*Promising Practices: Preparing Critical Needs Students for College or Career*

Kristen Campbell Wilcox, Rebecca Shea, Mary Ann Zuccaro, and Fang Yu, February 2018

Case Study: Malverne Senior High School

It is probably the one district in Nassau County that represents a multitude of ethnicities, races, and various walks of life. We have a cross section of children. Some of them are very wealthy; many of them are economically disadvantaged. We have a huge minority population, but we also have a stable Caucasian population, and we have grown tremendously in our Hispanic population over the years. That has been the fastest growth. I think people would see it's small, it's intimate, and that children get along famously together.

- superintendent
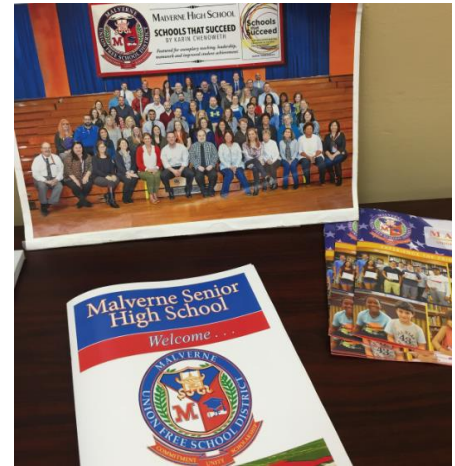
School Context

Malverne Senior High is situated about thirty miles from New York City in a working-class community dotted with small businesses, private homes, and housing complexes. A parochial school draws about 700 students from the district; to counter the segregating effects of that option, the district carries a history of court-ordered racial integration going back to the 1950s and 60s. As the superintendent explained, in this environment district and school leaders intentionally foster an "intimate" feeling by keeping about "85% [of students] from Kindergarten through graduation of high school" as part of the same cohort, . . . "so even though we have some migration, we absorb those children fairly rapidly and they become part of a very united group of kids."

Since 1999, Malverne High has met annual yearly progress targets and been categorized as in "good standing" by the state. It has not been without achievement disparity bumps, however. From 2002 to 2006, for example, graduation rates dramatically dropped from 92% to 77%, with rates among particular subgroups of students the lowest. In 2006, graduation rates for English language learners (ELLs) hovered around 20% and reached only 55% among students with disabilities. Since then the school has rebounded, and the graduation rate has remained relatively stable and high. By 2015, the graduation rate had reached 93%, the highest of the last 14 years, and this upward trend extends to all subgroups of students.

Malverne High's principal attributed the turnaround in part to "a change in cultural norms" and to exceptional school and district leaders as well as a dedicated cadre of passionate and capable teachers, faculty and staff. Support staff, among others, described how these "cultural" changes took shape in a number of adjustments, including raising expectations for exceeding the minimum graduation requirements, providing high school curricula in the middle school, and

changing approaches toward discipline. The principal reported that the effects of these cultural, curricular, and disciplinary changes are evident in students' behaviors:

> *I see kids that are coming here and trying to learn. I see kids come in and try to be the best they can be. I have kids that don't want to take lunch periods. They come in here at zero period—at 7:15 in the morning.*

Educator after educator consistently reported that the "mantra" had changed during this turnaround period to "failure is not an option" (support staff) and "all hands are on deck" (principal). The superintendent, who began his tenure at the start of this turnaround, when pressed to explain his and others' roles, explained,

> *So I set my sights on trying to work with the administration and our great Board of Education. The administration team just continued to grow and improve and we hired several wonderful teachers. I think that has been one of the main catalysts for improvement.*

The capacity that came with an able team of educators was accompanied by clear messages regarding expectations for relationship building and nurturing between adults and with students. These relationships rest on a bedrock of compassion, trust, and a shared belief that if adults at Malverne circulate "the right mindset" (district leader), as exemplified by "failure is not an option" and "all hands are on deck," all kids will succeed in high school and be ready to compete in college or career.

School Selection Criteria

Malverne Senior High School met the criteria of "odds beating" in this study[i] because the difference between expected graduation rates for students entering 9th grade in 2010, 2011 and 2012, who are African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino and disadvantaged economically, exceeded the average performance for similar students across the state. The difference between the actual and expected graduation rates were standardized to calculate the z-score[i]. With an overall z-score of 1.30, Malverne Senior High School is distinctive for exceeding expected performance on multiple measure of graduation across three cohorts of students who are African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino and/or economically disadvantaged.

Student Demographics 2016-17: Malverne Senior High School, Malverne Union Free School District

	Malverne Senior High School	Malverne Union Free School District	New York State
Grades Served	9-12	K-12	K-12
Total Enrollment	548	1,685	2,629,970
Economically Disadvantaged	51%	49%	55%
English Language Learners	3%	4%	9%

Student Ethnic/Racial Distribution			
African-American/Black	57%	50%	17%
Hispanic/Latino	22%	25%	26%
White	14%	18%	44%
Multiracial	1%	2%	2%
Other	6%	5%	10%

Demographic data are from the state report cards for 2016-17 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

This case study reports how district and school leaders, teachers, and support staff have approached preparing their students for college or career, with the next section highlighting those aspects of the district and school that were identified as being most salient to their odds-beating student graduation rates. An Appendix to this report shares the results of a survey of school staff that explored their perceptions of the overall quality of school life and relationships within the school and with the community. Those with instructional responsibilities also reported on their instructional practices.

Highlights

Dreaming Big

Fostering a "dream big" mindset in Malverne has taken concerted effort over a period of years and is a salient feature of what makes educators there tick. As the superintendent explained, a "critical" change related to their turnaround required a shift in "the standard at which they [students] measure themselves," and this referred to academics as well as behavior. He went on to explain how this was done,

> It used to be passing was OK. I know when I came here there were no dreams. There was, "I don't know what I want to be and I don't really care. I just want to survive." Most kids wanted to pass but that was it. We felt that discipline also was a real concern. Kids were acting out an awful lot. We had once, in 2008, 500 suspensions of 550 children in the high school. Not all for individuals, but some had multiples. We were really concerned that the behavioral norms were way over the edge. Statistically we were one of the highest suspending high schools on Long Island. So we set our sights on really bringing that back to square one and starting over.

The process of revamping their approaches toward discipline to one of "discipline with care," said a school leader, included launching the "Dream Program," with the superintendent's premise, "You have to have a dream" in order to get the most of your education and life. Starting with a "Dare to Dream" program in the middle school, leaders spread the program's framework vertically to the elementary and high schools, so that "each cohort would have that whole vision and support," explained the superintendent. And he added, giving this dream legs required "a good cooperative effort from each staff in each school" accompanied by efforts to define success at each level with regard to core components of the framework: "attitude, behavior, well-being, and safety." Once those pieces were defined educators turned to articulating what success looks like in terms of academic and personal achievement beyond academics.

Caring, Collaboration, and Collegiality at the Core of Relationships

In order to "scaffold" (principal) the steps for students to reach their dreams, educators at Malverne High expressed enacting care and collaboration, which in turn fuels collegiality and trusting relationships. Evidence of the value of care and collaboration emerged when teachers discussed what they do when confronted with students who are facing serious challenges, or are disengaged or disengaging. In these situations they spoke sincerely about the importance of caring for kids as individuals above all. As one teacher explained,

> *You can't sit there and say, "I'm going to beat the odds with these kids." You have to say, "They are kids."*

Putting in the emotional labor day in and day out to engage kids facing some very significant challenges can be exhausting, and teachers and support staff admitted, it is; however, they also said that they extend caring to and collaborate with each other, and do so with a sprinkling of good humor. One teacher described reaching out to another for help with re-engaging a couple of students and saw an immediate turn for the better. When interviewers asked the collaborating teacher what he had done to turn those students around, he explained,

> *I just talked to them, and I think what happens is kids realize it's not just one teacher that I'm giving a hard time to and that these teachers talk to each other and maybe deep down they understand that we ALL care as a community. So I didn't do anything special. I didn't punish them. I just said, "Can you stop?"*

The teacher who reached out for help noted, however, that his colleague had claimed that he had made the students do "500,000 push-ups!" This kind of playful camaraderie was evident in other conversations with teachers and support staff. As an example of how this collegial and caring climate permeates the school, one teacher captured a commonly expressed feeling, saying, "We like working here." Then she made the connection between adults caring and collaborating with each other and relationships with and among Malverne High's students: "I think that if the kids see that we like working here, then that's what's going to promote them wanting to be here."

A Closer Look

These highlights are evident throughout the five dimensions that frame the study of which this case is one part. The sections below expand on each of these findings within the context of the study's framework

Curriculum and Academic Goals

Eliminating Failure and Suspensions and Raising the Bar for Engagement

A quick skim of the district's goals might give one the impression, as the superintendent put it, that they are "pretty generic." However, within the inner workings of the high school a number of academic and non-academic goals are in play, and those are seen as drivers to help them prepare every Malverne student to compete in college or career. Two goals were described as of

paramount importance: eliminating failure and eliminating suspensions. The superintendent explained that they have made progress toward meeting both of these goals:

> *That [suspensions] came from 100s, down to about 25 at the high school last year. We look for more of a therapeutic intervention where a child may do something in lieu of being suspended from school.*

These two goals are accompanied by a number of others meant to raise the bar for engagement of all students. Part of this effort involves breaking open the Advanced Placement (AP) gateway to more students. As the principal explained, new policies have made AP available to students who would have never been allowed or wanted to take those courses in the past. He explained that in prior years the (unspoken) message to students was,

> *"He is smart and you are not. The smart kids only get into AP." We are breaking that and putting kids into these [AP] classes.*

The principal noted that student motivation is a "critical" requirement to placement and success in completion of AP coursework.

In alignment with the belief that students are not just students, but "kids"— kids with diverse interests that engage them, extracurricular involvement is also highlighted as a goal.

> *What we did, in combination to that [raise academic goals], was to start to create a lot of clubs and activities that were interest-related to children, at all schools.* -superintendent

In some cases these clubs and activities were generated out of student interest and in others, as a solution to a problem. For example, reported a school leader, when confronted with "huge amounts of girl fights," school leaders got together to "think out of the box," asking, "What can we do to handle this?" They arrived at cocreating, with students at the center of the conflicts, a "Growing Into Responsible Leaders" (GIRLS) club, with the upper grade girls mentoring their younger peers in how to "exemplify the virtues of a woman."[1] They have since seen "a dramatic decline in the girl fights and the girl drama," said a school leader.

College and Career Readiness Curriculum from Start to Finish

The idea that across the district's elementary, middle, and high schools, educators can make all students able and ready to attend colleges and universities, including some of the best in the state and country, fuels educators' competitive drive and their efforts to offer a cutting-edge curriculum. In this regard, a teacher leader explained that they adopted the College Board Springboard program in grades six through ten for just this purpose; according to the principal, the program focuses on things like "abstract and critical thinking and research," which are correlated with college success. Educators don't rely on programs like Springboard alone,

---

[1] Club description can be found at:
http://www.malverne.k12.ny.us/Assets/MHS_Links/092116_MHS_Clubs__Activities_Brochure_2016-2017.pdf?t=636100519327100000

however; they also engage in ongoing curriculum revision in-house, sometimes individually and sometimes as teams. As one ELA teacher explained, she worked individually over the summer on tying her English 11 curriculum "closer" to the SAT, Regents Assessments, and AP courses "and adding more research components." In other cases curriculum revision is led by teams of teachers across schools. As an example, a teacher reported that in social studies, a content area undergoing changes in state standards, high school teachers identified and then worked some of those skills that they had identified as needing development in preparation in the upper grade courses (i.e., reading and writing) "back down to the ninth-grade level." As evidence of attention to student readiness, these high school teachers also reached out to the middle school teachers with a call for support. As one teacher explained,

> We said, "Hey, can you guys [middle school social studies teachers] focus on some of the skills that we see on this side of the street that the students are weak in?" So we created a curriculum to focus on some of the skills that the students lacked and will need for the upcoming Regents changes.

Leaders and staff have also created new courses meant to scaffold the skills and knowledge students need to succeed in Regents courses. ELL students, particularly those who have experienced interrupted formal educations (SIFE), benefit from the efforts to "create new classes to build up their skills … so it's easier for them to pass that [Regents] class," claimed a teacher.

Staff Selection, Leadership and Capacity Building

Leading Turnaround with a Vision and Mission

As described earlier, the district reaped the benefits of experienced and able district leadership that, according to leaders and other staff, facilitated their "getting better and better." "It was more of a team between the teachers, administrators, our parents, and definitely our students," said a district leader. Their turnaround story is one led by a vision that educator after educator articulated consistently: failure is not an option -- for students or the adults who interact with them every day. As a district leader asserted, "It was a culture that was built over 11 years, and in 11 years it's been a dramatic change for the better." The superintendent's vision for "no failure" has been complemented by a mission to ensure that Malverne graduates can go beyond just graduation but compete with their peers in wealthier districts. Living up to this vision and achieving this mission requires a stance of unrelenting persistence tempered by a healthy appreciation for enjoyment and a long and holistic view of what makes for a healthy human being. As the superintendent explained, "We needed to make school enjoyable," inspiring renewed efforts to provide an array of extra-curricular options and redouble efforts to build lasting relationships between school staff and students even after graduation. As an example, a teacher leader shared a not so unusual occurrence: "We, yesterday, had a former student who came here for help with transcripts, and we helped him with the college application."

Leading a "Can-Do" Spirit by Example, with a Clear Why and a Way

The principal, when asked about anything in particular that he strongly encourages or even mandates of staff, answered with a clear message that teacher after teacher reiterated: It is about what kids _can_ do, not what they can't:

> One thing I will not accept, and everybody knows it: I want all kids to have the opportunity to take honors courses. I don't ever want to hear what kids can't do.

To do this requires some specific and strategic actions as well as instructional guidance, which the principal freely offers at times, even co-teaching a lesson. One guidance counselor explained how she and a colleague follow up on the spirit of this mission by preparing students to meet high expectations as early on as they can.

> I think that the expectations have certainly changed. They've changed the mantra into eliminating failure. The district itself is raising its expectations. The teachers have raised expectations, the administrators, and [our department] as well. So we'll go into the ninth grade classrooms and we'll talk to them [students]. We'll tell them what they need for graduation but absolutely we'll emphasize the fact that we want them to do more than the minimum, [asking] how can they stand out and be college and career ready. The students in eighth grade are taking Algebra 1, Living Environment, and a foreign language, and now even some of our seventh graders are taking Earth Science. So they're coming in with 2, 3, or 4 high school credits already, and we explain to them, "Okay, we don't have you doing that so that way you can be done with math and science in tenth grade; we have you doing that so that way you can get to those upper level classes in eleventh grade, twelfth grade. So we're encouraging our students to go for that AP Math or Science.

Hiring for Love of Children and Retaining Talent through Instructional Guidance

Finding the right educators to fulfill the Malverne mission was reported to be a challenge, taking into account statewide teacher shortages and Malverne's high expectations. Despite this, the school was able to hire a new English as a New Language teacher and a second school counselor in recent years; this was reported to have mitigated overload. While support staff said they always need more help, they also expressed feeling comfortable in freely asking school leaders for help and reported not feeling overwhelmed.

New staff members are like their peers who have been hired with a particular characteristic of high value at Malverne High: Love of children. As the principal explained,

> We put a tremendous effort into the hiring process. We need to hire the right people for the job. You have got to love kids. You have got to have a genuine love for children. I can teach you how to teach if you have a passion for it, but you have to love kids. So that's probably the number one thing I look for, someone who loves children.

Other complementary qualities leaders look for in staff hires according to the principal are "someone that has a passion for their subject matter" and "someone who's reflective." A teacher who has these qualities is then supported in developing teaching skill by not only the principal, but also by her or his fellow teachers as will be explained in more detail next.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

Teaching Self-Advocacy and Providing Support to Persist

In alignment with the mantra "failure is not an option" and the belief that all children can rise to challenges with appropriate scaffolding and support, leaders and teachers work to teach students how to advocate for themselves.

> *We want kids to be resilient when they leave. We want kids to be able to meet challenges and succeed without the supports but know they can do it.* - district leader

A teacher who works primarily with students with disabilities described the import of helping kids "be able to talk about their disability … and figure out how to work around that disability so they can reach whatever their potential is." Guidance counselors, too, explained how they work actively to help students chart a course for their futures:

> *We help them make the connections between what they're doing now and how it's going to help them in the future. We help them to hone in on what their strengths are and what their interests are and gear them towards a career path.*

And to help students rise to academic challenges along the way, such things as the "Principal's Challenge" gives students support to persist and succeed in AP classes.

> *In the Principal's Challenge, they [students] are responsible for doing the same level of work, and they're put into the AP classes for a kind of a probationary period. And so they have an extra set of eyes on them just to make sure they're getting that extra support, or if they're struggling that they have an additional person there to talk to. And we'll meet with them and the chairperson like every quarter just to see how they're doing and if there's any additional support that they need.* - support staff

Teaching for Engagement

School leaders, teacher leaders, and teachers expressed a shared concern for providing engaging instruction, and that instruction was described as student-centered, interactive, and collaborative.

> *It has to be a student-centered lesson. I don't want to see a teacher-centered lesson. I want to see, especially in science, I want to see them engaged. I want you to step back and I want them to explore a phenomenon and I want them to, in groups, to discuss the activity. I want them to present it to the class. I want whole class discussion and I want them to evaluate each other's work.* - teacher leader

While these qualities of instruction are valued, so are keeping students engaged through cutting-edge courses. Teachers expressed being eager to take on some of these new offerings. With Project Lead the Way (PLTW) at the forefront of their STEM (science-math-engineering-technology) initiatives, a number of new courses are meant to pique student interests. A school leader described just a few of these offerings:

> *Now we have PLTW Bio-medical. We have PLTW Computer Science. We have PLTW courses in Engineering. It's just exploded in the amount of science and engineering classes we are offering, but it's because students are really interested in that.*

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis and Use of Data

Driving Home the Import of Assessments to Kids

Enacting their "no failure" mantra means that constant and comprehensive college and career readiness data monitoring is necessary. Leaders understand that people, including most importantly, kids, need to and deserve to know the "Why?" behind what they do, and educators work to explain the import of assessments. As expressed by a guidance counselor, students still in middle school are taught that all assessments matter, and they must take particular ones very seriously to prepare themselves to succeed in high school and beyond:

> *We push the PSAT. It is something that all of our students take from 8th grade, 9th, 10th, and 11th, and the district pays for it. Our job as counselors is to help them to understand this is not just another test that you come in and say, "Oh, yeah, another test." This is an important measure where you are compared to students all over the country.*

Ongoing and Personalized Monitoring

In addition to the PSATs, educators use a variety of other academic and college planning assessment tools to inform course taking and instruction. Data monitoring systems are described as "ongoing" and facilitated by things like online gradebooks so that,

> *We know where they [students] are day-to-day. It's not like waiting for the quarterly report card. The teacher's grades are right in there."*   - superintendent

District and school leaders as well as teachers and guidance counselors are part of the "we" who check on student progress "virtually daily," according to a district leader, and provide "individualized scaffolding and support wherever it's needed," said a teacher. For ELL students who are expected to engage in meeting the same high expectations as their peers, teachers use a variety of assessments to identify the appropriate level of language and content instruction they need and monitor them very closely. As one teacher explained,

> *We consider all of our [ELL] students at-risk when they enter, which means not that they're failing, but that we have to pay close attention to their performance throughout*

the year. We can't wait until the end of the marking period or the end of the progress report.

Recognitions, Interventions and Adjustments

Recognizing Need with Timely, Effective, and Creative Responses

Malverne isn't the kind of place where people rest on the acclaim they have received over the past years for their odds-beating performance. Rather, in alignment with an "all hands on deck" approach and a competitive and creative spirit to solving problems and meeting high expectations, they recognize effort in traditional ways (e.g., award ceremonies) but also pursue recognizing where needs are unmet and responding to meet them. Whether a social worker who is described by a teacher as "tremendous" in "making connections with outside agencies" to attend to students' mental health needs or an initiative to improve communications with parents through social media, Malverne staff report working to creatively problem solve. Even students chip in when help is needed, an example of which was offered by a guidance counselor with regard to scheduling to meet student course-taking needs:

> *The students have actually become creative because we're trying to figure out how we can get the "conflicts" – that's what they call them -- that can't fit in nicely into the schedule, and they'll come to us and say, "Oh, I was talking to my other friend and his is like this and we have pretty much the same schedule. Do you think that we can fit it in?"*

Out of School Learning and Community Partnerships

Outside-of-school resources like a weekend with a local university provide support for students struggling in an academic area. In addition, a number of others including the "Regents Assistance Program" is offered on Saturdays. Summer programs are also seen as essential not only for students' academic success, but also to maintain and develop students' relationships with the school and beyond. A teacher leader explained the importance of this sustained effort:

> *I believe that it [the relationship that our students have with the school] shouldn't stop when the school is no longer in session. So during the summer I created the Math and Science Summer Camp. We have the Crossroads Farms down the road. We have taken them to the preserve, also. I use . . . what the community has to offer to get the kids in to do fun and hands-on science activities during the summer. We are reinforcing their math and science skills while they're having fun. There's no more pressure of Regents, just to get to love what they are doing. And also, we take them to the bank just to get them to know the community.*

In a Nutshell

Malverne Senior High School, which serves a more ethnically diverse student population than the average school in New York state, has achieved a pattern of better-than-predicted student graduation outcomes. Its "no failure" and "dream big" mantras, accompanied by a data-driven and collegial spirit, are evident in the way educators approach preparing the youth of Malverne for college or career. Positive and productive relationships across schools and among students and between students and adults are highly valued and supported by visionary leaders and staff who collaborate to help students to meet high expectations. Educators hired for their love of children provide timely interventions, offer cutting-edge curricula, and connect with parents, outside organizations, and agencies to maintain and continue to improve their "odds-beating" school.

Malverne Senior High School
Dr. Vincent Romano, Principal
80 Ocean Avenue
Malverne, NY 11565
vromano@malverne.k12.ny.us

[i] This case study is one of a series of studies conducted by Know Your Schools~for NY Kids since 2005. In 2017-18, research teams investigated 10 high schools. Three of these schools were typically-performing (with graduation rates as predicted for the student population served) and the remainder were odds-beating schools (with graduation rates above-predicted for the student population served). For the purposes of this study, expected graduation rates were estimated using regression analysis for two types of outcomes – proportions of cohorts earning any Regents diploma and proportions of cohorts receiving an Advanced Regents diploma – using three demographic characteristics – proportions of students who are classified as economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and either African-American or Latino/Hispanic. These estimates were calculated for three successive cohorts of 9th graders – 2010, 2011 and 2012 – with separate analyses for all students and four subgroups – economically disadvantaged, English language learners, African-American, and Latino/Hispanics. For each of the 30 analyses, gaps between actual and expected rates were standardized to have a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1 (i.e., z-score) before calculating an overall actual-expected gap by averaging these z-scores. Next, purposive sampling was used to reflect geographic and community variation around the state, with equal representation of rural, suburban and urban locales. Researchers used site-based interviews of teachers, support staff, and administrators, as well as analyses of supportive documentation in all schools. Results of the cross-site analysis and details regarding the project's other studies, staff, and publications can be found at www.albany.edu/nykids.

Appendix. Survey Results

As part of the study, school personnel were asked to respond to a school culture survey designed to explore their perceptions of the overall quality of school life and relationships within the school and with the community. Those with instructional responsibilities also reported on their instructional practices. The survey was distributed electronically to all staff members prior to the site visit. A total of 48 responses were received for a response rate of 62.3%. Forty-six respondents indicated they have instructional responsibilities in their current position.

To keep responses anonymous, identifying information was not collected. School personnel were asked to respond to a series of statements about their perceptions about the school environment, their beliefs and values regarding cultural diversity and engagement, and their instructional practices and responsiveness of these practices to diverse students.

Questions about culture asked participants to respond on a 6-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Instructional practices questions asked participants to respond on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from every day or almost every day to rarely or never. Responses are reported in the aggregate, as a percentage of total responses for each question, in Tables 1, 2 and 3, each following a brief summary.

Table 1. School Culture Inventory

*Staff-School Leadership Interactions***:** Almost all staff members responding reported that they can talk with their principal when they are concerned about a student all (98%) and that the principal and leaders back them up when addressing student behavior (89%).

Staff-Parent, Family, and Community Interactions: Most (83%) respondents reported that staff members have strong ties to the local community. Also, most parents/legal guardians have high educational expectations for their children as reported by staff members (87%) and are engaged in school activities and programs (85%). However, some staff members (20%) reported experiencing difficulties communicating with students' families.

Staff-Staff Interactions: All respondents (100%) reported feeling accepted and respected by most staff members and working together to ensure the needs of students are met.

Staff-Student Interactions: All staff members (100% of those responding) reported feeling responsible for helping all students learn and succeed and for teaching students to treat each other respectfully. In addition, all respondents indicated they believe students can learn; almost all (98%) staff members reported they are responsible for engaging students in school and learning.

Student-Student Interactions: Most staff members (63%) reported that they perceive students as tending to spend time with peers who are like them in their ethnic, culture, language, or socioeconomic backgrounds. A few respondents (4%) agreed with the statement that fights due

to these differences are a serious problem at the school. And almost all staff members (98%) reported that students respect classmates who excel academically.

Culturally Responsive Beliefs and Practices: All staff members (100%) reported looking forward to learning about the traditions, customs, and holidays of others as well as valuing each other's distinctive ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic differences. Additionally, all staff members reported feeling prepared to work with students of diverse backgrounds. Almost all (98%) reported that students and staff of different backgrounds treat each other with respect. Only a few (6%) reported that academic expectations are low for students of varying backgrounds.

Table 1: School Culture Inventory

Staff members were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements:	Strongly Agree, Agree, or Somewhat Agree	Strongly Disagree, Disagree, or Somewhat Disagree
Staff-School Leadership Interactions		
The principal and other leaders communicate a clear vision for positive relationships among students and staff members of different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds.	98%	2%
The principal and other leaders back up staff members when addressing student behavior problems.	89%	11%
I can talk with my principal(s) when I am concerned about a student.	98%	2%
Staff-Parent, Family, and Community Interactions		
Staff members have strong ties to various groups in the local community.	83%	17%
Most parents/legal guardians have high educational expectations for their children.	87%	13%
Most parents/legal guardians of students who differ in ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds are involved in some school activities and programs.	85%	15%
I have difficulties communicating with students' families.	20%	80%
I receive a great deal of support from students' families for the work I do.	71%	29%
Staff-Staff Interactions		
Staff members work together to ensure that all students are in school every day ready to learn.	100%	0%
I feel accepted and respected by most staff members.	100%	0%
Staff-Student Interactions		
I feel responsible for helping all students learn and succeed in school.	100%	0%
I feel responsible for helping all students learn to treat each other respectfully.	100%	0%
I feel responsible for engaging all students in school and learning.	98%	2%
I believe that all students can learn.	100%	0%
Most students are actively engaged in learning while at school.	100%	0%
I try to find help for any student encountering difficulties at home or in school.	100%	0%
I regularly discuss with students their plans after high school.	100%	0%
I am certain that I am making a difference in the lives of students at this school.	100%	0%
Student-Student Interactions		
Outside of classrooms, students generally hang out with peers who are like them in	63%	37%

their ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds.		
Fights between groups of students who differ in ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds are a serious problem in this school.	4%	96%
Most students respect classmates who excel academically.	98%	2%
Culturally Responsive Beliefs and Practices		
I look forward to learning about others' traditions, customs, and holidays.	100%	0%
I enjoy sharing my cultural and ethnic heritage with others at my school.	96%	4%
Students and staff frequently share aspects of their backgrounds such as their traditional food, clothing, art and/or music.	98%	2%
Students and staff of different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds treat each other with respect.	98%	2%
Students and staff at this school value each other's distinctive ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic differences.	100%	0%
I feel prepared to work with students from different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds.	100%	0%
I look for opportunities to learn about how to help students from different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds.	98%	2%
Students of different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds who have health or other problems get the services that they need.	98%	2%
Academic expectations are low for some students of different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds.	6%	94%

Table 2. Teacher Interactions about Instruction

The most common instructional practices that occur at least one per week at the school include: 1) discussing students with academic difficulties (78%); 2) discussing how to teach a particular topic (75%); and 3) sharing teaching experiences with colleagues (69%).

Table 2. Teacher Interactions about Instruction

Teachers were asked how often they had the following interactions with other teachers, including instructional coaches:	Every day to 1-2 days per week	1-2 days per week to every 1-2 months	Almost never or never
Discuss how to teach a particular topic.	75%	19%	6%
Collaborate in planning and preparing instructional materials.	63%	25%	12%
Share what I have learned about my teaching experiences.	69%	28%	3%
Visit another classroom to learn more about or provide feedback on teaching.	34%	22%	44%
Another teacher visits my classroom to learn new strategies or to provide feedback on my teaching.	22%	26%	52%
Analyze or review student data.	50%	28%	22%
Work together to try out new ideas for engaging students.	50%	41%	9%
Participate in professional development.	9%	85%	6%
Practice new skills.	47%	53%	0%
Discuss student with academic difficulties.	78%	22%	0%

Share strategies for communicating with students' families.	47%	41%	12%

Table 3. Instructional Decisions for Diverse Students

Overall, 47% of respondents alter the content of lessons, tasks, or assessments to reflect diversity in student ethnic, cultural, language, or socioeconomic background 3-5 days per week. However, there are still 22% of respondents reporting that they rarely or never alter their practices. A total of 44% respondents purposely place students in work groups with peers who are different ethnically, culturally, or socioeconomically or who speak another language 3-5 days per week, and 25% report rarely or never engaging in this practice.

Table 3. Instructional Decisions for Diverse Students

Frequency to which staff:	3-5 days per week	1-2 days per week or every few weeks	Rarely or Never
Alter lesson's content, tasks, or assessments to take into account students' different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds.	47%	31%	22%
Purposely have students work in groups with peers from different ethnic, cultural, language, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds.	44%	31%	25%