THE NATIONAL CENTER ON SCALING UP
EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Reaching for Rigor by Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility.

Identifying Practices of Effective High Schools for Design and Innovation.

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Introduction

The past several decades have borne witness to tremendous change—in our educational system and society as a whole. With the technological transformation of the workplace comes a recognition that readiness for college and careers requires today's students to acquire more than just knowledge in discrete subjects—they also need to develop habits and skills, such as teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking, initiative, and self-direction, that will enable them to succeed in future endeavors.[1] These changes have precipitated a gap between what schools are teaching and assessing and the skills that all students will need to succeed as learners, workers, and citizens in the twenty-first century.[2] The heightened emphasis on ensuring that high school graduates are career- and college-ready has changed our expectations of high school students – as exemplified by the curricular and instructional changes spurred by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the State of Texas Assessments and Academic Readiness (STAAR).

Through our research at the National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools (NCSU) on high schools in Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD), we have found a relationship between students taking ownership and responsibility for their academic success and positive outcomes for students. Our research findings show that increased student engagement and self-efficacy contribute to greater student learning. Thus, high schools can address gaps in student achievement and equip students to meet the educational challenges and workforce demands of the twenty-first century, by developing programs, processes, and practices that fully engage students and develop them as self-directed learners.

We collected case study data on four FWISD high schools in the 2011-12 school year. Our analyses revealed that the practice of *increasing student ownership and responsibility for their academic success* emerged as a distinguishing feature of schools with higher value-added student achievement over those with lower value-added achievement. The Center did not set out to look for student ownership and responsibility for academic success as the practice that distinguished schools that were obtaining greater than expected gains from students in traditionally low performing groups. Rather our data collection and analysis were organized around what we call the essential components of effective schools: learning centered leadership, rigorous and aligned curriculum, quality instruction, personalized learning connections, systemic performance accountability, systemic use of data, culture of learning and professional behavior, and connections to external communities. While research suggests that these components are essential to school success, our analysis of four FWISD case studies revealed that those schools with higher value-added student achievement held high expectations for the learning of all students and enacted practices that helped students assume ownership and responsibility for their learning. Notably, schools neither assumed that students would develop this ownership on their own, nor merely declared it as an expectation. Rather, teachers and other adults scaffolded students' learning of both academic and social behaviors and put structures in place to guide students in taking ownership and responsibility for their academic success. That is, these schools made a concerted effort to provide encouragement and support to students. Furthermore, teachers adopted—and were held accountable for—the perspective that student ownership for learning is important and should be

developed. The specific practices and school-wide conditions that we observed for facilitating this kind of academic environment will be described in more detail in later sections.

In this report we share our research findings with FWISD to initiate the next phase of the partnership between FWISD and NCSU. This involves a collaborative design process to develop an innovation (e.g., a school-level or practice) that is focused on increasing student ownership and responsibility.

The design and implementation involves a collaborative process that includes a District Innovation Design Team (DIDT) (such as teachers, other school-level personnel, central office personnel, and researchers) and School Innovation Design Teams (SIDTs). Our colleagues at the Educational Development Center (EDC) who have experience developing leadership and instructional programs will facilitate this process guiding the DIDT and SIDTs through the steps of 1) developing a prototype; 2) testing the ideas in the prototype; 3) learning from the testing and revising; 4) adapting based on the learning, prior to initial implementation. Through the collaborative process, the DIDT and SIDTs will develop, test and adapt an innovation that will be implemented in three high schools beginning in the fall of 2013.

This report describes the activities and findings from the 2011-12 data collection in FWISD. After briefly describing the research approach and four case study schools, we dedicate the body of the report to the main finding that distinguished between schools with higher and lower value-added student achievement: **the importance of student ownership and responsibility and the strategies schools used to help students take responsibility for their learning.** We then present seven examples of promising practices that illustrate these strategies. These practices describe efforts as observed in FWISD schools that help students build a sense of ownership and responsibility for their academic success. We conclude by describing how these findings will be used by the DIDT and SIDTs to design an innovation targeted toward increasing student ownership and responsibility.

Research Approach

This first phase of the Center's work which included data collection and analysis was guided by a framework of what we term the "eight essential components of effective schools:"

- Learning-centered Leadership
- Rigorous and Aligned Curriculum
- Quality Instruction
- Personalized Learning Connections
- Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior
- Connections to External Communities
- Systemic Performance Accountability, and
- Systemic Use of Data.

The components of this framework are conceptualized as working together in effective high schools to create deep connections and relationships for both adults (leaders, teachers, and staff) and students. Our framework emphasizes that it is not the adoption of any individual component through specific programs or practices that leads to school effectiveness, but the integration and alignment of school processes and structures across these eight components.[3] Although a consensus has recently begun to emerge around these components of successful schooling, far less is known about the ways in which educators develop, implement, integrate, and sustain these components. This is where the current report hopes to shed light.

This data herein come from a comparative case study of four high schools in FWISD during the 2011-2012 school year. The study was designed to identify the programs, policies, and practices that effective schools in FWISD used to coordinate the essential components into successful outcomes for students.[4]

The four schools were selected based on school-level, value-added student achievement measures. The measures of achievement for a number of student background characteristics, were created in reading, mathematics, and science for all students in the school, and for subgroups of students by race/ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, and English language learner (ELL) status. In short, two schools were selected with relatively higher value-added results and two with relatively lower value-added results. In each school, we conducted approximately:

- 9 focus groups (with students, teachers, and student activity leaders);
- 50 interviews (with principals, assistant principals, teachers, guidance counselors, support personnel, and students);
- 70 observations in English, mathematics, and science classrooms;[5] and
- 9 student shadowing observations.[6]

Data collection primarily focused on 9th- and 10th-grade students and teachers in English, mathematics, and science, although we balanced this focus with other data from key staff and a cross-section of the school (e.g., teacher focus groups spanned all grades and subject areas) to gain a comprehensive understanding of our schools. In addition to this fieldwork, we collected numerous school artifacts (e.g., documents about the school or processes within the school such as the teacher handbook, academic profile, academic learning walk criteria, etc.) and analyzed administrative, disciplinary, and course-taking data from the district, as well as survey data from teachers, students, and parents.[7]

Case Study Schools

In this section, we describe the two lower value-added (LVA) schools and the two higher value-added (HVA) schools. Table 1 provides data on the demographic characteristics and value-added rankings. To protect the identity of the schools and the participants therein, we have provided

ranges and used pseudonyms. We then provide brief case summaries focusing on the school context, cross-cutting themes, and main findings. Note that due to our sampling strategy, we refer to the schools as either lower value-added (LVA) or higher value-added (HVA). However, as described in the case summaries below, in some cases schools may be performing relatively better in some subject areas or for some student subgroups than others and thus one LVA school (Valley) has relatively strong outcomes in some indicators and one HVA school (Riverview) has relatively weak outcomes in some indicators. This continuum of performance outcomes is also evident in our findings related to student responsibility and ownership.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and Performance Indicators of Case Study High Schools

	LVA Schools		HVA Schools	
	Mountainside	Valley	Lakeside	Riverview
School characteristics				
Enrollment	700-1,200	>1,500	700-1,200	>1,500
Percent Black	>50%	<20%	<20%	<20%
Percent Hispanic	<40%	>75%	>75%	41-75%
Percent economically disadvantaged	60-75%	>75%	>75%	<60%
Percent Limited English Proficient	<7%	>7%	>7%	<7%
2010 Graduation Rate	<80%	<80%	>85%	>85%

Note: The graduation rates were the most recent data available at the time of school selection. Demographics represent the composition of the schools at the time of our visits (2011-12). Ranges are used to mask the exact identity of the schools.

Mountainside High School

One LVA school is Mountainside High School, which is predominantly African-American. The value-added indicators rank it last of the 13 high schools in the district in reading and science, both for all students as well as the two largest subgroups: African-Americans and those eligible for free- and reduced-price lunches. School outcomes such as graduation rates, dropout rates, and state accountability ranking are also very low compared to district averages.

Multiple participants with whom we interacted at Mountainside reported that while many elements of the school are functional, other systems that allowed the school to operate as an effective organization in the past may be breaking down. Several participants asserted that systems such as discipline and scheduling do not function as they should and thus complicate the work of faculty. Multiple participants reported that a lack of communication and trust prevents staff members from working together to meet the needs of students. Some participants traced these breakdowns largely to instability caused by significant turnover in personnel. In addition, multiple participants reported a culture of "multiple chances" that often allows students to make up work, while some students are not punished for disciplinary infractions. Although there are some benefits to offering

additional opportunities for students to succeed, these practices at Mountainside appeared to reduce student accountability and allow students to take the easiest path to graduation.

Valley High School

Valley High School, which serves a predominantly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged student population, has undergone considerable change in the recent past. We describe Valley as a lower value-added school because the value-added measures indicate the school is near the bottom of the district when combining all subjects for all students. However, for some subgroups and subjects, the school is closer to the district average. The graduation and dropout rates were near the district median.

A school culture that included gangs and low achievement rates led Valley to become a turnaround school several years ago, with a new principal who was given autonomy to hire staff. The principal hired a new administrative team and 40 percent of the faculty, educators who were willing to work long hours and emphasized outreach to students. Valley has since succeeded in the areas targeted for turnaround—creating a more positive school culture, building personalized relationships with students, and developing students' basic skills. Several related practices underlie the success, while others help explain why the value-added scores, particularly in science and English Language Arts (ELA), remain lower than other high schools in the district.

A key driver of the school's success is its strong leadership and the principal's agenda to personalize relationships. This is complemented by the loyalty and trust of the staff, and the school-wide buy-in to the principal's personalization agenda. While the autonomy given to teachers engenders trust and buy-in to the principal's goals, it also appears to support an "anything that works" instructional environment lacking the supports that might increase instructional rigor. The principal acknowledged it was time to begin focusing on rigor, but used indirect strategies such as talking to individual teachers about observation ratings rather than through a concerted, stated effort so as not to over-stress teachers.

Riverview High School

A public high school with a higher value-added ranking, Riverview is one of the larger and higher performing high schools in the district. Its special programs that appeal to many students include a large number of advanced courses, the Gold Seal Programs of Choice, and vocational training in areas such as agriculture and horticulture, construction, and information technology. The advanced courses attract primarily white, higher-income students, often from outside the school's assignment zone, while regular-level courses have a greater proportion of minority and lower-income students. On the value-added rankings, Riverview was third overall among the district's 13 high schools. However, it ranks sixth for free-lunch-eligible students and 12th for Hispanics.

Findings from our case study work offer insight into the school's success as well as the need for improvement. Across multiple interviews, students, faculty, and district leaders acknowledged the persistence of "two schools within the school," a problem Riverview has addressed with two broad strategies: to encourage more students to take honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses and

to protect and increase the quality and number of these courses. Faculty also described ongoing support for a wide variety of extracurricular activities as a key strategy for engaging students socially and academically and for building respect between students and teachers. While there is evidence that these two strategies have increased opportunities to learn for some students at Riverview, they have failed to reach many disengaged students.

Lakeside High School

Described as a community school, Lakeside High School, a higher value-added school, has one of the highest concentrations of poverty in the district and serves a predominantly Hispanic population. Participants described the need for the school to "take care" of student emotional needs, noting that students seek stability at the school when it is lacking elsewhere in their lives. The value-added indicators rank it near the top of the district in math and science, both for all students and most subgroups. The value-added indicators place it near the middle of the district for reading. Rankings for ELL students are low, however, particularly in science.

Study participants described the school as having improved significantly over the last several years, starting with the previous principal and continuing with the current leadership. A driving feature of the school is a shared and systemic focus on helping students to take responsibility for their own learning. Promoting student ownership and responsibility has both social and instructional aspects, including downplaying traditional modes of instruction in favor of a more student-centered framework and cooperative learning activities that engage students more actively. The school also stresses a culture of learning that holds students accountable and supports them through systematic but personalized interventions. The administration fosters a culture of trust and positive climate that facilitates school processes and practices by listening to the concerns of faculty and staff and supporting their professional growth. School-wide practices include: the Lakeside Code, a set of expectations for students and teachers; Learning Time, a lunchtime tutorial system; Assignment Logs, a shared template for students to monitor their progress; and the Intervention Committee, which provides supports for students who are not meeting expectations. Tracing the development of recent improvement activities makes clear that the shared vision and teacher buy-in built over several years and the introduction of current structures formalize this vision of student ownership and responsibility.

Design Challenge

What differentiated the two HVA schools from the two LVA schools were *practices that helped students take ownership and responsibility for their own academic success*. Teachers and other adults in the HVA schools scaffolded students' learning of both academic and social behaviors to guide them in assuming ownership and responsibility for their academic success. However, this strategy alone did not explain above-average gains for students. The schools also developed an integrated system of academic press (the encouragement of students to achieve) and support (resources to foster academic success) that was facilitated by a set of school-wide facilitating

conditions. This involved promoting self-efficacy by changing students' beliefs and attitudes and engaging them to do challenging academic work. Thus, self-efficacy and engagement are considered indicators of student ownership and responsibility, while academic support and press are strategies used to develop student ownership and responsibility. Figure 1 presents a diagram of the theory of action behind the design challenge. This figure is intended to illustrate how our findings suggest the elements of developing student ownership and responsibility fit together. While our data do not permit causal claims, it is consistent with findings from other research. As illustrated in this figure, concerted school efforts to develop an environment of both academic press and support work to increase outcomes such as student self-efficacy and engagement. The intermediate outcomes of self-efficacy and engagement reinforce each other in a reciprocal relationship, and ultimately influence student achievement outcomes. These processes are supported by a set of school-wide facilitating conditions.
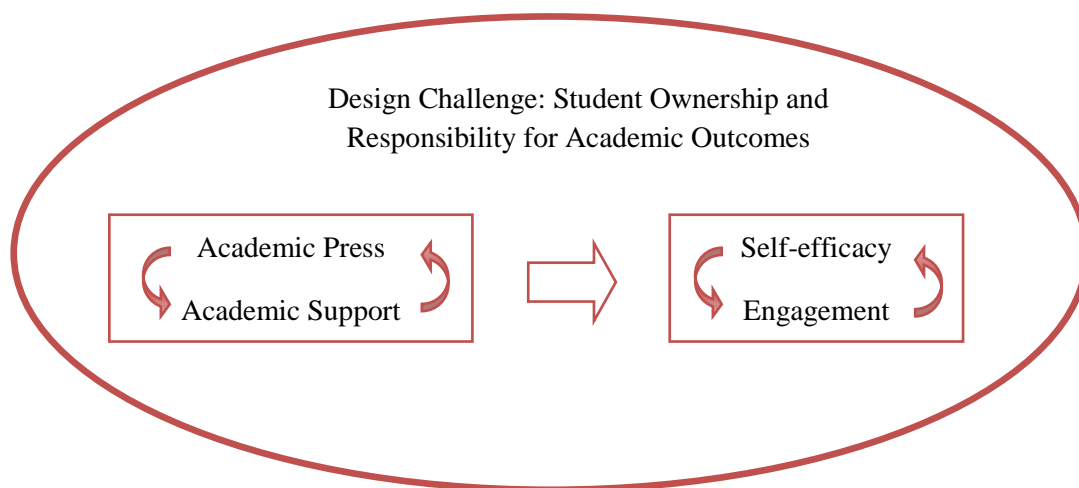
School-wide Facilitating Conditions

- Shared vision
- Aligned and coherent structures
- Trust
- Faculty and student stability
- Care and relationships between students and teachers
- Teacher accountability
- Individual and collective teacher efficacy
- Safe and orderly environment

Figure 1: Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility for Academic Outcomes

How can other schools in Fort Worth develop student responsibility and ownership? This is the design challenge for the district in its collaboration with the Center.

Defining Student Ownership and Responsibility

To help begin the work of the design challenge we provide definitions and specific examples of how our case study schools addressed student responsibility and ownership for academic learning. We first describe what we mean by student ownership and responsibility. The next section presents the school evidence that illustrates its importance.

Putting such a focus in place involves building students' confidence and understanding of how they can take responsibility for their own academic success. We emphasize two activities important for increasing student ownership of and responsibility for their academic success: 1) changing beliefs and mindsets of students to increase self-efficacy (that is, an individual's beliefs about his or her ability to perform behaviors that should lead to expected outcomes[8]) and 2) engaging students to do challenging academic work.

Research shows that students who have strong, positive mindsets and a high degree of self-efficacy exhibit more positive academic behaviors, choose more difficult tasks, have higher engagement with academic work, demonstrate more persistence despite setbacks, and have higher achievement across academic areas.[9] Such students also demonstrate both behavioral and academic engagement.[10] Behavioral engagement involves the basic behaviors expected in school, such as coming to class prepared and completing assigned tasks, that are important predictors of student achievement and, thus, predictors of whether students will graduate or drop out.[11] Academic engagement is defined as student investment in learning and the desire to challenge oneself. Students who are cognitively engaged exhibit strategic or self-regulating behaviors, are focused, and ask questions to clarify their understanding. Such students use strategies including rehearsing, summarizing, and elaborating in order to organize and understand the material.[12]

When students have a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning, they:

- Believe they can achieve challenging academic tasks.

- Are personally invested in academic success—both the immediate learning task in front of them and in long-term outcomes such as college and career readiness.

- Believe it is up to them and in their control to succeed in school.

- Are able to identify and work toward learning goals with self-direction, productivity, and initiative.

- Demonstrate their sense of responsibility through behaviors such as coming to class prepared, completing assignments well and on time, making up missed work in a timely manner, and seeking additional help when they are struggling (i.e., going to tutoring).

- Demonstrate their investment through engagement in class, asking questions when they are confused, monitoring their own learning, and attempting to master material with which they struggle.

- Demonstrate life skills such as initiative, self-direction, productivity, and accountability.

School Strategies to Develop Student Ownership and Responsibility

It is important to note that while student ownership and responsibility are measured by a set of outcomes at the student level, our research indicates that student ownership and responsibility resulted from concerted school efforts. Teachers and other adults in the school scaffolded learning of both academic and social behaviors that guided students in assuming ownership and responsibility of their academic success. Both of our higher value-added case study schools provided this scaffolding through integrated strategies of academic press and academic support.

We define *academic press* as the degree to which both the school and the classroom environment push students to achieve. Academic press includes staff expectations, school policies, and practices, norms, and rewards generated by staff and students.[13] It exists when teachers expect students to work hard by (e.g., do more challenging work or attempt more challenging problems). Academic press also includes the push to get students into higher-level classes. When academic press is present it is part of the "nature of teacher norms toward student instruction at the school".[14] Academic press is related to gains in student achievement, particularly in low-SES schools.[15]

Academic support is the degree to which the school and classroom environment provide the resources students need to succeed academically—that is, to meet the demands created by academic press. Teachers can directly support students in developing ownership and responsibility by giving them personalized academic support.[16] Academic support can take many forms. It includes elements of curriculum (when schools provide challenging academic courses), the effective organization of time (such as extended learning opportunities), the effective use of personnel to target individual student needs, rewards for student academic success, and the use of authentic and formative assessment.[17] Classroom instruction is critical. It provides academic support through collaborative, engaging activities that are relevant to students' lives, a source of empowerment for students, designed around authentic questions, and focused on higher-order thinking skills.[18] Further, there is evidence that teachers can instruct students in strategies for engaging cognitively and behaviorally.[19]

In short, increasing student ownership and responsibility requires a commitment by teachers and the school as a whole to a scaffolded approach. Educators need to establish an environment of academic press and support to help students take ownership of their learning. We outline four attributes of schools that succeeded at increasing student responsibility and provide examples of strategies they used.

- Teachers and other school personnel have high academic expectations for students.

  - School personnel hold students accountable to high academic standards by communicating clear and consistent expectations for performance and explaining the gap between those expectations and a student's current standing.

  - Teachers use instructional strategies and learning goals that push students into

higher-level thinking.

- ○ Teachers create a sense of urgency among students to work productively during class time (i.e., giving students time cues to complete tasks).

- ○ The school day is structured to maximize and protect academic learning time.

- ○ School personnel encourage all students to take challenging courses and actively identify students who could succeed in more challenging courses.

- ○ Teachers maximize productive learning time (i.e., starting class on time, minimizing transition time during activities).

- Teachers and other school personnel provide instructional supports to help students meet high expectations.

  - ○ Teachers use instructional strategies that require students to explain, analyze, problem solve, and produce something rather than applying formulaic procedures.

  - ○ Teachers use authentic instructional strategies that emphasize the relevance to students' current and future lives.

- Teachers and other school personnel provide organizational supports to help students meet high expectations.

  - ○ The school day is organized to provide opportunities for struggling students to get extra help.

  - ○ Teachers and other school personnel identify students who are struggling and develop a plan to intervene and provide additional supports.

- Teachers and other school personnel use techniques to deeply engage students in academic work.

  - ○ Adults in the school model and explicitly teach students the behaviors that demonstrate investment and a sense of responsibility.

  - ○ Teachers empower students by letting them lead classroom activity and discourse.

  - ○ Teachers build on students' intrinsic motivation by allowing them to apply the skills being taught in class to their areas of interest.

  - ○ Teachers equip students with skills and strategies to learn how to learn.

Evidence on Student Ownership and Responsibility

This section presents the school evidence that illustrates the importance of student ownership and responsibility and the environment of academic press and support that our case study schools established to foster it. We draw on all four of our case study schools and emphasize the

characteristics that appeared to differentiate the higher and lower value-added schools. Due to recent improvements in Valley through the turnaround efforts, we describe how Valley and the two HVA schools differ from Mountainside. Further, because one HVA school—Lakeside—had the most systematic and explicit focus on increasing student responsibility, we emphasize findings from Lakeside to underscore how one of the most economically disadvantaged schools in the district developed and sustained a coherent and integrated focus on helping students assume ownership of their learning.

Our data suggest that both HVA schools had stronger and more systemic practices, policies, and resources to establish an academically rigorous school environment where students were pressed to achieve and supported in doing so. Indeed, as described below, one higher value-added school focused explicitly on increasing student ownership and responsibility for their learning. The vision shared by adults of student ownership and responsibility entails both changing the cultural/climate and instruction, including a focus on moving away from traditional modes of instruction to more meaningful, student-centered, and cooperative learning activities that require students to be actively engaged in their learning. This vision was led by the current principal, but had developed over several years. Several key personnel had realized that systems previously created in the school had led to student dependence on the teachers and other adults, thus training students to be overly reliant on others for their learning. School leaders decided to tackle that challenge in order to push for greater improvement in student achievement. The efforts to increase student ownership and responsibility focused on building a culture in which students are held accountable for their learning and supported through systematic but personalized interventions. Lakeside's levers for academic press were the Lakeside Code, Learning Time, and the focus on student ownership and responsibility to try to enforce high expectations in all classes. (See the Promising Practices section below for a full description of these practices.)

For example, the Lakeside Code, which outlines expectations for student conduct, focuses on academic and instructional behaviors rather than discipline or social behaviors. (See also the section below on the Lakeside Code.) Lakeside teachers, students, and administrators described academic behaviors as the heart of the student and teacher accountability mechanisms. School participants reported a strong perception that consequences existed if they failed to meet standards. Similarly, rewards were provided for meeting accountability standards. Notably, adults in the school described a relationship between student behavior and academic performance in that behavior reflects underlying academic issues. This belief undergirded academic-first responses and interventions to problems that were not ostensibly academic. Lakeside also provided systemic support structures to help students meet their academic expectations. While teachers across case study schools described being available to students for tutoring, Lakeside established an extended lunch period to encourage tutoring as the norm for students throughout the school. Another key feature of Lakeside's academic support system was the Intervention Committee, which worked with students who were not meeting standards to determine the root causes of their difficulties and develop a plan to address them.

The other higher value-added school, Riverview High School, also showed evidence of a strong

student culture of learning, at least among the honors students, who took the initiative to form study groups, tutor each other, and work collaboratively to master challenging material, often after school. Honors students also reported having been approached by lower-level peers to provide tutoring, outreach supported by adults in the school who allowed the use of classrooms for such engagement. Although this culture of learning was heavily influenced by parental press for high academic standards, even in Riverview where many students are college-bound, there was evidence of concerted strategies to increase student engagement to achieve school-wide rigor. Academics are described as the "driving goal" in Riverview, with concrete academic expectations. The school established academic press and support by highlighting its success with AP/honors courses to encourage more students to take those courses, with a concerted effort to keep the quality high. This outreach, which was targeted particularly at low-income and minority students, was described as a key lever to provide greater learning opportunities for a broad spectrum of the student population. One teacher illustrated this philosophy when she said the faculty was committed to taking students who are not "honors students" and making them into "honors students."

In contrast, the two LVA schools did not demonstrate a systemic focus on academic press and support. Participants in Valley High School reported they were working on these things, though not systemically. While Mountainside High School lacked student ownership and responsibility overall, small pockets existed in such programs as JROTC and AVID. One reported characteristic shared by the LVA schools was a "culture of multiple chances," in which students could get several opportunities to make up for failure. Participants reported positive and negative aspects to this practice, and the limited student accountability in the LVA schools supports the premise that academic press is a key difference between HVA and LVA schools. While all four schools provided credit recovery and other opportunities for students to make up failed assignments or courses, Lakeside and Riverview both were able to resolve the tension between supporting students and holding them accountable in ways that did not lower rigor. In contrast, LVA schools had only isolated examples of teachers pressing students and helping them take ownership of their academic success.

School-wide Facilitating Conditions

The Fort Worth ISD case study high schools suggest there are eight key conditions that sustain and integrate the school-wide strategies to increase student ownership and responsibility; these are consistent with the larger body of research on characteristics of effective schools:

- A shared vision
- Aligned and coherent structures
- Trust
- Care and positive relationships between students and teachers
- Faculty and student stability
- Individual and collective teacher efficacy
- Teacher accountability and
- A safe and orderly environment

Each of these school-wide facilitating conditions is described below, and supporting evidence provided from our case study schools.

Shared Vision

Effective schools are mission-driven organizations; they have a clear shared vision that animates daily life in the school. Leaders can articulate a vision for learning and hold high expectations for all students.[20] School improvement efforts are enhanced when teachers and others in the school share the school-wide vision.

The evidence from both case study HVA schools indicates that they have clear, shared goals that link desired outcomes with strategies to achieve those outcomes. Notably, participants in both higher value-added schools identified a limited number of goals, while participants in the lower value-added schools reported multiple, sometimes inconsistent, goals. More important, goals in the higher value-added schools differed qualitatively. They not only wanted to raise student achievement, but also had a plan for how they would reach that goal. The vision in Lakeside focused on pressing students to take responsibility for their own learning and the vision in Riverview focused on promoting academic excellence through advanced course-taking accompanied by concrete academic expectations.

Aligned and Coherent Structures

The shared vision should not just be a set of ideals, however. It should include a coherent and consistent set of school-wide and classroom-level structures that are aligned with the vision. While classroom-level structures are necessary to ensure that new practices shape core instructional activities, school-wide structures will sustain and support teachers in implementing those activities. For example, instructional program coherence exists when a school 1) develops a common instructional framework with consistent expectations, materials, and strategies; 2) aligns teacher recruitment, evaluation, and professional development structures to the common instructional framework; and 3) strategically garners and allocates internal and external resources toward implementing this framework.[21] Prior research suggests schools that increased their instructional program coherence improved twice as fast as less coherent schools.[22]

Both higher value-added schools supported their school-wide vision with aligned and integrated school-wide practices. In Lakeside, several school-wide structures and practices, such as the Lakeside Code, Learning Time, and Intervention Committee, support the shared vision of increasing student ownership and responsibility for learning. Further, these unique structures do not exist in isolation. Riverview High School also had structures aligned to its shared vision, creating a culture that reflects and advances the goal of academic excellence and creates considerable cohesion. Although Riverview had less strategic planning than Lakeside, there was a backdrop of action in the sense of getting students to excel. In contrast, Mountainside showed little evidence of convergence around any single effort or coordinated set of efforts to support school goals. Further, numerous participants indicated that the lack of communication or connection among adults in the school made it hard to meet the needs of students. Valley provided school-wide structures to support personalization and relationship-building, but structures to support the goal of increasing rigor were largely limited to one department.

Trust

Relational trust—which is the presence of mutual respect, personal regard, and a belief in the competence and integrity of others in the school—is a key contextual element of schools that can facilitate school operations and improvement activities.[23] When students trust their teachers and perceive them to be fair, they have higher academic motivation, improved behavior, and are less likely to drop out.[24] Trust between adults is also a resource for school improvement as it creates a safe environment for teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to take risks, try new ideas, and receive constructive criticism—that is, to learn.[25] Although trust can facilitate school improvement efforts, the absence of significant trust does not mean improvements cannot be made; indeed school-wide improvement initiatives can also work to help develop trust among school personnel.

Our data suggest that three of the four case study schools had sufficient amounts of trust to support school improvement efforts, particularly in Lakeside and Valley, one higher and one lower value-added school. In both schools, teachers spoke positively about each other and, in nearly all cases, about the administrative team. Moreover, faculty reported feeling respected by administrators, which in turn enhanced their respect of administrators. The culture of trust in both schools was fostered by two-directional communication between administrators and teachers, as well as collegiality and collaboration. In Riverview, an atmosphere of trust among adults was not described as explicitly as in Lakeside and Valley, although there was a general sense that students trusted their teachers and teachers trusted each other as well as school administrators. In contrast, trust between adults was particularly weak at Mountainside and deteriorated as the year progressed. The distrust reportedly stems from inconsistent disciplinary action by the administration, inconsistency in instructional initiatives (i.e., a sense that new initiatives were not given time to play out before another initiative was issued), lack of trust in administrators' evaluations, as well as a sense among some that that the administration did not wholly value their work.

The culture of trust at Lakeside provides the clearest example of how trust can facilitate the successful implementation of school-wide initiatives such as increasing student ownership and responsibility. Trust allows administrators and department heads to hold teachers to high expectations without significant resistance. Likewise, data is seen as a resource for professional responsibility and not information to punish teachers. Perhaps most important for understanding how practices such as the Lakeside Code work, the culture of trust increases teacher support for the shared vision and allows teachers to feel supported when holding students accountable and pressing them to be responsible for their learning. In contrast, while trust facilitates a sense of community in Valley, it is not sufficient to ensure high expectations for students or rigorous instruction.

Care and Positive Relationships between Students and Teachers

Strong, personalized relationships between students and teachers are a vital component of school organizational capacity. Students that have stronger relationships with their teachers are more likely to feel connected to the school, are less likely to feel alienated and drop out, have greater academic motivation and achievement, and display more cooperative and less disruptive behavior.[26] When students feel cared for, they are receptive to teachers and willing to engage in a

reciprocal relationship.[27] Teachers can increase student motivation and learning by building rapport with their students, caring about them, and being enthusiastic.[28]

Our data suggest that while positive relationships between students and teachers are critically important to student success, they cannot lead to high student achievement without a systemic focus on academic press. Valley illustrates this challenge. Relationships were strong, relatively widespread, and a specific focus of the school. However, without linking the relationships to academic learning (e.g., high expectations for students' academic work, expectations for teachers' rigor in instruction), the relationships often did not push students beyond attending school and passing their classes and state assessments.

In contrast, the combination of a high floor for students' academic expectation and positive teacher-student relationships allowed Lakeside to successfully implement student ownership and responsibility practices. A primary structure contributing to this success, Learning Time, encouraged teachers and students to build personal, non-academic relationships. Strong personal relationships also supported the success of the school Intervention Committee, where the goal was to understand the root cause of student failure and address problems in a student's life that are inhibiting success. Riverview also has strong and relatively widespread positive relationships between students and adults, although they are stronger in the advanced/honors track. For example, as one student in a focus group described strong relationships with teachers: "the top students at our school are constantly in teachers' rooms, figuring out assignments, going ahead, just trying to get it." Positive relationships alone, however, did relieve the persistence of "two schools within the school" at Riverview. At Mountainside, positive relationships were seen as important, but their presence was limited to pockets.

Faculty and Student Stability

Similar to trust, school stability can exist at the student, teacher, and administrator level and serves as a key facilitating condition for school improvement activities.[29] Not only does mobility affect the students who are changing schools, but even non-mobile students have lower achievement in schools with high student mobility.[30] High levels of teacher and leadership turnover can also reduce a school's organizational capacity by impeding the ability to create instructional coherence and eroding relational trust.[31]

Our data suggest that both leader and teacher turnover can negatively impact implementation of the components of effective schools. The particularly high turnover of teachers and leaders at Mountainside made it difficult for leaders to gain the trust of teachers and implement an effective reform agenda. In contrast, Valley has been relatively stable since implementing a turnaround model in which the new principal asked for a three-year commitment from those hired. As much of the academic and behavioral improvement in the school has been credited to the principal, stability in leadership has had a clear impact. The two higher value-added schools have had a stable core of leaders and teachers, although enrollment growth in Lakeside has led to an increase in new teachers over the past few years. Because of established routines of practice and shared goals in Riverview and Lakeside, their performance trajectories and improvement activities have been stable despite recent turnovers in leadership.

Individual and Collective Teacher Efficacy

Teachers' sense of efficacy—which is a belief that teachers individually and/or collectively have the capability to achieve desired outcomes such as improved student achievement—serves as a form of school capacity and empowerment.[32] Teachers with a high individual sense of efficacy are more resilient in the face of challenging situations, have more focused instruction, and believe their actions can impact student learning.[33] On the other hand, teachers with low efficacy are more likely to deflect improvement efforts and blame poor performance on students' lack of motivation.[34] Collective teacher efficacy exists when teachers believe that the faculty as a whole can impact student learning and achieve school-wide goals.[35] Collective teacher efficacy is related to student achievement,[36] possibly because teachers with high collective efficacy are more likely to build positive relationships and respond positively to school improvement initiatives.[37]

Teachers at Lakeside appeared to have a greater sense of individual and collective efficacy. Whether this contributes to-- or is an outcome of the school's success is not clear. This sense of efficacy does, however, support faculty and staff efforts to promote student ownership and responsibility with a student population (i.e., low-income Hispanic students).

At Riverview, the other higher value-added school, teachers were most likely to report a sense of efficacy with students in honors and AP classes. While many in the school prided themselves on the inclusivity of their honors program, responses from some teachers suggested that they felt less efficacious with minority students not enrolled in honors courses, and their families. An administrator noted the need to narrow gaps between honors and regular classes by increasing student-centered activities/strategies and performance expectations in regular-level courses. Valley also appeared to place more blame on students and families for academic failure, although some teachers in Valley felt capable of supporting students' social and emotional needs. Interviews with teachers in Mountainside suggested little sense of individual or collective efficacy. Multiple participants said their ability both to motivate students academically and to influence student achievement is heavily influenced by factors outside of their control.

Teacher Accountability

To successfully implement strategies of academic press and support, schools need a systemic approach to teacher accountability. This may entail developing both individual and collective responsibility as well as internal mechanisms to ensure teachers are implementing desired practices consistently.[38] Schools and districts exercise internal accountability by establishing individual responsibilities,[39] which in turn enable the marshaling of resources to respond effectively to external accountability measures.[40] The consistent implementation of local expectations and responsibilities requires that leaders hold teachers accountable for implementing practices that align with the shared school-wide vision. This often requires frequent instructional observations and curricular discussions or other mechanisms.[41]

The two higher value-added schools had more systemic approaches to teacher accountability and integrated accountability for students and teachers. For example, teachers were held accountable for also holding students accountable and helping them to succeed. The increased teacher accountability was accompanied by pervasive administrative support. In Riverview, we found

evidence across the faculty of a willingness to be accountable for student outcomes to one another or to their broader fields (e.g. AP subject areas), coupled with an openness to investigate new strategies or options. In Lakeside, the role of classroom walk-throughs illustrates the integration of teacher support and accountability. There, teacher observations were part of an ongoing, bilateral dialogue between teachers and leadership, a hallmark feature of the practice. Feedback from observations was looped, with observers asking guiding questions and expecting a response from teachers. In contrast, observations in the lower value-added schools were seen as merely *pro forma* or perfunctory and done for accountability purposes rather than being designed to help teachers grow. Particularly in Mountainside, but to some extent in Valley, there was a sense that administrators used observations to catch teachers making mistakes. Teachers at Valley were largely left alone unless there was a problem.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Schools must have a calm, safe, and orderly environment for the strategies and school-wide facilitating conditions to take root. Indeed, trust, caring relationships, and teacher responsibility require safe and orderly climates where student discipline is handled in a fair and consistent manner.[42] Schools characterized by safety and order see greater improvements in the essential components of effective schools that contribute to student outcomes.[43] Likewise, a consistent approach to behavior management is a building block for personalization of academic and social learning.[44]

A safe and supportive disciplinary climate has the potential to facilitate other activities, such as fostering trust. For example, teachers and students trust administrators when they see rules enforced consistently. Lakeside and Riverview demonstrated consistent behavior enforcement, although in Lakeside, discipline/behavior management was integrated into the focus on student ownership and responsibility. For example, the Lakeside Code, which serves as a student code of conduct, focused more on academic and instructional behaviors than discipline or social behaviors. While there was support for addressing small infractions, the strategies often included an academic component, such as completing homework or bringing a book to class. Student behavioral discipline was actively linked to academic discipline; school personnel sought to understand the "root cause" of student academic failure or misbehavior.

As with positive relationships, consistent disciplinary enforcement is necessary, but it cannot promote student ownership and responsibility by itself. For example, at Valley High School, teachers gratefully reported that administrators consistently and fairly resolved discipline problems (facilitating relational trust), and Valley has significantly more disciplinary referrals than any other case study school. The fact that the referral rate has also increased in recent years, reflects the attention given to this by school leaders.

Mountainside lacked consistent disciplinary enforcement and it led to lack of trust between the administration and teachers, as well as between the administration and students. This, in turn, inhibited other efforts to improve achievement.

Promising Practices

We provide seven promising practices to describe specific programs and approaches that appeared to contribute to increasing students' responsibility for their own learning, and describe how the success of the practices was sustained by the school-wide facilitating conditions. The first four practices were in the two higher value-added schools. The next three were in the two lower-value added schools. We stress that effective practices can be found in both types of schools. One key difference between higher and lower value-added schools is the degree to which such practices exist. In the higher value-added schools such practices are more systemic, spanning the entire school, while they exist only in portions or pockets of the lower value-added ones.

1. *Lakeside: The Code*

Description

The Lakeside Code can be summed up by the school motto Effort Required. The cornerstone of Lakeside's improvement efforts, it includes seven elements that all students must recognize in order to increase their own accountability and responsibility for learning: 1) attend school and be on time; 2) come prepared to class and take advantage of tutoring opportunities during Learning Time; 3) Find out what assignments are required after missing school; 4) be able to either explain what the teacher has emphasized or have a question about what isn't clear; 5) practice independent applications of material to ensure understanding and attend Learning Time when you don't understand; 6) talk to teachers about assignments and tests where you struggled; and 7) monitor your own progress through Assignment Logs. Staff members are expected to know these elements of the Code, and school personnel occasionally describe it as a student code of conduct and treat it as such by linking implications such as referral to an Intervention Committee and in-school suspension to violations. However, the Code also sets expectations for academic and instructional behaviors of both students and teachers. Each element includes specific behaviors required for compliance by students, as well as expectations for teachers to support students in taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, point 4 expects students to pay attention and ask questions in class, while teachers must press students to explain. Teachers are expected to randomly select students to respond, teach students how to manage their attention and ask students to summarize their learning from the previous day.

Although the Code just took effect in the 2011-2012 school year, it follows years of work by school leaders to develop a shared understanding of the need to reduce student dependence on teachers and build student responsibility in order to improve student learning. The principal described how a core group of faculty and administrators compared the school's student achievement data with that of other schools in the district and determined that what successes they had achieved came from putting the locus of responsibility on teachers. This group realized that students would need to take more responsibility if the school was to achieve additional improvement. The current principal, while new to the role this year, was part of the leadership team

during these discussions. Thus the Code is, in a sense, a formalization of this shared vision and a structure to support its enactment. The Code initially focused on students, but as it was implemented, the school realized that students were more likely to meet the expectations if the Code included expectations for teachers, too, and these were added midyear. For example, point 7 of the original Code required students to monitor their progress with the Assignment Log. The Code now requires teachers to help students by training them to use the Assignment Log and calculate their grades, giving them time to update their logs after returning work, monitoring the logs, and refraining from posting grades.

The Code was posted in almost every classroom and teachers (with the encouragement of leadership) referred to elements of the Code during class. For example, students who didn't bring materials to class were reminded that the Code expects them to come prepared. Teachers reported monitoring Assignment Logs and rewarding students who had accurate logs. Additionally, administrators randomly asked students to show them Assignment Logs. School leaders supported implementation of the Code and mentioned it frequently in various types of interactions with teachers (e.g., weekly principal e-mail to the faculty, as feedback after classroom walk-throughs, in faculty meetings). The principal also provided professional development opportunities to teachers to help them learn how to implement elements of the Code.

Part of what made the Code effective was its integration and alignment with other systems in Lakeside. The remainder of this case example focuses on how the Code was enacted through the strategies used by the school and facilitated by several school-wide facilitating conditions. In particular, points 1, 5, and 6 of the Code have explicit expectations for when students should attend Learning Time and be referred to the Intervention Committee when they are not complying with the Code.

How the Lakeside Code Supported Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility
The Lakeside Code helps to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning by explicitly teaching them behaviors that demonstrate personal investment in learning. The school also sought to help students develop a sense of efficacy by recognizing that they have the ability to achieve if they exert the effort required to succeed.

The enactment of the Lakeside Code illustrates how the teachers and other adults in the school used academic press and academic support to scaffold students' learning of both academic and social behaviors to guide them in assuming ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Further, the structures and practices that contributed to academic press and academic support were integrated and aligned with each other. In terms of **academic press**, Lakeside created shared practices around student accountability, high expectations, and an academic-focus environment, within an instructional vision devoted to student ownership, responsibility, and engagement. There were clear expectations for students with explicit consequences for not following the Code. Teachers also reported that they were supported in maintaining high expectations for students and holding them accountable for meeting those expectations. To create an academic environment of high expectations, the school explicitly set the goal for student performance higher than that of the district as a whole. The Code also sets out expectations for student conduct, but it focuses more on

academic and instructional behaviors than discipline or social behaviors. Notably, the school decided to de-emphasize the dress code to focus student accountability efforts on elements in the Code. Finally, the explicit expectations for all teachers outlined in the Code make it clear that there are instructional implications. The school's primary improvement strategy, then, sought to help students learn before they had a chance to fail and require remediation.

A**cademic support** was conveyed through school-wide mechanisms to help students meet the expectations set out in the Code. One mechanism was the Learning Time tutorial system (see below), which set a designated time when teachers were expected to be available and students were expected to attend if they had missed assignments and/or were struggling in class. Thus, Learning Time was another example of a school-wide effort to teach students to take responsibility for their learning by expecting behaviors that demonstrate personal investment in their learning. No one could plead ignorance of the Code's requirements. Teachers and other school personnel posted it throughout the building, including in every classroom, and created an Intervention Committee process (described below) to work with students who lapsed.

Several school-wide facilitating conditions supported enactment of the Code. First, as the centerpiece of Lakeside's improvement efforts, the Code codified the school's **shared vision and the aligned and coherent structures created to support the vision.** As noted above, prior to formalizing the Code, the school leadership developed a shared understanding that they needed to reduce student dependence on teachers and turn the locus of responsibility over to students in order to improve student learning. Over several years, most adults in the school began to buy into this developing goal. Through this evolution, Lakeside became mission-driven. Clear processes and procedures were put in place to meet the goal and achieve the shared vision, and policies, practices, and activities were aligned to each other and to the vision. One reason the Code was effective is that, as the most prominent embodiment of the school's vision, it set forth both specific behaviors—and interventions for infractions—that were integrated and aligned with other school-wide processes. Thus, it represented a holistic vision that not only codified the explicit expectations of Learning Time, Assignment Logs, and the Intervention Committee, but it fostered a professional environment in which in-service training could be linked to the Code and the implementation of Code provisions could be monitored through regular classroom walk-throughs.

Lakeside also had a culture of **trust** that was fostered by two-directional communication between administrators and teachers. This trust facilitated much of the shared school practices as it allowed administrators and department heads to hold teachers to high expectations without significant resistance. In particular, it increased teacher buy-in to the shared vision and allowed teachers to feel supported when holding students accountable and pressing them to be responsible for their learning.

The relative **stability** of leadership, teachers, and students facilitated school practices and the development of the shared vision and understanding of the Code. Despite a having a first-year principal, continuity was possible because the principal was part of the leadership team under the former principal. More experienced teachers reported that as they focused on student ownership and responsibility over several years, student response was improving. Although the school had

recently added new teachers in response to student growth, the newcomers were hired only after expressing support for Lakeside's goals of student ownership and responsibility and willingness to enforce the code. The strong **relationships and a sense of care** between teachers and students also facilitated the school's efforts to help students take more responsibility for their learning. Teachers reported that students were willing to be held accountable and responded to teachers' efforts to shift the locus of responsibility over to them because they had strong, personal relationships. Students felt that their teachers were willing to go the extra mile for them and thus they responded in kind.

Because the Code outlined behaviors teachers were expected to exhibit, **teacher accountability** practices facilitated the successful enactment of the Code. Student ownership and responsibility for learning was the focus of both student and teacher accountability, with classroom observations including checks for teachers' efforts to ensure that students took active ownership of their own learning. Teachers, then, were held accountable for holding students accountable.

Teachers' willingness to be held accountable in these ways was supported by a sense of **individual and collective teacher efficacy**. While teachers described several school challenges, such as lack of resources, language barriers with students and parents, and low parental involvement, most teachers described these forces as challenges to be overcome rather than excuses for not succeeding. Teachers believed their efforts could affect student success, both individually within the classroom and collectively through school-wide practices. In particular, teachers recognized that while getting students to take responsibility was a major undertaking, the school was experiencing some success.

Finally, the **safe and orderly environment** in the school also supported enactment of the Code. Most students were interested in their learning, and discipline problems were resolved efficiently and fairly. Teachers said the administration supported them in handling student behavior problems. These attributes allowed the school to focus efforts on enforcing academic expectations rather than behavioral expectations.

2. *Lakeside: Learning Time*

Description

Learning Time was offered during the extended lunch hour when teachers were available to tutor students. Unlike other high schools in the district that had eight 45-minute periods, Lakeside had only seven 45-minute periods to accommodate Learning Time. Students were required to attend unless they had an 81 percent or above in all classes, in which case they received a pass for the six-week marking period. Students could choose how to spend the time and some extracurricular activities, such as student clubs, also met during Learning Time. Thus, a student could attend tutoring with his or her math teacher on Monday, tutoring with his or her science teacher on Tuesday, and a meeting of the drama club on Wednesday. Although some students with a Learning Time pass reported using that time for an extended lunch, sometimes leaving campus to eat, others occasionally sought extra assistance before tests or participated in clubs.

The Lakeside Code expected students to attend tutoring for all classes in which they were

struggling or unable to explain key ideas of lessons, and required them to show evidence that they were trying to understand questions they had missed on assignments and assessments. During tutorials, students could work one on one with teachers, in small groups, or independently to complete missed assignments. The tutorials were a mix of formal and informal tutoring opportunities, and on most days, teachers were available to answer questions from students or help with assignments. Occasionally, one department would offer a more formal tutoring session if the faculty noticed many students having difficulty with a particular topic. All teachers were expected to be available during Learning Time four days a week, getting one day a week to take a full hour-long lunch. However, in practice, most teachers reported spending the lunch time in their classrooms for Learning Time nearly every day.

Learning Time also provided opportunities for students and teachers to build personal, non-academic connections. Some students ate lunch, socialized with their friends, or talked to the teacher about non-academic concerns during this time. One participant explained that Learning Time is "not just kids coming for tutorials, but coming to hang out, talk to us, just be there."

Learning Time was in its third year of implementation in Lakeside in the 2011-2012 school year, though the new principal instituted several changes. Students were expected to check in with their homeroom teacher at the beginning of Learning Time and inform him or her where they would be spending the time. All teachers were expected to keep track of which students came to them for tutoring so homeroom teachers could ensure students actually attended. Some faculty noted issues with implementation of the changes and frustration with the increasing number of details. Upon hearing this feedback, the leadership decided to reduce the mechanisms to enforce student attendance, and some students reported skipping tutorials even though they did not have a Learning Time pass. Although students were expected to sign in for tutorial sessions and keep a tutorial log, theses data were not used systematically to monitor attendance or progress. Despite these inconsistencies, students reported in interviews and focus groups that they attended Learning Time about two to three times per week. This was a considerably higher rate than in the other three case study schools, although they also offered tutorial opportunities, sometimes even during lunch.

How Learning Time Supported Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility
Learning Time was an effective strategy for increasing student ownership and responsibility because it provided **academic support.** Students and teachers throughout the school said it helped students meet academic expectations. By not only creating time for students to get additional help, but by also institutionalizing this time in the school schedule and making it the default expectation, Learning Time enabled students to better engage in the challenging work set out by their teachers. By making Learning Time the default expectation for students, we mean that rather than operating under the assumption that attending tutorials was an "extra" activity students could do if they chose, school personnel and students appeared to operate as if attending tutorials was the standard behavior and expected of all students. The changing of the default expectation for students to attend Learning Time is evident because even though Learning Time passes were awarded to students who performed well, teachers still expected students to attend tutorials to make up work or understand concepts they did not grasp fully.

The shared expectation that students would attend Learning Time to master learning goals—and the reinforcement of this expectation during class time—also served as a form of **academic press.** For example, teachers were observed reminding students to come to Learning Time when they could not answer a question in class or struggled with an assignment.

School-wide facilitating conditions reinforced Learning Time. Shifting responsibility for learning to students involved creating **aligned and coherent structures** that support a **shared school-wide vision** to provide multiple opportunities for students to succeed. The Lakeside Code spelled out the school's standard for excellence and Learning Time and other supports provided opportunities for help to students falling short of the standard. Learning Time also supported use of the Assignment Log. Teachers were expected to post assignments in a visible area of the classroom and students were to keep track of both the assignment and the grade they earned. Through Assignment Logs, students and their teachers were expected to know their class average at any given moment, and therefore know if they should be attending a tutorial during Learning Time. The responsibility for using this time wisely rested mainly with the students; teachers did not actively monitor where students were or whether they attended the correct tutorial. While teachers and students said some students did not use this time wisely, the general consensus was that most took advantage of this time as needed to complete assignments or receive extra help. Students who continued to struggle despite opportunities to make up work during Learning Time were referred to the Intervention Committee (see below for more details) to receive an individualized learning plan to monitor his or her attendance, Assignment Log, and assessments.

Trust, stability, and care and relationships between students and teachers also supported the effective enactment of Learning Time. They facilitated student understanding of-- and adherence to Learning Time requirements. While attendance at Learning Time was not perfect, students reported wanting to attend because they knew teachers would be available for additional help. Students told us they most often spent Learning Time with teachers they trusted and with whom they had strong, positive relationships. In turn, Learning Time reinforced these relationships as it provided additional opportunities for teachers and students to get to know each other. Trust among adults in the school and staff stability also enhanced the effectiveness of Learning Time.

While Learning Time was not a major component of teacher accountability in Lakeside, there was evidence that it reinforced **individual and collective teacher efficacy** as it provided an avenue for student success and helped teachers overcome a perceived barrier—the lack of time and space in students' home lives—to getting extra assistance. Teachers reported that many students used Learning Time to complete missed assignments and homework, tasks that work and family obligations often made difficult outside of school.

Finally, the **safe and orderly environment** aided the enactment of Learning Time. Such a program could have set up a different school for disorder. Unlike regular class periods, students did not have to be at the same place for Learning Time each day. Coupled with the extended lunch period and fact that some students had Learning Time passes, the potential existed for a great deal of uncertainty about where students were supposed to be. However, the school remained relatively calm during this time.

3. Lakeside: Intervention Committee

Description

The key tenets of the Lakeside Code required students to put forth effort. Students who failed to meet the Code's expectations were identified for a series of interventions that culminate with the Intervention Committee. The first step was to have the teacher of the class in which the student was struggling talk with the student to determine the root cause of the poor performance and to develop a plan for improvement. If problems continued, the teacher reminded the student and parents about expectations related to the Code, and again sought to determine the reason for this failure and develop an improvement plan, adding steps to help the parent support the plan. If the student still failed to show the desired improvement, he or she was referred to the Intervention Committee. A sponsor was then assigned to the case to review past interventions with the student and why they were not successful. Ultimately, students who still failed to show the expected effort were assigned to in-school suspension and possibly referred to a hearing at the district-level. The Intervention Committee was led by the dean of instruction and is composed of the school social worker, an intervention specialist, and five teachers. The Intervention Committee met to discuss students as a group and all members sponsored students referred to them, although the caseload could vary by committee member due to other responsibilities. Sponsors were required to coordinate with the assistant principal who was assigned to the student. Teachers and Intervention Committee members were expected to work with the student to identify underlying causes of failure and move beyond explanations that blame students (e.g., the student is lazy). The goal was to identify the underlying reasons and then develop a plan to support the student.

The Intervention Committee was in its first year in 2011-12. School participants estimated that 70 to 80 percent of students referred to the Intervention Committee became successful, suggesting that referred students tended to start turning in homework and quiz grades improved.

How Intervention Committee Supported Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility

The Intervention Committee served as a key **academic support** for students. The interventions were actively linked to academic discipline as part of Lakeside's push for student ownership and responsibility. Notably, adults in the school (starting with the administration) asserted that students' behavior reflected underlying academic issues. This belief informed academic-first responses and interventions to problems that were not ostensibly academic. Hence, the committee sought to address the cause of student failure before a student became a behavioral problem.

The Intervention Committee illustrates how Lakeside enacted the school-wide facilitating conditions evident in effective schools. For example, a **shared vision** and an explicit **aligned and coherent school-wide practice**, were intertwined. The vision focused on both outcomes and a process to achieve those outcomes. Students were referred to the Intervention Committee if they met two conditions: earning an 80 or below in any class and not meeting the expectations of the Lakeside Code. Thus the school set both a performance expectation and a set of behavioral expectations to help students meet the performance expectation. When students failed, the

intervention process emphasized helping them understand and implement the behavioral expectations described by the Code, such as making up missed assignments, going to tutorials for additional help, and paying closer attention in class. As noted, the missions of the Code and the Intervention Committee were aligned in stressing the importance of practices established and supported by the school, such as Assignment Logs and Learning Time.

Care and relationships between students and teachers and **trust** among all school actors were important for the smooth implementation of the Intervention Committee. Committee members had to know what was going on in a student's life to mete out effective interventions. Further, the interventions required students to assume accountability, undergirded by more intensive monitoring of their academic behaviors and support. This synergistic interplay of accountability and support worked because of the trust and positive relationships that existed in the school.

Teacher accountability was also tied to the intervention process because when administrators met with teachers about student failure, they asked about interventions tried, attempts to identify the root cause, and referrals to the Intervention Committee. Administrators reported holding teachers with high student failure rates accountable for following the process of referring students to the Intervention Committee and meeting with students prior to the referral to identify the cause of failure.

The Intervention Committee process is not unique to Lakeside. What was somewhat unique was the focus on academics rather than behavioral disruptions, made possible by the **safe and orderly environment** and absence of significant student behavioral problems.

4. Riverview: Increasing Enrollment in Advanced Courses

Description

Administrators, faculty, and students at Riverview described access to Advanced Placement and honors courses for all students and low-income minority students in particular as a priority. Administrators and teachers described this effort as one to increase inclusivity at the school—a key lever to provide greater learning opportunities for a broad spectrum of the student population. The faculty members were reported to be committed to taking students who were not "honors students" and making them into "honors students." Similarly, a major goal was to make sure that students were getting the highest level of education possible, with a two-pronged school-wide strategy that 1) protects the quality and increasing the number of AP/honors-level courses and 2) allows and encourages more students to enroll in these courses. While the district policy allows students to choose to take AP/honors courses, teachers, assistant principals, and counselors at Riverview used proactive strategies to identify and encourage more regular-level students to enroll in honors-level courses. These strategies included conversations between faculty and students (e.g. teachers encouraging students to enroll in an AP class) as well as faculty checking with counselors or assistant principal's to use "behind the scenes" or "back channel" discussions to identify students who could move into honors or AP courses.

Riverview had a long and outstanding reputation among district high schools for its success in preparing students for college. Advanced course-taking seems much higher than that of the other case study schools, and was accompanied by higher rates of students taking and, importantly, passing AP exams. Riverside also had structured the curriculum to provide options to appeal to varied interests. For example, students interested in English did not have to stop with Advanced Placement English Literature; the school also offered Linguistics as an additional option. Similarly, students talented in math could take differential equations. Only one other high school in the district had a higher percentage of students taking advanced courses.

How Increasing Enrollment in Advanced Courses Supported Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility

Encouraging students to enroll in accelerated coursework was one way in which Riverview instituted high **academic press and** helped to increase student ownership and responsibility for their learning. Administrators, teachers, and students described high expectations for the students in AP/honors level courses, and many students, in turn, were described as having high expectations for themselves. In order to succeed in AP and honors courses, students must take ownership for their own learning. For example, the more rigorous in-class and out-of-class work expected of AP and honors courses encourages organization, engagement, the timely completion of assignments, preparation for assessments, and participation in challenging class discussions.   An additional benefit was that students in higher level courses were exposed to habits of mind and practices that had value beyond the academic curriculum.

Academic support was a crucial ingredient for helping students succeed in higher-level courses. One manifestation was the school-wide expectation that all teachers offer tutoring after school. Additionally, counselors and teachers described meetings in which they encouraged struggling students, and if applicable their parents, to remain in advanced courses.

In general, a sense of **trust** exists in the school, which was often described as enabling **relationship building and a sense of caring** between teachers and students. Teacher-student trust supported efforts to move students into more advanced courses by increasing students' willingness to work hard.

The school's **stability**, evidenced by the lack of transience among teachers and guidance counselors, allowed for ongoing support for moving students into more advanced coursework. The principal, although only in the second year as school leader, was committed to pushing this practice as a means to close gaps between the perceived "two schools within a school".

The school had **teacher accountability** mechanisms, such as department-level walk-through evaluations and a formal teacher evaluation program provided by the district. However, we found no evidence that teachers were held accountable for ensuring student movement into more advanced courses. As described previously, this practice was more a "professional commitment".

Examples of i**ndividual and collective teacher efficacy** emerged in discussions of advanced course curriculum. Evidence indicated that teachers of advanced courses often increased their expectations and provided challenges to match students' abilities. These teachers also had more influence over the curriculum and could enrich lessons with extra material to engage and challenge students. Counselors collectively believed more students could excel in higher level courses, and leveraged their familiarity with students' profiles and their relationships with them to guide them into advanced courses when working on schedules.

5. *Valley: AVID Program*

Description

All middle schools and high schools in the district have AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) programs. These programs are designed to promote college readiness and increase school-wide performance and learning. Valley, in particular, used the program to help increase students' ownership and responsibility for the own learning.

At Valley, AVID was considered an honors program, focusing on college readiness for the sizeable majority of students who would be the first in their family to attend college. Approximately 9 percent of students participated, many of whom also participated in AVID in middle school. While teachers could identify and recommend additional students for the program, our interviews suggested that it functioned nearly at capacity and that additional recruitment was not a priority. AVID functioned as an elective course, teaching organizational study (e.g., using binders, time management with a planner, Cornell Notes); writing skills; exploration of college benefits and application support (e.g., careers that require a postsecondary education, guidance on filling out applications, getting a fee waiver for the SAT/ACT, and completing student aid and scholarship applications); academic tutoring; and participation in community service. AVID students also were expected to take an increasing load of honors or AP courses as they progressed through their sophomore, junior, and senior years.

How the AVID Program Supported Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility

The AVID program helped increase student responsibility and ownership because it focused on holding students accountable for meeting the program's expectations. The voluntary nature of the program allowed the faculty who oversee the program place additional responsibility on the students as students are reminded that they are committing to particular expectations when they chose to participate. Further, the AVID program exemplifies a balance between **academic press** and **academic support**. AVID students in Valley were held to high expectations for exhibiting positive social behavior, taking rigorous courses, and adopting organizational and study skills that would prepare them for college. Students were also becoming personally invested in the goal of college attendance. While college attendance and success were clear outcome goals, the strategies used to increase student ownership toward those goals were keeping materials in binders, organizing class notes and summaries using Cornell notes, taking an increasing number of honors classes, and applying for college admissions, scholarships, and financial aid. While AVID students

were held accountable for these organizational processes, as well as their behavior and performance in their classes, students reported feeling supported by their AVID teacher. The AVID teacher reported that the school provided supplies such as binders when possible and expected students to take care of them. Replacements were available for defective supplies but the idea was to instill responsibility.

Expectations for AVID students are academic and behavioral, with the AVID program addressing socio-emotional needs as well as academic. The AVID teacher reported visiting students in other classes where their teacher reported misbehavior to hold them accountable and provide supports for students to meet expectations in all classes.

The AVID program also capitalizes on relationships and a sense of care between students and their AVID teachers. Students described how the AVID program supports them in preparing for college as the teachers help students conduct the college search, complete the application process, and find scholarship money. Students also reported that the AVID teacher was accessible and that they could talk about anything, indicating that the AVID teachers are involved with students, respect them, and do not give up on them.

The strength of Valley's AVID program was a result of the **stability of leadership** within the AVID program as well as a culture of **trust** between students and AVID leadership. The AVID leadership had been running the program for several years, and with each year, students who remained in the program had deeper connections and stronger relationships with AVID staff.

We highlight AVID in Valley, which was identified as a lower value-added school, because it appeared to be a practice that helped increase students' ownership and responsibility for their academic success. This case demonstrates how some effective practices were observed in lower value-added schools, even if they only existed in pockets. The voluntary nature and size of the AVID program (e.g., students and parents sign a contract and can be "exited" if they do not meet expectations), make effective scaling-in to the whole school a significant challenge.

6. *Valley: The Challenge*

Description

Teachers in Valley use mandatory tutoring or in-school suspension to hold students accountable for completing assignments and improving their test performance. The approach was not universally successful, however. Some teachers continued to struggle with getting students to turn in homework, while others only assigned a minimal amount. Teachers had the option of assigning behavioral infractions if students did not show up for mandatory tutoring, but one department attempted to shift responsibility for completing work or getting assistance toward the student by turning mandatory tutoring into "the Valley Challenge." The Challenge's goal is to use competition instead of coercion so that they come to tutoring on their own accord. The Challenge was for students to compete on a quiz, knowing they must come for extra help if they earned less than 81 percent. The administration is tracking the results of this more voluntary program and will compare

it to the existing mandatory tutoring program..

How the Valley Challenge Supported Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility

The Valley Challenge illustrates how the academic department in Valley worked to support students in challenging themselves to exceed the minimum requirements. By using competition instead of coercion, the teachers pushed the ownership of academic success back onto students, including their belief about who is in charge of academic outcomes. While this approach was just beginning at our time in the school (making the evidence of its success limited), the department hoped it would increase attendance at tutorials, increase engagement during class as students were motivated to achieve higher scores in the competition, and increase individual student's beliefs that they can master challenging objectives.

The unity of this department in attempting a new approach to tutorials demonstrates a **shared vision** among staff and a sense of **collective teacher efficacy**. After reflecting on current tutorial practices, this department recognized the limitation of their current approach, brainstormed possible solutions, and collectively attempted the Valley Challenge.

The Challenge was also supported by **trust** between leadership and faculty**.** In breaking away from the school-wide tutorial plan, this department needed the trust of school leadership to allow them to experiment and improve student outcomes. Without this trust, the department may never have launched the Challenge.

Finally, The Challenge was facilitated by **positive relationships and a sense of care**. The Challenge's goal was to avoid the perception of punishing students if they did not attend tutoring (e.g., by having to spend lunch with an assistant principal), but about encouraging teachers to develop relationships and trust with students so that they wanted to learn. This departmental team tried to improve student learning by focusing first on changing standard practices in ways that turn supported activities that had a negative connotation into ones about which students would feel more positive.

7. *Mountainside: Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC)*

Description

Nationwide, the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) prepares students at over 3,000 high schools for leadership roles, making them aware of their rights, responsibilities, and privileges as American citizens. It encourages graduation from high school. The curriculum teaches students self-discipline, self-confidence, and leadership skills. The program is conducted by instructors who are retired Navy, Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard officers and enlisted personnel.

The JROTC program relies on a curriculum called the Leadership Education Training (LET) program, which is generated by the national ROTC administration. This curriculum emphasizes citizenship, character and leadership development, and community service. The curriculum instructs cadets in the elements of leadership, drill instruction and ceremonies, military customs,

uniform inspections, physical fitness training, marksmanship, and military history. Community service activities, drill competition, field trips, marksmanship training, and other extracurricular activities augment classroom instruction. The military provides uniforms, textbooks, training aids, and a substantial portion of instructors' salaries. The commander at Mountainside reported that part of the success of the JROTC program was its authentic curriculum, which teaches life skills, including such topics as financial planning. He reported that the more in tune the curriculum was with students' lived experiences, the more engaged they became.

How JROTC Supported Increasing Student Ownership and Responsibility

As evidenced by student shadowing observations of students' class days, the JROTC program at Mountainside contributed to increased cognitive and behavioral **engagement** through student ownership and responsibility. JROTC participants reported that the program supported academic achievement by focusing acutely on the literacy of incoming freshmen. This provided integrated support and accountability for students. Thus, a**cademic press** is intrinsic in the program and is supported by the Leadership Education Training (LET) curriculum and culture of responsibility and high expectations. The program at Mountainside has a high (98%) rate of graduation, post-secondary enrollment (50%), and military attachment (25%).

Further, the program illustrated the enactment of school-wide facilitating conditions in the service of encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning, albeit for only a portion of the student body. For example, it fostered **care and relationships between students and teachers**. The program helped students feel connected to the school and provide a positive sense of family cohesion. One participant reported that the program helped establish relationships with students, adding that s/he "serves as a mentor for a number of kids in my program." Care and relationships between students and teachers were also evident in the commendation and celebration of student academic achievement through JROTC promotion ceremonies. While parental involvement was reportedly low in the school as a whole, the JROTC program successfully engaged parents through activities such as promotion ceremonies and field trips.

The JROTC program included various types of systemic performance **accountability**. The program set clear expectations for student performance. In addition, adults in the JROTC program were held accountable for performance. One JROTC instructor reported that s/he is evaluated by the principal, as well as ROTC cadet command (an external entity), and that s/he faces significant potential consequences from federal inspections. Lastly, students were held accountable. JROTC students and instructors reported that JROTC cadets are held to high standards within the program, including standards of dress, conduct, and academic success.

Further, Mountainside has had a JROTC program for over five decades, a sign of the program's **stability**. In the 2011-12 school year, it served an estimated 16 percent of students, many of whom were recruited from the JROTC program in the sole feeder middle school. Alumni of the program have gone on to universities and careers in the armed forces. The commander and the instructors **share a common vision** for the program, partially by virtue of its affiliation with the national program. The goal of the national program is "to prepare cadets to meet the challenges and demands in the 21st Century."

Next Steps.

Increasing student ownership and responsibility for their academic success holds promise for raising student achievement in high schools, based both on the case study research presented here and prior research that links the elements of student ownership and responsibility with student outcomes.[45] Further, teaching students the academic behaviors and engagement strategies to take responsibility for their learning (e.g., going to class, doing homework, organizing materials, studying) can lead to more positive outcomes in college.[46] Drawing on intensive case studies of four high schools in Fort Worth, Texas, this report underscores the importance of student ownership and responsibility. While most of the findings on student ownership and responsibility come from one higher value-added school, evidence exists in the second higher value-added school of other levers to increase academic press and rigor. Furthermore, in the lower value-added schools pockets of practices that contribute to student ownership and responsibility exist. While increasing student ownership and responsibility may not be easy, requiring that teachers and other adults in the school provide careful scaffolding, it is noteworthy that Lakeside – one of the highest poverty schools in the district – achieved success amid resource constrained conditions.

Further, the findings from these case studies suggest that the higher value-added schools effectively raised student achievement for traditionally underserved students (i.e., economically disadvantaged, racial minority, and ELL) by developing, integrating, and aligning school-wide goals and processes that cut across the essential components of effective schools, serving as the glue to hold them together. We refer to these processes as school-wide facilitating conditions. To be clear, it was not the school's focus on increasing student ownership and responsibility alone that explained the achievement results, but the fact that this focus was integrated and sustained by the school-wide facilitating conditions and built on a set of foundational elements that facilitated school-wide efforts.

The next stage of the Center's work involves bringing district leaders, school leaders, and teachers together to collaborate in the design and implementation of an innovation to increase students' ownership and responsibility for their own academic success in other high schools in the district. In this way, the central findings from this report will define a design challenge to guide a collaborative design process. A District Innovation Design Team (DIDT) will develop an innovation based on the research findings presented in this report, the broader research literature on effective practices, and a needs assessment on what aspects of student ownership and responsibility are currently in place in other high schools. And School Innovation Design Teams (SIDTs) will pilot, adapt, and implement the designed innovation in three low value-added schools. As part of this process, schools themselves will also be studying and evaluating the impact with an eye to scaling up. The researchers in the Center will then study and evaluate this implementation, examine its impact, and assess the district's ability to support and scale-up the designed interventions to additional high schools.

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[5] The same teachers who participated in the interviews were also observed. We used an observational tool called the CLASS-S (Pianta.et al., 2011) to assess teacher-student interactions in the classroom. We observed and coded the following domains and dimensions using the CLASS-S framework: emotional support (positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for adolescent behavior), classroom organization (behavior management, productivity, instructional learning formats), and instructional support in the classroom (content understanding, analysis and problem solving, quality of feedback, and instructional dialogue), and student engagement.

[6] In late spring 2012, we conducted a total of 37 student shadowing observations where a member of the research team accompanied a student through his or her school day. Every five minutes, the researcher recorded data in an electronic shadowing log detailing the class period, precise time, course subject, track, location, the teacher's expectation of the student (what is the student supposed to be doing), the academic nature of that task (i.e., related to content or not), nature of student engagement in that task (active engagement, passive engagement, not engaged), and if the student was off-task the behavior the student in engaging in, and with whom the student was interacting.

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