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# Oregon Quality Education Commission College Readiness Case Study Project



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# CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Tables and Figures</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
School Success Model .....	2
Methods .....	4
<i>School Selection</i> .....	4
<i>Data Collection Methods</i> .....	4
<i>Analytic Framework</i> .....	7
<b>Case Study Schools</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Crater Renaissance Academy .....	9
<i>Collective Vision</i> .....	11
<i>Leadership</i> .....	12
<i>Professional Development</i> .....	13
<i>Academic Structures</i> .....	14
<i>Focus on Social Justice</i> .....	15
Jordan Valley High School .....	18
<i>School and the Community</i> .....	19
<i>Collaboration and Support</i> .....	22
<i>High Standards for a College-Going Culture</i> .....	23
Sheridan High School .....	26
<i>Teacher Collaboration</i> .....	27
<i>Professional Learning Communities</i> .....	29
<i>Collaboration With Community</i> .....	30
Jefferson High School Middle College for Advanced Studies .....	32
<i>Leveraging Strong Partnerships</i> .....	33
<i>Structures That Support Student Success</i> .....	37
<i>Gentrification and DEMOgraphics</i> .....	39
<i>Valuing Relationships and Authenticity</i> .....	41
<b>Cross-Case Analysis</b> .....	<b>43</b>
Social Capital .....	43
<i>Bonding Social Capital: School-as-Community</i> .....	44
<i>Bridging Social Capital: School-in-Community</i> .....	47
Sense Making .....	48
<i>The AVID Choice</i> .....	49
<i>Staffing Priorities</i> .....	50
<i>Using Assessment Data</i> .....	51
Leveraging Relationships Into Student Success .....	51
<i>Building Culture at Crater Renaissance Academy</i> .....	52
<i>Freshman Academies at Jefferson</i> .....	52
<b>Striving Forward</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	<b>57</b>
<b>Appendix A: School Data</b> .....	<b>58</b>
<b>Appendix B: Teacher Survey Results</b> .....	<b>59</b>

# TABLES AND FIGURES

**Table 1.** Definitions for Key Elements at Each Level of the School Success Model ..... 3  
**Table 2.** Case Study School Selection Variables, 2014–2015 ..... 8  
**Figure 1.** Structure of the School Success Model ..... 2

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) conducted a case study analysis during the 2015–16 school year of four Oregon high schools (Crater Renaissance Academy, Jordan Valley High School, Sheridan High School, Jefferson Middle College) located in differing geographical locations. The purpose of the study was to identify and find support for factors that contribute to successful schools, leading to positive college and career readiness outcomes for students. We used the EPIC School Success Model as an organizing framework to examine the extent to which academic, programmatic, social, and other factors were aligned with a core set of values, beliefs, theoretical frameworks, attitudes, and vision. Complete findings are described in later sections, but a few key findings are highlighted here:

- The schools shared a number of common elements. All were able to activate and leverage social capital in service of the students. In this context social capital refers internally to the degree to which adults in the school building are able to collaborate across classrooms, departments, and services. Some examples include professional learning communities, professional development, and school care teams. Externally, social capital refers to the degree to which the school partners with outside agencies in order to serve the academic, social, and cultural needs of the school. Examples include postsecondary institutions and social service providers.
- Schools in the study also demonstrated an ability to use data to make sense of student achievement and strategize for future efforts based on a commitment to the values and beliefs that they espouse. Examples include the decision process to adopt AVID, staffing choices, and school data teams.
- Schools in the study shared an approach to program design that includes weighing costs and benefits around aspects of school structure, which includes the importance of local and cultural relevance.
- In each of the schools there was a profound connection between students and teachers. Students felt known by their teachers and supported to reach their postsecondary goals.

The complexity of the individual cases is explored in greater detail in the report. The individual attributes and voices of each school are explored and analyzed. We then provide a cross-case analysis of common themes from the schools.

# INTRODUCTION

The Oregon 40-40-20 goal, heralded by the adoption of Senate Bill 253 in 2011, seeks to better prepare young learners in Oregon for the growing demands of the 21st-century workforce. To this end, it is commonly understood that schools need to be doing a better job at preparing today's youth to exit high school and obtain postsecondary training and/or education. The Quality Education Commission (QEC) has been working to seek out and better understand the best practices, and the associated contextual factors, used by Oregon high schools to improve graduation rates and promote greater engagement in postsecondary education among Oregon's high school students.

The purpose of this study, undertaken by the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) under contract to the QEC, is to look closely at factors beyond academic achievement alone with regard to what constitutes a successful school. Additionally, this study examines how situational context may have an effect on how schools function, considering factors such as geographic location and connection to the community. The guiding questions that this research was designed to unpack and address are the following:

- What factors contribute to a school's success in achieving positive and equitable student college and career readiness outcomes?
- Do successful schools in varying geographic locales employ similar or different strategies to achieve their success?

This study employed a mixed-method design wherein schools were selected from a list compiled by ECONorthwest via a rigorous quantitative analysis of college-going rates and factors that might influence those rates (e.g., geographic locale, demographics). Schools were ranked within each geographic category by the size of the effect of the school itself in influencing college-going rates. The invited schools were asked to participate in a case study. A case study approach was employed because the examination of quantitative data alone does not explain the unique and powerful interplay and contributions of students, teachers, staff, and community to the functioning of a school. A qualitative perspective allows for a rich and deep description of the combination of interactions that occur within a "successful" school organizational system.

## SCHOOL SUCCESS MODEL

Schools are inherently complicated organizational systems. The challenge of aligning programs, curriculum, grade levels, and funding choices to adequately meet the needs of students, teachers, staff, communities, and families is often an overwhelming task. In such an environment, efficiency and simplicity often take precedence. For the participants, school days are built on hundreds of micro- and macro-level decisions, some of which can have profound impacts and consequences that cannot always be anticipated. Making sense of the data collected in this report required researchers to organize the data along some sort of heuristic that can provide coherent assertions and potential lessons for other schools.

The School Success Model (SSM) is a multileveled, diagnostic framework designed by Dr. Matt Coleman, EPIC's Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer, as a tool that schools can use to organize, align, reflect on, and plan their efforts. The four levels of the SSM (see Figure 1) represent a sense-making progression that begins from a foundation of the beliefs, values, attitudes, vision, and theoretical frameworks that guide the strategic directions of the school. The SSM asserts that this foundational level helps schools to uncover and make explicit the cultural identity of the school. Continuing up the model allows schools to answer the questions of how their structures align with their values, beliefs, etc., how learning happens in the school, and how the school prepares all students for life after high school.



Figure 1. Structure of the School Success Model

The analysis in this case study uses the SSM as a guiding framework. During the site visits, we first attempted to uncover the beliefs, values, and vision that influenced the strategic direction of the school. Based on many prior studies of successful schools, we believed there would be clear indications of a shared vision that could be made explicit by multiple stakeholders in the school. Beliefs, values, and theoretical frameworks could then be traced up through the structures of the school and ultimately be made visible in the instructional practices, program design, and student learning outcomes (see Table 1).

Table 1. Definitions for Key Elements at Each Level of the School Success Model

Key Elements of the School Success Model						
Level 4	<p><b>Instructional Practices</b> refer to what is taught, how it is taught, and how the community assesses what students are learning. Instructional practices must be rooted in pedagogy that is culturally relevant and responsive with the recognition that culture is multidimensional and changes over time.</p>		<p><b>Professional Development</b> is the continuous process of building educator capacity. Professional development should be designed to ensure teachers’ actions and student learning align with the school’s cultural identity.</p>		<p><b>Program Design</b> includes the design of student learning experiences. This can consist of the curriculum, pedagogical approach for how learning takes place, and when and where learning takes place.</p>	
	Level 3	<p><b>Social Capital</b> involves people working together, thinking together, learning from each other, and becoming “collectively committed to improvement.” (Hargreaves &amp; Fullan, 2012)</p>		<p><b>Sense Making</b> is the process of evaluating data, knowledge, and experience using analytical and logical reasoning. Information from multiple perspectives and multiple measures is gathered, disaggregated, reviewed, and analyzed to influence decisions, develop action plans, and guide future action.</p>		<p><b>Innovation</b> is a multistage process in which a new idea that solves an important problem is developed, adopted, and enacted within an organization. Innovation requires taking risk and embracing failure, launching small tests and iterations to develop a solution that works.</p>
		Level 2	<p><b>Leadership</b> entails “taking responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty.” The responsibility of the leadership team is to develop a shared capacity for visioning, sense making, relating, and inventing. (Curtis &amp; City, 2009)</p>		<p><b>Structures &amp; Systems</b> include the infrastructure, communications, roles, role relationships, procedures, methods, and routines that support the operations of a school. Successful structures and systems are well aligned with each other and in accordance with the organizational culture and identity.</p>	
Level 1	<p><b>Theoretical Frameworks</b> are the mental models or lenses that frame how people think, act, and make decisions in a specific context.</p>		<p><b>Beliefs</b> are assumptions and convictions that people hold to be true about themselves and the world around them. Often, values inform the beliefs people hold.</p>		<p><b>Values</b> are the ideals, concepts, or principles that guide people and are integrated into the fabric of an organization. In the context of schools, the values and corresponding beliefs we hold around students and how learning occurs strongly influence how the organization is structured.</p>	
	<p><b>Attitudes</b> refer to the general “feel” of the organization as a collective. They are manifested in interactions between people and are influenced by the specific context, experience, systems of power and privilege, leadership style, etc.</p>		<p><b>Vision</b> is what we want to become true. A vision should serve as a clear guide or north star for current and future courses of action.</p>			

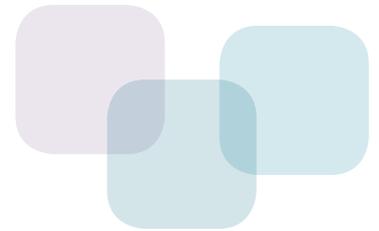
## METHODS

This section provides details about school selection procedures, data collection instruments and processes, and our analytic framework.

### *School Selection*

Case study schools were selected from a list of high-performing schools developed by ECONorthwest for the matched pairs study funded by QEC in 2014–15 (Andrew Dyke, ECONorthwest, memo to Brian Reeder, March 11, 2014). This list identified schools that appeared to have the strongest effects on college-going rates given different sets of demographics. Specifically, the variables included in the analysis that resulted in the ordered ranking of schools within each of four geographic categories (i.e., urban, suburban, town, rural) were the following:

- Enrollment
- Percentage of students with Limited English Proficient (LEP) status
- Percentage of students from economically disadvantaged households
- Percentage of students who are non-White
- Percentage of students who identify as Hispanic



EPIC compiled background information, including major programs and unique circumstances, from about 20 schools: the five schools in each geographic category with the largest effect sizes on college-going rates. The QEC members then determined the order of prioritization for an invitation to participate: the school within each geographic category with the highest effect size would be invited to participate and if the superintendent or principal of that school declined to participate, the school with the second largest effect size would be invited, and so on through the list of the five within each category. In three of the four geographic categories, the school with the largest effect size agreed to participate after being invited by the QEC. In one category, the school with the third largest effect size agreed to participate.

### *Data Collection Methods*

**Student focus groups.** To gain a deeper understanding of student attitudes and perceptions, focus groups were held with students at the four case study schools. Student focus group participants were selected by the school principals to provide equitable representation, to the best of their ability, aligned with the school demographics. EPIC evaluation team members developed a focus group protocol designed to gather student perceptions around individual and school factors associated with positive and equitable college and career readiness outcomes.

The following numbers of students participated in focus groups:

- Crater Renaissance: 41 students, Grades 9–12
- Sheridan: 32 students, Grades 9–12
- Jordan Valley: 16 students, Grades 10–12
- Jefferson: 26 students, Grades 9–12

***School staff and administrator focus groups/interviews.*** To gain a deeper understanding of staff attitudes and perceptions at each school, focus groups/interviews were held with key staff and administration members. Focus group/interview participants were selected through consultation with school principals to obtain access to school staff members who were key to college and career readiness at the school, as well as to include staff who could best address the guiding questions of this project. EPIC researchers developed a focus group protocol designed to gather attitudes and perceptions from key school staff around individual and school-level factors associated with positive and equitable college and career readiness outcomes for students.

The following numbers of staff members participated in focus groups or interviews:

- Crater Renaissance: 7 teachers, 5 administrators/counselors/other
- Jordan Valley: 3 teachers, 1 administrator/counselor/other
- Sheridan: 2 teachers, 3 administrators/counselors/other
- Jefferson: 2 teachers, 6 administrators/counselors/other

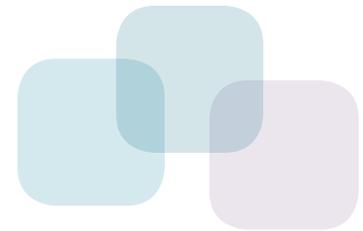
All student and school staff/administrator focus groups and interviews were held during the two-day site visits at each school and were conducted by EPIC team members. Focus group sessions were audio recorded. Participants were provided informed consent information sheets and they provided written and/or oral consent to participate and be recorded. Passive (Jordan Valley, Crater Renaissance, Sheridan) and active (Jefferson) consent forms were also obtained from parent/guardians of student participants. Audio recordings were transcribed, and responses were then organized and thematically analyzed using NVivo qualitative research software. Once themes were identified, data were summarized by category.

***Teacher survey.*** EPIC administered a survey to teachers at each case study school to gather data on educator attitudes and perceptions around the factors associated with a successful school organizational system. The survey was administered using an online format and was designed to be completed in approximately 20–25 minutes. A link to the survey was provided to the principal at each school and thus distributed to the teachers by their administrator for completion. The majority of questions were closed-ended, using a variety of response scales, depending on the survey subsection. Three open-ended items were also included, as well as three demographic questions. The teacher survey included items relating to the following constructs: Schoolwide and Individual

Teacher Efficacy (34 items), Leadership (18 items), School Goal Structure (13 items), College/Career Readiness Culture (6 items), Equity Perceptions (19 items), and Demographics (3 items).

All teachers at the participating schools included in this study were invited to participate. Participation was voluntary and respondents were assured that their participation would not be associated with evaluation and that their responses would remain confidential, to be used only for research purposes. Open-ended data were analyzed and summarized thematically. Closed-ended items were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The number of completed surveys and the response rates for each school are as follows:

- Crater Renaissance: 24 responses, 100%
- Jordan Valley: 2 responses, 50%
- Sheridan: 14 responses, 100%
- Jefferson: 34 responses, 82%



**School observations.** EPIC researchers conducted school walk-throughs along with classroom observations during each two-day site visit. The purpose of the walk-throughs was to look for artifacts that may be indicative of elements of the school culture that support college and career readiness, academic press, multiple rigorous pathways, tone of the school environment, and other factors that generated questions and discussions within a certain case study site. The walk-throughs throughout the school buildings also allowed researchers to note general student and teacher comportment within the school. Classroom observations at each school were arranged through cooperation with the principal and teachers, allowing researchers to attend a sample of classrooms across the grade levels and content areas during the course of the two-day site visits. Classroom observations usually involved short 10- to 15-minute informal observation sessions, enabling approximately 5–10 visits per school. The classroom visits allowed researchers to observe levels of student engagement and teacher-student interaction within the classroom.

**School documents/artifacts.** EPIC staff requested and conducted a review of relevant documents and records from each case study site. Requested records and documents related to the research questions were used to set the school success context for each case study and to clarify or elaborate on the interview and focus group data. Below are the types of documents received from each site:

- Crater Renaissance: Website (includes Teacher Toolbox link to resources on shared instructional strategies for teachers), mission/vision statement, personal education plan for students, CES principles, school improvement plan, proficiency grading documents, restorative justice/ bullying prevention documents, samples of school newsletters
- Jordan Valley: Website (includes link to resources for dual credit program/advising at Treasure Valley Community College), daily schedule

- Sheridan: Website, student handbook, professional development schedule, new teacher mentoring program, sample of school newsletter
- Jefferson: Website, student handbook, school four-year plan, grade-level progression plan documents, course guide, Portland Community College documents, Self Enhancement Inc. document, student staffing protocol

**State data.** EPIC researchers requested and reviewed five years of school data from ODE on metrics that are able to be shared with third parties, such as those contained within the school report cards. These data are summarized in the Appendix. Additionally, the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) survey data were reviewed for case study schools where the data were available at the school level (Crater Renaissance and Sheridan). Data were used to provide context for each individual school and to inform the overall understanding of how the schools function.

### *Analytic Framework*

The EPIC School Success Model was used as a heuristic through which to view the functioning of each case study school. Through the use of constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the analysis began by looking at the primary and secondary data sources from each individual school and identifying the components of the School Success Model that are comprised in Level 1, which include values, beliefs, attitudes, and theoretical frameworks. The next step of the analysis was to examine the patterns in the data that outlined the “through lines,” pathways that illustrate how the Level 1 components inform the development of schoolwide structures and processes that are found in the higher levels of the model. For each case study school, researchers made a decision to highlight those key structures and processes that emerged from the data to provide support for the research questions guiding this inquiry project. Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted to determine how themes found to be common across schools played out differently in each case, in part due to the complexity of factors that contribute to how schools operate and function. Throughout the process of analysis, data sources were compared to provide triangulation on the common themes and were used in the report to provide support for the findings.

## CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

The four participating schools in the case study project represent four different geographical categories, as determined by NCES locale codes: Suburb, rural, town, and city:

- Suburb: Crater Renaissance Academy, Central Point, Oregon
- Rural: Jordan Valley High School, Jordan Valley, Oregon
- Town: Sheridan High School, Sheridan, Oregon
- City: Jefferson High School, Portland, Oregon

This section of the report contains an individual portrait of each school. In keeping with the purpose of this study, unique factors that were identified as contributing to a school's success in achieving positive and equitable college and career readiness outcomes for its students are presented and examined.

See Table 2 for an overview of the demographics of the four schools.

Table 2. Case Study School Selection Variables, 2014–2015

School	Total enrollment	Students with Limited English Proficient status (%)	Students from economically disadvantaged households (%)	Students who are non-White (%)	Students who identify as Hispanic (%)	Minimum distance to OUS* or CCWD** (miles)
Crater Renaissance Academy	427	8	64	23	15	18
Jordan Valley High School	48	***	52	8	8	47
Sheridan High School	244	8	58	25	14	12
Jefferson High School	475	13	****	81	13	2

\* = Oregon University System campus.

\*\* = Community College/Workforce Development campus.

\*\*\* = Data suppressed to protect student confidentiality.

\*\*\*\* = In 2014–15, offered lunch at no charge to all students (77% in 2013–14).

# CRATER RENAISSANCE ACADEMY

Central Point, Oregon (pop. 17,600; 2013 data), sits just to the north of Medford, Oregon. In fact, those traveling south probably would not be able to tell when they passed from Central Point to Medford if not for signs informing them. The city lies along the I-5 corridor that bisects the valleys of western Oregon. The Medford region is a gateway to the Rogue River Valley to the west and the Cascade Mountains (including Crater Lake National Park) to the east. The interstate provides a physical metaphor for the dichotomies in Southern Oregon. Central Point has the highest income per capita in the area of Southern Oregon, which is contrasted by high poverty and unemployment rates, yet 64% of Crater Renaissance students are deemed economically disadvantaged by the state. Politically conservative (the zip code is the most conservative in Oregon), the city is juxtaposed against liberal-leaning Ashland, which is 17 miles to the south and home to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Against this backdrop, Crater Renaissance Academy, a Gates Small School, is carving out a vibrant niche.

## Crater Renaissance Academy 2014–15

**Enrollment: 427**

**Graduation Rate: 72.83%**

**9th-Graders on Track: 71.6%**

**Students Taking SAT: 36.5%**

In 2005, a group of longtime local educators and community leaders came together with the goal of writing a small schools grant and establishing focused academies to better serve the area students. Crater High School community members had always prided themselves as having a school whose staff knew the students well, that welcomed everyone, and that turned out nice kids. An activity at a faculty meeting caught them by surprise: out of a student body of approximately 1,500, every 15th student's name was printed out. Names were posted around the room at the meeting, and teachers were asked to place sticky notes next to students' names, using a yellow note if the student and their family were known very well, and a white note if the student was known well enough to greet in the hallway. At the end of the activity, there were 12–15 student names with only a white note and a few students with no notes at all. This visual representation of connections to the students served as a clarion call to the school staff. The educators wanted to build a school where relationships were important and where every student would be seen and known. Additionally, they felt that achieving successful outcomes would require them to build a school where students could find something to be passionate about, to ignite their interests and keep them engaged in school. A design team assembled to imagine and develop four small schools.

Community outreach discussions were held around Central Point with parents and families about what the small schools model would look like and how it would benefit the students. Although it was difficult at first, the educators not only secured from all their stakeholders the support and trust



they needed to pursue the project, but they also wrote and obtained the grant, laying the groundwork for an alternative approach to high school in the region.

Out of this process ultimately arose three academies within Crater High School. One of the academies is Crater Renaissance Academy (CRA), with 427 students. This school's staff made the decision to adopt the philosophies of the Coalition for Essential Schools (CES). CES is a national network of schools dedicated to 10 principles that form the foundation of the educational approach: learning to use one's mind well, less is more,

depth over coverage, goals apply to all students, personalization, student as worker, teacher as coach, demonstration of mastery, a tone of decency and trust, commitment to the entire school, resources dedicated to teaching and learning, and democracy and equity (for full descriptions see [www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org)). The 10 principles drive the content of the small learning communities that structure the school's curriculum. They are physically apparent on posters in the classrooms and many of the principles pepper the discussions with students, teachers, and administrators.

The emphasis on the arts and sciences is reflected on the walls of the school and in their new performing arts center across the campus. Student artwork and murals line the hallways, adding interest and splashes of color alongside the lockers and display cases. Each teacher's door is decorated with an image and quotation that speaks to an aspect of their personality and/or teaching philosophy. Students created an intricate mosaic of the CRA logo (the spiral that represents the Fibonacci sequence) on the outside of the building. It is a fitting metaphor as CRA has managed to find the golden ratio of pride, expectations, environment, and engagement.

*I feel like all the students and the teachers and the administrators all work really hard together to make a community with everyone and make sure . . . no one gets left behind and everyone's really pushing through together and accepting each other and loving each other. (Student focus group)*

*One of the things that I really love about this school is that last year we had . . . a campaign that student government put together, Student Congress, called Engage and basically it was about teachers and students not letting anyone fall through the cracks. Everyone was going to engage and everyone was going to push forward and even if you stumbled at the finish line, you're going to make it to the finish line and the teachers are going to make sure that you get there. (Student focus group)*

The following sections explore the collective vision of CRA; the leadership structures, including how power and sense making are distributed across all members of the school community; and how the structures of the school encourage and rely on deep discussions of equity, justice, and community.

## COLLECTIVE VISION

The Coalition of Essential School's 10 common principles form the foundation of CRA. Students are taught and exposed to the principles in a variety of ways, including the student handbook. As one teacher explains the vision at CRA, "My quick answer to you is if it doesn't fit into the 10 principles, we don't do it. That's what we built our school on." Each year, CRA focuses on one of the principles, using a variety of teacher- and student-led activities throughout the year. In the 2015–16 school year, the campaign focused on the principle of "Using your mind well."

*One of the things that . . . is crucial to our development as a school is the professional development that we have had for our teachers. . . . For the first 8 years . . . we went to CES National Conferences both during the summer and in the fall and took as many teachers as we could afford to take. Usually that was 12 or 13. We get to visit great schools. We get to talk to great educators, great thinkers, people who are passionate about what they do. It changes everything. There's no more being that cynical teacher sitting in the staff room saying that doesn't exist. They can use this toolbox of tricks and protocols that we have implemented as a school. That's what really on the ground has worked. (Conversation with Principal King)*

The focus on using one's mind well was a continuous theme during the visit. It was spoken and repeated by the students and the adults in the school and many referred to instances of its application in classrooms.

*Yesterday we had an assembly talking about using your mind well, which is our Habit of Mind for this year. And we had a conversation in Mr. Reynolds's class yesterday and it was about using your mind well and what does that actually mean, and how much of your thinking is actually **your** thinking? And he asked all these questions that get you deeper into the topic, and that really just . . . makes me think about life and . . . how much your thinking is actually **your** thinking? Where does it come from? (Student focus group)*

*Student: That certain class, it's structured for essays and research topics, which is where we can demonstrate our own personal taste and our own way of expressing ourselves, are always—I won't necessarily say vague but they're very broad—they give you a lot of opportunities to really dig in to specifics that you are interested in. My sophomore year, we were studying Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. So a really broad section, but we spent a couple weeks in each one, but then we wrote a research paper, we had a problem or issue and we needed to write on that. That was our starting point, and then what that problem or issue might be we got to decide on, whether it was past or present. So there are people writing about the effects of the bombing of Hiroshima, how it affected Japanese culture after the fact. I did mine on the Rwandan genocide. It really helped to express [the] thing I love about this school, is the depth that people go into their subjects, and having that freedom to really go in-depth makes people want to love and really just go for whatever it is they're working on. It turns something that terrified me as sophomore, like a seven- or eight-page research paper, into something that was a complete breeze; I had no problems completing that paper because I loved what I was studying. And I think that's something I've really enjoyed, that it gives this overarching theme and this really broad network and then helps us pinpoint a specific thing and really work at it. By promoting this idea of making yourself think better, using your mind well, is what we call it. So, not*

*just working on something, not just studying the basics but really going in depth, getting every last little detail you can from anything you can study, just extracting it, and chewing over it, and really making it your own.*

*Interviewer: Do you all have a similar experience?*

*Students (collective): Yes. (Student focus group)*

For students, the focus on using one's mind well thus inspires both deep reflection on what they care about and a profound willingness to engage deeply in their learning. In this way students internalize the vision of the school and incorporate it into their learning.

## LEADERSHIP

Strong and shared leadership is evident at CRA. On the teacher survey, 100% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that leaders at CRA support creativity, innovation, and appropriate risk taking in the service of meeting student needs. From the superintendent to new freshmen there are visible structures and processes used by the school and designed to build consensus toward collective action. There is a profound sense of responsibility for the care of the school, each stakeholder playing a role in the maintenance of its design. District Superintendent Samantha Steele expresses an understanding of the need to create the space for an innovative small school like CRA:

*I think you go to the small schools' process and you receive . . . autonomy and then you say "I will protect that . . ." because I think when you have room for people to get together and they believe in something . . . it's going to work. And I really want to give people space to try things. (Conversation with Superintendent Steele)*

As principal, Mr. King provides an overarching and unifying vision for the staff and students at CRA. He is able to model the behaviors he wants to see, providing passion and enthusiasm that is felt by teachers and students, but does so in a way that is supportive and participatory. He attributes much of the school's success to the consensus model used in the school's sense-making processes. During staff meetings, ideas are considered by building consensus. When a decision is made, the expectation is that all teachers will implement the practice in their classrooms.

*That's been an important thing [the consensus model]. We use our consensus model for big things and one of them is instructional techniques. If somebody brings an instructional technique or model forward that people like, we end up saying, "Should we implement this schoolwide?" If we get to [where] everybody is saying yes, then it's my job to make sure everyone's using it. So we have this list found on our website, all of our teachers use it. (Conversation with Principal King)*

Students are also deeply embedded in the leadership structures at CRA. The Student Congress functions as the voice of the students. All students are invited to participate, there are no elected positions, and students use a moderated discussion format that they implement and follow themselves. Student attendance at the meetings varies, but they usually have a strong core group of student leaders. Principal King and several teachers attend, but they do not lead or control the

discussion. This format allows students a place to broach and discuss topics important to them that will have an impact on the greater student body. They take on serious issues and generate workable solutions. Recent meetings have addressed subjects such as student hunger, drug use in schools, and how to recognize and respond to racial microaggressions. Outcomes of the work of the Student Congress have been the development of a school community food bank, where students can obtain food but do not have to be embarrassed to ask about it, and the production of an assembly about how to combat microaggressions at CRA.

*It's not just a hierarchy. They [CRA teachers and staff] ask us questions about a lot of stuff. They take our opinion on a lot of things. It's not just, "This is the way you do it. There's no other way to do it. I'm teaching you this and nothing else." They're open to new ideas and new ways to doing things and they encourage it. (Student focus group)*

*There's no head of Student Congress. Even the teachers and principal who come and sit in to hear what we have to say, it won't be about them just dictating how are things going. It's about the students getting a chance to bring up topics that they feel need to be brought up. I remember when it was two years ago, we were reading over reports from our school about how many kids come in to school hungry, [about] drug use in school. And stuff that we all care about, because we want to make a safe and happy learning environment. One thing that I absolutely love about Student Congress is that we actually make things happen. We sometimes take on more than we can handle, sometimes we don't get as much done as we'd like, but the fact of the matter is that there is still this group of students who are pushing to try to change some things. (Student focus group)*

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development for teachers could just as easily be placed in the leadership section of this case study. Teachers develop and lead weekly sessions in which instructional practices are embedded in the themes of that week. At the time of the study, the staff was reading Paul Tough's book, *How Children Succeed*. They were expected to have read and be ready to discuss the first chapter. At the beginning of the meeting, facilitators placed quotations from the reading around the room. As teachers participated in a gallery walk of selected quotations, they were asked to generate two open-ended Socratic-style questions on a sticky note for use in the next activity. Then, the teachers set up the room for Socratic seminar triads, another instructional technique practiced in the staff professional development sessions and then shared across the classrooms at CRA. Facilitators posed essential questions based on the reading that were used to not only discuss the themes brought up in their shared reading, but also to practice the Habit of Mind around Proof – Evidence – Argumentation. The final 10 minutes of the meeting included space for reflection and writing, as teachers responded individually to the morning's activity in their reflective journals.

The consistent and systematic use of the same instructional techniques across classrooms at CRA is part of the set of agreements on which teachers come to consensus. Once consensus is reached, a description of the technique is placed in the Teacher Toolbox, a publicly available (<http://www.district6.org/cra/staff-resources/resources/>) clearinghouse of approaches that have been previously

agreed upon. Examples of the common strategies include schoolwide writing and reading systems (using the acronyms MEAL and MOWED, respectively); text marking; Cornell notes; and student-led conferences, where students present, share, and defend their work. The consensus approach to instructional practice means that students become accustomed to patterns of speech, expectations for participation, and analytical tools across classrooms. In effect, the practices are normalized and integrated into the school culture. The Socratic method and the moderated discussion of the staff meetings are similar to those used in Student Congress. They simply become part of “what we do here,” which was a nearly constant refrain from students, teachers, and administrators. There is clarity of purpose driven by a common vision and shared both vertically and horizontally throughout the school. Data from the teacher survey indicate that teachers at CRA have a high degree of confidence not only in their own self-efficacy as teachers, but also in the competence of the teachers as a group.

One teacher sums up the philosophy behind how these common strategies are put to use at CRA: “So it’s this culture of we’re going to share here. And it’s not that I’m going to be dispenser of knowledge, but we’re in this together. And I think that manifests in different ways in people’s classrooms, but to me that’s what underlines those relationships.”

## ACADEMIC STRUCTURES

In order to build and capitalize on the development of close relationships between teachers and students, the academic day is structured to include three-period humanities blocks with the same teacher. According to teachers and students, the blocks become like families. As one teacher described the contribution of the blocks to student success on the teacher survey: “Close ‘family’-like relationships within our small learning communities . . . foster the academic and emotional growth of our students.” The modified block scheduling allows teachers to achieve the CES principle of depth over coverage. It prioritizes deep learning and exploration of subject matter. Students report liking the way that they are allowed to learn and personalize their learning (“like being pushed, but in a loving way”) and that they are given a chance to defend their thinking, pushed to provide facts to support their thoughts.

*There’s a culture of engagement [in our classrooms]. So we are so purposeful . . . in our classrooms, especially looking around this table [at the other teachers in the focus group], really purposeful in building a strong classroom community that enables, engages, and expects students to participate.*

**How do I make a MEAL?**

College Ready Writing - MEAL paragraph

**M** = **Main Idea**

- Do I have a main idea? Also called a ‘topic sentence.’
- What am I trying to prove in this paragraph?
- What do I want the reader to remember?
- Does my topic sentence for this MEAL paragraph link directly to my thesis?

**E** = **Evidence**

- Can be a direct quote from the text.
- Can be a concise summary of important info. from the text.
- Can be a piece of data collected using the Scientific Method.
- Can be field-based evidence collected using Social Science observational tools.
- Does my evidence support the main idea of this paragraph?
- Am I using the most important or appropriate evidence?
- Does my evidence relate to my thesis?
- Do I use proper MLA citation after a quote or summary? (Author page #).
- \*Note: citation methods vary depending on the field of study.

**A** = **Analysis**

- Do I include analysis of my evidence?
- What does my evidence mean? Especially in relation to my thesis?
- Is my analysis thorough?
- Does my analysis break down and explain the meaning of my evidence?
- Does my analysis show my point of view?

**L** = **Link**

- Do I set up for my next paragraph?
- How can I introduce the next paragraph logically through hinting, drawing conclusions, showing cause and effect, asking questions or posing new ideas?
- Does the beginning of my next paragraph contain some echo of the previous one?

*So whether it's a conversation or whether it's a job talk or whether it's a small group, even reflective writing, that culture of engagement is built and is recycled back and continually, continually visited, demanded, expected, respected, celebrated all the time, not just the first week of school. That's the way [it is] in my classroom, very transparently in . . . fellow teachers' classrooms . . . then I can ask students not only do we not do **that** here, but let's do **this** here, and why. (Teacher focus group)*

CRA does not have school counselors, so the blocks also function as an advisory class. The advisory format includes a focus on college and career readiness discussions and activities, including the completion of Personal Education Plans that guide students through a five-year college-bound planning process (beginning in the sophomore year of high school and into the first two years of college). CRA has a variety of other options and activities that are used to help prepare students for careers and college. The school holds Financial Aid/FAFSA Support Nights for students and families. Advanced Placement classes are offered on site and online. Students have the option to participate in dual credit classes through Rogue Community College. Recently, CRA has adopted the use of the AVID program as well. Two programs that the principal and teachers feel function particularly well in speaking to the student experience of the college environment are returning alumni talks and college treks. Every year, CRA alumni who have gone on to college or careers come back to speak during assemblies and describe their experiences from a student's perspective. College treks get students on to college campuses around the state, as well as allow time for tours of the cultural options in the city in which they are visiting. The money for the different college treks is raised through fundraisers and through the operations of the campus coffee cart, a program started a few years ago by a CRA teacher. Student volunteers are trained as baristas and are now able to run the cart independently, bringing in on average \$300 per week that is allocated for college treks.

*Our goal, and what we've seen and have been able to be proud of, is that you [students] may come from a variety of backgrounds, right? And maybe you have somebody helping you get to college, maybe you don't, so AVID might help you there. Maybe you have never been on a college campus, so college trek gets you to go, "Oh, I can do this" or "How cool, I can't wait to move." But it's looking at this large, incredibly diverse group of students and realizing that we may have goals for them, but what are their goals for themselves? So asking them to think outside the box and feel something different, feel what it feels like to be on a college campus, feel what it feels like to talk to somebody about college experiences. This week we are [having] alumni come back and we're doing college discussions on Thursday. Those kinds of experiences, though we may be blue in the face saying the same thing, when it comes from somebody that's cooler than we are, all of a sudden they're listening. So I think we are purposeful in getting those moments, those guest speakers attempting to connect somehow. Even though it might be the fourth year we've been saying it . . . finally in her [the guest speaker's] class they're listening. (Teacher focus group)*

## FOCUS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

During one of the focus groups students began talking about their projects and presentations in class. One was presenting on abortion, another on the Rwandan genocide and others researched food production and factory farms. It became abundantly clear that there was an intentional



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 in the focus groups and hallways using 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 dive 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 places 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 veteran teacher of more than 30 years at 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 Principal 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 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 liaise 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

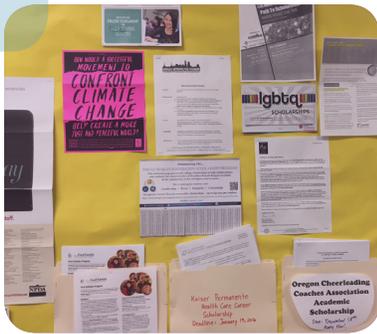
Schools in small towns often serve as the social center of the community. Teachers tend to live in the community where they teach; multiple generations of families have walked the same school building hallways. The institutional memory of the schools is inextricably linked to the history of the town. 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.

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, then the community changes. You hear that language . . . you have to see the student and the*

## Jefferson High School 2014–15

Enrollment: 475

Graduation Rate: 80.47%

9th-Graders on Track: 81.1%

Students Taking SAT: 41.5%

*individual, but the goal is for it to be a groundswell that is enough to shift the tide. (Conversation with Principal Calvert)*

In 2010, the school faced the possibility of closure due to dwindling enrollment and low standardized test scores. The community rallied behind the school, as they had done many times before. Jefferson was saved and reorganized under a focus option, middle college educational model. The middle college is designed to ensure that all students at the school participate in college-level work, both at the high school and at local colleges and universities. Every student who enters the door does so with the expectation of, and support in, completing college coursework prior to graduation. In order to receive a middle college diploma at graduation, students must earn at least 12 college credits. To achieve this goal, Jefferson, with the financial support of the Portland Public Schools, has designed a curriculum and a schoolwide system that provides students with opportunities for multiple college and career experiences.

After five years of intentional effort, the middle college design is bearing fruit. In 2014–15, with a graduating class of 100 students, 94 students earned at least 4 college credits and 66 students earned at least 12 college credits and the middle college diploma. This success is driving an overall increase in graduation rates that is outpacing other schools in the state. In last year's class, 80% graduated on time, a 14% increase over the prior year. These historic graduation gains are built on a legacy of Demo pride. The Jefferson Dancers, a well-known and respected dance program founded in the 1970s, have become a hallmark of the school, and the athletic programs claim a number of state titles. Students at Jefferson express pride in and enthusiasm for the opportunities that are available to them:



*I'm looking forward to having about two classes and being able to go across the street and having a lot of free time. I'm really excited to be able to take the classes that I'm interested in. I'm interested in medicine, so my sophomore year I started taking PCC classes early. I took medical terminology, and I'm excited to do more medical type of classes. (Student focus group)*

The middle college program is designed to ensure that students get access and support to experience college-level work, in part to demystify the college-going process but also to allow students, many of whom will be first-generation college students, to earn credits before they graduate high school.

## LEVERAGING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

The reorganization of Jefferson into a focus option middle college meant developing a set of strong core beliefs and practices around not only best practice in teaching and learning, but also in what

it takes to provide the supports needed to prepare students for an intense college-preparation environment. Laying this foundation of a focused and shared vision for the school involved several components, beginning with creating stable and committed leadership and a commitment to traverse the difficult process of working in coalition with other community organizations. The partnership between Jefferson, PCC, and SEI required the creation of horizontal leadership structures and the sublimation of individual institutional goals in service of the collaboration.

*When you get to a big partnership and so many kids are involved, it changes the type of conversation we have with the partner. We're not a small piece of what they do, and they're not a small piece of what we do, so we better figure it out. Both are at a higher level of investment. We just describe it as everyone went all in, right? In many ways it's a great image, because it was like the last hand, right? (Conversation with Principal Calvert)*

Central to the use of the preexisting connections with PCC and SEI as fixtures of the local community was a shared belief within school and across institutions about what would help students be successful in high school, in college, and beyond.

*I think as a staff and as a school and through our partners, PCC and SEI, we are kind of unified in our mission and that is: we want you, you are not going to end at graduation. Our goal for you is not a June goal, our goal for you is a **beyond** goal. It's not just walking across the stage as your goal but what are you going to do when you leave Jefferson and how are you going to be productive? (Teacher interview)*

Instead of being loosely affiliated with these institutions, PCC and SEI became integrated into the fabric of the school culture, with representatives at the table on a regular basis and providing input and feedback on decision-making processes at the school. Data from the teacher survey suggest that this level of collaboration has contributed to the success of the middle college program, with the majority of survey respondents agreeing that people at Jefferson trust, respect, and support one another as peers and across levels and feel comfortable expressing new ideas.

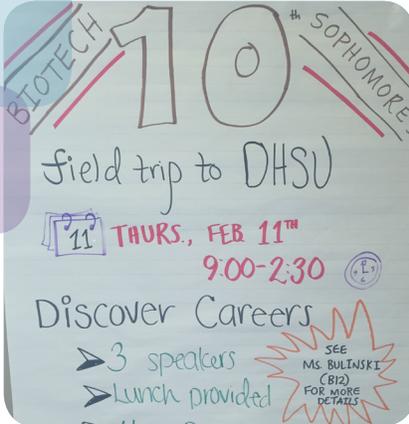
Although the physical distance between Jefferson and PCC is less than a stone's throw, the real challenge is symbolic. Teachers, administrators, and other staff talk about the importance of walking students across the street to their classes. While PCC serves as the main academic conduit into the world of postsecondary education, the school also maintains connections with several other local and state institutions (e.g., Portland State University, Oregon Health Sciences University, Warner Pacific College, Pacific University, Willamette University, Oregon State University, and the University of Oregon). Jefferson then acts as both home base and launch pad to college life.

*We want kids to go across the street [to PCC]. Yes, you can get college credits here, and yes, we're going to work with you here. You need to have experience across the street. Because it's different. It's a different experience. What we want is for them to find success in high school. All right, let's get you successful here as a high school student. Then we want you to have a successful experience at PCC, or in some other college setting. We want you to face the challenge, we want to push, so that when you*

*get pushed you're surrounded with caring adults and all these supports . . . that you know what to do, right? (Conversation with Principal Calvert)*

Damon Hickock is the middle college coordinator at PCC who serves as the liaison between PCC and Jefferson. His role is to assist students with getting ready for the college experience and advising them through the process. Among the beliefs about college readiness at Jefferson is the

idea that readiness does not begin and end with academic ability. The staff want students to be learning about the speed of the college class and how to navigate and be successful on a college campus, how to read a syllabus and meet with an instructor during office hours. This includes building a schoolwide culture of success, providing counseling and tutoring services, helping to develop study skills, and mapping out classes to best fit with individual students and their class load. Mr. Hickock and the PCC side of the street works as a team with the Jefferson side to provide students with the learning experiences they need. Mr. Hickock noted what makes the Jefferson program successful:



*Meeting the kids where they are. We don't have a preconceived pathway, we have multiple ones. We just kind of meet you where you are, then being in a class in a mainstream college class is way different. If you bring 26 high school students over there and they're just taking Physics, then you have a high school class across the street, but if you have three kids with 19 other adults who paid \$600 to be in that class, it changes the dynamic. It shows model grown-up behavior for the students. . . . It's really good for them to get to see what being an adult is like, and that's priceless. That's really the college experience, it's not me trying to imitate it by giving you a college class, and you're going to be with all your buddies. It also makes it easier for the college instructors because the college instructors aren't equipped to deal with high school kids. It's apples and oranges, but when they only have two or three . . . one, they don't generally notice them and two, they say, "Hey, I sort of like these high school students." So it gives them a better feel about the high school, about working with younger students, that it's not scary and not like the Lean on Me movie.*

On the Jefferson side of the street, school staff work hard to find ways to know the students well enough that they can match them up with first-contact college experiences that fit the student. They then continue to work with each student throughout their years at Jefferson. Kara Mortimer, middle college director at Jefferson, had this to say:

*One of the things we know—not just at Jefferson but nationwide—if students can have a positive experience on a college campus before they leave high school, they're way more likely to enroll in a college, and they're way more likely to persevere, and continue on into their second year of college.*

From her perspective, helping students navigate "both sides of the street" includes making the high school side welcoming and generous and supportive. The school staff also works with parents to

help empower their kids to navigate the sometimes-unfamiliar institutions. Additionally, Jefferson has counselors, a career coordinator, and a new college coordinator who are all pieces of the support network created for students.

Part of building on current success means that the school teams are constantly examining data to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed. This includes working to find ways to better support struggling populations within the school, such as multiple pathways for young men through the expansion of career technical education programs.

*Ms. Mortimer: One of the patterns is we're not seeing our African American boys and our Hispanic boys cross the street at the same rates as we see our girls cross the street.*

*Interviewer: How are you addressing it?*

*Ms. Mortimer: The school, so not me specifically, but the school. . . Damon [Hickock] has worked really hard with PCC to create a connection with the Swan Island Trades Center, which is part of PCC Cascade and has a Monday afternoon electrical trade [class], kind of an intro to electrical trades class.*

The second integrated partnership at Jefferson is with Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI). This nonprofit organization has been working with youth in the Portland area for over 30 years. When Jefferson reorganized under the middle college model, SEI had already been in the school for over 20 years. The restructured partnership made services available for all students at Jefferson, and SEI currently has 12 coordinators on site who work directly with any student who signs up with the program. Troy Hollis, the SEI manager at Jefferson, describes the mission of the organization: "You put caring, nurturing adults that are committed and passionate about working with the youth in the schools. To be there, to be 100 percent responsible for the students on their case loads." Mr. Hollis says the partnership with Jefferson and PCC staff works well, in part because the SEI coordinators feel welcomed at the table with teachers and feel like they are seen as their peers.

<b>Respect</b>	<b>Stay</b>	<b>Respectfully</b>	<b>Own it.</b>	<b>Do Not Use</b>
<b>Air Time Focused</b>	<b>Help Others</b>	<b>Stay Focused</b>	<b>Fix it.</b>	<b>Racist, Sexist,</b>
			<b>And move on.</b>	<b>Homophobic, or</b>
				<b>Derogatory Remarks</b>

The organization actively recruits students to SEI participation with special programs and activities. Once students are signed up and have passed their probationary period, SEI coordinators help them set their personal, educational, social, and academic goals. They accomplish this via building and maintaining personal connections and contact with students, using email, texts, social media, and just walking up to students in the hallway to check in on them and their goals. This deeply relational approach helps coordinators establish direct connections with students, develop a complex understanding of the students' lives, and provide targeted support and services based on an individual student's circumstances. Coordinators are active and visible at athletic events and school functions. Outside of academic goals, SEI will help connect students and their families with mental health resources, housing, family and parenting classes, enrichment programs, and basic needs such as food, energy, and rental assistance.

Students involved with SEI had praise for the way that SEI helps not only with academics but also by helping students and families get connected to basic needs and services. As one student described the support received from his SEI coordinator, “He said, ‘You are already someone. But make that someone become famous.’ Which is pretty cool.” Another student noted:

*I think the adults here really care, especially having SEI located here, they really go out of their way to make sure that you have everything you need, whether it is school related, home related, family related. I think that when it comes to school and your personal life it all comes together, because a lot of times it is really hard to balance school and personal life, and with SEI here it really helps us sail through it. SEI teachers really care. (Student focus group)*

## STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

School structures at Jefferson are designed to align with the middle college program and goal of allowing all students to earn at least 12 credits before graduating. The staff at Jefferson recognizes that knowing students is crucial to instilling in them a sense of family and community, as well as providing a tailored college-going experience that recognizes the assets that students carry with them. All ninth-grade students become part of a Freshman Academy. Students attend the same English, social studies, science, and college readiness classes together. There is a heavy emphasis in the Freshman Academy on building reading and writing and literacy skills, so that students are prepared for the demands of their junior year when they take Reading 115 for dual credit and Writing 115 at PCC. The reading, writing, and social studies programs at Jefferson are part of the legacy of Linda Christensen and Bill Bigelow, long-time teachers and activists in Portland and founders of the national organization Rethinking Schools. Their continuing influence has created a curricular and pedagogical stability that centers on culturally relevant, social justice-based, and equity-focused instruction. Christensen is also the founder of the Oregon Writing Project, a professional development organization for teachers with a powerful focus and structured approach to reading and writing. The vast majority of language arts teachers at Jefferson have participated in the OWP, which provides instructional continuity both within grades and across them. The Freshman Academy is seen as a way to start the high school years off with a strong foundation for academics, a starting point from which to build ongoing individualized support. During the ninth-grade year, students visit PCC in the fall, providing an initial orientation to the school and a sense of the scope of possibilities college can provide them.

During their sophomore year, students have a full academic schedule and teachers report often seeing a “sophomore slump,” partly because of the give-and-take required to ensure that Freshman Academy teachers have the time they need to do scheduling and meet about students, and partly because students are now provided with more independence and the expectation that they begin using the skills built during freshman year.

At the end of the sophomore year, students take the Compass placement exam in order to determine their eligibility for classes at PCC the following year. Students can take classes at PCC earlier than their junior year if they complete an Early Admission Application and are successful on their placement exam. They also work with counselors to determine if they are ready for the demands of college classes. The sophomore year also includes another visit to a college for all students, usually Oregon State University or the University of Oregon.

During their junior year, students begin college-level courses for credit. Reading 115 is taken at Jefferson and then Writing 115 at PCC. Once these prerequisite classes are completed, students are eligible for almost any other class besides math at PCC, which students are placed into based on math class level and placement testing. Relationships between teachers at Jefferson and instructors at PCC have built content alignment in the introductory reading, writing, and math classes, ensuring that students have the necessary skills to succeed in the PCC classes. Although students are required to earn at least 12 college credits to receive the middle college diploma at graduation, the actual number of credits earned by students during their high school tenure varies widely:

*On a number of the recommendations that I've been writing . . . and resumes that I've seen on students, [the number of credits students earn at Jefferson] is well above the twelve. Ranging maybe from sixteen to eighteen, all the way up to . . . thirty, thirty-six, it's amazing. (Conversation with the career coordinator)*

With the school united in a goal of equity and access for all students, the Senior Inquiry class was offered for all students for the first time in the 2015–16 school year. Senior Inquiry is taught by a team of two teachers in collaboration with a professor from PSU. Students explore elements of social justice important to them. The class aligns with the Freshman Inquiry class at Portland State that covers four university goals: critical thinking, communication, ethics, and social responsibility. With these four goals as targets, students complete four pieces of work on a topic of interest, producing a one-page reflection of how the research that they conduct relates to that goal. The final product is a personalized e-portfolio that is evaluated using a six-point rubric in the evaluations at the end of the year by faculty from PSU. Jefferson's approach to these innovative practices is iterative. The school staff's prior knowledge of academy structures provided them with a wealth of information that they used to design the Freshman Academies. The junior-year college classes started with a small group of students to test the strength of the support system, but were soon expanded to include all juniors. Senior Inquiry began as a class for a small group of seniors, but the powerful educational environment created in the partnership between Jefferson and Portland State University was also broadened to include all seniors. This has been the pattern at Jefferson: find what works, expand it to include everyone, and provide the support they need to succeed.

Sitting in on a Senior Inquiry class, EPIC researchers observed a wide range of student-generated topics and ideas, including police brutality, the effects of poverty on the brain, and the benefits of lab-grown meat. Class discussion was lively and engaging, and the teachers use a variety of strategies

to ensure that the instructional model for the class stays fresh and dynamic. The teachers pay close attention to current events to use as discussion points for hard conversations. To do this, teachers reported that they need to be authentic and reflective and willing to make mistakes. Teachers at Jefferson use classroom observations and team teaching to help support and grow teachers in their conversations around race and culture.

*We know kids, no one slips through freshman year, and our goal is always . . . that they are already on a college track. We let them know that we are going to push that expectation. Then, at the senior level, all senior teachers, we're meeting together. We meet with the other teams. We know what they need, we know what they need for a work sample. We know how they are doing towards the e-portfolio for Portland State credit. (Conversation with Senior Inquiry teacher)*

Students agree that they feel much more prepared and ready to go to college, not just academically—they have the skills to navigate the system and know what to expect from a college professor versus a high school teacher: “So, just having an actual college professor and being able to compare that to a high school teacher, that’s eye-opening because professors, they do not play.” Some students report that they could use more support and tutoring in all subjects, especially given students’ already busy schedules. Other students were concerned about the availability and accessibility of tutoring for the PCC classes in which they are enrolled.

## GENTRIFICATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

It is lost on no one at Jefferson that they are, and have been for a long time, the only school in Oregon with a majority African American population. Decorations on the walls, faces on hall passes, institutional memory, and community (mis)perceptions are created with the idea that Jefferson High School is the epicenter of the African American community. This identity is a great strength of the school and has provided the urgency that has fueled the resurrection of the school. The growth in graduation rates and the spirit and success of Jefferson is juxtaposed against the growing whiteness of the community around the school. What was once a predominantly African American community has now transitioned into a gentrified, majority-white neighborhood that is only now beginning to be reflected in the student population at the high school. It is the large white elephant in the room whose once faint footsteps are beginning to echo throughout the hallways. This section will explore the importance of African American identity for the school and the fear of how and when gentrification in the community will change the face of Jefferson High School.

For African American students at Jefferson, the historical and contemporary primacy of Blackness creates a comfortable and accepting school atmosphere that might not exist anywhere else in the state.

*People value being in a space where you feel comfortable being yourself, and I think that’s what’s important, because you could go somewhere and they can be tolerant of . . . what it is, I call my Blackness . . . but that doesn’t necessarily mean that they value what it is you’re bringing to the table when it comes to that type of stuff. Even just . . . I don’t know*

*how to explain it. It's just . . . here I feel, amongst my peers and mostly amongst the staff, I feel like people value what it is, culturally, everybody brings to the table. Because whether we want to admit it or not, it plays into our education, and the way we act, and the way we learn, and all of those things. (Student focus group)*

*Student 1: In general, people have this perception that we're not students and we don't take our education seriously. Part of one of the amazing things about Jefferson High School I don't think is anywhere else is that we can go from banging on the lockers in the hallway, having a little dance battle in the middle of passing period—*

*Student 2: Which happens a lot.*

*Student 1: Which happens a lot and it's amazing. It's incredible because we have some of the most amazing talent ever in this school. Teachers don't come to the hallway, "Stop all that noise, blah, blah, blah." They come, they watch, or they just stay in their classrooms or whatever. We can go from doing that to going into the classroom, doing our work and getting our stuff done. (Student focus group)*

That the school is a comfortable place for African American students is not merely a result of demographics or history. It is a purposefully and carefully maintained identity that is infused throughout the curriculum.

*Feeling like, when you stand up in a classroom and what culturally is relevant to you is also relevant to your teacher and he values that? That's important. You know what I mean? Or, if for our school presentation we want to do a rap song instead of a speech, that's cool. Being open to change and being open to things that are culturally relevant! (Student focus group)*

*We are doing, we are kind of taking the Beyoncé thing, media representation, we are using a Black power mix tape. We are going to talk about other people that led in the civil rights movement, other than the charismatic leaders. Then our thinking goes, "And they are going to create posters." It's up in the hallways, Black History Month for real. Then we start talking about, as it starts to change, how do you not forget that this was the only predominantly black school in the state? (Teacher interview)*

Since 2000, the median home price for houses around Jefferson High School has increased more than 60%. As property rates have risen, the African American community has been pushed farther into East Portland. As the community has become more white, families, potentially due to a mix of the school's poor test scores and misperceptions (at best) and racism (at worst), have been unwilling to send their students to Jefferson. As graduation rates rise and families learn about the opportunities offered in the middle college design, that hesitance is waning. For the first time in decades, the freshman class at Jefferson is not predominantly African American. There is a palpable recognition running through the school that these demographic shifts are changing the face of the school.

After years of intentional focus on African American students, the partnership between Jefferson, SEI, and PCC is yielding results. African American students are graduating at over 80% and rising, largely driving the graduation rate increase for the school and for African American students in the

district. The culturally and locally relevant approaches that have been fought for and implemented are working, and now the gentrification of the community is seen as a threat to that progress. As students are pushed farther into East Portland and beyond, they are often enrolled in schools without a long history or a comparable success record with African American students.

There is also fear that the successes of the school will be attributed to the influx of white students, not to the measurable success and focused effort of African American students.

*Student 1: Usually when people think Jefferson they are thinking, "Oh, majority black school, it is dangerous" and all of that, but I feel like a lot of people are more attracted to Jefferson now that the Jefferson Dancers are really up there and there are a lot more white kids here. It makes it seem like less dangerous, like they don't really . . .*

*Student 2: I think the thing that is really sad is they are going to attach the graduation rate to the gentrification. They are going to say that the graduation rate is getting higher because there are more white kids. (Student focus group)*

## VALUING RELATIONSHIPS AND AUTHENTICITY

*I have a picture of the graduating class, they took a picture on the front steps. Every student has a story, and every student . . . it's like you start to see that there is momentum that builds. What does that look like, and how does that play out when the students connect to the students and their story goes in this direction? (Principal Calvert)*

The power of personalized relationships and knowing students and their families was evident in conversations with both staff and students at Jefferson. A word used often by both groups was authenticity; students appreciate teachers and staff who they feel are "real" with them.

*I genuinely think [student motivation] is from this culture of "We don't got much but we can make it work." . . . Paying attention, being attentive, not just teaching us what you think we need to know and moving on. The people who are pausing to ask what we want to do and listen to it. All that stuff is making us feel like "I'm successful" and I think that's playing a part in saying, "Okay. Yes, I can go to college." (Student focus group)*

Students generally agree that even with the diverse population and changing demographics, while there can be tension around hard conversations, students have each other's back; they want to help their friends who might be struggling to get the support they need. Some students did note that there is a perceived difference in how male students and female students are supported, that females are held to higher standards or have more support than the males. Other students reported some issues



of tensions between student groups, but at the same time feel that, for the most part, students at Jefferson get along and the teachers make concerted efforts to address any issues head on.

*I think Jefferson brings people a sense of community. Although there are the different groups of people, if we come together, like if we are all in one space, I feel like it will be cool. Like there wouldn't be any tension or weird vibes or anything. (Student focus group)*

## CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

While the unique contributions of each school provide potentially powerful lessons, the cross-case similarities are integral to examining the intertwined fibers that make up the tapestry of a successful school. In the following section we address the second research question: *Do successful schools in varying geographic locales employ similar or different strategies to achieve their success?* The simple answer to this question is yes—schools employ both similar and different strategies to achieve their success. Schools interpret, design, and deliver educational practices in ways that are relevant both culturally and locally, and often rely on the assets available to them in their building and in their community. The prior sections outline the unique qualities of each of the four school sites. The following sections provide commentary on the structures and systems that are common across school sites.

In all four schools, subject areas are treated discretely, teachers collaborate to varying degrees, the school day follows traditional patterns, and so on. Providing a more nuanced and practical answer to the research question, in the context of the School Success Model, again requires investigation of the schools' common values, beliefs, attitudes, and theoretical frameworks, even as their outcomes differ across sites.

### SOCIAL CAPITAL

The concept of social capital, and its application in educational settings, provides a valuable lens through which to view the ways that nonmonetary resources are activated in schools. The School Success Model (SSM) places social capital in the third level, under the general category of how schools learn. In the context of the SSM, social capital is described as people working together, thinking together, learning from each other, and becoming collectively committed to improvement. Social capital has been defined by some along two distinct but related concepts (Agnitch, Flora, & Ryan, 2006). Bonded social capital refers to the strong ties that exist within a similar group of people. Bridging social capital refers to the links between heterogeneous groups that allow for the sharing of resources. In each of the school sites that we visited, we saw examples of bonding social capital based on how the school functions as a community; most notably, how relationships between students and teachers, students and students, teachers and teachers, students and administrators, etc., created the space for more profound learning. The school became a comfortable and safe place because of the interactions between people in the school building and the way people navigated the interactions with curriculum, sociocultural factors, and physical spaces.

However, as the cases show, community does not and cannot stop at the school walls. Schools in the study recognized the need to provide multiple pathways for their students that incorporate and activate the assets that exist within the larger community locally, regionally, and globally.

This section will explore the ways that school-as-community (how a school builds bonding social capital) and school-in-community (how the school leverages bridging social capital) interact to create a strong school culture.

### *Bonding Social Capital: School-as-Community*

Schools are inherently complex organizations. Daily interactions between students, teachers, staff, families, community members, curriculum, classroom spaces, programs, and partners (among many other variables) make cohesion of purpose a challenging task. Building a strong school culture is an aspirational, practical, and iterative endeavor. This section highlights the collaborative work of teachers as they organize themselves, their pedagogy, and their content. It then explores the role that students can, and do, play in contributing to the bonding social capital in the school.

**Teacher collaboration.** At all case study schools, there are expressed beliefs and values placed on collaboration (Level 1 of the SSM). Teachers participate in PLCs that recognize and activate teacher leadership, are organized both horizontally and vertically within and between schools, and create structures and systems (Level 2) that support the professional development and instructional quality of the teachers (Level 4).

*Once a month [are] the vertical [team meetings], but PLCs are every Monday. We have [them] within the high school three times a month, and then once a month with the junior high to vertically align. Right now our PLC cycle works really well for the grade school where you have more of a department, because you have three sixth-grade teachers and whatnot, and they'd go through looking at the data around testing and evaluation. But our PLCs were kind of 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, but we're still working on different ways to align; for instance, even with the English, one of our English teachers teaches two classes of English and the rest is math. (Sheridan teacher)*

*Yeah, [I have the support of other teachers]. Even just last night I spent three hours in [another teacher's] room going over some goal-setting stuff. I'm supposed to be doing this PLC goal-setting thing and I've never done it. I spent three hours sitting there working on it and asking questions while she was helping some . . . students. It was just awesome that she took the time out to help me go through it. She could have been like, "You're a teacher now, figure it out." But she's just great. (Jordan Valley teacher)*

Through collaboration (and thus the activation of social capital), teachers are able to acquire and mobilize resources in the school. The sharing of resources is imperative, especially for new teachers as they navigate both the stresses and the opportunities of teaching, and in more rural schools, where smaller teaching staffs make collaboration (in the form of coplanning within an academic department) more difficult.

At Jefferson High School, the legacy of Linda Christensen and the Oregon Writing Project (OWP) has created an internal consistency among language arts teachers as they share a common approach, language, and set of expectations for what good writing looks like. This collaboration around a common approach to language instruction is then modeled through classroom posters and other physical artifacts around the school that create a culture within the school that can be expressed by teachers, students, administrators, and staff.

*Jefferson Teacher: Almost all the English and social studies teachers are Oregon Writing Project coaches or are trained. That's a big through line because of the approaches. Yeah, we don't believe in the five-paragraph essay. . . . I mean, we have a different approach but we all have that social justice OWP approach training. That's a big through line in practice.*

*Interviewer: Yep. We just saw that in the Senior Inquiry class.*

*Jefferson Teacher: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so that's a through [line] where we coach them all up on that.*

*Interviewer: It's going to be a similar process every year?*

*Jefferson Teacher: Yeah, it's similar. . . . I mean making their work transparent and sharing out and that workshop-style of it where we don't need it polished. We're looking for the good things, we're trying to figure out what engineers your success . . . articulating the engineering of the success. We work on revisions and patterns of errors too, but the big focus is really I'm going to learn a move from you because I'm looking for what move worked in what you did and I want to remember that.*

This interaction demonstrates how common language and a common approach across the school builds the school culture around writing. The writing workshop approach of the Oregon Writing Project allows students, whether they are in a Freshman Academy or Senior Inquiry, to experience a similar academic approach to writing. Students are then able to learn from and coach each other (sharing social capital) on their own. Collaboration is modeled and applied by all members of the school community.

Crater Renaissance Academy (CRA) is a clear example of how a belief in collaboration and a horizontal leadership structure combine to increase the social capital of teachers. Their open classrooms and internally organized professional development give teachers opportunities to observe and learn from each other. In one interaction, teachers discussed how they improve their practice. Experienced teachers serve as instructional coaches who help newer teachers process and plan for instructional improvement by taking “tours” of other classrooms where teachers are stronger in the targeted practices.

*[The instructional coach] usually runs the tours and she'll take in groups. So, last year I was able to go on two or three. And on those I was very specific: "I'm looking for stronger openers to my class." And she took me to a teacher that has a strong opener. (New teacher focus group)*

All these examples indicate how a core value of teacher collaboration allows teacher to leverage their social capital in ways that improve classroom practices.

**Student engagement.** Students play a key role in building a welcoming community in their school as well. In each of the schools, students talked about how safe they felt, how there was little to no bullying, and how school often felt like family. At Crater Renaissance Academy, students take an active role in creating an environment where bullying does not occur.

*Student 1: I think it was a basketball game, one of the kids was saying racial slurs to this kid, and he was an exchange student from Africa. And because it was a public event, Mr. King [the principal] came to each classroom and he cried with us. It was really sad and he was like, "I can't believe that this happened to our school and we need to work better to not, this doesn't, this shouldn't be happening in our world" and . . . it was so emotional.*

*Student 2: So what happened with that was Student Congress met up and we talked about it and we decided to do the microaggression assembly, we decided to do the "not on our campus" program and we just, we told Mr. King, "Mr. King, you've got to talk about this." If Mr. King needs our advice, he's come to us as a student's congress and we'll say to him, "You need to talk to the students," and we need it also, we don't not talk about things like that. So we decided as the Student Congress to have an assembly and then we organized that for a month. They're really well thought-out. We go in, we have to have a purpose, we have to have an action plan. This is what we do to make change in our school. So we have a big assembly, we have keynote speakers, and we watch impactful things as an entire school.*

Students at CRA are empowered through the Student Congress to take an active role in creating a welcoming environment. Solutions are cocreated, and everyone takes responsibility for their implementation. This example demonstrates that the collaboration that happens between students is strengthened by a system and structure that is part of the school. Leadership for solutions occurs both horizontally and vertically. All this is built on values of antiracism, collaboration, and mutual responsibility for the care of all students.

This theme was repeated at each of the other schools in the study:

Jordan Valley

*Student 1: We're all friends.*

*Student 2: There's no bullying type stuff that's going on in other schools.*

*Interviewer: Do you all agree with that?*

*Student 3: Yes, it's more of a community.*

Sheridan

*Student 1: Our school is great because we have a very safe environment in a very diverse school. We have a few great teachers in the school that push and inspire our students. We take bullying very seriously and have minimal bullying in our school.*

Bonding social capital functions by creating norms that govern behavior in both explicit and implicit ways. Schools in the study use intentional and structured approaches (e.g., PLCs and Student Congress) to build collaboration among and between students, teachers, staff, and administrators.

### *Bridging Social Capital: School-in-Community*

In a case study of social capital as a driver of urban school reform in Texas, Shirley (1997) stated that,

*Social capital theory suggests that if reformers seek to improve urban schools, they need to cultivate generalized reciprocity and social trust in such a manner that virtuous circles replace vicious ones. In addition . . . they must abandon purely internal reforms within the school and emphasize the many potential relationships that can be built (and rebuilt) between the school and its community. Those relationships must engage parents . . . but they should extend beyond those family members who are immediately concerned with children's learning to reach out to congregations, the business community and public officials. (p. 27, emphasis in the original)*

The schools in this study all succeed in identifying and leveraging the assets of the community in service of the students and staff.

***Bridges to families.*** At Jordan Valley, Sheridan, and Jefferson, the schools recognize that students enter the school with both the assets and the burdens of their lives outside of it. Students lead complex lives, which requires an acknowledgment that the learning process will have more success when that complexity is incorporated into the educational mission at the school. Jordan Valley students see a direct connection between their school and the community through the community's tireless support and championing of athletic and other extracurricular events. Sheridan's Principal Rech spoke of the need for collaboration with community partners from Yamhill County to provide necessary social services for students and families. This outreach included getting firewood for families with wood stoves during the winter months. At Jefferson, the school's partnership with Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI), a nonprofit agency that offers both educational programs and social services, provides students and families with wraparound services and support. Through SEI's partnership, the school can offer case management, rental and energy assistance, and access to mental health counseling.

***Bridges to local businesses.*** The connection between Jordan Valley and the local community is nearly seamless. The school is in the community and the community is in the school. Local businesses share both the financial and social capital to meet their commitment to the education of the students at the school.

***Bridges to institutions of higher education.*** Each of the schools in the study has close connections with local colleges and universities. Through their relationship with Willamette Promise, students at Sheridan are earning college credit at both Chemeketa Community College and Willamette University. Students in Jordan Valley do the same with Treasure Valley Community

College, which sends a liaison to the school regularly to provide academic and social support for the students. Many students at Crater Renaissance are coenrolled at Rogue Community College and Southern Oregon University, and many are earning college credits before they graduate high school.

Perhaps the most integrated partnership between a high school and its local postsecondary institutions is at Jefferson. Portland Community College is located across the street from the high school. While there have been attempts in the past to partner, Jefferson's transition to a middle college required a deeply embedded partnership that provides dual credit opportunities at Jefferson and regular college classes at PCC. Both institutions have dedicated staff members who work collaboratively to support students as they transition from Jefferson to PCC. The success of the program and the support network that makes it possible allowed Jefferson to take on the ambitious goal of having every junior at the school enrolled in classes at PCC. Additionally, Jefferson instituted a Senior Inquiry class for every 12th-grade student who partners with Portland State University and provides students with credit for their participation.

## SENSE MAKING

Sense making is defined in the School Success Model as the process of evaluating data, knowledge, and experience using analytical and logical reasoning. Information from multiple perspectives and multiple measures is gathered, disaggregated, reviewed, and analyzed to influence decisions, develop action plans, and guide future action. Sense making asks teams to "cultivate a habit of using evidence" in the context of the complexity of change in schools and communities (Curtis & City, 2009). Weick (2007) quotes a personal conversation with a wildlands firefighter who said, "If I make a decision it is a possession, I take pride in it, I tend to defend it and not listen to those who question it. If I make sense, then this is more dynamic and I listen, and I can change it. A decision is something you polish. Sense making is a direction for the next period."

Sense making relies on the critical foundations underneath it in the SSM. If a school does not have clear values, beliefs, and attitudes, if there is no coherent vision, and if there are no guiding theoretical frameworks, then the school may meander down educational pathways rather than stride purposefully forward. If there is no structure to the organization, if leadership is concentrated in a few hands, and if there are no structures and systems in place, the data from multiple sources may prove cumbersome and not provide a sense of clear purpose and direction.



The following sections explore the ways that the case study schools are using data in many forms in order to process information and proceed strategically with their choices. Although the examples provided across schools vary in their content and implementation, the key unifying element is the focus by school leaders and staff on deliberation of choice versus crisis of the moment.

## The AVID Choice

The staff at both Jefferson High School and Crater Renaissance Academy (CRA) discussed the process they used to make sense of the role a program like AVID could play at their school. For CRA, as they looked at AVID they realized that they were already doing many of the things that AVID does. Their values, beliefs, and theoretical frameworks were in alignment. They believed that AVID provided more structure and cleaner materials that would be easier for students to understand and for teachers to get behind. Because of this alignment, it made sense to become an AVID school.

*Speaker 1: AVID fell into our laps to start with. . . [We] went to see a demonstration site and hear about it, and we then spent the next 48 hours talking about does this work for our school or not? We have enough on our plate, we don't need more. What we're doing, we're doing well and we'd like to do it much better. So we don't want to get our eye off the ball, you know, and get distracted by something else. But the more that . . . we talked about it, we realized that a lot of the AVID structures and expectations were things that we were already doing in our classes or asking our teachers to do in our classes and asking our students to do in our classes. And this felt like a way of refreshing us, reminding us and keeping us focused on what it is we're already doing.*

*Speaker 2: Increasing fidelity as well.*

*Speaker 1: And so, that's what it came down to. It's not something new, it's what we're already asking people to do, but it's an increase in fidelity and then it came down to bringing our teachers together at the PD. That also happened very, very quickly after that meeting. We said we're thinking about this, but we need to know if there's buy-in. And of the 15 people sitting at that table, there were 8–9 people who wanted to teach the class as I recall. (Teacher focus group)*

For Jefferson, staff looked at AVID and also realized that they were already teaching many of the values, beliefs, and skill sets that AVID offers. However, AVID did not fit with Jefferson's value of all students getting equitable opportunities. They had recently committed to having all freshmen in academies, all juniors in dual credit and middle college classes, and all seniors taking Senior Inquiry. AVID did not match with their theoretical frameworks.

*Our educational goal is to support students and [assist them to] achieve in college experiences, prior to graduating from high school. Every student that enters the door realizes that the expectation is that they will complete college coursework, prior to leaving, and that for them to receive what we call a middle college diploma they have to complete at least 12 credits prior to graduating. That focus became essential to the educational model. . . . We were committed to saying, students have to start to see themselves on a college campus, so we built that. . . . We want kids to go across the street [to PCC]. Yes, you can get college credits here, and yes, we're going to work with you here. You need to have experience across the street. Because it's different. It's a different experience. What we want is for them to find success in high school. All right, let's get you successful here as a high school student. Then we want you to have a successful experience at PCC, or in some other college setting. We want you to face the challenge, we want to push, so that when you get pushed you're surrounded with caring adults and all these supports. (Interview with Principal Calvert)*

*Speaker 1: We wanted to double-block English because the biggest problem the kids have, when they go to college, is their reading and writing is behind. It's rather than doing a bunch of little bitty things the freshman year when they're still trying to figure out what high school is, the priority is really to get reading and writing skills up as much as possible, because . . . writing is just evidence of their thinking. We have looked at some places that do these little bits of "you're going to do this little activity here and there and there" but it doesn't really amount to anything or they're a place—*

*Interviewer: You're talking from a college and career readiness or from . . . ?*

*Speaker 1: Yeah. From different college and career readiness programs. Doesn't get as much as double-blocked English with a lot of intensive reading and writing. There are places that have done different things like tutoring support for all their classes or AVID kind of things . . . but they don't do as much of the real content. If you don't have content to them because you're just doing skills but no content, then there's no buy-in to it. (Teacher interview)*

## Staffing Priorities

After many years of not having a school counselor, Sheridan High School had a choice to bring in either a school counselor or a school resource officer (SRO). The school chose a school counselor.

*For a smaller school, I think we have a lot of services that we can offer the kids...[an alternative program], they're based out of Newburg, that's for those kids that are challenging or they're having other issues. With the Henderson House, if we have issues with . . . kids with parents having to deal with any type of abuse. So with the other services here, we've got a drug and alcohol counselor that comes in. I've got the mental health counselor. We had a school resource officer, but it came up between the school resource officer and the school counselor, and because we weren't having . . . the huge discipline issues where we needed the SRO, we decided to go with the counselor instead. We do have that connection with the SRO. If we have citations or anything that needs to be delivered . . . they'll come pick those citations up and they'll deliver those citations to parents or guardians of those kids that are absent . . . basically really a mediation between the parents and student and us trying to build that relationship, trying to remove any type of boundary that . . . might be keeping that kid out of school. We try and . . . set that aside and do what we can to help them. That's our priority. (Interview with Dean Rech)*

The school looked carefully at the needs of their students and recognized that one of the best ways they can support students and families given the local conditions is to ensure that basic needs are being addressed, including hunger, homelessness, and mental health concerns. Adding a guidance counselor to the school staff was a considered decision that made sense in light of the other services the school offered. The school maintained a relationship with the SRO, but with a light touch, based on the lack of disciplinary issues that might have necessitated the greater presence of an SRO at the school.

## Using Assessment Data

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.

*We look at data, we talk about data . . . but when you have four kids taking the English language arts assessment, it's really hard to extrapolate that into good data for anything. Basically what we do [is to look at an] individual student's data. This is that individual student's strengths and weaknesses. This is what we need to do to help that individual student. Our collective data, our cohort data, is just pretty useless. As we look at the data, mostly what we looked at is what happens in the classroom. Again, the small size really helps us. It's our own assessments, our own instruction, that we base decision making on. (Teacher interview)*

The lack of useful cohort data means that the school has to rely on multiple levels and measures of data to make sense of student growth and achievement. The small class sizes mean that the school can deeply know each student and apply multiple assessments that are student-centered and locally sourced. The individual classrooms, the relationships between students and teachers, and the interactions with locally and culturally relevant curriculum (like agricultural technology) become the grist for the assessment mill. National momentum is moving toward systems of assessment that rely on multiple measures of achievement and, thus, multiple pathways toward success. The leadership team at Jordan Valley has recognized that standardized assessments provide data that are unreliable at best, and unusable at worst. Their experience crafting multiple measures that provide actionable data might serve as a model for schools just entering the discussion of the potential of multiple measures.

## LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS INTO STUDENT SUCCESS

One of the powerful narratives that emerged from these case studies is the degree to which relationships between students and the adults who work in the schools create an environment where students feel known, supported, and part of the community. There are many variables that create these conditions: the small to medium size of the schools in the study, the geographic isolation of some of the schools that leads to teachers and students living in the same community, the retention and tenure of administrators and teachers leading to increased sustainability across time. While there are many potential inputs that allow for positive relationships, the outcomes of a sense of belonging and a consistency of message and approach are powerful creators of student success. At both Jordan Valley and Sheridan High Schools the small student population makes knowing the students well an easy task. There is only one social studies teacher at Jordan Valley, so at some point (and at multiple times after) that teacher is going to have all 48 students in their class.

This section highlights some of the practices that the two larger schools are using to ensure that their students are known and how those practices lead to a sense of belonging on the part of the students.

## *Building Culture at Crater Renaissance Academy*

The deeply embedded culture at Crater Renaissance Academy (CRA) is purposefully cultivated in various ways. The principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools provide the framework that allows teachers and students to interact in meaningful ways.

*So we are so purposeful . . . in our classrooms, especially looking around this table [at the other teachers in the focus group], really purposeful in building a strong classroom community that enables, engages, and expects students to participate. So whether it's a conversation or whether it's a job talk or whether it's small group, even reflective writing, that culture of engagement is built and is recycled back and continually, continually visited, demanded, expected, respected, celebrated all the time, not just the first week of school. That's the way in my classroom, very transparently in our fellow teachers' classrooms . . . then I can ask students not only do we not do **that** here, but let's do **this** here, and why. Why do we do that? And so that, not that, we're not like saying we have this down, 100 percent down, I'm just saying—that's something that works for us . . . building on that community, instilling that culture together so that we can ask more of each other. And part of it is listening in respectfully on their conversation. (Teacher focus group)*

A number of efforts support the creation of this school culture. The three-period block classes allow students to be deeply known. The Student Congress allows students to participate in the creation of the culture. The internal professional development empowers teachers to learn from and with each other as engaged professionals. This intentional and practiced approach results in the students feeling that they are a part of something bigger than themselves.

*There's no head of Student Congress. Even the teachers and principal who come and sit in to hear what we have to say, it won't be about them just dictating how are things going. It's about the students getting a chance to bring up topics that they feel need to be brought up. I remember when it was two years ago, we were reading over reports from our school about how many kids come in to school hungry, [about] drug use in school. And stuff that we all care about. 'Cause we want to make a safe and happy learning environment. (CRA student focus group)*

Participants in Student Congress are trusted, and in fact expected, to interact and cocreate solutions to pressing issues at the school. The responsibility that is expected of the students creates engagement that, as the teacher quoted above explains, allows school staff to ask more of their students.

## *Freshman Academies at Jefferson*

The transition to high school is difficult and can often open a crack in the system that allows students to slip through. At Jefferson the staff and administration implemented the Freshman Academies as a mechanism to ease the transition by ensuring that all freshmen are deeply known by someone at the school. The academy system was not new to Jefferson. Teachers who had participated in academy structures at Jefferson and other schools designed the Freshman Academies to provide a collaborative and intensive experience for first-year students.

Teachers in the Freshman Academy teach one less class than their colleagues. This freedom allows common planning time in which they can discuss students, design interventions, plan curriculum, and provide support to students and to each other. This approach puts greater stress on teachers in the higher grades who have larger student ratios and heavier class loads. However, the intentional focus on the freshmen creates structure and continuity for them that can carry throughout the other grades. Deep knowledge of the students allows teachers to better differentiate their instruction and craft their lessons to the unique educational interests of their students. The increased class load for teachers is thus counteracted by the more prepared and engaged students in their classes.

Jefferson's partnership with the Oregon Writing Project means that many teachers are trained in OWP practices. This common approach to writing is applied in the Freshman Academies to make sure that by the time students finish their ninth-grade year they are writing proficiently. Freshman English is double-blocked and students participate in one period of an OWP-style English class and one period of what is called college- and career-ready writing. The focused writing is meant to prepare the students for the expectations of college-level writing that they will encounter during their junior year. This again provides both a horizontal (all freshmen participate) and vertical (the learning is preparation for future endeavors) approach that provides both support and continuity for the students. Students reported that the Freshman Academies are a powerful first experience at Jefferson and that the continuity they create is helpful.

*It's easier to settle in, because you're not just switching . . . always constantly meeting all these new people right away. You kind of get into your main group, and then you all become pretty close.  
(Student focus group)*

*It wasn't like a set of rules for specific teachers. It used to be . . . I remember I would have different teachers [at my old school] and they would all say different things. . . . The fact that it was uniform throughout the whole academy made it kind of . . . I don't know, it just helped. (Student focus group)*

It is from this deeply relational beginning that students are then asked to take on further responsibilities as participants in a middle college program where they are expected to expand their own education beyond the walls of the high school itself. Principal Calvert echoes the teacher at Crater Renaissance Academy when she says:

*Our teachers understand that [the way that] students in school [interact is] relational. We accept that in the premise that students will do more for teachers who they believe care for them and want them to do well. . . . That is just in the fabric of the work.*

It is important that students feel seen and known within the school building. It creates an atmosphere of acceptance and comfort. However, the creation of a school culture of "known-ness" is incomplete if it is not tapped for its educative potential. Knowing the students means teachers can ask them to do more. In the cases of Crater Renaissance and Jefferson, the students are responding to the call.



## STRIVING FORWARD

In the case studies described in this report, a purposeful decision was made to look for what is working at each of the participating schools and to describe the systems and structures, both formal and informal, that are supporting student learning. Of course, the story of what is happening within the schools is far more complex. Each school also has its challenges and areas where they recognize that work needs to be done to bring about the changes that they would like to see to ensure academic success for all their students. The following list is a compilation of needs identified across participating schools as those requiring additional future efforts as the schools continue to strive for secondary and postsecondary success for all their students:

- *Expanded on-site content area opportunities*
- *Expanded on-site opportunities for career and technical education (CTE)*
- *Increased availability of technology to provide more opportunities for student research activities and access to online classes*
- *Hiring of highly qualified teachers and teachers with qualifications to teach dual enrollment classes*
- *Implementation of college and career advisory classes*
- *Increased student awareness of alternatives to traditional four-year college programs*
- *Multiple pathways for meeting the needs of emerging bilingual students*
- *Earlier academic interventions at the secondary level*
- *Increased engagement with the community*
- *Expanded independent learning opportunities for students*
- *Increased engagement with parents and families on multiple issues (college/postsecondary options, support for poverty and substance abuse)*
- *Increased emphasis on career readiness, financial literacy, and other metacognitive and “soft” skills*
- *Increased opportunities for teachers to participate in racial equity/cultural competency training and responsiveness to needs of LGBTQ students*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The case study approach to investigating models of school success reveals a wealth of rich and contextual data. In telling the stories of these schools, however, it should be noted that the stories we are able to tell are limited due to constraints of time and generalizability. In order to extend and deepen the findings of this study, the following recommendations are presented:

- Continue to explore and disseminate the stories of current practices that are in place across successful schools, using newer data, alternative measures to define college and career readiness, and/or a targeted focus on specific factors. Examples of areas for further research include
  - schools of particular types not covered in the current case studies:
    - larger high schools
    - more and varied rural schools
    - tribal schools
    - charter/alternative schools
    - schools with large Latino populations
    - schools identified using a different composition of factors to define success in college and career readiness
  - the impact of innovative and/or culturally sustaining practice on schoolwide structures, school budgets, and college and career readiness
  - longitudinal, multimethod case studies of postsecondary outcomes for students from schools identified as successful; this study could include a cost/benefit analysis assessing the cost per successful postsecondary outcome
- Conduct a statewide survey examining frequency of occurrence and diversity of implementation of the practices identified in the current case studies to determine the breadth of practice and whether these practices correlate with metrics of college and career readiness at the school level.
- Investigate implementation of specific practice(s) of interest (e.g., teacher collaboration) and costs of implementing practices at the school level.
- Identify and investigate practices in schools that are “on the move” (i.e., exhibit 3- to 5-year positive changes in metrics related to college and career readiness). Variables of interest may include:
  - instructional practice
  - student demographics
  - school/district size
  - leadership
  - funding allocations
  - community partnerships

Schools are complex institutions, and their success lies at the confluence of people, programs, community, and history. They cannot, and should not, be reduced to single metrics of achievement, nor reduced to binary distinctions of success and failure. The four schools in this study were shown to be achieving something beyond expectation. However, the successes highlighted in this study barely scratch the surface of the efforts that created them. Foundational in the School Success Model that guided our work are the attitudes, beliefs, theoretical frameworks, and values that create conditions where school success is possible. It is hoped that the cases illustrated in this study provide a profound exploration of how these schools organized the foundational elements in service of their students and demonstrate the importance of institutional coherence as schools attempt to make sense of their work.

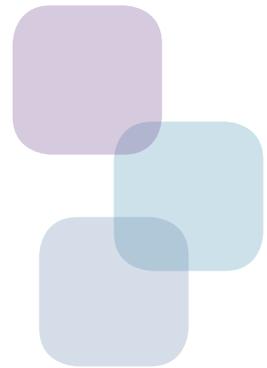
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## APPENDIX A: SCHOOL DATA

Table A1. Graduation Rates by School and Demographic Category for 2014–15 School Year

Group	2014–15 Four-year cohort graduation rate %			
	Crater Renaissance Academy	Jordan Valley High School	Sheridan High School	Jefferson High School
All Students	72.83	100.00	89.58	80.47
Male	65.85	100.00	87.50	76.27
Female	78.43	100.00	91.67	84.06
American Indian/Alaska Native	--	--	100.00	50.00
Asian	100.00	--	--	100.00
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	--	--	--	100.00
Asian/Pacific Islander	100.00	--	--	100.00
Black/African American	100.00	--	100.00	80.56
Hispanic/Latino	60.00	100.00	100.00	66.67
Multi-Racial	37.50	--	33.33	80.00
White	79.10	100.00	92.11	91.67



## APPENDIX B: TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Table B1. Collective Efficacy: Group Competence

Item	N	Mean*	SD	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Somewhat disagree or agree	Strongly agree/ agree	Choose not to respond
Teachers in this school have what it takes to get the children to learn	74	5.20	1.01	2.7%	12.2%	85.1%	--
Teachers here are well prepared to teach the subjects they are assigned to teach	74	5.19	0.98	1.4%	14.9%	83.8%	--
Teachers in this school really believe every child can learn	74	5.15	1.04	4.1%	12.2%	83.8%	--
If a child doesn't learn something the first time, teachers will try another way	74	5.14	1.14	6.8%	9.5%	83.8%	--
Teachers in this school are skilled in various methods of teaching	74	4.95	1.13	4.1%	17.6%	78.4%	--
Teachers in this school are able to get through to difficult students	74	4.77	1.35	9.5%	20.3%	70.3%	--
Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students	74	4.65	1.28	8.1%	25.7%	66.2%	--
Teachers here need more training to know how to deal with these students	74	3.45	1.43	32.4%	44.6%	23%	--
Teachers in this school think there are some students that no one can reach	73	2.71	1.46	60.8%	25.7%	12.2%	1.4%
Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems	73	2.58	1.32	59.5%	29.7%	9.5%	1.4%
Teachers here fail to reach some students because of poor teaching methods	74	2.51	1.43	62.2%	25.7%	12.2%	--
If a child doesn't want to learn, teachers here give up	74	2.18	1.32	73.0%	17.6%	9.5%	--
Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning	74	2.07	1.23	78.4%	13.5%	8.1%	--

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*. Respondents could choose not to respond.

Table B2. Collective Efficacy: Task Analysis

Item	N	Mean*	SD	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Somewhat disagree or agree	Strongly agree/ agree	Choose not to respond
The allocation of resources in this school supports the teaching and learning process and our school improvement goals related to college and career readiness	74	4.12	1.32	16.2%	36.5%	47.3%	--
Drug and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for students here	73	4.11	1.35	13.5%	41.9%	43.2%	1.4%
The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn	73	3.51	1.32	24.3%	44.6%	29.7%	1.4%
These students come to school ready to learn	74	3.50	1.04	16.2%	64.9%	18.9%	--
The quality of school facilities here really facilitates the teaching and learning process	74	3.49	1.21	21.6%	56.8%	21.6%	--
The lack of instructional materials and supplies makes teaching very difficult	74	3.31	1.24	32.4%	51.4%	16.2%	--
Students here just aren't motivated to learn	74	2.80	1.23	51.4%	40.5%	8.1%	--
Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety	73	2.30	1.07	62.2%	35.1%	1.4%	1.4%
Home life provides so many advantages, they are bound to learn	74	2.16	1.05	66.2%	31.1%	2.7%	--

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*. Respondents could choose not to respond.

Table B3. Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Question	N	Mean*	SD	Choose not to respond
To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	72	7.86	1.35	2.7%
How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	72	7.43	1.39	2.7%
To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	72	7.42	1.29	2.7%
How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	74	7.36	1.44	--
How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	72	7.32	1.39	2.7%
How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	71	7.15	1.46	4.1%
How much can you do to help your students value learning?	74	7.09	1.53	--
How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	73	6.96	1.73	1.4%
How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	74	6.93	1.52	--
How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	72	6.93	1.86	2.7%
How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	73	6.90	1.62	1.4%
How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	74	5.53	1.57	--

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Very low efficacy* to 9 = *Very high efficacy*. Respondents could choose not to respond.

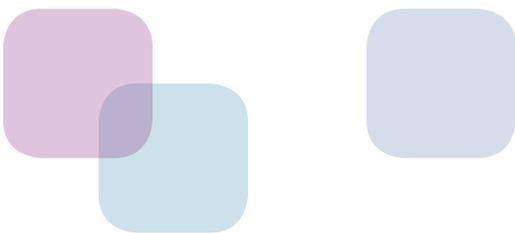


Table B4. Leadership Capacity

Item	N	Mean*	SD	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Somewhat disagree or agree	Agree / strongly agree	Choose not to respond
Leaders encourage and support people who are willing to step up and take on leadership roles	72	4.88	1.13	5.5%	21.9%	71.2%	1.4%
Leaders support creativity, innovation, and appropriate risk taking in the service of meeting student needs	71	4.82	1.21	6.8%	23.3%	67.1%	2.7%
Leaders demonstrate positive and high expectations	73	4.78	1.37	6.8%	28.8%	64.4%	--
Leaders build and maintain a vision, direction, and focus for the organization and student learning—to include everyone's role in that vision	72	4.72	1.27	6.8%	30.1%	61.6%	1.4%
Leadership models the values and behaviors that support student and teacher achievement, and collaboration at all levels	73	4.70	1.39	9.6%	27.4%	63%	--
Leaders ensure that important conversations (e.g., student achievement and civic and social growth) are always at the forefront, and taking place on a regular basis	73	4.58	1.31	8.2%	37.0%	54.8%	--
Vehicles are in place to enable shared/collaborative leadership and decision making	72	4.56	1.24	8.2%	32.9%	57.5%	1.4%
Decisions are shared whenever practical, and people are empowered to make decisions at every level whenever possible	72	4.47	1.29	8.2%	38.4%	52.1%	1.4%
Leaders don't initiate major projects without getting the requisite buy-in and doing all the homework necessary to ensure success	71	4.32	1.33	11.0%	38.4%	47.9%	2.7%
Organization and department goals are clear and aligned	73	4.30	1.30	11.0%	38.4%	50.7%	--
Leadership recognizes and acts upon the need to take things "off the plate" when additional responsibilities are assigned; people are given permission to let go of old requirements/ practices	72	4.11	1.44	16.4%	41.1%	41.1%	1.4%

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*. Respondents could choose not to respond.

Table B5. School Culture

Item	N	Mean*	SD	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Somewhat disagree or agree	Agree / strongly agree	Choose not to respond
Student needs are put ahead of adult needs	72	4.99	1.04	2.7%	23.3%	72.6%	1.4%
People focus on the future and getting better, versus the past and blame	73	4.89	1.15	5.5%	24.7%	69.9%	--
People trust, respect, and support one another as peers and across levels	73	4.56	1.17	8.2%	30.1%	61.6%	--
People feel comfortable to speak freely to express new ideas	71	4.39	1.19	6.8%	35.6%	54.8%	2.7%
People respect the authority and communication "chain of command"	71	4.27	1.23	8.2%	41.1%	47.9%	2.7%
People are prepared for and on time to meetings	73	4.25	1.26	9.6%	37.0%	53.4%	--
Students are generally well behaved	73	4.18	1.30	11%	39.7%	49.3%	--

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*. Respondents could choose not to respond.

Table B6. School Goal Structure for Students (Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale)

Item	N	Mean*	SD	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Somewhat disagree or agree	Agree / strongly agree	Choose not to respond
Students are told that making mistakes is OK as long as they are learning and improving.	71	5.04	1.06	5.5%	11.0%	80.8%	2.7%
The importance of trying hard is really stressed to students.	72	4.85	1.27	8.2%	19.2%	71.2%	1.4%
The emphasis is on really understanding schoolwork, not just memorizing it.	70	4.81	1.27	6.8%	17.8%	71.2%	4.1%
A real effort is made to recognize students for effort and improvement.	72	4.78	1.12	4.1%	27.4%	67.1%	1.4%
A real effort is made to show students how the work they do in school is related to their lives outside of school.	72	4.67	1.29	8.2%	28.8%	61.6%	1.4%
Students are frequently told that learning should be fun.	66	4.06	1.19	11.0%	38.4%	41.1%	9.6%
It's easy to tell which students get the highest grades and which students get the lowest grades.	71	3.72	1.38	20.5%	46.6%	30.1%	2.7%
Students who get good grades are pointed out as an example to others.	69	3.61	1.19	16.4%	61.6%	16.4%	5.5%
Students hear a lot about the importance of getting high test scores.	72	3.42	1.23	21.9%	58.9%	17.8%	1.4%
Grades and test scores are not talked about a lot.	70	3.39	1.28	23.3%	57.5%	15.1%	4.1%
A lot of the work students do is boring and repetitious.	70	2.94	1.20	37.0%	49.3%	9.6%	4.1%
Students hear a lot about the importance of making the honor roll or being recognized at honor assemblies.	70	2.86	1.41	41.1%	41.1%	13.7%	4.1%
Students are encouraged to compete with each other academically.	71	2.51	1.18	52.1%	41.1%	4.1%	2.7%

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*. Respondents could choose not to respond.

Table B7. Academic Preparedness

How well do you think your school does in preparing students in the following areas:	N	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Choose not to respond
English/language arts	70	2.8%	6.9%	41.7%	45.8%	2.8%
Math	70	8.3%	23.6%	54.2%	11.1%	2.8%
Social studies	69	5.6%	9.7%	52.8%	27.8%	4.2%
Science	69	4.2%	19.4%	50.0%	22.2%	4.2%
Readiness for college	72	8.3%	15.3%	52.8%	23.6%	--
Readiness for careers	72	12.5%	29.2%	48.6%	9.7%	--
Readiness for civic behavior/ citizenship	72	12.5%	20.8%	40.3%	26.4%	--

Table B8. College and Career Readiness Culture

Item	N	Mean*	SD	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Somewhat disagree or agree	Agree / strongly agree	Choose not to respond
My school assesses students' readiness for college and/or careers.	69	4.28	1.26	9.7%	40.3%	45.8%	4.2%
My school has clearly defined and set standards for what constitutes college and/or career readiness for students.	72	4.26	1.36	12.5%	33.3%	54.2%	--
My school creates multiple definitions of success for life after high school.	70	4.20	1.35	15.3%	29.2%	52.8%	2.8%
My school attempts to include families and community members in our college and/or career readiness for students.	71	4.15	1.17	13.9%	43.1%	41.7%	1.4%

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 6 = *Strongly agree*. Respondents could choose not to respond.

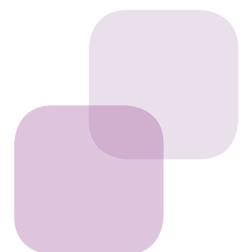


Table B9. Postsecondary Planning and Outreach

How well do you think your school does in preparing students in the following areas:	N	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Choose not to respond
Providing information to STUDENTS about what the requirements are to get postsecondary training (trade/technical school, 2 year, or 4 year)	70	5.6%	15.3%	38.9%	37.5%	2.8%
Providing information to STUDENTS about the availability of and how to get financial aid for postsecondary training	71	4.2%	16.7%	43.1%	34.7%	1.4%
Providing information to PARENTS about what the requirements are to get postsecondary training (trade/technical school, 2 year, or 4 year)	67	8.3%	26.4%	45.8%	12.5%	6.9%
Providing information to PARENTS about the availability of and how to get financial aid for postsecondary training	66	9.7%	26.4%	38.9%	16.7%	8.3%

Table B10. Equity Practices

Item	N	Mean*	SD
Does your school provide language interpreter/translator services for people who speak languages other than English?	71	76.1%	21.1%*
Does your school offer racial equity and cultural competency training?	72	65.3%	34.7%
If yes, do you think that the training is enough to meet the needs of the students at your school?	58	56.9%	43.1%
Does your school offer training around responsiveness to the needs of LGBTQ students?	72	61.1%	38.9%
If yes, do you think the training is enough to meet the needs of the students at your school?	59	47.5%	52.5%
Does your school visibly post materials in languages other than English?	71	50.7%	49.3%

\* 2.8% of respondents chose N/A (No parents or students speak a language other than English).

Table B11. Equity Perceptions

Item	N	Mean*	SD	Choose not to respond
The staff at our school have an understanding of the social, environmental, and structural conditions that lead to inequity.	70	4.07	1.03	2.8%
Our school has an institutional commitment to addressing/eliminating racial and ethnic inequities.	70	4.06	1.18	2.8%
The leaders at our school are effective in reaching out to families in poverty to provide access to support where needed.	69	4.01	0.87	4.2%
School leadership takes issues of equity and justice into account when making decisions	70	4.00	1.24	2.8%
Our school has an institutional commitment to addressing issues of poverty and socioeconomic inequality.	72	4.00	1.04	--
Staff actively address issues of poverty and socioeconomic inequality that affect student learning.	70	3.99	1.01	2.8%
Our school has an explicit school-wide anti-bullying/harassment policy.	70	3.91	1.24	2.8%
Our school has partnerships with local and state agencies that help to identify and provide resources for families living in poverty.	66	3.89	1.10	8.3%
Our school uses inclusive and culturally responsive communication strategies (strategies that take into account cultural knowledge, prior experiences, performance and communication styles, and values and belief systems).	71	3.87	1.06	1.4%
Staff actively address racial and ethnic inequities that affect student learning.	70	3.84	1.27	2.8%
The staff at our school regularly disaggregates student data by race/ethnicity and poverty status in an effort to understand inequities within our school.	69	3.84	1.39	4.2%
Our staff examines their own cultural biases through professional development or other processes.	70	3.83	1.20	2.8%
Our school provides support for teachers around issues of equity.	71	3.80	1.25	1.4%
Our school has an effective means of problem solving when issues of equity arise.	69	3.78	1.20	4.2%
Our school emphasizes using instructional materials that reflect the culture or ethnicity of the students and families.	67	3.76	1.33	6.9%
Our school has a structure that supports authentic community partnerships.	69	3.71	1.10	4.2%

\* Scale ranged from 1 = *Haven't started work in this area* to 5 = *Part of our routine, we model it*. Respondents could choose not to respond.



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