THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
SCALING UP
EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Teachers, Hiring, and Human Resource Practices: The Human Capital Story in 25 of New York City's Effective Small High Schools

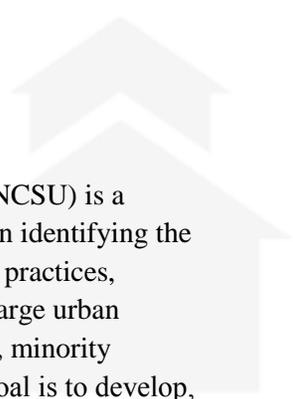William H. Marinell │ Adriana R. Villavicencio

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The National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools (NCSU) is a national research and development center that focuses on identifying the combination of essential components and the programs, practices, processes and policies that make some high schools in large urban districts particularly effective with low income students, minority students, and English language learners. The Center's goal is to develop, implement, and test new processes that other districts will be able to use to scale up effective practices within the context of their own goals and unique circumstances. Led by Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, our partners include The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Florida State University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Georgia State University, and the Education Development Center.

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Teachers, Hiring, and Human Resource Practices:

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Draft Report

Introduction

The New York City (NYC) public school system's effort to create new small high schools, which began in 2002, is among the more intensive reforms to create effective high schools. Thus, it stands to reason that the educational community might look to NYC as a place to address questions, such as: what types of high schools are working, for which students, and under what circumstances? While researchers have studied NYC's new small high schools extensively, it is only recently that studies have found compelling evidence of their effectiveness. In 2010, MDRC found that NYC's limited-unscreened small high schools of choice[1] (SSCs) were more successful, as a group, than other high schools at raising students' achievement and attainment. This investigation addressed a question of fundamental importance – whether these new small high schools were working – and set the stage for a series of subsequent studies that seek to understand how these schools were created and operated and, ultimately, what accounts for their success.

In this paper, we report preliminary findings from a larger, exploratory study on which the Research Alliance for NYC Schools (Research Alliance) and MDRC are collaborating. The larger study examines the relationship between the characteristics of NYC's SSCs and their impacts on student outcomes. This paper is based on the first component of this study – a series of fieldwork interviews with teachers and principals responsible for creating and operating a small subgroup of 25 effective SSCs. The following research questions guide this fieldwork:

1. What features of SSCs do the professionals who created, facilitated and operate them think are most responsible for their success?

2. What do these informants believe were the most important, actionable steps taken to produce effective SSCs?

3. What do these informants report were the most serious obstacles that they confronted while

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[1] It is important to note that the term "choice" in the name of these schools distinguishes them from other NYC schools that have selective application procedures which screen students. See MDRC's full report for additional details about the students that SSCs serve and for an overview of NYC's system-wide high school choice process.

creating effective SSCs? Do informants report having overcome these obstacles and, if so, how did they do so?

This paper focus on only one facet of the findings from our fieldwork: the human capital story related to SSCs' teachers. More specifically, we discuss participants' perceptions about how and why teachers were critical to their schools' success, the processes that these schools used to recruit and screen their teachers, and the challenges that teachers reported encountering in their work in SSCs.

Our decision to focus on the human capital story within these SSCs stems from the fact that respondents consistently reported that teachers were a critical component to their schools' success, and that their schools' recruitment and hiring practices were among the important actionable steps that practitioners took while creating and operating these effective SSCs. Moreover, in explaining their theories about how and why their teachers were central to their schools' success, respondents described the capacities that teachers in their schools needed in order to be successful and how their schools' screening and hiring practices attempted to identify candidates who were well-suited for their schools. While there was general consensus among respondents about the importance of teachers to SSCs' success, respondents also described a number of challenges associated with teaching in this new type of high school. Respondents worried that these challenges would result in their teachers burning out, which might, in the process, compromise their schools' success.

This study is certainly not the first to present analysis from interviews with teachers and principals in NYC's small high schools. What makes this study unique is that it uses estimates of schools' impacts on student outcomes (from MDRC's analysis) to identify a sample of effective schools for further scrutiny; thus, we begin this research confident that we stand to learn important lessons from practitioners who have been on the ground, creating and operating schools that have achieved a certain degree of success. In addition to the value of respondents' accounts of how their schools work, the findings from this analysis inform the theories that we examine in subsequent components of the study and the tools we use to investigate them.

Background on Small High Schools

The advent of the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) effort to create new small high schools of choice and to close historically underperforming schools has been well documented in the literature (e.g., Ancess & Allen, 2006; Quint, Smith, Unterman, & Moedano, 2010), as have the motivations for launching this initiative (Siskin, 2010). In NYC, creating new, small high schools is one strategy among many in the DOE's larger initiative to strengthen the city's high school education. As the Research Alliance summarized in a recent paper (Research Alliance, 2010), over the past eight years, and with support from private foundations and federal, state, and local resources, the DOE has embarked on a multi-pronged effort to improve the city's high schools via a number of policy initiatives, restructurings, and reforms, including: phasing out persistently low-achieving high schools and replacing them with smaller schools; creating a choice-based high school application and student assignment process; opening multiple pathways to graduation and post-secondary professional opportunities; providing schools with increased autonomy over decisions regarding their budgets and sources of support; and employing a wide range of intermediary organizations to guide high school creation and improvement efforts.

These reforms have changed the landscape of NYC high schools. In the 2008-09 school year, there were approximately 425 high schools serving students in 32 districts throughout the 5 NYC boroughs; this is in contrast to the 224 schools that existed in 2002.[2] Since 2002, the DOE has closed over 20 large underperforming high schools and opened over 200 smaller schools.

The potential success of small high schools hinges on a number of theories, including the creation of personalized learning environments, the benefits of focusing a school's curriculum on a particular theme that lends itself to real-world learning, and the role that partnerships with external organizations can play in helping strengthen a school's operation (e.g., Cotton, 2001; Clinchy, 2003; Feinberg, 1999; Meier, 1995; Raywid, 1998; Sizer, 1984; Vander Ark & Wagner, 2000). As Quint et al. (2010) documented, the architects of NYC's small high school movement intended for these schools to put three principles into practice: academic rigor for students, or coursework that helped prepare students for post-graduate college, work, and life; personalized learning environments, such that teachers, students, and administrators were all familiar with, and able to support, one another; and partnerships with external organizations, that supported schools' work and brought additional resources to these new small schools.

A number of researchers (e.g., Fancsali et al., 2010; Foley, 2010; Foley, Klinge, & Reisner, 2007; Kahne, Sporte, & Easton, 2005) have examined how new small high schools were created and supported in their early years of existence and whether they are associated with improved student outcomes. MDRC's recent impact analysis (2010) finds that NYC's students who attend limited-unscreened small high schools of choice (the SSCs to which we refer earlier) outperform a comparison set of students who attend other types of NYC high schools. Specifically, MDRC's analysis revealed that SSCs were responsible for having significant positive effects on students' course-taking behavior, attendance, and graduation rates. By the end of students' ninth grade year, SSC enrollees had earned an average of 11.3 credits, compared to the 10.4 credits earned by control group counterparts. Attending an SSC increased students' overall graduation rates to 69%, as compared with a 62% graduation for students in comparison high schools.

The small high schools, or SSCs, on which we focus here serve students in grades 9-12 and opened between 2002 and 2006. As MDRC's (2010) full report describes, these schools serve approximately 100 students per grade, and were intended to serve the NYC public school system's most disadvantaged students and are located in some of NYC's most impoverished neighborhoods. As limited-unscreened schools, they do not impose selective entrance requirements, though they can require that students be "known" to the school, which usually consists of students attending an open-house or some school-sponsored event prior to high school choice process assigns students to schools. SSCs also give preference to students who are located in the schools' geographic region of the city.

Research Methods

School Sample and Participants

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[2] Based on a Research Alliance calculation using JForm data from the DOE, http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/stats/Register/default.htm.

This study capitalizes on MDRC's rigorous impact analysis to identify a sample of schools. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe the research design underlying MDRC's impact analysis at length; interested readers should consult the technical appendices of the full report (MDRC, 2010). Using the results from the impact analysis, MDRC researchers identified a sub-group of 30 SSCs that had: 1) consistently large, positive impacts on student performance (as measured by graduation rates and on-track indicators); and 2) sample sizes that were sufficient to produce estimates with an acceptable level of statistical precision. Thus, these 30 SSCs were the schools in which we had the highest degree of confidence were responsible for positive local average treatment effects[3] in the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years.

Using this list of 30 SSCs, Research Alliance researchers set out to recruit 25 of the 30 schools during the spring of 2011. During this process, principals at two SSCs declined to participate because of time limitations; principals at three SSCs were unresponsive to multiple efforts to recruit their schools to participate in the study (including in-person visits to the schools). Because our goal was to recruit 25 of the 30 schools, we did not continue to pursue participation from these three schools.

From within this sample of 25 SSCs, we recruited one school administrator – most typically the schools' current principal – to participate in the study. Subsequently, we requested that the school principal select between 3-5 teachers to participate in a focus group interview. We requested that principals select teachers who had been teaching in the school since it was first opened; if there were not 3-5 teachers who met this criteria, we asked principals to select teachers who had worked at the school for at least three years.

Table 1 presents an overview of our sample of schools and participants. As the Table depicts, the majority of participants are principals and teachers. In one instance (Leadership high school), a principal requested that an Assistant Principal also participate in the administrator interview. In one instance (Plainview), we chose to interview an Assistant Principal rather the principal, as the former had been at the school since its inception (and the principal was a recent hire). In yet one other instance (Mill Creek), the principal declined participation on account of time constraints, but the Assistant Principal agreed to participate. In most schools, principals selected between 3-5 teachers to participate in the focus groups; occasionally, principals selected only 2 teachers. In other instances, principals requested that other school staff (e.g., guidance counselors, etc.) participate in the focus group interviews, usually because these individuals had been at the school since its inception.

Data Collection

We interviewed principals and teachers (and, in several cases, Assistant Principals and other school staff) over a two-month period in the spring of 2011. Data collection involved one 60-minute interview with each administrator (Appendix A) and one 45-minute focus group interview (Appendix B) with 2-5 teachers and school staff in each of the 25 schools. Our interview protocols were semi-structured and sought to ascertain respondents' beliefs about the factors responsible for their schools' success, the challenges they encountered while creating and operating their schools, and the steps they took to overcome these challenges and create effective SSCs.

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[3] Intent to treat estimated effects ranged from 13-77 percentage points on the ninth grade on-track indictor (all effects are statistically significant at the 0.1 level) for these schools.

We hypothesized that these schools' success might be the product of some combination of factors that were related to the SSC theory of action (e.g., these highly personalized learning environment for students) and factors that were more broadly related to effective school operation (e.g., supportive leadership). To minimize the extent to which steered respondents towards attributing their success to factors related to the SSC theory of action, we began the interviews with open-ended questions; we reserved more structured questions about the features aligned with the theory of action behind SSCs for later in the interviews.

Data Analysis

Researchers audio-recorded all of the interviews, which were then transcribed verbatim, and coded using Atlas.ti software. Immediately following each interview, researchers wrote reflection memos in order to form preliminary hypotheses to investigate upon receipt of the transcribed interviews. The research team developed a coding scheme that linked the data to our guiding research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Appendix C for codes); we then tested the comprehensiveness of the coding scheme, and the reliability of our application of it, by having all four members of our research team code a common set of transcripts, discuss the results, and refine our coding scheme and process accordingly.

Table 1: Characteristics of Sample Schools and Fieldwork Participants

Borough	School Pseudonym	Participants	Year of SSCs' operation in which school admin joined	School admin had previous experience on campus	Focus group contained 1 or more participants from schools' inception?	AVG years in current SSC, among focus group participants	Year of schools' inception	
							2002-04	2005-06
Bronx	Leadership	Principal and Assistant Principal; 4 teachers	1st		X	7.25	X	
	East	Principal; 3 teachers and 1 guidance counselor	1st	X	X	6.00	X	
	West	Principal; 3 teachers	1st		X	7.33	X	
	Motivation	Principal; 3 teachers	5th			1.66		X
	Carroll	Principal; 3 teachers	1st		X	6.00		X
	Kentford	Principal; 3 teachers	2nd			5.33	X	
	Community	Principal; 3 teachers	4th			3.00	X	
	Bayview	Principal; 4 teachers	1st	X		5.25	X	
	Riverside University	Principal; 3 teachers	3rd	X		5.33		X
	Rockford	Principal; 2 teachers	1st	X		5.50		X
	South Division	Principal; 5 teachers	1st	X	X	6.00		X
	Better Way	Principal; 5 teachers	1st		X	3.80		X
	Delta	Principal; 3 teachers	2nd	X		5.00	X	
	Fleetwood North	Principal; 3 teachers	1st	X	X	4.33		X
Brooklyn	Parkway North	Principal; 2 teachers	1st	X		3.50		X

	Constitution	Principal; 2 teachers and 1 social worker	5th		X	7.00		X
	Milford	Principal; 3 teachers	5th		X	6.66		X
	Channel Bay	Principal; 1 teacher and 1 guidance counselor	1st	X	X	8.00	X	
	Mill Creek	Assistant Principal; 2 teachers	6th			6.50	X	
	Springside	Principal; 3 teachers	1st			5.66	X	
	Brookside	Principal; 2 teachers	4th			5.50		X
Manhattan	Central	Principal; 4 teachers	1st	X	X	5.00		X
	Memorial	Principal; 3 teachers and 1 technology coordinator	1st	X	X	6.00		X
	Valley	Principal; 4 teachers	1st	X	X	5.25		X
Queens	Plainview	Assistant principal; 3 teachers	1st		X	4.33		X

After a thorough examination of coded data related to each research question, we fleshed out key themes in code narratives that connected the research questions to the evidence present in the data (Merriam, 1998). We wrote analytical memos and created matrices to capture hierarchical relationships between the themes described in the code narratives. We drew on all of these analytical documents in writing this report.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations worth considering while reviewing our findings. First, because this interview study is based on teachers' and principals' self-reports, we cannot claim that the features of SSCs to which our respondents attributed their schools' success are, in fact, the features responsible for their schools' positive impacts on student outcomes. Second, our sample of schools includes schools at different stages of their development. In schools that were created in the early stages of the SSC initiative (i.e., 2002-2004), participants may have found it difficult to recount the details of their schools' creation and early operation given the amount of time that had elapsed before the interviews. On the other hand, with the benefit of hindsight, these participants may have had great insight into how their early decisions had affected the schools' development. Third, due to resource constraints, we were reliant on principals to select participants for the focus group interviews. Thus, it is possible that principals selected individuals who reflected a certain perspective. A final validity concern relates to the potential influence on our findings of previous research on SSCs. Our respondents may have been inclined to attribute their schools' success to aspects of the SSC theory of action. We anticipated this potential bias at the outset of the study and deliberately designed our instruments to minimize this concern.

Findings

Overall, we found that teachers were one of four key factors to which respondents attributed their schools' success. In describing how and why teachers had contributed to their schools' success, respondents highlighted particular skills and capacities of teachers, as well as recruitment and hiring practices that helped their schools secure teachers who were well-matched for their particular school context. While there was general consensus among respondents about the importance of teachers to SSCs' success, participants also described facets of the SSC model that made teaching challenging and which they worried would result in their teachers burning out and, in the process, potentially compromising their schools' success.

This paper focuses on what teachers and principals in 25 effective SSCs told us about the skills and capabilities of the teachers in their schools, through what processes and practices these teachers were recruited and hired, and what challenges they encountered in their work. Before delving into the details of this human capital story, we present a brief overview of the primary factors to which respondents attributed their schools' success. Our objective in doing so is to ground this paper's focus on teachers in participants' accounts of what mattered to their schools' success.

To get at this important question, we asked the following open-ended question of the teachers and principals in this study: *Of all of the things that contribute to making a school work, what are the two or*

three factors that you think are most responsible for this school's success? In response, respondents identified four key features as being responsible for their schools' success: 1) their schools' personalized learning environments; 2) the talents and capabilities of their teachers; 3) their principals' leadership; and 4) the high expectations that school staff had for students, as well as for one another. These four features were *not* the only factors that respondents identified, rather they were the *most commonly* reported across all of the interviews. Table 2 presents the frequency with which teachers and principals identified each of the following four broad factors in response to this open-ended question.

Table 2. The frequency and order of the features that respondents reported were most responsible for their schools' success, in response to a related open-ended interview question

Total number of times that respondents identified these features

	Personalized Learning Environments	Teachers	Principals	Academic Expectations
Teachers (and school staff)	22	11	11	10
Principals (and APs)	17	11	6	5

Number of instances where respondents identified each of these features first

	Personalized Learning Environments	Teachers	Principals	Academic Expectations
Teachers (and school staff)	13	2	3	1
Principals (and APs)	6	7	4	1

Note: teachers (n=25 focus groups of 3-5 teachers and school staff; 75 individuals total); principals and assistant principals (n=26; 23 principals, 3 assistant principals)

It is important to call attention to several aspects of this table in justifying our decision to focus on teachers and the role that participants claimed teachers played in their schools' success. First, as the top panel of Table 2 depicts, second to SSCs' personalized learning environments, teachers were the characteristic of SSCs to which respondents most frequently attributed their schools' success. Less obvious from this table, but which our interview data reveal in detail, is that SSCs' teachers also played an essential role in two of the other features to which respondents attributed their success – their schools' personalized learning environments and the academic expectations that school staff had for students. For instance, it was quite common in our interviews for respondents to begin answering the open-ended question by describing how critical teachers were to the school's success but to clarify, over the course of their response, that they were highlighting the role that teachers played in either creating the school's personalized learning environment or setting high academic expectations. We tallied these types of

responses in the personalized learning environment and high academic expectations categories, respectively. Respondents also identified numerous other ways that teachers contributed their school's success; it is these other types of responses that we tallied in the "Teacher" category. Thus, collectively, across the categories in Table 2, the teachers and principals in these effective SSCs attributed much of their success to teachers. Throughout the remainder of this section, we explore this central finding in greater depth.

Teachers: Their Characteristics and Capacities

In describing how and why they believed that teachers had contributed to their schools' success, respondents highlighted the importance of their teachers having three characteristics: flexibility, leadership, and dedication. In addition, respondents reported that their schools' success was, in part, the result of hiring teachers and school staff who are interested in, and skillful at, building the types of trusting relationships with students that were at the core of their schools' personalized learning environments. Lastly, respondents attributed part of their schools' success to having teachers who believed that, with the right support, all students were capable of succeeding in high school and beyond. We discuss these characteristics and capacities in greater depth below.

One of the primary challenges that SSCs face is that, because they are small, there are fewer staff to cover the range of subjects and tasks required of a high school. Given this, respondents explained, part of succeeding as an SSC hinges on finding teachers who are flexible – willing to take on multiple roles, sometimes outside their areas of expertise, versatile across a variety of subject areas, and willing to reinvent themselves to fit the needs of their school. A teacher at Kentford high illustrated this point when she remarked:

…a lot of our strong teachers will switch subjects and earn extra certifications for the sake of helping kids pass. Martha is a social studies teacher, has that certification, but through staying after school and learning the algebra curriculum, she was able to assist with that subject. I came in as social studies and then got my English certification, so now I help with the two social studies tests and the English test. Manny is mostly a global teacher, but he will always help out with U.S. History prep. We have a flute teacher who's a real whiz at math and science, and was a math minor, so she now helps out with the math and the science Regent's prep classes. A lot of it is flexibility… being able to put our best people in as many positions as possible.

In other cases, teachers and principals described less cross-subject contributions and more how teachers were willing to attend and support different types of school events, from after-school awards ceremonies that recognize students to field trips to fun activities that help students blow off steam, such as open-mic nights and other performance opportunities.

Also related to SSCs' small size is the need for a relatively large proportion of a school's teachers to assume leadership roles in order to help the school function. At larger high schools, the size of the teaching staff often exceeds the number of leadership opportunities for teachers, such as subject area department chairs, parent coordinators, leaders of data inquiry groups, etc. Not so, respondents claimed, at

many of these smaller high schools. A teacher at Memorial attributed part of her school's success to teachers' willingness to fulfill leadership roles that would not be expected of them at larger schools. This teacher explained:

There's a lot of leadership among the teachers [at Memorial]. The curriculum work groups are all led by a teacher. There's an opportunity for almost every teacher to be a leader of some kind of group or committee in some way. I'm the 9th grade team leader. The 9th grade Spanish teacher leads the curriculum work group. There's all these different areas where teachers can kind of step up and be the leaders.

In these small high schools, it was typical for teachers to take on not only roles outside of their designated subject areas, but also leadership responsibilities commonly held by other types of staff (e.g., assistant principals) in large high schools.

Respondents also lauded, and noted the importance of, their teachers' dedication to their work, their school and, most importantly, to their students. Principals and teachers alike used the phrase "above and beyond" to describe the efforts of the teaching staff in these SSCs. For instance, to illustrate his staff's dedication, one principal conveyed the number of occasions he has to say to teachers as he is leaving for the day, "Look, you can't stay too late." Other principals and teachers characterized staff as believing that teaching was "more than just a job" and as being willing to "do whatever it takes" to help students' achieve their academic objectives. A teacher at Valley high school summarized this sentiment in the following way:

I think the success of [this school] is driven by the staff here. Many uncompensated hours working with kids in this school and staying in school. I mean, there's a huge commitment of teachers to come in early and stay late and give up their lunch periods with not a consideration of compensation.

We heard this type of sentiment in many of the 25 schools – that part of what contributed to their success was teachers' unfailing commitment to doing whatever it took to serve their students, even if that meant working many more hours than those specified in typical teacher contracts.

In underscoring the importance of teachers' dedication to their schools' success, principals and teachers often noted the particular importance of this trait to small high schools. As was the case with teachers' flexibility, dedication seemed part and parcel to the work of effective small high schools. A teacher at Fleetwood North summarized this point succinctly. She identified her colleagues' dedication and their willingness to collaborate and to remain open-minded about various aspects of the schools' operation as the keys to Fleetwood's success. When pressed to elaborate on the importance of these particular characteristics, she responded:

Because it's a small school and there are so few people to work with, I think it's important to have teachers who cooperate and compromise and take on more than what they need to do on paper.

Teachers and principals also noted the importance of dedication given the student populations that SSCs serve. Many of their students not only struggled academically, but also faced severe hardships at home. Some respondents noted that it simply wasn't possible to be successful with their students without putting in an effort that transcended their job descriptions and formal responsibilities. While respondents were consistent in their assertions about the benefits of having dedicated teachers, they simultaneously noted that the exertion required to operate an effective SSC was taxing and, potentially, untenable, which we discuss in greater depth below.

Respondents also reported that their teachers' (and principals') efforts to create personalized learning environment (PLE) in their schools was of fundamental importance to their schools' success. Further, respondents asserted that functional PLEs – those that support both students' academic progress *and* their social/emotional well-being – were the product of teachers and administrators with shared, equally high expectations for students, and with the right skills and capabilities, working together to create and maintain an elaborate, deliberate process for supporting students' development. Thus, to create these learning environments, respondents reported, it was critical that schools hire teachers who: 1) believed that all students, with the right support, were capable of graduating and succeeding; and 2) who possessed the interpersonal skills (and desire) needed to create and maintain the type of personalized learning environment that supported students' success.

Recruiting and Hiring Teachers

In describing how their SSCs secured teachers who were well-suited for their schools, respondents spoke about the importance of beginning with a core group of teachers who epitomized the expectations and capabilities required for the unique responsibilities of working in small high schools. Further, they noted the importance of specific practices and policies related to hiring that helped their schools identify teachers who were well suited for their schools, in particular, and for small high schools more generally. Below, we describe some of the recruitment strategies and hiring processes to which respondents attributed their ability to secure the teachers who they believed, in turn, were integral to their schools' success.

In transitioning to a discussion of how these SSCs obtained their teachers (below), it seems important to underscore that respondents' accounts emphasized the importance of getting teachers who are well-suited *for working in their schools and in SSCs* (and for establishing processes that identifying and recruit these teachers), rather than simply attracting the best and the brightest. The following excerpt from the principal of Fleetwood North illustrates this point:

Hiring the right people for the right job [was the most important factor in this school's success], and just to elaborate: I know some dynamic, academic teachers in big school environments who couldn't survive a day in here. And I have a few weak, growing teachers who couldn't survive in a big setting, but, here, they succeed because they connect to kids on a daily basis. They're not the strongest instructors, but they connect to kids. The right person for the job, in the right environment, is key. If you start with four or five teachers and one is detrimental, you won't succeed… The staff is what makes the school successful.

Below, we turn our attention to the recruitment and hiring processes that SSCs employed in their quest to find teachers with the right skills and capabilities to succeed in these schools.

Establishing Hiring Committees

In describing their schools' hiring processes, the vast majority of respondents depicted processes that granted hiring responsibilities to a committee. The composition of the hiring committees differed across the schools, though most contained some combination of teachers, parents, students and, on occasion, guidance staff. Interestingly, administrators at many schools deliberately either limited their role in the hiring process or, in several instances, excluded themselves from the hiring process altogether. Principals spoke at length about the benefits of the committee approach to hiring. They noted the importance of deferring to the individuals (teachers) with the strongest knowledge of the content for the open positions and of letting teachers choose the individuals with whom they would be working closely. For instance, the principal at Constitution high school reported:

I put a lot of emphasis, or, I put a lot of the teacher hiring into the hands of the teachers. We have a pretty rigorous process to make sure that we're getting the right fit person for our school… The department leader, who is a teacher, is in charge of the hire. They put together a hiring committee of teachers. They run interviews, demo lessons. We ask the kids in the classes that are experiencing the demo lessons to rate the candidates. The teachers rate the candidates, as well. The department leaders usually come to me like, 'Okay we have a couple of really top candidates, so we want you to meet them. We want your input on this… This is the person we want to hire, and this is why we want to hire this person.'

I feel like that is a really good system because [the teachers] are going to have to work together. They're going have to be colleagues. They want to make sure that they're getting high quality teachers who are going to be a good fit for the school, a good fit with the students, and who are going to be able to work in a collaborative environment. I feel like it also puts an added piece of accountability onto the person that's being hired because they know that they've been hired by their colleagues.

Principals also noted that committee hiring processes sent important signals to candidates, among them that teachers were expected to play an integral role in the school's operation. The principal and assistant principal at Leadership high school emphasized this point, noting:

Assistant Principal: We're the last [people to meet the candidates]. They meet the hiring committee, which is composed of teachers, students, and sometimes parents when they're available. The teachers have their questions, the students have their questions, because it's not just hiring and filling a position, it's seeing if this is a good fit for our community.

Principal: And when people are applying for a job and being interviewed, the hiring committee's really clear that this is not a teach-your-four-courses, five-courses-and-go-home kind of thing. This is a highly collaborative school. You work in grade levels, you work in departments, you work in committees, and [the committee] will ask, 'What else can you do? What else are you interested in doing here, because you

have to [contribute]?' They're very insistent. I think, by setting up the hiring committee model, that expectation starts before [candidates] walk in the door.

Assistant Principal: Yeah, and we don't even get to meet [the candidates] until the end, until the hiring committee says, 'We approve of this person.' And then we just – it's a formality after that. We're not going to go against the voice of our staff, who we trust, and our students. So it, kind of, starts there. Right off the bat when [the candidates are] not meeting the principal the first or the second time, that's where, I think, they get the sense of collaboration.

The hiring committee at Channel Bay exhibited a similar level of attention in their committee hiring process. Teachers conduct roundtable interviews in which they ask candidates nine questions they have developed and refined over the years. Students played a role at both Bayview and Riverside University high schools both as participants on the committee and in identifying candidates to hire.

Developing Practices That Identify Teachers Who are Well-suited for SSCs

In addition to their schools' hiring processes, respondents described deliberate practices that they believed helped them identify teachers who would be effective in their schools. The details of these practices differed widely across schools. Respondents spoke in depth about how these practices provided them with critical information about candidates' suitability for their school. For instance, at Memorial, the hiring committee conducted a "fish bowl" interview with a group of candidates simultaneously. In this exercise, Memorial's hiring committee asks candidates to reason through difficult hypothetical scenarios that they might encounter in their work while committee members focus on different aspects of candidates' responses: their interpersonal skills, tendency to reflect, and their composure when in the company of their competitors for the position. Beyond the appropriateness of candidates' responses, this exercise provided committee members with insight into the candidates' receptivity to being observed, scrutinized, and transparent about their thinking.

Similarly, while many schools required candidates to teach demonstration lessons, some schools had modified this exercise to provide additional information about candidates' potential match with their SSC. For example, Fleetwood North required candidates to teach demo lessons in front of a classroom comprised of the schools' most-challenging-to-manage students. At Kentford high school, the hiring committee provided candidates with feedback on their demonstration lesson, discussed the feedback with the candidates, then gave candidates time to gather their thoughts before re-teaching the demonstration lesson to another group of students. In making hiring decisions, the hiring committee at Kentford put as much, or more, weight on candidates' ability to accept and incorporate feedback than on the quality of the candidate's initial demonstration lesson. Community high school engaged in a similar exercise, though it was centered around a lesson plan – rather than a demonstration lesson – that the principal requested and reviewed in advance of the interview. Springside asked candidates to create an impromptu lesson plan with another teacher in order to provide insight into a candidate's willingness to collaborate.

Respondents described numerous other practices that helped them identify teachers who were well-suited for their school. For instance, Channel Bay orchestrated a seemingly unplanned (to the candidate),

informal conversation between candidates and parents that was actually a formal part of the hiring process meant to gauge candidates' attitudes towards parents and their ability to form relationships with students' families, which were of fundamental importance to the school's personalized learning environment. At Kentford, the hiring committee encouraged candidates to spend unstructured time in the school to observe its daily operations. This approach, the staff at Kentford reasoned, would provide candidates with an accurate window into the school's strengths and weaknesses, so there would not be any surprises (and/or potential disappointment) upon a new teacher's arrival to the school.

Establishing Policies That Screen Out Certain Teachers

In addition to these customized hiring practices, respondents in some SSCs noted the importance of establishing policies that screen out particular types of teachers, namely new teachers. While articulated by respondents at only a handful of schools in the sample, the strength of respondents' testimony seemed to warrant its mention. For instance, in response to a probe inquiring about the sources of her teachers' success, the principal at Memorial reported, "We have, and we've tried to get, very, very few first-year teachers. In the course of a year, maybe one or two [teachers] are new to the profession, straight off the boat." Similarly, when asked to describe an ideal teacher candidate, the principal at Valley high school remarked, "I like someone who's been teaching for two or three years, so they're still cheap but they've screwed up somewhere else and they've learned their lessons." Lastly, at West, a teacher described his school's deliberate movement away from recruiting new teachers after having sought them out in the school's early years. He reported:

In our first year, we opened with only one teacher who had any previous classroom teaching experience. The rest of us were all brand new first year teachers. That's because it's easier to find brand new, first-year teachers who are super-hard working and who are committed to all the crazy, heavy lifting that is involved in opening a school. A lot of experienced people aren't really interested in that job.

As we've gotten older, we've shifted the focus from looking for people who are going to work crazy, crazy, crazy hours to people who are really smart, really articulate, and really experienced – particularly, experienced working with a population similar to ours: New York City kids, or city kids…diverse student populations.

While respondents in only a few schools described avoiding hiring any new teachers, their comments exemplify the type of deliberate decision-making that many of these principals (and other staff) practiced while considering which teachers to recruit and hire for their schools.

The Challenges of Teaching in These SSCs

As we describe above, our teacher and principal respondents attributed their schools' success, in part, to the characteristics and capacities of their teachers and to the recruitment and hiring practices that helped

them identify teachers who could succeed in their particular schools. At the same time, however, respondents anoted that the very nature of teaching in SSCs presented teachers – and, hence, these schools – with some of their greatest challenges.

Respondents in 10 schools reported that the greatest organizational challenge their schools faced during their first years of operation was related to staff members having to take on responsibilities outside of their content specialties, skill sets, and previous experiences. At start-up, because schools did not have enough students to justify hiring teachers in non-core subjects (e.g., foreign language, music, art, and technology), core-subject teachers had to take on these non-core courses while also teaching their primary assignments. Some founding teachers reported that, not only did they juggle multiple subjects, they were also involved in other school-wide activities, including writing curriculum, scheduling students, coaching teams, and starting special clubs. One teacher at Plainview high school described:

My first year here, I wore so many different hats. Not only was I a regular English teacher, but I also did the [literacy program]. I was a [literacy program] teacher as well as the on-level English teacher… I was also the technology teacher, and I really had no experience whatsoever with that. We also had advisories, so I was also the advisory teacher. You had to do lessons in that also. I had four or five different preps. Now I'm just English. I just have sophomore and junior [classes] – so much easier in planning. The first year was so rough because everyone had to wear so many different hats… That was very challenging.

A few teachers also recalled the difficulty of being the sole teacher in a particular department and being wholly responsible for creating that department's curriculum. Having to take on numerous responsibilities in and outside the classroom while also being a subject department head proved difficult for many of the teachers who started during their school's first year. These conditions were especially challenging for relatively new teachers who had little experience teaching, let alone running a department or other aspects of the school's operation.

The small number of staff members and the expectation that teachers take on multiple and shifting responsibilities continued to be a challenge well beyond SSCs' first years of operation. In more than half the schools, staff members reported that it continued to be challenging to fulfill all of the requirements of a regular-sized high school with many fewer staff members. They reported that wearing multiple hats was fatiguing because of the volume and range of responsibilities. Thus, not only did teachers talk about doing more but also about handling very different types of tasks. One teacher at Rockford high school said:

In the larger school, those tasks would be easier to delegate. People could handle a smaller variety of tasks, even though the load may be the same, but their focus would be narrowed. I think that that's one of the things in a small school. The Assistant Principal of Instruction is not only supporting teachers, but she's also the school accountant. That's really challenging when you have so many jobs for one person.

Respondents acknowledged that, while their teachers' flexibility and willingness to take on roles outside of their expertise was critical to their schools' success, it also presented challenges that could eventually take a toll on their teaching staff.

Respondents also noted that working in SSCs was fatiguing for reasons beyond the expectation that they

shoulder multiple responsibilities. Some respondents reported that the highly personalized nature of SSCs' learning environments (another aspect of these schools that participants felt was critical to their schools' success) required a level of emotional investment that, while rewarding, was difficult to sustain.

According to some teachers, the nature of teaching in SSCs led to their feeling burned-out or unable to sustain the effort required to be successful in this context. Some worried that expecting teachers to consistently go above and beyond might result in a de facto situation where teachers at SSCs were all relatively young and inexperienced. For example, a few principals noted that their maturing teachers were unable, or unwilling, to commit the same amount of time to the school as they had earlier in their careers. Milford's principal described the maturation of his own staff and what that might mean for the school:

Principal: Going forward? I think the interesting challenge I've considered… is that we have a lot of teachers in the kind of that four, five, six, seven year teaching. So they're young. They live in Green Point, and Lynnsburg, and they pay too much for their rent. But it's a cool place to live. You know because we can go out after work and have a good time. But as they get older and they get married and they have families and the children and the child care expenses becomes less desirable place to live. [Chuckles] And they want to move to Long Island, New Jersey, Staten Island, somewhere more affordable. These things happen.

Interviewer: So a maturing teacher population might go away?

Principal: Well no, not that they'll go away. That they'll be less inclined to go above and beyond.

Teachers' dedication and willingness to go "above and beyond" allowed them to provide students with the kind of support the students might not receive elsewhere. This principal's concerns, however, raise important questions about the sustainability of these schools' success. If the success of the schools in this sample was partially contingent upon teachers' willingness to put in extra work, then it may become difficult to sustain that success if teachers' changing lifestyles and competing responsibilities no longer permit that level of commitment.

Discussion

Over the past decade, urban school systems throughout the country have attempted numerous and diverse efforts to strengthen public high schools. It is imperative to learn as much as possible from the successes and failures of these efforts if we are to improve the prospects of under-served high school students. The NYC public school system provides a unique opportunity to examine how a series of related reforms has influenced the system's public high schools and the students who attend them. NYC serves as a particularly instructive place to learn about theme-based, small high schools, which were the cornerstone of the system's initiative to strengthen its high schools. By interviewing the teachers and principals responsible for creating and operating 25 effective small high schools, we sought to ascertain

practitioners' accounts of what made these schools successful, what challenges they encountered in their early operation, and what key decisions they made along the way that they believe are related to their success. We found that these individuals attributed much of their success to the characteristics and capacities of their teachers. Further, respondents described their schools' recruitment and hiring procedures as among their schools' important operational steps. While this research is exploratory, these findings raise questions, and have potential implications, for policy, practice, and future research.

First, respondents in the 25 effective SSCs in our sample attributed part of their schools' success to the characteristics, capacities, and efforts of their teachers. This finding, in itself, is no surprise. What does seem notable, however, is the extent to which respondents highlighted the importance of having teachers with certain dispositions – such as dedication and flexibility –rather than with some of the hard skills that we commonly associate with effective teaching (e.g., subject-specific or pedagogical knowledge). This is not to say that the latter capacities were unimportant, but rather that teaching in this particular model of high school appeared to entail particular responsibilities – and place unique demands on teachers – for which hard skills, alone, might not suffice. Further, respondents described at length how operating their schools' personalized learning environment (which they also identified as being critical to their schools' success) required having staff who cared about students, believed that all students were capable of success, and had the interpersonal skills (and desire) to forge deep, supportive relationships with students and with students' families.

These findings may have implications for programs that prepare teachers to enter districts with small high school models in place. Specifically, these findings may suggest the importance of supplementing traditional teacher preparation curricula (which is commonly divided between training in subject-specific content and teaching pedagogy) with practical exposure to how schools operate as organizations and how prospective teachers might be called to contribute in different school contexts. Further, programs that prepare teachers to enter small high schools may be well advised to consider the advantages of deliberate training in establishing constructive relationships with students and students' families and in having prospective teachers confront and reflect on their beliefs and biases about students' academic capabilities. Lastly, given the flexibility that teaching in small high schools seems to require, preparation programs might consider the merits of establishing expectations around subject-area minors, such as is typical in undergraduate institutions. Under this model, graduates of preparation programs might receive certification in a particular core subject area (e.g., math) but taken enough coursework or training to receive a minor in a subject of importance to schools (e.g., Special Education, adolescent development, language acquisition, Spanish, etc.).

Our findings also reveal that respondents believed that their schools' deliberate recruitment and hiring procedures played an important role in their ability to secure teachers who were well-matched to their school and, thus, positioned to be successful in these particular contexts. By extension, this finding suggests that school-based hiring systems that allow schools to design and customize hiring processes may be an important infrastructural component to have in place in advance of scaling-up efforts to create or expand similar high school models. On a related point, district-level administrators might pay particular attention to respondents' emphasis about the importance of hiring a capable core of teachers at the very outset of a new school's creation. Policymakers in districts that are preparing to implement small high school models might think about whether their current operating procedures will afford schools this possibility and, if not, what the potential consequences of not doing so might be.

Respondents in these 25 SSCs openly acknowledged that their schools demanded more of teachers than many comparable public high schools. In describing the efforts of their teachers, respondents either directly acknowledged, or implied, that their teachers contributed a level of effort beyond what is specified in most collectively-bargained agreements between district administrations and teachers' unions. While these particular schools appeared to have established operating norms and informal agreements about these expectations with teachers, school systems/districts interested in endorsing the small high school model would be well advised to consider whether comparable levels of dedication are possible under the terms of their current contract with teachers.

On a related point, this research also highlights the trade-offs or potential costs of the high demands and heavy workloads that SSCs placed on teachers; in the process, our findings raise questions about the sustainability of these schools' effectiveness. Interestingly, a few of the schools in our sample described an intentional turn away from the "above and beyond" mentality in favor of an ethos that emphasized balance and recognized the roles and responsibilities teachers have outside the school building. Future research should explore whether and, if so, how NYC's small high schools are able to maintain their initial success. Further, researchers should investigate how these schools manage various organizational transitions as they emerge from the start-up phase and enter a more mature phase of their existence.

In subsequent components of the larger study, our research team (in collaboration with MDRC) will use additional sources of data (from both extant and original teacher surveys) to examine associations between schools' impact on student outcomes and particular features of these schools. In the process, we hope to extend and refine our understanding about the factors that contributed to SSCs' success and to gather important descriptive information about how these schools differ from other NYC high schools. Much of this analysis will rely on various measures of SSCs' context – such as SSCs' personalized learning environments, the strength of schools' partnerships with external organizations, etc. – that we are in the process of creating using data from an original survey of 1,786 teachers in 85 SSCs (including teachers from 23 of the 25 schools that participated in the fieldwork study on which this paper is focused). The findings from these subsequent components of the larger study may corroborate, extend, or qualify what we report here.

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Appendix A: **School Administrator Interview Protocol**

Statement to Subjects

A recent study by an independent research organization, MDRC, found that New York City's small high schools that were created since 2002 were more effective than other high schools at increasing students' achievement and attainment. The Research Alliance and MDRC are collaborating on an extension of this study that seeks to learn why small high schools are effective.

We're speaking with you because your school has had a positive impact on student outcomes in recent years. Thus, your perspective on how this school operates is critical for helping us understand this school's success. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. The questions will focus on your impressions of various aspects of your school, the areas in which you think your school is succeeding or struggling, the challenges that the school has faced, and where you think the school is headed in the future.

The Research Alliance will use the information you provide for research purposes only. We will keep your responses confidential and will not attribute any comments to any specific individuals or schools. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. You may also skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

Do you have any questions?

<u>Background</u>

To get started, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your background and about how and why you became the principal of this school…

1. First, how long have you been the principal at this school?

   - Were you involved with the creation of the school?

2. What were you doing before your current role as principal of this school?

   - Prior principal experience? If so, where?

3. Please tell me a bit about how you became the principal of this school?

    -   Motivation: why this school?

    -   What factors influenced your decision to come to this school?

        ○ Did the school's being new, small, or theme-based influence your decision at all? If
          so, how? Please describe…

Ask the following questions if principal was present when school first opened…

*You mentioned that you were you involved with the planning of this school prior to its enrolling
students… I'd like to ask you a bit more about that…*

4. First, please describe how you were involved with the start-up of this school…

    -   How did this school secure its location and building?

    -   Were any key decisions made during this start-up period that have had a profound impact on
        the school's success? Please describe.

    -   What were the major challenges the school faced during this period?

        ○   Whether, how, by whom, and to what end were these challenges addressed?

Overall Impressions of the school

*Later in the interview, I'm going to be asking you specific questions about different features of this
school, but before that, I have some questions about what makes this school effective.*

5. First, does anything set this school apart from other public high schools in New York City?

    -   From other small high schools? (Probe for details and examples)

    -   Probe for comparisons to other schools that principal is familiar with.

How does this school measure its success?

6. Of all of the things that contribute to making a school work, what are the 2 or 3 factors you think are

most responsible for the successes that you just described?

- Probe for examples if not offered: how do these factors influence the school's success?

- Is there evidence that these are the most important factors or is this a hunch?, e.g., teachers tell me this matters

- Have these always been the most important factors or are they recent developments?

  - Other important factors in the past?

- Probe for process and steps: *I'm interested in understanding the process that led to these factors contributing to the school's success…*

  - What had to happen? What decisions were made? What made this possible? Was this difficult?

<u>Human Resources</u>

I'd like to ask you some questions about your teachers and your HR policies…

7. Please describe the hiring process at this school.

- How do you recruit teachers?

- Who screens applications? Who makes decisions about which teachers to hire?

- What are you looking for when you hire a teacher to work at this school?

- What kind of teachers seem to do well in this school?

- Does the union influence this process?

8. How are teachers evaluated? How are decisions about terminating teachers or not renewing teachers' contracts made at this school?

9. Please describe the teachers in this school…

Listen for…

  - Mix of veterans and novice teachers?

  - Primary strengths of the teaching staff?

  - Areas for improvement?

        ○   Probe for: role teacher characteristics play in contributing to the school's success?

Probe: Is there anything about the way the teachers in this school work together that plays a critical role in this school's success?

        ○   Time in their schedules to work together?

        ○   School norms that promote teachers working together?

Learning Environment

Let's turn our attention to the learning environment in this school.

10. Are there aspects of the learning environment that have a big impact, positive or negative, on the school's success?

Listen for: Safety/discipline; Relationship between staff and students; Academic expectations; Student engagement

- How important are these characteristics relative to those already described?

11. What is the theme of this school? How, if at all, does the theme influence the way this school operates?

- Influence community partnerships? Curriculum?

Intermediaries/Community Partnerships

13. Does the school have any other relationships, past or present, with external partners that play a big role in the school's success?

- Which ones?
  - Networks, intermediary organizations, community-based organizations, others?
- What role have these organizations played?

14. Does this school share the same building with other small high schools?

  - If so: How, if at all, does the presence of this school(s) in the same building affect your school's success?

Challenges

15. What are the biggest challenges facing this school today?

  - Looking ahead, what major challenges, if any, do you anticipate this school facing in the future?

  - How do you think these challenges will be addressed?

Follow-up on impressions of the school

Earlier in the interview, I asked you about your impressions of the school and about the factors that you think are responsible for this school's relative success…

16. Has talking about specific aspects of this school prompted any other thoughts about the factors most responsible for this school's success?

  - How important are these relative to the factors mentioned earlier?

17. In closing, is there anything else that I should have asked you about your school, or that you'd like to share, to help us understand this small school operates and why, as a group, small schools have been successful?

Appendix B: Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Interview code (e.g., WM01):_____

School: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewees: _____

Statement to Subjects

A recent study by an independent research organization, MDRC, found that New York City's small high schools that were created since 2002 were more effective than other high schools at increasing students' achievement and attainment. The Research Alliance and MDRC are collaborating on an extension of this study that seeks to learn why small high schools are effective.

We're speaking with you because your school has had a positive impact on student outcomes in recent years. Thus, your perspective on how this school operates is critical for helping us understand this school's success. This focus group will take approximately 45 minutes and will be audio recorded. The questions will focus on your impressions of various aspects of this school and what makes this school successful.

The Research Alliance will use the information you provide for research purposes only. We will keep your responses confidential and will not attribute any comments to any specific individuals or schools. We also ask that you not share the responses of your colleagues with anyone outside this room. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. You may also skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Conceptualizing Essential Components of Effective
High Schools

SCALING UP
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Conference Paper | February 2012 **29**

<u>Motivation, Start-up and Professional Culture</u>

To begin, I'd like to ask you each to describe how you came to this school and what it's like to teach here…

1. First, please tell me each of your grades, subjects, and how long have you been teaching at this school?

   ○ Were any of you full-time teachers prior to coming to this school? If so, where and for how long?

2. Next, please tell me a bit about how you came to teach at this school?

   ○ What factors influenced your decision to come to this school?

     ▪ Did the school's being new, small, or theme-based influence your decision at all? If so, how? Please describe…

3. Were any of you involved with the planning of the school prior to its enrolling students?

   ○ If yes, please briefly describe how you were involved…

   ○ Please tell me about any major challenges the school faced during this start-up period…

     ▪ Were these challenges addressed?

     ▪ If so, how and by whom?

     ▪ How successfully were these efforts?

4. *I'm interested in learning what it's like to teach at this school…* To begin, please describe how, if at all, teachers work together at this school…

   ○ When and in what capacity?

     ▪ Formal or informal collaborations? Time set aside in the schedule for teachers to collaborate?

     ▪ Focus: instructional, non-academic (e.g. students' social wellbeing), or both

     ▪ School norms re: autonomy vs. collaboration. Are classrooms open? Do teachers regularly observe and critique each others' work?

Factors Responsible for School's Success

As I mentioned at the beginning of the interview, our collaborators at MDRC have identified this school as a school that has been relatively effective. This does not necessarily mean that the school is succeeding in every regard (though that may be the case), but rather that the school has been successful overall in recent years. Next, I want to ask you to share your thoughts about what makes this school successful at preparing and graduating students.

5. Of all of the things that contribute to making a school work, what 2 or 3 factors do you think are most responsible for this school's success?

    ○   Probe for examples about how these factors influence the school's success.

    ○   Have these always been the most important factors or are they recent developments?

Put bulleted table tent on the interview table so participants can see it…

This next question has several parts, so we've created this bulleted table tent to help you keep track of the components of the question… When new small high schools were being created, the theory behind why they would be effective is that they would provide: 1) personalized learning environments that enabled close relationships between teachers and students; 2) they would emphasize high academic expectations for all students; 3) they would have a curriculum focused on a particular theme and that provided students with a real-world learning opportunities; and 4) they would have partnerships with external organizations to support the school's objectives and enhance teachers' and students' development…

6. How does your school compare to this general description of small high schools?

    ○   Are there any notable differences between your schools and this hypothetical description?

    ○   Is one or several of these characteristics more important than the others?

    ○   How important are these factors at influencing the school's success relative to the factors you identified early (e.g., in response to Question 5)?

Challenges and Personal Plans

7. What are the current challenges that this school is facing today?

    ○   What challenges, if any, do you foresee this school confronting in the future?

    ○   How do you think these current and future challenges will be addressed?

Note: May need to focus teachers on challenges unique to this school, as opposed to challenges facing all schools. I.E., may need to quickly clarify and refocuses if teachers start identifying system- or profession-wide challenges…

Follow-up on impressions of the school

Earlier in the interview, I asked you about your impressions of the school and about the factors that you think are responsible for this school's relative success…

8. Has talking about specific aspects of this school prompted any other thoughts about the factors most responsible for this school's success?

    ○   **If participants provide additional thoughts:** How important are these relative to the factors mentioned earlier?

9. In closing, is there anything else that I should have asked you about your school, or that you'd like to share, to help us understand how this small school operates and why it has been successful?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix C: Code List

CODE NAME	CATEGORY / CODE DESCRIPTION
MOTIVATION	What brought individual to the school/what factors influenced their decision to come to the school
EXPERIENCE	Individual's experience prior to being in current role at the school
STARTUP-DECISIONS	Key decisions made during start-up period that have had a profound impact on school's success
STARTUP-PARTICIPATION	Nature of individual's participation in start-up process
STARTUP-CHALLENGES	Challenges school faced during start-up process
STARTUP- SUCCESS	Whether and how challenges during start-up process were successfully addressed
COLLABORATION	Degree to which teachers work together
STRUCTURES	Descriptions of organizational structures/systems critical to school's work
RAPPORT	Presence of rapport and/or collegiality among staff
AUTONOMY	Teacher and administrator valuation of independence or autonomy within the school
MEASURE-SUCCESS	Ways in which the school defines or measures success
SUCCESS-STRUCTURES	Presence of systems or structures that facilitate school's success
SUCCESS-TEACHERS	Teacher qualities responsible for school's success

SUCCESS-PD	Teacher development opportunities linked to school's success
SUCCESS-AUTONOMY	Teacher autonomy/ independence linked to school's success
SUCCESS-PERSONALIZATION	Personalized learning environment linked to school's success
SUCCESS-ACA EXPECTATIONS	High expectations around students' academic performance linked to school's success
SUCCESS-COLLABORATION	Collaboration among teachers linked to school's success
SUCCESS-EXT PARTNERS	Partnerships with external organizations linked to school's success
SUCCESS-LEAD	Actions taken by, or qualities of past or current leaders linked to school's success
SUCCESS-TEACH&LEARN	Teaching and curriculum linked to school's success
SUCCESS-OTHER	School's success due to factors other than those captured by the other "SUCCESS-X" codes
MODEL-PERSONALIZATION	Personalized environment consistent with/differs from TOA
MODEL-ACA EXPECTATIONS	Emphasis on high academic expectations for all students consistent with/differs from TOA
MODEL-THEME	Curriculum focused on specific theme and that provides students with real-world learning opportunities consistent with/differs from TOA
MODEL-PARTNER	Partnerships with external organizations to support the school's objectives and enhance teachers' and students' development consistent with/differs from TOA

CHALL-CURRENT	Current challenges faced by school
CHALL-FUTURE	Challenges anticipated for future
CHALL-ACTIONS	Actions taken or that individuals thinks will be taken to address challenges
HR – EVALUATION	How teachers are evaluated and how decisions about terminating teachers are made
HR – TEACHER HIRE	What principal looks for when hiring teachers
HR – TEACHER SUCCESS	Descriptions of teachers that do well in the school
HR – TEACHER DESCRIPTION	Description of characteristics of the teaching staff
HR-PROCESS	Processes for hiring teachers
LE - DISCIPLINE	Learning Environment linked to Safety/Discipline
LE - ACA EXPECTATIONS	Learning Environment linked to Academic expectations
LE - PERSONALIZATION	Learning Environment linked to Relationship between staff and students
LE - THEME	Learning Environment linked to school's theme
LE-TEACH&LEARN	Learning Environment influenced by curriculum and pedagogy
EXT PARTNERS	Relationships with external partners that play a big role in the school's success (past or present)
BUILDING	How presence of other schools in same building affects school
DATA-USA	Descriptions of how school uses data

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NETWORK	Descriptions of schools work/relationship with network
STUDENT POP	Descriptions of schools' student population