High Schools That Work:
A Case Study of Implementation in Three Schools

Executive Summary

Drawing on interview and survey data collected over a two-year period, this case study describes school staff members' understanding and enactment of High Schools That Work (HSTW) in three schools. The case includes a brief overview of the reform's main principles and theory of action, a description of how the enactment process unfolded, and a discussion of the factors that influenced that process.

HSTW aims to improve student achievement by creating "a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement in high schools" (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2005, p. 2). The reform calls for high academic standards, rigorous curriculum, and increased graduation requirements. Teachers are expected to adopt instructional and assessment practices that hold all students to the same high standards and provide them with extra help and opportunities to revise their work until those standards are met. Student engagement is central to the reform's instructional approach. HSTW is based on the premise that for students to be engaged, they must develop strong relationships with teachers, and see the purpose and relevance of their academic learning beyond high school. To those ends, the reform calls for creation of an advisory system and closer linkages between academic and career studies. Support for each of these components is provided in the form of professional development (both on- and off-site), participation in a network of schools implementing the reform, and on-site technical assistance from an HSTW provider liaison.[1]

While schools implementing the design are expected to adopt all of these components, they have considerable latitude in determining the sequence, prioritization, and specific strategies for doing so. School change in the HSTW design relies on teacher engagement, empowerment, and collaboration. Teachers are organized into issue-driven groups, called focus teams. Focus teams plan, lead, and evaluate the implementation of schoolwide organizational and instructional change. The goal is to build consensus around the need to change, then to empower teachers to enact changes deemed necessary. Through ongoing teacher collaboration and reflection, a culture of continuous improvement emerges.

All three schools made efforts to adopt a more rigorous curriculum and increase graduation requirements. Beyond that, the flexibility that is built into the HSTW design allowed them to follow different implementation pathways. Each school emphasized different aspects or components of the reform. One school focused on extra help for students, another created a ninth grade academy, and the third implemented a student advisory system. The decision about which aspects of the reform to prioritize was influenced by district policy, the presence of other reforms, and availability of resources. Most significantly, these decisions were generally made by school leaders without significant teacher input. As a result, we found considerable variation in teacher engagement and depth of implementation, both within and across schools. Teachers assigned to focus teams whose work was a priority were highly supportive of the reform effort and most

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[1] We use the term "provider liaison" to refer to the individual employed by HSTW who oversaw the reform effort in the school. These HSTW staff members coordinated and supplied guidance, technical assistance, and general implementation support.

inclined to report that HSTW had influenced their practice. Those assigned to teams whose work was less of a priority felt less empowered and saw less value in the reform.

Across schools, the degree to which the enactment of reform components precipitated substantive changes in professional practice was a function of a number of factors, including teachers' perceptions of the value of HSTW; emergence of informal leadership and communication networks around the reform; and support from the provider,[2] district, and school leadership.

For teachers and administrators who come to general consensus about a vision for change for their schools and are willing to invest time and effort in realizing that vision, HSTW offers a participatory structure and a wealth of professional expertise than can significantly advance reform efforts. Our data suggest that under the right conditions, the reform can empower teachers; engender a deep commitment to reform; and facilitate improvements in instruction, professional collaboration, and teacher-student relationships. The challenge, it seems, is one of scale. The tendency of school leaders to formulate a reform agenda without broad teacher input appeared to conflict with the reform's stated goal of engaging and empowering teachers to plan and carry out reform. Additionally, while teachers who received direct professional development from HSTW reported that it was of high quality, few mechanisms were in place at the school level to allow teachers to share what they learned with colleagues. School and district leaders can be proactive in addressing these challenges by encouraging widespread input and participation in the reform process, and by working closely with the provider to develop school-level supports for instructional change.

I. Introduction

Each year more high schools are identified as underperforming due to failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress. To raise achievement, new performance expectations require teachers, schools, and districts to move beyond aligning curriculum, reallocating time, and other conventional approaches. In response, they increasingly rely on external school reform organizations. However, the challenge of making improvements in schools, and in high schools in particular, is well documented (e.g., Siskin, 2003).

To better understand this challenge, researchers at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) examined the interactions between reforms and 15 high schools. That larger project is particularly important because it makes the organizations and their impacts on schools simultaneous objects of investigation. To conduct this research, data were collected as part of a two-year, 15-school study. Reforms in this CPRE research project include: High Schools That Work, First Things First, Ramp-Up to Literacy, the Penn Literacy Network, and SchoolNet. These reforms were selected as representative of the types of external assistance found in high schools during previous CPRE research (see Gross & Goertz, 2005). Based on this research, we sought out reforms working in the areas of whole school reform, literacy instruction, and data use. After a scan of the environment, reforms that appeared to have promising strategies were recruited for participation in this study.

This document grows out of that larger research project and is a case study that examines the progress of one reform in a sample of three schools at different points of implementation.[3] The case study presented here focuses on the work of High Schools That Work (HSTW) and draws from interview and survey data collected in three high schools and districts in different regions of the country, and from HSTW staff during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years. This research, including the case study presented here, is *not* intended to be

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[2] We use the term "provider" to refer to the external school reform organizations that offer reforms to schools and districts, such as HSTW.

[3] Case studies for each of the other four reforms can be found by visiting www.cpre.org.

an evaluation of either the schools or the reforms. In contrast to evaluation studies, this case study is part of a research project intended to examine the design components of various reforms, the ways in which those components were understood and enacted at the school level, the reasons for those understandings and enactments, and the degree and type of variation in enactment observed across schools. While readers may be interested in placing this case study within a larger research context, that is beyond the scope of this case study. Instead, we aim to provide readers interested in HSTW with a descriptive exploration of how the reform was enacted in a small number of schools, the factors that shaped the enactment process, and some questions or considerations that that may be gleaned from the story of these schools.

Methods. The case study presented here is based on a sample of schools at different points in the HSTW implementation process. It draws from interview and survey data collected in three high schools and districts across the country, and from provider staff during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years. At our request, HSTW staff identified three schools with which they had collaborated for one to five years. Two of the schools were in their first (HSTW1) or second (HSTW2) year of implementation at the time of our first visit. A third "mature" school (HSTW3) had worked with the reform for more than five years. This sampling strategy allowed us to examine the reform at different points in the implementation process. Data collected from early implementing schools (HSTW1 and HSTW2) provided an in-depth look at the implementation process as it unfolded, and as it was experienced by school staff. Because this process was the primary focus of our study, two of these schools were visited three times during the study period (at the beginning and end of the 2004-2005 school year and at the end of the 2005-2006 school year). The inclusion of a mature school (HSTW3) served as a point of comparison, offering some perspective of how understanding and use of the reform differed in a school that had worked with the reform for a longer period of time. This school was visited once during the 2005-2006 school year. The collection of data from HSTW1 and HSTW2 over a two-year period allowed us to observe some overlap in the implementation process across schools. In other words, HSTW1 at our second point of data collection (spring 2005) was at the same implementation stage as HSTW2 at our third data collection point (spring 2006). However, due to variation in local context, the reform assumed very different forms in the two schools. As such, our ability to make comparisons between schools at similar points in the implementation process was limited.

During each visit, interviews were conducted with teaching and administrative staff at the school. Staff members with both central and peripheral involvement with the reform were targeted. In addition, we interviewed district staff members in each of the school districts and staff from the HSTW. In total, our findings are based on approximately 136 semi-structured interviews lasting between 30 and 60 minutes each. A total of 92 individuals were interviewed, including 5 school administrators, 69 teachers, 7 individuals in other roles such as staff developer or instructional coach, 6 district staff members, and 5 HSTW representatives.

In addition, at all three schools a survey was conducted with all teaching staff in the 2004-2005 academic year. The survey provides data about both the enactment of components of the reform program and communication among staff in each of the schools. In the two schools at the earlier stages of reform implementation, the survey was administered a second time, at the end of the 2005-2006 school year. Our findings in this case study are based on 194 surveys from spring 2005 and 148 surveys from spring 2006, with school response rates ranging from 75%-88%.

This case study uses a mixed-method design. Qualitative data were analyzed iteratively using a set of codes derived from existing research literature, as well as our previous and ongoing data collection and analysis. Simultaneously, survey data were analyzed in order to provide schoolwide measures of reform use, teacher familiarity, and comfort with the reform, as well as perceptions of school change, and communication patterns among high school faculties. Using both the qualitative and quantitative data, case studies were developed for each school. These findings were then aggregated, with analysis focused on factors explaining patterns and/or variation in implementation. It is these aggregate descriptions and analyses that are presented here.

Study schools. The schools in our sample varied in size, urbanicity, and student demographics. School size ranged from 575 students at HSTW3 to roughly 1,500 students at HSTW2. HSTW2 and HSTW3 were predominantly White, while about one quarter of the student body at HSTW1 was African American. All three schools served working- or middle-class communities. The percentage of students eligible to receive free- or reduced-priced lunch ranged from 19% at HSTW3 to 37% at HSTW1. All three schools made Adequate Yearly Progress for the 2004-2005 school year. HSTW1 and HSTW3 are located in medium-sized cities, while HSTW2 is rural. While the variation in size and student characteristics was helpful in terms of seeing schools in different contexts, it is worth noting that school staff did not often cite these characteristics as a factor influencing the implementation of the reform.

Limitations. The research presented here is not intended as an evaluation of HSTW as a reform or of the three high schools. Evaluations require very different measures, samples, and methods. In contrast, this research used sampling and data collection methods designed to illuminate a deep understanding of teacher and administrator experience with the reform and their sense of the reform's progress in the three schools. As a result, references to "change" or work related to the reform are based not on external measures such as classroom observations or student achievement, but instead reflect the perceptions of school, district, and provider staff as expressed through interview and survey data. In addition, our findings heavily emphasize the experience of those schools that are relatively early in their implementation processes. Finally, our sample was designed to allow us to observe the implementation process in a variety of local contexts. The schools selected do not constitute a representative sample of all HSTW schools. While we hope that the findings and implications of this study are more broadly applicable, the enactment of HSTW in these three schools was profoundly influenced by local context, and does not necessarily reflect the reform's implementation in other schools.

Overview. This case study is divided into five sections. The first section offers a brief overview of the reform that focuses on core concepts and components, theory of action, and provider intent. Further details about the reform are provided in related sections, such as professional development or technical assistance. The second describes the enactment of reform components or practices from the perspective of school staff. In many instances local enactment diverged in important ways from provider intent. (This divergence is central to our overall findings, and is explained in section four.) The third section documents individual and organizational outcomes of implementation as perceived by school staff. Analysis of district and provider perspectives, where appropriate, are presented as a counterpoint to school-level perceptions. Section four analyzes factors explaining patterns or variation in implementation across schools, focusing on factors influencing (1) the formation of the reform agenda in each school as it relates to HSTW, and (2) the enactment and support of that agenda. These factors explain much of the observed variation across schools, as well as apparent disconnects between reform enactment and provider intent. Section five highlights some implications of our findings.

II. Reform Overview

HSTW aims to improve student achievement by creating "a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement in high schools" (SREB, 2005, p. 2). The reform calls for high academic standards, rigorous curriculum, and increased graduation requirements. Teachers are expected to adopt instructional and assessment practices that hold all students to the same high standards, providing them with extra help and opportunities to revise their work until those standards are met. Student engagement is central to the reform's instructional approach. HSTW is based on the premise that for students to be engaged, they must develop strong relationships with teachers and see the purpose and relevance of their academic learning beyond high school. To those ends, the reform calls for creation of an advisory system and closer linkages between academic and career studies. These principles are embodied in ten Key Practices that are at the heart of the HSTW design: high expectations, program of study, academic studies, career/technical studies, work-based

learning, teachers working together, students actively engaged, guidance, extra help, and culture of continuous improvement. Support for each of these practices is provided in the form of professional development (both on- and off-site), participation in a network of schools implementing the design, and on-site technical assistance from an HSTW liaison.[4] (For further details on these components, see Sections III-C and III-D.)

While schools implementing the reform are expected to adopt all of these components, they have considerable latitude in determining the sequence, prioritization, and specific strategies for doing so. School change in the HSTW design relies on teacher engagement, empowerment, and collaboration. Once a school has entered into a contractual relationship with HSTW, it participates in a Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) composed of internal and external evaluation. The TAV is designed to establish the basis for the school's improvement plan (SIP). School staff are then organized into issue-driven groups, called focus teams. Focus teams plan, lead, and evaluate the implementation of schoolwide organizational and instructional change. The goal is to build consensus around the need to change, then to empower teachers to enact changes deemed necessary. Through ongoing teacher collaboration and reflection, a culture of continuous improvement emerges. (For further details on this process, please see Sections III-B and V-A.)

Once the reform agenda has been established, the focus teams begin the work of implementing reform components aligned with Key Practices. For instance, increasing graduation requirements is a clear strategy for raising expectations. Establishing student advisory systems, family outreach programs, or small learning communities supports the goal of improving student engagement, providing guidance, and offering extra support where needed. Depending on the specific component or practice a school decides to adopt, HSTW connects it with aligned professional development opportunities, including attendance at conferences, site visits to schools that have successfully adopted the practices in question, or direct training by HSTW or affiliated staff. Provider liaisons support implementation at the school level, working closely with principals and other leaders of the reform effort, responding to the information and resource needs of school staff, and disseminating information about resources and professional development opportunities available to schools. Schools monitor their progress in implementation through feedback from the provider liaison and teachers, both informally and through annual surveys. In addition, schools are expected to review student performance data to identify needs and challenges, and to implement new programs or practices as needed.

Like most reforms, HSTW has evolved over time. As a result, different cohorts of schools have experienced different types of support. For example, over the past two years the provider has focused on building leadership capacity, particularly at the school level. These efforts have focused on both the role of principals and the importance of shared decision-making through the establishment of leadership teams. Among the study schools, however, participation in leadership professional development was limited.

III. Enactment

This section explores teacher and administrator perceptions of the process through which HSTW was adopted, enacted, and supported at the school level. It focuses on seven aspects of enactment: teacher awareness of HSTW; participation in reform activities; the amount and type of professional development provided; support offered by school, district, or provider staff; monitoring of the implementation process; primary components implemented at each school; and school-level adaptations to the reform. In some instances, school-level enactment diverged significantly from provider intent. This divergence is summarized in Section III-G. Factors that explain variation in enactment—both across schools and from the reform's intent—are discussed in Section V.

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[4] For a more detailed description of HSTW Key Practices, see Appendix A.

A. Awareness

For HSTW to partner with a school, at least 85% of staff members must vote in favor of participation. From the perspective of the provider, then, all teachers should at least be aware of the initiative *prior* to implementation. In our three schools, however, the decision to partner with HSTW was carried out by a small minority of the schools' population, if not by the principal alone. This apparent shortcut to adoption had implications for teacher participation, as discussed in Section III-B.

While it appears that many teachers were not well informed about the design *prior* to adoption, overall awareness increased rapidly thereafter. With varying degrees of support from district offices, all staff at each study school were provided with a broad overview of the HSTW design soon after the contract was negotiated. Whether they were in favor of the reform or not, teachers knew they were in a HSTW school, and could offer some description of what that meant. Most teachers readily concurred that HSTW was about increasing expectations for all students, and ensuring that all students are successful. Beyond that, there was less agreement about what exactly HSTW entailed. (For more detail, see Section IV-A.)

Teachers appeared to get the majority of their information about the reform through their own experience attending conferences, making site visits, and participating in other professional development, and through informal communication with colleagues. All schools seemed to have sufficient resources and opportunities to allow interested teachers to attend these professional development activities. However, our quantitative data indicate that while the proportion of respondents that reported attending HSTW professional development increased each year that a school participated in the reform, there were still large portions of the faculty (i.e., 50% or more) who had not attended any training.

B. Participation

HSTW operates on the theory that "change—no matter how positive the outcome—cannot be imposed from above. Those who feel the impact of change must be involved from the beginning" (Southern Regional Education Board, n.d.a, n.p.) To that end, the design aims to engage all teachers in reflecting on the school's strengths and challenges, creating a reform agenda, participating in professional development needed to implement the agenda, and evaluating whether steps taken have been effective. The primary vehicle for engaging teachers in this process is focus teams. Typically organized around HSTW Key Practices, focus teams involve all teachers in the school, and are charged with developing and implementing action plans within their respective domains. The goals of the focus teams are two-fold. First, they set and carry out the reform agenda for the school. Second, they involve all teachers in the reform process in order to increase buy-in and support.

Among the three HSTW schools included in our sample, two formed focus teams during the first year of implementation, while a third created grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). At the third school, PLC activities included periodic teacher meetings and professional development focused on instructional practices and dissemination of information about HSTW. All teachers participated in regular meetings with these groups. At the very least, superficial participation in HSTW spread across the entire school in all three schools. Higher degrees of teacher involvement with the reform were less consistent, however, especially in schools that were newer to the reform. Some focus teams appeared to function at a high level. Teachers reported that meetings were well-organized and well-attended, and that their team made concrete progress developing and implementing action plans. Other teams struggled, with teachers frustrated about lack of progress, lack of commitment from team members, or resistance to the team's work from school administrators.

In general, it appeared that the inconsistency in focus team function (and thus teacher engagement) was related to the school-level roll out strategy. At HSTW1 and HSTW2, it seemed that rather than being shaped by the focus teams themselves, the agenda for reform was determined prior to the formation of the teams. Focus teams whose work centered on high-priority agenda items thrived, while others were marginalized. At HSTW1, for example, curriculum reforms and the establishment of an advisory program were the top items on the school's agenda. Teachers involved with those two focus teams generally reported high levels of team functioning, strong teacher support for the reform, and a sense of empowerment. Teachers on the other teams were more ambivalent about their work; a handful described them as a waste of their time. A similar pattern was evident at HSTW2, where PLCs were organized by grade level and the ninth grade academy was the highest reform priority. Teachers involved in the academy reported that their PLC functioned cohesively and supported HSTW, while others suggested that the remaining three PLC's languished and were unpopular with the faculty. By the time of our second visit to HSTW2, perceptions of PLCs had improved among some faculty members who were previously critical, attributable primarily to changes in school leadership.

It is unclear whether the focus teams that thrived did so primarily because of their centrality to the reform effort (and the increased status that went along with it), because they were intentionally staffed with strong teachers, or some combination of the two. What is clear is that the roll out process in these two schools varied from the intent of the reform. Rather than engendering teacher buy-in through the establishment of a reform agenda, the teams were a product of a reform agenda that had already been established and seemed to empower certain groups while marginalizing others. In describing teacher participation and engagement in the reform, provider liaisons did not appear to recognize this pattern, suggesting simply that all teachers were involved in the reform by way of focus teams or PLCs. There was, however, a more general acknowledgment of resistance among some teachers.

While its focus teams were formed several years prior (and had since been reorganized), it should be noted that focus team engagement at HSTW3 did not seem to follow this pattern. Within each team there appeared to be variation in teacher engagement, but the focus teams seemed to carry roughly equal influence. During our site visit, there was a general sense that the focus teams were too large and needed to be reorganized, but there was no evidence that some teams were more central to the reform than others. It was unclear whether the school had faced such challenges when it first adopted the reform.

Survey respondents at all three schools reported that they were either "involved" or "very involved" in HSTW. At the two schools where the survey was administered twice, the level of overall involvement dropped somewhat in the second year. Fewer people stated that they were "very involved" at the time of the second administration. This reflects a trend similar to what we found at the mature school where the majority of respondents (66%) stated that they were "involved" as opposed to "very involved" (18%), and parallels the differentiated engagement of focus teams described before. Superficial or limited involvement appeared to be widespread, while deeper engagement with the reform was more narrowly concentrated among a minority of teachers.

C. Professional Development

In the HSTW reform, professional development and networking across schools are the primary means through which teachers are prepared to make changes in school organization, culture, and instruction. Once teachers have clarified the need for change in their school (via their own evaluation and the technical assistance visit), the next step involves learning about the potential strategies that can be utilized to facilitate improvement. While HSTW has a number of qualities and goals that it upholds as characteristic of successful schools, it is flexible regarding the manner in which schools achieve those goals. HSTW's professional development structure is a best-practice model. It has a large network of individuals who provide training on a variety of popular instructional strategies. Examples of HSTW professional development attended by teachers

in our study schools included workshops on cross-curricular literacy strategies, project-based learning, work with disadvantaged populations, and establishment of small learning communities and an advisory system.

HSTW professional development is delivered primarily through off-site visits to model schools or attendance at national or regional conferences. "Model schools" are those identified by the provider as having had success implementing a particular aspect of the HSTW design, or those that have made significant improvements in school outcome measures such as a student achievement. Provider liaisons identified professional development opportunities for the study schools, and often made specific recommendations for schools that teams of teachers should visit.

In the study schools, opportunities to participate in HSTW trainings were widespread and generally voluntary. All teachers were offered the chance to attend conferences or training sessions, and some were encouraged to attend by administrators. District and school administrators reported identifying individuals for specific professional development, and supported all participating teachers by providing release time and covering travel and registration expenses. At all three schools, a specific individual took responsibility for disseminating information about professional development opportunities. In two of the three schools this role was subsumed under the duties of the Site Coordinator (discussed further in Section III-D), while in the third, a teacher served as proxy for the principal.

Teachers who attended HSTW professional development were expected to implement and share what they learned. Provider liaisons suggested that their schools institute model classrooms for sharing and modeling instructional strategies, but there appeared to be little professional development or support in establishing this process. All three schools faced the challenge of spreading and institutionalizing practices or techniques covered in off-site professional development. At HSTW1 and HSTW2, teachers were expected to share what they learned with their colleagues, but there were few formal mechanisms in place to facilitate the process. A model classroom was in place formally at HSTW1, though teachers did not appear to make frequent use of it. At HSTW2, the model classroom was more informal. At both schools, teachers for model classrooms were identified by the administration as highly skilled, progressive teachers whose practices were consistent with HSTW. However, practices modeled in those classrooms were not necessarily linked to specific HSTW professional development.

HSTW3 did not institute a model classroom, but instead had an in-house professional development center. According to the provider liaison, the center ensured that groups of teachers were exposed to some common "best practice" instructional strategies. While not linked to specific HSTW conferences or professional development, the center supported or reinforced some of the practices emphasized therein.

Teachers were mixed in their assessment of the value and usefulness of HSTW training. Not surprisingly, teachers at HSTW1 and HSTW2 who participated in professional development tended to be more heavily involved in reform efforts. They offered a positive appraisal, and suggested that they had incorporated what they had learned into their instructional practice. Those who were not central to the schools' reform efforts were more critical, questioning the value of the training and its impact on practice. (For evidence of impact on teaching practice, see Section IV-C.)

Visits to other HSTW schools appeared to be a particularly useful form of professional development. For instance, after receiving a grant to create PLCs, staff from HSTW2 visited another HSTW school (recommended by the provider liaison) that had already been through the process. Staff from that school then visited HSTW2 later in the school year, serving as advisers as the school developed themes for its PLCs. In the end, the themes for PLCs at HSTW2 closely resembled those of the school they had visited.

D. Technical Assistance and Support

Technical assistance (TA) and support fell into two general categories: TA offered by provider liaisons and local support provided by school or district staff.

Provider technical assistance. Schools that enter into a contractual relationship with HSTW receive a package of support services that includes a provider liaison, an orientation workshop, several technical assistance visits, and biannual student assessments. Typically, the role of the provider liaison is to facilitate the conversation about setting the reform agenda, respond to local problems or requests for information, refer school staff to HSTW professional development or other resources, and monitor school progress (discussed in Section III-E).

In addition to the liaison, HSTW provides its schools with access to a vast network of practitioners. This network includes not only providers of professional development but (and possibly more importantly) teachers and leaders in other HSTW schools. School staff are encouraged to visit and interact with other schools in the HSTW network that may be implementing similar interventions. This sharing of practitioner knowledge is one of the primary sources of additional support available to HSTW schools.

Provider liaisons reported similarity across all schools in the provision of basic support services. These included informing teachers and administrators about HSTW professional development opportunities, providing on-site support several days each year, and providing remote support by phone or email as needed.[5] In keeping with the reform design, the amount of on-site support declined after the first year in all three schools, a change noted by some teachers.

Provider interviews suggested that the specific role of liaisons varied depending on school leadership. Where school leaders were most active and engaged, liaisons played a more background role. If school leadership was more passive, liaisons were more assertive and visible. This pattern was evident among the three study schools. At HSTW1 and HSTW3, the provider liaison played an active, visible role that included advocating for change (sometimes quite aggressively) and arguing for specific strategies or reform priorities. Teachers who were engaged in HSTW reported that they frequently went to the liaisons for assistance, and that they were almost always supportive and responsive. At HSTW1, the liaison also appeared to play an intermediary role, both between school administrators and groups of teachers and between the school and the district.

In contrast, the provider liaison was less visible at HSTW2. Few staff reported seeing the liaison at the school. And while a few noted that they had emailed him, most teachers reported that they went to colleagues within the school for assistance with the reform. Where the liaisons at HSTW1 and HSTW3 were generally recognized within the schools as leaders of the reform, there did not appear to be such a relationship at HSTW2. Interview data from the school, district, and provider suggest that the different role assumed by the provider liaison in this instance was likely attributable to the leadership role played by the former principal, who had extensive knowledge of HSTW and was an aggressive proponent of the reform, effectively reducing the need for the liaison to play that role.

Across all three schools, district staff reported that the HSTW liaisons provided high-quality support to the schools. They unanimously endorsed the value of the TAVs and the reports that they generated. All indicated that these reports were helpful in planning for the schools as well as in advocating for school needs in front of other administrators or the school boards.

School and district support. In addition to the provider support just described, school and district support played a critical role in implementation at all three schools. In most cases this played out at three levels. First,

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[5] Both HSTW2 and HSTW3 had focus teams that kept minutes that were sent electronically to the provider liaison.

school and/or district administrators were considered the primary leaders and foremost experts about HSTW. At HSTW2 (during our first year of data collection) and HSTW1, administrators served as the primary contacts for the liaisons, disseminated information about professional development, and responded to teachers questions about the reform. At HSTW3, a similar role was played by a district administrator. It should be noted, however, that the close association between administrators and reform support had some negative implications. In two of three schools, some teachers reported receiving little support for HSTW, in large part because they were not comfortable going to their administrators with questions or concerns.

Second, in two of three schools a kind of intermediate layer of leadership or support emerged around the reform. At HSTW3, this role was assumed by two in-house staff developers who provided training that was aligned with or supported HSTW. At HSTW2, two department heads described working with teachers within their subject area to specify and integrate HSTW instructional practices. In addition, the district standards coach (whose time was split between HSTW2 and another school) provided professional development for HSTW practices.

Third, in cases where HSTW professional development addressed instructional practices, teachers tended to seek out colleagues for advice about using such practices in their classrooms. While this communication was typically informal, in each school there were particular teachers who were recognized by their peers as experts. In some cases this perceived expertise derived from a teacher's general reputation, while in others it derived from his or her experience with a particular instructional technique or practice. In the case of the latter, attendance at HSTW professional development seemed to be related to these perceptions.

As suggested above, in all three schools there was a considerable blurring of school and district roles when it came to support. At HSTW1, the leader for the reform effort moved from a district- to school-level position during the study period, while at HSTW3 an associate superintendent was the primary leader for the reform, and the in-house staff developers were technically district-level employees. At HSTW2, the district standards coach played a vital support role. This reflects not only a functional role for the district in supporting implementation, but an investment of resources (in the form of district staff time) as well.

HSTW calls for the creation of a Site Coordinator position to support implementation. This position is primarily logistical. The Site Coordinator serves as a point person for the provider and disseminates information about the reform. Among the three schools, these duties were assumed by administrators in two of three schools. HSTW3 was the only school to have a Site Coordinator who did not hold some formal leadership role.

E. Monitoring

While HSTW uses a formal assessment process to track school progress, this component did not appear to have much influence on implementation. Each HSTW school is required to complete a biennial HSTW assessment. These assessments measure schools' progress on the 10 Key Practices that make up the reform. All three schools participated in these assessments. However, none of the HSTW liaisons interviewed mentioned the assessment, nor did they refer to it when asked to report on the progress of their respective schools. Likewise, school staff rarely mentioned the assessment; it did not appear that the feedback it generated played any significant role in shaping the school's reform agenda, nor the perceptions of school staff about the progress of implementation.

Provider liaisons reported making numerous informal evaluations of progress during each site visit and in conversations with principals and school staff. One consultant collected minutes from every focus team meeting and then emailed the combined minutes to all of the teachers in the school. In this way he was able to simultaneously monitor and spread the reform. Although the consultants had no real power to impose rewards or sanctions, it appeared that their presence (even the anticipation of a visit) was sometimes enough to

motivate schools to push for greater progress on implementation. In their informal assessment of school progress, provider liaisons tended to evaluate schools based on their ability to excel in implementing specific components (e.g., focus teams, advisory, ninth grade academy) rather than in the whole reform.

District personnel reported a relatively minimal role for themselves in terms of monitoring progress of the reform at the classroom level, relying instead upon the assessment of the provider liaison and the TAVs. There was little evidence of monitoring efforts by school staff at the classroom level. A handful of individuals such as department heads, coaches, or administrators reported visiting classrooms periodically for the purpose of providing feedback or support to teachers; none mentioned ensuring compliance as a goal. The lone exception was the former principal at HSTW2, who most teachers viewed as a top-down manager and who used regular classroom visits to ensure that HSTW practices were being used. The lack of compliance-oriented activity is not surprising, as the reform stresses teacher agency and views monitoring (or observation) as a professional development rather than management activity.

F. Components

While the 10 Key Practices and process aspects of HSTW (in particular the emphasis on focus teams) are clearly articulated, HSTW schools have some flexibility in how they are implemented. Because the intent of the reform is for each school to chart its own course, there is no set sequence for implementing reform components. Nonetheless, all HSTW schools are expected to implement all 10 Key Practices in relatively short order. Across the three schools, implementation did not appear to follow this pattern. Specifically, we found that some components were implemented at a high level while others were overlooked, and that school-level understanding of the reform tended to reflect this partial or selective enactment.

HSTW liaisons generally felt their schools were making great strides in implementing the reform. In keeping with the HSTW design, the prioritization of specific components varied considerably, especially in the early stages of implementation. For instance, at HSTW2 the ninth grade academy was the highest priority. At HSTW1, the provider liaison reported that increasing graduation requirements was the centerpiece of the school's early efforts. In each case, progress on these primary components became synonymous with liaisons' perceptions of the overall success of HSTW implementation.

School and district staff reported progress in implementing four major components of the reform. First, at all three schools staff reported taking significant steps toward increasing the rigor of the curriculum. In our survey, more respondents reported using common syllabi than common end-of-course exams. Across the three schools, the percentage of respondents reporting that they used common syllabi ranged from 54-87%. The percentage using common end of course exams was considerably lower and ranged from 34-57% in the first year survey. The popularity of end of course exams grew in the second year administration of the survey so that in HSTW1 and HSTW2, between 60% and 66% of respondents reported using common end of course exams, while the percentage using common syllabi stayed relatively constant. Interestingly, at all points, the percentages of respondents engaging in these two practices (strongly encouraged by HSTW) were lowest at the most mature school. This may be explained in part by the fact that in many cases only one teacher taught a given course at HSTW3, thus having no one with whom they could share syllabi or exams. The practices were most popular at HSTW1, which, though early in its implementation, had focused on these areas at the school and district level.

Second, all three schools implemented an advisory program, in which every teacher in the school was assigned 15-20 students. The groups met anywhere from weekly (HSTW1) to monthly (HSTW3), and advisory teachers stayed with students across grade levels. At HSTW2, the advisory program appeared to be little more than a homeroom period, though it did meet regularly. By contrast, at HSTW1, the advisory period had its own curriculum organized around study skills, team building, and college and test preparation. In addition, the advisory period was connected to the work of other teams, such as guidance and testing or

transition from high school. The advisory program at HSTW3 was somewhere in between these two poles; a curriculum had been developed, but its use was optional. Overall, the program remained very much a work in progress.

Third, ninth grade academies were focal points of implementation in two schools. The academy was the centerpiece of the design at HSTW2, and was viewed by the initiating administration as a beachhead for the overall implementation effort. By the time of our second visit, the teachers in the ninth-grade academy at HSTW2 indicated that the academy had struggled some since the previous principal left. Teachers reported having less planning time, and expressed concern about whether the new administration would continue to support their work. At HSTW1, creation of the ninth grade academy coincided with the school's application for a small learning communities grant that was in the planning stages at the time of our second visit. It appeared that implementation of the academy would cause considerable upheaval in the school. Faculty generally seemed to understand the purpose for creating the academy, though some voiced concern that it was too much change too quickly, given all of the other reform components being implemented.

Finally, teachers in all three schools reported that connections between academic and vocational classes were being made in their classrooms on a somewhat regular basis (at least once or twice a month). This was done with the most frequency at HSTW3, which had the most substantial vocational program, and where teachers reported feeling most prepared to make such connections. At the other two schools, teachers reported linking academic and vocational classes, but there was less assurance about how prepared they felt to do so. About 40% of teachers across the two schools reported that they were not prepared or only slightly prepared to make such connections. Despite these perceptions, we found little qualitative evidence that the content of core academic classes was substantively integrated with the vocational classes. To the extent that HSTW had an impact in this area, it was by adding additional academic content to the vocational curriculum rather than fundamentally changing it. Similarly, there was no evidence that practices in use in the vocational courses were integrated into core academic classes.

Overall, the implementation of specific components appeared closely tied to the formation of the reform agenda at the school level, as well as the resources available to adopt specific reforms. For example, incorporation of PLCs and/or ninth grade academies at HSTW1 and HSTW2 was linked to external grants that would support those activities. These factors are discussed further in Section V.

G. Fidelity and Adaptation

As a non-prescriptive reform, the HSTW design relies on local adaptation. The provider offers a range of suggested practices and strategies, but ultimately schools are required to integrate the reform's core principles into the local context. In this sense, the varied implementation patterns across the three schools reflect fidelity to the reform more than modification of it.

From the perspective of the provider, schools had considerable latitude in choosing which components to implement. Furthermore, HSTW was amenable to schools using multiple reforms simultaneously, encouraged schools to focus on issues of primary concern to them as a means of implementing the reform, and allowed teachers and schools to choose their own professional development content.[6]

While specific reform components are intended to vary across schools, what is less negotiable are the reform's process aspects. As discussed earlier, the provider is very clear that reform should be teacher-driven, with focus teams serving as the primary means of engagement and a School Improvement Team established to guide the overall implementation process. It is here that some significant modifications of the reform were

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[6] It should be noted that HSTW is moving towards the establishment of more stringent non-negotiables with regard to participation in the reform including, but not limited to, adoption of the HSTW standard curriculum plan.

evident. At two of three schools it appeared that the majority of teachers saw HSTW as being imposed upon them by the administration. Likewise, many teachers in these schools suggested that their focus teams did not have real autonomy or decision-making authority. The exceptions were those individuals who participated on one of the focus teams that were central to reform priorities within the school. As noted earlier, teachers on those particular teams tended to feel empowered by the reform.

Another significant process modification concerned the creation and use of a School Improvement Plan (SIP). In the HSTW design, the SIP serves as the school's roadmap for reform. It is intended to be the product of both the TAV and broad teacher input, and to inform decisions about the constitution of focus teams. In this sense, the creation of the SIP is the first step in engaging teachers broadly in the reform process. Among the two early implementing schools, however, there was little evidence that the SIP was produced with significant teacher input. Even among those heavily involved in the reform, the SIP was rarely mentioned, and teachers generally suggested that the administration had defined the school's reform agenda early in the implementation process.

District leaders' most commonly cited modification of HSTW was the speed with which practices were implemented. HSTW1 and HSTW2 district staff members said that the elimination of low-level courses took longer than provider liaisons would have liked. One district leader suggested that, in some cases, resistance to rapid change had led HSTW to "question our level of commitment," but that the chosen implementation pace was necessary in their district. District staff generally felt that HSTW could be modified with relative ease to meet the needs of the particular school; this was one of the things they appreciated about the reform. They slowed the introduction of new courses and requirements, modified focus team structures that HSTW had recommended, and gave individual schools more or less latitude to change based on other concerns and priorities in the district. As one district staff member at HSTW2 remarked: "I think if they had chosen a more prescriptive initiative, I really feel like with the culture of our school system it would not have been successful." In general district staff viewed the reform as an opportunity to introduce and legitimize changes in schools that they felt were needed.

In some cases, the adaptations described here represent significant changes from the intent of the HSTW design. This is not to suggest that some aspects of the reform "worked" while others did not. Again, this study was not designed to render such judgments. Instead, this case study aims to describe the types of adaptations that emerged as the reform was enacted at the school level. The factors influencing this process are multiple and complex, and are discussed in detail in Section V.

IV. Outcomes

This section describes school, district, and provider perceptions of the degree to which HSTW influenced school organization, instructional practice, and in some cases student behavior or performance. Again, it is important to note that what is reported here are perceptions of change. External measures of change or improvement were not a part of our overall research. Instead, we focus on perceptions of several areas that related to the overall impact of HSTW at the school level: teacher understanding of the reform, value of the reform, effect on teachers, effect on school and district leadership, effect on students, and sustainability. In addition, we use teacher survey data to analyze the effect of the reform on communication patterns within schools.

A. Level of Understanding

In general, teachers understood the basic tenets of HSTW, but differed on their value and implications for their own practice. They consistently reported that HSTW aimed to better engage students while increasing the overall rigor of academic work. Some saw the reform as a collection of helpful hints to assist them in

moving toward increased rigor and relevance, but did not see it as requiring them to make major changes to their practice. Others viewed HSTW as a sea change for the school, a completely different philosophy in which responsibility for student achievement was placed squarely on teachers. In the case of the latter, some teachers viewed this positively, while others were highly critical (for further discussion, see Section IV-B).

As illustrated in Table 1, our survey of teachers found that 91% of those at HSTW1, 87% at HSTW2, and over 91% at HSTW3 agreed with the statement that they understood the purpose of HSTW. Asked whether they agreed that HSTW had a detailed plan for improving instruction, 77% of teachers at HSTW1, 81% at HSTW2, and 84% at HSTW3 reported that it did. When asked whether HSTW required them to make major changes in their classroom practices, 36% of HSTW1 teachers, 47% of HSTW2 teachers, and 46% of HSTW3 teachers saw a need to change their practice. Overall, it appears that teacher-reported understanding of the purpose of the reform was high, and that teachers generally saw HSTW as related to instructional improvement.

Table 1. **Teacher-Reported Understanding of HSTW**.

	Percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that:		
	I understand the purpose of HSTW.	HSTW has a detailed plan for improving instruction.	HSTW required me to make major changes in my classroom practice.
HSTW1	91%	77%	36%
HSTW2	87%	81%	47%
HSTW3	91%	84%	46%

Provider liaisons appeared to be aware of the potential disjuncture between understanding of the design and the perception that it required little deviation from current practice. Liaisons reported that teachers understood the reform and knew what it meant to be an HSTW school, but widespread transition to a highly rigorous curriculum was more limited.

B. Perceived Value of the Reform

Survey data suggest that across all three schools, a majority of teachers supported the core principles of HSTW. Staff accepted the HSTW premise that "raising the bar" and increasing expectations for all students was a worthy goal. The majority of teachers (approximately 70%) believed that "the changes called for by HSTW are helping or will help [their] students to reach higher levels of achievement." Over 80% of teachers felt that teachers in their schools had high expectations for student learning. These two findings suggest that teachers generally felt that high expectations were part of the culture at their schools. It is not clear from the data that there was any significant difference among schools based on how long they had worked with HSTW.

In the schools that were surveyed twice, the belief that HSTW provides useful ideas and resources for changing classroom practice grew significantly from year to year. At HSTW2 the percentage agreeing with that statement grew from 56% to 66%, while at HSTW1 the percentage grew from 58% to 73%. At HSTW3, where teachers were more experienced with HSTW, 60% believed that they were receiving good resources from HSTW. A majority of teachers in all schools believed that strategies promoted by HSTW would help their students achieve at higher levels.

Qualitative data from the three schools portray a more complex picture, suggesting that groups of teachers opposed particular aspects of the reform while others were ardent supporters. For example, while a clear majority of teachers reported having high expectations for all students, in two schools there were relatively

large factions that believed that HSTW did not challenge students enough. Specifically, they suggested that the practice of allowing students to redo work that was not up to standard (as opposed to failing them) constituted a form of coddling. By not failing students who deserved to fail, they suggested, the school was inadequately preparing them for college or the "real world."

While there was general support for the principles of the reform, teachers interpreted the HSTW philosophy differently and varied in the degree to which they embraced that philosophy. At HSTW1 and HSTW2, teachers who worked on high-priority components of the reform were more likely to value it than those whose work was more marginal. At HSTW3, teachers that were involved with HSTW (e.g., attended conferences, used strategies in the classroom) seemed to have an overall positive perception of HSTW and felt that the goals of HSTW were good and realistic. Those in leadership roles (e.g., leaders of focus teams or HSTW-professional development sessions) noted that it was not easy to achieve the reform goals; it was a process that took time and continued effort. Conversely, a few teachers interviewed (about three or four) had little knowledge of and/or involvement with HSTW. Their responses ranged from feeling like HSTW had had no real effect to some animosity towards the reform, believing that HSTW made unreasonable demands in terms of what students could accomplish.

District respondents suggested that HSTW was very much geared to the classroom teacher. One HSTW1 staff member commented:

> *High Schools That Work isn't focused at that upper level. It's focused at the teacher level, and what do we got to do to get teachers to move, and become better teachers. And so that's what I really like about it.*

An HSTW3 district administrator suggested that the structure of the reform empowered teachers because:

> *When you send them to conferences in the summer and you send them to conferences during the years and then you have site committees and you have focus groups, you empower them because they have picked their own topics to work on. And I think that is wonderful because that didn't exist here before.*

C. Changes in Teacher Behavior and Practice

Teacher adoption of HSTW instructional practices occurred at two levels. It appeared that most teachers selectively added to their repertoire specific practices that they found useful or effective with their students. Reflecting this perspective, one teacher suggested that HSTW offered teachers some useful additions to their "bag of tricks" but did not require major changes in instruction. For a smaller group of teachers who were heavily involved in implementing the reform, however, HSTW clearly effected deep change in the way they worked. These teachers (a relatively small minority in just two of our three schools) indicated that their practice had become far more collaborative and transparent than it was prior to adopting HSTW. Some also suggested that they had accepted greater responsibility for student learning than they had before.

At all three schools, teachers reported that morale had been affected by HSTW. Specifically, it appears that morale suffered when schools started to change structural aspects of schools that directly impacted teachers' daily routines. For instance, creation of a ninth grade academy at HSTW2 forced many teachers to change rooms, teach different classes, and work with different colleagues. A similar process was unfolding at HSTW1 as teachers planned their ninth grade academy. While teachers often cited feeling overwhelmed and spending too much time in meetings as reasons for low morale, these complaints generally coincided with the larger structural changes like the implementation of ninth grade academies, common course syllabi, or focus teams/PLCs. This sense of discouragement is notable because it suggests a lack of ownership of the reform by

most teachers. Such widespread investment and support is critical to HSTW's theory of change, and is the primary reason for creating decision-making bodies such as focus teams.

As noted earlier, all three schools had taken steps to make the curriculum and/or graduation requirements more rigorous. In reflecting on the impact of HSTW, some teachers suggested that their teaching reflected this increase in rigor. In most cases, however, teachers struggled to define this change, or to offer examples of how increased rigor manifested in their instructional practice. It appeared that while increases in requirements or changes in curriculum were concrete and easily identified, increasing the rigor of instruction was far more abstract and therefore difficult to realize.

While provider liaisons indicated that the schools made significant progress in implementing HSTW, they were cautious in their assessment of the reform's impact on practice, suggesting that this was an area in which more work was needed. District respondents were more optimistic, reporting that most teachers had changed their classroom practice at least to some degree. The changes that they could identify included incorporating a pre-instructional activity into their lessons and breaking up the period in ways that would better meet the needs of various types of learners. District leaders were also able to point to changes in teacher behavior that were not limited to classroom practice. They felt that the new organizational structures (PLCs or focus teams) had begun to change teachers' approach to their work. Teachers were seen as taking a more active role in the school and in the analysis of student work and learning. District staff were also cognizant of the fact that HSTW required more work of teachers, adding to their responsibilities in terms of collaboration, involvement in school programs beyond their own classrooms, and new instructional approaches.

D. Changes in Other Staff Behavior and Practice

Principals play a central role in HSTW's theory of change, but their role is complex, and in some cases seems contradictory. On the one hand, interviews with provider liaisons suggest that principals should work to push teachers to recognize that change is needed. Further, it is the principal (with support from the Site Coordinator) that is responsible for establishing the focus teams, as well as leading the School Improvement Team. All of these functions suggest a more directive role for the principal. At the same time, the HSTW reform is designed to be deeply participatory, with teachers accorded substantial authority in rendering judgments, identifying problems, and advocating for solutions regarding the state of the school. The principal's role in this process is to listen and be responsive to teachers' ideas. Additionally, HSTW accords principals a substantial instructional role. Specifically, the reform aims to help principals become curriculum leaders and calls for them to use student performance data to guide continuous improvement. Despite the importance of school leaders and the complexity of their role, administrators in the study schools did not report attending any professional development focused on leadership specifically (though they had attended training on specific components of the design). To the extent that they were aware of what was expected of them by the reform, this information was most often conveyed by provider liaisons. (More recently, HSTW-developed professional development directly focused on school leadership.)

In addition to creating a critical role for the principal, HSTW calls for the creation of new leadership positions (though this did not always happen). First, a Site Coordinator is responsible for managing the logistics of implementation and serving as the primary contact between the school and HSTW. Second, each focus team is facilitated by a leader, who sits on a School Improvement Team comprised of the principal, other administrators, and the Site Coordinator.

Leadership played an important role in implementation of HSTW at all three schools (discussed further in Section V). There is little evidence, however, that the reform influenced the practice of those in formal leadership positions at the school level, regardless of whether their practices aligned or conflicted with its demands. More often, principals and other administrators suggested that their approach to leadership was well-suited to the HSTW design. In other words, implementing HSTW did not require them to change their

practice. For instance, at HSTW2, principal turnover resulted in the enactment of two very different approaches to leadership in a short period of time. Teachers were nearly universal in reporting that the change had altered both the process and direction of HSTW implementation in the school. Yet both principals described their style and approach as consistent with the expectations of the reform. In sum, while HSTW clearly calls for specific types of leadership practice (and has recently focused more intently on building school-level leadership capacity), we found that the reform itself did little to influence practice in the three schools.

There is more evidence that implementation of HSTW facilitated the emergence of new leaders. Specifically, individuals who played leadership roles on focus teams charged with implementing key components of the reform were generally viewed as leaders—either for the reform or more generally—by their peers. At HSTW1, for instance, teachers reported that the individuals leading the focus team charged with creating an advisory program gained in stature and influence as a result of the advisory program's positive reception by most teachers. Similarly, teachers at HSTW2 generally recognized that the creation of the ninth grade academy served to shift the balance of power in the school. In some cases the teachers who emerged as reform leaders were already recognized and respected figures in their schools, while in other instances teachers who were not previously seen as leaders emerged as such as a result of their role in HSTW.

Survey data confirm that focus team leaders also were seen as primary sources for advice about HSTW at HSTW2 and HSTW3. The likelihood that they would be approached for advice about HSTW increased with the maturity of the reform. Focus team leaders' designation as "key" leaders of the reform effort, and the additional training and exposure to HSTW that they received as a result of their increased role, created several primary sources for information in each school. In effect, the correlation between being a focus team leader and being seen as a source of advice about the reform created a sort of distributed leadership that at least has the potential to spread the reform's ideas and practices throughout the school. Unlike the other two schools, survey data at the end of the first year at HSTW1 show a budding, though not yet statistically significant, likelihood that focus team leaders are seen as sources of advice about the reform.

E. Changes in Communication Networks and Staff Relationships

Teacher reports suggest that HSTW altered communication patterns in all three schools. Specifically, the focus team structure created new communication networks in the three schools. The teams were generally cross-disciplinary and thus represented a significant departure from the departmental structure that was in place prior to HSTW adoption. However, the relative strengths of these new networks varied. As noted earlier, some focus teams functioned more effectively than others, suggesting that the level and quality of communication varied as well. Similarly, teachers in high-functioning focus teams, or those who were otherwise heavily involved in the reform, tended to report improved communication and collaboration among teachers as an outcome of HSTW. It is worth noting, however, that some teachers suggested that HSTW had undermined collaboration and communication, either by weakening familiar departmental structures or by dividing the school into pro- and anti-reform factions (though in these cases leadership was clearly a contributing factor as well).

Survey data suggest that the establishment of focus teams at HSTW schools created a new avenue for communication among teachers and staff. Where they existed over a period of time, these new units did appear to be catalysts for new lines of communication. For example, at HSTW1, shared focus team membership became an important predictor of communication. The same was true at HSTW2 where the PLCs, which stood in for focus teams, were significant predictors of communication. These new networks were used most heavily for advice about HSTW. The focus teams supplemented rather than supplanted the traditional subject area departments as conduits for communication. Departments were still the primary influence on who teachers turned to for advice about their course curriculum and pacing. At HSTW3, where after years of stability the focus teams had recently been reconstituted, they played an insignificant role in

influencing communication. This indicates the importance of some stability over time in the organizational structures if they are to have a positive influence on building communication.

Generally, teachers at HSTW1 and HSTW2 reported that HSTW connected them to a cross-section of their colleagues with whom they would not have otherwise interacted, exposing them to practices and ideas that they would not have otherwise known about. The structural changes introduced by HSTW also gave teachers an opportunity to talk more about the students they had in common, not necessarily focused on a particular subject area. Several teachers mentioned that communication among teachers had become more "student focused."

District leaders suggested that communication improved in two ways. First, HSTW's Key Practices and TAV reports gave the school and district some common issues to focus on. As one leader in HSTW1 noted, "I believe that we did not have good communication with the high schools until High Schools That Work came about." Additionally, as schools identified challenges, they occasionally sought help from the district in fixing those problems (e.g., changing course or requirements, creating tutoring programs), leading to increased communication.

Second, district leaders reported that communication within schools had changed. They suggested that the creation of focus teams or learning communities gave teachers and staff a time and reason to gather to discuss issues of concern and best practices. District leaders believed that these teams, and their leaders, were being used to share information gleaned from professional development opportunities, train teachers in new practices, and bring teachers' ideas up to the administrator level. It had, according to district staff, changed the culture of communication in schools from one that was more complaint-driven and not focused on students, to one focused on solving problems and meeting the needs of students.

F. Perceived Effects on Students

In all three schools, teachers suggested that HSTW had improved student behavior and attitudes toward school. At HSTW3, teachers suggested that attitudes toward school, achievement, and even postsecondary outcomes (college or work) had improved in recent years, and cited HSTW as one of the factors that helped to bring about improvement. At HSTW2, teachers in the ninth grade academy reported that since adopting HSTW, student behavior and engagement had improved, and that dropout rates had decreased significantly. While conceding that more ninth graders were passing, critics questioned whether they were as well prepared for the upper grades as they needed to be. At HSTW1, teachers generally cited improved behavior and school climate as positive effects of HSTW. In all three schools, positive perceptions of student effects were stronger among teachers who were more fully involved in the reform.

As noted earlier, survey data suggest that teachers generally believed that HSTW either was or would eventually lead to gains in student achievement. With the exception of some teachers at HSTW3, however, few reported improved achievement during interviews. This suggests that while most teachers were optimistic about the potential of HSTW, the reform had not been in place long enough for them to see that potential translate into improved student outcomes.

District leaders hoped to be able to point to some tangible results on student performance but were generally reluctant to do so in those schools where the reform had only been in place for a couple of years. Staff in HSTW1 and HSTW2 generally felt that it was too early in the process to expect to see tangible effects on student performance as a result of the HSTW partnership. At HSTW3, the assistant superintendent suggested that the changes that had been made as a result of the HSTW partnership included improved SAT and state test scores. She noted that the general level of instruction at the high school had also been raised, resulting in an increased number of students prepared for both academic and professional pursuits.

G. Perceived Sustainability

While questions were raised about the depth at which HSTW was adopted, there was general agreement among most school, district, and provider staff that the reform would persist in all three schools. At HSTW3, almost all of those interviewed (teachers and administrators) felt that HSTW was in the school to stay. Regardless of their feelings about the reform, all admitted that HSTW had been around longer than any other initiative they had seen. Teachers felt that the administrators were committed to using the reform and administrators confirmed this impression. While there was not consensus at the other two schools, at least some teachers reported that certain elements or practices introduced by HSTW would be maintained regardless of whether the school continued a formal relationship with the provider. At HSTW1, teachers cited changes in school climate and discipline policies as lasting beyond any specific reform, and many suggested that the advisory program would remain in place. One department chair suggested that focus teams had changed the way the faculty communicate and collaborate, and that was likely to have a lasting impact on the school. At HSTW2, teachers cited increased rigor (evidenced primarily by curricular changes) as a likely legacy of HSTW. Some suggested that the ninth grade academy was fully institutionalized, though the academy teachers did not seem to share that assessment.

At the two schools where the future of HSTW was less certain, teachers cited resources and leadership as factors affecting sustainability. The availability of grant money to pay for professional development was the primary resource concern for teachers at both schools. At HSTW1, leadership was cited as the key factor in the sustainability of HSTW, while at HSTW2 some teachers said it was the reason the reform likely would not persist. The other factor influencing perceived sustainability (though mentioned less frequently at both schools) was outcomes. Teachers noted that if test scores improved the case for continuing with HSTW would be strengthened.

District leaders viewed HSTW as part of their general high school improvement strategy and could not imagine departing from it. They sought to pursue the use of many of the strategies that they learned about through HSTW. However, leaders in two districts still expressed some concern that a new superintendent or high school principal could seriously impact the reform's prospects for sustainability. Though commitment to the reform and its continuity was strong, district staff recognized the ability of individual leaders to, as one person said, "take us in a different direction. I think that would be a disaster."

While generally optimistic about the future of HSTW at all three schools, provider liaisons noted that sustainability was ultimately linked to substantive changes in instructional practice, as such changes would be most likely to persist beyond the provider's formal relationship with the school. Provider liaisons also cited school and district leadership as a factor that could influence the sustainability of the reform either positively or negatively. While they were generally pleased with the current level of district support for the reform, they cautioned that turnover in key positions could easily undermine their work, a concern shared by staff at the school and district level.

V. Explanatory Variables

In general, engagement and participation in HSTW within the three schools depended on how the reform agenda for each school was formulated. The degree to which the enactment of that agenda precipitated substantive changes in professional practice was a function of a number of factors including teachers' perceptions of the value of the reform; emergence of informal leadership and communication networks around the reform; and support from the provider, district, and school leaders.

A. Formulation of the School-Level Reform Agenda

School and district leadership, along with district policy and availability of resources, influenced the manner in which HSTW was interpreted, organized, and enacted in the three schools. This influence was heightened (and in some cases made possible) by characteristics of the reform.

Design factors. Two elements of the HSTW design appeared to exert a particularly strong influence on the implementation process: (1) the flexibility schools have in adopting various components, and (2) the participatory nature of focus teams as an organizing body. HSTW is non-prescriptive in both the sequence and emphasis of components that schools select to implement. The reform borrows and brokers "best practice" resources from many different sources according to school needs.

Schoolwide involvement in HSTW is profoundly shaped by the reform's participatory structure. While the provider is charged with offering guidance and resources, change in schools can only succeed if it occurs through a bottom-up process. Primarily through the establishment of focus teams, HSTW is designed so that schools distribute and share leadership responsibilities (and power) across a wider, more diverse and largely teacher-centered cadre of decision makers. The non-prescriptive nature of the reform is intended to empower teachers to shape and thereby invest themselves in the reform agenda.

While we found some evidence of this process unfolding as intended in one school (HSTW3), more often these two elements of the reform interacted in reverse order. Rather than widespread participation shaping the reform agenda, it appeared that the formulation of the reform agenda itself (usually by a much smaller and less representative group of individuals) delimited participation by emphasizing the work of some focus teams while marginalizing others. Teachers who were involved on teams whose work was central to the reform agenda tended to understand it better than their colleagues, and felt a greater sense of urgency to effect the type of changes called for by the reform. The agenda itself was influenced primarily by three factors: formal leadership, district policy, and resources. It should be noted, however, that in at least one instance (HSTW1) the provider liaison appeared to play a pivotal role as well.

Formal leadership. Formal leadership around the reform was enacted by individuals in a variety of positions, including the principal, assistant principal, and an assistant superintendent. In each case, these individuals were perceived by teachers as exercising control over school resources (materials, money, and/or time) and/or decision making. This also had implications for teacher perceptions of the reform itself. Those who supported or got along with formal leaders advocating the reform tended to support it, while those who clashed with such leaders were more likely to be resistant. In other words, formal leaders played a critical role in driving reform, but they also appeared to galvanize resistance to it. (Such resistance is further discussed in Section V-B.)

As noted earlier, our data suggest that formal leaders (sometimes in conjunction with the provider liaison) often defined the reform agenda for their schools at the earliest stages of implementation with significant consequences for participation, component use, and faculty support for the reform. In most cases, formal leaders suggested that the agenda they had established was consistent with the HSTW design. As a result, schools followed very different paths to implementation. This flexibility is an intended result of the reform; each school is expected to adopt specific components according to its needs. More noteworthy is that the process of identifying needs and charting the course for reform was not especially participatory, as called for by the reform, deriving instead from leaders' assessments of school needs. These assessments in turn shaped nearly every aspect of the reform process.

District policy. Policy initiatives from the district tended to be integrated into the school's reform agenda, frequently under the rubric of HSTW. At HSTW1, for example, a district-mandated reading program was described by the assistant principal as part and parcel of the overall HSTW reform effort. At HSTW2, a

district-wide focus on literacy across the curriculum was assimilated quickly into the school's agenda under HSTW, eventually becoming a high priority. Again, the assimilation of local initiatives into the HSTW process is not anathema to the reform's design; local adaptation is encouraged. However, the top-down nature of that assimilation may have had consequences for participation and engagement within schools.

Resources. Lastly, the availability of resources (especially funding) clearly influenced decisions about which reform components each school would adopt. Provider liaisons encouraged and assisted schools in securing grant funding to support reforms adopted through HSTW. For instance, at HSTW2 the requirements of a specific grant led to the creation of PLCs in place of traditional focus teams. Similarly, administrators at HSTW1 suggested that the decision to create small learning communities was motivated in part by potential access to grant funding for that specific purpose.

In sum, the reform agenda in each school was influenced by numerous factors external to (though not in conflict with) the HSTW process. This agenda led to the selective adoption of reform components. As a result, some components were substantively implemented while others languished, and some teachers became fully involved while others distanced themselves from reform efforts.

B. Factors Affecting the Enactment of School-Level Reform Agendas

As discussed above, a combination of reform, school, and district factors served to shape each school's reform agenda under HSTW. The degree to which that agenda was successfully enacted, and its ultimate impact on the school as a whole, was influenced by four interrelated factors. First, reform practices were more substantively enacted by those who believed change was needed and saw the reform as a valuable tool for doing so. Second, the quality and type of support offered by the provider and school districts facilitated (or undermined) adoption of reform practices. Third, teachers' existing communication and support networks facilitated professional communication around the reform and reinforced reform ideas and practices. Fourth, teacher leadership emerged as a powerful force not only in support of reform, but also in opposition to it.

Perceived need to change and value of reform. To "create a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement in high schools" requires a change in teacher beliefs about what students are capable of and how many (more) of them can achieve at higher levels. This requires teachers to recognize low expectations as a real problem in their school, and to see HSTW as a resource in addressing that problem. In general, teachers who were most heavily invested in HSTW were highly critical of what they perceived as complacency or low expectations for students, and tended to see themselves as responsible for their students' improvement. Not surprisingly, these individuals were also most likely to report making significant, substantive changes in their instruction. Conversely, teachers who tended to be more critical of HSTW were more likely to note that factors outside of school also affected student performance and behavior.

In conjunction with teacher beliefs, formal leaders clearly influenced the level of pressure for change in each school. Because HSTW is highly flexible and is intended to be teacher-driven, it runs the risk of superficial adoption by those who are not inclined to fundamentally challenge the status quo. In our three schools, deeper implementation relied on formal leaders' efforts to create pressure for change. In two schools, administrators stated plainly that those teachers who did not wish to be involved with HSTW should consider moving to another school. At HSTW2, a change in school leadership created a palpable sense of relaxation among some teachers, who suggested that HSTW would continue in the school, but that the pace would be slower and more mindful of teacher concerns. This change clearly appealed to some, while for others it raised questions about the school's commitment to reform.

Quality of support from provider and district. Provider liaisons served a variety of roles including cheerleader, coach, and information resource for both administrators and teachers. The relative impact provider liaisons had in the study schools seemed to be associated with the amount of time spent in the

school. Liaisons who communicated more frequently with staff and administrators appeared to more significantly impact the process of implementation. The personality of the liaison seemed to be a less influential factor with regard to their ability to support implementation and in some cases even create a sense of urgency around the reform. Liaisons who were intense and forthright and those who were relaxed and unassuming had powerful impacts on the roll out of the reform in their schools as well as the issues that were prioritized in the reform effort.

In the three study schools, districts had quite different relationships with their high schools, particularly regarding support for HSTW. Though all of the districts had been involved in the selection and funding of HSTW at the school level, ongoing involvement by district staff members ranged from passive to active. In those cases where the districts were involved and supportive, the use of HSTW seemed to be wider and deeper when "controlling" for the length of time that the reform had been in the school. For example, the school in which we saw HSTW having the greatest impact was HSTW3. This school had both the longest tenure with the reform and also the most supportive district staff, thus making it difficult to separate the district's impact. However, this high school is the sole school in its district meaning that district staff members have little else to focus on. It is undoubtedly the support of district staff (the assistant superintendent in particular) that allowed HSTW to remain in the school and to make the changes that it has at the school level.

Conversely, at HSTW2, the reform was initiated and supported largely by the principal (since retired). While one district staff member (working primarily in two high schools) played an important role in supporting HSTW, district leaders did not become particularly involved with the details of the reform or its use at the school. Both the impetus and vision for reform were generated largely at the school level. Changes in HSTW implementation that were evident when there was turnover among formal leadership at the school level can be partially attributed to the low level of district leadership involvement.

In two of three cases, provider liaisons appeared to influence district support. While it is the stated role of the provider liaison to connect with the district to see that the school has the systemic and resource supports that are needed to implement HSTW, this did not always happen. Part of the reason that the HSTW2 district was not highly involved with the reform was because the provider liaison was a less active presence at both the school and district level, and generally communicated with school rather than district leadership. In the other two districts, the liaison made a great effort to involve key district staff in decisions about the reform and spent effort explaining why certain changes should be made. This activity, though time-consuming, allowed schools to progress with the support of their districts. As a result, it appears that the prospects for sustainability at those schools are more positive than at the school that was working with relatively little district support.

Communication networks. While the new structural change that HSTW introduced—the focus team—was effective in providing avenues for communication, this communication was generally limited to the schoolwide issue on which the team focused. This was true for HSTW1 and HSTW3, which had issue-oriented focus teams. Because of their relatively narrow focus, the focus team networks, while important, did not overlap with other communication networks in most cases. This situation is not unique to HSTW schools. It appears that as new demands are placed on teachers—in this case the Key Practices of HSTW—they will seek out those individuals who can best help them with those challenges. Essentially, we see a layering effect in communication that is present in many reform efforts. Because communication networks do not overlap, it becomes more difficult to see where various components of teacher practice intersect. For example, because in most HSTW schools teachers continue to turn to their departmental colleagues for advice about course content, and to administrators for advice about discipline, and to focus team colleagues for advice about HSTW, it is difficult to have conversations that may tie all of these issues together in a way that relates to teachers' classroom instruction.

We continued to see silos of communication. Though it is likely that HSTW had managed to build new silos devoted to important schoolwide issues, we did not see evidence of many connections between these silos. This may help to explain the relatively limited nature of instructional change that we saw in the HSTW schools. At HSTW2, teachers organized into grade level PLCs that did not have a clear focus but looked at improvement more broadly. Thus, shared membership in the PLC influenced communication around curricular issues and assistance with low-performing students as well as issues related directly to HSTW. This demonstrates the potential for structural changes and interdisciplinary groups to impact advice-seeking communication around a host of issues as opposed to solely HSTW. By making this modification, HSTW2 has created a more multi-faceted communication structure than that which existed in the other two schools. This finding may be driven by the highly-functioning ninth grade PLC which had embraced the reform, and had considerable success impacting everything from structure to discipline to classroom instruction.

Due to the largely voluntary nature of much of the HSTW-related professional development described previously, teacher communication networks were generally built only around those areas where teachers wanted advice or in the very limited areas where their participation was required (i.e., focus teams). This means that given the low level of monitoring of classroom practice, teachers were seldom pushed to reach out to others around issues of their own practice. That being said, a significant number of those teachers who were interviewed spoke about their desire to learn from others. While our network surveys were bounded by the schools, teachers spoke about the connections that they had formed with other teachers through HSTW conferences and cross-school visitations. For those teachers who were positively predisposed toward the reform and participated in HSTW professional development opportunities, these external communication links were cited as particularly valuable. It was often through these connections that teachers spoke of gaining new ideas and learning new practices that they then employed. These teachers, with external connections, were often the vectors for new ideas that could then flow through internal school networks. Frequently, these new ideas related to the areas on which their focus teams were working, thus a new idea could move into the school through an external connection and internal network.

Teacher leadership. At all three schools, teachers who were liked and respected by their peers played important roles in legitimizing, and in some cases resisting, the reform. Teacher leadership influenced HSTW implementation in two ways. First, respected teachers were sometimes recruited by administrators to lead the reform effort. At HSTW3, for instance, the assistant superintendent deliberately chose teachers who were well respected by their colleagues to lead focus teams. As a result, it appears that for several years the focus teams at HSTW3 functioned productively. At HSTW2, teacher leadership changed significantly with principal turnover. Under the previous principal, a small group of teachers was recruited specifically to drive HSTW implementation. By contrast, the new principal delegated substantial authority to a group that had been less involved with HSTW but was well regarded by most faculty members. Some teachers viewed this as a retreat from HSTW, while others saw it as a change of course within the reform. Either way, the emergence of new teacher leadership signaled a change in implementation of the reform. While our data reflect few instances in which teachers adopted reform elements because a particular individual championed them, there was greater evidence that for those who were inclined toward reform, these teacher-leaders served as a primary support in bringing new ideas or practices into their classrooms.

Second, in some cases teacher leadership seemed to coalesce around resistance, either to HSTW or to those in formal leadership positions. While we found little evidence of resistance at HSTW3 (though teachers reported there was resistance when the reform was first adopted), at the other two schools individuals emerged as the voice for those teachers who opposed the direction taken by formal leadership. At HSTW1, for instance, one well respected teacher openly challenged not only the assistant principal but also the provider liaison about the value of reform. Some teachers were uncomfortable with the confrontation, but acknowledged that it was reflective of the sentiments of a portion of the faculty.

VI. Summary

This case study is one part of a larger study of high school improvement. It is meant to provide the reader with an account of the reform's design, understanding, enactment, and perceived effects of one reform effort based on data from three schools. This work is not intended as an evaluation of either the high schools or HSTW. Instead, it examines both the story of implementation and explanations for why implementation proceeded as it did. Below, we discuss some of the implications our findings have for both those designing high school reforms and for potential consumers.

Encourage broad-based teacher participation at the early stages of reform. Ultimately, HSTW is about empowering teachers to take full responsibility for the success of all students and giving them access to the resources they need to do so. Our data from three schools suggest that for a small subset of "true believers" the reform had precisely this effect, while for many others it was beneficial but not transformative. The participatory structure of the reform, chiefly the varying degree of centrality of focus teams, seemed to reinforce these differentiated levels of buy-in and engagement. Specifically, it appeared that in two of three schools, small groups of teachers were engaged by school leaders in the hope that they would set an example for the wider faculty. Instead, we found that some teams embraced the reform while others rejected it, resulting in some deep divisions among the faculty.

For teacher-driven reforms such as HSTW, teacher involvement in the formulation of the reform agenda is critical to their continued investment in and support of the reform effort. Rushing or circumventing this process runs the risk of alienating large groups of teachers and polarizing the faculty, as was the case (albeit to different degrees) in two of the schools. While more participatory modes of decision-making may be more complex, time-consuming, and even fractious, they are likely the best way to avoid the type of differential engagement that was apparent in the schools in this study.

Define the problem. Just as teacher participation in the early stages of reform must be widespread, so must consensus regarding challenges facing the school. Because the HSTW reform is flexible and adaptable, implementation can follow many different trajectories. It is therefore critical that school staff acknowledge and agree about the specific problem(s) HSTW aims to address. If the problem is not seen as important or pressing, there is little reason to think the reform will be. While the initial TAV—intended to identify school needs and prioritize steps in the reform process—was regarded as valuable by school and district leaders, our data suggest that teacher participation in the TAV was limited. Increased teacher participation at the outset would support broader consensus about reform priorities.

Strive for balance. Widespread teacher engagement, a goal of HSTW, is undermined when the bulk of the reform work falls to a small number of individuals. In two of our three schools, specific focus teams shouldered the vast majority of responsibility for implementing the reform, while other teams were disengaged or even resistant. Not surprisingly, the teams that were most engaged were staffed with teachers who were energetic and committed to the reform. Broad-based teacher engagement requires that, whatever their specific area of concentration, all focus teams have a valuable role to play. Similarly, teachers who are likely to be champions for reform should be spread across teams rather than concentrated on one or two.

Build in school-level supports linking reform components with instructional practice. HSTW clearly effected changes in school structure and organization. At different schools, it led to the creation of small learning communities, ninth grade academies, and advisory programs, along with some significant changes in curriculum and assessment. With a few notable exceptions, however, these organizational changes did not appear to produce the kind of deep changes in teacher beliefs and practices intended by the reform. Similarly, while HSTW professional development (e.g., attendance at conferences, site visits to other HSTW schools) was effective in facilitating organizational and structural changes in schools, it had limited impact on

instruction. Approaches to school-level dissemination of instructional practices such as model classrooms had a limited impact in schools that implemented them. Further, it appears that while general principles of instructional practice (e.g., higher expectations, increased rigor) were prevalent in professional development, lack of specificity about how they might be embodied in practice may have hindered their adoption at the classroom level. For instructional changes to approach the level of implementation of structural and organizational components, intensive, ongoing classroom-level support is needed.

The adoption of these recommendations relies heavily on two factors. First, leadership at all levels (district, school, and individual teacher) is critical if implementation is to move beyond a superficial level. Formal leaders (at the school and district level) profoundly influence the process of defining the reform agenda for the school; their efforts can leave teachers feeling empowered or disenfranchised. Similarly, formal leaders, in their words and actions, are in a unique position to communicate that reform is a high priority. Teacher leaders play a vital role in supporting and reinforcing ideas and practices introduced by the reform.

Second, provider liaisons have the potential to significantly influence the implementation process. Our data suggest that where liaisons were knowledgeable and hands-on, schools made progress in implementation. Effective liaisons agitated for change and provided resources and supports that matched school needs. In order to accomplish this, they had to be sufficiently familiar with school context and capacity, a time- and labor-intensive endeavor. At the same time, liaisons who were too aggressive in pushing a specific agenda may have undermined or threatened teachers' and leaders' ownership of the reform.

For teachers and administrators who come to general consensus about a vision for change for their schools and are willing to invest time and effort in realizing that vision, HSTW offers a participatory structure and a wealth of professional expertise than can significantly advance reform efforts. Our data suggest that under the right conditions, the reform can empower teachers, engender a deep commitment to reform, and facilitate improvements in instruction, professional collaboration, and teacher-student relationships. The challenge, it seems, is one of scale. The tendency of school leaders to formulate a reform agenda without broad teacher input appeared to conflict with the reform's stated goal of engaging and empowering teachers to plan and carry out reform, and left some teachers feeling alienated. Additionally, while teachers who received direct professional development from HSTW reported that it was of high quality, few mechanisms were in place at the school level to allow teachers to share what they learned with colleagues. School and district leaders can be proactive in addressing these challenges by encouraging widespread input and participation in the reform process, and by working closely with the provider to develop school-level supports for instructional change.

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Appendix A
High Schools That Work Key Practices

1) **High expectations.** Motivate more students to meet high expectations by integrating high expectations into classroom practices and giving students frequent feedback.

2) **Program of study.** Require each student to complete an upgraded academic core and a concentration.

3) **Academic studies.** Teach more students the essential concepts of the college-preparatory curriculum by encouraging them to apply academic content and skills to real-world problems and projects.

4) **Career/technical studies.** Provide more students access to intellectually challenging career/technical studies in high-demand fields that emphasize the higher-level mathematics, science, literacy, and problem-solving skills needed in the workplace and in further education.

5) **Work-based learning.** Enable students and their parents to choose from programs that integrate challenging high school studies and work-based learning and are planned by educators, employers, and students.

6) **Teachers working together.** Provide teams of teachers from several disciplines the time and support to work together to help students succeed in challenging academic and career/technical studies. Integrate reading, writing, and speaking as strategies for learning into all parts of the curriculum, and integrate mathematics into science and career/technical classrooms.

7) **Students actively engaged.** Engage students in academic and career/technical classrooms in rigorous and challenging proficient-level assignments using research-based instructional strategies and technology.

8) **Guidance.** Involve students and their parents in a guidance and advisement system that develops positive relationships and ensures completion of an accelerated program of study with an academic or career/technical concentration. Provide each student with the same mentor throughout high school to assist with setting goals, selecting courses, reviewing the student's progress, and suggesting appropriate interventions as necessary.

9) **Extra help.** Provide a structured system of extra help to assist students in completing accelerated programs of study with high-level academic and technical content.

10) **Culture of continuous improvement.** Use student assessment and program evaluation data to continuously improve school culture, organization, management, curriculum, and instruction to advance student learning.[7]

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[7] Southern Regional Education Board, n.d.b.