

Re designing high schools

WHAT MATTERS AND WHAT WORKS

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“OF ALL THE CIVIL RIGHTS FOR WHICH THE WORLD HAS STRUGGLED

and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental... The freedom to learn... has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn, the right to have examined in our schools not only what we believe but what we do not believe; not only what our leaders say, but what the leaders of other groups and nations, and the leaders of other centuries have said. We must insist upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is, and what its greater minds have thought it might be.”

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Freedom to Learn* (1949)
In P.S. Foner (Ed.), *W.E.B. Du Bois Speaks* (pp. 230-231).
New York: Pathfinder, 1970.



FOREWORD

Across the nation, there is a growing consensus that schools must change in fundamental ways if they are to accomplish the goals we now have for them: teaching our very diverse student population for higher order thinking and deep understanding. The system we work in today was invented nearly 100 years ago for another time and another mission—the processing of large numbers of students for rote skills and the education of only a few for knowledge work. It was never designed to teach all children to high levels. Caring and dedicated teachers, administrators, and parents work hard every day within this system to educate our children for more ambitious thinking and performance skills—and yet their efforts are often stymied by outmoded institutional structures, most notably the large, impersonal, factory-model school.

A growing number of educators and policymakers believe that existing assembly-line schools that inhibit our students' and teachers' potential need to be replaced by smaller schools that are better designed to support teaching and learning. And we have evidence that small schools are indeed better for our children: All else equal, they produce higher achievement, lower dropout rates, greater attachment, and more participation in the curricular and extracurricular activities that prepare students for productive lives. There is real potential for the current small schools movement to transform the educational landscape in America for the better.

Yet we must proceed with caution. “Small” is not synonymous with successful. There are ineffective small schools, some of which replicate the very problems they were seeking to solve. Small size is a necessary condition for effective schooling, but it is not enough.

School designers are likely to be more successful if they can access the lessons learned from the reform efforts of the past several decades. A number of schools that have been extraordinarily effective and have helped other schools to replicate their success have important lessons to offer, based on the elements they hold in common. This publication lays out ten of those lessons—ten design features of effective small schools that help create the kind of education many of us want for all of our children: safe environments where exciting and rigorous academic work occurs in an equitable context—a setting where all groups of students succeed academically, graduate at high levels, and go on to college and productive work. Each section is accompanied by one or more profiles of small schools that are putting these features into practice and creating powerful learning opportunities for their students.

The design features described in the following pages range from school structures that promote meaningful, sustained relationships among teachers and students, to curriculum and instructional practices that help all students achieve at high levels, to approaches that ensure teachers are experts at their craft, to strategies for involving families in schools and making decisions democratically. The features are not arranged in priority order, and, while successful schools tend to include most or all of these elements, not all of them enact each feature in the precise manner it is described here. Schools need to create means for enacting their goals that respond to their local contexts and work for the student, parent, and faculty members of their communities.

The process of creating better schools is hard work. There is no progress without struggle. As we undertake this struggle together, we should remember the words that Langston Hughes used to describe our collective quest to build a better world: “Keep your hand on the plow. Hold on.”

Linda Darling-Hammond

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THE RIGHT TO LEARN

WHY FACTORY MODEL SCHOOLS DO NOT WORK

A New York City dropout explains how the system is structured for not caring:

“I had passing grades when I decided to drop-out. Nobody tried to stop me. Nobody cared. None of the counselors paid any attention to me. The only time I ever saw the principal was when I got sent to him, which I never stayed around for. The individual classes were too big for students to learn; students should have longer exposure to individual teachers. If students could have the same subject teachers throughout their high school careers, this would allow teachers to get to know students better. No high school should have more than 400 students max, and all on one floor. Who needs seven floors in a school?”

In 1949, W.E.B. Du Bois said, “Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.” He went on to describe a vision of democratic and equitable and successful schools for all of our children. But instead of enacting a right to learn for all children, society has constructed a system with deeply embedded inequalities that, in many respects, dares our children to learn.

We Dare Our Children to Learn

We dare many of our children to learn in schools that were designed at the turn of the last century explicitly on the factory model—schools in which we put children on a conveyor belt and move them from one overloaded teacher to the next, from 45 minute class period to 45 minute class period, to be stamped with separate, disconnected lessons six or seven or eight times a day. We dare them to learn in schools where they have little opportunity to become well known over

a sustained period of time by any adults who consider them as whole people or as developing intellects. We dare young people to learn when they are supposed to get “personal” advice and support from a counselor with a caseload of 500. We dare our students to learn to think when they work alone and passively, listening to lectures and memorizing facts and algorithms at separate desks in independent seatwork. We dare too many of our children to make it through huge warehouse institutions housing thousands of students and focused substantially on the control of behavior rather than the development of community, with a locker as students’ only stable point of contact. While these factory-model schools may have worked for the purposes they were asked to serve 50 years ago – when fewer than 50 percent of students were expected to graduate and only a handful were expected to learn to think – they do not meet most of our children’s needs today.

Institutional Structures Create Barriers

The problem with these schools does not lie with the people in them, but with the institutional structures that organize their work. Just as we dare students to learn, we dare many of our teachers to teach, when they see 150 students or more every day, precluded by this structure from

A day in the life of a typical factory-model high school

Consider what it would be like if your job was organized like the work students do in a typical American high school: When you arrive at the office, you are seated at a desk and you start working; then, 45 minutes later somebody rings a bell and says “Jump up! You’ve got to go to your next job.” So you run to another desk in another part of the building with a new boss, who has different rules and different expectations—a whole different agenda for you to accomplish—and you sit down and try to figure out how to do the job for 45 minutes, and another bell rings. Then you jump up and run to another part of the building, and do another job for another boss with different rules and expectations for 45 minutes. And you do this 7 or 8 times during the day. Some of the rules are explicit, but many of them are tacit. You are supposed to figure out for yourself what your boss cares about and what she will really care about when evaluating your work. Most of your bosses don’t know you well, because they see 30 or so employees every 45 minutes and rarely get to talk to any of them one-on-one. If you get confused, most of your bosses will say, “Don’t talk to your co-workers; that’s cheating. Do your own work.” Under these circumstances, how productive do you think you would be?



doing the work that they are committed to doing. We dare our teachers to teach when they work in isolation from one another with little time to plan together or share their knowledge. A California high school student put it well: “This place hurts my spirit.” An administrator in the same school voiced the dilemma of caring educators caught in the squeeze between students and the system: “[M]y spirit is hurt, too, when I have to do things I don’t believe in” (quoted in Poplin and Weeres, 1992, p. 11).

Heavily stratified within and substantially dehumanized throughout, the factory model school, which we inherited from the efficiency experts of so many years ago, creates a context in which many students experience schools as not caring, even adversarial environments, where getting over becomes important when getting known is impossible. But school does not have to be like this. Successful new schools in cities across the country have shown that new possibilities exist, and we now know that envisioning these possibilities means starting small.

Smaller is Better, But Small is Not Enough

Over the past few decades, educational research has suggested that, all else equal, small schools tend to produce significantly better results for students. These results are the most pronounced for students who are typically least well served by traditional schools. Yet it is important to recognize that “small” is not enough. While it is true that small schools are generally more successful than large schools, smaller size is only a part of the answer.

There are key design features that have been observed in successful small schools that are conspicuously absent in those that have failed. Valuable lessons are provided by extraordinarily successful small schools like the Urban Academy, Central Park East Secondary School,

International High School, Vanguard High School, and Landmark High School in New York City that have been studied over many years. These schools serve African American, Latino, and recent immigrant students from low-income communities – students who routinely drop out of traditional city high schools at rates above 50 percent. Students in these schools are now graduating at rates well above 90 percent, and more than 90 percent are going to college. Also in contrast to national trends, most of them are staying in college and succeeding there (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The ten “features” highlighted in the pages that follow encapsulate the lessons learned from these successes.

The Research on Small Schools

Educational researchers have found that, all else equal, in comparison to large schools, small schools tend to have:

- better attendance rates
- stronger academic achievement
- lower dropout rates
- higher grades
- fewer failed courses
- greater participation in activities
- less vandalism and violence
- fewer behavioral incidents
- especially strong academic results for low-income students and students of color

For more information on the research on the effectiveness of small schools, please see the references section at the end of this publication and the School Redesign Network at Stanford University website at <http://www.schoolredesign.net>.

FEATURE 1

PERSONALIZATION

“School should not be mass production. It should be loving and close. This is what kids need; you need love to learn.”

—a student at Vanguard High School, New York City

A high-quality education starts with relationships. One of the major strengths of a small school is that it can *personalize* education by supporting the development of meaningful, sustained relationships among teachers and students. In study after study of successful small schools, students compare their school to a family rather than a factory and link their academic achievement to their caring relationships with teachers. Successful small schools typically have smaller classes for students and reduced pupil loads for teachers, so that the young people and the adults in the school are well-known to each other.

Of course, restructuring schools for this kind of personalization might be viewed as too expensive. However, schools can make great strides toward personalization without spending more—if they are willing to reprioritize and place relationships at the core. This is partly because in the United States, teaching is highly departmentalized and class periods are very short, and partly because we organize schools to place too many staff in roles outside of core classroom teaching. Only about 43 percent of educational employees in the U.S. are classroom teachers, as compared to nearly 80 percent in Japan and Belgium and about 70 percent in many other countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Economic Development, 1995). In the U.S., there are 17 students per teacher (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001)—and yet, in many high schools, students still sit in classrooms with 30 or more classmates, and teachers must juggle the needs of 150 or more students each day. Even in elementary schools, average class sizes in many cities are 25 students or more.

Reorganizing Staff

Effective small schools have created much smaller classes (usually 20-25 students per class) and, at the high school level, significantly reduced pupil loads for teachers (usually in the range of



40 to 80) by rethinking their use of staff and time. One way that schools reduce class size is by allocating more of their resources to hiring teachers rather than non-teaching staff and assigning more staff to be regularly engaged in classroom teaching rather than to roles outside the classroom. Allocating more resources to classroom instruction means hiring fewer assistant principals, deans, counselors, program administrators, and other non-teaching staff, and “pushing in” specialists to the classroom, rather than using “pull out” methods of organizing teaching. For example, an elementary school in Boston dramatically reduced class size by “pushing into” classroom teaching the special education and compensatory teachers who had previously worked on a pull out model and providing time for them to consult with other teachers on their teams (Miles and Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Most large schools have a bigger administrative staff, and they often hire people to run special programs, such as dropout prevention and compensatory education, that exist to solve problems that arise because students are not getting enough personal attention. These programs and positions rarely solve the core problems that are a result of depersonalized instruction, and they become less necessary when students feel that they can turn to their teachers for personal as well as academic support—and when resources are redirected to the classroom so teachers have few enough students that they can spend more time on each one.

Reorganizing Time

Small high schools and middle schools also reduce pupil loads for teachers by having teachers teach fewer groups of students for longer blocks of time. One way to do this is to create inter-disciplinary courses. In a Humanities course where one teacher is responsible for both English and social studies, for example, he or she can have half as many students for a longer block of time (usually 70 to 120 minutes). Longer blocks of time can also be used in courses organized around a single discipline.

“For the first time, [students] are seen as important individuals in the school system. I compare this with my experience in large schools with 35 students in a class, where kids fall through the cracks.”

—a teacher at Vanguard High School, New York City

In schools that use this strategy, students generally take fewer courses at a time than in traditional high schools, often 3 or 4 rather than 5 or 6. This approach—which resembles a college schedule—allows students to concentrate on more rigorous work, while their teachers know them better and can support their success.

Trade-Offs

As schools reallocate their resources to provide smaller classes and lower pupil loads for teachers, they also need to figure out how to provide teachers with significant time for collaborative planning and professional development, which is essential if teachers are to provide the support that students need to succeed. Since school budgets are finite, trade-offs are involved in the redesign process: For example, schools may secure more time for professional development by allowing slightly larger classes or more student time in out-of-school learning experiences such as community service or internships. Successful schools have balanced these priorities to create structures which are much more effective than those in traditional school models. For more information, please see the “Budget and Staffing Models” section at the end of this publication.



School Profile

International High School

31-10 Thomson Ave, Long Island City, NY 11101

(718) 482-5455

At International High School, 75% of the staff members are classroom teachers, as compared to about 55% in a large New York City high school. Teachers work and plan together in interdisciplinary teams, called clusters, which share 75 students. Classes are 70 minutes long and average 25 students each. Classes are offered four times per week, so students get as much instructional time as in other schools, but teachers teach fewer courses. The average class size is 25, and average pupil load is 75, less than half of that at a typical large high school. All professional staff work with students in academic classes or in advisories, small groups of 12-13 students that meet regularly and for whom the advisor serves as a mentor and advocate. Guidance counselors are attached to teaching teams and work with students in classes, seminars, and group sessions. The librarian is also a classroom teacher.

FEATURE 2

CONTINUOUS RELATIONSHIPS

“Through looping, I’ve had my students in math and science class for two years now. What strikes me most is the progress of students who often get lost in the system — the shy ones who now ask questions because they trust me, the unmotivated ones who now come in for help because they know I’ll be supportive, and the defiant ones who now recognize that I’m an ally who cares for them. These are the kids who need adults’ support the most, but it takes them the longest to develop relationships. Looping gives us the time to make these relationships happen.”

—a teacher at Benjamin Franklin Intermediate School, Daly City, California

Effective small schools are not only designed to support relationships; they are also structured to allow these relationships to develop *over time*. Students need support from adults and classmates they know and trust. Teachers can help young people learn more effectively when they know their students well, both emotionally and intellectually. This knowledge and trust does not develop overnight.

Thus, many successful small schools keep students and teachers together for multiple years. Some also create advisory structures that provide time during the school week to support ongoing relationships among teachers and students.

Part of the reason sustained relationships are so important is that they enable more time for serious teaching and learning. Ever since the U.S. adopted the Prussian age-grading system, the practice of handing off students to a different teacher each year has provoked the age-old teachers’ complaint about how we lose so much ground with our kids with all the start-ups and wind-downs that occur. As teachers, we get a new set of students in September, and by November, if we are elementary teachers, we begin to know most of them and something about how they learn. (Secondary teachers may have a chance to get to know 20 or 30 percent of their students in a



detailed way by mid-year.) We get a good month of teaching in before the winter holidays, and when they come back we get another good couple of months before testing season begins in April, and after the test preparation and testing process, we are pretty much into the denouement for the year. We've learned so much about our students, and then they go off to another teacher, who has none of the knowledge we've assembled, and we start all over again with a new group.

Looping

When students and teachers stay together for multiple years—a strategy some call looping—they do not have to spend all that time re-establishing relationships and developing norms and routines, and they can devote much more time to the business of learning. Teachers can come to know their students and families well, and can organize their teaching to take advantage of student strengths and experiences and to address student needs. In most countries we think of as peers or competitors, teachers stay with the same students for at least two years, sometimes three, and occasionally four. This is true even at the high school level. A principal in Japan, where teachers work for at least two years with the same students, put it well: “The first year you can look and listen; then in the second year the real learning can begin” (Sato, 1994, p. 12). Among students, staying together over time reduces the tension that often comes with negotiating a new set of peers; conflicts are less likely because kids come to know one another and develop trust. As a student at a small school in Boston put it, “We have to get along. We see each other all day, every day, and we know we'll be staying together.”

Although many educators associate looping with the elementary grades, it is effective in middle and high schools as well. Often looping in secondary school is accomplished through the use of interdisciplinary teaching teams that stay with the same students for two grades. Research shows that when teachers and students work together for longer periods of time, achievement levels go up (Gottfredson and Daiger, 1979). In addition, researchers have found that multiage, multilevel classrooms can be extremely successful for all kinds of students (Anderson and Pavan, 1993).

Advisories

Another way that small secondary schools provide student support and enable strong relationships to develop is through advisory structures that make sure no student falls through the cracks. Rather than asking guidance counselors with case loads in the hundreds to give students personal attention, these schools put advising into the hands of teachers, who are given time to work intensely with small numbers of students.

Advisory groups place 10-15 students together with a faculty advisor several times a week for ongoing academic and personal counseling and support. These small student-adult ratios are achieved by having nearly every staff member in the school take responsibility for an advisory. In many cases, teachers advise students they also teach in class, thus increasing the amount of time they spend together during the week. At some schools, students stay with the same advisor for at least two years—thus building on existing relationships over extended periods of time.



Connections With Families

Advisory teachers are advocates for their students, and they serve as the main adult point of contact for their advisees, gathering information from other teachers about what the young people need and spearheading efforts to support them. Advisory teachers also call home frequently and meet with students' parents several times a year to strengthen relationships with families and to help parents understand what students are working on and what they can do to support their success.

Advisory and looping are strategies that allow teachers to know students and their families well over time. With this knowledge, teachers can design curriculum that motivates their students and supports their needs, so that they can succeed academically.



School Profiles

Landmark High School

220 West 58th Street, New York, NY 10019

(212) 247-3414

Landmark High School has advisory groups where 13 students meet with one adult five times a week for ongoing academic and personal counseling. The adult who works with the students in advisory is usually one of their academic teachers as well. Students stay with the same advisor for one year in ninth and tenth grades, and for two years in eleventh and twelfth grades. Courses are also organized for personalization and intensive relationships. Faculty at Landmark see the advisory as a cornerstone of their success with students.

High Tech High School

2861 Womble Road, San Diego, CA 92106

(619) 243-5000

<http://www.hightechhigh.org>

In addition to an advisory system, High Tech High uses looping to build sustained relationships between adults and students. The school is organized into teams of five teachers and 100 students; these teams stay together as a group for two years.

Sherman Oaks Community Charter School (K-4)

1800 Fruitdale Avenue, San Jose, CA 95128

(408) 795-1140

At Sherman Oaks, looping is used both to reduce the amount of time teachers spend at the beginning of the year establishing rules and getting to know their students, and to build stronger relationships among teachers and students. Teachers stay with the same students from kindergarten through second grade, and then from third to fourth grades. This means extra challenges for the teachers, including changing curricula and materials each year, but teacher Sandra Villareal explains that the benefits of looping are great, especially in her second year with the children, when there is no wasted time at the beginning of the year: “students know what your procedures are and you know what their learning styles are, so [on] day one... you’re off and running.”

This information on Sherman Oaks is based on a profile by the George Lucas Educational Foundation. For more information, see their website at <http://www.glef.org>.

FEATURE 3

HIGH STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

A New York City student explains how performance assessment supports learning:

“When you take a test you don’t feel like you need to know it after it’s done. The portfolio stuff sticks in your brain better.”

Successful small schools have a clear goal: They want all students to achieve to high standards, and they are clear about what students should know and be able to do when they graduate. They communicate their goal by fostering a “sense of press” that pushes students ever further in their thinking and academic performance. But they don’t enforce standards by setting ambitious goals and then allowing students to fail. They provide both high standards and high supports.

Common Expectations

Clarity and coherence are important underpinnings for high standards. The curriculum at these schools is organized around common “habits of mind” that are consistently reinforced across classrooms. For example, these habits may require students continuously to weigh and use evidence, address multiple perspectives, make connections among ideas, speculate on alternatives, and assess the value of the ideas they have studied, as well as to present their ideas clearly and with appropriate use of conventions. In many traditional schools, the goals of learning are tacit and mysterious. It is a challenge for students to figure out teachers’ different expectations: One teacher is saying, “I’ll give you an F if you don’t put your name on the paper,” and another is saying, “I want you to learn to think independently,” and a third is saying, “Just memorize what the textbook says.”

At effective schools, students are expected to meet similar academic expectations and learn similar habits of mind in each class they take, and the school community as a whole has a solid sense of what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate. Joint curricular planning

also enables the curriculum to “add up”—to build ideas from one course to another and from one year to the next. This also enables more powerful learning than can be achieved with a fragmented, disconnected course of study that leaves students with gaps, holes, and misunderstandings as they try to put the pieces together by themselves.

Standard-Setting

Successful schools often frame the issue of common standards by asking themselves the following questions:

What do we want our students to know and be able to do by the time they graduate?

How will we know if we are succeeding?

In good schools, the former question is answered through an intensive and constantly evolving process of standard-setting that is led by the school’s faculty. Teachers work through the guidelines of national, state, and district standards as they determine what is essential for their students to know and be able to do. Many existing standards documents are unrealistic in their breadth, so teachers must make principled choices about what is most important—that is, what ideas and skills are central to the discipline, are transferable to other contexts, and allow students to gain access to other ideas and skills. This kind of discipline in choosing material to study is necessary when one understands that students learn more from in-depth study of concepts that they evaluate and skills they apply to new situations than from a cursory overview of many topics.

Focus on Student Work

The latter question—how will we know if we are succeeding?—is answered by looking at student work as the concrete representation of progress toward the school standards. As a result, student work is the focus of the school: Student writing, artwork, and other projects are displayed prominently throughout the school to demonstrate this commitment to placing their learning at the center of the school’s mission. Student work is also the subject of much teacher and student





discussion and analysis. Students have frequent opportunities to engage in serious conversations about their work, and to share, reflect upon, and receive feedback on their progress. As teachers look at the work of their own students, they learn much more about what is working as they had hoped and what is not than they could from standardized multiple-choice tests. As they look at the work of other teachers' students, they have a window into the curriculum and teaching strategies used in other classrooms.

Performance Assessment

These conversations about the quality of student work best occur in the framework of a well-crafted performance assessment system. Such systems are based on common, school-wide standards, they are integrated into daily classroom practice, and they show students what they will need to do by providing models, demonstrations, and exhibitions of the kind of work that will be expected of them.

Generally these systems include:

- portfolios of student work that demonstrate in-depth study through research papers, scientific experiments, mathematical models, literary critiques and analyses, arts performances, and so on;

- rubrics that embody the set of standards against which students' products and performance are judged;

- oral presentations (exhibitions) by students to a committee of teachers, peers, and others in the school to test for in-depth understanding and assess the student's readiness for graduation;

- opportunities for students to revise their work and improve in order to demonstrate their learning and to meet the standards.

Students develop their portfolios over time with the support of their teachers. Class assignments are designed to meet the portfolio requirements and judged using the same rubrics. Students revise and improve the work they have done in class, often during advisory time and with the help of their advisor or other classroom teacher, to prepare it for inclusion in the portfolio. Many high schools not only have a graduation portfolio that students prepare in their last two years, but also ninth and tenth grade portfolios or projects that focus instruction and help students learn how the process of developing and exhibiting complex performances works.

When students graduate, they leave with a portfolio that they carry proudly, because it represents the work that they have done over multiple years, it represents who they are, what they care about, and what they have learned, and it means much more than a test score. Portfolios are not just evaluation instruments; they are complex learning experiences (see Newmann, Marks, and Gamoran, 1995). One student described the power of having to defend the portfolio in an exhibition: “You take the role of a teacher when you do your portfolio. You get to do most of the thinking when you work with your portfolio. You have to explain how to do something or why something is important so that someone who doesn’t know it can understand it.”

New York Performance Standards Consortium
<http://www.performanceassessment.org>

The Performance Standards Consortium is a network of 40 schools in New York that have agreed to use common performance assessment measures. Students at each of the schools complete four common tasks in order to graduate—a research paper, a science experiment, a mathematical analysis, and a literary analysis. Students must also present and defend their work before a graduation committee and successfully complete all coursework. (Each school has additional graduation requirements that are unique to the school.) Teachers at each school use the same rubrics to judge the quality of student work. Based on their common standards, these schools received a waiver from the New York state Regents’ exams that are normally required for graduation. Although this waiver may be rescinded by a new state superintendent whose decision is currently being contested in court, this effort shows the potential for schools to work together to create authentic, standards-based assessment systems that are accepted by educational and political leaders. The School Redesign Network at Stanford University is creating a similar performance assessment network on the West Coast; for more information on this effort, please see <http://www.schoolredesign.net>.

Standards for Teaching

Thus, performance assessment is a learning tool, a tool for guiding progress, not a method for sorting students into successes and failures. At too many schools today, people say, “We know we have high standards because so many students fail to meet them.” I would argue that this is not an example of high academic standards. Having high standards for children means having high standards for adults in their work with children. Educators must raise their standards for the quality of their own teaching and work together to create a wider range of strategies to meet student needs. We cannot separate standards and assessment from curriculum and instruction: As teachers, we meet high standards if we can help all of our students achieve by constructing, with careful scaffolding, the pathway to success.

Performance assessment helps teachers hold themselves accountable and improve their practice. As one New York teacher put it, “Portfolios are a key way into individual work with students, to see what’s working and what’s not, and what we need to do better.” School-wide standard-setting and shared public assessment strategies convey valued ideals in a concrete way; they provide occasions to recognize and celebrate student and teacher work; and they make clear the areas where more work is needed. The public nature of the process is an important incentive for teachers not only to prepare individual students well, but to work to improve their overall teaching as well.

A New York City teacher explains how performance assessment supports teaching:

“Teachers pushed each other to answer “why are we doing this? And what do we want kids to get out of it?” (The portfolio) is understood to be something we need as an entire school... I can’t imagine right now trying to teach without thinking about assessment all the time. It’s easier to be in your own little world and not be accountable to anybody. It’s much easier for me to be in this room doing what I want. But it’s not the best thing for the kids, and it’s not really the best thing for my teaching.”

—a teacher at Central Park East Secondary School

School Profiles

**Urban Academy,
317 East 67th Street, New York, NY 10021
(212) 570-5284**

At Urban Academy, students must complete a set of “proficiencies” in order to graduate—projects, papers, exhibitions, presentations, or experiments that build on what students have learned in class and allow them to show the knowledge and skills they have gained. Students complete proficiencies in six academic areas—Creative Arts, Criticism, Literature, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. Each proficiency requires high-level work and takes a long period of time to complete, sometimes a year or more. While course grades at Urban Academy reflect effort and progress as well as scholarship, proficiencies demonstrate that a student has attained a high level of academic achievement, and they often must be revised and improved before they are accepted. For more information on the six proficiencies, see the Urban Academy website at <http://www.urbanacademy.org>.

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1021 Jennings Street, Bronx, NY 10460
(718) 861-0521**

At Fannie Lou Hamer, a small neighborhood school in the South Bronx, portfolios and exhibitions are an essential part of the learning process. In Division I (ninth and tenth grades), students prepare two multi-subject portfolios per year, with work from each class. Students work with their advisors to revise the work before it is included in the portfolio, and they present one piece of work from their portfolio to a committee of teachers and peers. In Division II (eleventh and twelfth grades), students work with their advisors to prepare seven graduation portfolios based on their course work, five of which are required (math, science/technology/health, social studies, literature, social issues/community service) and two of which are discretionary (one of these must be in the arts or media, and the other may include ethics, geography, language, autobiography/life planning, or internship). When the advisor feels the student is ready, the student presents the portfolios to his or her graduation committee, which consists of the advisor, another teacher, another adult of the student’s choice, and a peer. Only when this committee feels that the student has met the school’s requirements for graduation—as defined by the rubrics for each portfolio—do they recommend him or her for a diploma. “Portfolios are much better than tests,” explained one student. “We have to know more, and be able to explain it. It’s not just a one-time thing. It’s harder, and it really helps us learn.”

FEATURE 4

AUTHENTIC CURRICULUM

A school should offer “a rich and interesting curriculum full of powerful ideas and experiences aimed at inspiring its students with the desire to know more, a curriculum that sustains students’ natural drive to make sense of the world and trusts in their capacity to have an impact upon it.”

—*Deborah Meier, The Power of Their Ideas*

To help students meet high standards as measured by performance assessments, teachers must use a curriculum that engages students and challenges them to understand concepts deeply, find and integrate information, assemble evidence, weigh ideas, and develop skills of analysis and expression. Just as small schools will not be effective if they replicate the impersonal staffing structures of factory-model schools, they will not succeed if they use the same old curriculum: one that touches on topics superficially and focuses on getting through the book, rather than on deep understanding.

There is evidence that more authentic assessment and teaching can change student outcomes. For example, in a study of more than 2,000 students in 23 restructured schools, most of them in urban areas, Newmann, Marks, and Gamoran (1995) found much higher levels of achievement on complex performance tasks for students who experienced what these researchers termed “authentic pedagogy”—instruction focused on active learning in real-world contexts calling for higher-order thinking, consideration of alternatives, extended writing, and an audience for student work. A recent analysis of national data found that students in restructured schools where “authentic instruction” was widespread experienced greater achievement gains on conventional tests (Lee, Smith, and Croninger, 1995).



Intellectually Challenging Work

The curricular orientation of schools that are succeeding at very high levels is quite different than in many traditional schools. These successful schools demand intellectually challenging work, and they are focused on preparing all students to work independently and to meet the skill and content demands of college and challenging jobs. Students are asked to read and write extensively in all classes. They must apply their learning to novel problems and tasks and produce significant pieces of analytic work. In all classes, including mathematics and science, they are asked not just to acquire pieces of information, but also to produce research papers, projects, models, and designs. Many classes require students to do large end-of-course projects that include written documentation and are presented and defended orally. These tasks, which are key components of a performance assessment system, allow students to show that they have met high standards.

Curriculum Linked to Students' Lives and Interests

To make this rigorous curriculum effective, teachers make strong efforts to link the curriculum to students' own lives and interests. This does not imply that the content at successful schools is watered down or confined to the students' own immediate concerns. Instead, assignments are designed to link students' experiences to the demands of a liberal arts curriculum that blends classical studies with contemporary and multicultural elements that students can understand. For example, students compare works by Ibsen and Chekhov with pieces by Marquez and Toni

Morrison. Sanchez sits alongside Shakespeare. The study of constitutional rights is linked to issues students understand. As a teacher at Manhattan Village Academy describes:

We try to relate historical issues to the present day. We connected Fourth Amendment rights to locker searches when a book bag was stolen. We discuss individual responsibility and what you want the government to take over. We discuss and debate to push them to develop their thoughts.

Project-Based Learning

One strategy for linking the curriculum to real-world issues is through project-based learning, where students are engaged in challenging tasks that usually involve knowledge and skills from more than one academic discipline. These tasks require students to work independently to solve complex problems, and they culminate in real-world products.

Less is More

Schools can demand rigorous intellectual work from students only if they are willing to forgo the goal of superficial content coverage. Successful schools follow the Coalition of Essential Schools' (1994) guiding principle of "less is more," carefully choosing what to focus on so that students gain in-depth understanding, rather than simply exposure to large quantities of information. In-depth



study does not imply haphazard selection of a few interesting ideas to focus on. Instead, topics are judiciously selected to provide a framework for many related key ideas, so that students come away with an understanding of the core ideas of the academic disciplines they are studying.

At an effective small school, “less is more” applies not only to curricular choices, but also to the entire school program. Small schools simply cannot offer the breadth of choices that their large counterparts can if they want also to personalize instruction. They must make deliberate choices about what is most essential, and do those important things well. Successful small schools also supplement their own core offerings with out-of-school experiences such as community service, internships, and courses at local colleges. These programs, which require partnerships with community-based organizations and other agencies, allow a small school to provide a more well-rounded education and to give students the opportunity to understand the world in which they are growing up.

Community Service and Internships

Community service and internships not only extend the curriculum and make it more authentic; these opportunities for real-world work also allow young people to feel responsible. Many traditional schools infantilize students, particularly adolescents, by treating them as if they need to be constantly monitored and controlled. Just when students need to be gaining some independence, they are treated as if they cannot be trusted, and they often act accordingly. Effective schools give young people progressively more responsibility so they can grow and take ownership of their own learning. As they are responsible for the welfare of others, they develop pride and confidence in themselves and greater maturity in their perspectives about others. Community service activities and internships allow students to explore their interests and future career goals, make a contribution to the lives of others, and learn how to engage the world outside of home and school. This real-world work, which is accompanied by seminars and reflective assignments that help students process what they are learning, is part of the authentic curriculum experience.

Preparation for Higher Education

Finally, many effective small high schools reinforce their curriculum and help prepare students for higher education by establishing connections with local colleges and arranging for students to enroll in college courses. These experiences enable students to gain insight into the demands of college study and help them prepare for it. Rather than teachers saying, “you’ll need this when you get to college,” students experience what they need first hand and gain commitment to the learning process.

School Profiles:

San Francisco Community School (K-8)

125 Excelsior Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94112

(415) 469-4739

Since 1991, the curriculum at San Francisco Community School has been based on project-based learning that is connected to the community. The school developed some of its work in conjunction with Project 2061, a program developed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science that teaches students to apply science and math concepts to their own lives. For example, in one mixed-age class of first and second graders, students learned math, science, history, and English through the challenge of building a suspension bridge that could support their weight. The children in this class read books about bridges, watched movies about bridges, went on field trips to the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge, and then designed and constructed a six foot long suspension bridge.

Coalition School for Social Change

220 West 58th Street, New York, NY 10019

(212) 247-3651

At the Coalition School for Social Change, the faculty designs projects that combine academic study with contemporary investigations and meaningful work in the community. A science teacher explained how students do “the work done by environmental consulting firms: they identify a problem, make a plan for how to study it, do field work, and write up conclusions.” Another science class “did a project with Central Park rangers, who are short-staffed, and identified tree samples for them.” A humanities teacher described how another recent project made connections among history, fiction, and contemporary life: “Last year we did a study of Latin America with a focus on the Dominican Republic. We read Julia Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies* to look at the extremes the dictatorship went to. We then went up to Washington Heights and interviewed senior citizens who had lived through this period. These interviews were powerful learning experiences for our students.”

The Met

Shepard Campus

80 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903

(401) 277-5046

Peace Street Campus

362 Dexter Street, Providence, RI 02907

(401) 752-3400

<http://www.metcenter.org>

The curriculum at the Met has extraordinarily strong real-world connections. The Met does not have classes in the traditional sense; instead, students spend most of their time learning through internships, community service, and other off-campus activities. Each student is part of an advisory of 13-15 students that meets twice a day and stays together with the same faculty advisor for all 4 years of high school. The advisor helps each student plan an individualized course of study based around the real world projects, with focused skill-building activities at school to support their personal learning goals.

FEATURE 5

ADAPTIVE PEDAGOGY

“[Flexible scheduling and small pupil loads mean that] I can use in-depth approaches and assign college level research projects. For two months, each morning, we teach students research skills and essay skills so that they can do a minimum 20-page research paper in history. They choose the topic. We develop their topic together. We develop an angle to the topic. I take them to the Donnell Library. First I call the librarian and she gets books on their topics together. They browse through different books, take notes, and order their thoughts in an outline. Then, the kids have to listen to their teachers and peers criticizing their work. Then they have to rewrite. They have to cite references, show evidence, and prove their thesis.”

—a teacher at Vanguard High School, New York City



Access to challenging curriculum and assignments does not automatically translate into student capacity to succeed. High standards cannot work without high supports. Successful small schools not only focus on what kids need to learn, but also on how they learn.

Focus on Learning

The more we know about how people learn, the more we understand that teaching must take account of individual differences. Students have different pathways and approaches to learning that enable them to process information and to make sense of their experiences. One out of every eight American children today is identified as having “learning disabilities”—not because huge numbers of our children are “disabled,” but because they, like many other children who are not so labeled, have distinct learning needs (Levine, 2000). We are beginning to recognize that the traditional classroom, with a teacher in the front of the room lecturing to rows of students, is often ineffective if it is the only pathway to learning. Successful schools adjust their teaching modes to meet students where they are.

Psychologist Robert Glaser (1990) calls this kind of teaching an adaptive pedagogy. He argues that 21st century schools must shift from a *selective* mode—“characterized by minimal variation in the conditions for learning” in which “a narrow range of instructional options and a limited number of ways to succeed are available”—to an *adaptive* mode in which “the educational environment can provide for a range of opportunities for success. Modes of teaching are adjusted to individuals—their backgrounds, talents, interests, and the nature of past performance” (pp. 16-17).

Multiple Instructional Strategies

An adaptive pedagogy means using multiple instructional strategies that support active learning and give students different entry points to learning, allowing them to use what Howard Gardner calls their multiple intelligences (1997). In effective classrooms, teachers use diverse strategies ranging from whole class lecture and recitation to guided inquiry, small group work, discussions, independent work, projects, experiments, book and internet research, constructions of models and products, use of technology and the arts for accessing and expressing ideas, and teacher interaction with individuals and small groups. In these classrooms, students attend to short-term tasks as well as long-term projects and are engaged in activities aimed at the mastery of facts as well as in-depth understanding.

Group Work

Small group work is common, but it goes beyond the kind of self-teaching that often characterizes unstructured group work in many schools: It is highly structured through activity guides that provide substantial scaffolding, and it is accompanied by active teacher coaching and assistance. When groups have authentic, open-ended tasks to perform that require different kinds of skills

“You get to create 3D models, do research, and exhibitions. You do projects. You come up with your own topics and problems. You create the questions and answer them. You write theme, plot, and character essays. You do visuals. [The teachers] don’t want it to be boring for you.”

—a student at Vanguard High School, New York City

and abilities and rely on roles that support distributed expertise among the members, they enable what educators Elizabeth Cohen and Rachel Lotan (1994, 1997) call complex instruction, an approach that has been found to support increased achievement that is also more equitably distributed.

Explicit Teaching of Academic Skills

A key element of adaptive pedagogy is the explicit teaching of academic skills, which is especially important in high school. Much high school teaching assumes that students have already mastered advanced skills in reading, writing, and inquiry. Yet many ninth graders are seriously under-prepared for high school; some can only read at a basic level, are quickly swamped by the demands of serious academic texts, and do not know how to conduct research, synthesize information, or plan and structure a paper, experiment, or project.

Scaffolding

Teachers in effective schools work to ensure that students are taught the skills they need to develop and will be expected to apply. Instead of reducing the demands of the curriculum, the schools construct a curriculum that explicitly teaches students how to study, how to approach academic tasks, how to read and write at a college level, and how to evaluate their own and others’ work. Teachers also provide careful scaffolding for student tasks: Instead of simply asking students to produce a polished research paper, for example, they lead students through a step-by-step process, from framing a question to finding sources to taking notes to developing a thesis to outlining to writing and editing, which leads them to a high-quality finished product. Such instruction requires intense and systematic work on the part of teachers, but it is essential if all students are to meet high standards.

Culture of Revision and Redemption

Another important characteristic of schools with an adaptive pedagogy is a learning environment where teachers are aware of what students are thinking, and where the curriculum does not move on when students do not learn immediately. Unlike the traditional “teach, test, and hope for the best” approach, adaptive pedagogy does not leave students behind. Adaptive teachers don’t say, “You got a C-” on this assignment and then move on to the next unit without looking back. Instead, they give students the opportunity to tackle difficult tasks without fear of failure by

feature 5: adaptive pedagogy

promoting a culture of revision and redemption that encourages students to attempt challenging work, provides continual opportunities for practice and revision, and supports students in developing the courage and confidence to work continuously to improve in their successive efforts. Within the guidelines of a performance assessment system, students can revise a piece of work again and again until it becomes better, and it becomes better still, finally meeting the standards the school has set. That's how quality performances are developed in the real world, whether you think about an Olympic skater, a musician, an athlete, or an academic and scholar.

Extra Support

Schools that are successful with all learners often use after-school time and Saturdays to provide extra support outside of class. In many cases, schools collaborate with volunteer programs to secure tutors who can assist students with reading, writing, and math skills. Others use peer tutoring or faculty assistance to provide additional help to struggling students. However a school chooses to provide support, the emphasis in successful schools is on adding learning opportunities—extra classes, tutoring sessions, or a resource room staffed by a skilled special educator where students can come for support on their assignments—not pulling kids out of class. English language learners and students with particular learning needs stay in the classroom and get support there, and then they get additional support outside the classroom.

Strong Relationships

Of course, schools cannot implement an adaptive pedagogy unless they are already redesigned to promote strong relationships between teachers and students. A school's staffing model and schedule must support this kind of curriculum by providing lower pupil loads for teachers, smaller class sizes, longer teaching blocks, and fewer courses for students to take at a time. The caring relationships that result are just as integral to students' success as are more formal interventions.



School Profiles:

Vanguard High School

317 East 67th Street, New York, NY 10021

(212) 517-5175

Vanguard provides its students with numerous opportunities to improve in areas where they need extra help. The school runs a peer tutoring program and collaborates with a volunteer program to help students with SATs, writing, and math skills, both during school hours and on Saturdays. Sisters with Choices, a group of women of color, provides role models and mentors for female students and offers group counseling and tutoring three times a week. Vanguard also runs a resource room where special education students get help so they can understand and complete the same challenging assignments as other students.

Landmark High School

220 West 58th Street, New York, NY 10019

(212) 247-3414

At Landmark, skills instruction is built into the curriculum from the first days the students enter. When students begin ninth grade, they are immediately taught how a library works and how to do a research paper. They are introduced to the habits of mind and rubrics that will be used to assess their work as they move from grade to grade and ultimately, their graduation portfolios. The teaching of reading and writing is explicitly integrated into the ninth and tenth grade curricula. They are taught how to do exhibitions so that by the time they defend their portfolios, they have had several years experience in oral presentations.

FEATURE 6

MULTICULTURAL AND ANTI-RACIST TEACHING

“I cannot learn from you unless you can accept me and find value in me for who and what I am.”

—From Beverly Tatum,

“Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”

Effective schools work consciously and mindfully to provide a caring, respectful community for all students that acknowledges and values them and who they are. In addition to personalization and ongoing relationships, this work involves a serious commitment to multicultural and anti-racist teaching, which promotes respect for diversity and creates a context within which students' experiences can be understood, appreciated, and connected to the curriculum.

The Effect of Low Expectations

Many students of color have had negative experiences in society that undermine their self-confidence and their conception of their own ability to succeed—and they may well have had those experiences in school. Jacqueline Irvine's (1990) review of research about teacher expectations found that teachers hold more negative attitudes about black children's ability, language, behavior, and potential, than they do of white children's. Other studies have documented similar teacher perceptions of Latino students. Still other studies have found that children of color have fewer favorable interactions with their teachers and are more likely to be punished for offenses that white students commit with little or no consequence. Black students, particularly males, are more likely to be suspended from schools than whites for similar situations (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Fine, 1991; Nieto, 1992).

Most disturbing is what happens when students fail to conform to the expectations that schools have for them. In one study, 66 white student teachers each worked with two white students and two black students. One student of each race was identified to the teacher as gifted. The study

found that the black student who was labeled “gifted”—especially when he was male—received less attention, less praise, less encouragement, and more criticism, than *any* of the other students in the class (Rubovitz & Maehr, 1973).

The Effect of Discrimination

Outside of schools, students experience discrimination in a variety of ways as well, ranging from the employment and housing conditions in their communities to the encounters they have with others to the dismal conditions of many of their schools. In contrast to other countries that fund their schools centrally and equally, U.S. schools are funded extremely inequitably. Across the country, the richest ten percent of schools spend nearly ten times more than the poorest ten percent. Study after study has found that schools serving low-income and minority students have fewer dollars, less well-qualified teachers, larger class sizes, larger school sizes, fewer books, materials, and equipment, and more dilapidated facilities. Within large schools, tracking systems segregate students and allocate lower-quality curriculum and teaching to those in the bottom tracks—once again, disproportionately those students who have the least political voice (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Young people are very observant. They note these patterns. They understand when they are not considered to be deserving of a rigorous and humane education. It is little wonder then that



some students create an identity that is oppositional to school: How can you buy into something that has identified you as unworthy or incapable of succeeding?

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Effective schools develop and maintain environments that explicitly embrace the cultures represented by the students in their classrooms as well as in the larger society. There is a large body of research showing that effective teachers of students of color, white teachers and teachers of color alike, form and maintain connections with students within their social contexts. They celebrate their students as individuals and as members of specific cultures. They ask students to share who they are and what they know with the class in a variety of ways. They regularly incorporate instructional materials that provide various viewpoints from different cultures. These teachers exhibit a culturally responsive pedagogy (Irvine, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Garcia, 1993).

Knowledge of the Community

Successful teachers of students of color do not shy away from issues of race and culture. With students of varying language backgrounds, they allow the use of multiple languages. They are familiar with students' ways of talking and ways of working, even when they instruct in standard English and focus on traditional content. Connections to the community are an essential component of multicultural and anti-racist learning environments. Teachers consistently use their knowledge of the community to advance student learning and to fortify feelings of solidarity with the students they teach. They share students' passion and affection for the community and its multiple cultures. They acknowledge the realities that students encounter and work with them in pro-social ways to increase equity and opportunity.

Active Approach to Teaching

These teachers are passionate about their content as well as about their students' learning. They use an active approach to teaching—demonstrating, modeling, explaining, writing, giving feedback, reviewing, emphasizing higher order skills, pushing and prodding. They do not allow students to settle for less than they are capable of achieving. They avoid relying on rote learning, drill and practice, or excessive punishment; instead, they see the teacher-student relationship as humane and equitable and characterized by a sense of community and teamwork.

Multiculturalism

At the school level, multiculturalism is reflected through both subtle and explicit norms and mores. Tracking does not exist in these schools, although students can choose different classes based on their interests as they reach their junior and senior years. Students are not segregated, nor are they excluded from any part of the school's life. They are actively encouraged to create



and participate in social clubs and activities that reflect the local community’s cultures, values and traditions. Their families’ participation in the school is a valued contribution that staff members pursue through persistent outreach via multilingual invitations and announcements, home visits, and social events.

Democratic Schools that Construct Diversity

One of the major challenges facing small schools is that there will be a tendency in some cases for them to become homogeneous. All of us feel more comfortable with people who are like us, whom we already understand and identify with. It will be a special challenge for us to create democratic schools that seek out diversity, in people, perspectives, ideas, and experiences, and then to work to ensure that the diversity is valued as a great source of strength.

In *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey (1916) noted that “a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living” (p. 87). He stressed the importance of creating circumstances in which people share a growing number of interests and participate in a growing number of associations with other groups, noting that:

In order to have a large number of values in common, all the members of the group must have an equitable opportunity to receive and to take from others. There must be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences. Otherwise, the influences which educate some into masters educate others into slaves. And the experience of each party loses in meaning, when the free interchange of varying modes of life experiences is arrested (p. 84).

Communications that, in Dewey's words, are "vitally social or vitally shared" allow people to experience the perspectives of others, and by that connection to develop understanding and appreciation for that person's experience of the world, thus expanding their own knowledge and building a broader common ground. This is the fundamental goal of education in a democratic society.

Multiculturalism in Action: Student Portfolios

At Central Park East Secondary School in New York, a culturally responsive pedagogy has meant encouraging students to bring much of themselves, their passions, and their concerns into their work. Among the many topics for pieces of work that students have included in their portfolios are the following:

"Internship Blues: Dealing with a Scissor-Happy Editor"

"The Women in *Othello*"

"Slavery: The Struggles and Hardships of Black Women"

"Education in South Africa and Cuba"

A science project entitled "A Comparison of the Effects of Hair Straighteners and Hair Removers on Skin and Hair"

A videotape entitled "Black on Black Crime"

"The Effects of Alzheimer's Disease"

The personal concerns students bring with them to these topics translate into a motivation to dig deep and persevere through the hard work that the challenging projects typically entail. For more details, see Darling-Hammond, Ancess, and Falk, *Authentic Assessment in Action*.



FEATURE 7

KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SKILLED TEACHERS

“You can be a mediocre to poor teacher very easily. And in that case, I think it’s a simple job. But to be a good teacher and one that expands and keeps learning, it’s the hardest job I’ve ever done—and I’ve done a lot of jobs...I had no idea how complex it was and how much of a profession it is.”

—A teacher who recently completed a well-designed teacher education program

It is critical that schools be designed to support teachers and students in their work together. It is equally critical that teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to take advantage of these supports in helping students learn. A substantial body of research suggests that one of the most important school determinants of student achievement is the quality of teachers (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1999). One study of 900 school districts found that spending additional resources on more highly qualified teachers led to greater increases in student achievement than any other use of those resources (Ferguson, 1991).

Qualified Teachers Make a Difference

If teachers are viewed primarily as transmitters of information to students, one could argue that they need little more than basic content knowledge and the ability to string together comprehensible lectures in order to do an adequate job. But if teachers are to ensure successful learning for students who learn in different ways and encounter a variety of difficulties, then they must be prepared as diagnosticians, planners, and leaders who know a great deal about the learning process and have a wide repertoire of tools at their disposal.

Small schools can enable thoughtful teachers to do their work well. But small schools alone do not create inspirational teaching, especially if teachers do not have the opportunity to learn how to teach well. This is particularly true when there are high levels of needs among students. Small schools with inadequately prepared teachers are not more effective than larger schools.

Making Content Accessible

There are three key areas in which teachers must be experts: their subject matter, the needs of diverse learners, and the learning process. Teachers not only need to know the subject matter in their content area well; they also need to know how to access curriculum resources and how to represent the ideas in their content area so they are accessible to others.

Understanding the Needs of Diverse Learners

Teachers also need to understand the needs of diverse learners. This includes knowing about child and adolescent development, as well as understanding how young people's cultures, languages, and experiences, as well as multiple intelligences and learning differences, shape their approaches to school and to learning. Each student has a unique mind, and teachers must know how to figure out how students are thinking and learning so they can shape lessons to connect with what students already know and how they learn well.

Supporting the Learning Process

Finally, teachers must have deep knowledge about the learning process, which is very complex. They need to know what motivates people to learn, and how people learn in different ways and for different purposes. No matter what content area they are teaching, they must understand language learning and literacy development, which are at the heart of the learning process for all students, especially English language learners, who must learn how to communicate in English while they are simultaneously learning content. And teachers also need to know how to use assessment effectively to identify students' strengths and needs, and to help students learn better.

“I really feel like during those two years in teaching (before I entered teacher education), I was forced to sink or swim. And, of course, after going through [my teacher education program], I'm like, oh, I need to go back and apologize to every single one of those kids.”

—A teacher who taught for two years before entering a well-designed teacher education program

Teachers who enter teaching without adequate preparation and who do not receive adequate supports often wind up resenting and stereotyping the students whom they do not understand, especially when their lack of skills renders the teacher less successful. One teacher who entered teaching through a short summer training program explained: “I found myself having problems with cross-cultural teaching issues, blaming my kids because the class was crazy and out of control, (and) blaming the parents as though they didn’t care about their kids.” This teacher later entered a teacher education program, and found that the tools she acquired transformed her ability to reach her students. Students need access to teachers who themselves have access to knowledge about how to implement a culturally responsive pedagogy that supports students from diverse backgrounds.

Innovation is important, but knowledge is important as a base for that innovation. Especially in new schools, we must make a commitment to hire teachers who are well-trained and well-qualified—teachers who are prepared to create change based on their understanding of how children learn.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), established in 1987, is an organization of teachers and other education stakeholders who are working to strengthen the teaching profession and to improve student learning. The NBPTS establishes rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do and runs a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet those standards. The NBPTS standards are derived from five core propositions about high-quality teaching:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities.

For more information on NBPTS and the certification process, please contact the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University at (650) 724-7349 or <http://nbrc.stanford.edu>.

School Profile:

East Palo Alto High School
475 Pope Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 329-2811

The East Palo Alto High School opened in fall 2001 as a partnership between Aspire Public Schools, the Stanford University School of Education, and Ravenswood Public Schools. The school hired teachers for its first year using two key criteria to ensure teacher quality: (1) teachers who were fully credentialed and either already certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or committed to obtaining National Board certification within five years; and (2) teachers who represented the diversity of the school's student body, in terms of language and ethnicity. The hiring team actively recruited teachers who met these criteria by contacting support groups for National Board certification, teacher education program alumni groups, culturally-based teacher organizations (such as the local Alliance of Black School Educators), and other networks of well-qualified teachers. The school serves as a professional development school for the Stanford Teacher Education Program, supporting the preparation of novice teachers and receiving support for teacher development and curriculum development.

FEATURE 8

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A New York teacher explains how collaborative planning time supports student learning:

“Now that the schedule allows teachers to meet, we help each other. We write curriculum together. The variety of work we do with students is greater.”

Effective teachers are not only well-prepared; they are also continually learning. Good small schools commit serious time and resources to collaborative planning and on-going professional development. This supports both more thoughtful and effective teaching within the classroom and greater coherence across courses and grade levels.

Expertise in teaching—as in many other fields—comes from a process of sharing, attempting new ideas, reflecting on practice, and developing new approaches. Good teachers learn from one another, and they need time to do it. In many American schools, teachers spend their Sunday nights sitting at their kitchen tables, all by themselves, inventing their lessons for the week. For too long, we have had the notion that teachers are only working when they are alone in their classrooms, stamping kids with lessons on the conveyor belt of the industrial model school. The presumption of the assembly line school was that teachers would not need time to plan or evaluate their teaching, because they would merely march through the lessons in a prescribed curriculum.

Joint Planning

We know, however, that one-size-fits-all teaching and ad hoc planning miss the mark for most students. High-quality teaching is developed by creating a deliberate repertoire of strategies and a well-sequenced plan for content that connects to students’ prior learning, and doing so in collaboration with other faculty so that knowledge is shared. This shared planning is something that many other countries and some unusual schools in the United States build into their structures for schooling.

“Teachers share what they are doing in a formal way in team meetings. They plan together and share what they have done. There is whole school sharing and there are summer institutes where we have more time to reflect. There is more coherence than in big schools where teachers work alone.”

—Sylvia Rabiner, former principal of Landmark High School in New York City

At successful schools, teachers work together to develop the curriculum, to develop lessons that will work with their students, to look at student work, and to evaluate their lessons and troubleshoot for future classes. If teachers do not work together, it is impossible to develop a collective perspective in the school. This means that curriculum will be fragmented, problems of practice will not be addressed, and students will fall through the cracks.

Time for Collaboration

Of course, collaborative planning takes time. Since most U.S. teachers have only one 45-minute planning period a day (often less in elementary school), they have nowhere near enough time to engage in this work, and the time they do have is not generally scheduled to allow collaboration with other members of a department or teaching team. But if collaborative planning and professional development are a priority in school design, it is possible, even on a meager budget, to reallocate resources, organize the schedule, and assign enough staff as teachers so that teachers teach fewer hours during the day and have at least five hours a week to work together. (See the “Budget and Staffing Models” section at the end of this publication.)

In schools in industrialized countries in Asia and in Europe (where they don’t spend much more money per pupil than the United States, but they spend it differently), teachers spend between 15 and 20 hours of a 40- to 45-hour work week in their classrooms with students. Thus, they have 20 hours or more per week to plan lessons, to meet with students and parents, and to work together and learn from one another. This collaborative work includes developing curriculum and assessments, observing each other’s classes, and participating in study groups and other professional development activities.

Carefully Crafted Lessons

In Japan, it is common practice for teachers to try lessons out on one another. For example, a teacher might use her colleagues as the audience for a new lesson on fractions. These teachers would plan and role play the lesson with her, and then critique it. Then when she taught the lesson in her classroom, her colleagues might participate in a research lesson, observing her teaching the lesson in the classroom, taking notes on what happened, and then debriefing it together. Researchers Jim Stigler and Harold Stevenson have called the shared lessons that result from this type of planning “polished stones” because they are so carefully crafted (1991).

A Collective Perspective

These collaborative adult learning experiences not only enable teachers to adjust their pedagogy to help students learn more; they also provide opportunities for school staff to revisit the school's vision and goals, develop a collective perspective on teaching practice, and create a stronger school culture. They also provide time for teachers to talk together about individual students to figure out how to best support them.

To make this work possible, good small schools devote resources to building in significant time for teacher collaboration during the work day. Of course, since resources are always precious in our under-funded schools, this involves trade-offs: For example, schools that significantly reduce the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom each day may have to settle for slightly larger class sizes. Nevertheless, without expert teachers who are continually learning and growing as professionals, much of the other work that small schools are doing will not be successful.



feature 8: collaborative planning and professional development

VANGUARD HIGH SCHOOL SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULE, FALL 2001

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Advisory 8:00 – 8:40	Advisory 8:00 – 8:40	Advisory 8:00 – 9:00	Advisory 8:00 – 8:40	Advisory 8:00 – 8:40
Humanities 8:40 – 10:20	Humanities 8:40 – 10:20	Humanities 9:00 – 10:30	Humanities 8:40 – 10:20	Humanities 8:40 – 10:20
Math/Science 10:20 – 12:00	Math/Science 10:20 – 12:00	Math/Science 10:30 – 12:00	Math/Science 10:20 – 12:00	Math/Science 10:20 – 12:00
Lunch 12:00 – 12:45	Lunch 12:00 – 12:45	Lunch 12:00 – 12:45	Lunch 12:00 – 12:45	Lunch 12:00 – 12:45
Minor Portfolio classes 12:45 – 2:25	Minor Portfolio classes 12:45 – 2:25		Minor Portfolio classes 12:45 – 2:25	Minor Portfolio classes 12:45 – 2:25
Internship 2:30 – 4:00	Internship 2:30 – 4:00		Internship 1:00 – 4:00	Internship 2:30 – 4:00

(darker areas represent time for collaborative planning)

School Profiles:

Sherman Oaks Community Charter School (K-4)

1800 Fruitdale Avenue, San Jose, CA 95128

(408) 795-1140

At Sherman Oaks, an innovative schedule allows teachers to meet for collaborative planning and professional development for 90 minutes a day over lunch. Instead of having students take electives such as art, music, and PE at various times during the day as is the case at most elementary schools, Sherman Oaks contracts with community-based agencies such as local museums to provide these classes all at the same time, in the middle of the school day. This provides a long period of time during the work day (not at the end, when teachers are generally tired) for teachers to work together to develop their skills and figure out how best to support individual students.

Vanguard High School

317 East 67th Street, New York, NY 10021

(212) 517-5175

Vanguard High School reallocates its resources to reduce class size and provide teachers with significant time for collaborative planning and professional development. The school's three main strategies are: (1) hiring more teachers and fewer out-of-classroom personnel (and having all staff teach in some capacity); (2) creating a schedule where the core subjects all occur at the same time during the day; and (3) hiring part-time teachers to offer elective courses while the core teaching staff is doing collaborative work. See the Vanguard High School schedule for more information.

FEATURE 9

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

“At our school, there is a true partnership between parents and teachers. It feels like we are both raising the same child.”

—A parent at San Francisco Community School

Successful schools do not operate in isolation. They build connections to families and communities as a way to strengthen relationships in support of children, and as a way to better understand students so that teaching can be tailored to them as individuals.

Creating Family-School Partnerships

Most traditional schools—and even many new small schools—see parent involvement as a secondary goal. They say they will teach the child, no matter what is happening at home. Yet differences between the norms and expectations of home and school can lead to serious disjunctures that cause students to fail in school. If parents do not understand or trust what is happening at school, they are not as likely to support and reinforce their children’s efforts to succeed there. If parents do not know what the school expects and needs from their children and from them, it is difficult for them to respond in supportive ways. Just as strong teacher-student relationships can provide students with invaluable support, so, too, are solid partnerships among teachers and families a key component of student success.

Part of the difficulty in creating strong family-school connections is that parents often do not feel welcome at school, especially in high schools. Many have vivid memories of their own negative experiences in school. Usually the only reason the school contacts them is to tell them that their child is in trouble: Teachers who call home with positive news are the exception, perhaps not surprisingly given teachers’ typical load of 150 students or more. And when parents do make an effort to reach the school, they are frequently shunted around between counselors, deans, and assistant principals, none of whom knows very much about their child.

Treating Families as Experts

If educators in small schools truly value family involvement, they can reinvent this dysfunctional relationship and reach out to create common ground with families, which leads to mutually supportive practices at home and at school. To establish this kind of partnership, teachers and administrators must recognize that parents and guardians are experts on their children's needs and treat them as such. Parents can offer observations about students' strategies, paces, and styles of learning; their different strengths and experiences; the ways they express what they know; and the kinds of teaching strategies that are effective for them. When teachers' insights are supported by parents' insights, teachers can more easily connect students' experiences to curriculum goals.

Looking at Student Work Together

In effective schools with performance assessment systems, teachers often draw parents into these conversations about their child's learning process by inviting them to participate in conferences about students' exhibitions and portfolios. These may be the centerpiece of teacher-family conferences, which are held regularly in high schools as well as elementary schools, creating a common starting place for understanding the work of the school and the student. When teachers and parents look at student work together, they begin to talk about what the child is doing and learning and how they both can support the educational process. Teachers in successful schools also invite parents to visit the classroom when they can and to contribute to the curriculum whenever possible.

To make these conversations possible, educators must understand families' cultures and, whenever possible, communicate with them in their primary languages. This means translating documents and using translators at meetings (including, often, the students themselves) so that non-English speaking parents can be full participants in the life of the school.



Finding Ways to Meet

Reaching out to families in a meaningful way is not easy: It requires time and perseverance to establish the sustained relationships with parents that will lead first to mutual understanding and then to cooperation on behalf of children. Some schools begin their outreach with visits to churches or community centers where families congregate; they also host meetings at school and welcome parents with food, translation services, and child care. Regular one-to-one meetings between teachers and parents or guardians (even in high school) help build relationships and keep lines of communication open. Effective schools hold these meetings at various times and provide translation and child care to accommodate parents' schedules and needs. If parents are unable to come to the school—and even if they are—teachers make home visits to show their commitment to working with families to support their children's education. Advisory structures and looping, as well as smaller student loads, make these contacts feasible and encourage the development of strong parent-teacher relationships.

Co-Constructing Schools

Many effective new schools have engaged families in the design and start-up process, so that the school represents an educator-family partnership from the start. In some cities, grassroots community organizing groups have been deeply involved in starting new schools (see box). When alliances among teachers and families develop across class, race, and culture in the process of creating a new school, the results can be extremely powerful.

Supporting Family Learning

Some schools run family literacy or continuing education programs (or partner with community agencies that run such programs at the school) to provide useful services to families and at the



same time welcome them into the school community. Parents who attend such activities at the school during school hours get to know teachers and other school staff and feel more comfortable talking with teachers about their children's education (Henderson, 1994).

In a broader sense, family-school connections are essential because they place education where it belongs—at the heart of the community. Unlike the traditional factory-model school representing a faceless system, the small redesigned school has the potential to be an integral part of the neighborhoods it serves—and even to help build community in those neighborhoods around the critical goal of education.

School-Community Partnerships in Action: The Oakland Story

Oakland Community Organizations (OCO)

**7200 Bancroft Avenue, #2 Eastmont Town Center, Oakland, CA 94605
(510) 639-1444**

Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES)

**1629 Telegraph Avenue, 5th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 208-0160**

The city of Oakland is engaged in an impressive city-wide effort to bring parents and teachers together to design new schools. In 1997, a group of parents working with Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), a faith-based community organization, proposed a new school to deal with overcrowded conditions at their local elementary school. Since then, OCO has organized thousands of parents to make their voices heard about education and encourage political leaders to support the creation of new small schools. OCO joined forces with the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES), a non-profit education reform group, to promote a small schools policy, which was approved by the Oakland school board in Spring 2000. Under the policy, which represents a partnership among OCO, BayCES, and the Oakland Unified School District, design teams comprised of teachers and parents can start small, autonomous public schools. BayCES provides technical and financial support to these start-up schools, and OCO ensures that parents and community members have a strong voice in the process.

School Profile:

Sherman Oaks Community Charter School (K-4)
1800 Fruitdale Avenue, San Jose, CA 95128
(408) 795-1140

When educators in San Jose were creating the Sherman Oaks Community Charter School, a new K-4 school in a primarily Spanish-speaking low-income neighborhood, the school's principal knew that educators alone could not create a school that truly met the community's needs. As a result, she established a partnership with People Acting in Community Together (PACT), a local grassroots community organizing group. With training and support from PACT, Sherman Oaks teachers conducted home visits, built relationships with families, and listened to parents' ideas and concerns so that the school design would reflect what parents wanted for their children. Now that the school has opened its doors, the groundwork laid by the PACT partnership has led to much more open lines of communication between teachers and families. The school has several hundred parent volunteers and is working actively to develop parent leadership. For more information, see the George Lucas Educational Foundation website at <http://www.glef.org>.

FEATURE 10

DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING

“If you have an authoritarian, hierarchical school structure, the teacher becomes the information dispenser in the classroom. If kids are going to collaborate in classrooms, then teachers have to collaborate in decision-making.”

—Eric Nadelstern, founder of International High School in New York (quoted in Authentic Assessment in Action, p.124)

Many schools have achieved their success by ensuring that teachers—and often parents and students as well—have a voice in governance. There is evidence that teacher participation in school decision-making can lead to improved academic achievement for students (Smylie et al, 1996).

Democratic decision-making at the school level models the collaborative work that effective teachers expect from their students (and indeed the democratic process of the larger society) and enables small schools to make significant improvements in their practice with the full endorsement and engagement of all members of the school community.

Most large schools find it difficult to manage universal participation in governance because of their size, so they typically turn to representative forms of governance, such as school-based decision-making councils. These efforts to obtain everyone’s input often leave some people out and end up alienating others. At a small school, everyone can have a voice, and everyone can hear the other voices. Teachers, parents, and students can create a common vision for where the school is going, and teachers can make decisions that lead to student success. The ownership that results from shared governance is critical if innovations are to last.

Shared Norms and Values

The process of democratic decision making is not easy, however. The first key element of a shared governance system is the development of shared norms and values that guides the work of

“A democratic school, over time, is a more satisfying and professionally rewarding place for students, faculty, and parents or guardians. It becomes a true community.”

—C. Glickman, *Renewing America’s Schools: A Guide for School-Based Action*

teachers, parents, and students in making decisions. Working through these values is worth the time it takes to develop a strong consensus about what matters to members of the school community and what the goals for student learning and joint work will be. Teachers can then use these as touchstones when hiring colleagues, developing evaluation systems, engaging in peer review, making curriculum decisions, setting standards for assessing student and teacher work, and deciding on professional development. These common values provide essential coherence to the educational program.

Decisions Close to Classrooms

Within the framework established by these shared norms and with ongoing collaboration in school-level decisions, effective schools place day-to-day decision-making authority as close as possible to the classroom, so decisions are made by those who best know the students and their needs. Just as many businesses today have clear standards and goals but allow work teams to have considerable flexibility as to how they reach those goals, well-structured schools establish academic standards and shared values, and then give teaching teams the responsibility of making decisions and hold them accountable for student performance. For example, at International High School, a team of three or four teachers might share a group of 75 or 80 students. The teachers have the authority to create their own curricula and even daily schedules, and they have access to a budget to support their work; in exchange, they are collectively responsible for the academic success of their students, as measured through the school’s performance assessment system. This localized decision-making structure allows teachers to respond quickly and flexibly to changes in students’ needs.

Faculty Governance

Where school-wide decisions are concerned, many successful schools create committees that interview and hire staff, plan and implement professional development, and manage other functions that cut across teaching teams. These smaller groups of staff work on specific issues, bringing them back to the whole staff when policy decisions must be made. This whole-school decision-making gives all staff members the chance to participate in the final decisions and maintains the coherence and unity of purpose in the work of the school. At some schools, committees and work groups have changing memberships to reduce territoriality and create opportunities

for people to develop shared perspectives and learn from one another. In addition, all participants in the governance process receive leadership training, so that decision-making is collaborative and skillfully executed.

Student and Parent Involvement

Finally, at good schools, student and parent involvement in governance is common. Parents and students are sometimes involved in the kinds of committees described above. In addition, student advisory groups regularly discuss school-wide issues of concern and make recommendations; at the secondary school level, their purview is not just dances and assemblies, but also substantive teaching and learning decisions. Students also lead regular town-hall meetings and participate on school-wide committees. Through these activities, students develop new skills and learn to be responsible members of a democratic community. Parents too are invited to participate in the governance process, and while many working parents may not have time for committee meetings that are not directly related to their child's education, it is essential for schools to cultivate parent leaders who can accurately represent diverse parent voices in the decision-making process. Parents are continually involved in discussing the work of their own students and are often invited to the staff development and other school development activities that guide the life of the school.



School Profiles:

International High School

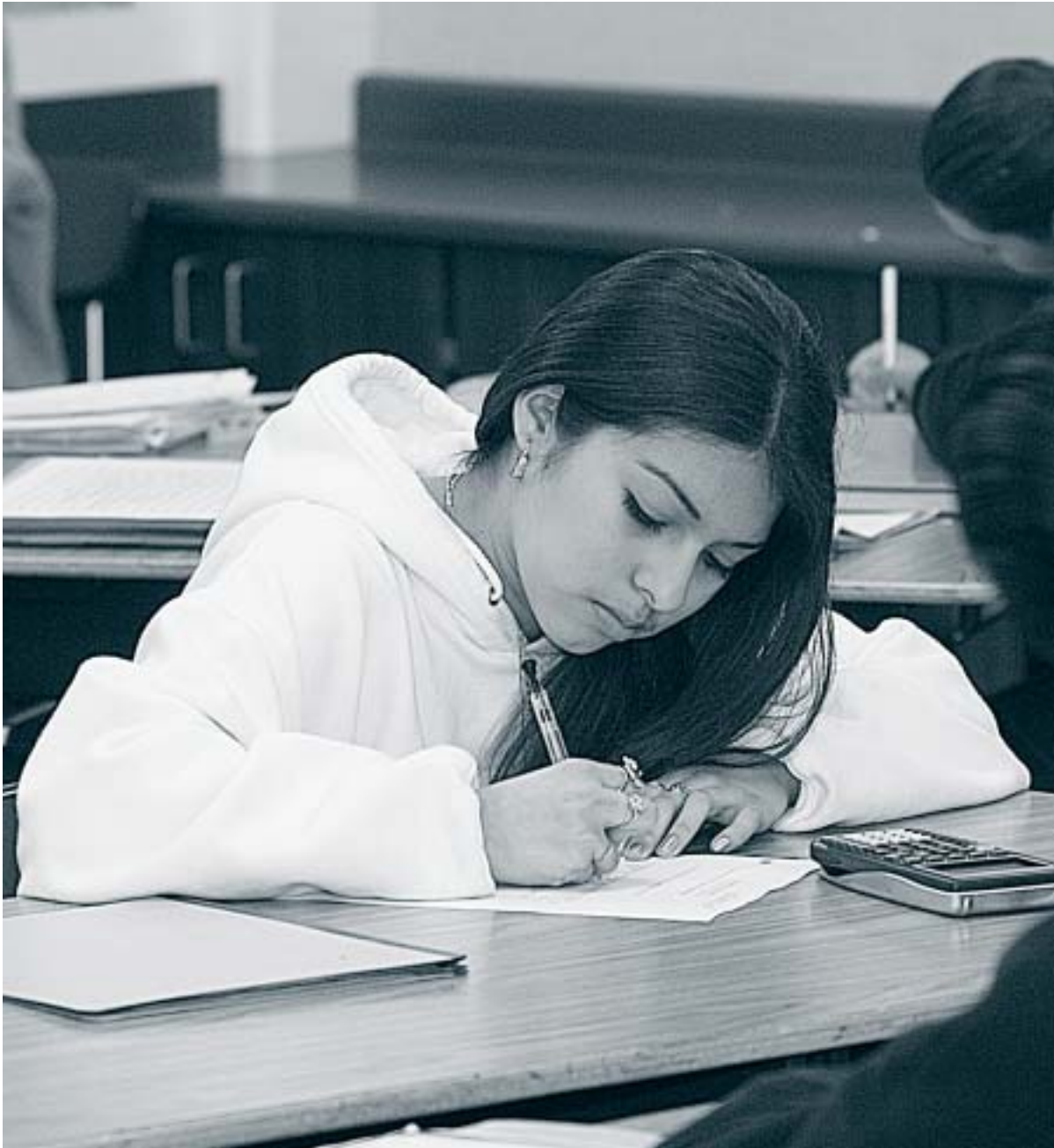
31-10 Thomson Ave, Long Island City, NY 11101

(718) 482-5455

International High School is divided into teams of four teachers who share responsibility for a group of 75 students over a period of two years. Each teaching team receives two classrooms, half-day access to a science lab, a part-time counselor, and a budget for materials and professional development. Based on their knowledge of the content, the learning process, and their students—and on shared school-wide values about learning—the teachers decide how best to use these resources; they design a schedule and a curriculum that will produce success for their students over the two years. Along the way, they are accountable, both to their own team and to the wider school community, for student attendance and student performance indicators. Principal Eric Nadelstern says, “The accountability that comes from this structure is at the heart of International High School’s success.” Each teacher at International is also a member of at least one school governance committee (such as the faculty personnel committee, which recruits and selects new teachers) and participates in the faculty forum, where the entire staff makes all major policy decisions by consensus.

San Francisco Community School (K-8)
125 Excelsior Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94112
(415) 469-4739

San Francisco Community School is a teacher-run school. All significant policy decisions are made by the entire faculty and staff of just over 20 people, which has a 75-minute governance and business meeting every other week. (On the alternate weeks, teachers meet for 75 minutes of professional development. Each developmental-level team also meets for 90-120 minutes per week.) The school has a head teacher who serves as the school's instructional leader and organizational director. Three committees—the lead team, the professional development team, and the assessment team—assist the head teacher in making and implementing decisions. Each of these committees includes a representative from each of the school's developmental-level teaching teams. Parents and community members also have an important voice in policy decisions through the Parents Action Committee, which meets monthly. To ensure that leadership skills and the school's vision are shared among all staff members, the faculty chooses a new head teacher every three years. “This may seem like a short term for a school leader,” says current head teacher Tanya Friedman, “but it creates tremendous teacher ownership and buy-in.” Friedman feels she will have been successful as head teacher “if the good practices I care about continue when I return to the classroom. Success happens when *everyone* owns the vision and has the leadership skills to sustain it.”



ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

Just as small size alone does not produce success, even a redesigned school like the ones described in this publication will not be effective without certain essential external conditions.

Adequate Resources

The first, and perhaps most important, is adequate resources. Inequalities in access to resources and opportunities still plague U.S. schools. There are schools across the nation where teachers are untrained, where key curriculum offerings are lacking, where students must use decades-old textbooks or none at all, where teachers do not have enough paper to make photocopies, where vermin and roaches are commonplace, where libraries are closed, where there are no computers in the classrooms, where art and music classes have been cut from the budget, where the bathrooms are locked during the school day because they don't work or lack supplies, and where paint is peeling off the walls and tiles are falling from the ceilings. In California, where a group of parents and students recently filed a lawsuit against the state based on the degeneration of their schools, there has been steady decline in funding and a growing gap between the haves and the have-nots for the past two decades. Similar lawsuits have been filed in New York, New Jersey, South Carolina, Louisiana, and other states.

The problems these lawsuits seek to address will not be solved by small schools, no matter how well-designed. When funding levels are extremely low, important structural features such as small classes and reduced pupil loads are not feasible even once budgets are reallocated. States—and it is primarily state governments that are responsible for education funding—must decide to fund all of their schools at a level that allows for decent facilities and makes a high-quality public education a realistic possibility. Some states—like Connecticut, Kentucky, and North Carolina—

have undertaken reforms that support greater funding equality, improvement of teacher knowledge and skills, more equal access to highly qualified teachers, and reforms of curriculum, assessment, and school design. These states have improved educational outcomes for all of their students and have begun to reduce the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Redesigned School Districts

Second, if small redesigned schools are to flourish, school districts need to redesign themselves. Many districts have evolved in ways that now make them bureaucratic and inefficient, with top-down management systems that discourage innovation and burden teachers and administrators with rigid rules of operation and unnecessary paperwork. If redesigned schools are to succeed, they cannot spend all of their time struggling against district red tape. Just as many U.S. businesses have moved away from top-down, hierarchical governance, so too school districts need to set broad achievement goals based on performance assessment measures and then give schools considerable flexibility to decide how to reach those goals. This means, within certain parameters, giving schools autonomy over key aspects of their programs—including budget, staffing, curriculum and assessment, leadership and governance, school policies, and school calendar and schedule—and then holding schools accountable for results.

While this kind of “autonomy in exchange for accountability” arrangement is often associated with charter schools, small redesigned schools do not necessarily have to be charters. There are



many districts, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and Oakland, that have allowed for the creation of innovative small schools within the district, sometimes by issuing a request for proposals asking for design teams of teachers, parents, and others to start new schools. This within-district approach is more systemic and ensures that new schools have a facility and operational support—two key factors that often create difficulties for new charter schools. In some cases, however, a charter school may be the only possible approach to creating an effective small school, and as such charters can represent a valuable reform opportunity.

Planning Time

Whether a new school is a charter school or an in-district school, another essential condition that is necessary for success is sufficient planning time. A new school cannot be thrown together on the fly, even by experienced educators, and in most cases, at least a year of planning is necessary in order to ensure a smooth opening. One reason this time is important is so that the school can do outreach work to ensure that it represents a broad community base, not just a small group of educators who have a good idea.

While most of the small redesigned schools profiled here have started as new institutions (in most cases starting with one or two grades and growing year by year), there are also many large schools that will want to convert to smaller learning communities. In many respects, this kind of conversion is even more difficult than the challenging enterprise of starting a new school. Existing institutions have strong traditions, and, unless a school is unusually dysfunctional, many staff members are understandably uncomfortable with radical change. This kind of change often proceeds slowly and requires the participation of all stakeholders, and at first it may involve only certain structural elements that seem more feasible—say, looping or advisories. If a large school decides it is ready for wholesale conversion to smaller schools, the process may sometimes need to be phased in, starting a new group of entering students in smaller, redesigned schools or learning communities within the larger school. At the same time, a shared commitment to real transformation is essential for change to be fully implemented. Without a clear goal and time frame in mind, the change process can wander and lose momentum.

Conclusion

A sense of urgency is needed to fuel the difficult but necessary work of creating schools that can provide both love and learning—schools that can convey to children the sense of individual worth that Pablo Casals described when he said:

We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the world there is no other child exactly like you. In the millions of years that have passed, there has never been a child like you... and when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel? You must cherish one another. You must work—we must all work—to make this world worthy of its children.

BUDGET AND STAFFING MODELS

Many educators know that schools with the design features described in this publication are likely to result in greater student success, yet they ask, quite reasonably, “Can we really do this within existing budgets?” The sample budgets and schedules below are intended to show that the effective school structures described above are indeed possible to implement with existing resources, though it should be noted again that there are trade-offs involved.

This section includes budgets and schedules for two high schools—a large, traditional school with 1,600 students and a small, redesigned school with 400 students. The contrasts between the two illustrate how the small school has reallocated resources to provide smaller classes and lower pupil loads for teachers, as well as significant time for teacher collaborative planning and professional development. Note how the teacher and student schedules for each sample school correspond to the school’s budget.

The staffing model for the large, traditional school is based on an analysis of three actual high schools in California, each of which employs about 50 percent of its staff in classroom teaching positions. By contrast, the sample small, redesigned school allocates 80 percent of its staff to classroom teaching. As a consequence of these differences in staffing, combined with changes in scheduling, the small school offers a class size of 20 (rather than 30), a student-teacher load of 40 (rather than 150), and more than 6 hours of teacher collaboration time each week (rather than one).

This comparison is intended to stimulate thought and discussion about what is possible in different contexts. Many effective schools, including some of those mentioned in this publication, do not employ 80 percent of their staff as full-time classroom teachers; between 65 and 75 percent is more common. Yet the sample budget provided here is a realistic example of how it is possible to allocate even more resources to the classroom within existing spending levels.

Other useful examples of staffing and schedules in redesigned schools (including elementary schools) can be found in the following resources:

LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND, *The Right to Learn* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), Chapter 6, “Staffing Schools for Teaching and Learning” (pp. 177-209)

KAREN HAWLEY MILES AND LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND, “Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons From High-Performing Schools,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 9-29. This article is also available on the internet at <http://www.cpre.org/Publications/rr38.pdf>, courtesy of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education at the University of Pennsylvania.

Budget and Staffing Models

REVENUE	<i>large traditional school</i>		<i>small redesigned school</i>		NOTES
	#	\$	#	\$	
Students	1,600		400		
Per Student Revenue		5,800		5,800	California average (see note A below)
Total Revenue		9,280,000		2,320,000	

COSTS	#	\$	#	\$	
Principal	1	85,000	0	0	salary of \$85,000 (see note B below)
Assistant Principals	3	225,000	0	0	salary of \$75,000 (see note C below)
Head teachers/Co-directors	0	0	2	120,000	salary of \$60,000 (see note D below)
Deans	3	180,000	0	0	salary of \$60,000
Counselors	6	330,000	1	55,000	salary of \$55,000 (see note E below)
Librarians	2	100,000	0	0	salary of \$50,000
Department Heads (FTEs)	1	60,000	0	0	salary of \$60,000
Classroom Teachers	64	3,072,000	25	1,200,000	salary of \$48,000 (see note F below)
Resource Teachers	11	528,000	1	48,000	salary of \$48,000 (see note G below)
Paraprofessionals/Aides	32	960,000	1	30,000	salary of \$30,000
Administrative Asst./Clerks	10	300,000	1	30,000	salary of \$30,000
Security Guards	3	90,000	0	0	salary of \$30,000
Benefits		1,482,500		370,750	25% of all salaries
Books and supplies		520,000		130,000	\$325 per student (see note H below)
Services & other expenses		1,320,000		330,000	\$825 per student (see note I below)
Total Costs		9,252,500		2,313,750	

STAFFING	#	%	#	%	
Class size	30		20		see schedules
Teacher student load	150		40		see schedules
Collab. planning hours/week	1		6+		see schedules
Teachers	75	55.1	26	83.9	includes classroom and resource teachers
Other staff	61	44.9	5	16.1	includes all non-teaching staff
Total staff	136	100.0	31	100.0	

Notes

- In 1999-2000, the average expenditure per student for California school districts was \$5,783, according to the state Department of Education. Most states spend more per student.
- The principal salary of \$85,000 is a conservative estimate based on average salaries reported by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP). According to the NAASP, the average high school principal salary in the "Far West" region was \$91,966 in 2000-01.
- The assistant principal salary of \$75,000 is a conservative estimate based on average salaries reported by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP). According to the NAASP, the average high school assistant principal salary in the "Far West" region was \$79,191 in 2000-01.
- In the small redesigned school, the head teachers/co-directors share leadership and administrative responsibilities. They also each teach one class or have an advisory group.
- In the small redesigned school, most academic counseling responsibilities are taken on by advisory teachers. The one counselor is a college counselor.
- The teacher salary of \$48,000 is based on the average California teacher salary, which was \$47,680 in 1999-2000, according to the National Education Association.

continued

Budget and Staffing Model Notes *continued*

- G. Instead of using a pull-out model to serve special needs students, the small redesigned school includes these students in regular classes, and all classroom teachers are trained to provide special needs support, with the assistance of one resource teacher.
- H. The California average per student spending on books and supplies was \$324 in 1999-2000, according to the California Department of Education.
- I. The \$825 per student cost for services & other expenses is based on an urban California district that spends much more than the state average of \$540.

SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULE FOR A SMALL, REDESIGNED SCHOOL

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 – 9:30 Humanities	8:00 – 9:30 Humanities	8:00 – 9:30 Humanities	8:00 – 9:30 Humanities	8:00 – 9:30 Humanities
9:30 – 11:00 Math/Science	9:30 – 11:00 Math/Science	9:30 – 11:00 Math/Science	9:30 – 11:00 Math/Science	9:30 – 11:00 Math/Science
11:00 – 12:15 Elective: fitness, art, music, Spanish	11:00 – 12:00 lunch (and individual help from teachers)	11:00 – 12:15 Elective: fitness, art, music, Spanish	11:00 – 12:00 lunch (and individual help from teachers)	11:00 – 12:15 Elective: fitness, art, music, Spanish
12:15 – 1:15 lunch	12:00 – 1:00 Advisory	12:15 – 1:15 lunch	12:00 – 1:30 Advisory	12:15 – 1:15 lunch
1:15 – 2:30 Elective: fitness, art, music, Spanish	1:00 – 3:30 Service Learning Projects	1:15 – 2:30 Elective: fitness, art, music, Spanish	1:30 – 2:30 Community Meeting	1:15 – 2:30 Elective: fitness, art, music, Spanish
			2:30 – 3:30 Tutoring	

SAMPLE TEACHER SCHEDULE FOR A SMALL, REDESIGNED SCHOOL

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 – 9:30 Class	8:00 – 9:30 Class	8:00 – 9:30 Class	8:00 – 9:30 Class	8:00 – 9:30 Class
9:30 – 11:00 Class	9:30 – 11:00 Class	9:30 – 11:00 Class	9:30 – 11:00 Class	9:30 – 11:00 Class
11:00 – 12:15 individual planning	11:00 – 12:00 lunch (and individual help for students)	11:00 – 12:15 individual planning	11:00 – 12:00 lunch (and individual help for students)	11:00 – 12:15 individual planning
12:15 – 2:30 lunch and team planning	12:00 – 1:00 Advisory	12:15 – 2:30 lunch and disciplinary planning	12:00 – 1:30 Advisory	12:15 – 2:30 lunch and team planning
	1:00 – 3:30 Faculty meeting (governance and professional development)		1:30 – 2:30 Community Meeting	
			2:30 – 3:30 Tutoring	

Teachers and students in the small, redesigned school are organized into 10 teams of 40 students and 2 teachers each for the core subjects. Two teachers—one math/science and one humanities—share 40 students in 2 classes of 20 each. Thus, class size is 20 students. In addition to the two core classes, students take two electives which meet three times per week. There are 5 elective teaching positions, which could be filled by full-time or part-time teachers.

Each core teacher teaches 2 sections of core classes in 90 minute blocks five times a week, spending 15 hours per week teaching core courses. S/he has nearly 4 hours per week for individual planning, as well as over 6 hours per week for collaborative planning and professional development, including more than 4 hours of team planning time (which allows for in-depth conversation about how to support individual students) and 2 hours for planning with colleagues in the same discipline. A 2 hour weekly faculty meeting allows time for both shared decision-making and whole-staff professional development. Additional time is made available for individual help for students (two lunch periods a week); advisory meetings with students (2 hours per week); and tutoring (1 hour per week).

Note that teachers in the small, redesigned school take on additional responsibilities for student support in their time outside the classroom. For example, the school only has one counselor, who focuses on college counseling, so most academic counseling is done by the core teachers through the advisory program. In addition, special education services are provided by the core teachers in their classes, rather than through a pull-out model with resource teachers.

SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULE FOR LARGE, TRADITIONAL SCHOOL

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 - 8:55	math	math	math	math	math
9:00 - 9:55	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.
10:00 - 10:55	social studies	social studies	social studies	social studies	social studies
11:00 - 11:55	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
12:00 - 12:40	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch
12:45 - 1:40	English	English	English	English	English
1:45 - 2:40	science	science	science	science	science

SAMPLE TEACHER SCHEDULE FOR LARGE, TRADITIONAL SCHOOL

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 - 8:55	class	class	class	class	class
9:00 - 9:55	planning	planning	planning	planning	planning
10:00 - 10:55	class	class	class	class	class
11:00 - 11:55	class	class	class	class	class
12:00 - 12:40	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch
12:45 - 1:40	class	class	class	class	class
1:45 - 2:40	class	class	class	class	class
2:45 - 3:30			faculty meeting		

Teachers in the large, traditional school teach five out of the seven periods daily. During each of the six non-lunch periods, $\frac{5}{6}$ of the teachers are teaching. Thus, class size equals the number of students divided by $\frac{5}{6}$ of the teachers, or $1600 / (64 \times \frac{5}{6}) = 30$. Students take six different classes from six different teachers. Each teacher sees 150 students daily.

Each teacher spends about 23 hours per week teaching class and has about 4.5 hours of individual planning time per week, as well as one required faculty meeting per week, which may include some collaborative planning or professional development time.

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