

Several students spoke to their initial experiences at CRA, when they learned what it is like to be accepted and how to speak up for themselves and others, to use respectful language but to still approach controversial topics. The outcome of this emphasis is evidenced by the fact that students do not change their language or stop talking when teachers or administrators walk by.

I've had classes with my teachers and with other students . . . that not only promote an idea of tolerance and respect but also they want us to speak our minds. (Student focus group)

Students feel comfortable expressing their views and opinions and engaging in a discussion process. Students could be seen using in the focus groups and hallways the same techniques and language they have learned about respect and acceptance in their classrooms.

I found myself kind of taking on a role of social justice warrior—which, I don't know, feels like a dirty word for some reason, like to be a feminist—but outside of the school, like on the bus, people will make comments about trans people. . . . I feel like it's my responsibility, after knowing what I've learned in the school, to stand up and say, "Hey! Guys, that's not cool." And I feel like that's a skill we learn in this school, how to speak our minds and fight for those who might not have the same voice. (Student focus group)

Asking students to value depth over coverage, and expecting teachers to teach that way, means being open to the profound discussions that occur when student begin to use their minds well. It would be disingenuous to invite depth then stifle the discussion. Thus, it is teachers that manage, facilitate, and structure discussions in ways that support students who may have been silenced by other educational settings.

I think there's a few teachers at the school who will help kick-start really thinking deep about yourself as an individual. . . . I think part of it is the teacher, obviously. I think they really promote thinking deep about broad subjects and controversial subjects like race and sexuality, and they really want you to have a strong mind, strong grasp around these things. But another thing . . . is that a lot of people who come to Renaissance are people who were . . . usually bullied or picked on for the vast majority of the first half . . . or for most of their school career, and one of the things that draws people here is this idea that we'll be accepted regardless of what we might think is different . . . like being someone who was really into the arts and being a singer in elementary and middle school. That was considered a "gay" thing to do. Doesn't matter here. And so, finding a place where we can talk and open up about these things and knowing that there are other people like us who had been bullied and picked on, maybe not for the same reasons, but it develops this understanding between us. I've never met someone who's gay until I came to Renaissance. And . . . you know what? Up until that point in my life, all I had in my mind were what you see in the media and all that sort of stuff. You know, stereotypes. And then, I've actually met people that helped open my mind to what seems different. . . . We find like-minded individuals which we can open and share and be ourselves with and that's so liberating and some wonderful beautiful thing. (Student focus group)

Integral to this approach is that the benefits of powerful subject matter raise the level of rigor for all students. Students must be engaged in the work of their peers and together they drive into their subject matter in meaningful ways.

JORDAN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Jordan Valley, Oregon (pop. 175; census data 2013), is located in the remote southeastern corner of Oregon, 50 miles from the Idaho border, in a part of the state where ranching and agriculture form the basis of most occupations. The sweeping plains of the valley are dotted with family farms and ranches separated by grazing land and seemingly uncountable numbers of livestock. The town itself

Jordan Valley High School 2014–15

Enrollment: 48 (Grades 7–12)

Graduation Rate: 100%

9th-Graders on Track: > 95%

Students Taking SAT: 40%



lies along U.S. Route 95, a main thoroughfare between Boise, Idaho, and Reno, Nevada. As the highway enters Jordan Valley from the west, it passes by a coffee shop, a gas station/hotel, a convenience store, and a restaurant. In the center of town, where Route 95 takes a sharp northerly bend in the road, is a pelota court built in 1915, an artifact from the Basque sheepherders who helped colonize the area. A little further up the road lies Jordan Valley Middle/High School, a small, one-story white building with a sign in front proudly announcing the school as the home of the Mustangs. To the west lies a grassy football field lined with sets of bleachers and a view of Pharmacy Plateau, a prominent geographical and geological landmark boasting the letters JV on its side.

Most of the students of Jordan Valley, as well as their families, teachers, and administrators, have been members of the local community for years. Pictures of grandparents, parents, and former and current students line the upper hallway of the small school, dating back to the class of 1947. The trophy cases archive achievements both scholarly and athletic, their levels of tarnish a testament to generational stability. The town is known for its basketball teams, but the trophies include volleyball, football, rodeo, and 4H competitions. The walls of the new gym (a 1999 addition to the original schoolhouse) are lined with tournament brackets from past championships, with the proud names of the conquering local heroes alongside. Reminders to spectators are posted on the doors to the gym: "Be Loud, Be Proud, Be Respectful."

A recent Student of the Month ceremony provides a glimpse of the sense of family and community that exists at Jordan Valley High School. Right before lunch, once a month, all the students and staff at JVHS gather in the smaller old gym, in the original part of the school building. There are only 45 students in the high school so it could just as easily be held in a large classroom. But the small gym provides a communal space where students sit together on the same small set of bleachers

their parents (and sometimes grandparents) did. They face the basketball floor, chatting and joking with their friends until the first teacher steps out onto the gym floor and asks for their attention, which is given readily. In turn, each of the teachers (there are 4 total) describes the qualities and characteristics of their selection for student of the month. They do not name the student until the end of their monologue, and the anticipatory energy peaks as the anonymity of the winner is slowly revealed by simple process of elimination. The students erupt into cheers as the student is described and ultimately named. This is a monthly ritual for the school. Five students (four high school and one middle school) are recognized and celebrated for a variety of accomplishments. As student names are announced and they step out to the floor to receive their awards from the nominating teachers, the rest of the student body claps for their peers. During the ceremony there is respectful joking and laughter among the students, who often have been in the same classes since kindergarten, but it is respectful in tone and no teachers find it necessary to “shush” anyone. At the end of the ceremony, students disperse to take their lunch break, while the selected Students of the Month get a certificate and have their pictures taken by another student.

Jordan Valley Middle/High School (Grades 7–12) is part of Jordan Valley School District #3, which includes Jordan Valley Elementary School (Grades K–6), also located within the city of Jordan Valley, and Rockville School (Grades K–8), located about 35 miles outside of town. The middle/high school receives students from two other area school districts, including one in Idaho. In the 2015–16 school year, the school’s four teachers range in experience from a first-year teacher to a 32-year veteran in the school. These teachers provide instruction in their areas to students in Grades 7–12. Each teacher also fills additional roles within the school, including girls’ basketball coach, Future Farmers of America (FFA) advisor, drama coach, class advisor, college prep coordinator, and guidance counselor, among others. Principal Rusty Bengoa, also the district superintendent, is new to Jordan Valley this year, although he grew up in a community just 100 miles away. Mr. Bengoa recognizes the importance of relationship building in a small and close-knit environment like Jordan Valley. School is critical for students to assist in their preparation for participation in the local community, whether it is going away to college and returning to work on the family ranch or moving away to work outside of Jordan Valley: “One of the big things for me is to keep pushing the kids, and I want to make sure everybody is challenged every step of the way to get better. I don’t want to settle.”

SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

In a rural community like Jordan Valley, the schools play a critical and central role in the surrounding areas. Not only do they provide children and their families with basic education, but they also quite often serve as the cultural and economic focal points for the community. The population of the Jordan Valley region is spread across wide swathes of land, and the workload required by the ranching and agricultural lifestyle is a heavy one. Curricular and extracurricular activities provide entertainment, education, community building, social connection, and networking. The relationships built through the process become reciprocal. As social capital increases, the potential for participants to access and leverage the assets of the community grows as well. School-based activities not

only provide students with opportunities to experience a variety of activities, but also serve as entertainment and as a source of local pride. This dynamic is profoundly clear in Jordan Valley, where collective expressions of Mustang pride come boisterously from students, families, teachers, and the entire community.

It's a major community activity from the first football game in August to the last track meet. We fill the gym to overflowing capacity and it's a huge commitment. The people around here have jobs and they do whatever they can to take a whole entire weekend off so they can go with their kids to the [away games outside of Jordan Valley] and then come home. (Teacher interview)

This is a tight-knit community. When you go to a basketball game, the stands are full. The entire community shows up for support in there. Even the awards, with other sports or academics, there's a huge turnout and everybody is very supportive. (Conversation with Principal Bengoa)

Throughout the school year, students have opportunities to participate in school-based athletic activities as well as programs coordinated by teachers. The variety of activities is impressive. During Thanksgiving last year there was an afternoon carnival and turkey shoot, which was open to community members. The drama club recently hosted a dinner theater production. Attendance at the student performance of the play itself was free, but community members could also purchase a ticket to a pre-performance dinner, served at long tables set up in the school's old gym, where the stage is located. On the afternoon before opening night, while the drama coach and her students ran through the final preparation for the play, parent volunteers were in the school, assisting in setting up and decorating the dinner tables and using the school's home economics kitchen to prepare the food that would be served to those attending the dinner.



There are both formal and informal structures that support community development. Jordan Valley has both a Parent Teacher Organization and a Booster Club. These organizations coordinate and develop fundraising activities, provide funding for athletic uniforms, making it possible for students to attend basketball camp.

Local businesses are regular donors for school-based events and academic needs. One business bought graphing calculators for a class of advanced math students. Other local businesses and ranchers serve on senior project committees for students completing their Senior Capstone projects that require students to research potential careers in which they may be interested. Students participate in job shadowing and community service projects. The project culminates with a presentation to a committee that includes local community members who provide feedback on their research and presentation skills.

There is a spirit of both reciprocity and investment for community members in Jordan Valley. In a remote, rural area like Jordan Valley, the health and sustainability of the community relies on local business helping the community, which in turn supports the local businesses. The shared responsibility for educational success means that students get support for all their endeavors. In return, students provide support and entertainment in the form of sporting events, local plays, and community service projects.

In Jordan Valley, community engagement is an equity issue. Principal Bengoa credits the programs and support from the community and Malheur Education Service District for helping students, teachers, and families access resources they need to meet basic needs. The closeness of the relationships between teachers and students also allows the school to anticipate any needs and reach out to families personally to ensure that students have the opportunity to participate in any activity they want to pursue.

We really fight to make sure that every kid gets the opportunity to [participate in all school activities]. If there's some way that they can earn it, if they need to pay \$20 to go on a field trip and they don't have that \$20, we try to figure out a way to [help]: "Let's do a fundraiser. We'll pay for everybody. That way everybody gets to go [on the field trip] so they don't have to pay for it on their own." (Teacher interview)

A result of the community involvement and support in the school is that students feel safe and at home at Jordan Valley. They spend a good deal of time at the school, especially students who drive long distances to get to and from school and are involved in multiple activities.

The general feel of the school . . . the majority of the time is positive, very positive. Like I said, it's a very comfortable environment. The kids are comfortable being here; the teachers are comfortable being here. It's not stressful on people to show up. They're not scared about something. They come to work or to school even, it's an enjoyable day. The social aspects of the school for the rural community are that everyone gets together, otherwise they're scattered around. It's good for the kids in that sense. (Conversation with Principal Bengoa)

Norms of community reciprocity are not merely financial. Students also see the investment in their future that all the adults around them are making, and many students feel that they want to live up to the standards that are being set for them by their community.

When we have an event or something like sports awards or FFA kick-off barbecue, a lot of people will come and be there even if they don't have a kid in the school. They will just come and be supportive and they'll say . . . congratulations after you've gotten an award or something. (Student focus group)

There is a social contract in the community that sends a unified message to the students: this is what school is for, you are here to learn. As students work hard to fulfill their part of the contract, the community provides the necessary resources and support, even while recognizing that not all students will come back to fill roles in the community if they leave the area to obtain postsecondary education/training.

The students just understand that that's what their parents will do for them. They're teenagers, I don't know how much they express their gratitude. But they definitely notice when they are sitting in a gym at an away game and the Jordan Valley side is fuller than the home side is—that happens a lot and they comment on it. They are recognizing that they are getting a lot of dedicated support from the community. (Teacher interview)

The support of the local community means that students do often come back to the area after going away for postsecondary studies. This is important in a remote area where fewer college-level jobs exist. At the beginning of the 2015 school year, agriculture sciences teacher Annie Mackenzie stepped in to fill a role in the school when she heard that Jordan Valley was going to have to drop its CTE agriculture technology and shop courses. "I grew up here and I went to high school here and I was back helping my dad. . . . They mentioned that they might lose their Ag program if they couldn't find somebody to take the position and so I said, well, Jordan Valley needs an Ag program, it's an Ag community." A recent college graduate herself with a background in agriculture, Ms. Mackenzie knew that this program was important to the identity of the local community, so she offered to teach the classes while simultaneously working on her teaching degree through Eastern Oregon University.

COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT

One result of having a small school setting is that teachers and administrators play multiple roles within the school environment. All the teachers at Jordan Valley are department leaders because, essentially, they *are* their department. A deeper level of collaboration and communication is thus enabled and essential to the school's functioning. Teachers feel that Mr. Bengoa, in his first year as Jordan Valley superintendent and principal, is working hard to build strong relationships, to bring teachers together and get them on the same page while providing collective decision making. With a staff this small, when there are problems or decisions to be made, the group sits down and comes to consensus about future directions.

The teachers at Jordan Valley use a professional learning community (PLC) model that meets on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. The intent of the PLC is to work on goal setting, to write building- and classroom-level goals around spring state testing data and the Common Core State Standards, and to use both state and classroom data to examine instruction and student achievement.

The ability to know the students is the key component to this process. Principal Bengoa points out that there is mutual respect between students and staff at Jordan Valley. During PLCs, time is set aside to check in about students whose academic needs are not being met. Struggling students are then placed in what the school calls "teacher rotations." When teachers identify a student who could benefit from additional and targeted work time, the student is assigned to rotation. Once students receive this designation, they are expected to stay after school with a different teacher each afternoon during the week to work through their areas of difficulty and bring up their grades. This program is fully supported by the principal and the athletic coaches; if a student is on rotation, he or she is expected to

be in the classroom instead of attending sports practice or other activities.

Students learn best when they are given meaningful activities to do that are tied to specific standards and objectives and when they are given a chance to demonstrate that success to some meaningful assessment. It's going to be meaningful. We just aren't into busy work around here. We have too much to teach to just throw up worksheets randomly to fill 45 minutes. No, there's no time for that sort of thing. Since we do have a really short, tight school year, most of the teachers around here fill up 56 minutes a period, seven periods a day, just keeping kids actively engaged in what's going on. I think that's probably all of our attitudes. There's not a whole lot of wasted time going on around here.
(Teacher interview)

Rotations are a key reason why students report that they feel that their teachers go the extra mile for them. The teachers take turns staying after school to help in more than just their own content area, so students are confident that they will get the help they need and teachers share the workload. Principal Bengoa is proud of the relationships between teachers and students at his school: "I feel that the teachers have a phenomenal relationship with their students. The students respect the teachers and when they're in their classrooms, they understand what they are there for." The safety net created by the relationship between students and the community is thus reinforced by the way social capital is leveraged in the school itself. The relationships between students and teachers and both groups' willingness to engage in the work means that students get individualized attention and support.

HIGH STANDARDS FOR A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

In a rural community like Jordan Valley, most of the students come from ranching/ agricultural families. Students are used to the requirements that come with the lifestyle, with the commitment to being fully engaged in the work before and after school and on the weekends. Work ethic and responsibility are instilled in students at a young age. Students are described by their teachers as diligent, hardworking, and responsible. The local community values these traits, yet families also understand that ranching is a precarious employment situation. The community is united in the expectation that all students finish high school but also place a lot of value on the importance of postsecondary education to ensure that students receive a credential that will allow them to achieve their goals after leaving high school. Some students move away from the region because the opportunities in the area are limited, but close ties with family and community also mean that many students want to try to find a way to come back to Jordan Valley.

These high standards for student academics drive the decision making that takes place at Jordan Valley, based on what is best for students to achieve academic success. "We really want our kids to be successful, but our solution is not to dumb things down, but provide students with the time and support that they need to elevate them." The administration and teachers at Jordan Valley work to keep the parent/community response in mind, but they are also not afraid to take on innovative projects if there is consensus around what is best for kids. One example is an increased number of days on the school calendar this year, which is not always desirable to families that want/need to have

students at home to work. However, the school administration and staff determined that kids needed more instructional time, so they were able to make the changes that they sought with the support of the community.

Jordan Valley promotes a culture of college and career readiness through a variety of methods designed to encourage exploration and goal setting. Through a close partnership with Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC), all freshmen at Jordan Valley take Success 101, an introductory course that encourages the exploration of career options and preparation for postsecondary education. Students receive three college credits for taking this class. Juniors and seniors at Jordan Valley have access to on-site dual credit classes in mathematics, English/language arts, social science, and career technical education (CTE) through TVCC, while other introductory classes can be taken online. Families pay for the dual credit classes, but at a very reduced cost (i.e., \$10–\$40 per credit), with some of the cost subsidized by the Eastern Promise collaboration. Because of the availability of dual credit classes and the support provided by Jordan Valley administration and teachers, current juniors may acquire 15–20 college credits by the time they graduate, reducing the future economic load for students and their families, while also preparing them for academic success in a small and supportive environment. Students at Jordan Valley can get time with the school's paraprofessional aides, who work with students during a dedicated time during the school day for those students enrolled in TVCC classes. Additionally, a TVCC liaison comes to Jordan Valley monthly to orient students to the dual credit and community college process, and to help them navigate the world of postsecondary education and transfer credits.



All seniors at Jordan Valley take a capstone class. This class requires students to complete a project that involves researching their job interests and obtaining relevant, hands-on experience through job shadowing and community projects tied to their interests. At the end of their project, students present the findings of their research in front of a board of community members who provide feedback on their perceptions of student employability and on their written and oral presentation skills.

CTE programs are a foundation of the educational programming in the school, and agricultural technology is the cornerstone. The agricultural science and shop classes that are offered, and the CTE classes offered through TVCC, create a place-based educational approach that prepares students to contribute to their local community. Additionally, the school has an active Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter that is supervised by Ms. Mackenzie. Participation in FFA gives students real-world experiences with agricultural sciences, including leadership, personal growth, and career success components. As a recent college graduate herself, Ms. Mackenzie works to provide students with

answers to their questions about the experience of college, not just the academics: "I always tell them that's the best experience of their life, that they have to go, at least for a while, it is good to get out of Jordan Valley. Even if they come back to the ranch, go learn something new from somebody new who does it different."

The principal and teachers at Jordan Valley are in agreement about their vision for the school: continuing to build and promote the college-going culture at their school and setting goals on how to also establish a college-completing culture. Future plans include expanding options to meet student interest and community needs for CTE programs in areas that will contribute to local economic prosperity, such as health occupations, automotive technology, and veterinary programs. Sheryl Douglass, a 30+ year veteran teacher of Jordan Valley sums up the philosophy of the school: "I've got six years to give them the best education that I can so that whatever they want to do, when they leave Jordan Valley, it's available to them."

SHERIDAN HIGH SCHOOL

Sheridan (pop. 6,011; 2013 census data) is located along Route 18 in the Northern Willamette Valley in Oregon. The Sheridan Bridge spans the meandering Yamhill River, whose waters provide sustenance to some of the most fertile farmland in the world. Amid the wine grapes and hazelnut trees sits Sheridan High School (SHS), home of the Spartans and 244 students in Grades 9–12. The

Sheridan High School 2014–15

Enrollment: 244

Graduation Rate: 89.58%

9th-Graders on Track: 66.7%

Students Taking SAT: 45.1%



high school is a one-story building with a bright and welcoming foyer in which Principal Dean Rech stands and welcomes students to begin every day. A prominent trophy case chronicles the achievements of the SHS teams. From the foyer, the school is divided into a series of hallways with large blue and gold lettering announcing the grade level. A quotation accompanies each sign: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." "Reputation is for time, character is for eternity." "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened." In fact, the walls throughout the hallways are filled with value statements and inspirational quotations. Banners hang from rafters urging students to "Be Involved!" "Be Respectful!" "Be Responsible!" These are all mantras for their

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. Above the hallway to the classrooms for agricultural technology and other career technical education (CTE) classes is the seal for Future Farmers of America and the values of "Premier Leadership, Personal Growth and Career Success." In fact, it is impossible to walk through the school without confronting visible evidence of school spirit, clearly stated values, and inspirational messages.

The power of community is vital in a school on the rebound. The closure of a manufactured home factory in 2012 meant that many families lost jobs. Traversing the difficult terrain of the economic recession required the steady hand of the small and dedicated staff at Sheridan High. Principal Rech has been in the district for 19 years, with the last six spent as the principal. Office manager Karen Martin has been in the district for 31 years. Kimberly Butt has been teaching for 33 years, with 22 of them at Sheridan High. Dotty Bagwell, the school librarian, has been there for 16 years. There has also been an influx of younger and newer teachers and staff at the school. Kelsey Brown is the new school counselor. Before she arrived the school had not had a counselor for the previous five years; the role was taken on by Mr. Rech and other staff. Tyson Pratt teaches Spanish, ELL, and Leadership. However,

a simple listing of tenure and job titles undersells the role that staff plays at SHS. Concerted efforts to coordinate services, both educational and social, have created conditions that reinforce the values painted on the walls. For Rech the foundation of their work is structured by relationships: “The great thing about this is we’re building relationships because we really care about the kids and we want to make a difference in their lives, not for the support they need that when they leave school that they’ll be successful in what they do.”

The following sections will highlight the particular organizational and community structure and process assets Sheridan High School is leveraging in service of students and families in Sheridan.

TEACHER COLLABORATION

In small rural schools, the work of the staff and teachers is rarely limited to their job description. As mentioned, when SHS didn’t have a counselor, the principal assumed many of those duties. “As you’ve heard . . . a lot of teachers get to wear different hats, many hats here in the smaller district. And they’re all in.” (Principal Rech, focus group). Limited human resources leads to professional diversification. These varied roles create overlap and proximity that lend themselves to collaboration. As teachers at SHS introduced themselves, the variety of their duties became readily apparent. The following excerpts demonstrate the many roles that teachers, administrators, and staff members at Sheridan are asked to play (emphasis added):

I’m Kimberly Butt and . . . this is my 23rd year here in this district and 33 years teaching total. I have a weird role because I’m not only a full-time teacher, I’m also a parent of a child here in school and that has given me a lot of different roles unofficially that I do. I teach English mostly, primarily freshmen and juniors. I do a lot with credit recovery programs because I also do the summer school program and, as a part of an afterschool study hall which started as a grant, the afterschool program, which we have retained and funded once the grant [was] gone. We’ve also kept our robotics teams [for] which I’m the liaison also and even though I’m totally out of my depth in robotics. The afterschool study hall [is] where we do a lot of credit recovery, a lot of math support, science because there’s a lot of math in that, and social studies. I’ve been referred to as the Great Mathi because I go after them to keep eligible—since I also have a son in sports, I kind of liaised when the coaches come to ask me what can they do [to] get their athletes in that school program so they can play. I think what else I do, work with the professional development committee. I was AVID coordinator here at the high school until this year when we started that two or three years, four years ago. (Teacher interview)

[I’m] Julia Holsti and . . . primarily I’m career technical educator, so I have marketing and I have computer apps, web design, computer science, those types of classes, and then as part of my CTE role I also complete all data reports for ODE at the end of the year. I compile the data from our CTE programs and then I do all the program updates through ODE as well in the fall. And then I teach, I have an elective, I teach AVID 11 and I’ve had that same group since they are freshmen. It’s kind of neat to see them grow, and now we’re looking at scholarships and looking up where we’re going to go and find the colleges next year. Through our AVID program, and Kim [Kimberly Butt] is really involved in that as well, we have done a lot of different college visits. We take students to visit college campuses every year and so that’s part of Aspire as well, and Kelsey [school counselor] is now involved with the planning of

going to college fairs and visiting college campuses and so we stress a lot of just getting kids to get that experience. Kim and I have had three big trips so far. (Teacher interview)

The various responsibilities outlined in the excerpts above demonstrate how multiple roles can lead to collaboration. For Ms. Butt, her role as English teacher and mother to a son at the school brings her into contact with the coaches and her roles as the robotics team coordinator and former AVID coordinator bring her into contact with other staff at the school. For Ms. Holsti, her role as the new AVID coordinator means that she is collaborating with Ms. Butt and the school counselor to coordinate college visits and other programs. Although teachers and other staff taking on multiple roles is not unique to small and rural schools, the small staff size means that there are more points of contact across the school. These points of contact provide both formal and informal opportunities for staff to share information, trade ideas, and plan future efforts.

Teacher effectiveness within this multitasking environment is made possible through a somewhat hands-off approach from the administration.

I find myself here as someone who helps guide, facilitate, and really just do anything I can to help. I get them what they need to be successful. They're the ones that are in the trenches, they're the ones that are working hard, they're on the front lines with the kids, and I really appreciate their efforts and their commitment to the kids here at Sheridan High School and really they're the ones doing it. (Conversation with Principal Rech)

Data from the teacher survey indicate that most teachers at Sheridan agree that leaders at Sheridan encourage and support people who are willing to step up and take on leadership roles. It is from this belief system that teachers become empowered in their positions to take on multiple projects, to collaborate across classrooms, and to reach out into the community.

These relationships become key supports for students as they navigate the complexities of home, school, and activities:

Family and then support within teachers and students. When I did cheer, my coach is really supportive and even for our school we have these things that say you can't do the sports if you don't pass these classes, but she'll tell you two weeks in advance. She's like, "You need to focus on this, get some help" and then my cheer. It was a lot of drama this year, but the last couple of years since freshman year, I've been injured and it's been family. We are all close to each other. We know if someone's upset that day, we'll come in and hug them and try to make them feel better. What we say before is that we stir the drama out of the gym doors before we come in. We can be calm and work together as a unit. Family and cheer, it's one of the things that I focused on most and then college. Family—I have two younger sisters, one older sister, but then my mom has a boyfriend that has three kids—this is my family and I have to focus on them. For sometimes schoolwork, I have to help with dinner and do all this other stuff. There's nine people in my house and I'm trying to get everything ready and then sometimes I don't feel there's help—but then I can come back to a teacher and be like, "I'm stressed out about it" and then she's like, "This is what you can do" or she calms me down. She helps a lot with things. (Student focus group)

This student's experience demonstrates the web of support that collaboration between her coach and teachers creates in her life. The coach leverages the student activity in service of the student's academic success and urges her to find support from teachers at the school. Teachers then provide support that considers the student's social and familial responsibilities.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Sheridan High School participates in Willamette Promise, a part of the Regional Achievement Collaborative (RAC) located within the Willamette Educational Service District. The focus of Willamette Promise is to increase access to and participation in dual credit classes in collaboration with Chemeketa Community College and Willamette University in Salem. Developing professional learning communities (PLCs) between practitioners at the secondary and postsecondary levels is a key strategy of the collaborative. At Sheridan, PLCs are integrated both horizontally (within the school) and vertically (between schools). This intentional collaboration is vital to providing support to students as they earn college credit during their high school years and is a foundational aspect of Sheridan's approach to college and career readiness.

The PLCs within Sheridan High School provide teachers with the opportunity to align curriculum across grade levels. Academic departments at SHS are small, so PLCs are structured broadly across disciplines.

It's interesting having a PLC in a small school, because when we first went to it, what we found out is there were a lot of schools with PLCs but they were all big schools and they had it by department. I said, "Well, okay, that means our business teacher is one department." You couldn't do it by department at our high school, so we've had to do some combining. (Teacher focus group)

Like the informal structure detailed in the previous sections, the more formal PLC structures require interdisciplinary collaboration due to small numbers of teachers. This presents both opportunities and challenges for teachers.

But our PLC, we're struggling in some ways because we don't all have the same students and we don't teach the same classes. I'm the only one in our PLC that teaches freshman English and junior English. But we're looking at different ways that maybe we can align with freshman teachers who might be doing different content but have the same students, so you can attack strategies that way. (Teacher focus group)



In addition to the horizontal alignment within the school, teachers meet monthly with teachers from the middle schools. These meetings allow teachers across school sites to collaborate, plan professional development, and build community across schools.

The PLCs of the high school—the junior high has PLCs, too, and the grade school—once a month those PLCs come together in departments. Then we have the teacher instructional leadership and we look at a lot of the different data for the district and the report cards and what we could do, what we can do better and that combines also and dovetails into the collaboration grant which is now the PD, where we're looking at professional development and upping the quality of our professional development. We've been doing a lot of surveys with what the teachers feel about the professional development, what works, what doesn't work, and how to improve it, what they need. (Teacher focus group)

Four times a year, SHS teachers participate in PLCs with college instructors and other high school teachers in order to align the dual credit course curricula: "... at the ESD where we're in contact not only with the professors from the college but also the other teachers within ESD that are doing the same subject area" (Teacher focus group). High school teachers and college instructors double-score student work; when it meets the agreed-upon standards, students are awarded college credit. Often, high school teachers must have Master's degrees in the content area in order for them to teach dual credit classes at the high school. This becomes a significant barrier for rural and distant town schools and results in inequitable access to early college credit. Double-scoring student work allows them to earn college credit regardless of teacher credentialing.

COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY

Schools in small towns often serve as the social center of the community. Teachers tend to live in the community where they teach; multiple generations of families have walked the same school building hallways. The institutional memory of the schools is inextricably linked to the history of the town. SHS is no different. The homecoming parade is well supported, the trophy case highlights athletic successes that span decades, and Future Farmers of America helps prepare kids for their roles on family farms. Shifting demographics and socioeconomic realities are changing the culture of towns like Sheridan. The largest employer in the area is the federal prison, located just outside town. When the manufacturing plant closed, some families had to leave to find work. Within this challenging context, the school has fought to maintain a sense of community and contribute to the solutions.

Mr. Pratt, the Spanish teacher/ELL teacher/leadership teacher, is on the forefront of these efforts. In his leadership class he speaks of the values that drive their work:

We've talked about a lot of things that the leadership group does . . . we tried to teach selflessness. Our motto is we have spirit and we want to get out the spirit of the school, because I believe we've got positive things going on in our school . . . I want everybody to recognize those things. That's our motto and then I'm just trying to teach selflessness, empathy. When we did our Thanksgiving, that was part of our service unit because we did some service, and then in the spring I wanted some accomplishment, it was kind of a unit that I want to teach there. I feel really good about what our leadership group is trying to achieve as far as getting the message out regarding those things. (Teacher focus group).

Last Thanksgiving, the school hosted a meal for families in the community. It was organized, fundraised, prepared, and served by students and school staff.

Yeah, somebody had a great idea to put on a community dinner on Thanksgiving Day, because we felt like we have a need in this community, maybe people didn't have the extra money to make a real nice meal on Thanksgiving Day, so we got the leadership class to help coordinate a big Thanksgiving dinner and, on Thanksgiving Day from 11 to 1 in the afternoon . . . we had about 70 people. Just an overwhelming giving heart from this community here and the whole idea was . . . to really build this relationship with the district and with the community. And I think there's been a disconnect for a while and we're trying to bring that [relationship] back in and I know that's one of our district goals. (Conversation with Principal Rech)



In addition to events like the Thanksgiving meal, the school has developed partnerships with local service agencies to attend to the social, physical, and mental health needs of students. A mental health counselor and a drug and alcohol counselor from Yamhill County Family and Youth Services visit the school twice a week. These services become integral, as drug use in the area has risen in recent years. Data from the teacher survey indicated that teachers believe drug and alcohol use in the home to be a significant barrier to academic success at SHS. The school has also organized with

local service providers to provide firewood in homes with wood stoves as their primary source. The wraparound services place SHS at the center of the community for students and their families. It is a place where families can get help and access services.

Community service is also built into the curriculum of the school. All seniors participate in a senior inquiry class where they participate in 30+ hours of community service and keep a binder outlining their participation. During focus groups, one student mentioned conducting a research project about Sheridan High graduates who had gone into the military. Another was organizing a 5k fun run to raise money for the senior trip. Another was organizing a volleyball tournament as a fundraiser for breast cancer research. The senior inquiry class is a capstone project that is required for graduation. Students participate, organize their projects, and then present them to a panel of community and school staff members where they are evaluated.

When viewed through the School Success Model, community service and collaboration can easily be considered some of the core values of SHS. They are made explicit as values by administrators, teachers, staff, and students; they have been integrated into the structures, the instructional practices, and professional development of the school. Successfully instilling these values requires an intentional organizing of social capital both within the school and in the community.

JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL MIDDLE COLLEGE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

There is a familiar and familial feeling in the hallways at Jefferson High School in Portland, Oregon. From the outside, the 100+ year old building's brick façade faces out on an athletic field under the vigilant watch of a seated statue of the third president. The energy from Killingsworth Street, a main thoroughfare of this North/Northeast Portland community, bubbles through the front doors as students spill in to begin their day.

Students talk and laugh with friends in groups along the hallway, with frequent and welcome interruptions from school staff—administrators, teachers, and security guards alike—that connote a cultivated and reciprocal feeling of community.

Jefferson High School 2014–15

Enrollment: 475

Graduation Rate: 80.47%

9th-Graders on Track: 81.1%

Students Taking SAT: 41.5%

Located in historic North/Northeast

Portland, Jefferson High School sits within a neighborhood that was once predominantly African American but has seen recent dramatic shifts in demographics due to gentrification. Jefferson has long been the only predominantly African American high school in the state of Oregon; built in 1908, it is also one of its oldest. The legacy of the Jefferson Democrats is a powerful story of race, resistance, education, and perseverance. Its current iteration resulted from the creation of a partnership between the high school and two organizations in the neighborhood: Portland Community College (PCC) and Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI). While the high school had developed and redefined various collaborations in the past, five years ago the district's threat to close Jefferson resulted in a formalized partnership and an agreement to succeed or fail together.

Principal Margaret Calvert and Vice Principal Ricky Allen are visible figures in the hallways at Jefferson in between classes and before and after school, greeting students by name and shaking their hands. Principal Calvert came to Jefferson as a vice principal right at a critical transition point, when Jefferson was facing closure but also pressure from the community to stay open. She was part of negotiations with community leaders and institutions about what it was going to take to get the right people at the table to provide a foundational and sustainable vision of what Jefferson would become. Her leadership has since provided stability that was lacking in previous years.

In describing the culture of the school, Principal Calvert had this to say (emphasis added):

Dynamic, very relationship-based. A sense of community, sense of social justice. All schools have a sense of possibility. There is an undercurrent of really wanting transformation for kids and for the community as a whole. That's part of what's different, if I were to describe it, it's not about individuals' success. You can win with a kid. We want to win with every kid. If that's the case,