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Teams
Although CSD's high schools made significant progress in adopting many of the core structures of the SLC model (e.g., block schedule, academies, interdisciplinary teams), the new infrastructure both faced challenges in taking hold and, in some cases, introduced potential new problems for the school improvement efforts. Time was dedicated for planning across subjects, flexibility in the composition of teams was provided, and some investments in professional development on team building were made. Unfortunately, only CHS has developed significant enough support and accountability for these teams and, even there, the focus was less on meaningful, integrated instruction and specific instructional strategies (e.g., project-based teaching, use of data and assessment to guide practice, differentiation). Few cross-disciplinary teacher teams, even where bonds were strong, moved to higher levels of mutual accountability and PLC and designed, implemented, and collectively reflected on truly engaging, rigorous, vertically aligned instruction.

CSD teams struggled where most reforming high schools do—in meaningfully collaborating on **instructional innovation** and planning. Teachers from across content areas used much of their shared time discussing individual students, but often more in terms of behavioral problems than learning needs and strategies for differentiating to meet them. Likewise, curriculum discussions often concentrated more on scheduling and logistics than on the challenges of creating opportunities for in-depth, active learning of rigorous content.

Successful SLCs also need an intensive **focus on teaching and learning**, leading to the development of "empowered educators." A vision for what will change and what good teaching would be (e.g., active learning) should be shared across disciplines and departments, and rigorous curricular and instructional models should be used. Time and support for teacher collaboration and for meaningful PLCs should be provided and strictly protected. Quality, aligned professional development is essential to the process. Last, accountability from teachers and administrators should be developed, from notebooks that monitor team progress to checks on resource allocation.

Raywid (1993) claims curriculum discussions to be more important than equipment, facilities, or traditional professional development, adding that the frequent and efficient use of collaborative planning time distinguishes successful schools from unsuccessful ones. In particular, other schools have benefited from more and better, scaffolded, **professional development opportunities** for teachers to observe each other and model lessons, be observed, and receive regular feedback on and support in reflecting on their instructional practices. (As an indication of teacher desire for feedback on their practice, several teachers actually complained about not being regularly observed by the principal.)

It is worth noting, though, that many of these teams, although not particularly instructionally focused, showed significant progress in their relationships with parents and their students. The benefits were not only experienced by teachers. Teachers may need help planning for how to balance team time to continue to improve their **parent outreach** and communication efforts (and the coordination of these across teachers) while also taking on instructional improvement. School and district officials also need to recognize the time needed for regular and meaningful parent–teacher communication and need to consider appropriate supports.

Of real concern is the extent to which other school and district priorities, as well as changing resources, threaten teacher time. In uncertain times surrounding budget deficits, districts and schools are encouraged to preserve and make improved use of common planning time through both professional development and accountability strategies.

Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum and Instruction

In addition to school-specific programs of study and themes, the three high schools made significant investments in a variety of curricular and instructional models, including AP courses, IB, AVID, Talent Development, PEP, and LFS. Ensuring a coherent curriculum will continue to be challenging at each of the sites. Although CSD courses were informed by Delaware's state standards, the presence of a coherent district or schoolwide curriculum was not obvious. Rather, teachers exercised considerable

autonomy in determining course content and appropriate performance expectations. In efforts at cross-course collaboration, there seemed to be some retrofitting and a lack of clarity about the learning objectives, although more engaging lessons were created. Marrying engaging instruction with a rigorous, **coherent curriculum** and high expectations for student performance continued to be challenging.

Likewise, ensuring that school staff members have sufficient knowledge and resources to implement the myriad of programs with confidence and fidelity and in coordination requires considerable resources in time and attention, as well as dollars. The mix of programs and their costs also need to be considered along with the benefits and costs of implementing programs of study. Efforts should not be seen to be in competition, either for dollars or teacher or leader time. As described in previous reports, teachers, parents, and the community need continuing support in understanding the menu of programs, both individually and as part of a larger, coherent school improvement effort.

Most importantly, programs should be seen as supports, not substitutions, for high-quality instruction. The schools, as one described, "need to take a serious look at their instructional practice, their [curricula] alignment; they should be getting better results."

Inclusive Programs and Practices

The three high schools took a variety of steps to ensure that the SLC design and implementation effort actively and meaningfully engaged the broader school and district community and that all students were served by and included in the effort. They should be applauded for their early efforts, particularly in correcting mistakes made in the first year that made some programs of study seem less inclusive (and more like tracking) and in bringing special education teachers onto the SLC teams. However, the transition from the design to implementation phase suggested continuing need to be more inclusive of other students and staff, particularly to engage them in more significant efforts at instructional improvement.

Improved student **progress monitoring** at the school and team level would have also helped teachers who argued a need for more guidance in understanding the needs of their individual students and applying strategies to effectively differentiate instruction to meet those needs.

Real progress was made in parent engagement at specific schools among teachers on specific teams, including a broader notion of **parent involvement** to include much more regular and meaningful contacts between teachers and parents. District and school leaders should have taken advantage of the developing expertise to help leverage more systemwide improvements and move some schools and teachers beyond traditional models of parent involvement that focus on school-based special events and calls when students are in crisis.

Continuous Program Improvement

By the end of Year 2, much work had been done to create systems of data and information to support continuous improvement both at the individual school and district level. However, progress was much slower at the grade, team, and classroom levels, which might have benefitted from a planned **cycle of inquiry approach**. However, much of what was learned about SLC implementation was responded to less strategically than

such an ambitious improvement effort might suggest, and many improvement opportunities were missed.

Another source of data, the two prior evaluation reports and their findings, seem likewise to have been little considered in each succeeding year's implementation efforts. This, however, might also be a byproduct of leadership instability and, until recently, often inconsistently articulated district vision.

Building/District Support

Research on school improvement consistently finds that district leadership context—clear and consistent vision, stable leadership, and aligned systems and support—plays a significant role in the success and sustainability of school-based reform efforts. CSD was limited in its efforts because of high administrative and teacher turnover. In the early years of the grant, such attrition coincided with significant teacher turnover and low teacher, student, and community morale associated with poorly articulated mission and vision and limited buy-in. Inside buildings, both the role of the SLC coordinator and the purpose of the high school SLC team meetings (often focusing more on school discipline than school improvement) became less clear, and outside of the schools, parents grew skeptical of and impatient with the slow change process.

For the most part, CSD's vision and specific school goals were not widely and purposefully articulated for and developed with input from parents, community members, or even some teachers. Rather than leaving this work to the individual schools, districts should implement a specific districtwide strategy for reaching out to and informing parents about the reform initiative, the rigor of SLCs, and the design and foci of the various academies.

For successful implementation of SLCs, a **clear and consistent vision for reform** must be reinforced across all organizational levels (central office, school, teacher teams, classroom). The entire district or school administration needs to be prepared to commit fully to SLCs. Ideally, a stable and capable administration should be at the helm of these efforts, and there should be full buy-in by all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents, at all levels. All stakeholders must be informed about the operation of SLCs in general and familiar with the specific goals and objectives of the particular district or school's SLCs. The goals should be well articulated, and the resources should be aligned accordingly, including the reallocation of existing resources where needed.

Also essential to the successful implementation of SLCs is early and **ongoing community involvement** (teachers, parents, students, community leaders) in determining themes and programs of study, opting into specific programs of study (e.g., parents with their students, teachers into specific teams), and monitoring the progress of the programs.

Fidelity and Sustainability

Two years of turmoil in changes in leadership, school personnel, team membership, anticipated resources, and academic programs made districtwide SLC implementation especially challenging. And in the process of surviving, many key SLC principles were adopted or sustained with local adaptations and limited guidance or clarity about the

vision. As such, the schools needed time and support in rebuilding their sense of identity and community tied to the SLC purpose and design. To date, there has been little evidence of a plan for sustainability after the grant.

Reinforcement of the vision from district leadership, as well as clarification of expectations to the level of implementation and corresponding district supports for SLC work at the end of the grant, would have proven especially important to sustaining the work already underway and halting some of the unraveling of effort occurring at some of the schools and teams. In particular, some specific level of district resource commitment needed to be made to ensure minimal capacity for the work. The investment in the external support provider diminished significantly, signaling to many a continuing decline in district-level support and valuing of the SLC work. In contrast, though, the latter decision might have been an important sign of a new commitment to building internal capacity to support SLC implementation, but such an effort would need to be more strategic to fully take advantage of the expertise across the district. A large plan around developing a district learning agenda and related and professional development plan would be important to both improving school-level confidence in the commitment and building buy-in. It would also serve to build morale among several staff who were involved in SLC design and implementation since the very beginning, and much deserved and would have benefitted from positive reinforcement.

Sustaining implementation efforts—at the same time some leaders who had experienced limited progress were beginning to turn away from the model—would have been especially difficult. As suggested in Year 2, and given limited progress both in SLC implementation and in improving student outcomes, creating a district and community-wide **sense of urgency** and commitment around and explicit accountability for high school transformation would be important to future success and to the success of SLCs implemented elsewhere. §§

Appendix A
School Goals

During Year 1 of the SLC grant, each of the high schools developed its own set of 3-year goals and annual measurable objectives. These school-specific goals and objectives are detailed below.

Glasgow High School
3-Year Goals and Objectives (2005–2006)

Goal 1: Improve student achievement
Objective 1: Reduce the number of students that are retained in Grade 9 by 15%
Objective 2: Increase the number of 9th-grade students scoring at the proficient level in spring 2005 Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) in reading and mathematics from 62% to 65% and 44% to 47%, respectively.
Objective 3: Increase the performance of all 9th-grade special education students scoring at the proficient level in spring 2005 DSTP in reading and mathematics from 16% to 20% and 0% to 10%, respectively
Objective 4: Implement wall-to-wall themed academies by the 2006–2007 school year (International Baccalaureate in fall 2007, approval pending)

Goal 2: Decrease the achievement gap
Objective 1: Reduce the achievement gap in reading for all 9th-grade groups to 15% or less [as measured by scoring proficient or better on the DSTP]
Objective 2: Reduce the achievement gap in Mathematics for all 9th-grade groups to 15% or less [as measured by scoring proficient or better on the DSTP]

Goal 3: Improve school climate
Objective 1: Reduce suspension rates for all ninth graders by 20%
Objective 2: Reduce unexcused absences to class by 20%
Objective 3: Increase the number of [9th-grade] students receiving recognition by 20%

Goal 4: Increase Parent/Community Involvement
Objective 1: Increase the number of parents serving on site council by two
Objective 2: Increase the number of business partners who support our incentive and recognition incentives by five

Newark High School
3-Year Goals and Objectives (2005–2006)

Goal 1: Increase achievement for all students
Objective 1: To increase by 3.5% students who score a 3 or higher as measured by the 10th-grade DSTP in mathematics
Objective 2: To increase by 3.5% students who score a 3 or higher as measured by the 10th-grade DSTP in reading

Goal 2: Establish a positive school climate
Objective 1: To decrease by 5% the number of Level III violations
Objective 2: To decrease by 3.5% the number of Level II violations
Objective 3: To increase percentage of 9th-grade students participating in extracurricular activities by 10% from 2004 to 2007
Objective 4: To improve attendance for 9th-grade students by 2%
Objective 5: To improve attendance for SLC teachers by [2% 04–05 %2% 05–06]
Objective 6: To increase the number of 9th-grade students who matriculate at grade level [3% in 2004–2005 and 3.5% in 2005–in 2006)

Goal 3: Increase parent/community involvement and engagement
Objective 1: To increase diversity of parents who attend site council
Objective 2: To increase the number of parent volunteers by 2%
Objective 3: To increase the number of home visitations by 2%

Christiana High School
3-Year Goals and Objectives (2005–2006)

Goal 1: Improve student achievement
Objective 1: Increase in SLC students yearly GPA by 0.2%
Objective 2: Increase in SLC students who perform at a level 3 or higher on the DSTP in reading, writing and math by 10% [or use MAP/RIT change scores*]

Goal 2: Increase parent and community involvement
Objective 1: Increase in the number of committee members who attend PTSA and Advisory Boards by 20%
Objective 2: Increase in parent participation in their child's high school and postsecondary planning by 10%

Goal 3: Improve school climate
Objective 1: Decrease in student suspensions by 10%
Objective 2: Increase student participation in extracurricular activities by 10%

Goal 4: Decrease the achievement gap
Objective 1: Increase the percent of SLC, African American, low-socioeconomic, and special education students scoring at a level 3 in reading, writing, and mathematics on the DSTP by 5% [or use MAP/RIT change scores*]
Objective 2: Increase the percentage of teachers believing they are receiving high-quality professional development by 12%

Appendix B

Research-Based BEST PracticeS IN Slcs
(By Oxley'S Domains)

Domain 1: Interdisciplinary Teaching
Learning Research-based best practices:
- SLC interdisciplinary team (or teams) is organized around no more than a few hundred students
- Interdisciplinary team remain with students for multiple years of study
- Teachers have more than half-time assignment to SLC
- Interdisciplinary team has common planning time
- Building space in sufficient to create a home base for collaboration

Domain 2: Rigorous, Relevant Curriculum and Instruction
Research-based best practices:
- Interdisciplinary curriculum organized around topics of interest to students and essential skills/ knowledge
- Rigorous, standards-based curriculum
- Minimum half-day block of instruction
- Interdisciplinary team actively collaborates on curriculum, instruction, and student progress
- Collaboration with community partners
- Active, authentic student inquiry

Domain 3: Inclusive Program and Practices
Research-based best practices:
- Teams collaborate with parents
- SLC membership based on teachers' and students' interests and choice to
- Ensure equitable access
- Innovative, flexible use of time/space to meet needs of all students
- Instruction is tailored to diverse students' needs
- Special education and ELL instructors and integral members of SLC team
- Counselor and integral members of SLC teams
- Teams advise/mentor students
- Teams collaborate with parents

Domain 4: Continuous Program Improvement
Research-based best practices:
- Team reflect on practice and engage in continuous program improvement using a variety of student data
- Team use of input from stakeholders and other critical friends to reflect on practice
- Teams set and pursue professional development goals that match SLC improvement needs

Domain 5: Building/District Support
Research-based best practices:
Alignment of goals and policies
- Building wide improvement goals align with SLC needs
- Building and district provisions for professional development meet SLC needs
- District Standardizes policies needed to support of SLC practice
Adoption of SLC principals of organizing staff and students:
- Building-level class scheduling and staffing changes to strengthen SLC program
- Academic track/alternative program changes to increase choice and challenge across all programs
- Building and district policies to strengthen building and SLC self-governance
- District negotiation of teachers' union contract provisions to meet SLC staffing needs

Appendix C

Delaware Student Testing Program Summary Results

DSTP Summary Reports: Christiana High School

	Reading					Mathematics					Writing				
	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003
% Meets or Exceeds Standards															
8th Grade	40.7	46.67	41.82	28.57	-	11.1	<5.0	5.26	<5.0	-	27.6	<5.00	5.26	<5.00	-
9th Grade	62.4	62.34	-	-	-	35.1	32.27	-	-	-	68.6	32.27	-	-	-
10th Grade	51	55.77	61.41	55.6	51.15	30.7	33.52	39.33	33.69	26.62	56.8	33.52	39.33	33.69	26.62
% Below Standard															
8th Grade	59.2	53.33	58.18	71.43	-	88.9	>95.0	94.74	>95.0	-	72.2	>95.00	94.74	>95.00	-
9th Grade	25.6	37.66	-	-	-	64.8	67.73	-	-	-	31.5	67.73	-	-	-
10th Grade	27.5	44.23	38.59	44.40	48.85	69.3	66.48	60.67	66.31	73.38	<43.8	66.48	63.67	66.31	73.38

Note: A dash (–) indicates a grade was not tested in the year indicated.

DSTP Summary Reports: Glasgow High School

	Reading					Mathematics					Writing				
	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003
% Meets or Exceeds Standards															
8th Grade	47.7	64	47.46	34.85	-	9.3	13.16	5	5.13	-	58.5	59.46	51.81	53.74	-
9th Grade	56.3	70.83	-	-	-	31.8	34.69	-	-	-	64.3	61.12	-	-	-
10th Grade	53.4	61.24	62.45	60.00	57.67	35.5	44.28	37.28	32.85	32.67	54.9	70.26	75.35	72.79	68.08
% Below Standard															
8th Grade	52.3	36.00	52.24	65.15	-	90.7	86.84	95.00	94.87	-	41.5	40.54	48.19	46.25	-
9th Grade	43.6	29.17	-	-	-	68.2	65.31	-	-	-	35.7	38.88	-	-	-
10th Grade	46.5	38.76	37.55	40.00	42.33	64.5	55.72	62.72	67.15	67.33	45.1	29.74	24.65	27.21	31.92

Note: A dash (–) indicates a grade was not tested in the year indicated.

DELAWARE STUDENT TESTING PROGRAM SUMMARY RESULTS

DSTP Summary Reports: Newark High School

	Reading					Mathematics					Writing				
	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003	Spring 2007	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003	Spring 2007	Spring 2007	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Spring 2003
% Meets or Exceeds Standards															
8th Grade	66.7	N/A	40.00	41.67	-	29.7	N/A	<5.00	<5.00	-	48.6	N/A	45.16	41.67	-
9th Grade	73.7	67.58	-	-	-	49.1	43.33	-	-	-	66.5	64.31	-	-	-
10th Grade	72	62.53	66.96	73.21	73.46	55.5	53.54	49.32	54.76	58.87	67.7	74.87	73.46	78.91	72.99
% Below Standard															
8th Grade	33.4	N/A	60.00	58.33	-	70.3	N/A	>95.00	>95.00	-	51.3	N/A	54.84	58.33	-
9th Grade	27.4	32.42	-	-	-	51	56.67	-	-	-	33.5	35.69	-	-	-
10th Grade	28	37.47	33.04	26.79	26.54	44.5	46.46	50.68	45.24	41.13	<32.4	25.13	26.54	21.09	27.01

Note: A dash (-) indicates a grade was not tested in the year indicated. N/A is printed when N was less than 15.

Appendix D

Delaware Highly Qualified Teachers & Staffing Ratios

Table 1: Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (2005–2007)

Content Area	Christiana High School			Glasgow High School			Newark High School		
	Total Classes*	Percent Highly Qualified		Total Classes*	Percent Highly Qualified		Total Classes*	Percent Highly Qualified	
		2005-2006	2006-2007		2005-2006	2006-2007		2005-2006	2006-2007
English	82	92	96	92	93	99	92	93	97
Reading/Language Arts	5	100	40	3	100	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arts	63	87	100	51	100	100	68	100	100
Foreign Language	31	80	96	32	100	100	56	100	100
Science	6	77	80	53	100	92	70	92	97
Mathematics	79	89	100	75	93	100	73	97	100
Civics & Government	4	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	0	N/A
Social Studies	57	100	100	56	100	100	62	93	100
History	1	100	100	2	100	100	N/A	N/A	100
Not Categorized	1	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Summary	390	88	95	364	97	98	424	95	99

*Figures for 2005–2006 only available.

Table 2: High School Staffing Ratios (2005–2007)

Staffing Ratios	Christina HS		Glasgow HS		Newark HS	
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006	2006-2007
Student : Teacher	16.3	16.6	16.5	17.2	17.1	18.1
Student : Administrator (Principal, Assistants)	390.5	376.8	502.0	356.5	466.5	340.6
Student : Instructional Staff	13.8	14.4	14.5	16.0	14.0	15.9
Student : Pupil Support Staff	120.2	125.6	136.9	178.3	143.5	154.8
School Staff : Administrator	40.3	38.0	49.7	32.0	45.0	30.4

Note. Ratios are based on fall 2005 and 2006 enrollment and staff as reported on this school profile.

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The Urban Education Collaborative

The Urban Education Collaborative was established in 2004 by the College of Education at Temple University, with support from the William Penn Foundation. Collaborating with the School District of Philadelphia, as well as with other districts and schools in the Philadelphia region, the UEC was founded in order to develop a mutually supportive educational reform strategy, one that simultaneously improves both the work of schools and institutions like the college. In particular, UEC's strategy is designed to correct a lack of coordination between school improvement efforts—as pursued by district leaders and staff, principals, and teachers—and educational research and training of educators—as conducted in institutions of higher learning.

This coordinated effort supports urban school reform focused on (a) improving the quality of teaching, (b) developing leaders, and (c) ensuring safe schools conducive to learning. Within each of these areas of its focus, the UEC seeks to:

* conduct continuous monitoring in order to develop a thorough understanding of the specific needs of preK–12 practitioners;
* pursue rigorous research in response to specific school or district problems; and
* encourage and support the application of practices demonstrated to be effective by research—practices that will improve the system of education, particularly in the professional education of teachers and school leaders.

Through the effort of the UEC, it is hoped that the college, districts, and schools will identify and develop innovations in urban education and the preparation of urban educators to significantly improve school conditions and student learning.

For full descriptions of these and other programs, see the UEC website at

www.temple.edu/education/uec

College of Education
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Urban Education Collaborative