

Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers

FINAL REPORT



New York City Department of Education External School Curriculum Audit | August 2011

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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being designated as in corrective action under the New York State Education Department differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. The utilized ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

About Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers

Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers (M550) is a bilingual/English as a second language (ESL) school that meets the special needs of newly arrived non-English-speaking immigrant students. The students represent approximately 50 countries and speak nearly 30 different languages. The school celebrates diversity through various celebrations and activities. Many of the teachers and support staff members are from countries around the world. The library has books that are academically, culturally, and linguistically representative of the school's students. Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers has an English as a second language program that enables students to have a smooth transition into regular English classes as well as content area classes in mathematics, social studies, and science. All courses are designed specifically for English language learners (ELLs). The ESL and bilingual classes support students in meeting their goals for high school graduation. Liberty High School offers a free-standing ESL literacy program, bilingual Spanish literacy program, pre-GED program, and an intensive ESL program. Language courses offered include native language arts in Chinese, Spanish, and Polish.

Located in Manhattan, Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers had a 2009–10 enrollment of 420 students in Grades 9–12. The school is comprised of 16 percent African-American, 39 percent Hispanic, 15 percent Caucasian, and 29 percent Asian students. The average attendance rate for the 2009–10 school year was 90 percent. Ninety-one percent of the students are eligible for free lunch, and 5 percent are eligible for reduced-price lunch. Eighty-five percent of students are limited English proficient.

The 2008–2009 New York State Accountability Report indicates that the school's Hispanic/Latino, limited English proficient, and economically disadvantaged student subgroups did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English Language Arts (ELA), and the Hispanic/Latino student subgroup did not make AYP in mathematics. The 2009–2010 New York State Accountability Report indicates that the limited English proficient student subgroup did not make AYP in ELA, and the limited English proficient and economically disadvantaged student subgroups did not make AYP in mathematics. The school's prior School in Need of Improvement (SINI) status and subsequent failure to meet AYP benchmarks for two

consecutive years across student subgroups resulted in the identification of the school as in Corrective Action (Year One) Comprehensive for ELA and mathematics. The report also indicates that the school is currently in good standing for graduation rate.

Audit Process at Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers

The ESCA approach utilized at the high school level examines six topic areas: student engagement, academic interventions and supports, support for incoming students, classroom instruction, professional development, and courses and extracurriculars. Data were collected at the school level through teacher surveys, administrator interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of documents submitted by Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers, during March, 2011. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of data reports for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school during a co-interpretationSM meeting, held on June 8, 2011. During this meeting, all stakeholders from the Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers community read the reports. Through a facilitated and collaborative group process, they identified individual findings, then developed and prioritized key findings that emerged from information in the reports.

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates developed in response. Please note that there is not necessarily a one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations; rather, the key findings are considered as a group, and the recommended strategies are those that we believe are most likely to have the greatest positive impact on student performance at Liberty High School.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, co-interpretation participants determined a set of key findings. These key findings are detailed in this section.

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

A significant number of staff members (one third) believe that discipline is a concern; they do not believe the school has an adequate discipline plan. Further, according to the teacher survey, professional development on managing student behavior was inadequate.

Supported by data from the teacher survey report, co-interpretation participants at Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers identified this key finding to be the most important area in need of improvement. Although nearly one third of surveyed teachers reported reviewing student behavior data at least twice weekly, the same number of teachers reported that the school does not have a schoolwide behavior plan in place. Furthermore, 75 percent of the teachers reported not receiving effective professional development on managing student behavior. This finding, while supported by only one data source, rose to be the highest prioritized issue for the co-interpretation participants (the entire faculty).

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:

A challenge at Liberty High School is to connect curriculum across content areas vertically and horizontally.

Supported by evidence from the supports and structures report, this key finding states that Liberty High School offers core courses based on New York State Education Department (NYSED) and NYCDOE standards and adapted to meet the needs of the ESL population. However, it is challenging to connect the curriculum both vertically and horizontally, which would support ESL and content teachers working together.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

The survey indicates that professional development related to teacher collaboration was not helpful or that teachers did not have enough time during professional development to collaborate. Teachers' findings regarding collaboration in the school appear to be inconsistent.

Supported by data from the teacher survey report, this key finding shows that teachers at Liberty High School feel that collaboration is very limited and sporadic. Teachers reported this in regard to collaboration across subjects and grade levels and to opportunities to work productively with their colleagues through professional development sessions. Most teachers also felt that such collaboration does not include enough time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 4:

The math and English language arts curricula are incomplete.

Supported by evidence from documents reviewed, this key finding states that both English language arts (ELA) and math curricula at Liberty High School are incomplete, are not benchmarked, and do not describe instructional strategies. Furthermore, review of the ELA curriculum shows that it articulates what is to be taught in a limited way and that not all courses include scheduling and pacing materials on instructional content.

Positive Key Finding

Co-interpretation participants identified the following finding as an area of strength in the school and wish to improve further in this area. To further that improvement, a recommendation was made around the following finding.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 1:

Data show a strong support and success rate in guiding students through the college application process, with 51.5 percent admitted to four-year colleges and 48.9 percent admitted to two-year colleges.

Evidence from the supports and structures report as well as the teacher survey report show that, in order to best support their transition to college, numerous supports are offered to students at Liberty High School. These supports include college visits and college advisory. This encourages many of the graduating students to apply for college. When surveyed, teachers were asked if they felt that their ELL students, who comprise 85 percent of the entire student population, were prepared for college. Seventy-seven percent agreed.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

During the Liberty High School co-interpretation, school staff and faculty identified several critical key findings that pointed to issues for improvement at the school and one positive key finding that captures the school's successes that can be expanded upon. Prioritizing these key findings made several themes evident. Co-interpretation participants identified behavioral issues (a lack of common positive behavior expectations, as well as issues regarding attendance and tardiness) and curriculum and instruction issues as priority areas for improvement. The staff also wished to have information on collaboration and college preparation issues (positive findings that Liberty High School wishes to expand upon).

THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

With these issues in mind, Learning Point Associates developed the following four recommendations:

1. Develop and implement a schoolwide positive behavior policy and system.
2. Create complete articulated curriculum maps (guiding documents) that are aligned vertically and horizontally and include standards, benchmarks, and activities that address and prepare students for rigor beyond high school.
3. Develop and implement a professional development plan that is aligned to school goals and focused on subject-area content.
4. Enhance students' preparation for college.

For each recommendation, additional information is provided in the narrative on specific actions that the school may consider during its action-planning process, as well as real-life implementation examples and research resources for further reading.

Please note that the order in which these recommendations are presented does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Positive Behavior Management System

Develop and implement a schoolwide positive behavior policy and system with clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. The policy and related system should include concise social expectations and a continuum of supports, interventions, incentives/rewards, and consequences—including a clear delineation of activities and programs that students are entitled to versus those that are privileges.

LINK TO RESEARCH

One of the greatest obstacles within urban schools is the large number of students whose behavior interferes with their achievement or the achievement of others. Often these students behave in a manner that disrupts the educational climate of the classroom and the school. Yet, research studies consistently show that schools that establish a positive social culture also achieve the best academic gains. Thus, one key element for changing this pattern is the consistent implementation of an existing schoolwide behavior program that has been developed with the input and support of parents and the school community. The emphasis is on consistency—both throughout the building and across classrooms. The entire school staff is expected to adopt strategies that will be implemented uniformly. As a result, approaches require professional development and long-term commitment by the school leadership for this innovation to take hold.

Effective schoolwide behavior programs have clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. Students need a secure, orderly environment that promotes their personal well-being and supports learning. Rules also should be fair and stress students' responsibility to the school community, their parents, and themselves. All students in the school need to be aware of the rules, the reasons for the rules, and the consequences for breaking the rules. Effective discipline programs are based on praise and encouragement for positive behavior and clear, consistent consequences for misbehavior (Chicago Public Schools, 1998).

Effective schools build and maintain a positive social culture. Successful students are safe (don't hurt themselves or others), respectful (follow adult requests and get along with their peers), and responsible (arrive to class on time and complete assignments). These foundational skills are essential for a safe and orderly school environment. In addition, members of a positive social culture use higher order skills, such as (1) impulse control, (2) anger management, (3) conflict resolution, (4) empathy, and (5) drug and alcohol use resistance and prevention (California Services for Technical Assistance and Training, 2011).

Positive behavior interventions, used correctly by teachers, administrators, and parents, encourage or strengthen desirable behavior and reduce inappropriate behavior. Positive interventions have a greater likelihood of enabling students to change their behavior in a way that does not interrupt learning. Effective interventions encourage praise and recognition of positive behavior and demand clear and consistent responses to misbehavior. Children and youth tend to respond to positive techniques. In some cases, however, more restrictive interventions may be necessary to control and change extremely inappropriate and aggressive behavior (Chicago Public Schools, 1998).

QUICK LINKS:

Online Sources for More Information

School-Wide PBIS Implementation in High Schools: Current Practice and Future Directions (Publication)

http://www.pbis.org/school/high_school_pbis.aspx

Tiered Interventions in High Schools: Using Primary Lessons Learned to Guide Ongoing Discussion (Publication)

http://www.pbis.org/school/high_school_pbis.aspx

Alcott Middle School Behavior Expectations and Related Teaching Materials (Video)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/alcott_mid.aspx

"Discovering School-Wide PBIS: Moving Towards a Positive Future" from Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project (Video)

http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/pbs_video-discovering_swpbs.aspx

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports is based on the research-based application of lessons learned from more than 7,000 schools currently implementing successful changes in their school environment. School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports evolved from valid research in the field of special education. School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports is not a curriculum, intervention, or practice but a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidenced-based behavioral practices for improving important academic outcomes for all students (Office of Special Education Programs, Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2011).

Researchers have only recently begun to study the effects of schoolwide behavioral management systems and what it takes to implement these systems effectively. While it is too early to offer recipes for success, the work of key researchers and their school-based colleagues are providing some encouraging developments. There are different variations of schoolwide systems of behavioral support, but most have certain features in common. The school-based models featured in the Quick Links on the previous page have been selected to show how different features of a schoolwide behavioral management system can apply across urban, suburban, and rural locations. Apart from sharing these common features, the featured schools recognize that change is incremental and have approached implementation of their schoolwide systems slowly and over an extended time period.

Common Features of Schoolwide Behavioral Management Systems

- Total staff commitment to managing behavior, whatever approach is taken
- Clearly defined and communicated expectations and rules
- Consequences and clearly stated procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors
- An instructional component for teaching students self-control and/or social skill strategies

(Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 1997)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has established the following schoolwide positive behavioral supports guiding principles:

1. Develop a continuum of scientifically based behavior and academic interventions and supports.

- If not already established, a well-articulated schoolwide behavior policy/student code inclusive of positive expectations and minor and major infractions must first be in place. Clarity about expectations for staff's handling of in-class behaviors is important. Authentic faculty feedback and participation are important throughout the policy and system development processes.

2. Use data to make decisions and solve problems.

- Data on both minor and major behavior incidents should be collected, tracked, analyzed, and utilized in decision making by the team and faculty on at least a monthly basis. Data should be presented in a user-friendly format.

3. Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior.

- This is inclusive of three to five positively stated overarching schoolwide social expectations that are posted in visible locations around the school, particularly in problematic areas.

4. Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors.

- Students should be introduced to and taught the schoolwide expectations, rules for specific settings, rewards and consequence system, and related interventions and supports. Staff should be trained on how to present expectations to students. Ongoing communication and collaboration with families and the community are very important.

5. Implement evidenced-based behavioral practices with fidelity and accountability.

- Interventions should be multitiered, include evidence-based programs or strategies, and increase in levels of intensity. The Primary-Level plan, targeting all students, is the overall behavior management plan for the school. The Secondary-Level plan is for a targeted student group or individual students who did not respond to the first level. The Tertiary-Level plan is highly individualized for the few students who did not respond to the first two levels.

6. Screen universally and monitor student performance and progress continuously.

- The behavior management plan should include scheduled data collection and analysis to evaluate schoolwide positive behavioral supports outcomes and plan future adjustments.

DETERMINING SCHOOL CAPACITY

Other important implementation considerations focus on school capacity—gauging, reviewing, and developing the school's individual and collective capacities to implement a comprehensive program. Capacity may be assessed by posing the following initial questions:

- What are the schoolwide social expectations and routines?
- Who at the schoolwide level has the ability to both firmly hold students accountable and support them as they attempt to adjust to the program?
- What are the procedural expectations of teachers for managing in-class behaviors?
- What manageable recourse do teachers have to address a pattern of disruptive behavior and/or extremely disruptive and disrespectful instances of behavior in the moment (i.e., immediate referrals to a dean/counselor/administration, in-school time-out room, etc.) and criteria for reentry?
- What is a specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of interventions and supports?

- What is a specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of consequences for patterns of disruptive in-class behavior?
- How will the selected interventions and supports be monitored and adjusted intermittently as needed? What data will be used? Who is responsible for collecting and analyzing the data?
- What are the mechanisms for notifying and collaborating with students' parents or guardians in the process? How early and how often? Who is responsible for notifying and collaborating with parents?
- What are the thresholds for more severe consequences and losses of privilege for students who exhibit persistent patterns of disruptive behavior and/or extremely disruptive or disrespectful behaviors?
- What outside resources are available to support students and families struggling with issues that are affecting students' behavior but are well outside of the school's capacity to address?
- What privileges and incentives (i.e., extracurriculars, athletics, field trips, social activities) are currently in place that can serve as points of leverage? Do more need to be identified or developed?
- How are students who actively exhibit established desirable social behaviors formally recognized?

The aforementioned questions can fuel the school's needs-sensing and aid in identifying gaps in awareness and understanding that might be addressed through professional development.

Positive Behavior Support in the Classroom

- Arrange classroom to minimize crowding and distraction.
- Establish explicit classroom routines and directions that are linked to schoolwide routines and directions.
- Post three to five positively stated expectations, and teach and reinforce them.
- Provide frequent acknowledgement of appropriate behaviors.
- Give students multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction.
- Actively supervise the class during instruction.
- Ignore or provide quick, direct, explicit reprimands or redirections in response to inappropriate behavior.
- Implement multiple strategies (e.g., points, praise) to acknowledge appropriate behavior linked to schoolwide strategies.
- Give specific feedback in response to social and academic errors and correct responses.

(Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, & Sugai, 2006)

A Case Study on the Schoolwide Application of Positive Behavior Support in an Urban High School

A rare three-year participatory case study of schoolwide positive behavioral supports implementation in an urban high school yielded the following findings:

- **The school required three years to implement the plan.** The school required three academic years to approach full implementation across five domains of the plan: defining expectations, acknowledging expectations, setting up a system for responding to behavior, making data-based decisions, and managing the plan. Two other domains—teaching behavioral expectations and gaining district support—were more difficult to achieve.
- **Behavioral outcomes were positive.** After three years, the school saw significant reductions in the total number of referrals per student per year, incidents of serious disobedience of authority, the number of daily referrals, and school uniform violations. As a result, less administrative time was spent on discipline, and instructional time in the classroom increased. In addition, the action researchers identified several challenges to implementation that they considered unique to high schools:
 - It was important for this adolescent population that rewards/acknowledgments be meaningful and cool but not babyish.
 - There was a need to overcome staff resistance to teaching behaviors directly rather than reinforcing them. This points to the need for a system in which teaching these behaviors occurs on a regular basis and is integrated into the curriculum. Understanding the training, priorities, and needs of high school teachers also is critical.
 - Owing to the complexity and sheer size of many high schools, initial implementation may take longer and require more energy and effort during the initial data-gathering efforts and development of partnerships than at other levels. Moreover, a perfect stepwise assumption should not be made regarding the succession of interventions.
 - Because of the sheer numbers of staff and students within a large high school, developing and agreeing on a consistent policy for a range of issues requires sustained effort.
 - Another challenge was the modification of the discipline referral form to assess and track behaviors in a meaningful way. Modifications included making it easier for teachers to provide data about the location and time of referrals and asking teachers to hypothesize about the students' possible motivation for their behavior (e.g., gaining attention).

(Bohanon et al., 2006)

Recommendation 2: Vertical and Horizontal Curriculum Alignment and Consistency of Guiding Documents

Create complete articulated curriculum maps (guiding documents) that are aligned vertically and horizontally and include standards, benchmarks, and activities that address and prepare students for rigor beyond high school.

LINK TO RESEARCH

A curriculum is a school's written specification for what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of instruction and for how content is distributed and sequenced over time. Curriculum has three components: the written, the taught, and the tested (English, 2000). "The curriculum guide should indicate what should be taught (and also what will or should be learned), how what is to be taught or learned will be assessed, and by which instrument and when, and curricular objectives should be keyed to the textbooks teachers may use to implement the designated curricular objectives (by page number)..." (English, 2000, p. 49). English goes on to write that other resources, such as videos, worksheets, and so forth should be included so that "in this way, teachers know very quickly not only where various curricular objectives can be located in all of the textbooks but also what other resources contain the curricular objectives that must be taught and learned." Finally, "there must be some sort of time designation within the curriculum guide as to how much stress (in some convenient unit of time) is required to teach the designated objectives (or topics, subjects, themes, facts, processes, or the like)" (English, 2000, p. 50). Hale (2008) notes that, "since curriculum maps are oftentimes accessed, read and discussed without the map writer or writers present, consistency in wording, format and intra-alignment contribute significantly to the quality and clarity regarding accurate map data interpretation throughout a learning organization" (Hale, 2008, p. 39).

As identified in Marzano's (2003) meta-analysis, a guaranteed and viable curriculum is the most important school-level factor impacting student achievement. Marzano defines guaranteed and viable as a combination of opportunity to learn and time (p. 22). Of the school-level factors, opportunity to learn has the strongest apparent link to student success. Opportunity to learn is related to the extent to which a school (1) articulates its curriculum clearly, (2) monitors the extent to which teachers cover the curriculum, and (3) aligns its curriculum with assessments used to measure student achievement. Time is a crucial element because it determines viability. "The content that teachers are expected to address must be adequately covered in the instructional time teachers have available" (Marzano, 2003, p. 24). Whitehurst (2009) found that the effects of curriculum on student achievement are larger, more certain, and less expensive than the effects of popular reforms such as common standards, charter schools, and reconstituting the teacher workforce. He recommends that curriculum have a prominent place in the education reform agenda.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Vertical Alignment: Ensuring Opportunity to Learn in a Standards-Based System (Publication)

<http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/centerissuebriefaug09.pdf>

This brief explores some of the issues that districts may face when implementing vertical alignment of the written curriculum across grade levels.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Much has been written about the need for curricular alignment with standards, or *external alignment*. Just as important is *internal alignment*, alignment within subject areas and across grade levels so that learning experiences are cumulative and coordinated and support subsequent student learning. The following definitions are helpful:

Horizontal alignment. The extent to which the standards, content/materials, instructional strategies, and assessments are delineated and coordinated within a single grade level or course.

Vertical alignment. The extent to which the standards, content/materials, instructional strategies, and assessments used in one grade level or course are designed to support student learning and success in subsequent grade levels and courses.

Curriculum mapping is a strategy that has proven useful for helping teachers engage in the alignment process (Kallick & Colosimo, 2009). Mapping provides authentic data that can be used for reviewing, revising, and renewing the written curriculum. For example, a diary map is developed by an individual teacher after instruction, usually on a monthly basis (Jacobs, 1997). Diary maps can be shared among teachers and compared with the district's written curriculum (Learning Point Associates, 2009, p. 5). Diary or journal maps record the content of what was actually taught. Hale (2008) defines three additional types of curriculum maps. Each type addresses content that is planned to be covered.

Projection maps. Completed monthly by individual teachers with the content and learning experiences that teachers expect to deliver.

Consensus maps. Completed monthly or by grading period. Developed at a school site with two or more teachers, these maps contain agreed-upon compulsory content for a subject area or discipline.

Essential maps. These maps are developed for districtwide use and are typically developed by a committee of representatives from all schools that includes teachers as well as specialists and administrators. The content of these maps address the mandatory content and learning experiences for a course or series of courses (Hale, 2008, p. 12).

At the secondary level, vertical and horizontal alignment requires that educators consider the multiple routes to graduation that students may take. It is crucial to ensure that all courses provide students with the necessary learning experiences to be successful regardless of which pathway to graduation they take or which courses in a given subject area they enroll in. For this reason, regular and ongoing reflection and discussion among teaching staff is necessary for sustained and successful efforts to vertically and horizontally articulate curriculum. Jacobs (1997) outlines the following four components for curriculum mapping:

Breadth. The number of topics included at each grade level identifies a curriculum's breadth. Analysis of breadth is important, given the limited number of hours in a school year; greater breadth implies less depth of instruction.

Duration. The length of time (number of grades) topics are retained in the curriculum defines duration. Analysis of duration is important because it may contribute to broad curricula or one where topics are retained, recycled, reinforced, or reintroduced rather than being dropped from the curriculum. This duration, in turn, has implications for rigor. More advanced topics are crowded out or not covered in depth.

Flow. The interplay between breadth and duration is how topics flow into or out of the curriculum. The number of topics, placement within the curriculum, and duration of topics are central to flow. Analysis of flow is important because flow is central to the goal of meeting state standards by moving students through material. When flow of the curriculum is blocked by too many topics or excessive duration, mastery of material is difficult to attain.

Rigor. The depth of understanding of complex content. It is hard to determine what is developmentally appropriate within local culture. Most educators would agree that the goal of a rigorous curriculum is to push students to a higher level of proficiency as they move from Grade 9 through Grade 12. Ultimately, a rigorous curriculum focuses on challenging topics appropriately and attends to the breadth, duration, and flow by dropping less challenging topics as students progress through the grades.

Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers should take the following steps to ensure that all students have the requisite learning experiences to adequately prepare them for Regents exams, successful graduation, and postsecondary success:

- 1. Determine the type of curriculum maps best suited for the school—diary, projection, or consensus maps.**
- 2. Provide time and support (i.e., materials, training, guidance) for teachers to engage in initial map development.**
- 3. Decide on a common format for the maps and ensure the curriculum maps contain the following elements:**
 - Common Core State Standards
 - The content of instruction and the skills to be addressed
 - The time frames for instructional delivery
 - Differentiated instructional methods used to meet all students' learning needs as well as modifications and adaptations used to meet the needs of diverse learners
 - Instructional and curricular materials, including sample lesson plans
 - Formative and summative assessment tools and techniques
- 4. Provide time for teams of teachers, specialists, and administrators to review the maps and to identify gaps and overlaps in coverage across grade levels and within subject areas. Then, share and discuss findings with all faculty members.**
- 5. Develop a plan for eliminating gaps and redundancies. Determine a timeline for immediate revisions as well as a timeline to address issues that need additional time for planning and research.**

- Develop and execute a system to monitor the implementation of the curriculum within the school
- Develop a plan for the use of monitoring data to annually reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum; intersperse times for teams to reflect on data throughout the year

THE PATH TO SUCCESS: Developing Implementation Benchmarks

Curriculum maps should be used as tools to for educators to communicate about and plan instruction and evaluate internal and external curriculum alignment. Once developed, curriculum maps should be examined and revised regularly to identify and eliminate unneeded redundancies, gaps, and weaknesses. Following are steps to consider when developing curriculum maps:

1. Provide opportunities for teachers to work in collaborative grade-level and/or content-area teams, and identify what they are currently teaching through a curriculum mapping process.
2. Identify redundancies and gaps between what teachers should be teaching and what they are teaching. Determine solutions for addressing the redundancies and gaps.
3. Evaluate the resulting curriculum based on the following criteria:
 - **Alignment.** The curriculum provides the following types of alignment:
 - Alignment to the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010), and local and state assessments.
 - Horizontal alignment. The extent to which the standards, content/materials, instructional strategies, and assessments are delineated and coordinated within a single grade level or course.
 - Vertical alignment. The extent to which the standards, content/materials, instructional strategies, and assessments used in one grade level or course are designed to support student learning and success in subsequent grade levels and courses.
 - **Quality.** The curriculum provides sufficient activities addressing the learning goals to ensure that all students can learn; activities reflect best practice.
 - **Rigor.** The curriculum requires students to engage in inquiry of disciplinary concepts and construct knowledge rather than simply reproducing content (Manning et al., 2007).
 - **Relevance.** The curriculum engages learners in authentic tasks and connects to students' daily lives and to their future lives and careers. Relevancy is also reinforced when students are able to make connections between content areas (Manning, Jolliffe, Jackson, Sisserson, & Buenrostro, 2007).
4. Continuously review the curriculum based on the following information:
 - Data from state and local assessments.
 - Analysis of student work to determine any weaknesses in instruction or curriculum
 - Information gathered from classroom walk-throughs.
 - Strength of the alignment between objectives, instructional strategies, and assessments.
 - Reflection on and examination of curriculum maps.
 - Research on student learning.
5. Monitor and revise the curriculum to reflect the findings of the review process.
6. Provide professional development to ensure that the curriculum includes evidence-based practices and is implemented with fidelity.

Stoneybrook Middle School

The process to ensure that a rigorous, relevant, and aligned curriculum is fully articulated and understood by teachers can take many forms. Still, some common steps and practices characterize successful efforts. Stoneybrook Middle School is an urban school on the East Coast serving a population of students that is 65 percent African-American, 32 percent Caucasian, and about 2 percent Asian and Native American. Nearly 80 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. A school-based team analyzed achievement trends from annual and benchmark assessments and analyzed previously developed diary maps. What emerged from those ongoing conversations was a realization that there were gaps in the curriculum at certain grade levels and a lack of rigor in some areas. Teachers at Stoneybrook and other district schools had previously engaged in diary mapping. It was decided that it was time to take the effort to the next logical step: developing consensus maps. The renewed curriculum initiative was supported by the district curriculum coordinator, who coordinated logistics and provided leadership and guidance for the work.

The initiative began in the summer months with teams of subject-area teachers meeting for half-days, five days a week over the course of six weeks. The first step was to spend several days unpacking the standards. This step was crucial for developing a common language and understanding of the standards. Teachers and content specialists engaged in in-depth discussions about the cognitive demands of the standards for specific grade levels. The teams analyzed what the standards required students to do (i.e., identify, evaluate, synthesize, compare) and how similar content standards differed among grade levels. Small groups examined the diary maps that had been developed previously. This initial step led to many insights by classroom teachers. Sixth grade ELA teacher Margery Wallace indicated she had not been aware of how ELA content standards for author's purpose differed between sixth and eighth grade. Eighth grade math teacher Sean Jenkins shared an ah-ha moment when he realized he needed to spend more time on developing his students' conceptual understanding of algebraic principles rather than the procedural practice he had been emphasizing.

The curriculum initiative was carried on by Stoneybrook's grade level professional learning committees throughout the school year. The professional learning committees examined student work regularly, discussed evidence of student learning, and reflected on where in the curriculum student learning could be reinforced. When asked about the outcomes and successes of the initiative, one teacher summed up the benefits of the work by saying, "We're much more targeted with our instruction now. I and my fellow teachers have a firm grip on where our students are at and where they need to go—it was an eye-opener to really examine the learning standards and compare our diary maps. At first I was worried that all this was only going to lead to more 'teaching to the test,' but now I think it actually helped me to go deeper with my students." Initial student achievement results in the two years after the summer planning session are promising. District benchmark assessment results show gains and the school was able to move off of the state's accountability watch list.

Recommendation 3: Professional Development and Collaboration

Develop and implement a professional development plan that is aligned to school goals and focused on subject-area content.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Research has found that professional development for teachers is most effective and boosts student achievement when it is embedded in their daily work and sustained, as opposed to a one-time workshop model (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Steiner, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Effective professional development also provides teachers with opportunities for collaboration, coaching, and peer observation, which allows them to be actively involved in their own development and more frequently practice learned skills (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002). In addition, professional development is most effective when it is directly connected to teacher practice and focuses on content (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). Content areas should align with school improvement needs and goals to target improvement to those areas.

By refining the process by which professional development is offered, ensuring that it is embedded, sustained, and allows for active teacher participation, and by focusing the development on teacher practice and content, schools can improve teacher practice and student achievement (Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Creating a professional development (PD) plan that addresses both student learning and teacher learning can be a complex task. Professional learning activities should be designed with student achievement as both the impetus and outcome. School improvement goals should be directly related to a review of student achievement data. Subsequently, teacher learning activities should be directly related to the goal of improving student outcomes. At minimum, successful schoolwide professional development plans include the following sequential steps:

- 1. Analyze student data/conduct a needs assessment.**
 - Review student learning data such as an item analysis of state test results, interim assessment results, school quality review, or ESCA report.
 - Identify areas of low proficiency, slow learning progress, drops in proficiency between grades, and subgroup and gender differences.
- 2. Select goals for student learning.**
 - Identify specific and measurable (SMART) learning goals for students.
- 3. Select PD goals for teacher learning.**
 - Identify specific and measurable teacher learning goals, directly related to student learning goals.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Public Impact—Professional Development for Educators (Website)

<http://www.publicimpact.com/teachers-leaders/professional-development-for-educators>

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality—*High-Quality Professional Development for All Teachers: Effectively Allocating Resources* (Publication)

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/HighQualityProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>

4. Select PD activities to meet goals.

- Determine what activities will best meet teachers learning needs (e.g., workshops, coaching, collaborative inquiry, intervisitation, etc.).
- Consider available resources (time, money, materials) and a range of PD activities and match with the needs of adult learners.

5. Implement PD activities.

- Ensure that teachers have time and resources for activities (e.g., research, articles, video clips, coaches, opportunities to observe master teachers).
- Provide teachers with clear expectations for integration into their pedagogical practice, structures and protocols for activities, and opportunities for reflection.

6. Evaluate impact.

- Develop an evaluation plan.
- Identify what to measure, how to measure it, and when to measure it.
- Create a frequent and ongoing schedule of evaluation.

7. Modify PD plan.

- Determine the impact of the PD activity.
- If the activity achieves or fails to achieve its desired results, modify the plan accordingly.

Sample Professional Learning Plan

- **Needs Assessment.** A significant drop in mathematics proficiency between fourth and fifth grade. Further review of test item analysis indicates that students did not demonstrate proficiency in fractions.
- **Student Learning Goals.** At the end of the third quarter of fifth grade, 75 percent of all students will pass an end-of-unit test on fractions.
- **PD Goals for Teachers.** At the end of the spring semester, all fifth-grade teachers will demonstrate an improved ability to teach fractions as measured by their implementation of new instructional strategies and improved student learning.
- **PD Activities.** In the fall, before teachers begin the fractions unit, fifth-grade mathematics teachers will meet twice a month to discuss and share new curriculum materials related to fractions and design joint interim assessments to measure student progress. Teachers will receive the assistance of a mathematics instructional coach. In the summer, review schedules to ensure that fifth-grade teachers have common planning time to meet. Gather curriculum materials and meet with instructional coach to discuss implementation.
- **Evaluate Impact.** Measures of evaluation include (1) percentage of students meeting objectives and (2) staff pedagogy measured by regular and ongoing observations conducted by the school's instructional leaders.

Adapted from *Apply What You Know: Designing Effective Professional Development* (Steiner, 2009).

Professional Development Plan for New Vision High School (2004–08)

The New Vision High School vignette was the culmination of four years of work. Each year, the school made incremental changes in how teachers experienced professional development. They engaged in small, school-based interdisciplinary learning teams (who meet three times a week for 45 minutes) developing their own learning plans for the year.

Year One

The new principal, Leslie Richardson, began the process by focusing on student learning needs and how large schools could be structured to provide a more personalized learning environment for students and teachers. The principal took the following actions:

- Made brief walk-throughs of classrooms
- Interviewed faculty members to collect perception data
- Used faculty meetings for small-group discussion about alternative structures for large schools and research-based teaching strategies
- Formed a team of 10 who visited a high school that had divided into “houses”

Year Two

The school faculty divided itself into small study groups. Each group focused on a specific topic related to a restructured high school format. Topics included block scheduling, advisor-advisee programs, problem-based learning, and senior projects. Each team also was responsible for creating and implementing interactive activities about their topics for faculty meetings.

Year Three

The school faculty voted to divide into interdisciplinary houses that use a modified block schedule advisor-advisee system and senior projects. The school offered five- or 10-day summer workshops on how to teach in a block schedule, problem based learning, cooperative learning, and serving as an advisor. Teachers were assigned to a multidisciplinary team and a subject-area team. These teams supported and followed up on the same topics offered during the summer institute and conducted problem-solving discussions to help support the desired change. A small team representing each content area attended a summer institute, joined a school-to-school network, and attended three follow-up meetings designed to provide support and assistance to the whole school as they worked through this change.

Year Four

Teams took on the responsibility of forming their own learning plans based on the analysis of student data. The data included state achievement tests, district-based interim assessment data, and classroom projects. Teacher teams created their own learning goals for students as well as plans for their own learning and refinement of expository writing in their classrooms. These plans were reviewed by administration and shared with other teams in order to promote cross-team collaboration.

(Ozarks Unlimited Resources Educational Service Cooperative, 2008)

Recommendation 4: College Readiness

Enhance students' preparation for college. Implement a comprehensive postsecondary education preparation program that promotes cognitive strategies, content knowledge, self-management skills, and knowledge about postsecondary education.

LINK TO RESEARCH

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the share of tenth graders who stated that they hoped to earn a bachelor's degree or higher doubled, from 40 percent in 1980 to 80 percent in 2002 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Similarly, American College Testing's 2010 Report on the Conditions of College and Career Readiness show that a total of 89 percent of all ACT-tested high school graduates aspire to continue their education after high school graduation, with 7 percent of students aspiring to complete a two-year postsecondary degree, 38 percent aiming to earn a bachelor's degree, and 44 percent intending to obtain a graduate or professional degree.

These high aspirations reflect an awareness of economic realities. During the course of a lifetime, people who do not have a college degree earn about half as much as those who do, and the value of a college degree is only expected to increase. The United States Department of Labor estimated that 87 percent of the new jobs in high-wage, high-growth occupations expected by 2014 will be filled by workers who have at least some postsecondary education. Currently, there is a significant difference in income between those who have a college degree and those who do not. Household income as well as per capita income in the United States rise significantly as the educational attainment increases. The average earnings range from \$21,023 for high school dropouts to \$31,283 for high school graduates, \$58,613 for college graduates, and \$125,019 for workers with professional degrees (US Census Bureau, 2008).

Despite these ambitious goals, not many students who graduate from high school are adequately prepared for college. In New York State, for instance, only 37 percent of students who entered high school in 2006 left four years later adequately prepared for college, with even smaller percentages of minority graduates and those in the largest cities meeting that standard (NYSED, 2011). In New York City, schools that received the highest grades in the NYSED's school assessment system are graduating students who are not ready for college. Of the 70 high schools that earned an A on the most recent city progress report and have at least one third of graduates attending a college of the City University of New York, 46 posted remediation rates above 50 percent, according to reports sent to the city's high schools. Over all, the remediation rate—the percentage of students who fail a City University of New York entrance exam and require remediation classes—rose to 49 percent in 2010, from 45 percent in 2007. The combined remediation rate for the 50 high schools serving the highest achieving students, based on middle school test scores, was 21 percent. For the 50 schools serving the lowest achieving students, the City University remediation rate was 77 percent (Phillips & Gebeloff, 2011).

Many students do not succeed in college because they have not gained the content knowledge, study skills, and willingness to work hard in high school that are required for college. Students who have not acquired college-level reading, writing, and math skills are generally required to take remedial or developmental classes once they get to college. And students who take these developmental courses are less likely to earn a degree (Adelman, 2006).

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Educational Policy
Improvement Center's
Publications on College
Readiness (Publication)

https://www.epiconline.org/publications/college_readiness

These reports and presentations convey research-based findings on what it really takes for students to succeed in college and how to best prepare them for success.

College and Career Ready:
Helping All Students
Succeed Beyond High
School (Publication)

<https://www.epiconline.org/files/pdf/CCRbook.pdf>

This book explains the rationale and the methods for redesigning high schools to focus on college and career readiness skills.

A helpful step in addressing this challenge is to think in terms of postsecondary readiness, not college admission. All students need to reach high levels of achievement and have opportunities to apply knowledge and skills they are learning and mastering in relevant real-world settings. The challenge is to design high schools in ways that ensure their instructional programs are doing one thing exceedingly well: focusing on a core set of knowledge and skills and then ensuring that all students have the opportunity to master the core at a level sufficient to enable them to continue learning beyond high school (Conley, 2010).

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Liberty High School has an impressive record of college admissions; however, data show that students feel less prepared for careers immediately following graduation. The following information is provided as background for school staff to continue to improve in these areas.

1. Focus on the four dimensions of college and career readiness.

College and career readiness can be defined as the level of preparation students need in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program, or in a high-quality certificate program that enables students to enter a career pathway with potential future advancement.

A comprehensive college preparation program must address four distinct dimensions of college readiness: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, self-management skills, and knowledge about postsecondary education. This model serves as the basis for determining how prepared students are for college and careers.

The Four-Dimension Model

Key Cognitive Strategies. The development of a range of metacognitive capabilities has been identified consistently and emphatically by those who teach entry-level college courses as being as important as or more important than any specific content knowledge taught in high school. Key cognitive strategies are used in activities such as formulating problems, conducting research, interpreting conflicting evidence, communicating conclusions and findings, and completing all work with precision and accuracy.

Key Content Knowledge. Inextricably bound with key cognitive strategies is key content knowledge. Greater consensus is emerging regarding the content knowledge associated with college and career success. These big ideas of each content area are important building blocks that can serve as frameworks for the development of individual high school courses and an integrated, sequential program of study during four years of high school.

Key Self-Management Skills. Similarly important are the attitudes and behavioral attributes that students must demonstrate to succeed in postsecondary education. Among these are the ability to study, manage time, be aware of one's performance, demonstrate persistence with difficult tasks, and set and achieve academic and personal goals. These behaviors require mastery of specific skills combined with

a mind set and attitude toward learning. The common element across all of these is a high degree of self-management, self-awareness, and intentionality on the part of the student. These attitudes and dispositions need to be developed slowly and systematically if they are to become habitual for students by the time they reach a postsecondary program where they will be expected to take much responsibility for their own learning.

Key Knowledge about Postsecondary Education. An increasing number of studies have highlighted the importance of students' possessing knowledge of how the postsecondary system operates and the difference between high school and college. These studies have identified the adjustment challenges students face when attending a postsecondary program because, for most students, going to college is like entering a new culture. This profound transition, disorienting for even the best-prepared students, is particularly difficult for students from communities that have little prior experience with postsecondary education. All students, particularly those without prior knowledge of the college culture, lack critical information in a number of areas and are not able to read important cues. Examples range from procedural tasks, such as how to choose among colleges and how to apply to college and for financial aid, to more sophisticated insights into how college is different from high school, how to interact with professors and peers in college, and a host of other types of knowledge critical to student success in applying to and matriculating at college.

2. Help students determine their college and career readiness.

Following are tools, methods, and indicators that will help students understand how ready they are for postsecondary studies:

- **Course Titles and Grade Point Averages.** These are the most common tools to define readiness in terms of high school course-taking patterns, including the titles, perceived challenge level, and the total units required for graduation combined with the grades students receive in those courses.
- **Tests.** A more direct approach is to test a set of the knowledge that students are presumed to need to know in order to succeed in college entry-level courses. Admissions tests are the vehicle of choice for this type of testing.
- **Performance in College Courses.** Students who must enroll in remedial courses or fail entry-level courses find graduating from college much more difficult. One of the first orders of business in improving college readiness is to reduce the number of high school graduates who end up in remedial courses in college, particularly in community college. Remediation suggests that the school's program is not adequately geared toward preparing students for college admission or success.
- **General Education Requirements for a Baccalaureate Degree.** The United States' undergraduate system includes and emphasizes general education requirements that all students must meet in order to graduate, regardless of their major. This means that incoming students who wish to pursue a degree will be expected to be capable of performing in a number of subject areas, not just their area of interest or strength. Being prepared to succeed in general education courses is key to success for college students.

Ensuring Successful Transition to College

The following examines specific measures that have been put into place to further ensure a successful transition to college based on a conference convened by the MDRC with The Council of the Great City Schools and The National High School Alliance.

Making sure that high schools teach courses that prepare students for college. Colleges expect applicants to have taken certain classes that cover certain content areas. Omaha, Nebraska, working with the College Board, has pursued a strategy known as *vertical teaming* to define a course of study for elementary, middle, and high school students. The goals are to ensure that students will leave middle school with the skills needed to do high school work and that they will graduate from high school having taken the classes and learned the content that colleges expect.

Exposing high school students to college-level courses. Students are better prepared for college if they understand the level of work expected of them. Advanced Placement (AP) classes are designed to offer challenging, college-level content to students while they are still in high school. In Buffalo, New York, and St. Louis, Missouri, all high schools offer AP classes. The Memphis (Tennessee) City Schools have taken advantage of technology, adding e-learning options to the curriculum in order to increase students' access to AP classes.

Dual enrollment classes are another way of infusing college-level courses into students' high school experiences and, thereby, of easing the transition to college. Dual enrollment allows high school students to enroll in college courses and to apply the credits they earn toward both high school and college graduation; students can graduate from high school with some college credits already in place. For example, for the past 10 years, seniors in Charleston, South Carolina, have been able to take college credit classes on their high school campus with adjunct professors detailed from the College of Charleston and Trident Technical College. In Toledo, Ohio, students can spend their entire senior year in college.

Starting college planning in ninth grade (if not earlier). Students need to start planning early for college; ninth grade is not too early. Some ninth graders in a number of districts develop individualized high school graduation and postgraduation plans to take field trips that expose them to college and university settings. Students in the Saint Paul (Minnesota) Public Schools start planning even earlier: The district operates an advisory program in which eighth grade students create a six-year plan that takes them through high school and beyond.

Making college planning a family affair. It is useful to enlist parents or guardians in the college planning process, especially if these parents have not attended college or are unfamiliar with what is required. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, teachers now meet individually with parents and students to formulate long-term action plans. These plans are informed by the results of a test that helps ascertain whether the student is on a successful trajectory toward college or career readiness.

Strengthening the role of guidance counselors. Teachers and guidance counselors may be the only college-educated adults to whom many students have regular access, so it is especially important that guidance counselors and other advisors have the resources to do their jobs effectively. The most precious of these resources may well be time. When guidance counselors carry caseloads of 400 students, they are too often unable to provide the individual attention that students need to negotiate the college admissions process. In contrast, Des Moines, Iowa, has instituted a plan in which advisors are responsible for no more than 20 students with whom they meet individually for six years to plan for postsecondary education or job training.

Helping students step up to the test. Students who do well on the SAT or the ACT test have a big advantage in securing admission to the college of their choice. Educational institutions are trying out different approaches to boost students' performance on these tests. The Kansas City, Missouri, district, for example, has contracted with Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions to provide ACT preparation classes.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools *(continued)*

Showing students the money. It is important to make students aware of available scholarships and other financial aid options. Helping students and their families understand and complete the famously lengthy and detailed Free Application for Federal Student Aid form is another way schools and counselors can help ensure that students with limited resources can go to college.

Making attending college a matter of community pride—and resources. In 2006, the superintendent of the Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) Public Schools and the mayor of Pittsburgh announced the Pittsburgh Promise, a major initiative designed to help students who meet standards to plan, prepare for, and pay for education after high school. The program's goal is to make funding for tuition at an accredited postsecondary institution within the state available to all graduates, as long as they make regular progress toward the completion of a degree or a certificate program. A local foundation has established a fund to support the initiative with annual fundraising campaigns targeted to Pittsburgh-based corporations and businesses and other donors. The Pittsburgh Promise appeals to both altruism and self-interest; it draws on the civic-mindedness of individuals and institutions while helping to ensure that the city's future workforce will be educated.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR REVIEW

Professional Development and Collaboration

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