



# EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

## District Innovation Design Team Report

LED BY



THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOLS  
District Innovation Design Team Report  
National Center for Scaling up Effective Schools

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## Section I: Introduction

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The National Center for Scaling up Effective Schools (NCSU) is a five-year project working to develop, implement, and test new processes to scale up effective practices in high schools that districts will be able to use within the context of their own unique goals and circumstances. While a consensus is emerging around the “essential components” of successful schooling from years of prior research, far less is known about the ways in which educators develop, implement, integrate, and sustain these components. The Center’s first year of fieldwork was designed to identify the bundles of practices that effective schools in one district in Florida use to orchestrate the essential components into successful outcomes for all students. Drawing from these findings, the District Innovation Design Team (DIDT)/School Design Team will develop an innovation that will be implemented in three district high schools during the 2012-13 school year. The purpose of this report is to present the main findings from the first year of data collection to the DIDT so as to provide a roadmap on how to proceed with the design challenge.

The report is divided into five sections. Following this introduction, Section II gives an overview and background of the project as well as its main findings. Section III identifies the eight essential components of effective high schools drawn from a comprehensive review of the high school reform literature (e.g., Dolejs, et al., 2006; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006) and two others that emerge from the analysis of the fieldwork data in Year One. It also presents the eleven enabling practices that our findings suggest are necessary for schools to enact the essential components. Together, the ten essential components and the eleven enabling practices provide the foundation for the design challenge. Section IV presents the Design Challenge. Section V provides case examples of practices drawn directly from our case study findings and from your district. These case studies cut across the different components to support school success. They represent actual practices taking place in effective schools in your district. Details about the research design, including the sample selection, data, and three-stage approach used to analyze the data can be found in the Appendix.

## Section II: Overview

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The National Center for Scaling up Effective Schools (NCSU) is a partnership between Vanderbilt University, Florida State University (FSU), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Georgia State University, the University of Wisconsin, and the Education Development Center (EDC). NCSU focuses on identifying the combination of essential components and the programs, practices and policies that make some high schools in large urban districts particularly effective with low income, minority students, and English Language Learners and developing processes to bring effective practices to schools that have struggled to improve outcomes for their students.

NCSU focuses on high schools for three main reasons. First, the overwhelming majority of research on effective schools and school reform is limited to elementary schools. Secondary schools are larger, organizationally more complex, and politically more complicated with multiple administrative layers and subject-based teachers and other specialists that often create natural divisions amongst staff (Cuban, 1984; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001) and result in disagreements around goals, policies, and practices. Such factors make the process of change more difficult in secondary schools (Firestone & Herriott, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1985). Second, national and international comparisons of student achievement indicate that, despite progress in elementary grades, underperformance in high school is a persistent problem (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). There are extraordinary economic and educational consequences for students who are neither college nor workforce ready. Third, as prior research suggests, the relative importance of non-school factors, such as family background, decreases as students progress through school (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2000; Fryer & Levitt, 2002). Put simply, identifying effective high school practices holds the promise of increasing the outcomes and life opportunities of students.

The Center's work is divided into four stages: identifying those practices that make certain schools highly effective, building innovations based on those practices and the systems to successfully implement them, developing the means to measure successful implementation, and measuring the success of scale-up efforts.

### *Summary of Methods*

During the 2010-11 school year, researchers with the National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools (NCSU) conducted a variety of data collection activities in four Broward County high schools. These schools were selected based on value added

methodology with two schools identified as “higher value added” and two schools identified as “lower value added” based on the achievement gains of their low income, minority students, and English Language Learners. Fieldwork activities at the four schools over three weeks included interviews with administrators, English/Language Arts, math and science teachers, school support personnel, and students; focus groups with students and teachers across departments; classroom observations using the CLASS-S observation instrument; observations of meetings of the administrative team and/or professional learning communities (PLCs); and shadowing students for a full day. Findings draw on these multiple data sources. For an extensive discussion of the methods of the study, please see the Appendix.

### *Central Finding*

The analysis of data from our qualitative case study of four high schools identified a main theme that cut across our essential components and enabling practices. This was **personalization for academic and social learning**. Our findings show that the higher value-added (VA) schools made deliberate efforts through systematic structures to promote strong relationships between adults and students as well as personalize the learning experience of students. In addition, the higher VA schools maintained strong and reliable disciplinary and support systems for students that, in turn, engendered feelings of caring and, implicitly, trust among both students and teachers. Leaders at the higher VA schools talked explicitly about looking for student engagement in classroom walkthroughs as well as in their interactions with students. Teachers at the higher VA schools were more likely to discuss instructional activities that drew on students’ experiences and interests. The higher VA schools also encouraged stronger linkages with parents. In Section V, we provide specific case examples drawn directly from our findings. These case examples both provide evidence of practices in the higher VA schools, but also provide a direction for the DIDT team as they develop their own design for the schools in the study.

Research reviews on high school students suggest that three decades of high school reform aimed at improving disadvantaged student achievement has not resulted in substantially narrowing achievement gaps (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Cook & Evans, 2000). Indeed, there is little evidence that any single program or practice will close more than a fraction of the achievement gap and reduce high school dropout (Berends, 2000; Murphy, 2010). Substantially improving the learning opportunities for students from traditionally low performing subgroups will require multifaceted, integrated, and coherent designs (Chatterji, 2005; Shannon & Bylsma, 2002).

#### *Eight Essential Components + 2*

The research literature on effective schools suggests 8 essential components for school success. These include Rigorous and Aligned Curriculum, Quality Instruction, Learning-centered Leadership, Systematic Data Use, Personalized Learning Connections, Systemic Performance Accountability, Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior and Connections to External Communities. A definition for each of these components is available in Appendix A.

The Center work is guided by the eight essential components of effective high schools that emerge from a comprehensive review of the high school reform literature as well as the two that emerged from our fieldwork (Dolejs, et al., 2006; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). The first component is a *Rigorous and Aligned Curriculum*, which focuses on the content that schools provide in core academic subjects (Gamoran, Porter, Smithson, & White, 1997). A second component is *Quality Instruction*, the teaching strategies and assignments that teachers use to implement the curriculum (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Wenglinsky, 2002, 2004). A third component is *Learning-centered Leadership* that entails the extent to which leaders hold a vision in the school for learning (Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, & Elliott, 2007). A fourth component is *Systematic Use of Data*, including data to inform classroom decisions, and multiple indicators of student learning (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006). A fifth essential component is *Personalized Learning Connections*, developing strong connections between students and adults that allow teachers to provide more individual attention to their students (McLaughlin, 1994; Lee & Smith, 1999) as well as developing students' sense of belonging (Walker & Greene, 2009). The sixth essential component is a *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior*. This component refers to the extent to which teachers take responsibility for their students' performance and the degree to which they collaborate (Little, 1982; Lee & Smith, 1995). The seventh essential component is *Systemic Performance Accountability*, both external and internal structures that hold schools responsible for improved student learning (Adams & Kirst, 1999; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). The eighth component is *Connections to External Communities*, the ways in which schools establish meaningful links to

parents and community organizations or local social services (Ascher, 1988; Mediratta & Fruchter, 2001; Sanders & Lewis, 2004). In our fieldwork, we identified two additional components that emerged from the data analysis. *Organization of the Learning Environment* refers to how the organizational structure and culture of schools shape the interactions of students, parents, teachers, support personnel, and school leadership. *Variation in Schooling Experiences* focuses on how schools provide equal and equitable access to resources, minimize differences across ability levels by having high expectations for all students, and identify opportunities to promote inclusion of all students in all aspects of the schooling experience. We provide annotated definitions of each component below.

### *Learning Centered Leadership*

Principals engaging in learning-centered leadership prioritize student learning. They possess an ambitious vision for learning and hold high expectations for all students and staff. Such leaders: 1) set a vision with specific priorities around student learning; and 2) facilitate continued school improvement and support for improving instruction through collaborative, shared leadership. They engage both school-level factors (such as the school mission and faculty governance structures) and classroom-level conditions (such as student grouping and instructional practices) to focus staff, resources, and improvement strategies squarely on students' academic and social learning.

### *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior*

Actors in effective high schools take part in a strong culture of learning and professional behavior. This culture is defined by a shared focus on high expectations for students and emphasis on students' academic needs among the administration, staff and faculty of the school. Students internalize these cultural values, as well, taking responsibility for their own learning and working together to promote their academic success. Finally, effective cultures of learning are collaborative, with actors across organizational levels working together to accomplish the mission of the school. Such collaborative activity is strongly supported by the school leadership, both through careful development of collaborative structures and the devotion of necessary resources.

### *Rigorous and Aligned Curriculum*

Effective schools that have a rigorous and aligned curriculum 1) set clear curriculum standards 2) align the curriculum with state, district, and school standards and assessments 3) implement the curriculum with consistency and integrity to the standards, and 4) have a rigorous curriculum that includes ambitious content and high cognitive demand for all students. That is, they ensure the availability of

college preparatory courses to all students and engage all students in complex content and demanding activities that focus on inquiry and higher order thinking, not just memorization and computation.

### *Quality Instruction*

Teachers engaging in quality instruction: 1) meet the individual needs of their students with individualized/adaptive pedagogy; 2) use collaborative learning strategies; 3) practice authentic pedagogy that relates to students' lived experiences; and 4) emphasize "higher order" thinking skills through rigorous, challenging content. They foster the development of "higher-order" thinking skills in their students, promote creative thinking, embrace rigorous, challenging content, and incorporate real-life applications in their classrooms. In turn, quality instruction develops classrooms characterized by students' intrinsic motivation, retention of material, and positive attitudes toward learning.

### *Personalized Learning Connections*

Personalized learning connections are the ways in which students in a school have a connection or sense of belonging to the school as a whole, as well as meaningful, positive connections with other adults (teachers or other staff members) and students in the school. At effective schools, these practices are widespread. There are several different ways of conceptualizing personalized learning connections. At effective schools, these efforts are authentic, relevant and responsive to students' needs and interests. The opportunities for connections among students and the school interact and build upon one another. For instance, personalization and positive relationships are contingent upon the organization and structure of the school. The school has intentional organizational structures to promote these relationships.

### *Systematic Use of Data*

Effective high schools are data-driven and information rich environments, where actors operate in a culture of data use targeted toward improving the learning experiences of students. In these schools, streamlined information management systems are in place, giving actors across organizational levels ready access to comprehensive sources of data. Administrators, instructors, and staff are well trained in the use of these systems, and systematic efforts have been made to build the capacity of all actors to make meaningful use of available information. Finally, faculty and staff utilize these resources to take action, working collaboratively to target students for intervention, adapt instructional practices, and promote student success. In doing so, they demonstrate an internalized "culture" of data use, in



which the necessity and beneficial nature of data-driven practice is an accepted organizational perspective.

### *Systemic Performance Accountability*

Schools that exhibit systemic performance accountability have faculty and staff who hold clear expectations for student performance that reach beyond external accountability pressures. Actors in these schools focus on student academic outcomes and continuous improvement on explicit performance targets, and implement initiatives to reach those goals.

### *Connections to External Communities*

Connections to external communities are deep, sustained connections between the school, parents, and community that advance academic and social learning. The focus is not on what parents do, but on what the school helps parents to do. Two elements comprise Connections to External Communities: 1) parental involvement and 2) connections to the larger community. Parental involvement includes what schools encourage parents to do at school and what parents could do at home to support their child's learning. An important element of parental involvement entails teachers' and administrators' roles in reaching out to parents and creating a culture that supports parents reaching in. Connection with the community entails linkages to the greater community (e.g., for internships, service projects, etc.) that enhance and support students' learning opportunities. Effective community-school partnerships require structural support, trust amongst partners, and investment in collaborative work.

### *Organization of the Learning Environment*

The organization of the learning environment entails how the organizational structure and culture of schools shape the interactions of students, parents, teachers, support personnel, and school leadership. It looks at the policies and processes by which students and teachers are assigned to classes, support systems are aligned to meet student needs, and schools are governed. Student achievement is at the heart of the academic organization of schools. Shared governance is a salient feature of school success. Power is dispersed broadly throughout a network of leadership teams. These teams have clearly defined goals for managing the schools' administrative, instructional, and support systems. Effective schools foster functional relationships and exemplify a strong collaborative culture. In this regard, schools demonstrate flexibility in their assignment of support personnel to adequately meet the needs of students. Effective schools also adapt their teacher assignment protocols to align with the culture and needs of the school. School personnel

understand the implications of course/class assignment for student outcomes. Decisions for placement in courses are data-driven. However, responsive school personnel also employ policies and practices to mitigate the potential negative impact of formulaic and impersonal systems that are not always failsafe. Overall, the effective school is oriented around student achievement and organized to ensure ample participation of stakeholders.

### *Variation in Schooling Experiences*

Actors in effective schools recognize that students' experiences vary and understand that policies, practices and programs implemented at the school level can help to promote positive educational experiences across groups of students. Effective schools promote equal and equitable access to school resources, minimize differences across ability levels by having high expectations for all students, and identify opportunities to promote inclusion of all students in all aspects of the schooling experience.

### *Eleven Enabling Practices*

Findings from our 2010-2011 case study work also suggest that *a defining set of enabling practices support the successful uptake of the essential components*. We define these enabling practices as activities that are critical in the implementation of the essential components. To use a metaphor from microbiology, the essential components and enabling practices together may be thought of as the DNA of effective schools. Just as DNA consists of two interdependent strands, schools must draw from both the essential components and the enabling practices to promote effectiveness.

Our findings reveal 11 enabling practices. Compared to schools with lower VA scores, schools with higher VA scores enabled personalization for academic and social learning by...

- **Adopting a dually-focused strategy that combines the academic AND the social;**
- **Having a goal-driven focus by the leadership, faculty, and staff that guides actions and structures;**
- **Having a leadership structure that involves a broad network of people;**
- **Using data for identification, monitoring, and providing actionable feedback;**
- **Allocating adequate resources (time, space, proximity);**

- **Being proactive (rather than reactive to emergent problems);**
- **Adopting a solution-oriented approach;**
- **Creating supports for the work (structure and leadership);**
- **Using targeted yet inclusive strategies that productively resolve the tension between common high expectations for all and the need for differentiation;**
- **Promoting open communication across all stakeholders; and**
- **Fostering alignment, coherence, and integration across activities.**

In Section V, we provide powerful examples from our higher VA study schools of how each of the enabling practices plays out through the essential components to support our design challenge: personalization. First, however, we turn to the Design Challenge.

## Section IV: Design Challenge

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### *Design Challenge*

Drawing on findings from the 2010-11 study of four Broward high schools, as well as materials and summaries of the relevant research literature, the DIDT will develop designs in three innovation schools. We challenge schools to develop a systemic approach to personalization for academic and social learning:

#### *What is Personalization for Academic and Social Learning?*

*Personalization for academic and social learning (PASL)* represents a systemic, school-wide approach to meeting the academic and socio-emotional needs of high school students. Schools with PASL attend to not only students' academic, but also their socio-emotional needs. Through deliberate structures as well as efforts to promote a culture of personalization, students not only feel safe, but also exhibit a sense of belonging towards the school that, in turn, leads to higher motivation, engagement, and sense of self-efficacy.

Theoretical grounding for personalization for academic and social-emotional learning is found in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Of particular relevance for social cognitive theory are the concepts of social modeling and human agency (Bandura, 2001, 2005). Social modeling occurs in schools when adults model behavior that facilitates high academic and social outcomes. When adults in schools personalize the learning environment for students, they are not only interacting on a regular basis with students, but they are also modeling behaviors conducive to social and academic success. Human agency refers to the process by which adults and students in schools intentionally take responsibility for influencing student behavior and future life circumstances. Schools that promote human agency provide academic and social opportunities for students to explore and identify areas of interest that, in turn, are likely to encourage students to perform. They promote students' "ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution" (Bandura, 2006, p. 165). Students in schools who feel that they are able to pursue their interests, realize their potential, and are supported by adults in the school are more likely to feel *perceived* self-efficacy or the belief in one's capacities to exercise self-control and self-determination (Bandura, 1990; 1993; Zimmerman, 2000). High degrees of perceived self-efficacy at the individual level can lead to a school culture of collective self-efficacy (Bandura, 2000).

When schools attend to personalization for *academic learning*, they infuse personalization in the area of academics in the classroom. Administrators and teachers who hold high expectations for student's academic success, coupled with their intentional efforts to become knowledgeable about their students, bolster the students' sense of belonging and engagement in their own learning (McLaughlin, Talbert, Kahne, & Powell, 1990). Teachers personalize instruction through activities

such as differentiated instruction or targeting students' interests and experiences (Keefe and Jenkins, 2002). Through these varied personalized instructional approaches they become more aware of and attend to students' individual learning styles, interests, and needs that, in turn, motivate and engage students in their academic work (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002).

When schools promote personalization for socio-emotional learning, they deliberately attend to students' social-emotional competence and engagement. Social-emotional competence involves "the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish relationships with others" (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 234). A personalized school environment reflects what Noddings (1988, p. 219) refers to as "an ethic of caring" or "a relational ethic" by which students develop their capacities to engage their peers, teachers, and school community at large. Students evidence several positive outcomes, including a higher sense of self-efficacy, more participation in class and school activities, more pro-social behaviors, less behavior problems, and improved academic performance (Zins and Elias, 2007). Students' perceptions of teacher support and caring has a positive effect on the culture of student learning (Klem & Connell, 2004; Tucker & Griddine, 2010). Schools with strong personalization implement formal school structures such as small learning communities (SLCs; Connell & Klem, 2006; Felner, 2007), advisory programs (McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010; Meloro, 2005) and the looping of administrators, guidance counselors as well as teachers (Burke, 1997; Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1997). These arrangements deliberately place students with specific teachers, administrators, guidance counselors and staff to promote relationships and address students' individual needs. Schools with strong personalization also provide authentic and relevant opportunities for students to participate in school-related activities and programs. They actively encourage student involvement in extracurricular activities. Finally, schools with strong personalization encourage informal personalization through a positive school climate achieved through administrators and teachers' expressed care and concern for student's well-being, intellectual growth, and educational success.

Critical to personalization is a behavior management system consistently enforced by administrators and teachers that addresses student behavior in an individual and fair manner and in which students feel safe. Specific, clear and fair disciplinary structures support a school culture where students feel secure as well as a sense of belonging (Akey, 2006; Kuperminc et al, 2001; Gottfredson et al., 2005; Ways, 2011). School personnel are developmentally responsive (Felner, 2007). Due to the formal structures discussed above, administrators and guidance counselors have the opportunity to build relationships with all students. When there is a behavior management concern, not only do administrators, counselors and teachers draw on their prior relationships with students, but they also rely on established pathways for information and support.

PASL is a systemic, school-wide approach in which schools make deliberate efforts to attend to the academic and socio-emotional needs and competencies of

students. Schools with strong personalization have “structures, policies, and practices that promote relationships based on mutual respect, trust, collaboration, and support” both at the school and classroom levels (Breunlin, et al., 2005, p. 24; Keefe, 2007).

## Section V: Case Examples

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We now turn to the case examples. Each provides a description of a research-based practice that is employed as part of a systemic approach to addressing personalization for academic and social learning at one or both of the high VA schools in our study. For each case, we begin with a description of each practice as well as its research base. We follow with the ways in which the district supports the practice. We then describe the way the school implemented each practice, discuss how the practice supported personalization for academic and social learning and provide illustrations of school implementation. Throughout each case, we then systemically identify the ten components and enabling supports that are implemented and sustained through the practice.

### *Case Example 1: Formal and Informal Culture of Personalization*

Description: Personalization in schools refers to the ways in which students in a school have a connection or sense of belonging to the school as a whole, as well as meaningful, positive connections with other adults (teachers or other staff members) and other students in the school. Schools with strong personalization have “structures, policies, and practices that promote relationships based on mutual respect, trust, collaboration, and support” (Breunlin, et al., 2005, p. 24). They also attend to students’ individual learning styles, interests, and needs/wants (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002). In fact, the student is the starting- and end-point of personalization, whether it is classroom-based or school-wide (Keefe, 2007).

Personalization in schools is promoted in a number of ways. It may be promoted through “small learning communities (SLCs)” comprised of a specified set of teachers and students (Connell & Klem, 2006) and “looping”—intact classes are maintained over several grade levels (Osterman, 2000). Another arrangement may include “advisory programs” in which students and an educator get together regularly to deal with cognitive and affective education-related issues, as in homeroom or mentoring situations (see McClure, Yonezawa, & Jones, 2010; Meloro, 2005). Meaningful student-teacher relationships are fundamental to personalization efforts (Littky & Allen, 1999). In successful personalization cultures, “*interpersonal*” accountability exists between teachers and students such that mutual commitments are met. Teachers are knowledgeable about their students, which promotes the students’ participation in their own learning (McLaughlin, Talbert, Kahne, & Powell, 1990). Discipline is integral to personalized learning (Connell & Klem, 2004). Positive student-student relationships also complement such adult-student

connections (Hoffman & Levak, 2003). As Littky and Allen (1999, p. 27) note, “[a] culture of sharing and respect in the student body frees students to learn from their classmates.” Moreover, personalization requires purposeful effort by all adult stakeholders who are concerned with students’ well-being (Hoffman & Levak, 2003). A personalized school environment reflects “an ethic of caring” that abounds beyond the confines of the classroom (McLaughlin, et al., 1990). Overall, there exists “a school culture of collegiality” (Keefe, 2007, p. 219).

**District Implementation:** The need to attend to personalization is not new in Broward County. According to *The Smaller Learning Communities Grant: First-Year Evaluation Report, 2005-06*, the district “need[s] to further personalize the learning environment for students” (Broward County School Board, 2007, p. ii). Hence, the initial Small Learning Communities (SLC) effort “targeted eight of the most populated high schools” (p. 1). This formative evaluation report shares findings from a survey of the eight school principals and 65 school teachers regarding the formal and informal culture of personalization in Broward schools. Perspective of students were drawn the annual “District Customer Survey.” Teachers reported having personal knowledge of their students’ names, cultural and academic backgrounds, and academic aspirations. Broward teachers, however, were reportedly not conversant with students’ home life and social relations (friendships). The Report indicates that the following SLC-related programs were implemented in the target schools and/or existing programs were enhanced to foster greater personalization. These included: (a) a ninth grade transitional house, (b) a whole school magnet program, (c) career academies, or (d) school-within-school models. The district has also employed several other strategies over the last ten years to promote personalization in schools including: (a) alternative scheduling/block scheduling, (b) common planning periods, (c) counselor assigned to SLC, (d) interdisciplinary curriculum, (e) interdisciplinary teacher teams, (f) adult mentors, and (g) a student advisory period/teacher advisories.

**School Implementation:** The high VA schools in our study promoted a culture of personalization through a number of structures, policies, and practices. Participants at the two schools consistently made explicit references to “personalization.” B103 had small learning communities where APs, counselors, teachers and students engaged in “the looping process.” As one counselor stated, “They personalize the education... we try to take a big school and break it down to a small school, which is why we have small learning communities.” Participants believed that a major strength of the school was the way “we personalize education” such that “there is a sense of community that is palpable.” Administrators mentioned knowing a number of students by name. B103’s principal explained further that “knowing the kids,



knowing their background, and creating a sense of family I think goes a long way.” At B104, data use to identify and monitor students in need and to guide their instruction was viewed as an important “personalization piece.” School personnel also referred to several activities that illustrated a culture of personalization. To one teacher, “The whole personalization is what matters in this job, the key component to having success.”

**Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning:** At the higher VA schools, both formal and informal facets of a culture of personalization are illustrated in a reciprocal relationship between two essential components: a consistent *culture of learning and professional behavior* and pervasive *personalized learning connections* associated with academic and social learning. Administrators and teachers’ high expectations for and intentional efforts to become knowledgeable about their students bolstered the students’ sense of belonging and engagement in their own learning. They were **proactive** in developing and sustaining these relationships both through formal structures as well as informal interactions. They strived for **alignment, coherence and integration** across all personalization activities. Illustrations of how the two higher VA schools augmented the *personalized learning connections* via a *culture of learning and professional behavior* for academic and social learning are provided below:

***Illustration A:*** Crafting **alignment, coherence and integration across** formal structures and informal practices to build and sustain *personalized learning connections* for academic and social learning.

**Alignment, coherence, and integration** in HVA schools were evident across structures such as looping and professional collaboration at meetings of the SLCs. An assistant principal at 103 noted that personalization with students is seen when a teacher “knows the kids’ strengths and weaknesses; the kids know the teacher’s expectations and his teaching method” and “there is rapport.” The AP further pointed to looping and SLCs as examples of ways to facilitate personalization. He stated that “a perfect illustration about how looping is beneficial” is when a student makes connection with prior learning, such as recognizing, in a current book, themes similar to those in the play “Antigone”. In the SLCs, core teachers share and meet to “discuss common students once a week—kids that are struggling; kids that are not performing; kids that have attendance issues or behavior problems...” It is believed that the “interdisciplinary” arrangement of the SLCs ensures that there are “a lot of cross-curricular” connections.

***Illustration B: Adopting a dually-focused strategy*** to foster relationships that epitomize and enhance a culture of *personalized learning connections* for academic and social learning.

The possession of genuine interest in and intimate knowledge of students is reflective of a dually-focused strategy in which academic demands are linked with students' social experiences. To one counselor at B103, "You get to know your kids. Teachers get to know the kids as well... It's close knit family because everybody wants the kids to do well." Participants also noted that personalization involves genuine caring. One teacher at B104 described an instance of asking a student about the position he played on the basketball team and what that felt like. In another instance, the same teacher researched an artist that a student had mentioned and, the next day, engaged in conversations with the student about the said artist. The teacher concluded, "I think that's an example of personalization, getting to know your students, your clientele, and it goes back to does this teacher care. Once they realize that you care, I think you will get them working and going above and beyond." Teachers from B104 also illustrated care and concern in trying to find out about their students' background. A number of them "went on a school bus and... drove through all of the low income areas" where one-fifth of the students live in order to get a sense of the environment in which some students are expected to do homework.

***Illustration C: Creating supports*** through leadership-by-example to endorse and foster formal and informal *personalized learning connections* for academic and social learning.

Somewhat formal and informal arrangements involve having school personnel and students interact outside of the academic/classroom context. At B103, administrators reported spending the entire lunch period in the cafeteria interacting with students. Once every three weeks, however, the principal was reported to have lunch with selected seniors who had been chosen by their teachers and administrators. Students confirmed that these formal and informal interactions occurred and expressed a lot of fondness for the principal: "The principal is caring." Students also felt that high academic expectations were maintained. As one student put it, "Our school holds you to a higher caliber" and "you have to stay on top of your game." The principal at B104 also stated that he interacted with the students "in the cafeteria pretty much every day, and kids come to me all the time about anything... Very

rarely do I talk to a kid and not ask about how classes are going, who is your favorite teacher, that type of thing.”

### *Case Example 2: Coherent Behavior Management System*

**Description:** The foundation for a functional school environment is a coherent behavior management system that works for all stakeholders at the school. Such systems serve both the adults and students by implementing systemic behavioral accountability. In schools where there is a coherent behavior management system, classrooms are less likely to have student behavioral interruptions, allowing for a culture of learning. With coherent behavior management systems administrators support teachers in the classroom by addressing student behavior issues in a timely and fair manner. Teachers, for their part, feel that they can address inappropriate behavior in the classroom and that their decisions will be supported by the administration. For their part, students know that they will be held accountable for their actions at school and that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Confidence in the school’s behavior management system engenders feelings of safety and trust among administrators, faculty, students and parents that, in turn, provides the foundation for personalization (Akey, 2006; Gottfredson et al., 2005; Waters, 2009).

Schools that have strong socio-emotional supports in place, including those that promote student engagement, high expectations of student behavior and positive school climates see decreases in the number problem behaviors (Elias, 2006; Galloway & Lasley, 2010; Pilar, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2006). Schools with strong professional communities have discussions about challenges facing their students. These conversations include discussions about students’ discipline issues, in addition to discussions of other topics such as attendance, and academic performance (Copeland, 2010).

**District Implementation:** In the late 1990’s, Broward County Public Schools was sued for unequal treatment of minorities, which included the questioning of the enforcement of disciplinary measures (Ferrechio, S & Arthur, L., 2000; Advancement Project, 2006). As a result of one lawsuit, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit required Broward County Public to work towards addressing racial disparities in school discipline. In the Fall of 2004, Broward County implemented a Discipline Matrix in response to this lawsuit. This matrix continues to this day to be the guide for appropriate disciplinary action when students have committed violations per the Code of Student Conduct (Burnett, 2010). According to the current District website, “This tool is designed to offer consistency at all levels across the

District so that students are disciplined fairly from school to school when their behavior requires punishment beyond the classroom” (Broward County School Board, 2011).

**School Implementation:** At both of the high VA schools, there exists strong and coherent behavior management systems which support each schools’ culture of learning. Each higher VA school has staff, both APs and behavioral specialists, who are responsible for behavioral management issues at the school. Though behavioral management was a priority at each of the high VA schools, the structures that existed within each school were different. At B103, there was a comprehensive behavioral management structure that was recognized from principal down to the students. In contrast, at B104, the principals and APs reported placing a clear emphasis on students’ adherence with school rules and requirements. Administrators reported attending to the smaller rules—such as the dress code to passing time—in an effort to support academics. Both schools administrators also recognized that good behavior and academics go hand in hand. Students at both schools described the administrators as fair and consistent.

**Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning:** Higher VA schools in our case study **adopted a dually-focused strategy that combined the academic AND the social and allocated adequate resources in the areas of time, faculty and proximity** which engendered *systemic performance accountability* and a *culture of learning*. **Having a leadership structure that involved a broad network of people** ensured that outcomes are diffused throughout the school.

*Illustration A: Adopting a dually-focused strategy that combines the academic and the social by allocating adequate resources to strengthen systemic performance accountability and to maintain a sound culture of learning.*

The behavior management structure at B103 was comprehensive and there was a sense that all participants bought into the system. There was a focus on behavioral management structures, led by the leadership and respected by the faculty, staff and students that guided the culture of learning within the school. Participants consistently reported that behavioral management was a not only a priority, but a strength of the school as well. The principal expressed the view that when “kids...feel a sense of personalization, discipline problems hopefully are reduced and student achievement increases.” As a result, adequate resources were allocated towards this effort. There was a “structured sense of discipline at this school” according to an AP. Another AP reported spending 60-70% of his time on discipline and described discipline as a way to “preserve the

learning that goes on in the classroom.” When a student was sent to the AP for discipline, it was seen as an opportunity to discuss college-going goals and the student’s current academic standing. At the weekly leadership meetings, administration discussed ways in which to reward students with improvements in behavior. Academic structures in place at the school contributed to the school-wide support of the behavioral management structure. The administrators reported that looping, knowing the parents and familiarity with the students contributed to a decrease in discipline issues. The SLCs also provided the teachers an opportunity to discuss not only the students’ academics but also student behavioral issues.

When describing the effectiveness of the school’s discipline practices, teachers called it a “no nonsense approach.” According to one teacher, a campus guest even remarked on the good behavior of the students, explaining that “one of the things that differentiates this school from others that I know well is that..., for the most part, the administration is pretty consistent with respect to discipline.” When a student was referred to administration, administrators followed up with the teacher. One teacher explained that the principal “supports us with discipline overall, everything. If you can discipline the students you are world ahead of everything.” In addition to going to the administration, the teachers described going to the athletic coaches for the support with students with behavioral issues. A guidance counselor reported that the school has a holistic approach and focuses on the student’s academic, social and behavioral performance to ensure that the student is doing the best that each student can do. Students explained that adults in the school held high expectations for good student behavior.

***Illustration B: Having a leadership structure that involves a broad network of people and adopting a dually-focused strategy that combines the academic AND the social to sustain systemic performance accountability and a culture of learning.***

The behavioral management system in place at B104 was driven by a leadership structure that involved a broad network of people. Administration allowed teachers the freedom to handle discipline issues in the classroom and when applicable, refer to administrators in order to engage with the students. There was a culture of high expectations in regard to student behavior, though not enough to completely deter behavioral issues. Teachers appeared to operate independently in regard to behavior management in their classrooms. Teachers as well as guidance counselors reported that major challenges to student learning were student motivation and discipline.

At the point that a teacher refers student to the administration for a behavioral issue, the APs and behavioral specialists look at the incident in the context of the student's overall performance at school. With each referral, the APs described reviewing the student's the attendance, grades and the discipline information. This systematic use of data is used as an opportunity to evaluate the status of each individual student and to provide a holistic approach to dealing with the behavioral issues that initiated the interaction. This sense of personalization with the APs was recognized by the students as well. Students reported viewing the APs as being in charge of the discipline at B104 which gave them the opportunity of getting to know them more personally than the principal.

The behavioral specialist at B104 is involved in 10th grade through 12th grade disciplinary issues. His responsibilities include keeping parents informed as to issues of concern with their student. In addition, he works to mediate teacher-student issues: "I always listen to the students and find out what's going on."

The principal specifically works to be proactive in dealing with new students that may be entering B104 with a tendency toward behavioral issues. He visits the feeder middle schools specifically to meet with the middle school students with behavioral issues. When students are transferring into B104 from out of the zone, the principal has the student sign an agreement that includes complying with the student Code of Conduct. The principal reported that discipline is one of the indicators monitored by the administration, along with GPA and attendance "to be top of kids to be sure they graduate."

### *Case Example 3: Data-driven Practice*

Description: Today's educators operate in information-rich environments, in which numerous performance data exist that may inform decision-making and facilitate efforts to promote personalization for academic and social learning (Anderson, Leithwood & Strauss, 2010). Research supports the idea that a wide variety of performance data are available to school actors (Firestone & Gonzalez, 2007; Guskey, 2007; Halverson, Grigg, Prichett & Thomas, 2007; Ingram, Louis & Schroeder, 2004; Guskey 2003). These data are derived from multiple sources; actors may, for instance, have access to data derived from external sources, like state or district performance assessments, as well as internal—and often more informal—sources like teachers' grades or classroom observations. The literature (Gallagher, Means, & Padilla, 2008; Cohen, 2003) also indicates that administrators

and teachers are accessing these diverse performance data through the use of increasingly complex information management systems. Across contexts, however, these systems are not uniform in their comprehensiveness and may be limited in the types of data they offer to practitioners (Means, Padilla, DeBarger & Bakia, 2009; Gallagher, Means & Padilla, 2008).

A number of authors (Gallagher, Means & Padilla, 2008; Wohlstetter, Datnow & Park, 2008; Halverson, Grigg, Prichett & Thomas, 2007; Kerr, et. al., 2005; Murnane, Sharkey & Boudette, 2005) assert that developing capacity for data use among school actors, primarily through focused professional development, is vital in establishing effective data-driven practice in schools. School actors translate this capacity to use data into meaningful action in a variety of ways (Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Gallagher, Means & Padilla, 2008; Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Firestone & Gonzalez, 2007; Lyons & Algozzine, 2006). For instance, they may construct a broad typology of such uses, asserting that within local organizations, data serves to guide instructional actions, enlighten actors, and mobilize support for decisions.

District Implementation: Broward County is immersed in a state accountability system that emphasizes the use of performance data in informing decision-making processes. Scores from the state assessment system, a key component of the accountability framework, are made available to school and district actors. Moreover, the district has its own assessment system, Broward's Benchmark Assessment Test (BAT) designed to mirror the Sunshine State Standards appropriate to each grade level and intended to be used as one component to guide instructional decision making. School actors in the district, as a result, have access to a variety of performance data, including scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), the Benchmark Assessment Test (BAT), AP exams, and post-secondary admissions tests like the PSAT and SAT. The district has historically supported the use of such data in individual schools through the development and maintenance of infrastructure—a primary example of this is the district's provision of information management software like Virtual Counselor (for faculty and staff) and Pinnacle (for students and parents). Apart from providing the data systems, the district does not, according to participant reports, have programs focused on developing faculty members' capacity to use data through professional development. Moreover, there does not appear to be comprehensive district-wide framework for how data should be used.

School Implementation: Across our case study schools, participants reported a number of commonalities in the way they conceptualized and used data. Participants in all four schools reported that they had easy access to externally derived

performance data, including FCAT and BAT scores. Internally-derived performance data that were commonly mentioned included classroom observations, classroom-level assessments, student grades, and mini-BATs (diagnostic tests that were reportedly modified from district templates). Participants in all four schools reported that they accessed such data through Virtual Counselor and Pinnacle; one school (B104), however, differed from the rest in that participants reported using a school level data system—which integrated diagnostic data such as mini-BAT scores with other indicators. Collaborative analysis and use of data across all four case study schools was reported as largely occurring in the context of “data chats” between teachers (or groups of teachers) and administrators—the development of faculty capacity to use data through professional development was reported as being an emphasis of such meetings at one school (B103). Finally, all four schools reported that data were used for a variety of purposes; some schools, however, reportedly emphasized some uses more than others. School leaders in B102, for example, reportedly emphasized using data to evaluate teachers and their practice, while the use of data to target students for intervention was a reported focus at B104.

Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning: Higher VA schools in our case study, in particular, were reported as leveraging the power of *systematic use of data* to bolster personalization for academic and social learning. According to participants, the successful integration of performance data into educational practice in these schools was facilitated by several enabling characteristics – in higher VA schools, for example, data use was mediated by a focus on employing information for **identification, monitoring and the provision of actionable feedback**. Additionally, successful schools **created supports for the work** in that they built the capacity of instructors to use data through professional development. Illustrations of how the two higher VA schools maximized the effect of *systematic use of data* in personalizing academic and social learning are provided below.

*Illustration A:* Casting the **identification, monitoring and provision of actionable feedback** as integral to the *systematic use of data* to promote personalization for academic and social learning.

Reports from participants in B104 indicate that one of the key differences in the implementation of data-driven decision making at the school was a focus on using performance data to monitor and identify students in need. Faculty members shared that performance data were invaluable in targeting those students in the “bottom 30%” who needed personalized attention or help. One assistant principal, for example, asserted that “when it comes to raw data, that's the data we are trying to discuss to see which kids we need to make sure we highlight,



which kids do we need to give that extra support...one of the things I try to do, I don't always go through the teachers' classrooms that I have concerns. I try to plan when I go through to hit kids' classrooms that I know are in that bottom quartile. Not so much from the teacher, so the teachers know, but just to put my hand on that kid's shoulder, to put a face with a name, so that when I see that kid in the cafeteria I can have a conversation, how are things going: "These are mediation programs." "Are you taking advantage of the after school tutoring?" "Are you going to FCAT camp?" That's my strategic way to give that kid that push, or that stroke they need..." Another participant asserted that "[the administration] will target; they have data...students who have had one or two F's, they will start to pull them out. Again, as I said, there is counseling available. One-on-one conversations with teachers. parent contact, administrative contact. I mean, we try, we really do. It's not just 'well you have two options, you could be successful, or unsuccessful, and that's your choice' and we back off. We don't do that."

***Illustration B: Creating supports for the work*** of promoting personalization for academic and social learning by developing actors' capacity to *systematically use data*.

Participants in B103 indicated that one practice supporting their ability to promote personalized learning for their students was the administration's effort to build their capacity to use data through professional development and collaborative analysis. To do so, school leaders instituted professional development centering on the analysis and use of performance data; one assistant principal shared that "teachers, at the beginning of the year, have to look at their students and scores, and we make them do it by hand and put them into boxes, as to where they fall into percentile of the strategies. So they have something they can look at when the class comes in, and they have 15 kids over here say in [ELA STANDARD] and they know its words and context, so they need to be doing more words and context with that group." A teacher shared how this training helped him/her to use data in personalizing classroom learning: "we have to analyze our data. There is the time we come in, during planning time, and we have to attend a work shop so to speak on analyzing your data. We have a guidance counselor that's there. We can call them over if we have any questions. You are supposed to focus on your students that are in the lower percentile for a certain area. Then we do look and see where their weaknesses are, and we are supposed to gear, probably some of the times, how we word our questions for different curriculum, and try to gear it toward helping them succeed with whatever their weak points are."

### *Case Example 4: Looping*

**Description:** Looping is a practice in which schools match teachers, administrators and/or guidance counselors with students for two or more consecutive grade levels. While staff/student and year configurations differ by school, the purpose of looping is to build relationships between faculty and staff with students and their parents (Burke, 1997; Cistone, 2004). Looping is typically seen in elementary and middle schools, but can also be found in high schools where administrators, guidance counselors or teachers loop with students at some point during the four years (Pedante, 2006).

Looping has proved to be an effective process that decreases student anxiety, increases student achievement, supports instructional time, and provides enhanced relationships between adults in the school and students and parents (Burke, 1997; Pedante, 2006). Studies on school effectiveness find that when students build relationships with adults in the school, there is both higher student performance and teacher satisfaction (Ovalle, 2004). Burke (1997) identifies a number of studies that have evidence of positive outcomes associated with looping. These studies find an increase in personalization and stronger relationships as positive outcomes that contribute to student success. In a study conducted in Ohio, schools with multi-year teacher student assignments were found to have students who performed higher in reading and math, teachers with a higher level of performance, and parents with more positive experiences and perspectives in dealing with the school (Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1997). In another study, George, Spreul and Moorefield (1987) find that longer relationships with students allow teachers to create positive relationships with the students and parents, while the students feel a part of the group and more comfortable participating in class.

**District Implementation:** In the Broward Public Schools, looping appears to be voluntarily implemented as a pedagogical and administrative strategy at the school level.

**School Implementation:** At B103, we found two types of looping. In one form of looping, an assistant principal and guidance counselor were assigned to an incoming ninth-grade class with which they looped until the students graduated. This type of looping with the administrators and counselors had been in place for at least six or seven years. In the other form of looping, low performing students were matched with a social studies and an English teacher in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. These students looped through 10<sup>th</sup> grade with these teachers. This looping had been in place for

three years. These two structures overlapped with the APs and guidance counselors often joining the weekly meetings of the teachers to discuss students' progress. Administrators, guidance counselors, teachers and students at the school identified both sets of looping as helping to create personalized learning connections that support students' academic and social development. One administrator reported "You got four adults who have the same kid for two years, so you are really creating a sense of personalization." Not only did these teams work closely together, but the administrator, guidance counselor and administrative support had offices next to each other to promote informal as well as formal interactions between different adults as well as students.

Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning: Looping leverages several of the essential components identified by the NCSU's framework in the service of personalization for academic and social learning. These components include *personalized learning connections, organization of the learning environment, and culture of learning and professional behavior*. Based on participant reports, looping was an integral component for supporting sustained personal relationships among faculty, staff, students and their parents—a means of **promoting open communications among all stakeholders**. Looping was a prime example of the **adoption of a dually-focused strategy that combines academic and social** supports; personalized structures were thus created to improve students' prospects for success. By **allocating the resources** to implement the looping structure, staff was able to provide personalized academic and social supports for the students. Team effort **fostered alignment, coherence, and integration** throughout the student's schooling experience.

*Illustration A:* Providing administration, guidance counselors and teachers a framework that incorporates **a dually focused strategy that combines the academic and social** structures and promotes **open communications among all stakeholders** leading to *personalized learning connections* that facilitate the personalization of academic and social learning.

Looping among administration, guidance counselors and teachers created both an academic and social structure which supported student learning. Participants reported that staying with the same group of students over multiple years facilitated strong and meaningful relationships with administrators, faculty and staff along with the students and their parents. According to one AP "I have met with some of these parents on a regular basis over the last two years. So from an administrative standpoint, yes, that process is still in place, and it's invaluable to our success." The relationships

with the parents, getting to know them and communicating over a sustained period of time, also resulted in a reduction in disciplinary problems with these particular students.

The administration recognized that looping is effective in building personalized learning connections between the students and the teacher and remarked on the importance of those relationships, “There is personalization with the kids. [The teacher] knows the kids' strengths and weaknesses, the kids know the teachers' expectations and his teaching method. So in a perfect environment you keep that looping process to be fluid, because it's effective, especially with our struggling learners. They need a common face. They need somebody they have a rapport with already. So, that's critical.”

Support personnel reported positive outcomes resulting from looping and the opportunity it provided to build relationships between students and teachers, explaining, “Yes, looping. So [teachers] loop with those students. That's been something that's big for us. It's allowed the students and teachers and parents to get comfortable with those students in every aspect to where they got to know them on a personal basis.” Another participant concurred, “So this whole idea-- I keep coming back to personalization, knowing the kids, knowing their background, and creating a sense of family. I think goes a long way.”

*Illustration B:* Looping supports *personalized learning connections* and creates organized structures within the learning environment. These structures create opportunities for students to cultivate a connection to the school, by developing students' emotional, behavioral and cognitive engagement in the classroom as well as **fostering alignment, coherence, and integration** across the students' schooling experience. *Personalized learning connections*, the *organization of the learning environment*, and the *culture of learning* among students that is facilitated by looping promotes the personalization of academic and social learning.

Looping created opportunities for teachers and students to build both academic and social relationships. A good example of this is at B103 when students were discussing an assigned text in an English class. As this was the second year of English with this particular teacher, the students were very comfortable with the teacher and his expectations. During the discussion, students made connections with a book they had read the previous year and the current text. Adults at B103 explained “in a perfect environment you keep

that looping process to be fluid, because it's effective, especially with our struggling learners. They need a common face. They need somebody they have a rapport with already. So, that's critical.”

#### *Case Example 5: Curricular Alignment*

Description: Anderson (2002) describes curriculum alignment as, “a strong link between objectives and assessments, between objectives and instructional activities and materials, and between assessments and instructional activities and materials...content validity, content coverage, and opportunity to learn are all included within the more general concept of “curriculum alignment” (p.257). Put more simply, Savard and Cotton (1982) define curricular alignment as the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Aligning the school curriculum with state standards is similar to classroom instructional design promoted in Wiggins’ and McTighe’s (2005) Understanding by Design framework – the goals drive what materials and processes to use.

Anderson (2002) provides a rationale as to why curricular alignment is important: 1) curricular alignment informs stakeholders of what students have learned in school giving a sense of whether schooling has been effective, and 2) aligning the curriculum to a certain standard assists in achieving the goal of teaching all students to the stated standard and not marginalizing the educational experiences of certain groups. Cohen (1987) reviews three alignment studies which suggest that aligning the curriculum with what is to be assessed “routinely” creates a 1.2 to 3 point standard deviation effect size difference between treatment and control groups. These differences were made more sensational by the claim that instruction was delivered with “minimal instructional effort” (p.18-19).

District Implementation: BCPS ensures schools’ curricular alignment to the Sunshine State Standards and, therefore, to the FCAT through electronic distribution of instructional focus calendars (IFC) for each core subject. In addition to promoting curricular alignment, the IFCs are also aimed at ensuring that instructional pacing is similar across schools by identifying what concept is taught when and for how long.

School Implementation: Higher VA schools in our sample made efforts to align curriculum across grade levels and involve feeder middle schools in the process. The formalized, sustained alignment across grade levels appeared to occur through PLCs or SLCs. Though the district created and distributed IFCs to schools, higher VA schools used assessment data to develop school site-based IFCs that guided the curricular content, sequence and pacing to targeted student deficiencies. For

example, one AP at B103 reported using data from state and district assessments to make school-wide curricular and instructional decisions, “I have to use the data to make curricular decisions or instructional decisions. One example would be at the beginning of the year when we take a look at last year's FCAT results; ...It's my responsibility to share with the faculty and I use it to drive our instructional focus calendar. Areas of deficiencies, school-wide, will be used as important or priority areas of instruction at the beginning of the school year. The calendar will give us a particular date that we are going to work on specific strands and dates they are going to test again and review the results. So it's what drives us, or what drives our decisions.” Participants at B103 also reported using Do Now activities, a school-wide warm up curricular activity that is aligned with state achievement tests. Still other means of ensuring alignment was through collaboratively developed assessments wherein one unit test was created for an entire department. Finally, higher VA schools practiced cross-curricular alignment and planning (e.g., language arts teachers planning with social studies or science planning with math).

Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning: Compared to schools with lower VA scores, schools with higher VA scores enabled personalization for academic and social learning by **using data for identification** of potential problem areas, **monitoring** of student progress after identifying and correcting problem areas, and **providing feedback** so students can learn to correct themselves. These schools were **being proactive rather than reactive**. Higher VA schools facilitated a *systemic use of data* that informed curricular decisions such as a site-based IFC or targeted Do Now activities. Having **open communication across stakeholders** allowed the discussion of ideas, leading to *aligned curricular* activities such as the Do Now activities or silent sustained reading.

***Illustration A: Using data for identification, monitoring, and providing actionable feedback*** creates an atmosphere of *personalization and proactivity* that **fosters alignment, coherence and integration across activities** and assists with *curricular alignment*.

Administrators at B103 task teachers with identifying their student needs at the beginning of the year. Each teacher must identify in which FCAT strand his or her students need additional assistance. With that list, teachers then create lessons specifically for the area of weakness and spend extra time on those areas as necessary. One example of this practice at B103 at a school-wide level is the use of benchmark testing data to create specific Do Now activities to address FCAT strand deficiencies. The principal reported aligning school-wide initiatives with the results on state and district assessments “... this is

what we have, so she (referring to a teacher at the school) developed a program where the Do-Nows would revolve around where we were weak in the BAT data. We went back and forth, and I went around the table and said, what do you think; do we change the plan now on this, and they said, this is what we have. So, I shouldn't take that lightly. We did. She will tell you. You ask her. We went with her plan.”

Just Read, Florida! is the state's reading initiative. The two higher VA schools display their belief in the importance of reading via their reading across the curriculum efforts. Both schools reportedly have a version of silent sustained reading, although the intensity of the program was more evident and stronger at B103 where the students read for twenty minutes daily.

*Illustration B: Efforts at **being proactive** in curricular alignment fosters **alignment, coherence, and integration** across activities.*

At B104, and to a lesser degree B103, there were efforts and structures in place to align the curriculum between the high school and its feeder middle schools. Administrative participants reported that the alignment occurred through vertical teaming and PLCs, stating “there is a group that goes to the feeder middle schools a couple of times a year to discuss...how they are implementing vocabulary, and how they are going to continue its implementation at the high school level.” These meetings with feeder schools allowed participants from participating schools to find that “one school was kind of in alignment with where we are, and the other was totally off the mark when it came to what we were expecting.” This type of proactive collaboration allowed stakeholders to rectify potential issues before they became larger problems and fostered a common belief in the importance of curricular alignment from feeder schools to their high schools.

#### *Case Example 6: Feedback Orientation to Classroom Observation*

Description: Teachers face increasing instructional challenges that provide opportunities for instructional leadership. Major challenges to teacher effectiveness identified by principals involve classroom management skills, lesson implementation skills, and rapport with students (Torff & Sessions, 2005). Performance feedback based on classroom observation is viewed as a promising strategy for informing and sustaining effective instructional practice and improving academic, social, and behavioral outcomes (Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, & Monegan, 2009). Of necessity feedback is oriented toward enhancing personalization. Colvin

and colleagues (p. 96) posit, “Performance feedback through the use of objective observational methods can serve as a means by which teachers learn how to examine relations associated with instructional materials, tasks, and student behavior.”

A variety of characteristics are associated with feedback. A literature review on feedback identifies three categories of feedback. These include: “(a) the nature of the feedback [the content and the means of delivery]; (b) the temporal dimensions of feedback (frequency and whether it is delayed or immediate), and (c) who delivers the feedback (peers or supervisors)” (Scheeler, Ruhl, & McAfee, 2004, p. 397). Two other factors involve the communication of feedback: (1) how the feedback is given and (2) how it is perceived (Coe, 1998). To Scheeler and colleagues, teachers’ performances improve with optimal feedback, which is “positive, specific, and corrective.” This leads to better engagement with students. It is believed, moreover, that “immediacy” is the most demonstrably effective characteristic of feedback. Therefore, the reviewers recommend that, “supervisors should seek ways to provide feedback as close to the occurrence of teaching behavior as possible” (Scheeler, et al., 2004, p. 404). Coe concludes that it is important that feedback has a “diagnostic function” and focus on specific elements of a task. Together, these features should allow teachers to pinpoint salient concerns about the given task—hence averting focus on extraneous matters (such as feelings of inadequacy)—and to determine the extent to which their goals are being achieved.

Secondary school teachers may (be observed by and) receive feedback about their performance from an administrator (principal, assistant principal, or department chair) and peers as well as self-assessments (Freiberg, 1987). By virtue of their unique position as instructional leaders, principals are expected to provide feedback to teachers to enhance the teaching-learning process (Ovando, 2005). In this regard, they assume supervisory and evaluative roles, which have implications for the types of feedback teachers receive. Ovando, however, proposes that constructive feedback should be *formative*—in contrast to the use of summative evaluation. “Supervisory feedback” then can be seen in the context of professional development (see also McQuarrie & Wood, 1991). As it were, “the principal becomes less an inspector of teacher competence and more a facilitator of teacher growth” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 374).

District Implementation: As described in the district’s Instructional Personnel Evaluation System (IPES), the principal/assistant principal “is responsible for evaluating all Instructional Personnel (Broward County Public Schools ([BCPS],



2012a, p. 5). Other trained personnel may be “a regular integrated part of the observation and feedback process,” including peers, curriculum specialists, grade chairpersons, department chairpersons, and instructional coaches (BCPS, p. 10). The IPES is an ongoing process of observation and feedback to ensure continuous professional improvement. Based on Robert Marzano’s evaluation system, three types of classroom observations are described: *informal*, *formal*, and *targeted*. The district’s IPES seeks to foster “a supportive, positive” orientation to enhance performance by acknowledging competence and accomplishment.

School Implementation: Within the two high VA schools, school administrators (APs) typically conducted observations or “walk-ins” and provided systematic feedback to teachers. The principals and department chairs also conducted “walk-throughs” and some teachers engaged in “peer observations.” APs were assigned to (or matched with) specific teachers, a grade level, and/or a core subject area (as in B104). Teachers referred to a “classroom observational tool” which was a checklist that was used to provide teachers with “very specific feedback” about how well they are doing. Reportedly, department chairs sometimes used a more informal approach—taking notes and then providing feedback. Some teachers stated that they received feedback once every month. To other teachers, it appeared that “they [APs] come every week.” New(er) teachers were observed more and received more extensive and “constructive feedback.” Feedback was viewed as a means of support from an administrator, which provides insight into a teacher’s strengths and weaknesses. One AP saw classroom observation and feedback in terms of “helping mentor and coach our teachers.” A principal affirmed, “They are not going in to observe in a negative way; they are going in there from a support side.”

Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning: The orientation of the observation and feedback processes accommodates the interaction of several of the essential components identified by the NCSU’s framework in the service of personalization for academic and social learning. It appears that administrators and department heads demonstrate *learning centered leadership* through the use of *systemic performance accountability* as per classroom observations and feedback, and have **adopted a solution-oriented approach**. With an organized pattern of observation and feedback, teachers are more likely to maintain an environment that reflects a *culture of learning and professional behavior*.

Illustration A: **Creating supports for teachers** through *learning centered leadership* to ensure classroom observations are accompanied by constructive feedback is integral to *systemic performance accountability* and fostering academic and social learning.

Participants indicated that the supportive pattern of observations and feedback from administrators was aimed at encouraging teachers in every grade to provide the best learning opportunities for students. Administrators reportedly provided regular behavioral observations of teachers to determine whether particular instructional aids (e.g., “word of the day”, “TRIP”) are being used, and that students are actively and authentically engaged in their work. Teachers became aware of the expectation that they follow the school’s instructional “prescription” to ensure that “the kids are engaged in doing it.” The intent, according to one principal, is that “they [the students] are in the best position to be successful.”

***Illustration B: Creating supports for teachers and adopting a solution-oriented approach*** via constructive feedback as an essential function of *systemic performance accountability* to sustain a *culture of learning and professional behavior* that enhances conditions for personalization for academic and social learning.

According to a department head at B104, there were expectations that administrators use “formative observation” as well as some summative approaches “to give them [teachers] the opportunity to change and improve upon some things.” Administrators were also expected to “become more a role model” and suggest specific professional development training programs or other interventions if specific deficiencies were identified during observations. Teachers tended to view the feedback as generally positive and helpful. One teacher at B103 disclosed that an administrator provided feedback in the way she typically asked students questions—questions were not directed at any particular student—and she acknowledged the need to work on that aspect of her instruction. Efforts by administrators appeared to be focused on finding solutions to teachers’ problems. As an AP at B103 explained, “If we don’t see a teacher doing the right thing we call them in... I don’t believe in letting a teacher not do the right thing and all of a sudden come in here and say, you are not doing the right thing. If I see somebody that’s not doing teaching the right way, or being good for children, it’s right then and there, we will have a meeting the next day and I will tell them how I feel and what they need... Hopefully we can straighten it out, and if it doesn’t get straightened out then, we will take the next steps or measures to do the right thing, which would be get them support.”

### *Case Example 7: College Readiness Programs*

**Description:** College readiness programs are one strategy that schools have used to increase personalization in schools. One of the schools in our study had implemented a common readiness program—AVID, or Advancement via Individual Determination. AVID is an elementary through postsecondary college readiness system that is designed to increase school-wide learning and performance. Developed in response to desegregation efforts in San Diego during the 1980's, the program has expanded rapidly across the national stage. The Avid.org website asserts that “beginning with one high school and 32 students, AVID now serves over 400,000 students in nearly 4,500 elementary and secondary schools in 47 states, the District of Columbia and across 16 countries/territories” (Avid.org, 2012). The program’s website further indicates that it has been highly successful in promoting academic success among participants, claiming that “since 1990, more than 85,500 AVID students have graduated from high school and planned to attend college. Of the 22,210 AVID 2010 seniors who reported their plans, 91.3% intended to attend a postsecondary institution; 58.3% in four-year institutions and 33.0% in two-year institutions” (Avid.org, 2012). At the secondary level, the program functions by targeting students in the academic middle who “have the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard” (Avid.org, (2012). These students are enrolled in advanced courses—honors, AP, or dual enrollment, while also taking an elective course providing a curriculum focused on “organizational and study skills.” This elective course also provides students with the opportunity to “work on critical thinking and asking probing questions, get academic help from peers and college tutors, and participate in enrichment and motivational activities that make college seem attainable” (Avid.org, 2012).

A number of studies, many published by scholars affiliated with the AVID program, indicate that participation is related to several beneficial effects, ranging from increased teacher leadership to student achievement growth in schools with high minority populations (Watt, et. al., 2009; Watt, Huerta & Mills, 2009).

**District Implementation:** The district first instituted AVID in 2002-03 with the goal of promoting advanced course taking and post-secondary enrollment for students who might not otherwise do so. The program was offered in 3 high schools in 2003-04—all described as being “high poverty schools”—and expanded to a 4th in 2004-05. During this period, the district conducted a small study regarding the efficacy of the AVID program. They found that while the enrollment rates of 10th graders included in the sample were higher than non-AVID students, there were no significant differences in FCAT scores between the two groups. Participants reported that

budgetary concerns in the district prompted the eventual termination of official use of the AVID program's curriculum and professional development system. The district maintained the general framework of AVID, however – especially the use of an academic skills elective for “middle” students in advanced courses – under the umbrella of the Cultivating Achievement and Thinking Skills (CATS) program. In the case of the CATS, “middle” students are defined as students scoring a level 2 or 3 on the FCAT who may eventually enroll in advanced courses as well as a specific CATS course.

School Implementation: According to participants, school B104 implemented the CATS program “four or five years ago.” In addition to utilizing the district framework for CATS, however, the school initially defined a team of teachers—in Math, Science, Geography and English/Language Arts—as “CATS teachers.” Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders participating in the CATS program were put into cohorts in the academic courses taught by these instructors, in addition to the standard academic skills elective. Participants report that, during the early years of program implementation, this CATS “team” met on a weekly basis to discuss their shared students, and were given common planning time to do so. Due to budget constraints, the program has been cut in the last year resulting in such “cohorting” only occurring in English, Math and the CATS elective; additionally, CATS teachers no longer share planning and meet far more infrequently.

Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning: The AVID/CATS program leverages several of the essential components identified by the NCSU's framework in the service of personalization for academic and social learning. These components include the *organization of the learning environment*, *personalized learning connections*, and the creation of a *culture of learning and professional behavior*. Also, *variation of school experiences* is addressed. Based on participant reports, the success of the AVID/CATS program in driving student achievement at B104, in particular, stems from the further mediation of these aspects by several enabling supports; these supports include the school's **adoption of a dually-focused strategy combining the academic AND social, the allocation of adequate resources, and use of targeted yet inclusive strategies that productively resolve the tension between common high expectations for all and the need for differentiation.**

Illustration A: **Adopting a dual-focused strategy by Organizing the Learning Environment** to create *Personalized Learning Connections* to promote academic and social learning.

Participants reported that through AVID/CATS implementation, students were provided with deeply personal learning connections to both their peers and teachers through the school's use of cohorts. Students were reportedly assigned to their primary academic courses (Math, Science, Geography, and ELA) as a group, as well as the AVID/CATS elective, allowing them to develop a peer network providing both social and academic support. One student described the deeply supportive nature of this peer community, sharing that "I think this year, if I didn't join the CATS program, and I have the classes I have now, I wouldn't be like-- my GPA wouldn't be anything like it is. My GPA went up from 3.3 last year to 3.6 this year. Mostly it's because the kids in there, like it's a family as well, where we all sit around and help each other with homework because we all have the same homework. It's not like we give someone our homework to copy. We sit in big circle, and study for a biology test because we all have the same test, or math test." Further, personalization for social and academic learning was enhanced by the creation of a dedicated team of AVID/CATS instructors who shared students and were able to provide a stable network of adults to support students within the school. One participant described the depth of the ties between students and teachers participating in the AVID/CATS program at B104, sharing that "It was like a team and family. They feel like a family. They all work together. They go to classes together. And the teachers commonly plan together, so they do things together in order to help all of them be successful."

*Illustration B: Allocating adequate resources to build a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior while promoting the personalization of academic and social learning.*

Another powerful aspect of the implementation of CATS/AVID in B104 was the creation of a "learning community" of CATS/AVID teachers, actively fostered by the dedication of time and resources on the part of school leadership. A prime example of this was the provision of shared planning time for CATS/AVID teachers, allowing them to meet together to discuss shared students, identify potential issues and create opportunities for personalization. One teacher, describing the program in its fullest implementation, asserted that "It [was] like a school within a school. It [was] a very small learning community. We [met] to discuss those kids... I must say, for four years I was very proud of that program". Another teacher affiliated with the AVID/CATS program in the school explained the power of such structures, sharing that "we all shared the same group of students, so I got to see you along with the English teacher, the science teacher, the social studies teacher, and the

research teacher, almost like that middle school concept, where you had the same group of teachers. So we got to know you, from the time you walked into the school, until you left. It involved a personalization. It incorporated meeting with the parents when there was an issue. A lot of student conferences. I am very proud. Our first year students were so successful and some of them were the first of their family to go to college.”

***Illustration C: Using targeted yet inclusive strategies*** to limit *Variations in Schooling Experiences* and to build *Personalized Learning Connections* consistent with personalization for social and academic learning.

Adoption of the AVID/CATS program at B104 signals an understanding that students’ experiences and needs vary. There is evident awareness that, as one guidance counselor puts it, “those kids in the middle fall by the wayside.” As compared to programs for higher performing and lower performing students, “This was that catch in the middle,” as one AP referred to the program. The AVID/CATS program provides an organized learning environment that aligns the support systems with student needs. Per participants, students are given additional support in the form of tutoring, extra guidance toward higher education as well as a course on academic and social skills. One guidance counselor noted too that the AVID/CATS program “have a counseling component to them; so they are very individualized.”

### *Case Example 8: Instructional Coaching Teams*

**Description:** Traditionally, school systems have maintained organizational structures that favor a professionalized, and largely autonomous, base of “line” teachers, with a middle level of school administrators possessing a moderate degree of control over classroom practice; these structures are often governed, in turn, by district administrations that have few direct controls over classroom activity (Mintzberg, 1980). The pressures of the national movement toward standards and accountability, however, have introduced new pressures on districts to achieve a greater level of standardization in instructional practice and capacity. As such, schools may be adapting to develop more fully developed technocratic structures, allowing for the centralized analysis, evaluation, and development of practice within the school. Often, these structures take the form of teams of “instructional leaders” or “coaches.” Boston’s public schools, for instance, have reportedly seen significant success in forming instructional leadership teams drawing upon the expertise of experienced teachers (Berg, Miller & Souvanna, 2011). Reform efforts in the San

Francisco Bay area, similarly, employed “reform coaches”, who served to “ensure that the school vision for instructional improvement gets enacted successfully in classrooms and that teachers have the tools and knowledge they need to make appropriate and significant changes in their practice” (Coggins, Stoddard & Cutler, 2003, p. 8). In this context, the “coaches” accomplished these goals by “building leadership capacity for instructional improvement, knowledge management and boundary spanning, directly coaching teachers and building capacity for instructional support” (Coggins, Stodday & Cutler, 2003, p. 39).

There is little consistent empirical evidence, however, indicating that such teacher leadership structures have positive effects on student achievement, and most of the literature regarding such practices has been descriptive in nature (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The existing literature does indicate, however, that teachers operating in such roles gain valuable professional experience, and that student effects are more likely if the work of teacher leaders is directly focused on classroom-level practice (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

District Implementation: There does not appear to be a unified framework for the provision of structures like “instructional teams” or “reform coaches” across the Broward County School District, based on a review of the district website and other online sources. Academic coaches – primarily reading coaches – are, however, reported by participants to be one of the few common structures functioning across schools to facilitate instructional leadership. One participant described the position of the reading coach as encompassing student placement (for reading), modeling, co-teaching, and working to implement reading strategies across departments. Funding was reportedly inconsistent for such positions, however; one participant in our case study schools reported that she or he was uncertain as to the future stability of his or her position as a reading coach, due to resource issues. Other coaching positions were discussed in individual school improvement plans and may address other tested subjects, like Math, but the universality of such positions across schools in the district is unclear. The survey activities planned by NCSU may provide more complete evidence.

School Implementation: In the 2010-2011 school year, B104 implemented a new instructional coaching framework, tapping one of the school’s instructional coaches to assemble a team of teacher leaders from across the academic departments tasked with directing the school’s instructional reform efforts. In this role, the “lead instructional coach” is reported to coordinate a variety of activities, including: reading pull-out programs, the school’s Saturday FCAT camp, integration of reading strategies across departments, organizing the school’s professional learning

communities (PLCs) and the monitoring and collective analysis of student performance data. Acknowledging both the importance of instructional leadership and the pressures on administrators' time from other areas (e.g., discipline, safety, facilities, operations, community partners), the school's principal articulated a need in his school for a team focused squarely on instruction, sharing that "I wanted to make sure that I had someone that I trust that was going to kind of lead the way, someone I could pick-up the phone at any time of the day, any part of the week, pick-up the phone and we could discuss curriculum if I needed to."

Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning: Participants reported that the instructional coaching team at B104 appears to be leveraging several of the NCSU's essential components and enabling characteristics in order to drive personalization for academic and social learning. The team structure in place at the school, for instance, facilitates *learning-centered leadership* empowered by a **goal-driven focus on the part of leadership, faculty, and staff that guides actions and structures**. The instructional coaching team at B104 also provides a focal point for enhancing the instructional capacity of school actors by leveraging *systematic use of data* to **foster alignment, coherence, and integration across activities** in the school. Each of these examples is expanded upon in the illustrations below.

*Illustration A:* Empowering *learning centered leadership* by emphasizing a **focus on the part of leadership, faculty, and staff on a goal** of personalization for academic and social learning.

Participants reported that one of the primary tasks of the new instructional coaching team at B104, headed by the lead instructional coach, was to provide a central structure guiding the school's efforts to "move" student reading achievement. To do so, the lead instructional coach focused on bridging gaps between academic departments, and directing the collective attention of the faculty toward meeting one of the most significant identified learning needs of the school's students. The lead instructional coach shared, for instance, that "I stand before the faculty and I say to them that every single person in the school is a stakeholder to these children, because I wanted them to get out of that mindset, it's not my responsibility to move these children. It's a literacy movement. If you are a social studies teacher, or a PE teacher, we all have buy-in. This year my focus has been, especially developing these PLCs, that every single department is a stakeholder to this literacy movement with the children." Through coordination of instructional activities and the infusion of effective practices across departments, the instructional coaching team at B104 appeared to be driving the efforts of the faculty and staff toward the goal of meeting the needs of



the school's students, and fostering their academic and social learning where it is most challenged.

*Illustration B: Guiding the systematic use of data to foster alignment, coherence, and integration across activities* toward personalization for academic and social learning.

B104's new instructional coaching team and its lead instructional coach also used available performance data to inform instructional decision making at all levels of the school. The lead instructional coach reported, for instance, that the instructional coaching team used data to target specific students for academic intervention; she or he offered an example, explaining that "what I did this year...with our lowest quartile, buying in across the board, I assigned every elective teacher 10 to 12 students within our lowest quartile, they made personal phone calls home explaining the importance of getting the children to FCAT camp." The lead instructional coach further emphasized that that the general objective of the team's focus on data use was to generate a greater appreciation for the power of personalization by the school's faculty and staff; she or he asserted that "at the beginning of the year, I made every teacher pull their data. I even made them pull a separate list of their lowest quartile. Teaching them the importance of that personalization piece, that a lot of times we don't know what kind of baggage these kids are coming to school with. Sometimes they just need someone to talk to, to know who they are."

#### *Case Example 9: Middle school articulation*

**Description:** The transition from middle school into high school has been explored throughout the educational research literature. The need for suitable transition programs, both within the middle school, and in conjunction with the high school, has been identified as a way in which to increase success in high school (Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991; Hertzog & Morgan, 1999).

A number of studies indicate that students transitioning from middle school into high school have a multitude of concerns, including intimidation from the older students, problems navigating around the campus, difficulty in course work, and becoming involved in extra-curricular activities (Chapman & Sawyer, 2001; Smith, Akos, Lim, & Wiley, 2008). As a result, middle school students' transition into high school can prove to be challenging for many students, both academically and socially. High school tends to encourage more independent work, critical thinking, an increase in the breadth and depth of assignments and increased pressure for good grades, as

well as the social challenges of being the youngest students in the school, having to get to know the faculty and staff, meeting new students and more extracurricular options. Ninth grade is a year in which students' grades drop and the number of students dropping out increases. Smith and colleagues' work found that appropriate interventions can improve ninth grade performance.

Mizelle and Irvin (2000) identify three elements of transition programs that support middle school articulation: "activities that provide students and parents with information regarding the transition, activities that provide social supports, and activities that bring middle school and high school educators together" (p. 3). More specifically, Smith and colleagues (2008) find that successful middle school transition programs include discussing student expectations, providing parents information about the transition, and highlighting of both the similarities and differences of the high school experience. They also report that feeder middle schools and high schools need to work together (along with students) to identify the aspects of each school's "academic, social and organizational attributes" (p. 41), so that the students' perceptions are aligned with a realistic understanding of what can be expected in high school.

District Implementation: Initiated during the 1999-2000 year, Broward County Public Schools high school redesign initiative, referred to as the Blueprint for Redesign, identifies efforts to "personalize" as its first principle:

Freshman Transition Activities - Freshman transition activities help ease the difficulties students often encounter as they move from middle to high school. Some schools place all first-year students in their own academy or house setting, sometimes in a separate wing or even a separate building, with extra supports from adults. In other cases, freshman transition includes mentoring from older students, or special career exploration classes designed to set the context for high school as a pathway to college and careers (broward.k12.fl.us, n.d).

Broward County Public Schools has supported district-wide resources allocated in the support of students' transition into ninth grade and the high school environment. Ninth Grade Academies (NGA) were established with the purpose of the NGAs helping students with the transition into high school. The NGAs were either housed in a separate area of the high school or throughout the school but with a team of teachers and staff dedicated to the ninth grade students only.

However, though there appears to be an overarching district policy in place for the middle school students' articulation into high school, the interpretation of the policy appears to be at the discretion of each individual high school. One participant reported that the District does not allow students to fail in middle school and as a result, students are not prepared for 9<sup>th</sup> grade: "They get here in 9th grade and suddenly they are supposed to be responsible. That's not the way it works."

School Implementation: While all of the high schools in our study had a middle school articulation program, the programs at the high VA schools stood out for their coherence and integration between the feeder and high schools. At the two high VA schools, participants reported that a variety of stakeholders participated in programs focused on the middle school transition into high school. Participants at B104 reported a multifaceted approach to middle school articulation. All levels of our participants (i.e. principal, leadership team, teachers, guidance counselors) at both B104 as well as the feeder middle schools participated in the effort. The B104 principal played an integral role in building these relationships.

At B103, participants reported collaborating with the middle school in regard to vertical alignment of the curriculum, specifically in math and English, going back to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. As one teacher reported "We work every year with the middle school English teachers to get these best practices from the AP vertical teaming in place from 6th through 12th." Administration reported that teachers participated in activities specifically directed to middle school articulation, meeting during planning periods and other opportunities. As part of the personalization component, the principal reportedly gathered faculty and staff from the high school and brought them to the middle school for "a transition meeting. He lined up all of the guidance counselors, our custodial staff, or cafeteria staff, our security guards, our police officer, put them in front of the stage and said, all of these people you can talk to any one of them."

Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning: To support students, middle school articulation programs leveraged several of the essential components identified by the NCSU's framework in the service of personalization for academic and social learning. These components included establishing *personalized learning connections*, promoting *connections to external communities* and a *culture of learning and professional behavior* that manifests within the faculty and staff at the high school. Further, successful middle school articulation programs are **allocated adequate resources** such as time and faculty to enhance students' academic and social experiences in schools. **Promoting open communications across all**

**stakeholders** facilitated the articulation efforts. In **fostering alignment, coherence and integration**, students' transition experiences were improved.

*Illustration A:* Middle school articulation programs establish *personalized learning connections* with the students and their parents, essentially promoting academic and social learning. School administration **allocates adequate resources** to promote the success of the program. In turn, a collaborative among staff along with **alignment, coherence and integration** of transition activities make for better student adjustment to high school

B104 and its feeder middle schools had policies in place that establish personalized learning connections with eighth grade students and create social and academic structures that support these students' transition into high school. Both students and their parents had opportunities to discuss, learn and become familiar with the transition from middle school to high school. There were programs in place specifically for the students at the feeder middle schools. Incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders had an opportunity to shadow a high school student for a day. At the end of the school year, the high school hosted an orientation for 8th grade students and their parents. During the summer B104 hosted an orientation at the high school for the incoming ninth graders. The incoming freshmen were given a tour of the high school where the high school student government met with students. Participants also reported that middle school administration conducted 9<sup>th</sup> grade focus groups to discuss how prepared the students felt they were for 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

At the middle school, students were informed about what to expect in high school and provided opportunities for the eighth graders to learn about the expectations in high school, such as the increase in independent work, focus on GPA, and opportunities to be involved in extracurricular activities. The high school principal made frequent visits to the middle school to meet with students, especially those with discipline issues. Guidance counselors reported going to speak to middle school students during the year. The 504 liaison reportedly met with parents and students to inform them of changes in accommodations in high school, because such changes may be different than expected. Exceptional Student Education (ESE) was said to review the needs of the incoming middle school students so that the high school programs are based around the students' needs. The ESE personnel typically met with all parents of ESE students in a parent conference, with the general education teachers and ESE case managers.

Once at B104, participants reported supporting the students' transition. The ninth grade counselor reported being dedicated to helping 9<sup>th</sup> grade students transition. One teacher reported giving students some leniency when it came to the new expectations, as far as homework and homework grades. As a result of these established structures as well as personal connections established with the students and their parents, administrators and teachers were confident that students were more prepared for the demands of high school and had a better sense of what is expected of them.

*Illustration B: Promoting open communication across stakeholders* leads to a *rigorous and aligned curriculum* and sustains a *culture of learning and professional behavior and personalized learning connection* to accomplish the goal of academic and social learning.

Communication between the feeder middle schools and the high VA schools was a good demonstration of how comprehensive in nature the middle school articulation efforts were for incoming freshman to these schools. The principal reported that B104 has “a great working relationship with [the feeder] middle school,” referring to their biggest feeder school. At B104, this level of communication was credited to the initiative of the principal. The principal had begun a monthly meeting of feeder schools in that high school zone. This monthly meeting addressed a number of issues, including discussions around middle school encroachment zone. These discussions then prompted the middle school and the B104 teachers to discuss concerns regarding the middle school student's articulation into high school.

Participants reported that many positive changes came out of these meetings. The principal worked with the middle schools to implement changes in policies and practices that more closely aligned with those at the high school. Team leaders participated in quarterly meetings to discuss these issues as well. B104 math teachers hosted meetings with middle math teachers to discuss curricular alignment and student preparation. The language arts and social studies teachers also reached out to the middle school teachers. In addition to these meetings, the schools met annually to discuss this topic. As a result of these meetings, the English department identified areas of overlap to better align the middle school curricula to what was being taught in high school. B104 teachers also provided suggestions to the middle school teachers so that they gained awareness of practices that would prepare students for high school.

Participants at B103 reported that their teachers met with the middle school teachers to coordinate and discuss class progression. According to the principal, if it was necessary for the teachers to meet during the school day, resources were allocated for substitute teachers. This idea of promoting open communications across stakeholders at each school was integral to the success of the articulation efforts. B103 participants reported that they worked to have the transition from middle school to high school as smooth as possible for the students. The idea of a “seamless transition” was something the B103 principal reported as being important, not just from middle to high school, but the student transitions from one grade into the next throughout high school. This proactive approach was reiterated by the teachers as well who reported that middle school articulation “eliminates the disconnect between the middle school and high school, whereas what we are able to do is prepare those middle school teachers to what those students need to expect; therefore, there is a smooth transition.” Participants recognized the importance in multiple disciplines. An AP reported, “There is a saying, we got to bridge the gap. The gap is big when it comes to the math, middle school and high school.” An English teacher reported that they “work every year with the middle school English teachers to get these best practices from the AP vertical teaming in place from 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>.”

#### *Case Example 10: Small Learning Communities*

Description: Small learning communities (SLCs) have been at the core of school reform efforts to personalize schools for the last decade (Felner, Seitsinger, Brand, Burns & Bolton, 2007; Oxley, 2001; Supovitz, & Christman, 2005). Whether labeled as “school-within-schools,” “small schools,” “houses and/or teams,” the basic premise is to develop collaborative communities within schools as a central strategy for improving student learning (Supovitz & Christman, 2005). Scholars such as Felner and colleagues (2007) posit that the central focus across these efforts (i.e., creation of small learning communities) is to “create ‘conditions’ that engage students, support learning, and enhance development” (p. 210).

A growing body of evidence supports the idea that small learning communities can improve achievement, performance and adjustment of students in middle and high schools (Felner, et al, 2007, Fine & Somerville, 1998, Oxley, 2001). Evidence suggests that the impact of personalized environments created in small learning communities, when fully implemented, consistently show even larger effects on socio-emotional/academic outcomes for students from socially and economically

disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., minority or poverty backgrounds) (Felner et al., 2007).

Along with identifying essential features of small learning communities (e.g., team structures) (Felner et al., 2007), researchers have identified aspects of practices and processes of successful communities (e.g., team practices, professional development, teacher buy-in and decision-making) (Felner et al., 2007; Oxley, 2001). Embedded in these elements are dimensions such as enrollments, class size, student teacher ratios on teams and grades, number of students a teacher is responsible for across a day, common planning time for teachers, strategic planning for staff, span of classes covered by the team, and the length of the class periods (Felner et al., 1993; Felner et al., 2001). Research focusing on more specific dimensions for fidelity and implementation of SLCs supports the view that aspects such as capacity and skill of teachers involved in the SLCs are critical. For example, Felner and colleagues assert that “small learning communities that are effective have teachers who are well prepared to engage student/parents, to provide standards-based instruction, to use common planning time/work in teams...” (p. 214).

In examining the effective creation of small learning communities in middle and secondary schools, scholars have also examined and noted several key lessons for the successful implementation of these programs (Felner et al., 2007, Oxley, 2001). From a broader perspective, Felner and colleagues (2007, p. 211) highlight “the importance of a comprehensive, theory-based multi-dimensional approach to strategies for creating and developing small learning communities; critical features and practices that define effective small learning communities as they relate to student motivation, learning, and performance; and what it takes to get implementation of these features and practices, at desired levels of fidelity and implementation.”

District Implementation: With the support from funding from the United States Department of Education (USDOE), Broward County implemented small learning communities in a number of schools throughout the district, including several of our case study schools. USDOE’s Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) program awarded discretionary grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) to support the implementation of SLCs and activities to improve student academic achievement in large public high schools with enrollments of 1,000 or more students. SLCs include structures such as freshman academies, multi-grade academies organized around career interests or other themes, “houses” in which small groups of students remain together throughout high school, and autonomous schools-within-a-school, as well as

personalization strategies, such as student advisories, family advocate systems, and mentoring programs (US Department of Education, 2006). Schools operating small learning communities in the district, as a result, had access to apply for grant funds through the district to support the development and activities of SLCs. As the fifth largest district in the US, Broward was been awarded consecutive grants to fund development and activities of SLCs. The District evaluated the activities and outcomes of these programs within the first four years, conducting a summative evaluation in the fifth year.

During the 2010-2011 school year, small learning communities were present in one of our high VA case study schools, B103. According to participants at B103, apart from initial awards from USDOE discretionary grant funds in past years for the development of small learning communities, the district does not provide financial resources to support the activities of SLCs and its activities.

**School Implementation:** One of our case study schools, B103, continues to offer small learning communities. In B103, all 9th and 10th graders are assigned to teams. Below the principal describes the purpose and the composition of the SLCs at B103. He indicated:

The specific purpose is personalization... seven adults own 100 common children.” There are four core teachers—math, English, social studies, and science, your guidance counselor, your administrator. So you have a counselor over 9th grade; you have an administrator over 9th grade; and I say the seventh person is a secretary. The secretary is important. They are the front lines. So we value them. Also, we will bring in the ESE specialist. We might have a student who needs a collaborative problem solving initiative, but those seven folk and the ESE specialist are pretty much the core of what is provided as resources for that child.”

In B103, one of the teachers of the SLC is a “team leader” who coordinated team planning, meetings, and activities. Teachers had a common planning that meets every other day in which they discussed individual student performance, classroom curriculum, and instructional practices/strategies.

**Supporting Personalization for Academic and Social Learning:** One of our higher VA schools in our case study (B103) reported using small learning communities to promote *personalized learning connections* to bolster personalization for academic and social learning. The successful integration of small learning communities was facilitated by several enabling characteristics; for example, the



role of small learning communities is augmented by **adopting a dually-focused strategy that combines the academic AND the social** to promote personalization. The small learning communities also served as vehicles for making *connections to the external community*, specifically parents. Finally, the school **created supports for the work** of the faculty by providing administrative support and necessary structures for the SLCs.

Illustrations of how the two higher VA schools maximized the effect of *small learning communities* in personalizing academic and social learning are provided below.

***Illustration A:* Adopting a dually-focused strategy that combines the academic AND social** through which school structures such as small learning communities enable schools to promote personalization for academic and social learning.

Participants at B103 reported that the small learning communities had been critical in improving student academic performance and increasing communication between students, parents, teachers, guidance, and administration. Reports from participants suggested that one of the key goals of the SLCs was to improve the academic performance of students. For example, the principal reported, “When we originally started out with our SLCs, we focused on 9th and 10th grade, because that's where we were losing most of our kids. That's where our kids were doing the poorest.” The principal also reported that the goal for the SLC meetings this year “were normally to take anywhere from eight to 10 kids per 30 minutes, to discuss those kids. Sometimes they wouldn't get to five of them, but the goal was to get 10 kids, to discuss 10 kids. Make contact with at least three or four percent, 30 minutes.” The principal noted, “They [the SLC team] might spend all 30 minutes on one child. The big key is them meeting together and exchanging ideas that can help one another and contacting parents...”

Teachers shared that the SLCs were, indeed, invaluable in providing a structure for faculty to collaborate to develop personalized strategies to meet individual student needs. For example, one teacher in a focus group indicated, “He [the student] will come and meet with the SLC teachers for us to say, ‘The reason why you are here, obviously you are a wonderful person, but you are not doing well academically. We want to know your part of it. What's going on with you?’ We have had conversations like that.” Several teachers reported that using this personalized approach had “most of the time yielded wonderful results.” The value of using a team approach to address

student needs was highlighted by several participants. For example, one teacher noted, “Occasionally you notice well that student is in over his head, and maybe we need to reach beyond the student. That's when you request a parent conference, and you get a team together to really figure it out, because if it's a bigger problem than your classroom, a bigger problem than what the student will acknowledge, and what the parent can take care of, you need a team approach.”

In terms of fostering *connections to external communities*, communicating with parents and engaging them in strategic decision-making through parent conferences were key components and a goal of the SLCs. The principal indicated that “it's important for a parent to hear from three or four teachers at a time on a speaker phone. They feel like the kid is getting special attention.” Participants confirmed that parent phone conferences in SLCs are an opportunity to connect with parents and to provide them both positive and negative feedback about their child's performance.

Participants also reported that the small learning communities were invaluable in providing a structure for professional collaboration to discuss instructional strategies to improve academic and social learning. For example, several teachers in the focus groups reported that in the SLCs teachers “meet to bring ways of making instructional activities more effective.” From another perspective, the principal explained that, “what might work for one teacher and not for another teacher who may have a certain problem with Johnny, where another teacher uses a technique that keeps Johnny in line..., by collaborating... you are creating a sense of personalization, and they help each other out. They work as a team.”

*Illustration B: Effective schools **allocate adequate resources and create supports for the work** of building the capacity of school actors to create *personalized learning connections* in the promotion of personalization for academic and social learning.*

Participants in B103 identified the administration's effort to build school actors' capacity to promote academic and social learning as illustrated by the various resources that supported the SLCs and for the leadership of the SLCs. At B103, resources were allocated to support the small learning communities. The principal shared that resources (i.e., time, space) had been allocated to support the SLCs. He shared that the SLC team had “common planning, which is key.” The principal further reported that “they have a specific area in the school they meet. We have the SLC room in the back of the portable, where

there are phones and conference rooms set up... They have a database, and they are on a computer where they log-in and document parent contact. They can access Pinnacle for grades, attendance, etcetera.”

In addition to providing common planning time and physical resources, the administration in B103 developed structures to provide for leadership for the SLCs. Teachers (i.e., team leaders) were empowered to ensure that the goals of the SLCs are met. The principal indicated, “We designate team leaders. We hand pick them. They usually are people who have shown leadership ability within the school, whether it be school improvement committees, or whatever. We find that they want to be aspiring leaders, administrators, etcetera; and we hand pick them, and we pay them a small supplement. They coordinate the meetings. They run the meetings. They are actually like the traditional department chair; the only difference now is they are heading up a team of interdisciplinary teachers versus a department chair. We call them ‘curriculum leaders’—folk who oversee an entire subject area. I want to say they meet-- all team leaders meet once per month, the whole group of team leaders meet once per month, on Fridays religiously. And they are led by the 9th and 10th grade administrators, who run those meetings. A lot of professional development occurs during those meetings as well.” Participants (i.e., teachers and one assistant principal) confirmed that at B103, the leadership of the SLCs was entrusted to team leaders and the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade administrators.

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## Appendix

### *Description of Study Design and Methodology*

With its focus on high schools in large urban districts, the Center has partnered with the sixth largest school district in the country, Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) which includes cities such as Coral Springs, Ft. Lauderdale, Hollywood, and Plantation, Florida. The district serves large proportions of traditionally underperforming student subgroups, including low-income, minority, and English language learners (ELL). The student population during the 2010-11 school year was 38% African American, 28% Hispanic, 27% White, and 7% other. In the district, 48% of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunches and 10 percent are classified as ELL. BCPS has been engaged in a high school reform effort for the past nine years. High school reform goals include fully integrating an academic system that includes high standards, curriculum, instruction, assessments and supports. Specific strategies include credit recovery programs, weekend classes, intensive skills classes, and dual enrollment for students. BCPS has achieved national recognition for its efforts to improve chronically low-performing schools and has been a top-5 finalist for the Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2008, 2009 and 2011. Ten BCPS high schools were recognized among *Newsweek* magazine's top high schools in the nation in 2009. Despite these successes, BCPS has repeatedly failed to meet overall reading proficiency goals and both reading and mathematics proficiency goals for African American, economically disadvantaged, and ELL-eligible students.

The district was identified using a simple value-added achievement model (VAM) to estimate the relative performance of the state's high schools. The estimated fixed effect for each high school in the state was put in rank order and classified by deciles of value-added. These analyses indicated only one Florida district, Broward, with multiple high and low-performing schools serving our target student subgroups. Four high schools in the district - two higher performing and two lower performing - were selected for case study on the basis of findings from the VAM analysis.

### *Accountability Context*

In 2009-10, the state of Florida, through its Differentiated Accountability program, initiated greater state and district intervention over schools that failed to meet AYP for 2 consecutive years. The state identified five levels of sanction: Prevent I, Prevent II, Correct I, Correct II and Intervene based on FCAT performance points and the number of consecutive years that a school has not met AYP and a percentage of AYP met. High schools are classified as Prevent status if they are have FCAT

performance points of that equal a C or above but have missed AYP for at least two consecutive years and have met at least 80% of AYP criteria. Schools under this status faced increased monitoring from the district. The categorization for Correct I schools is similar to Prevent I schools with the sole difference that the former have AYP counts of 4 or greater. Under Correct I status, schools face increased district monitoring of school-initiated reforms. Schools categorized in Correct II status have AYP Counts of 4 or greater but have met less than 80% of AYP criteria and have D or higher. Under Correct II status, schools faced increased district and state oversight entailing progress monitoring and support. The State and District will direct school-wide interventions for Correct II F schools and the lowest 5% of Correct II classified schools. Unlike their non-Title I peers, Title I schools in Correct II status cannot apply for a waiver to be exempt from district and state oversight. Also, they must, unlike their non-Title I peers, implement a school-wide reform. Schools are categorized in Intervene status if they have less than 395 FCAT performance points and have received an F in four of the last six school years. Under Intervene status, schools face increased district and state oversight entailing onsite monitoring and support. Schools in Intervene status will have one of four reconstitution options: convert to a district turnaround school, reassign students and monitor progress, close and reopen as a charter school, or contract with an outside entity to run the school. One of our case study schools (B103) is in Correct I status. The other three are in Correct II status (B101, B102 and B104).

### *Study Design and Data Collection*

Fieldwork in Year 1 consisted of classroom observations, focus groups, interviews, observations of administrative team and professional learning community meetings, student shadowing and document collection during three week-long visits to each of the four case study high schools. One visit was conducted in the fall (November/December, 2010), another in winter prior to the administration of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) (early March, 2011), and the last in Spring after FCAT administration (late April, 2011).

Classroom Observations. In total, 706 classroom observation segments were scored. The observations provided us the opportunity to compare teacher-student interactions among the four schools. With this approach, we were able to explore classroom organization, emotional support and instructional support in classrooms across tracks (e.g., regular, honors, Advanced Placement), an important consideration given that the Center's target populations – minority and low income students and English language learners - are often disproportionately represented in lower academic tracks. In each of the case study schools, observations occurred in ELA, mathematics, and science classrooms predominantly serving students in 10<sup>th</sup>

grade. We choose to observe 10th grade classrooms to explore differences in the instructional quality and personalized learning connections across tracks and sequences, although doing so required us to observe a large number of classrooms within a single grade level. For cost and feasibility reasons, we choose 10<sup>th</sup> grade, as it is the latest common year in which Florida requires students to take standardized exams in Mathematics and ELA. It is also the year found in the research in which high school students are most likely to drop out.

We used two classroom observation methods. First, we used simple scripting to document classroom activities and student-teacher interactions (Slayton & Llosa, 2005). Second, we used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System for Secondary classrooms (CLASS-S), an observational tool developed by researchers at the University of Virginia, to observe and assess the quality of teacher-student interactions in classrooms. Based on development theory and research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are the primary mechanism of student development and learning (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001; Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Morrison & Connor, 2002; Pianta, 2006; Rutter & Maughan, 2002), the CLASS-S focuses not on the presence of materials, the physical environment, or the adoption of a specific curriculum but on what teachers *do* with the materials they have and on the interactions teachers have with their students. The observation tool looks specifically at interactions between teachers and students across three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.

Following the CLASS-S protocol, researchers observed eighteen 10<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics, English and science classrooms in each school for, at minimum, two class periods to complete the recommended four 20-minute cycles. One school had block scheduling, so we scored six 20-minute cycles.

Focus Groups. To help us understand how the programs, policies, and practices that characterize effective high schools are enacted and to gain a deeper understanding of essential components, we conducted six focus groups in each of the case study schools. Three focus groups involved between five and eight teachers from different departments and grade levels. Another three focus groups included between five and twelve students identified by school personnel as taking primarily AP, honors, and regular/remedial classes, respectively. In total, across all four schools, we conducted 24 focus groups.

Interviews. In total, we conducted 174 semi-structured interviews lasting between 35 and 120 minutes with the principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors, the department heads for ELA, mathematics, and science, the eighteen observed teachers, instructional coaches, ESE coordinators, ELL coordinators, and behavioral

specialists in each school. We interviewed the principals twice in fall and spring. The interview protocols were designed deductively around the program and practices that support and sustain the “essential components” and inductively to probe for other components participants credit with school effectiveness.

Observations of Administrative Team/Professional Learning Community Meetings. During our spring visit, we asked to observe an administrative or leadership team meeting. We observed this kind of meeting at all four of the schools. During these meetings, we kept a five-minute log of meeting topics and discussion. During our spring visit there was also a scheduled professional development day. Three researchers from each school went to a meeting of teachers scheduled for that day. Three of the schools were following a district-organized professional development activity, while one school opted out of this activity and had teachers meet in groups to discuss student progress.

Student Shadowing and Reflective Interviews. Student shadowing activities were conducted with six students at each of the four case study schools. Researchers followed the student’s daily schedule by attending the student’s classes as well as observing the student during non-instructional times such as passing time between classes and lunch.

Shadowed students were chosen based on their course assignment track. In each school, we selected three students from “higher” (accelerated/AP) and “lower” (regular) assignment tracks and who together represented the demographics of the student body.

During shadowing, each researcher completed a log in five-minute intervals noting where the student was, with whom the student was interacting, and the types of activities in which the student was engaged. The researcher also took field notes of the shadowed student’s activities during both passing time between courses and lunch, focusing on the types of interactions that the student had with his or her peers as well as with adults in the school.

Researchers ended the two-day shadowing period with a semi-structured reflective interview. A semi-structured reflective interview was conducted with the student at the end of the two-day shadowing period. The interview focused on the student’s educational and social experiences within the school and concluded with a short, reflective discussion in the researcher asked the student questions that probed the students’ academic and social experiences observed by the researcher during the course of the observation.



Documents. We collected a uniform set of documents from each school, including, for example, master schedules, pacing guides, teacher candidate interview forms, and lists of community partners. We also collected documents as they were referenced by study participants.

### *Data Analysis*

The CLASS-S tool was scored, and interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Pattern coding of interview and focus group transcripts, field notes, and documents were used to identify central constructs in the data (Fetterman, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1989). We began by coding our data with codes from our conceptual framework. As previously stated, our conceptual framework is built around eight a priori components associated with effective schools (Murphy, Elliot, Goldring & Porter, 2006; Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliot, Cravens, 2009) and two additional components that emerged during data collection and the subsequent preliminary data analysis: *Variability in Schooling Experiences* and *Organization of the Learning Environment*. Each of the components is comprised of between two and five subcomponents; codes defining each of these subcomponents were added to the master file created in NVivo.

To help establish dependability, multiple analysts (i.e., coding pairs/triads comprised of at least one “senior” researcher with experience using NVivo and a “junior” researcher) coded the preliminary data.

A three-phase approach was used to guide the coding and analysis of the data

The initial round of coding involved a subset of 28 data files across participant and data types. The purpose of this round was multi-fold: 1.) To construct definitions for codes for each component and subcomponent; 2.) To identify qualitative dimensions in the subcomponents, where they exist; 3.) To develop rubrics that help coders to identify quantitative dimensions at the subcomponent level that ‘get at’ intensity/depth, quality, and/or other dimensions and 4.) To identify any emergent themes that may not be captured under existing subcomponents. Coding in round two involved re-coding and analyzing data coded in the first round. During this process, each pair/triad engaged also in a reliability-building process. The pairs coded the first 28 files individually. Then they ran the Kappa score function in NVivo and met as a team to systematically discuss and compare coded text. After achieving inter-rate reliability, members of the pair/triad in the third round coded

seventy-five additional files, chosen to equally represent schools and data types. The full coding team met weekly to share findings and discuss emerging themes.

In addition to the coding process, the teams also designed rubrics for their subcomponents/dimensions. The coders followed a similar reliability process to the one described above to achieve reliability on the scoring of the rubrics. Team members scored the rubrics for the first 28 files and then met to discuss reliability. Once the teams had achieved 80% reliability, team members continued to code individually.

Each pair/triad wrote memos throughout the coding and analysis process. Memos are written records that contain the products of the analyses of the components/themes that emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Memoing in this project was aimed at identifying the properties and dimension of our components as they were manifested in our case study schools. Specifically, analysts were asked to respond to the following set of questions in each memo:

- How are the “essential components” and their related subcomponents manifest (or absent) at each case study schools?
- How and to what degree are these components manifest?
- Why and how are these components the way they are at each school?
- What makes these schools unique as compared to the other schools?
- What are the similarities and differences between the schools?
- What differences exist within each school?

### *CLASS-S Analysis*

To assess the quality of classroom instruction across our four case study schools, we targeted 10<sup>th</sup> grade English/language arts, mathematics, and science classes in fall, winter, and spring of the 2010-2011 school year. Seventy-three teachers were observed, with between 2 and 17 twenty minutes segments coded for each teacher (for a total of 685 segments). As research on tracking in high schools suggests that higher track classes tend to have higher quality instruction than lower track classes, we wanted to assess whether this was occurring in our cases study schools, as well as

whether higher value added schools “compressed” the instructional quality between their higher and lower track classes more than low value added schools. To increase the number of honors (and above) classes observed in each school, a small number of additional honors classes were sampled in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. For example, we asked to observe a higher track course taught by the same 10<sup>th</sup> grade teacher whom we may have already observed teaching a regular track course and vice versa. These classroom observations were coded using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System – Secondary (CLASS-S) described earlier. See Appendix C for more information on this analysis.

### *Shadowing Analysis*

We also were interested in understanding how students in our study spent their time in school. We therefore conducted an analysis of our shadowing log activities from Year 1 Fieldwork. In April 2011, 24 10<sup>th</sup> grade students were shadowed for a full day by a researcher. Starting at the beginning of the school day, the researcher logged the student’s activities every 5 minutes. The log asked for several pieces of information: the time, the period of the day (i.e., first period, second period), where the student was located, what the student was doing, with whom the student was interacting, and whether the student was on-task or off-task. The log had specified categories for the location, activity, and with whom the student was interacting, although the researcher could also write in other activities or provide more details.

Students were observed for a total of 1,670 five-minute segments. These segments are roughly equally distributed across schools (i.e., each school represents 23-27% of the observations). Of these five-minute segments, students were observed during class time for 1,521 segments (91%). In the remaining 9% of the observation segments, students were observed during lunch or between class periods. Note that this may overestimate the amount of time spent in class as it was difficult to follow students for the entire lunch period. The amount of time observed during class time was equally distributed across schools. See Appendix D for more on this analysis.