

# Pablo Neruda Academy for Architecture and World Studies

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 Pablo Neruda Academy for Architecture and World Studies conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as being in need of improvement 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 Pablo Neruda Academy

Located in the Bronx, Pablo Neruda Academy serves 395 students in Grades 9–12. The school population comprises 26 percent Black, 72 percent Hispanic, 1 percent White, and 1 percent Asian students. The student body includes 17 percent English language learners and 26 percent special education students<sup>1</sup>. About 65.3 percent of students are boys, and 34.7 percent are girls. The average attendance rate for the 2009–10 school year was 82 percent. Seventy-five percent of the student population is eligible for free lunch, and 7 percent of students are eligible for reduced-price lunch<sup>2</sup>.

Pablo Neruda Academy is a small high school that shares its building with other schools. Because the school is located on a shared site, Pablo Neruda Academy students are able to take advantage of many different extracurricular activities, including Public School Athletic Leagues (PSAL), cooking, and a campus arts program. In addition, the school offers many clubs, including robotics, Lego architecture, art and mural, student government, youth service club, salsa, theatre/drama, movie, art and sketching, and poetry/spoken word. Pablo Neruda Academy has partnered with many organizations to enrich student and staff experiences. These partnerships include The Leadership Program, Gear-Up, Pencil, Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), New York Cares, NYC Writing Project, Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), The Knowledge Project, and US FIRST<sup>3</sup>.

In 2009–10, Pablo Neruda Academy did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA), math, or graduation rate for all students. In addition, the school failed to meet AYP in ELA for Black/African-American students or economically disadvantaged students. It also did not meet AYP in math for economically disadvantaged students.<sup>4</sup> Because Pablo Neruda Academy was subsequently designated as a school in need of improvement, it was subject to an ESCA in the spring of 2011.

<sup>1</sup>[http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/teachandlearn/sesdr/2009-10/sesdr\\_X305.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/teachandlearn/sesdr/2009-10/sesdr_X305.pdf). Accessed on August 13, 2011

<sup>2</sup><https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/fc/AOR-2010-320800011305.pdf>. Accessed on August 13, 2011

<sup>3</sup>[http://print.nycenet.edu/documents/oaosi/cep/2010-11/cep\\_X305.pdf](http://print.nycenet.edu/documents/oaosi/cep/2010-11/cep_X305.pdf). Accessed on August 13, 2011.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/fc/AOR-2010-320800011305.pdf>. Accessed on August 13, 2011.

## Audit Process at Pablo Neruda Academy

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 extracurricular activities. Data were collected at the school level through teacher surveys, administrator interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of documents submitted by Pablo Neruda Academy. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school at a co-interpretation<sup>SM</sup> meeting on May 17, 2011. During this meeting, 12 stakeholders from the Pablo Neruda Academy 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 Pablo Neruda Academy.

## 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:**

**Levels of student engagement were inconsistent across observed classrooms.**

Eighty percent of ELA classrooms observed demonstrated inconsistent student engagement. That is, some students were engaged with the lesson while a meaningful number of students were not. Or, most students were engaged for only a portion of the lesson. Furthermore, about 27 percent of all observed classrooms exhibited low levels of student engagement.

#### **CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:**

**Classrooms are inconsistent in providing students with opportunities for higher-order thinking.**

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by data from classroom observations and the teacher survey. About 90 percent of teachers who responded to the teacher survey suggested that their students answered textbook questions at least one or two times per week. Co-interpretation participants were concerned that this reliance on textbook questions was not providing their students with enough opportunities for complex thinking and analysis. About half of teachers reported using discussions in the classroom often or always, while the other half reported sometimes or never using discussions in the classroom. In most observed classrooms, students were not provided with opportunities to think deeply about the content; only one class was rated in the high range on content understanding. While classes were observed in ELA, math, science and social studies, a high and consistent level of analysis and problem solving was observed only in ELA classrooms. In most classrooms, an inconsistent level of analysis and problem solving was observed. Most teachers observed also were inconsistent in encouraging a deeper understanding of the content.

#### **CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:**

**The majority of classrooms do not consistently exhibit a positive classroom culture.**

Observations showed that in 25 percent of classrooms, students were not respectful of the teacher and teachers did not show an interest in student lives. Only 20 percent of classrooms were rated in the high range on positive climate. Regard for adolescent perspectives was not sustained throughout the lesson in half of the observed classrooms. Furthermore, positive climate was inconsistently observed in a majority of classrooms with instances of student disrespect for teachers. Teacher survey data indicate that, while two thirds of teachers use the school's behavior management strategies, three fourths of teachers use strategies not consistent with school policy.

# Recommendations

## Overview of Recommendations

During the co-interpretation meeting at Pablo Neruda Academy, participants identified several critical issues related to student engagement, student behavior, and rigorous instruction. Co-interpretation participants at Pablo Neruda Academy also were clear about their concerns related to student engagement and were committed to increasing the level and consistency of student engagement. The recommendations about student engagement provided in this report will address these concerns.

Participants also were concerned about the opportunities students have to participate in higher-order thinking. This prioritized finding was related to a wide range of issues, including reliance on textbook questions, use of classroom discussions, low and inconsistent content understanding ratings from classroom observations, low and inconsistent analysis and problem solving ratings from classroom observations, and inconsistent focus on encouraging a deeper understanding of the lesson content. The recommendations about rigorous instruction were selected to address these issues.

The key finding related to student behavior management was drawn from a diverse set of findings, including issues related to lack of student respect, inconsistent regard for adolescent perspectives, inconsistent positive climate, and inconsistent use of behavior management strategies. Participants at the co-interpretation meeting voiced concern about student behavior and methods for managing it. The recommendation in this report related to implementing a positive behavior management system is presented with these various concerns and findings in mind. There was no objection to these prioritized key findings when voting was finished.

## THE THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Initiate a schoolwide process for increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment.
2. Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.
3. Develop and implement a schoolwide positive behavior policy and system with clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect.

These recommendations are discussed on the following pages. Each recommendation provides a review of research, specific actions the school may wish to take during its implementation process, examples of real-life schools that have successfully implemented strategies, and online resources for additional information. All works cited, as well as suggestions for further reading, appear in the References section at the end of this report.

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

## Recommendation 1: Student Engagement

**Initiate a schoolwide process for increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment. The aim is to improve student attendance, enhance participation, reduce boredom, end negative behaviors and the associated classroom management issues, and increase student achievement in academic and social skills.**

### LINK TO RESEARCH

Student engagement provides an essential foundation for increasing achievement levels. “Educators must work to build engagement levels if they hope to support students in meeting higher standards” (Learning Point Associates, 2005, p. 2).

In a report on the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), which was taken by 42,754 students, Yazzie-Mintz (2010, pp. 2–3) describes a spectrum of student disengagement—from temporary boredom to dropping out—and attributes this disengagement to the following: uninteresting and irrelevant material, work being too challenging or not challenging enough, no interaction with the teacher, not liking the school or the teacher, not seeing value in the assigned work, adults at the school not caring about the student, safety and bullying concerns, schoolwork not connecting to the real world or real work, feeling little connection with any adult at the school, teacher favoritism, ineffective instruction or instructional methods, feeling unheard and not responded to or respected, and feelings of frustration and disconnection.

When students feel marginalized or alienated at school, they lose interest and become disengaged. Yazzie-Mintz (2010, p. 17) concludes that there are considerable gaps not only in academic achievement but also in student engagement and suggests the integration of engagement data with academic data as a useful tool for school planning and decision making.

Factors that would increase student engagement, according to the surveyed students (Yazzie-Mintz, pp. 18–23) are as follows: supportive and nurturing schools; increased individualization; classes that are more fun as well as interactive, experiential, and relevant; a schoolwide belief in relationships, respect, and responsibility; coaching and modeling for the staff of good student engagement practices; reflection on and response to student ideas; adult understanding of student skills, strengths, and interests and having these qualities inform instruction; experiential learning and interdisciplinary studies; and opportunities for students to work together on finding solutions to real-world problems and issues.

Students need to build a sense of self-efficacy (Alvermann, 2003) in an inclusive environment in which they can achieve competence. They should be engaged in authentic and personally meaningful work, using a culturally relevant curriculum with an appropriate level of difficulty and challenge—one that requires problem solving (Voke, 2002). In addition, Gordon (2006) suggests the recognition and leveraging of individual student strengths and recalls a typical student response from the 2005 Gallup Youth Survey (pp. 77–80):

“My teacher understood the way that I learned and worked. I was never criticized for my ideas or feelings, but I was met with questions and ideas that could change the way I looked at something.” —Jessica, 17, Waverly, IA (p. 77)

### QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Center for Mental Health in Schools (Website)

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Website)

<http://www.casel.org>

Illinois Learning Standards for Social/Emotional Learning (Website)

[http://isbe.state.il.us/ils/social\\_emotional/standards.htm](http://isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm)

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility (Website)

<http://www.morningsidecenter.org>

A rubric titled the “Partnership Guide for Culturally Responsive Teaching” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000, pp. 185–187) offers a list of engagement activities (establishing inclusion, developing a positive attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence) and assessment tools. The Executive Summary of *Engaging Schools* (Committee on Increasing High School Students’ Engagement and Motivation to Learn, 2003) provides 10 recommendations for reaching “the goals of meaningful engagement and genuine improvements in achievement” for high school students (pp. 4–9). Easton (2008) discusses engaging struggling high school students by using experiential learning; essential questions; and a whole-child perspective in curriculum development, instructional strategies, professional development, and teacher evaluations. “If there is a secret to motivation in the classroom,” says Gordon (2006, p. 80), “it lies in the interaction between the teacher and the student.”

“There is a growing consensus that whatever else is done, schools must also become places where it is easier for students and teachers to know one another well and for students to connect to the school and its purposes, says Sergiovanni (2006, p. 58). “Schools in other words must be caring and learning communities.

## **IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: WHOLE-SCHOOL PRACTICES**

Incorporating student engagement practices should be part of the annual school improvement process. Whole-school practices such as building a safe and supportive school environment are part of this process. Students can learn effectively only in environments in which they feel safe and supported and where their teachers have high expectations for their learning. Implementation of a schoolwide positive behavior plan that is based on prosocial values, social competencies, incentives, and positive peer relationships will lay the foundation for classroom-level work and must occur before the classroom work can begin.

The following guidelines were developed by the Victoria Department of Education and Early Child Development (2009) for implementation of effective student engagement strategies across whole schools at the building level.

### **1. Create a positive school culture.**

Teachers and staff must recognize students as individuals by acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of the student population. The school must find ways to connect students to school (through clubs, sports, student council, and other activities) so they develop a sense of belonging. The school should provide transition programs and practices at different stages of schooling that will minimize anxiety, increase resilience, and ensure that students develop a readiness to enter their new environment and make successful transitions between year levels.

### **2. Encourage student participation.**

Giving students a voice is not simply about the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions; it also is about having the power to influence change. Incorporating meaningful involvement of students means validating and authorizing them to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences throughout education to improve the school.

### **3. Proactively engage with parents/caretakers.**

Keys to successful partnerships with parents/caretakers and families include strong two-way communication, volunteer opportunities, curricula-related collaborations, shared decision making, community-based partnerships, and efficacy building.

### **4. Implement preventive and early interventions.**

The school needs to determine how it will intervene when students exhibit disengaged behaviors—specifically poor attendance and antisocial behaviors. Prevention strategies should target the whole school and should be designed to reduce any risk factors that may contribute to attendance or behavioral issues.

### **5. Respond to individual students.**

The school should have a process in place to identify and respond to individual students who require additional assistance and support. It is imperative to coordinate early intervention and prevention strategies that utilize internal as well as external support services in order to identify and address the barriers to learning that individual students may be facing.

Schools also can implement major changes to their structures that can make it easier to develop positive learning relationships, including small learning communities, alternative scheduling, team teaching, teaching continuity, school-based enterprises, and professional learning communities.

## **IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: CLASSROOM PRACTICES**

Keeping students focused and engaged in the classroom is quite a challenge amid complex changes—physical, intellectual, emotional, and social—that they experience during this phase of their lives.

### **1. Relate lessons to students' lives.**

A relevant curriculum relates content to the daily lives, concerns, experiences, and pertinent social issues of the learners. Teachers can gain insight into student concerns by taking periodic interest inventories, through informal conversations, and from classroom dialogue (Learning Point Associates, 2005). These issues and topics then can be incorporated into units, lesson plans, and further classroom discussions.

### **2. Make the learning authentic.**

Newmann, Marks, and Garmoran (1995) advocate for authentic instructional practices to engage learners and offer three criteria for authentic instructional practices: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond the school.

The first criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate the construction of knowledge by acknowledging students' existing understanding and experience. Identifying students' preconceptions and initial understanding is critical to the learning process. "If students' preconceptions are not addressed directly, they often memorize

content (e.g., formulas in physics), yet still use their experience-based preconceptions to act in the world” (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, p. 5).

The second criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate disciplined inquiry through structured activities; the inquiry process is critical to the construction of knowledge (Marzano, 2003; Newmann et al., 1995). This process consists of building on the learner’s prior knowledge to develop a deeper understanding, integrating new information, and using the knowledge in new ways.

The third criterion for authentic instructional practices is value beyond school (Newmann et al., 1995). This criterion may entail connecting content to personal or public issues as well as the demonstration of understanding to an audience beyond the school. Examples of such activities include writing persuasive letters to the city council to advocate for a skate park, interviewing community elders for an oral history project, or communicating the impact of a development project using scientific concepts.

### **3. Give students choices.**

Finally, providing choice in classrooms will engage learners. Providing opportunities for students to select a topic or text acknowledges young adolescents’ need to exercise more decision-making power. Giving students ownership in their learning process increases motivation and keeps interest levels high. Students who have a strong interest in a specific subject may wish to pursue an independent project. These projects may be used as a differentiated way to explore the curriculum. (See “Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom.”)

## **Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom**

*Following are some suggestions for showing regard for adolescent perspectives. These ideas are based on the work of Smutny, Walker, and Meckstroth (1997) and Tomlinson (1999).*

- Independent projects will extend learning beyond the curriculum in the textbook and develop enthusiasm, commitment, and academic skills in addition to allowing students to develop deeper relationships with subject matter.
- “Brainstorming with...children on what kinds of projects they could do may also generate ideas teachers may never have thought of on their own” (Smutny, 2000, p. 7).
- Surveying students’ interests in the beginning of the school year will give teachers direction in planning activities that will “get students on board” from the start.
- Surveying again at key points during the year will inform teachers of new interests that develop as their students grow.
- Interest centers are designed to motivate students’ exploration of topics in which they have a particular interest. They are usually comprised of objects that students can explore, such as shells, leaves, maps, or projects, and are centered around broad topics. Students can choose from the menu and note their choices accordingly. Teachers decide how many items on the menu (minimum) that each student is required to complete. This is adjusted to meet instructional needs on an individual basis.

## **Examples of Student Engagement**

*The National Center for School Engagement (2007) compiled the following examples of student engagement best practices from school districts across the United States:*

**Factor in Math Fun:** *In Oswego, New York, a Factoring Fan Club was created for 9th- grade math students to get them excited about factoring, to keep it fresh in their minds, and to be “good” at factoring. Source: Oswego School District, Oswego, NY*

**Celebrate Pi Day on 3/14:** *This event was created to help students enjoy math by offering a fun-filled day honoring pi. Events included a pie eating contest, measuring the diameter and circumference of round objects to calculate pi, and other games related to circles. Source: Independence School District, Independence, VA*

**Mobilize Community:** *Community Now! is an asset-based community development tool of the Connection Institute. It uses asset-based language and planning to bring the community together to discover what values the community shares as a whole. It then works to mobilize community members around its assets and shares values to become proactive in its planning rather than reactive. Source: Kittery Children’s Leadership Council, Kittery, ME*

**Collaborate With Higher Education:** *In Mesquite, Texas, a local college delivers 3.5 hours of continuing education courses (“Educational Opportunities”) to truant students and their families. The curriculum includes the negative consequences associated with poor school attendance and the positive consequences associated with scholastic achievement. Discussion of transition from high school to college is discussed and a tour of the college is provided. Source: Dallas Independent School District, TX*

**Offer Incentives:** *As a reward, a lunch-time soccer game is organized for students with good attendance by school staff. Source: Summit School District, Frisco, CO*

**Support Positive Behavior:** *Jacksonville School District adapted the principles of Got Fish? (a book to build business morale) for the classroom. Principles include: being there, play, choosing your behavior, and make their day. Students are recognized when observed “living” each of the principles. Source: Jacksonville School District, Jacksonville, FL*

**Create Student-Generated Classroom Rules:** *In Eugene, Oregon, students create a list of classroom rules to be followed. Each student signs off on the rules and is held accountable by fellow students. In addition, they developed their own “honor roll”, in which students are recognized for doing their best, following directions, and not talking out more than three times per day. Source: Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR*

**Facilitate Positive Student-Teacher Connections:** *Some schools in Oregon encourage students to sign up for a one-on-one lunch with their teacher during school time. The teacher uses this time to get to know the student and offers them encouragement and praise. Children and youth benefit when their teachers demonstrate that they care about student well-being in addition to academic success. Source: Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR*

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Reprinted from *21 Ways to Engage Students in School*, available online at <http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21WaystoEngageStudentsinSchool.pdf>. Copyright © 2007 National Center for School Engagement. Reprinted with permission.

## Recommendation 2: Instructional Rigor

**Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.**

### LINK TO RESEARCH

Instruction that pushes students to engage in higher-level thinking leads to deeper learning for students (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Pashler et al., 2007). Too often, particularly in schools where students are struggling, instruction focuses on lower-level thinking skills, basic content, and test preparation. Teachers of struggling student groups or tracks usually offer students “less exciting instruction, less emphasis on meaning and conceptualization, and more rote drill and practice activities” than do teachers of high-performing or heterogeneous groups and classes (Cotton, 1989, p. 8). Yet this focus on basic skills does not necessarily improve student achievement.

Several research studies were completed from 1990 to 2003 “which demonstrated that students who experienced higher levels of authentic instruction and assessment showed higher achievement than students who experienced lower levels of authentic instruction and assessment” (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007, p. vii). These results included higher achievement on standardized tests (Newmann et al., 2001). It also is important to note that these results “were consistent for Grades 3–12, across different subject areas (mathematics, social studies, language arts, science), and for different students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status” (Newmann et al., 2007, p. vii).

Teachers need to provide structured opportunities and time for students to take on higher-level cognitive work (Tomlinson, 2003). In discussing the *gradual release of responsibility model*, Fisher and Frey (2008) state that “the cognitive load should shift slowly and purposefully from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility, to independent practice and application by the learner” (p. 2). This process allows students to become what Graves and Fitzgerald (2003) call “competent, independent learners” (p. 98).

There are several steps to ensure that students are being asked to complete this type of intellectually challenging work, which increases test scores and improves performance on authentic assessment measures as well. Newmann et al. (2001) define *authentically challenging intellectual work* as the “construction of knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry, to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school” (p. 14).

Daggett (2005) agrees, stating that all students should be pushed “to achieve academic excellence, which ultimately boils down to applying rigorous knowledge to unpredictable, real-world situations, such as those that drive our rapidly changing world” (p. 5). Disciplined inquiry, which occurs in the classroom, requires that students “(1) use a prior knowledge base; (2) strive for in-depth understanding rather than superficial awareness; and (3) express their ideas and findings with elaborated communication” (Newmann et al., 2001, p. 15).

### QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Doing What Works: Providing  
Research-Based Education  
Practices Online (Website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

*Organizing Instruction and  
Study to Improve Learning*  
(Publication)

[http://ies.ed.gov/  
ncee/wwc/pdf/  
practiceguides/20072004.  
pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20072004.pdf)

## IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. Cultivate schoolwide high expectations for students.

- Align instruction with the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards. According to NYCDOE (2011), schools in New York City are set to have fully adopted the P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for students to take aligned assessments during the 2014–15 school year. These standards are internationally benchmarked and rigorous; they clearly explain what students at each grade level are expected to know and be able to do. Some schools were involved in pilot programs in 2010–11.
- Develop a shared understanding of instructional rigor through collaborative curriculum planning, design, and/or redesign. When developing or revising curriculum maps, identify opportunities for formative assessment tasks that encourage higher-level thinking for each unit of study.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assignments that ask students to perform rigorous and authentic tasks.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assessments that include rigorous and authentic summative assessment tasks.
- Monitor implementation of expectations through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

### 2. Provide professional development for teachers on instructional strategies that push students to engage in higher-order thinking.

- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers that describes the importance of pushing students to do higher-level thinking and provides strategies for how to do so. This training may be provided through ongoing professional development sessions and/or support of an instructional coach.
- Create clear expectations regarding how teachers should implement this professional development in the classroom (e.g., one strategy utilized each day as reflected in lesson plans, authentic assessments at the end of each unit).
- Identify how this professional development can be incorporated into scheduled teacher collaboration sessions.
- Monitor implementation of professional development through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

### 3. Develop examples of authentic intellectual work.

The following example can be used to help school leaders and teachers understand what authentic intellectual work might look like.

## Examples of High-Scoring and Low-Scoring Measures of Authentic Intellectual Work

*The research report Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence? by Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka (2001) provides examples of two sixth-grade writing assignments: one that scored high and one that scored low on measures of authentic intellectual work. The authors conclude each example with a commentary of why the assignment received the score that it did.*

### High Scoring Writing Assignment

Write a paper persuading someone to do something. Pick any topic that you feel strongly about, convince the reader to agree with your belief, and convince the reader to take a specific action on this belief.

### Commentary

*In this high scoring assignment, demands for construction of knowledge are evident because students have to select information and organize it into convincing arguments. By asking students to convince others to believe and act in a certain way, the task entails strong demands that the students support their views with reasons or other evidence, which calls for elaborated written communication. Finally, the intellectual challenge is connected to students' lives because they are to write on something they consider to be personally important.*

### Low Scoring Writing Assignment

Identify the parts of speech of each underlined word below. All eight parts of speech—nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections—are included in this exercise.

1. My room is arranged for comfort and efficiency.
2. As you enter, you will find a wooden table on the left.
3. I write and type.
4. There is a book shelf near the table.
5. On this book shelf, I keep both my pencils and paper supplies.
6. I spend many hours in this room.
7. I often read or write there during the evening...

### Commentary

*This assignment requires no construction of knowledge or elaborated communication, and does not pose a question or problem clearly connected to students' lives. Instead it asks students to recall one-word responses, based on memorization or definitions of parts of speech.*

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Reprinted from page 24 of *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* by Fred M. Newmann, Anthony S. Bryk, and Jenny K. Nagaoka, available online at <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0a02.pdf>. Copyright © 2001 Consortium on Chicago School Research. Reprinted with permission.

## **Perrysburg High School**

**Perrysburg High School in Perrysburg, Ohio, serves students in Grades 9–12. Perrysburg is a suburb of Toledo.**

Perrysburg is the sole high school in the Perrysburg Exempted Village District in Wood County. Nate Ash teaches physics to eleventh and twelfth graders. Ash has taught professional development programs at the Northwest Ohio Center of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education, and at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He acts as a mentor to new science teachers.

Ash teaches physics using an inquiry approach. Students do lab activities and solve problems together to understand key concepts in physics. In each lesson he poses higher-order questions to help his students build explanations: How do you know that? What would happen if we changed this variable? How is this similar or different? Ash uses whiteboards in a number of ways: for group problem solving, representing a phenomenon with pictures, and student presentations.

Each new unit/topic is introduced with a hands-on activity. Ash presents a physical situation to students, has them manipulate the variables, and then narrows down their list of variables to design an experiment. Every experiment is introduced with an open-ended question (What would happen if...? What happens when...?). Students work in small groups to describe what happens with graphs, pictures, mathematical equations, and written expression. When they are finished, students present their work to the class in “whiteboard sessions.”

Ash explains how the whiteboard sessions give important insights into student thinking: “We can really see if the students understand on every different level how that problem works or how that situation works. And if there is a disjoint between any of those representations, that gives us someplace to go, that gives us something to talk about, something to work through.”

Students appreciate being in charge of their own learning, having the opportunity to challenge their peers, and develop critical thinking skills as they explain their ideas in front of a group. As Ash says, “Students really like this approach because, instead of just giving them the answer, it gives them a chance to explain to each other what’s going on. And I like it because all the times that I have done physics problems on the board and gone through the answers, I got pretty good at doing physics problems but my students never got any better at all.”

Ash has found that with this approach his students are no longer trying to find equations that fit the problems, but working to develop a deep understanding of the underlying concepts.

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Excerpted from the *Doing What Works* website at [http://dww.ed.gov/media/CL/OIS/TopicLevel/case\\_perrysburg\\_52708rev.pdf](http://dww.ed.gov/media/CL/OIS/TopicLevel/case_perrysburg_52708rev.pdf)

## Recommendation 3: 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 have behaved in a manner that disrupts the educational climate of the classroom and the school. One key element for changing this pattern is the implementation of a schoolwide behavior program that is developed with the input and support of parents and staff.

“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 should also be fair and stress the student’s 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 Office of Specialized Services, 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 (a) impulse control, (b) anger management, (c) conflict resolution, (d) empathy, and (e) drug and alcohol use resistance and prevention. Research studies consistently show that schools that establish a positive social culture also achieve the best academic gains” (Sprague, 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 a student to change his/her 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 Office of Specialized Services, 1998).

Schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is based on lessons learned from more than 7,000 schools currently implementing successful changes in their school environment. SWPBS evolved from valid research in the field of special education. SWPBS is not a curriculum, intervention, or practice but a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving important academic outcomes for all students (Office of Special Education Programs, 2011a).

### QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

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

[http://www.pbis.org/swpbs\\_videos/alcott\\_mid.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/alcott_mid.aspx)

Discovering School-Wide  
PBS: Moving Towards a  
Positive Future from Florida’s  
Positive Behavior Support  
Project (Video)

[http://www.pbis.org/swpbs\\_videos/pbs\\_video-discovering\\_swpbs.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/pbs_video-discovering_swpbs.aspx)

Researchers have only recently begun to study the effects of schoolwide behavior 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. While there are many different schoolwide systems of behavioral support, most have certain features in common. The emphasis is on consistency—both throughout the building and across classrooms. The entire school staff is expected to adopt strategies that will be uniformly implemented. As a result, professional development and long-term commitment by the school leadership are necessary in order for this innovation to take hold. The school-based models featured in the Quick Links on the previous page have been selected to show how different features of a schoolwide behavior management system can be implemented in urban, suburban, and rural locations. These schools understand that change is incremental, and are approaching implementation of their schoolwide systems slowly and over an extended period.

### Common Features of Schoolwide Behavior 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

Source: The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 1997

## IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. Incorporate key guiding principles.

The Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2011b) has established the following SWPBS guiding principles:

- Develop a continuum of scientifically based behavior and academic interventions and supports.
  - *A well-articulated schoolwide behavior policy/student code that includes positive expectations, minor and major infractions, etc., must first be in place. Clarity around expectations for staff’s handling of in-class behaviors is important here. Authentic faculty feedback and participation are important throughout the policy- and system-development processes.*
- 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 at least on a monthly basis. Data should be presented in a user-friendly format.*
- Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior.

- *This includes posting three to five positively stated overarching schoolwide social expectations around the school, particularly in problematic areas.*
- Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors.
  - *Students should be introduced to/taught the schoolwide expectations, rules for specific settings, reward/consequence system, and related interventions/supports. Staff should be trained on how to present expectations to students. Ongoing communication and collaboration with families and the community are very important.*
- Implement evidence-based behavioral practices with fidelity and accountability.
  - *Interventions should be multi-tiered, increasing in levels of intensity and inclusive of evidence-based programs or strategies. The primary level (all students) is the overall behavior management plan. The secondary level (some students) is for a targeted group or focused on individual plans for those who did not respond to the first level. The tertiary level (few students) includes highly individualized plans for students who did not respond to the first two levels.*
- Screen universally and monitor student performance and progress continuously.
  - *There should be a plan for collecting data to evaluate SWPBS outcomes, wherein data is collected as scheduled, and used to evaluate its effectiveness for future adjustments.*

## **2. Build a team.**

Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project (2005) outlines a SWPBS process that provides a systematic structure and formalized procedures that can be implemented during the summer. The initial steps are to establish and get all staff to buy in. Establishing a schoolwide leadership team or behavior support team supports this goal. If possible, fold SWPBS into the roles and responsibilities of an established team, rather than developing yet another group. Members of the team should include administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal, or dean), counselors, social workers, regular education teachers, special education teachers, members with behavior expertise, and a coach/district representative. It is vital that administration supports the process, takes an active role, and attends most meetings.

## **3. Determine school capacity.**

It is important to assess and develop the school's capacity to implement a comprehensive program. Key questions include:

- What are the schoolwide social expectations, routines, etc.?
- Who at the school has the unique disposition necessary to both firmly hold students accountable *and* support them as they attempt to adjust with fidelity?
- What are the procedural expectations of teachers for managing in-class behaviors?
- What manageable recourse do teachers have for extremely disruptive or disrespectful instances of behavior "in the moment" (e.g., immediate referrals to a dean/counselor/administration, in-school "timeout room," criteria for reentry)?
- What is the specific, realistic, and *manageable* continuum of interventions and supports?

- What is the specific, realistic, and *manageable* continuum of consequences for patterns of disruptive in-class behavior?
- How will the efficacy of chosen interventions and supports be monitored and adjusted as needed in a data-driven manner? Who is responsible for this?
- What are the mechanisms for notifying and collaborating with students' parents/guardians in the process early and often? Who is responsible for this (i.e., teachers, counselors, social workers, deans, administrators)?
- What are the thresholds for more severe consequences/privilege losses for patterns or disruptive behaviors?

### Positive Behavior Support in the Classroom

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

*Source: Positive behavior support classroom management: Self-assessment revised, by Brandi Simonsen, Sarah Fairbanks, Amy Briesch, and George Sugai, available online at [http://www.pbis.org/pbis\\_resource\\_detail\\_page.aspx?Type=4&PBIS\\_ResourceID=174](http://www.pbis.org/pbis_resource_detail_page.aspx?Type=4&PBIS_ResourceID=174). This document was published in 2006 by the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports at the University of Connecticut.*

- What outside resources are available to support students and families struggling with issues that are affecting students' behavior but well outside of the school's capacity to address?
- What privileges and incentives (e.g., extracurricular activities, athletics, field trips, social activities) are currently in place that can serve as leverage? Do more need to be identified or developed?
- How are students who actively exhibit established desirable social behaviors formally recognized? Perhaps most importantly, how are students who are attempting to make sustained social adjustments formally recognized and supported (without stigmatizing)?

## **Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support in an Urban High School: A Case Study**

A three-year study to examine the impact of SWPBS was conducted by Chicago Public Schools. The implementation high school served an estimated 1,800 students during the first year of the study. The school includes a diverse student body with the following racial and ethnic makeup: 36 percent African American, 36 percent Hispanic, 16 percent Asian American, 8 percent Caucasian, 2 percent Native American, and 2 percent other, with 21 percent demonstrating limited English proficiency. In addition, 89 percent of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, and 20 percent were identified as students with disabilities.

The results of the study revealed that it took about two years for the school to fully implement all components of the SWPBS plan. However, by the third year the average rate of daily discipline referrals had been reduced by 20 percent. Successful implementation strategies cited by the school included the following:

- Convening a “PBS team” with various stakeholders from the school (e.g., administrator, educator, parents, and students) for a day of training and to develop an action plan
- Conducting a summer trial intervention with about 100 students during a summer activity to test teaching systems using positive behavior expectations
- Providing teachers with key products such as sample copies of social skills lesson plans, posters reflecting schoolwide behavior expectations, and sample syllabi
- Conducting grade-level assemblies to introduce rationales for the expected behavior and provide opportunities to practice positive and negative examples of specific behaviors (e.g., respectful walking in the hallway)
- Creating a system of rewards, including redeemable “acknowledgment” tickets that could be awarded to individual students for exhibiting positive behavior
- Holding schoolwide celebrations that were contingent on the overall reduction of disciplinary referrals

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Source: Bohanon, H., Fenning, P., Carney, K. L., Minnis-Kim, M. J., Anderson-Harriss, S., Moroz, K. B., ... Pigott, T. D. (2006). Schoolwide application of positive behavior support in an urban high school: A case study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 8(3), 131–145. Retrieved August 13, 2011, from [http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/596879/schoolwide\\_application\\_of\\_positive\\_behavior\\_support\\_in\\_an\\_urban\\_high/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/596879/schoolwide_application_of_positive_behavior_support_in_an_urban_high/)

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## Suggestions for Further Reading

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