

# **Schools to Learn From: How Six High Schools Graduate English Language Learners College and Career Ready**

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# Executive Summary

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*Schools to Learn From: How Six High Schools Graduate English Language Learners College and Career Ready* profiles six public high schools that have demonstrated extraordinary academic outcomes for English Language Learners (ELLs). U.S. schools are currently considering the educational needs of ELLs like never before. New standards, most notably the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), highlight and elevate expectations across the content areas for students' language and literacy skills as well as their analytical practices, raising the bar linguistically and academically for ELLs. There are also more ELLs in our schools than ever before. In recent decades, and especially over the past ten years, almost all states have experienced an increase in ELL student enrollment. In fact, during the 2012-13 academic year, ELLs numbered 4.4 million and constituted nearly ten percent of all U.S. public school students.<sup>1</sup> Despite this demographic upswing and the new standards' linguistic focus bringing increased attention to the needs of ELLs, these students still face a significant achievement gap in relation to other students. Our educational strategies for them merit profound reconsideration. In conducting this research, we have learned that it is possible for schools and districts to build foundations that provide ELLs with a wealth of options to realize their aspirations and potential. We hope that by illustrating the details of how schools actually achieve these outstanding outcomes, the case studies in this report will jumpstart the national conversation about how best to educate ELLs in the context of new standards. We focus on high schools because so little is known about supportive programming for ELLs at this grade level.

The six schools selected for inclusion in these case studies were chosen on the basis of stronger than average graduation and college-going outcomes for ELLs.<sup>2</sup> The schools are: Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy (Boston, MA), High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies (Manhattan, NY), It Takes a Village Academy (Brooklyn, NY), Manhattan Bridges High School (Manhattan, NY), Marble Hill School for International Studies (Bronx, NY), and New World High School (Bronx, NY). Teams of two to three researchers worked closely with each school over the course of approximately three days to conduct site visits during which they closely examined the schools' systems and practices. These teams observed classrooms; interviewed and conducted focus groups with key stakeholders including principals, teachers, students, parents; and gained additional insights through key documents shared by the school team. Our findings point to schools that are *singularly driven* toward supporting ELLs' college and career readiness and are *constantly improving* their approaches to this mission.

## Shared School Values

Across the schools we visited, we identified six shared values that guide their daily actions and decision-making, and shape how students and their families experience the schools. The

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<sup>1</sup> Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). The condition of education 2011. NCES 2011-033. National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> When compared to other high schools within their districts and states. See Appendix I for an explanation of our methodology.

enactment of these values creates a supportive, thoughtful environment that allows ELLs to flourish and excel.

1. **The school puts forth an ambitious mission focused on preparing *all* students for college and career success.** From the moment students walk through the door of the school, it is conveyed to them repeatedly that they can and *will* succeed. This mindset goes beyond “high expectations”—the school makes a commitment to prepare *every single student* for post-secondary education, and ensures that students *will not need remediation once they are there*. The school will stop at nothing to make this happen. Instruction is tremendously rigorous, and there is an extremely high level of support provided to help students meet this level of rigor.
2. **The school mission guides all decisions.** Every aspect of the school experience is thoughtfully and intentionally designed, including the scheduling of classes, hiring of committed and qualified employees, course programming, professional learning, and partnerships with community organizations. Absolutely no opportunity is wasted to move the school closer to its goal.
3. **The school holds a mindset of continuous improvement.** Administrators and educators reflect on their practices as they continuously strive to fulfill the mission of success for every student. An abundance of student data provides a roadmap that allows the team to adapt its teaching and course structures to how students learn. The continuous improvement stance extends into the classrooms where we see students taking charge of and reflecting on their own learning.
4. **The entire school shares responsibility for students’ success.** *Everyone* in the school contributes significantly toward and takes responsibility for the success of every student. This includes staff members, network partners, parents, and even students themselves, who know to ask for help when they need it, and who frequently help other students when they are struggling.
5. **The school is highly attuned to students’ needs and capacities.** Everything starts with the students themselves. Courses, schedules, and other structures are designed and adapted with the ever-changing student population in mind, including its array of unique language and cultural backgrounds and language proficiencies. The school makes no assumptions about the student body, but rather collects and analyzes evidence to make decisions.
6. **There is a strong sense of pride in and respect toward all cultures.** The school values the diversity of students’ languages and cultures and invests time and resources to understand the lived experiences of students. Students feel proud of their unique identities and abilities, and are guided to respect those of their peers as well.

## Innovative School Design Elements

These six schools redefine the possibilities and outcomes for their ELLs in tangible ways through specific school designs and related instructional practices. Within all of the cases studies, you will notice how the schools embrace the following set of design elements, and adapt them to fit their strengths and needs. There is not a specific “formula” of success for any one of these schools. It is a combination of all seven of these elements working together in a coherent way, undergirded by the set of shared values outlined above, that allows the ELLs in these school communities to flourish and exceed expectations. In turn, these schools create a new generation

of young ELLs with the skills, knowledge, and drive to reach their utmost potential. These design elements include:

1. **Passionate, strategic, and mission-driven leadership.** School leaders are fiercely dedicated and highly organized and strategic about fulfilling the promise of ELLs' success. No obstacles or excuses impede this mission. The leaders are visionary and innovative, and “think outside the box” in designing learning specifically for ELLs. The leadership team is involved in instruction at every level. The leaders balance courage and strategy in enacting tough decisions, and work tirelessly to recruit and retain staff that shares and acts on the school's vision for its students. These leaders are entrepreneurial and cultivate numerous beneficial relationships with partners and stakeholders. Leadership is shared among principals, assistant principals, teachers, and other staff, who work collectively toward the same end.
2. **Strategic staffing.** School staff members, including leaders, often are immigrants and former ELLs, speak students' home languages, and have significant international travel experience. This helps staff to understand ELLs' perspectives, communicate with them, and serve as role models for students. They are also often dual-certified in ESL and content areas. The combination of the staff's multicultural histories along with its deep knowledge of working with ELLs helps teachers hone in closely on the strengths and needs of the ELL populations at their site. New staff members who share the school's vision are actively recruited and strategically deployed. Teachers are in charge of their own professional learning, which is tailored to their particular needs and aligned to the mission of the school. Collaboration is frequent and structurally well-supported, and retention levels are high.
3. **Ongoing, intentional assessment with follow-through.** The school assesses student capacities (language and otherwise) thoughtfully and in detail from entry through graduation and beyond, and updates instruction, course offerings, and structures based on this data. A guidance team typically works closely with students and their families, both formally through initial diagnostics and home visits, and informally through conversations and meetings throughout the year, to gather relevant information about the knowledge, background, and needs of each student and her family. Extensive formative assessment practices in classrooms inform instruction. Students' ownership of their growth and progress is strong. Students revise their own work, present their learning via portfolio presentations in public forums, and work collaboratively on project-based learning tasks—all in the effort to learn from the process and from the feedback of peers and adults.
4. **Intensive social-emotional support.** The school supports students toward academic success and helps them become healthy and thriving young adults. There are abundant mentoring relationships. Students experience caring connections with school staff. The school communicates with ELLs' families frequently (often daily) and in their home languages, making the families feel welcomed and supported. School staff respects the cultures and understands the experiences of ELLs' families, and gradually builds their trust and draws in their involvement. Lastly, the school goes above and beyond in connecting ELLs and their families with wraparound services related to health, housing, food security, employment, and community resources so that students and their families have successful transitions into their new communities.
5. **Unified language development framework integrating content, analytical practices, and language learning.** Teachers recognize that the cultural and language assets of their ELLs can be used to formulate and strengthen students' language and academic development, in

part through using resources from both languages. Students' assets are employed such that students increase their mastery of content knowledge and analytical practices while moving toward greater fluency in academic English. There is deliberate and thoughtful unit and lesson planning between ESL instructors and content area teachers, and agreement and consistency about how languages are to be used in classes and autonomy is to be developed.

6. **Intentional, carefully-orchestrated structures.** The school builds structures that are dynamic, creative and flexible to meet the promise of student success, and are not bound by the regular class period or school day. Staff is always on hand to help students. Structures may include block schedules, afterschool and weekend tutoring, and looping. The focus in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades for ELLs is on building strong foundational language, literacy, and college readiness skills, embedded and enriched by rigorous and meaningful content and ideas. This reduces the need for credit recovery, and releases funds and time for diverse advanced college-preparatory courses in upper grades.
7. **Strategic community partnerships.** Partnerships with external organizations are purposefully and carefully selected to *augment* and *improve* the existing practices at the school. The school works with community organizations to expand extracurricular options (e.g., robotics programs, philanthropic ventures, and film), extend college-credit opportunities, and strengthen the college selection and entry process (e.g., college visits, application support, and mentorship with students).

Altogether, these schools hold themselves accountable to the standards and expectations they have set with their students and families. We invite readers to learn more about these schools through these case studies and consider ways in which the schools' values and practices can be applied in local policy and practice environments. These high schools can serve as "North Stars"—guides that can orient both practitioners and researchers to reflect on their own beliefs and practices and engage in frank conversations about how we can work and learn from one another better *in the service* of ELLs.

# Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy

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## **I. A Glimpse into a SIFE Classroom: What are Human Rights?**


Seven students sit in a semi-circle reviewing their close-reading notes on the *U.S. Bill of Rights* and are discussing how the images on the board, one of Mahatma Gandhi, one that is a cultural signage from the Jim Crow era of the 1960's, and one that is of protesters in apartheid South Africa, are related to the abstract notion of “human rights.” Ms. T., a Haitian refugee who came to the U.S. as a teenager, encourages the students to use the concept map provided (see Figure 1) to make meaning between the close reading and the images projected and prompts students to generate ideas, thoughts, opinions, and claims that get them to relate the text, the image artifacts, and their personal histories in developing an understanding of what human rights means in these various contexts and how the concept has evolved and been redefined through key historical events.

All the students have a graphic organizer that frames their initial thoughts and guides them in entering into the discussion, as well as a “Human Rights: Partner Reading” template that is used to guide the subsequent activity that moves the students to clarify their thinking through writing (see Figure 2.) In this paired writing activity, Ms. T. groups the students heterogeneously with respect to English language proficiencies and encourages students who have greater facilities in English to help out the newcomers who have limited to no English experiences. At the same time, Ms. T. circulates the room to help the student groups, speaking mostly in English, but sometimes using Spanish to clarify terms or ideas, and she solidifies students' thinking by asking clarifying and extension questions. The buzz of conversations is interrupted by lulls of writing as the students craft their thoughts into coherent paragraphs to be shared shortly.

As students complete their writing exercise, Ms. T. asks each pair to take turns reading their paragraphs aloud to each other and circle “difficult” words that are challenging to pronounce, or are unclear or confusing in how they have been used in the particular context. At the close of the class, Ms. T. moves toward more explicit vocabulary instruction, selecting a subset of words that have been identified by the students and asks the class to consider how these words are used in context and moves them toward a deeper understanding of the meanings of these terms.

This classroom is just one example of how the Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) at BINcA grapple with rich, relevant content undergirded by strong literacy development. In our observations, we saw students engaged in a rigorous program of study designed to develop proficiency in English while cultivating grade-level content knowledge development. The instructional staff takes an additive bilingualism perspective, and utilizes students’ home

**Figure 1. Graphic Organizer: What Do You Understand about Human Rights?**

What do you understand about Human Rights?	
I understand that <b>human rights</b> are...	Three examples of <b>human rights</b> are... 1.) 2.) 3.)
I think the <b>most important</b> human right is...  because...	Draw a picture.  

languages to complement instruction, scaffold understanding of content knowledge, maximize student engagement, and facilitate learning in English.

As illustrated in this vignette, there is an explicit focus on language development, with contextualized pronunciation work, vocabulary and sentence development, and discourse structure woven into lessons. As evidenced by this lesson and supported by research in cognition and learning, learning is seen as a collaborative endeavor in BINcA classrooms, and students can be seen interacting to assist in each other's learning, clarify meaning, and produce improved and greater sophistication in their discourse. Activities are designed to encourage purposeful communication using cognitively challenging and discipline-specific language and complex texts. At BINcA, units of study, such as this one around human rights, value students' experiences and perspectives. Students are taught to write in meaningful ways for real audiences, listen to others, communicate ideas orally, and interact with peers. Modeling and scaffolding, such as the above use of images, concept maps, and sentence frames, help students develop more advanced levels of proficiency. Many activities also encourage the externalization of student learning so that teachers can formatively assess and monitor student comprehension of content.

Indeed, all of the support structures in place at BINcA are carefully designed to develop students' academic expertise, to create a climate of academic exploration, risk-taking, and trust, and to graduate students who are prepared to enter college. This case study will describe the many school-wide and classroom features that together guide student learning and effectively prepare English Language Learners (ELLs) for post-secondary education.

**Figure 2. “Human Rights: Partner Reading” Template**

**Human Rights: Partner Reading**

\_\_\_\_\_ is a rule or law \_\_\_\_\_. Some examples  
\_\_\_\_\_ are education, \_\_\_\_\_, no torture,  
\_\_\_\_\_, no slavery, \_\_\_\_\_, freedom  
\_\_\_\_\_, and equality. \_\_\_\_\_ fought for  
\_\_\_\_\_, equal rights for all, \_\_\_\_\_, and the right  
\_\_\_\_\_. Mohandas Gandhi \_\_\_\_\_ freedom,  
\_\_\_\_\_, equality, and \_\_\_\_\_ to others.

## II. Opening Doors

“Teachers who are successful here believe these students in our school community are changing the world... We provide them the environment, the resources, and the opportunities that they need. We, as a community, change the outcome that the student was looking at and then for generations to follow... We deeply understand how one person getting to college can change the family history forever [and] we are committed to having that happen for all our students.”

-Tony King, Former Assistant Principal, current Headmaster at BINcA

The above sentiment, empowering students to be change agents in their own communities and in the world, is echoed by the school leadership and staff of Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy. Just five years ago in the summer of 2010, Nicole Bahnam, Headmaster at the time of our team’s site visit, assumed leadership of the school, which until that transition had been two separate organizations (Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy). Bahnam led the two communities through a process of developing a common vision of empowering students to be “contributing citizens in a global society through discovery and wonder,” with core values centered on “advocacy, community, diversity and high expectations.” Together, these two communities formed BINcA. This joint school community has a shared vision and mission to:

1. Embrace new immigrant adolescent English learners and their families;
2. Teach English across the content areas while honoring students’ native languages and cultures; and

3. Partner with families and communities to ensure students will be college- and career-ready and motivated to pursue a life of learning and civic engagement by instilling the habits of ownership, perseverance, expression and service.

Located in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, BINcA is the only high school in the district designed to exclusively serve new immigrants and Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). All of BINcA’s 440 students are ELLs or recently reclassified former ELLs, and they represent over 40 countries and over 25 language backgrounds (predominantly Spanish, Cape Verdean Creole, and Haitian Creole) (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Demographic and Performance Data**

<p><b>2014-2015 October Enrollment</b>            Size: 381            African American: 43%            Hispanic: 50.7%            White: 1.3%            Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic: 1.3%            English not First Language: 100%            English Language Learner: 83.7%            Students with Disabilities: 3.7%</p> <p>Note: Individual students may be included in multiple categories.</p> <p>Source: profiles.doe.mass.edu</p>	<p><b>4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate<sup>3</sup> (2014)</b>            Size: 43            ELL: 100% of the 2010 entry cohort            Graduated: 76.7% (compared to 65.7% Boston graduation rate for ELLs)</p> <p><b>5-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2013)</b>            Size: 17            ELL: 100% of the 2009 entry cohort            Graduated: 100% (compared to 68.5% Boston graduation rate for ELLs)</p> <p><b>Graduates Attending Institutions of Higher Education (2012-2013)</b>            Size: 58            ELL: 100% of 2012 graduates            Attending college/university: 77.6%</p>
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Most of BINcA’s students and families are immigrants living in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. Across these working-class communities, many of the students and family members have endured hardship in their home countries and in their journeys to the U.S. as newly arrived immigrants or as refugees. Against this backdrop, BINcA, as described by Headmaster Bahnman opens doors to opportunities:

It’s a school that works for kids ... where thoughtful people surround the children, who are English Language Learners, and see the asset and gift they bring with them and build on these gifts. And regardless of where you come from, it opens the door to America. It gives them the tools to learn, to become an independent learner, and endure, and not [be] someone who is going to be waiting. They can start dreaming big...and they can help others.”

<sup>3</sup> The four-year adjusted cohort graduate rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class.



Indeed, students at BINcA have thrived. Newly-arrived ELLs enter the Newcomers Academy community at BINcA and take part in one of two programs: High Intensity Language Training (HILT), targeted toward students who have had interrupted formal education (SIFE) or very limited prior schooling experience, or Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) for all other students. HILT classes have significantly more native language support whereas SEI classes focus more on integrating language and literacy development into grade-level content area instruction with the goal of making academic subject matter more comprehensible while promoting English development. Students who enter Newcomers Academy stay one or two years, depending whether they are in HILT or SEI, until they transition formally to a high school program, either directly into Boston International High School community at BINcA, or to another high school in the district of their choosing.

BINcA has demonstrated strong academic outcomes for their ELLs. On the 2014 summative assessments, BINcA outperformed comparable state populations by 30.5% in mathematics and 8.1% in ELA (see Figure 4). The 2014 graduating cohort had 43 students, among whom 76.7% graduated in 4 years, and 100% graduated within 5 years (see Figure 3). Additionally, in the spring of 2015, BINcA was one of eight schools invited to apply for the *School on the Move* Prize, a \$100,000 Boston-wide prize awarded each fall to a school that has made significant progress over the past four years toward closing the achievement gap for all students.

**Figure 4. Strong Academic Outcomes for ELLs and Former ELLs:  
Comparing BINcA with State Averages**

	<b>BINcA</b>	<b>State</b>
English Language Arts Composite Performance Index <sup>4</sup> (CPI) [2014]	75.9%	67.8%
Mathematics Composite Performance Index (CPI) [2014]	94.3%	63.8%

This case study examines the factors that contribute to BINcA’s success. In particular, we detail how the school is designed to support academic knowledge and English language development for the diversity of its ELLs. The school sees diversity—among both students and staff—as a vital strength of its community. This report will focus attention on how the Newcomers Academy targets its resources and aligns its activities to support the success of its SIFE together with how the leadership of BINcA has built a culture that centers on relentless improvement with a laser focus on the school’s resolute commitment that all its students will graduate ready to thrive in college and careers.

The leadership and staff work closely with each student and family to help them understand their histories and experiences and to leverage those experiences in weaving together an intricate tapestry of foundations and stories where students, parents, and relatives consider BINcA a family. It is here that students feel safe and supported in their learning and development as they adjust to life in a new country. By empowering students with academic achievement and opportunities for success, BINcA is opening doors for the young immigrants of Boston.

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<sup>4</sup> The CPI is a measure of progress toward the goal of narrowing proficiency gaps on the MCAS on a scale of 0-100.

## How It All Began: Inception and Evolution of Newcomers Academy

The Newcomers Academy component of BINcA began as a separate entity during the 2008-2009 school year when central office leaders recognized that the district was not fully serving the needs of SIFE and newcomer students who would trickle into the Boston Public Schools throughout the year. Previously, SIFE were placed in either available bilingual programs or in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) programs where educators would be trained and “endorsed” to teach academic content in English to ELLs. The district team needed to address two major problems. First, the influx of SIFE throughout the year made it difficult for schools to budget, hire, and maintain the appropriate, high-quality staffing that would meet the needs of late arrival students. Second, many of the SIFE were dispersed throughout various bilingual and SEI programs and it was unclear if the needs for SIFE were met within these particular programs. As a result, the team researched various newcomers’ program models around the country and wrote a proposal to start a newcomers program in Boston to serve these students.

Doors opened in the spring of 2009. Tony King (BINcA’s Assistant Principal at the time of our team’s site visit), who was part of the initial district team that worked with the ELL and SIFE populations, formed a leadership team for the Newcomers Academy along with one other program liaison. This leadership team hired new staff and welcomed assigned students into the academy. The program launched that spring and King and the program director hired three long-term substitutes through the district’s human resources department who could work with the initial cohort of students entering this new program.

The recruitment process for the team differs today as the program has grown and stabilized in terms of programming and staffing. In the early years, hiring was predominately driven by seniority and the evaluation process. For teachers who were not the right fit at BINcA, school leaders have had to use the formal evaluation process, including mediation, in finalizing dismissal procedures for teachers. Finding the best teachers for BINcA students was not an easy task. Former Headmaster Bahnam has navigated through some of the politics and procedures within the central district Human Capital office to get the best fitting, most competent teachers for her students.

In the last two years, a new district process was put in place that is no longer based on seniority. This policy move from the district has allowed for greater flexibility for the school team to recruit and hire the best-fitting teachers for BINcA. The school tries to find team members who are aligned with the philosophy and culture of the school, have experience working with ELLs, are focused on working with newcomers, and have facility with the languages and cultures of the student body. The leadership team works closely with the current staff and taps into their networks to find possible candidates. Additionally, the leadership team and staff are well connected to the local teacher education schools that are training the next generation of teachers. King explained, “Before a position opens up, we’ve identified strong applicants and we encourage them to apply because we see fit as very important at our school.”

The challenges of hiring have evolved over time as staff members range in their strengths and experiences in working with SIFE students. For example, it has been, and continues to be a challenge to find educators who deeply understand the needs of SIFE, have strong instructional practices to support the diversity of ELLs and especially of newcomers, and have values aligned with the BINcA mission. Those who remain in this unique community are committed with both

their head and their heart. That is, they see themselves in helping to “shape history” for these students and create a new trajectory of opportunities that would otherwise be non-existent or limited.

In addition to finding the right team members to support this work, BINcA, like many other programs and institutions, struggles with how to best use the limited financial resources for its students and teachers. An ongoing issue is how to balance investment in academic supports with investment in enrichment for expression (e.g., art, theater, dance). The team has worked hard to prioritize and provide the necessary academic supports while developing partnerships that harness students’ artistic, creative, and expressive sides. However, access to resources is a continual challenge.

### **III. Community by Design**

“We are part of a community, we are one family here,” is how one parent describes Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy, and this connection to the school as a place of safety, nurture, and care is echoed by students and staff alike. This is one school organization composed of two intertwining parts: Boston International High School (serving grades 9-12), and Newcomers Academy (1-2 year transitional program for recently arrived immigrants and SIFE that prepares students for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade). One of the most important drivers of BINcA’s success is the way in which the school has been able to cohere as a community, with adults and students working together to form a support network for students. The end goal of the school is clear—to empower and support every single student through key transitions into and beyond high school, so that they will thrive in college and careers. This includes explicit college preparatory programming (i.e., curriculum, college and financial aid applications, SAT prep), and a clear pathway that allows students, families, and school personnel to track and monitor progress toward academic and career goals (see Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2013). As a result, the school serves as a sanctuary for students, where they know they can be challenged and supported in every aspect of their development.

To build this sense of community and family, BINcA starts by paying close attention to who its students are, with profound respect for and acknowledgement of their varied histories, cultures, and personal experiences. Using this deep understanding of their students, the staff is able to tailor a comprehensive set of social, emotional, and physical services to support each child’s well-being. An understanding of students’ cultural backgrounds allows staff members to mediate potential conflicts among students with sensitivity. In addition, extensive academic support structures ensure that students are able to meet the rigor of classroom demands. Throughout, the adults are guided by the belief that regardless of a student’s personal or educational history, BINcA can figure out a path for her educational success.

#### **Starting with Who the Students Are**

When asked about the students at BINcA, a guidance counselor describes her students with admiration:

Our kids are fearless. You have kids that crossed the border and in two weeks found their way to the East Coast... and come to school every day, go to work, get out at one o’clock

in the morning from a restaurant, and still make it back here on time and are doing homework... They're coming, and they're graduating, and they're going off to college.

This understanding of who their students are and the experiences that have shaped them is an important basis for the strong relationships that staff members have built with their students. Starting with the initial intake interview that BINcA has with each student and family in their home language, the team builds knowledge and understanding of the student's personal and academic history in planning out the necessary supports and services that will help the student succeed in this new environment. Sample questions from the student intake interview can be seen in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Sample Student Intake Interview Questions**

<p><b><u>Personal History:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What language(s) do you speak at home?</li><li>2. Where were you born? (City/Country)</li><li>3. When did you arrive to the U.S.? (Month/Year)</li><li>4. Where did you live before entering the U.S.?</li><li>5. Did you live anywhere else before you came to Boston?</li><li>6. When did you arrive in Boston?</li><li>7. With whom do you live?</li></ol> <p><b><u>Schooling and Academic History:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. In what language(s) do you feel most comfortable reading and writing?</li><li>2. How old were you when you began the first grade/primary school?</li><li>3. What language(s) did teachers use with you when you were going to school in your country?</li><li>4. How did you get to school? How long did it take you to get to school each time you went to school?</li><li>5. How many days a week did you go to school?</li><li>6. How many students were in each of your classes?</li><li>7. How long were your classes? How many minutes?</li><li>8. What subjects did you study in school?</li><li>9. Did you go to school every day or did you miss days? Why did you miss school days?</li><li>10. Have you ever been in a special needs program or have you received special needs services? Please indicate types of programs or services.</li><li>11. What are your interests? (e.g., music, arts, theater, etc.)</li></ol>
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The instructional team and support staff at BINcA are guided by the “4 Cs,” representing “Connection, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity.” Classroom discussions, hallway banter, and guidance sessions with students are influenced by connections to students’ past experiences and histories as Latino, Cape Verdean, or Haitian youths. As the Dean of Discipline explained, “The outreach and trust building often surprises students.” This attentiveness makes students feel cared for and reduces the external anxieties that may impact students’ experiences at BINcA, and ultimately enables the school to function peacefully. The support staff works

closely with the instructional staff to understand the various modes of expressions (e.g., theater, music, arts), passions, and creativity that can further students' long-term educational goals.

### **Appreciation of and Sensitivity to Cultural Diversity**

Staff, students and parents alike at BINcA see the diversity of the student body as one of the school's most valuable strengths. One student explained that she likes her school because even though students come from different countries, they do not act differently with different groups; instead, they work as one group and help each other. Another student describes BINcA as very diverse, but a place where everyone gets along with each other, people do not feel separated, and no one group feels like it is better than another. Parents of students at BINcA also appreciate the many cultures, languages, countries, and religions represented by the school's students, and the ways in which teachers draw upon students' backgrounds when they are teaching. As one parent put it, since the U.S. is a multicultural country, a multicultural school like BINcA will help prepare students for college and life after high school.

BINcA hires diverse staff members who possess keen understanding of the immigrant experience and the language skills with which to communicate with students and their families. For example, staff members speak many of the home languages used by students, from Spanish to Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, and Arabic. Parents and family members feel more at ease, welcomed, and willing to become more involved when families and staff can communicate in shared languages. Beyond the connection of shared language, many staff members also draw from their personal experiences as immigrants or refugees to build connections with their students and their struggles. The guidance counselor is empathetic toward her students as she is also an immigrant to the country. Regarding the shared experiences that she and many staff members have with their students, she said,

Many of us are products of immigrant parents, so we easily connect, understand [our students] and their struggles. Maybe they don't have all of their family, or have access to resources and family helping them to navigate their new world because family members may be studying and working full time. It takes one-on-one time where we build relationships and trust with each student, then you can build their self-esteem.

Staff members at BINcA also use their understandings of their students' various cultural customs and backgrounds as a resource when working with students and their families. The guidance counselor explained a recognition that school personnel have in working with immigrant families:

When it comes to decisions about college, there are a number of reasons parents may not be directly involved. It could be because of work, or because of other family responsibilities, or the lack of time, or [because they are] embarrassed about their lack of education or language barriers... From my family's perspective, a student goes to school, [and] the teacher and [headmaster] are in charge of that student and there's no reason for parents to be involved—because they are taken care of.

The school team often takes on significant responsibility for helping families explore opportunities and recognize possibilities for their children. The ability of the BINcA team to speak the families' home languages puts many families at ease, but challenges persist. The guidance counselor recalls how families may encourage their children to work, rather than

pursue college, because of the high cost of college. The team understands that there is a both a generational and cultural shift at play, and they see their role as supporting both the child's and family's long-term success in this new country.

Staff members at BINcA also use their knowledge of diverse cultures to ensure that students receive the supports they need. Recognizing that seeking counseling is viewed with stigma in some cultures, staff members are careful to frame referrals to the counselor as “checking in at the health center” or “meeting with someone to see how you are liking the school.” By changing the description of counseling to make it more acceptable to students, adults at BINcA are able to deftly steer students towards the services they need to be successful.

That the staff members at BINcA are uniquely attuned to the needs of students because of the staff's diverse language and cultural backgrounds is not lost on parents, who are quick to note that the school hires for diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and languages. Parents take comfort in the fact that school staff members who come from similar backgrounds as students and their families are more likely to be sensitive to their cultural heritages and educational needs. It is this deliberate attention to understanding and valuing the cultural background and assets of families that allows the school team to close the distance between culturally-diverse families and the school culture (Valdés, 1996).

### **Social-Emotional and Wrap-around Supports: Stability from Day One**

Knowing that many of their students have faced trauma and upheaval in their recent transitions to the U.S., staff members at BINcA believe it is extremely important to create stability for their students from day one. They do this formally through an extensive array of wrap-around services designed to meet individual students' needs, and informally through the constant expression of care and support. The vignette in Figure 6 illustrates how the school supports newly-arrived immigrant students with sensitivity and care.

**Figure 6. Student Vignette: Arrival and Initial Supports**

Audrey,<sup>5</sup> a 16 year-old Haitian native, recently immigrated to Dorchester to live with her distant relatives who work in the service industry. After taking a language placement test administered by the district office, the district liaison recommended that Audrey be placed at BINcA because of its diversity and supports for ELLs.

Audrey and an aunt who is accompanying her arrive to BINcA with some information from the district office about the schooling process but limited knowledge about BINcA and its specific offerings. At their first meeting, Audrey and her aunt describe to the guidance counselor Audrey's journey to America, her experiences in education back in Haiti, and her thoughts and aspirations at BINcA. During this time, the counselor moves fluidly between English and Haitian-Creole and steers the conversation toward some of the questions from the intake interview (See Figure 5). Within this one-hour conversation, the counselor notes particular strengths and needs of Audrey and her family and uses this opportunity to garner their trust as they begin this educational journey together as partners.

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<sup>5</sup> Pseudonym is used.

During the first two weeks of Audrey’s enrollment, the counselor greets Audrey and informally checks in with her in the hallways and before and after school to make sure her transition to BINcA have been smooth. Formally, she checks in with Audrey at the two-week mark, as she does with many incoming students and makes sure Audrey has an adult figure to turn to and to troubleshoot any unanticipated needs that haven’t been met. In this two-week check in, the counselor inquires about a students’ home life, general health (e.g., physical, mental, emotional) supports, as well as food and safety concerns that a student may have in her new country. This type of conversation will continue until and beyond graduation day. Of course the discussions will move from this important transitional and adjustment period toward exploring and setting the groundwork for future opportunities after graduation.

The vignette above is just a small example of the intentional ways that the team builds relationships and trust with students and their families. The counseling team members, all from immigrant families themselves, see their work as being both community builders as well as advocates for families, assessing the children’s and families’ needs, and getting the right services and resources that support student and family success in this new country. BINcA’s school dean explains that the school and family support team is well-connected with the local community and service providers:

We’re able to provide students and their families with access to much-needed resources such as food stamps or housing—having that connection with people who have those resources is a big plus... We’re going beyond just the child’s education. We’re helping their family...their grandmother.

Students realize that their teachers care about more than just their education, and this fills them with pride and respect for their school. Some students and families see the BINcA community as “an extension of their family.” The guidance counselor reiterated the importance of welcoming families to the school from day one. By showing them the support system that is in place for their children, she is able to build a foundation of trust that is the basis for future communication and involvement.

In addition to the care provided through the intake process and the provision of resources and services, BINcA also safeguards the well-being of its students through many informal practices on the part of adults on campus. During passing periods, the headmaster chats with teachers and students, taking the pulse of the school. During lunch time, former Headmaster Bahnam conversed with students, shared stories, shared lunch with them, and observed the social interactions among her students. She believes that lunch is a critical time to assess how students are adjusting socially to the school; by observing who they are sitting with, she could get a sense of how well students were fitting in and whether they needed additional social supports.

In a recent interview with Flora,<sup>6</sup> whose son Alex is a rising junior, she recounted her son’s first days as a new student at BINcA not knowing any English:

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<sup>6</sup> Pseudonyms are used.

My son Alex came [to the U.S.] in September 2013 and was scared to come to this new school [BINcA]. He didn't know any English and wasn't sure how he would express himself or communicate. When he came home from the first day, I was worried, but he said that it was the "best day" for him. He told me that someone took care of him, and teachers ate lunch with him so he wouldn't be eating alone and made him feel comfortable in this new place and immediately, my son felt like it was the best school. First impressions mattered and it was very good. For me, the teachers made my son feel comfortable, and communicated with me, explaining problems and successes. I feel like this is the right place for my son.

These positive first impressions served as small stepping stones toward building student trust and commitment toward schooling. Alex's mother further explained how her son feels like he's part of a family:

I can see that my son is enthusiastic, likes to learn, likes to come to school, and feels like part of a community. Over time, my son has been able to communicate and work with others and they get together and are part of each other's lives. The teachers understand the problem and work together as a group—this is one of the things that contributes to their success.

It is this nurturing family-like environment that allows the students at BINcA to feel welcomed from day one and thrive in classrooms that embrace and acknowledge the histories and strengths of each student, and brings them together in a close-knit learning community from young adolescent into adulthood.

### **Caring Relationships as a Foundation Toward Academic Success**

Care and consideration for the whole child also characterize the disciplinary system at BINcA. The philosophy of former Headmaster Bahnam is that a safe school environment is the number one priority for learning. As she put it, it is important for students to feel "included and cared for; they need a place with structure to help them grow, not a thousand small rules that govern their behavior." She reminded teachers that their students have different profiles and histories, and that being patient is part of the teachers' job. She believes that 50% of what the school provides needs to be social-emotional support—helping students to feel wanted and to believe in themselves. As students settle into their lives in the U.S., their emotional needs will stabilize, and they will thrive academically as well.

In keeping with this philosophy, behavior management at the school focuses on conflict resolution and student communication. Because staff members know that conflicts among students can escalate quickly if students do not understand why others are aggressive toward them, translation and mediation are used to resolve conflicts. The support staff organizes opportunities to help students examine their choices and acts as "coaches" in guiding students toward alternative ways to resolve conflicts. By emphasizing a problem-solving mindset rather than the punitive aspects of discipline, staff members at BINcA maintain a safe campus environment while preserving the social-emotional health of their students.

In our conversation with a district leader, she described BINcA's approach toward conflict management among their diverse student populations:



The staff and leadership are incredibly attentive to students' social, emotional, and physical health—which they see as critical to learning. Diversity here is seen as a strength and the team is proactive in giving students tools toward conflict resolution that help students understand each other's cultures and religion—because at times, their views and opinions differ... The time after the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing was tense across our schools, especially for those who served Muslim students. The team at BINcA foresaw this fear and quickly moved to put a plan in place. They designed lessons to help students understand why cultures and religions can clash.

After the bombing incident, the team worked proactively and used culturally-sensitive methods to stimulate reflection and dialogue among their students. They were able to anticipate and de-escalate potential conflict and the stereotyping after the tragedy that befell the larger community of Boston.

### Optimizing Engagement, Learning, and Effort

The school optimizes students' engagement, learning, and effort through creative scheduling and rigorous coursework. Figure 7 gives the curriculum and graduation requirements, which include passing numerous rigorous courses, completing a capstone independent research project in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and having passing scores on MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, the end-of-year state assessment in multiple subjects). Language and literacy development takes place not only in the double block of English and ESL courses, but is woven into the fabric of every single academic course at BINcA. This set of foundation courses with a strong emphasis on language and literacy across the content areas gives students the foundation they need to be successful in post-secondary life after graduation.

**Figure 7. Curriculum and Graduation Requirements**

<p><b>English</b> - 4 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ELA 9, ELA 10, ELA 11, ELA 12</li></ul> <p><b>English as a Second Language (ESL)</b> - 4 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ESL (2 years)</li><li>• Writing 1, Writing 2</li></ul> <p><b>Math</b> - 4 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Algebra 1</li><li>• Geometry</li><li>• Algebra 2</li><li>• Pre-Calculus or Statistics</li></ul> <p><b>Science</b> - 4 years (3 laboratory-based)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physics</li><li>• Chemistry</li><li>• Biology</li><li>• Biology 2 and/or Environmental Science</li></ul> <p><b>History</b> - 3 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• US History 1</li><li>• US History 2</li></ul>
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- World History
- World Languages** - 2 years
- Electives** - 5 units (e.g., Psychology, Health professions, Business exploration, Entrepreneurship, French, Film, AP-Spanish, Human Geography, Athletics, Technology literacy)
- Capstone project** - 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- MCAS** - 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- Passing scores: English, Math, and Science (Physics, Chemistry, or Biology)
- SAT Exam**
- Junior Year / 11<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Senior Year / 12<sup>th</sup> grade

### Team and Community Building: A Nuanced View on Hiring and Development

During her years as the school’s leader, former headmaster Bahnam assembled a team that cares about and knows how to work with BINcA’s diverse student population. In assessing the viability of potential teacher candidates, Bahnam discussed three major criteria she used in guiding her decision, shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Hiring Decision Considerations**

1. Candidate’s depth of knowledge in her or his content area: *Can this teacher work with students toward a high level of rigor?*
2. Candidate’s experience and familiarity with teaching ELLs and SIFE: *How does this teacher design his/her units and lessons for ELLs and maintain student engagement in learning the content and developing language?*
3. Candidate’s interactions with BINcA students: *How does this teacher respond to student questions and replies? What feedback do students have about this potential candidate?*

The former headmaster was not afraid to be tough with her staff and hold people accountable. In her evaluation of teachers, she visited classrooms and described everything she saw and heard. Afterwards, she asked herself what she learned and where she was lost. She also reflected on the deeper understandings that were engendered by the lesson, looking at the quality of the questions that the teacher asked her students, what types of scaffolds she may have used, and whether the lesson was thoughtfully planned and executed. In some cases, she had to evaluate out teachers who are not a good match for the school’s priorities and vision, and she viewed this as necessary in order to keep students at the center of her decision-making.

Going hand in hand with the commitment to success at BINcA is an openness to feedback that characterizes a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Neither the administrators nor the teachers are content with the progress the school has made. There is a willingness to talk about their

perceived weaknesses, a sense that “we’re not there yet,” and the staff at the school is motivated to keep refining its practices, such as starting an advisory system to better support students, and creating curriculum maps across grades and content areas to build a more coherent program of learning for students.

### **Extended Learning Time: All-Hands on Deck**

Former Headmaster Bahnam worked closely with her school community to provide BINcA’s students with opportunities through a symbiotic balance between academic achievement and social-emotional supports. Bahnam recognized that the regular length of the school day is simply not enough time to help students meet the rigorous academic demands of college and careers. As a result, she worked tirelessly to procure additional funding that allows many teachers to work extended hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:45 p.m. to 4 p.m. Teachers tutor students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, as well as newcomers. During Saturdays and semester breaks, teachers hold tutorials and offer intensive one-on-one and small group help for students who need additional academic support.

It’s an “all-hands on deck” type of environment at BINcA. Teachers and staff members are often seen working with students who may be struggling with the coursework or challenged with how to express themselves through multiple literacies or feel understood in and out of the classrooms. When they aren’t working directly with students, teachers are working together to analyze student data to determine which students need additional support. They take time to understand individual students and the issues they are facing. Every other Friday is an “early-release day” for students, allowing teachers to meet in grade-level teams to create individualized plans for struggling students and check in to see whether their interventions are working.

With these academic support structures in place, students build confidence in their classes and feel prepared to take the MCAS. One student expressed that with just an hour during the school day to learn math, she does not have time to learn everything. The afterschool tutorial time allows her to extend her learning and solidify her understanding. The dean reported that BINcA has the highest attendance rate for Saturday school in the whole city, which is indicative of the students’ desire to learn and improve. When the students know that there are so many adults backing them up, and that they are part of a community that will not let them slip through the cracks, they become fully committed to their academic success.

### **One Family**

The strength of the school community is undeniable at BINcA. The teachers and administrators are exceedingly dedicated, staying late after school or coming in during weekends and holidays, and always looking for resources to support students. The former headmaster herself tutored students in math every day during first period. Students notice these extra efforts and understand that staff members are looking out for their best interests in a deep, abiding way. As a result, students not only have buy-in for the school—they love it there. Students talk about everyone knowing each other at the school and working together as a family. They feel comfortable asking their teachers questions, just as they would at home, because they know their teachers will validate their inquiries as good questions. They describe their school as a great place for an immigrant to learn English, because there is always help from many people who understand the immigrant experience.

Parents likewise see the school community coming together as one family. Their children feel comfortable, safe, and supported at BINcA. Parents point out that the teachers and headmaster are passionate about their work and believe in their students, and that they are able to work as a team to care for and support their students' needs. The tightly-knit community at BINcA, dedicated to nurturing and educating the whole child and committed to the success of every single student, is one of the most important factors contributing to its success.

## IV. Newcomers Academy

BINcA's Newcomers Academy serves students who have recently arrived in the United States. These students spend one year receiving additional support in English and basic academic skills before entering the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade, either at Boston International High School or another high school of their choice. If a newcomer student is identified as a SIFE, she may spend up to two years in the Newcomers Academy building up literacy skills in both her native language and in English before entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2013-14, 270 students designated as SIFE were enrolled in Boston Public Schools.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, 53 SIFE are enrolled in the Newcomers Academy at BINcA. Because it often takes SIFE longer than four years to graduate from high school, it is not atypical to find students between the ages of 18 and 22 in the upper grades at BINcA.

The description in Figure 9 provides a glimpse into the conversations that are taking place in one Native Language History class in the Newcomers Academy.

### Figure 9. Classroom Vignette: What Would Your Ideal Country Look Like?

Six students, all of Haitian descent, are seated in a table cluster discussing why Haitians are immigrating to the U.S. and to other countries. The students speak animatedly and without reservation about the migration of Haitian people across the globe. Some share their thoughts on seeking better opportunities elsewhere. Others share their experiences of poverty, natural disasters, and corruption that have driven Haitians out of their own country.

In front of each student are population and topographical maps of Haiti and a handful of key phrases and vocabulary in both Haitian Creole and English. Their literacy/social studies teacher, Mr. G.,<sup>8</sup> who is of Haitian descent himself, moves the discussion toward uncovering root causes of this migration. He points to the maps and asks students to think about *who* those are who are fleeing the country, *how* they are transporting themselves, and *why*.

One student jumps in and talks about how girls in the Haitian countryside often do not have the same opportunities as boys to attend school. Meanwhile, others join in to talk about families who left and made better lives for themselves by any means possible. As the discussion heats up and moves intimately toward students' personal experiences, Mr. G. pulls the conversation back toward the larger thematic question posed for the unit, "What would your ideal country look like?"

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<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib07/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/238/BPS%20at%20a%20Glance%2014-0502.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.

Though the discussion is conducted mostly in Haitian Creole, Mr. G. occasionally introduces words in English to anchor the conversation and references some of the key phrases and vocabulary that strengthen and deepen students' means of expression in English.

The high level of agency and active participation seen in this vignette is typical in classes at the Newcomers Academy for SIFE. Students learn in small groups from teachers proficient in their native language, using a curriculum that is relevant, engaging and adapted to students' needs.

The Newcomers Academy is a source of immense pride for the BINcA community. Former Headmaster Bahnam marveled at one Somali student who entered the Newcomers Academy last year. Even though Bahnam and the student shared Arabic as a common language, the student was hesitant to speak more than a couple of words to her last year. In her time at the Newcomers Academy, as Bahnam put it, "She got stronger, she got her foundation, she's ready, and now she's going to go places."

The progress that the SIFE population has made at the Newcomers Academy and Boston International High School is especially heartening. That twenty percent of the graduating class started as SIFE is what the headmaster considers the "real success" of BINcA. The experience of new arrivals and SIFE at the Newcomers Academy, through the close, personal attention and extensive instructional supports they receive, is an important reason for the success of BINcA.

### **Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)**

A typical Student with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) at BINcA's Newcomers Academy is enrolled in four classes in her native language—Spanish, Haitian Creole, or Cape Verdean Creole—and in two ESL classes. Three of the six classes (native language development, social studies and science) are taught by one teacher, and another teacher provides a period of math instruction while a third teacher serves as ESL instructor for two periods. The classes are typically small, with a maximum of fifteen students for the SIFE programming courses, though class sizes do vary from year to year. The smaller class sizes allow for a great deal of individualized attention from the teacher. (As explained earlier in the report, newcomers who are not SIFE at BINcA take part in a Structured English Immersion [SEI] program.)

The goal of the SIFE program is to prepare students academically for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, either at the Boston International High School component of BINcA or at another local high school. The team at Newcomers Academy focuses their attention to address a number of high-priority needs for this school population because of students' gaps of education. These needs include supporting students' language and literacy development skills, leveraging their home language facilities and knowledge in their acquisition of English, and building their self-confidence as these adolescents navigate toward high school and the opportunities beyond.

A native language literacy teacher described her work in the following way:

My main focus is in foundational reading and writing. We do a lot reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary development—all in the native language, which we expect to transfer as they acquire English. Some of my students lack literacy in their native language, so I start at the level of the sentence and meaning-making, and move up

from there—to oral expression, to reading, and to writing—helping them build their stamina as they read so that they can be comfortable once they enter an ESL class.

The team discussed the importance of the balance of academics and esteem-building experiences that foster a greater sense of self, which in turn, serve as a strong motivation for students to persevere through future academic and social challenges in a new place. Here, the attention teachers pay to students' social-emotional needs at BINcA comes again to the fore. Another native language teacher on the SIFE team sees two components as being especially important to his practice: building relationships and providing opportunities. Having worked with 18- or 19-year-old students who are illiterate in their native language, he explained,

I'm trying to engage them in an overall experience about schooling and trying to take away elements of frustration related to academics... I try to bring other opportunities for them to experience a new life in a new country... We take them out of the school building. At the same time, we are trying to increase their level of literacy. It's an ethos in the school. Newcomers—they haven't had the opportunity to grow academically, even in their native language.

Recognizing that many of his students have not had the opportunity to grow academically in their native countries, this teacher tries to help them experience their new lives both within and outside the school building, at the same time that he tries to increase their level of literacy.

Teachers at BINcA rely heavily on students' home language skills as an important foundation in the acquisition of English, and they also draw frequently from students' historical and cultural knowledge of their home countries. In a Cape Verdean Creole native language class, for example, students learn about how figures within Cape Verdean history have influenced their home country's culture, values and governance, within a larger thematic unit addressing the essential question of "What would your ideal country look like?" In other assignments, students are encouraged to narrate their journeys of travel and migration and connect them to larger academic themes within history and social studies.

Teachers at BINcA work extremely hard to level the playing field for newcomers and SIFE. Because of the dearth of curriculum in languages such as Cape Verdean Creole, teachers in SIFE classrooms have to be creative to make sure they have appropriate instructional materials, often translating texts into students' native language themselves. Noticing that many students entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade unprepared for the transition to high school, teachers at BINcA developed a summer bridge program to ease the adjustment for students. For four weeks during the summer, rising 9<sup>th</sup> graders attend school for four half-days each week to build up their literacy and numeracy skills, and spend the fifth day each week on field trips throughout Boston. The program provides a valuable opportunity for students to build their cultural knowledge of their city while getting to know their teachers and peers before they start high school.

Beyond the classroom, college counselors at BINcA work to connect the SIFE population to opportunities after high school, building partnerships with local colleges and service providers that have ESL programs and are familiar with BINcA's student profile. Counselors orient students to the support programs they can access when they get to college and let them know that they can always come back to BINcA for help, even after graduation. The adults at BINcA hold SIFE to the same high expectations as the rest of the students at the school, expecting them to

graduate and attend college. The rich instructional and social-emotional supports that the Newcomers Academy provides for its SIFE, along with the growth they make during their time at BINcA, make the SIFE program a truly unique and inspiring feature of the school's success.

### **Pathways and Transitions**

For students who complete the two-year program within Newcomers Academy, they have a choice to transition and participate in the school choice process organized by Boston Public Schools. Guidance counselors work with the students and help each one narrow down their choice processes among the various options locally that would be the best fit. Tony King, Assistant Principal at the time of the site visit, shared that many of students who leave Newcomers Academy have strong interest in continuing their studies beginning at 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Boston International—as Newcomers Academy is co-located in the same building as Boston International and both share a common philosophy toward supporting the diversity of their students toward college and career readiness. Merging Boston International and Newcomers Academy has benefited both entities and they move forward as one. As a result, the school leaders have worked closely to accommodate and enroll Newcomers Academy students into Boston International in a seamless fashion. However, not all students who complete Newcomers Academy choose to attend Boston International. Some students choose to find schools closer to their homes, places where they know relatives have gone, or schools that offer a wider range of athletic options.

## **V. Leadership and Vision: Language and Literacy across Disciplines**

“A lioness,” “a very good person,” “a 24/7 leader”: these are phrases that members of the BINcA community used to describe then-Headmaster Nicole Bahnam. As an immigrant and English Language Learner herself, Bahnam saw herself as a staunch advocate for her families, students, and teachers. By laying out a strong and clear vision and school design for their staff, establishing a commitment to success for both themselves and teachers, and relentlessly fighting for resources so that students graduate high school college- and career-ready, the school leadership team members have been crucial drivers of BINcA's success.

During the summer months prior to the school start, the instructional leadership team plans out a week-long summer institute which includes team-building activities that garner greater trust and stronger relationships among colleagues and provide a common foundation from which teachers and staff members build throughout the school year. For new teachers, this enculturation into the BINcA environment is particularly important, because one of the greatest resources available to new staff members is the knowledge and expertise of the existing team members. Additionally, new teachers are assigned formal mentors who can support this important transition for new teachers as they embrace BINcA's culture, goals and practices in supporting students in their classrooms.

### **Vision and a Focus on Literacy across the Content Areas**

In our conversations with the BINcA team, it quickly became clear to us that the then-headmaster had taken the helm of the school with a strong vision of what it should look like and how it should serve its students, and a close focus on supporting the academic and social-emotional learning needs of all her students. She was guided by a keen understanding of the



student population—because no two students are the same, she strove to address their varying needs and to open doors to multiple pathways for them. For a school that serves around 400 students, a fully-staffed Student Support Team (SST) works closely with students and external partners. This team is composed of a student support coordinator, a dean of discipline, guidance counselors, a registrar, a family liaison, a nurse, and social workers. (More details regarding the roles and responsibilities of the SST can be found in the Supplementary Materials section at the end of this case study.)

The academic superintendent recognizes one of the contributing factors to school success has been its size. Here, Bahnam was able to get to know her students’ families and to partner closely with them to make sure students stay on track. She knows every student and their journey to the U.S. Similarly, a parent shared, “[Bahnam] can be hard when she needs to be, but is close to the students... When there is a meeting, she calls us and makes sure we are coming—in a friendly way, caring about what’s happening at home and in school.”

In fact, the emphasis that the former headmaster placed on working with the “whole child” and attending to both their academic and their social-emotional needs set the tone for how other staff members approach their work with the students. As one member of the Guidance and Family Connections team explained,

Our headmaster, she is no joke. She likes things done immediately when it comes to students’ well-being... We tend to go off her urgency around supporting the students, especially when it comes to social-emotional [issues] or [a] high risk of dropping out. We do home visits, ... we talk to the students, the guardian, the parent... She calls herself grandma or mom, and it literally is like that, having 400 children....

Along with her vision of BINcA as a supportive environment for all students, the former headmaster also laid out a clear instructional and learning framework for the school. The academic superintendent described Bahnam:

[She is] an amazing leader, because she’s very clear about what her vision is. She is an instructional leader and that is going to be her focus. She has very high expectations but she backs that up with strong supports. She doesn’t leave it to teachers to figure it out. She shows them how to do it.

Four pillars guide and anchor students’ academic experiences at BINcA, as shown in Figure 10. These “habits” not only guide how students reflect about their learning experience, but also provide a clear framework and expectations as to how one takes action and responsibility for their own learning and the learning of others.

### **Language Development Framework**

Another significant driver that shapes the teaching and learning at BINcA is its tight focus on literacy across content areas and in all classrooms. Every BINcA teacher is a teacher of literacy and content and it is a community expectation that the core practices of reading and writing are embedded into all content areas. During the Friday professional learning time, teacher teams come together from across BINcA to focus on reading and writing as part of a school-wide culture embracing literacy and learning. (Some teacher teams, like the history team, straddle both institutions, as they include teachers who work with students from both Boston International and



**Figure 10. Habits of the Graduate and Defining Questions**

<p><b><u>Perseverance</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What can I learn from my mistakes?</li><li>• What else can I try?</li></ul> <p><b><u>Ownership</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does this work reflect my success?</li><li>• What is my role?</li></ul> <p><b><u>Service</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do I have to offer in this moment?</li><li>• What have I done for others today?</li></ul> <p><b><u>Expression</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have I communicated effectively for my audience and purpose?</li><li>• What risks have I taken?</li></ul>
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the Newcomers Academy and who work with newcomers and SIFE, as well as ELLs and former ELLs. The SIFE team, in comparison, would be composed of teachers just from Newcomers Academy.)

Figure 11 shows some examples of BINcA’s shared literacy practices.

**Figure 11. Sample of BINcA Shared Literacy Practices**

<p><b><u>Writing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We will teach our students to write <b>Claim-Evidence-Analysis</b> paragraphs and use them whenever appropriate in academic writing.</li><li>• We will teach our students <b>argumentative</b> writing as their literacy skills develop and use this whenever appropriate in academic writing.</li><li>• We will use at least two stages of the <b>Writing Process</b> (Prewrite, Write, Revise, Edit, Publish) whenever students write.</li></ul> <p><b><u>Reading</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We will all use <b>pre-, during-, and post-</b> reading strategies.</li><li>• We will work to challenge students with varied <b>text complexity</b> and genre.</li></ul> <p><b><u>Vocabulary</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Based on our students, the time of year, and the text and/or unit, we will purposefully teach <b>words from multiple tiers</b>.</li><li>• We will use <b>Personal Dictionaries</b> that include word, definition, and at least two additional columns as a format for teaching/learning words. Content areas will determine their common options for additional columns.</li></ul>
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The above set of shared literacy practices undergirds the larger theory of action that drives the work of the team at BINcA. The expectation for all ELLs is that they can acquire content knowledge, literacy and language *simultaneously* in all classroom settings. The team works to align instructional practices, materials, curriculum and data inquiries to Common Core State Standards and WIDA English Language Development Standards so that the focus is on deepening the instructional shifts for students.

The expectations for how the instructional team builds its learning design are clearly guided by the language development framework, which is undergirded by the following three goals.

1. **Cross-disciplinary and cross-grade literacy expectations** across grades 9-12. The instructional team views this as a shared responsibility for students' literacy development. Courses include ESL, ELA/English, history/social studies, science, mathematics and other technical subjects.
2. **An integrated model of literacy** in which reading, writing, listening, speaking and language are taught together. These modes of expression mirror the process of communication.
3. **Teacher teams** that reflect on their practices and plan lessons and units conducive to reaching grade-level expectations.

Along with the above goals, cross-disciplinary teachers work together to develop instructional units that address and differentiate the student's learning at various levels of English proficiency to meet the Massachusetts ELA Framework that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These units:

- are developed around a theme that explores an "essential question";
- contain anchor reading selections, meeting the complexity, quality and range demanded by CCSS;
- differentiate for the various English Language Development (ELD) level with activities in reading, writing, speaking and listening; and
- specify and relate tasks to correlating standards for language development and formative assessment.

At the core of BINcA's language development framework are the teachers' relentless pursuit toward refining their teaching and learning through an inquiry and improvement lens. The teaching team works together in developing instructional solutions that are aimed at *accelerating* students' knowledge and language development. These solutions are team efforts that are targeted toward the root challenges and barriers that are hindering student learning. The instructional team acts as a coherent unit, in constant discussion around what is working and what is not working for their students, collects evidence from its efforts, and revises and improves based on student outcomes and feedback. This inquiry and improvement perspective is woven deeply as part of the fabric and community of adult learners at BINcA.

The school week is organized with dedicated common planning time for teachers to work together in subject specific teams, grade-level teams, and data-inquiry teams. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the upper grades humanities teachers recognized that they didn't have a strong coherent language development framework that brought together vocabulary

development, sentence development, and meaning-making for students. That is, many language development sessions came together through classroom workshops or isolated lessons on sentence parts and vocabulary, and were not embedded intentionally in the subject area coursework. As a result, the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade humanities team, along with the SIFE ESL teachers, came together and focused on the following set of language and literacy goals for students:

- Read, write, and comprehend complex sentences within subject specific texts.
- Utilize vocabulary development strategies to deepen understanding of words in context.
- Strengthen facilities with “Tier 2” vocabulary both in meaning making and use in academic settings.

Within the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade ELA courses, the teachers designed instructional tasks in which students wrestle with complex texts, deconstruct meaning from sentences, and develop greater nuance in vocabulary which they term “shades of meaning.” All of these activities come together to help students build understanding and meaning from text, and provide them with opportunities to express their ideas and thoughts in both in writing and in discussions. The vignette in Figure 12 is an example of how the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade humanities team works with the SIFE ESL teachers as they collaborate in developing engaging and rigorous curricular units, lesson materials, and meaning making activities for their classrooms.

This vignette is one of many classroom examples we saw that brought together literacy and disciplinary knowledge-building with explicit language development. This intentional focus on working with core language and literacy skills has helped students develop into stronger readers and writers. Additionally, students have paid more attention to their word choice and had a better grasp of “tier 2” vocabulary in their reading comprehension, writing, and discussions, and teachers felt that the goals allowed for targeted conversations during their common planning time. The teaching team admitted that one of the biggest challenges to this work was the time that the instructional team needed to build meaning making and the depth of vocabulary needed for students to be college- and career-ready. Not only were more vocabulary building strategies needed, but students also needed to be continuously working toward literacy and language development in every aspect of the school day. An outcome of this inquiry work was a shift for the upper grades humanities to be a double block of classes so that students would have more time to develop their English language proficiency and literacies.

The school-wide focus on literacy as a guiding principle was echoed by teachers on campus. But it is not just through a top-down approach that the headmaster imprinted her vision upon the school. Instead she took a collaborative approach with her teachers, empowering them to voice their ideas, and she was responsive to their needs. For example, one of the teachers gave the following example of how the administrative team has supported teachers’ problem-solving and decision-making:

The administration is open to listening to us. When there was a request from the upper-grade English teachers to think about how to find more common planning time, together, we were able to move the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English course to double blocks, which has allowed for more collaboration. This time allows us to deepen our practice and meet to

## Figure 12. Language Development Vignette: Complex Texts and Tier 2 Vocabulary Development

In a 12<sup>th</sup> grade mini-lesson that connects sustainability in science, and economic development in world history, students read from a *New York Times* article entitled “Where Your Cellphones Goes to Die” and spend time deconstructing the following sentence:

In far flung, mostly impoverished places in Ghana, India, and China, children pile e-waste into mountains and burn it so they can extract metals—copper wires, gold, and silver threads—which they sell to recycling merchants for only a few dollars.

The class takes this complex sentence and begins to identify key “body parts” and asks questions as to how it contributes to the overall meaning using a framework developed by Steve Peha at *Teaching That Makes Sense* (<http://www.ttms.org/>). These parts include the following:

Parts of a Sentence	
Body Part	What is it?
<b>Main Parts</b>	These parts contain the subject and the <b>main action</b> of the sentence. Answers “Who?” and “Did what?”
<b>Lead-In Parts</b>	These parts lead into other parts, especially main parts.
<b>In-Between Parts</b>	These parts fall in between other parts. They feel like a minor interruption in the sentence.
<b>Add-On Parts</b>	These parts give you more information about other parts of the sentence.

Table adapted from: <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-grammar-a-better-way-steve-peha>

Rather than a leading focus on grammatical parts of a sentence (i.e., identifying nouns, verbs, prepositions, adverbial phrases, etc.), the teacher guides students toward unpacking the meaning of these complex sentences so that they understand the meaning of each part *and* how they work together in contributing to an overall meaning at the sentence level.

In addition to the sentence-level work across each of the subject areas, the teacher-led inquiry team focuses on “tier 2” vocabulary words that usually have various “shades” of meaning, used in a variety of subjects, and are found in high frequency in academic texts (McKeown et al., 1985).

The focal vocabulary “persecuted” was presented in the sentence,

“They’re getting *persecuted* [in Mexico] because as soon as they speak Spanish, people know they’re American,” Amani said.

The teacher follows up with the following set of questions:

- What if Amani said “mistreated” instead?
- Why does Amani choose the word “persecuted”?
- What additional meaning does this word carry that others do not?

At the same time, students are also learning the various “shades” of meaning to the word “persecute” (see below) and developing greater facility in understanding how words come together to create more nuance and specificity in how authors communicate with their audiences.

**Shades of Meaning for the word “persecute”**

- mistreated- treated badly
- victimized - treated badly, *usually from cheating or stealing*
- harmed - treated badly *and hurt the other person*
- abused - treated badly *and hurt the other person over time*
- persecuted - treated badly and hurt the other person or group of people *because of some aspect of their identity* (LGBT, race, religion, language, etc.)

plan for instruction. When someone else will be teaching what you are planning—it has helped me become a better teacher.

The above example is one of many instances where the administration and staff have worked together to problem-solve and prioritize so that teachers can have opportunities to learn from one another and accelerate student learning. Each department has two hours per week of common planning time that are built into the school day, during which teachers are not expected to cover administrative duties at lunch or in the hallways. Instead, they are able to devote this time to planning instruction, examining student work, or carrying out their data inquiry work. Teachers shared that the focus on common planning time as a priority at BINcA has allowed them to deepen their practice and given more integrity to their work.

Former Headmaster Bahnam was also masterful at partnering with external organizations to reinforce her instructional vision. For example, she sought out community partners such as *WriteBoston* that support the literacy work she wants to happen on campus. In other words, her laser focus on a vision of instructional excellence and attention to the whole child allowed her to make clear and compelling decisions that supported her teachers’ practice and propelled student achievement. For the next few years, Bahnam hopes the school can focus on developing students’ academic uses of language and continuing to push collaboration and sharing among teachers.

**Assessment for Learning**

As seen in the opening vignette related to human rights, Ms. T. organizes her instruction in complementary parts: the learning activity and the evidence of learning. The evidence of learning can be seen most clearly in the way she formatively assesses her students throughout the lesson through the use of discussion prompts, graphic organizers, pre-writing activities, and peer review of student work. These formative assessment practices provide evidence of student learning and give teachers and students an opportunity to give feedback on student progress and create opportunities for students to assess their own learning throughout the lesson.

Much of what we saw in BINcA classrooms exhibited a thoughtful and planned balance of instruction and assessment that maximized learning for students. The opening vignette, along with snapshots of learning described in Figures 12 and 13, provided clear, motivating, and

accessible tasks for students. The tasks we saw required application and demonstration of content knowledge and language development as well as a depth of understanding that supported students' integration of knowledge across various domains. We saw students engaged in relevant and scenario-based problems that were meaningful to their learning goals, well-aligned to their curriculum, and appropriately scaffolded with abundant entry points into the content and ample opportunities for meaning-making and reflection.

### **Rallying for Resources**

In carrying out their vision for BINcA, the former headmaster and other administrators also have not hesitated to fight for resources that the school needs. Faced with policies or budget cuts that can negatively impact BINcA, Bahnam was not afraid to battle the district. Teachers and staff members remarked on the willingness of administrators to rally for resources so that students can have afterschool, Saturday, or summer programs. In response to teachers expressing the need for students to have access to experiences beyond academics, administrators at BINcA secured resources to bring a part-time music, art, and dance program to the school. Bahnam fought to start a girls' soccer team at BINcA, which has brought pride and school spirit to the school community.

Last fall, Bahnam called for a meeting of district leaders to present to them the case of ELLs with special needs at BINcA. She showed district leaders the stark data on ELLs and how both BINcA and the district need to find better ways to support the needs of this student population. Because BINcA is such a unique school within the district, the former headmaster had to pave her own way in her leadership of a school that serves an entirely immigrant student population. But, by forging a student-centered vision focused on academic rigor and student development, building a professional culture in which staff and students alike rise to high expectations, and passionately fighting for resources to make the work possible, Bahnam created a place in which all students have a chance to be successful.

## **VI. The Classroom Experience**

In a typical classroom at BINcA, students are focused intently on their teachers and the activity at hand. Content and language objectives are clear and visible on the board and the lesson's activities reflect an intentional design that allows students to express their knowledge through various forms of expression. Teachers prompt students frequently and deliberately, encouraging students to make sense of new ideas, wrestle with complex arguments, and help fellow students succeed. In the time we spent in numerous classrooms at BINcA, we saw a high level of student engagement due to the strategies teachers used to elicit students' use of language and leverage students' native languages, as well as due to the frequent use of socially-relevant topics as unit or lesson themes. We saw students who were engaged and often eager to participate and share their thoughts, as can be seen in the vignette in Figure 13.

This vignette is just one of many examples of how teachers set clear scaffolds that allow ELLs to organize their thoughts, practice expressing their ideas in small group settings, and then further develop rhetorical moves in advancing both their own thinking and their classmates' thinking.

**Figure 13. Classroom Vignette: Should Students Be Paid to Attend School?**

In a 10<sup>th</sup> grade English class, students move toward their table groups and begin working on the discussion pre-writing task at hand in their writing notebooks.

On the board is the following set of prompts:

- Has Geoffrey Canada created an effective plan to revitalize “The Harlem Children’s Zone”?
- How do you know?
- What would you add or change to make this plan more effective?

Alongside the instructional prompts are the following set of sentence starters:

- I concur with the idea that...
- I take issue with the fact that...
- To make this program more effective, I would...

After about ten minutes of individual brainstorming and writing, the students share in pairs and small groups their initial thoughts before transitioning to a large group discussion led by the teacher on the merits of the controversial question posed by author Canada about whether students should be paid to attend school.

For the large-group discussion portion of the lesson, students are provided with a handout (see below) that outlines a number of academic discourse practices and related sentence frames that can be used throughout the unit to enter into or continue the discussion.

**Academic Discourse Student Handout**

Skill	Sentence frames	What I said
1. Asked questions that propelled conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would happen if...</li> <li>• Is it justified for...</li> <li>• Do you agree that...</li> </ul>	
2. Answered questions that propelled conversation using evidence and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to X’s question, ...</li> <li>• Going back to the question that X asked, ...</li> </ul>	
3. Connected the discussion to larger ideas (other books, other news stories, other classes or other situations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is similar to/different from ...</li> <li>• In comparison, ...</li> </ul>	
4. Successfully incorporated others into the discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earlier you were saying that...</li> <li>• Can you say more about...</li> <li>• What is your opinion on...</li> <li>• Do you agree with X about...</li> </ul>	
5. Made classmate’s comment more clear by adding new evidence or information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To clarify what X said about...</li> <li>• Another way to explain what X said is...</li> </ul>	
6. Verified the truth of a classmate’s comment by adding new evidence or information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I’d like to verify what X said about... Her comment is accurate because...</li> </ul>	

7. Challenged the truth of a classmate’s comment by adding new evidence or information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I’d like to challenge what X said about...</li> <li>• According to...</li> </ul>	
8. Summarized points of agreement or disagreement in the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To summarize, X and Y disagreed about...because...</li> <li>• Ultimately, X and Y agree about... because...</li> </ul>	
9. Justified her own claim using evidence and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In my own view, ...</li> <li>• According to...</li> <li>• This illustrates that...</li> </ul>	
10. Explained why she changed her opinion or ideas based on new evidence or information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After considering what X said about... I have reconsidered my opinion...</li> <li>• X’s comment about...made me think that...</li> </ul>	

Throughout the teacher-facilitated discussion, students are attentive toward the speaker, and many appear eager to jump into the discussion. In this open-ended question of whether students should be paid to go to school, students are not in consensus as to what the “right” answer would be, but over the course of the hour, some students agree, others disagree, and some are on the fence and may be swayed in either direction. Using some of the sentence frames provided, students make sense of each other’s ideas, practice making claims, and ask clarifying questions that extend the class’s understanding on this controversial issue.

Throughout the discussion, the teacher takes notes using the same handout that the students have, and at the end of class, she shares with her students instances of their building on ideas or justifying their claims. As an exit ticket, students reflect on which discussion skills are becoming easier for them, as well as which ones remain challenging, and the reasons they think this is the case.

The classroom vignette described in Figure 14 provides a more fluid structure for students to engage in the discussion. The class is working on making claims and identifying strong evidence to support their claims and is practicing using a particular sentence stem in getting their ideas and thoughts to their classmates.

### Use of Home Language

Another feature of the classroom experience that we saw frequently at BINcA is the consistent use of students’ home languages—on the part of both students and teachers—to help students negotiate meaning and access the content being taught in classrooms. In one High Intensity Literacy Training (HILT) class for SIFE in the Newcomers Academy, the teacher provides support for students in English, Spanish, and Arabic. In Mr. D.’s<sup>9</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> grade physics class for newcomers, the teacher moved fluidly between English and Spanish in providing instructions to his students and prompting them with questions throughout the lesson. Teachers commonly group students together based on their home languages so that students can provide each other

<sup>9</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.



### Figure 14. Classroom Vignette: First Amendment Rights at Abercrombie & Fitch

In Ms. L.'s<sup>10</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class, students are seated in a nested horseshoe fashion reviewing a recent “article of the week,” about Abercrombie & Fitch’s refusal to hire a prospective employee because she wears a hijab. On the board are the following sets of objectives:

1. Content objective: SWBAT\* evaluate to what extent companies can discriminate against appearance by discussing with evidence in half-class groups.
2. Language objective: SWBAT use the following academic language sentence stem: “I know this .... because in the text it states ...” in whole class discussions.

\*SWBAT = Students will be able to ...

The students clearly care about the issues surfaced by their close reading of article, the recent media attention surrounding the case, and the role that bias and discrimination play in their daily lives. The teacher poses the following framing question in initiating the discussion: “Do you agree or disagree with Abercrombie’s employment policies in this particular case, or do you think racism or discrimination occurred? Explain your argument.”

Throughout the course of the discussion, the teacher asks the class, “What does the term ‘downgraded’ mean?” in an effort to clarify meaning in the context of the article. To deepen students’ understanding and facility with the dual objectives for the class, she encourages them to articulate their claims, summarize classmates’ arguments, and pose clarifying questions.

During one turn, a student refers to the First Amendment to bolster his argument about the right of the employee to wear a hijab, and the teacher redirects to the class, “How do you explain Joanna's<sup>11</sup> argument in your own words? Recall to each other what the First Amendment says.”

Throughout the remainder of the discussion, Ms. L. writes students’ arguments on the board and continues to push students to elaborate, justify, and extend their thinking as they are gaining more knowledge from the discussion. Here, students are expected to take risks, talk, make mistakes, and support and learn from each other.

with peer support.

The students we spoke to also remarked about how comfortable they feel learning English at BINcA because of their teachers’ respect for their home languages and understanding of students’ language needs as recent arrivals. The students we talked to all reported having had at least one teacher at some point at BINcA who spoke their home language. Instead of discouraging them from speaking in their home language, teachers at a minimum try to learn bits and pieces of their language so they can understand on some level what they are saying. Students recalled that they have never heard a teacher or classmate remark to them that their English level is too low. Rather, they embrace students of all language proficiencies and remind them that the best way to learn is by making mistakes. As a result, students feel willing to take risks using

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<sup>10</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

<sup>11</sup> Pseudonym is used.

English in the classroom, and they know that they can always use their home language as a support when they need it.

The widespread use of students' home languages as an important tool for meaning-making and instructional support jumped out as a clear pattern within classrooms and in students' accounts of their classroom experiences. At the same time, students are accustomed to the norms of English academic discourse and oral participation as a common expectation in many classrooms. The result is a school in which students' voices and ideas are heard frequently and in multiple languages, and where students are not afraid to practice their English, knowing that their "mistakes" will help them grow.

### Relevant and Engaging Topics

Teaching to a student population as culturally and linguistically diverse as the students at BINcA presents both challenges and opportunities. The challenge, as expressed by the teachers, is finding texts that are appropriate, adapting them to students' language needs, and often translating them into students' home languages. However, the need to customize their curriculum also presents teachers with opportunities to choose themes and topics that are meaningful for students. See Figure 15 below for sample unit themes and essential questions across disciplines.

**Figure 15. Sample Unit Themes and Essential Questions**

<p><b><u>SIFE Unit on "Community"</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who am I?</li><li>• How can writing an autobiography help deepen understanding of one's identity?</li><li>• What are my communities?</li><li>• How are communities similar and different?</li><li>• How have the people, places, and events of your past shaped who you are today?</li></ul> <p><b><u>SIFE Unit on "Immigration"</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why do people immigrate? Why did groups immigrate to the US?</li><li>• Who is an immigrant?</li><li>• What are some challenges that immigrants face? How do they overcome them?</li><li>• Why is immigration beneficial?</li></ul> <p><b><u>ESL 2 Unit on "Community:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does it mean to belong to a community?</li><li>• What does it mean to belong to America?</li></ul> <p><b><u>ELA 9<sup>th</sup> grade theme on "Perspectives" (Sample Unit Essential Questions)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does perspective shape or alter the truth?</li><li>• Does the truth exist?</li><li>• What is the benefit of investigating multiple perspectives?</li><li>• How can I shape my own reality?</li></ul> <p><b><u>ELA 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Unit on "Designing Human Life" (Research)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should people be able to design or alter human life?</li></ul>
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**ELA 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Unit on Science Fiction & Technology (Literary Analysis & Narrative Writing)**

- What are the consequences of technology in society?
- How do writers develop theme and character?
- How do writers organize their ideas?

**ELA 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Unit on “Criminal Justice” (Literary Analysis & Research)**

- Is our criminal justice system fair/ethical?
- What are proponent/opponent arguments for/against capital punishment?
- What is the argument in *The Exonerated*? How do the playwrights illustrate their argument?

In many of the classrooms we visited—especially the English and social science classrooms—we saw students working intently with material that dealt with familiar or relevant topics such as human rights and discrimination. Teachers work closely together during their common planning time as well as during their early release days when they co-develop year-long curriculum maps that support a coherent student learning experience from all disciplines.

In our conversations with teachers, one talked about the challenge of selecting appropriate texts:

We have to adapt and translate everything. Themes are easier to map out. We think about the age range, and familiar topics, like community, government, and change. We can bring in their experiences and connect it to American culture. It’s a team decision. We develop the curricular maps that outline the topics and especially for new teachers on staff, the maps are so helpful because we don’t want to repeat, but to build deeper each year.

For a 9<sup>th</sup> grade cross-curricular unit in English and History, students explore whether the American Dream is still possible, presenting arguments related to jobs, education, and public safety. For the 12<sup>th</sup> grade capstone project, which is a requirement for every senior, students research a social issue that affects the immigrant community by reading background literature, conducting interviews with outside experts, and collecting survey data. Students present their completed capstone projects to a panel of staff members as well as their parents, in both English and their home language.

An especially powerful practice we observed is the common practice in all English classrooms of using an article of the week to drive each week’s instruction. Each week, students are assigned a current events article in English that typically highlights a social issue of interest to students. The classroom vignette in Figure 13 on First Amendment Rights at Abercrombie & Fitch was one example. On Wednesdays students have a discussion about the current events article, during which they take a stance and defend their claims, and support it with evidence. One student shared that this weekly debate is one of her favorite classroom activities because it has helped her to develop her argumentation and language skills. The former headmaster has also noticed a difference in the conversations and discussions that are taking place inside classrooms as a result of this practice.

Even in classes where it is not as easy to customize the curriculum to students' interests, we saw teachers leverage students' knowledge of their home cultures in order to make content more accessible. In one U.S. History classroom, the teacher started a lesson on 1920s American culture by asking his students what aspects of their home countries' cultures they have brought with them to the U.S., and whether they believe America has its own unique culture. In one classroom after another, we saw students actively engaged in developing their literacy and language skills, as well as their content knowledge, through culturally-relevant and interesting topics that their teachers had thoughtfully selected with their students in mind.

## VII. Preparing ALL students for college and careers

Ultimately, all of the aspects of BINcA that make it a unique and outstanding place of learning and growth come together to instill in students the motivation to work hard and set ambitious goals for themselves. The students we spoke to have certainly internalized this college-going culture, sharing that they have heard from their teachers almost daily since they came to the school that they can and *will* be ready to attend a four-year college. The students acknowledge that their teachers push them hard and set high academic expectations to prepare them for college. One student shared with us that she was grateful that her teachers have reminded her since the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to become involved in a lot of activities in order to be competitive for college, and some teachers have even taught her how to act professionally during job interviews.

The former headmaster is emphatic that BINcA is not just a place where you can learn English, but a place where *all* students prepare for college and meaningful careers, and become full contributors to society. This mindset of believing in all students—regardless of their language backgrounds or educational histories—while giving them the support they need to succeed, guides the work of all adults at the school.

BINcA is a remarkable place for several reasons. A dedicated, experienced school leader has shaped the school around a vision of academic excellence and whole-child support, while building a team of capable and committed educators to execute this vision. A caring, family-like community wraps around each student and provides the social and emotional foundation she needs to thrive academically. Newcomers and SIFE are given time to build their language and academic skills through extensive instruction in both English and their home language. Finally, students are active agents of their learning in rigorous classes that demand their full participation and engagement. Through the focused hard work of adults and students alike, BINcA has truly set itself apart as a school that serves the needs of all ELLs.

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## IX. Supplementary Materials

### Details of Student Support Team (text provided by school)

The Student Support Team at BINcA consists of a group of individuals who work to improve students' quality of education and reduce their underachievement. We understand that we serve students with a variety of needs, which may impact their quality of education. To address these needs, the SST works with the students, teachers and outside agencies to help resolve issues that arise. Our Student Support Team consists of:

1. **A Student Support Coordinator** - Organizes the delivery of Student Support and meets with the Student Support Team to ensure services are being delivered and modified when necessary. The Student Support Coordinator also coordinates Special Education within the school.
2. **Dean of Discipline** - Addresses behavioral problems that hinder student learning and school safety. Designs behavior plan and goals for students.
3. **Guidance Counselors** - The Guidance Department consists of two Guidance Counselors who provide year-round academic support to our students. Our Guidance Counselors assist students with future planning, college preparation/counseling, the financial aid process, and applying for and securing summer employment. Our Guidance Team also plays a very important role in helping our students address needs beyond the classroom.
4. **A Registrar** - Creates school schedules for teachers and students. Works with students to place them in appropriate classes; coordinates major school testing, open house, and other school events.
5. **Family Liaison** - Serves as a bridge between school and families and works to keep families up-to-date on school issues, activities, and events. The Family Liaison also makes home visits to engage and foster relationships with parents to ensure the school is effectively helping their child.
6. **Nurse** - Addresses all medical emergencies and needs that may affect the education and well-being of a student. The nurse also works with outside hospitals/clinics to schedule appointments for students.
7. **Key-Steps Social Worker / Social Workers** - The Key-Steps social worker provides mental health counseling to our students and focuses on supporting teens, parenting teens or expectant parents. We also have additional partnering Social Workers available in the building who speak Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole.

# High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies

Case Study Author: Tina Cheuk

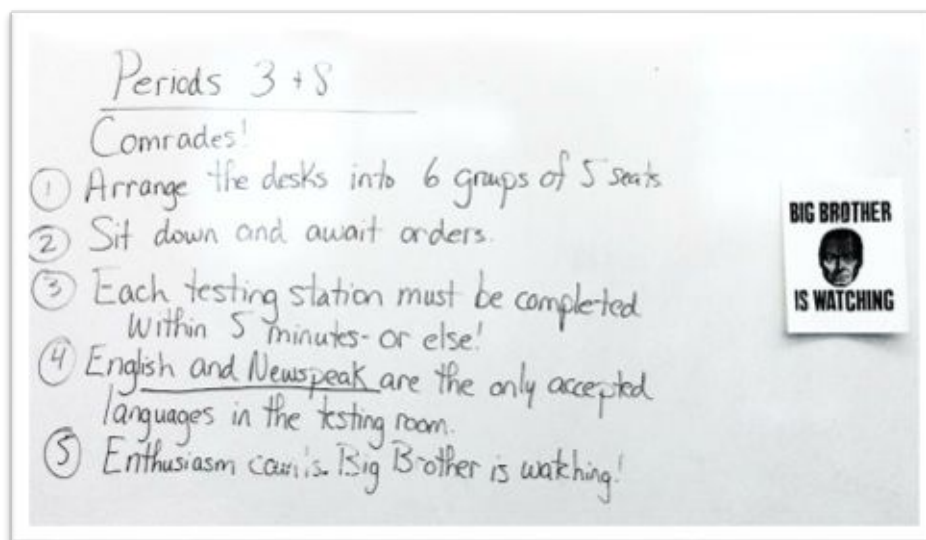
Site Visitors: Tina Cheuk, Hsiaolin Hsieh, Maria Santos

## I. A Look inside Dual Language: An 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade English Class Discussion

Inside Ms. K.'s<sup>12</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English class at High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies, the room is dark, and is lit up by a couple of small lamps with naked bulbs at each table cluster, or "testing station." Around thirty students are wrestling with Orwell's *1984* dystopia. Students assume roles where they have relinquished their lives, feelings of goodness are forbidden and vanquished, and all community members survive in fear, desolation, and repression.

On the walls, there are signs that read, "Big Brother is watching," and students are arranged in groups of six, engaged in either English or "Newspeak," the medium of language in their class novel.

Figure 1. Directions for an 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade English Class



<sup>12</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.

Ms. K. moves the students quickly into the classroom and directs her “comrades” to take their seats. She explains, “You all have been selected for re-education by the Party and your task is to carry out the instructions at each of the testing stations. Use Newspeak words and language as much as possible.”

Each of the five table clusters contains different tasks for table groups. At one table, “comrades” are to observe other “citizens” in the classroom and write down everything they do. At the same time, no one must know that they are being watched. At another table, a team is responsible for creating the eleventh edition of the Newspeak Dictionary for the Ministry of Truth. At other tables, one team is working on a “loyalty poster” to celebrate “Hate Week” and another team is redefining the ideal person for the “Junior Anti Sex League.”

The “comrades” move quickly to task and the discussions among table groups move from Mandarin to Cantonese to English in ways that appear seamlessly fluid among the students. That is, this English class contains a mix of “English proficient” students who are developing fluency in Mandarin Chinese as well as recent immigrants from China developing fluency in English as their second or third language. This classroom example stands out as a clear illustration of how the school is intentionally designed to support “dynamic plurilingual practices in instruction” (García, 2011). Here, a heterogeneous language mix of students collaborated with one another around key ideas within George Orwell’s novel, *1984*. Students used both English and Mandarin to make sense of the complex ideas scaffolded by the teacher across the five table groups and immersed themselves in character roles to deepen their understanding of the broader themes presented in the novel. Students understood that they were responsible for sharing their individual and group outcomes with the rest of the class in ways that would advance their classmates’ understanding of the material.

This type of intentional focus on fostering a pluralistic view of language is the bedrock of the school’s mission and instructional design. Recently ranked #2 in New York City and #14 nationally in a 2015 national poll organized by *U.S. News and World Report*,<sup>13</sup> High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies has consistently demonstrated high levels of academic proficiencies in English and mathematics and has strongly prepared all of its students toward college and career readiness. As stated within its mission statement, High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies is “devoted to providing quality instruction and guidance counseling to promote the academic and social development of our students as well as their linguistic capacity, cultural appreciation, and international and global awareness.” It is this passionate, mission-driven leadership with ongoing, intentional follow-through that supports the synergistic development of literacy and content in Chinese and in English under a unified language development framework.

## II. Twelve Years and Counting in the Lower East Side

High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies opened in September 2003, the same year that a bold new mayor took office and control of the city and the local department of education.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/new-york/rankings?int=c0b4c1>.



There had been serious talks at both the central office and the local leadership level to create a “dual language” academy at the high school level, as the city already hosted a small number of dual language elementary schools. At that time, and even now, there were not many dual language model schools at the secondary level—either middle or high schools. Situated at the nexus of two neighborhoods, the Lower East Side and Chinatown, in Manhattan, New York City, this school is deeply committed that all students will comprehend, speak, read, and write in both English and Mandarin Chinese by the time they graduate. All students take the state English Regents exam<sup>14</sup> and the AP exam in Mandarin Chinese. Much of this is made possible by effective guidance supports that ensure students receive the appropriate level of English Language Arts, English as a Second Language, and/or Mandarin for double or triple periods across all grade levels.

In the summer of 2003, the school’s founder and current principal, Li Yan, with support of the district, worked tirelessly to recruit students and families for the new school opening on September 1<sup>st</sup>. Recruitment was not an easy task. That summer, a large blackout in the city created obstacles that delayed the recruitment and communications processes from the central office. By mid-summer, many of the students who were in the system had already committed to their choice school. In spite of these challenges, Principal Yan opened the school with 28 freshmen on September 1<sup>st</sup>. As the school year proceeded, more students were registered and the inaugural class grew to 78 students by the end of October. Of these 78 students, all but two were designated as English Language Learners (ELLs).

Since that time, the school has grown to a population of over 400 students with 24% being ELLs (See Figure 2). Impressively, of the most recent graduating class, 81% of students successfully completed approved college preparatory courses and assessments (compared to the city average of 35%) and 90% of the students graduated and enrolled in a college or other postsecondary program within six months (compared to a city average of 53%).<sup>15</sup> Figure 2 details the demographic and performance data of Dual Language for the 2014-2015 school year.

The 24-member school team is strategically recruited to have a depth of knowledge of the history, background, needs, and strengths of the students in the school community. Similarly to several of the other high schools in our case studies, most, if not all, educators of the school community are immigrants themselves or have had pivotal ELL experiences that have influenced their values as educators. This distinct knowledge about the ELL and/or immigrant experience deeply shapes the motivations and drive of the educators who have chosen to work within this learning community. The staff and leadership’s pride and respect for the diversity of students’ cultures and languages are reflected in their work with students and families during this important phase of transition from adolescence into young adulthood.

### **Who are “Dual Language” students?**

The school is housed on the fifth floor of an older school building flanked by two major hallways, a shared cafeteria space and a small set of classrooms located on a floor below. During the many passing periods of the school day, we see over 400 students moving to and from

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<sup>14</sup> Regents exams are statewide standardized examinations in core high school subjects in New York State, which must be passed in order to graduate. See <http://www.nysedregents.org/> and Appendix III.

<sup>15</sup> Source: [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov).



**Figure 2. Demographic and Performance Data (2014-15)**

<i>Demographics</i>		<i>College &amp; Career Readiness</i>				
			School	Borough	City	State
Size	416	4-year Graduation Rate	97%	71%	70%	75%
Asian	89%	4-year ELL Graduation Rate*	94%	32%	33%	31%
African American	3%	College Enrollment Rate	90%	56%	53%	-
Hispanic	6%	College Ready	81%	39%	35%	-
White	2%					
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	1%					
English Language Learner	24%					
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	89%					
Students with Disabilities	2%					

Source: schools.nyc.gov and data.nysed.gov  
 Notes: 4-year June graduation rates are presented. Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma and exclude those earning either a special education (IEP) diploma or GED. College enrollment rate represents percentage of students who graduated from high school and enrolled in a college or postsecondary program within six months. For information on college ready index, please see: [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov). College readiness rate represents percentage of students who met the City University of New York's standards for avoiding remedial classes.  
 \*4-year ELL Graduation Rate is for 2013-2014 (source: data.nysed.gov)

classes, conversing with each other and with teachers, counselors, and staff in a multitude of languages that include Cantonese, Fujanese, Taosonese, Shanghainese, Mandarin, and English, to name a few.

The educational trajectories vary among the Chinese-speaking students, as some were born in China and schooled there up into the middle grades and have recently moved to the U.S. to further their education at the high school level. At the same time, a small number of students are U.S.-born, left for China during their childhood, and returned to the U.S. during their adolescence to complete their schooling. Students who are English Proficient (EP) vary in their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and a number of them are former ELLs. When we interviewed one parent whose daughter recently graduated from Dual Language, she explained to us her daughter’s extraordinary growth:

Once there was this teacher-parent conference for us to learn more about our child’s grades, and during the presentation my daughter’s teacher said that her English proficiency had reached the level [of] native speakers of her grade level. She’s been in the States for [less than] four years!

A key part of the Dual Language experience is a focus on students achieving biliteracy in both Chinese and English by the time they graduate. There are students whose primary language is English and who may not have had any Chinese proficiency prior to coming to the school. Their interest in Chinese culture and language, and the school’s focus on biliteracy, brings them to Dual Language. There are also students, typically with Chinese as a home language, who are former ELLs and who have developed English proficiency over the course of their schooling.

The school aims for a balance of 50% native Chinese speakers and 50% English Proficient (EP) speakers in its entering class. At the time of the interview, about 20% of the student population were designated ELLs and a larger portion of the school population were former ELLs.

Students wishing to attend Dual Language must choose the school as one of their choice schools through the district's high school application system. This process is designed to be transparent and efficient as the students and the school are matched based on a combination of factors including students' preferences and the school's desired composition. Admission to Dual Language is based on a number of criteria including middle school G.P.A., attendance records, citywide test scores in reading and math, and recommendations. The principal described the evolution of the recruitment of students:

100% of the students in the first cohort were ELLs. Over time, that percentage has gone down to 23% ELLs. However, 80% of our students are former ELLs, and we also have a small number of students with IEPs [Individualized Education Programs].

The dramatic decrease in the percentage of ELLs in the school over the last decade is a concern with the school team, but ELLs are still a large and diverse part of the school population. Their population ranges from newcomers who know very little English, to ELLs who are on the cusp of passing the New York State English as Second Language Achievement Test (NYSELAT). Not only has the student community shifted, but the teaching staff has shifted as well and now includes newer and more youthful members, as members retire or are recruited to take on leadership positions in other school settings.

In our conversations with the school leader and staff, many of them attributed the major strength of the school to the diversity of the student body, and others, notably current students and alumni, attributed the success to the mix of students *and* the high expectations of academic success set by the school culture and the dedicated efforts of their teachers in pushing them to meet these expectations, as discussed in sections of the case study below. What is most salient across our interviews of the school community is a relentless commitment to serve students and a focus on their strengths and needs. It is this “work-horse” ethic in concert with a clear instructional plan serving a diverse linguistic mix of students that has strongly influenced the consistent and strong academic outcomes of this school's ELLs.

## II. Design for Education: Dual Language's Approach for English Language Learners

### Organized Toward College Readiness and Bilingualism

This school's intentional design is built upon explicit programming to the language development needs of its student body with an absolute conviction that *all* students will graduate with opportunities to attend and be successful in college, no matter what it takes. The leadership and staff have planned with care how all of the school and classroom practices and structures work together to create a supportive and rigorous learning ecology for all of their students, especially ELLs and former ELLs. This includes a deliberate block scheduling of an English as Second Language (ESL) course that complements core academic English and Writing courses, as well as

a robust Chinese language and literature program, catered to both native Chinese speakers and those taking Chinese as a foreign language, which fulfills Advanced Placement (AP) purposes. This section will describe how the school embraces its mission toward college readiness and biliteracy through deliberate recruitment and development of its school team, and thoughtful planning of flexible course sequences to meet the developmental needs of the students.

The work toward college readiness and biliteracy starts with dedicated, passionate, mission-driven staff recruited and supported by a strong administration led by the founding Principal Li Yan and Assistant Principal Miriam Uzzan. In building their school team, Principal Yan and Assistant Principal Uzzan recruit educators with strong content knowledge and deep experiences working with ELLs. Candidate teachers are hired based on the needs of the school community, as well as candidates' strengths and potential for growth in a bilingual instructional setting and motivation and passion for working with the Dual Language student population. Teachers who join this community embrace the responsibility and vision, and they commit to working with students in fulfilling their goals and aspirations. As a result of this strategic hiring, the teaching staff we spoke with shared a common vision of fostering, through a clearly-defined yet flexible path, a community of college-ready bicultural and biliterate students.

Combined with a strong teaching team that has expertise and facility in content and language development, the school structures the course sequences to maximize students' learning potential and avenues for growth. For example, in addition to an expectation that all students achieve dual language fluency, all students take four years of mathematics and science courses. These courses include a range of AP courses available on campus taught by Dual Language staff as well as college-credit bearing courses that have been offered on-site by external faculty, and off-site course options made available to students. Flexibility is cleverly offered in the sequencing and development of mathematics courses, particularly with the topics covered in Algebra II and trigonometry courses. This set of math courses is designated as a college-readiness course that can be taken as a one- or two-year sequence. As a result, students have the option to move at a pace that best suits their needs and development in mathematics (NYCDOE Quality Review Report, 2014-2015).

Within each of the courses we observed, we saw teachers working together toward students' English and Chinese language development while tapping into students' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and home languages. This was clearly seen in the teachers' lesson design that supports opportunities for students to make sense of high cognitive demand content and explain their own thinking and respond to each other's ideas. The lesson design is paired with effective formative assessment methods that guide student learning and are aligned to college- and career-ready expectations.

Complementing this deliberate approach to course sequencing and lesson design is the underlying deep passion and incredible drive that the school team has in supporting student success. Ms. B.,<sup>16</sup> an 11<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and History teacher, attributed the school's success to "teachers' commitment and love for the student[s]." She said, "We work very hard and are dedicated to help[ing] everyone to improve. We work a lot of extra time, [doing] tutoring, support, and counseling." A former ELL herself, Ms. B. shared her own history and experiences growing up as she was forced to quickly assimilate and integrate into the dominant monolingual

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<sup>16</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.

culture of schooling where she was in the U.S. There, Ms. B. remembered her teachers explicitly telling her parents “*not to speak Chinese ... at home.*” Ms. B. was drawn to the mission of this school in developing “bilingual and bicultural citizens” who embody “curiosity and respect for American and Chinese cultures.” Similarly, Ms. C., a first-year ESL teacher at the school, wants her “students to have the language proficiency in English and Chinese to communicate effectively in both languages ... [and] have both the language and thinking skills to advocate for themselves.” This deep internal drive exemplified in both Ms. B. and Ms. C., paired with the teachers’ openness to learning and improvement in their subject area and in language and literacy, encourages both students and teachers to be self-reflective and to learn from each other. When teachers are not facilitating student learning, they are reflecting on their own practice and learning from each other, formally in structured professional learning time as well as informally with colleagues with whom they share students. This highly-motivated teaching staff also works closely to support the dynamic needs of the student population, and the school organizes itself for these demands and creates the appropriate learning opportunities to maximize student learning.

The assistant principal explains how the team conceptualizes the development and the structure of the learning pathways for students:

In both the Chinese and English departments, we look at where students are and how they are progressing in the language. It’s hard to make every level one class the same, so we figure out what the students’ strengths are and set the expectations. For EP students, we’re trying to figure out their transition from English to Chinese. We ask ourselves, if students [native English speakers] were in China, what [would] they [be] expected to do? We’re trying to make that curriculum more rigorous... At the same time, we want the ESL students to improve their English, with the goal of a high pass on the ELA NY Regents.

Dual Language’s underlying commitment to college-readiness requirements and biliteracy resonates through students’ academic careers. This shared set of expectations guides the work of teachers, guidance staff, and the school leadership in their course planning based on student strengths and needs. This commitment to supporting students extends beyond the classroom and is further deepened by the school’s robust guidance department. This team, composed of two full-time guidance counselors, a full-time family assistant, a full-time parent coordinator, and a half-time college counselor, meet weekly to set and revise goals, anticipate and tackle student-related needs, and organize programming that allows students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally within and outside of the school community.

One of the bilingual guidance counselors discussed an example of their work in matching students’ needs with the school’s course offerings for the next academic year:

For example, in the current semester, we are working with the incoming group, and we quickly realize that the incoming group is a little bit different from the previous group. So in terms of programing, you have to figure out how to deal with smaller number of ELLs, and more EP students. We have this kind of conversation early on. We have the conversation with the principal, AP and teachers to do the best preparation. Programming and course offerings are a big task for the guidance counselor.

We think about what courses to offer to the students when it comes to the ELLs. We have an assessment at the orientation for our ELLs that tells us how to prepare for the new term. This is a small school. We have to decide what levels of ESL we want to offer. Sometimes it's hard. Most of the kids here have been in middle schools in the U.S. for at least a year. They are not at the beginner's level, which is supported by the results from the state exam. We find out their levels from there and we quickly establish the levels [of the ESL classes].

Usually we start from the intermediate level (level 3) for those kids. As you go through our schedule, you can see that we provide ELL level 1 all the way to level 8 here. It's challenging for small schools to [offer all levels], but our school tends to focus on kids.

As described by this counselor, the school builds its ESL program based on the incoming and revolving needs of its students. Throughout the year, the guidance and instructional teams work closely together to figure out how the ESL programming and course options can meet ELLs' needs. For example, as students progress through the ESL levels, the course schedule needs to be flexible enough to support students who may be advancing more quickly or may need additional supports. It is this collective effort and responsibility of the entire school community that works together in making its mission of college-readiness and biliteracy a reality for its ELLs. The next section will go into greater detail about how teaching and learning takes place in some of these classrooms and reveal ways that teachers plan and go about the daily work of teaching and learning in their diverse classrooms.

#### **Language Development Framework: Discussion-Based Classrooms with Complex Texts**

Teachers and students alike at Dual Language agreed that oral language development is one of the biggest challenges of the student body. The teachers are cognizant of that, so across their classrooms, we saw numerous opportunities for students to practice their English speaking skills through scaffolded interactive activities. During our visit to classrooms, we noticed that teaching practices were informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching,<sup>17</sup> particularly student engagement, questioning, and creating a safe learning environment that allows for a range of academic discourse to take place. For example, in a chemistry class the teacher asked a mix of lower-order content and higher-order thinking questions, embedded as tasks, and as part of small-group and large-group discussions. Students were clearly engaged in “accountable talk”<sup>18</sup> processes where they were consistently asked to explain their own thinking as well as defend or refute claims made by other students. The chemistry teacher had clearly created a classroom environment that allowed students to take academic risks in classroom discussions, established safe boundaries of debate and argument in deepening students' understanding of complex ideas, and masterfully facilitated students' responses in deepening the class's thinking on the scientific concepts. See Figure 3 for details of the two domains seen in classroom settings.

In the domain of instruction, we observed a strong emphasis on academic discourse in classrooms. We noticed that in class and in homework assignments, students were doing close reading of complex texts, in both humanities- and science-related courses. In particular, across

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<sup>17</sup> [www.danielsongroup.org/framework/](http://www.danielsongroup.org/framework/).

<sup>18</sup> [http://ifl.pitt.edu/index.php/educator\\_resources/accountable\\_talk/podcasts/2](http://ifl.pitt.edu/index.php/educator_resources/accountable_talk/podcasts/2).

**Figure 3. Domains 2 and 3 from Danielson’s *The Framework for Teaching***

Domain 2: Classroom Environment  
2a. Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport  
2b. Establishing a Culture for Learning  
2c. Managing Classroom Procedures  
2d. Managing Student Behavior  
2e. Organizing Physical Space

Domain 3: Instruction  
3a. Communicating with Students  
3b. Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques  
3c. Engaging Students in Learning  
3d. Using Assessment in Instruction  
3e. Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

Source: <https://danielsongroup.org/framework/>

the humanities courses, the expectations for student discourse were high as the instructors created clearly-defined roles and responsibilities for participation and opportunities for students to enter and engage with the core content. For example, as part of the literature circle study work, one of the student group roles was that of a “discussion director.” As shown in Figure 4, the discussion director leads discussion, keeps the group on task, and ensures group members participate.

**Figure 4. “Discussion Director” Roles and Responsibilities**

Your job is to lead discussion, keep the group on task, maintain order, and make sure that everyone participates. You need to read the text several times so that you have a strong understanding of possible themes and the basic plot. You need to prepare at least FOUR STRONG questions that will lead discussion in any direction you choose and get your group thinking. Your questions should create discussion about characters, problems, theme, issues, thoughts, feelings, predictions, and/or concerns.

- Before you begin the discussion, ask the Summarizer to give a summary of the reading.
- After the summary, ask several strong discussion questions.
- You may ask any group member to respond at any time. Remember, it is your job to keep the discussion going!
- Keep track of time.

Please refer to the chart below for a clearer understanding of the STRONG questions you should prepare for your discussion:

STRONG QUESTIONS	WEAK QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are open-ended questions</li><li>• Have more than one possible answer</li><li>• Encourage thinking to find answers</li><li>• Allow differing opinions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a yes or no answer (closed-ended questions)</li><li>• Only one opinion possible</li><li>• Limit discussion</li></ul>

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage rich discussion</li> <li>• Encourage speculation, prediction, and inference about the text</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage just stating facts, details, and events</li> </ul> |
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Across a range of content and ESL classrooms, we saw students engaged in various types of academic discourse, particularly structures, processes, and norms that reflected the tenets and ideals of “accountable talk.” We saw “respectful and grounded discussion” where students’ claims, assertions, and arguments were guided by the “accepted standards of reasoning” that are found within each content areas (Michaels et al., 2008, p. 286). What was most notable across the classrooms observed was that each teacher created opportunities for students to “formulate ideas, challenge others, accept critique, and develop shared solutions” in both Chinese and English in ways that allowed students to further understand the concept at hand (Michaels et al., 2008, p. 286). Figures 5a and 5b showcase some of the tools that teachers used in classrooms where we saw an abundance of student talk combined with clearly defined tasks. These tools and scaffolds allow ELLs, especially beginning ELLs, to enter into the conversation and provide opportunities for students to practice, make mistakes, and reflect in the learning process. During our site visit, students "owned" much of the norms and sentence starters and were able to move fluidly in and out of discussions and debates all throughout the school day.

#### **ELL-Centered Classrooms in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grades**

A particular design feature that the school has found to be helpful is its intentional grouping of ESL students at the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades and heterogeneous mixing at the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. In the earlier grades, the goal is to help the ESL students accelerate their English language development while letting the non-ELLs focus on Chinese. Not only do the ESL classes focus on language and literacy development in the subject areas, complementing students’ humanities, history, and social studies coursework, but the school also organizes ESL courses in the sciences for ELLs (e.g., Biology-ESL) that explicitly focus on both language and literacy development in core science subjects.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, the ELL and EP students are in heterogeneous classrooms and have the opportunity to advance their language proficiencies together. Across all grades, teaching practices provide multiple entry points into the curricula, allowing students to grapple with challenging ideas, learn from fellow students, and grow from their experiences. Part of the school’s language development framework is this belief that all students benefit from heterogeneous grouping that allows them to learn from each other—both in content and language. In both upper ESL and content area classes, we saw deliberate grouping and pairing of students, allowing for shared sense-making of problem situations in mathematics, peer feedback in writing, and discussions of complex texts. For example, in one ESL course, the teacher created “high/medium” and “medium/beginning” English language proficiency pairings in an activity in which students gave each other feedback on an essay.







**Figure 5b. Sample Sentence Starter Posters**



Likewise, in an 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History class, heterogeneous small groups and the whole class could be seen doing a close reading and analysis of a Supreme Court case (*Korematsu v. U.S.*, 1944) and a Presidential Executive Order (9066, February 19, 1942), both related to how the U.S. government justified the Japanese-American internment during the 1940s. ELLs, former ELLs, and fully English proficient students who have never been ELLs worked together to develop metacognitive strategies for understanding these complex historical texts, deepening their historical perspectives and knowledge as to how these arguments have been made in U.S. history.

This bifurcated model develops a strong community of peers who are learning a new language together—students who have shared risks, challenges and successes together in safe classroom settings—and ample opportunities to engage in oral and written discourse in small class settings. The ELLs gain a lot of efficacy, confidence and agency in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade before moving into the integrated classrooms because they are all learning English together. A bilingual ELA and history teacher noted, “There’s a fear that the ESL kids will be made fun of by the native English speakers. There’s a fear of speaking up in groups. Even in mixed groups, the [English home language] students speak up more. I don’t know whether I [as the teacher] should speak in Chinese.”

The grouping of students by language development levels in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades also allows for intensive support and guidance for ELLs. In the beginning ESL classes at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the class size tends to hover around 10-15 students, and there is an average of 20 or so students in ESL-content classes. The smaller class size along with language development instruction that is couched in rich, authentic, and grade-appropriate content may be a strong driver to the accelerated learning of the ELLs as they transition to heterogeneous classrooms in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Both the staff and students recognize that this arrangement in an effort to accelerate English language development for ELLs and Chinese development for EPs may come at a cost of

socially isolating the ELLs from the EPs. The staff has worked together to find ways to bridge this social and linguistic divide through intentional mixed language grouping of students in academic classes, afterschool clubs and activities that foster teamwork and collaboration among ELLs and EPs, and ongoing conversations among the leadership and staff to find ways to create a more cohesive community among the ELLs and EPs at Dual Language.

### Course Offerings and Scheduling

In developing the course content and course sequences, the school team takes into consideration the strengths and needs of each incoming class as well as the growth and development of the current student body in both language and content knowledge development. That is, as appropriate, courses are designed to maximize students' learning time and preparation toward college and careers. This may mean creating a section for ESL-Biology class due to the interest and demand of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELLs interested in Biology, or an additional section of AP Calculus class to meet the growing interest and demand from the students. Each year, the instructional and counseling staff examines student data and creates courses that optimize students' language and academic development potential.

The range of course offerings can be seen in Figure 6. In this past year, the school was able to offer eight AP courses and this number will increase to ten for the upcoming 2015-16 school year. Courses are designed for college preparation, Regents exams, and enrollment in AP courses. Students take four years of English, social studies, math and science, as well as four years of Chinese. Students in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades have the opportunity to take college-level courses in collaboration with New York University and as part of the City University of New York College Now Program offered by Baruch College, Hunter College, and the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

**Figure 6. Course Offerings**

<b>English</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Foreign Language</b>
Communications	Global Studies 9	Chinese 1-6
English 9-12	Global Studies 10	AP Chinese
ESL 1-8	U.S. History	
Film Studies	U.S. Government	<b>Art</b>
Language & Composition	Economics	Art (required)
Writing for College	AP U.S. History	Art 2
AP English		Art 3
College Now Speech	<b>Mathematics</b>	
ESL Literature	Algebra 9	
<b>Science</b>	Geometry	
Applied Chemistry	Advanced Algebra &	<b>Physical Education</b>
Chemistry	Trigonometry	Health (required)
Applied Physics	Pre-Calculus/Intro to	Physical Education
Astronomy	Calculus	
Earth Science	Statistics	
Living Environment	AP Calculus	
Physics	AP Statistics	
AP Biology		
AP Chemistry		

The school has prioritized language and literacy classes by blocking these classes into 90-minute daily periods, and some students may be taking multiple courses that focus on language and literacy if they are beginning ELLs. Consequently, this prioritization of language and literacy instruction restricts the flexibility of courses for students, especially newcomers who have limited English proficiency. However, the school has wisely ensured that all of the ESL classes are credit-bearing so students who are in ESL classes can accrue high school credit toward graduation. ESL and humanities teachers in the lower grades share a lot of collaboration and unit planning as they work with the same students during the school day. At the same time, *all* students, both ESL and EP, take Chinese over the course of their academic careers and are prepared to take the AP Chinese exam in their junior or senior year. A writing center, run by NYU students, is also open Monday through Thursday.

Dual Language is also open on Saturday for college preparatory courses, physical education (PE), and supplementary workshops in English language development. College prep and SAT prep are offered through New York Cares on Saturday, when volunteers with this program work with students in small groups. The school has been able to take advantage of the campus facilities shared with the other four schools and organize time on Saturday so students can complete their PE credit in an efficient manner and not worry about running up and down four flights of stairs during the normal school day to attend PE class. While our team wasn't able to observe the learning activities that took place on Saturdays, the principal talked about what happens at the school on Saturdays from 9 a.m.-3:30 pm:

We use Saturday school to do some instructional work. We have PE and additional ESL classes... Lots of kids want to be here. About 150 kids are here [on Saturdays]. They like to hang out, socializing, especially the ELL kids. A lot of the kids live in the neighborhood. [During the weekdays], we allow them to stay until 6 p.m. They don't have space at home to do the work. Students will come to school on Saturday to do work.

Together with the intensive support provided by the counseling team, the school staff works together to ensure that students have opportunities that maximize learning time and prepare students for the rigors and demands of college.

### **Lesson Design: Language Instruction Embedded in Content-Rich Course Materials**

During our visit to Dual Language, our team noticed that language instruction was embedded within content-rich texts and course materials. Across all of the classes observed, we saw students grapple with grade-appropriate content that drew from their interests and/or connected ideas across various courses' content. The two subsequent vignettes highlight how instructional planning is aligned with the larger school vision of supporting English and Chinese literacies in their school community. For each of these two vignettes, the instructors have designed lessons with five interconnected components that come together to create a clear, guided learning opportunity for all students. Much of the lesson design work is influenced by Danielson's *A Framework for Teaching*<sup>19</sup> as well as other resources (i.e., *NY State Standards*<sup>20</sup>) that have been adapted to meet their classroom needs. See Figure 7 for more details.

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<sup>19</sup> [www.danielsongroup.org/framework](http://www.danielsongroup.org/framework).

<sup>20</sup> [www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/cores.html](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/cores.html).

**Figure 7. Components of Strong Lesson Design**

- Core academic content. All classes, including ESL courses, are clearly aligned to the relevant content and language/literacy standards (i.e., Regents and NY State Standards, and/or AP-aligned)
- Cognitive demand. Students are interacting with grade-appropriate and intellectually challenging ideas and tasks that stimulate productive learning opportunities for all students.
- Access to language and content. Classroom activity structures create multiple ways for all students to enter into and engage with the text and tasks and develop deep understanding of the content, and practice with English language and literacies.
- Student agency and identity. Through productive and supportive learning experiences, students develop stronger capacity and willingness to guide their own learning and learn from each other.
- Formative assessment. The teacher designs opportunities to gain insight into student thinking and adapt instruction to “meet students where they are.”  
(Danielson, 2011; Schoenfeld, 2014; Understanding Language, 2013)

**Figure 8. Vignette from Biology-ESL Class: Warbler and the Cuckoo Bird**

The 20 or so students in Mr. M.’s<sup>21</sup> Biology-ESL class begin to jot down initial responses and then proceed to discuss their thinking from the “do now” that is posted on the board:

Who is benefiting or getting hurt in the following situation? Describe the relationship.

- A. A friend helps you out with homework.
- B. You pay money to the cashier when you want to buy some snacks.
- C. You forgot and left your phone in the gym. The phone is not there anymore.

Many of the students are speaking in Cantonese and one could hear murmurs of biological terms such as “mutualism,” “predators,” and “prey” interspersed within their predominately Cantonese-based discussions.

After a couple of minutes, the teacher reconvenes his class so they can share their thinking on these scenarios and how these human relationships extend into the ecological concepts they have been learning in class so far.

Because Mr. M. does not speak Chinese, the full class discussion is in English. There’s a sense that students are most comfortable in their native language of Chinese as they converse in small groups using predominately Chinese. However, in both classwork and in larger class discussions, students are encouraged to practice their English through writing, to explain their thinking to each other, and to listen and respond to each other’s ideas.

As the class continues, Mr. M. uses a multimedia presentation to highlight the various types of relationships that may exist in the wild. On the video screen, we see a female cuckoo bird swoop into a warbler’s nest, kick out a warbler egg and lay her own egg in its place. Just in time, the

<sup>21</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

cuckoo bird leaves and the warbler raises both her warbler eggs as well as the cuckoo egg as her own.

Within this clip, students are asked to note the specific type of symbiotic relationship that is highlighted by the video excerpt. Students then regroup and are asked to discuss the relationship between the warbler and the Cuckoo bird first among their table groups and then later in a full class discussion.

In our subsequent interview with Mr. M., he shares his thinking behind planning for his ESL students:

One of the classes I have is ESL 1 and the other is ESL 5... There is a lot of scaffolding, especially with ESL 1 kids... I'll come up with different sentences starters and worksheets and help with vocabulary. Or I give them a chance to talk in Chinese. I don't speak Chinese. For ESL 5, I try to put a lot of visuals and pictures rather than just saying the word. I try to find other ways to express the words and ideas, provide scaffolds and pictures. For the ESL kids in my AP biology, they struggle with the textbook. I'm struggling because it's the first year that I've had ESL kids in AP biology. With them, I'm doing summaries and close readings of the text. I'm still experimenting with what works.

In this above example, Mr. M. thought about the various ways students can engage in deepening students' understanding of the biotic and abiotic relationships found in an ecosystem. Students have multiple opportunities to engage with and make sense of the content, in both their home language of Chinese and in English, through writing and discussions with peers. As the instructor noted, one of the major challenges of science is what some call "lexical density" of science texts. That is, science texts often are constructed with technical vocabulary, nominalizations, lengthy noun phrases, and abstract metaphors that differ from everyday speech. This "language of school science" is a challenge for *all* students who study science, and for ESL students, additional considerations need to be taken in how to organize instruction so that students can engage with the rich science content (Fang, 2006). Explicit in Mr. M.'s lesson plan are specific question prompts that probe student thinking and their development of the content while developing students' facilities with language and literacy practices in his biology class. Some of the guiding questions and tasks that allow Mr. M. to inquire and formatively assess his students' thinking throughout the lesson are listed in Figures 9 and 10. This example of ongoing, intentional assessment was often found occurring consistently across classrooms. Teachers probed at what and how students were thinking and adjusted their instructional moves accordingly. Students had multiple opportunities to self-assess and reflect on their progress in and outside of class.

As seen in Figure 10, Chinese characters are provided to describe key scientific terms next to the English words in context. This example highlights a type of scaffolding provided to a Biology-ESL class that leverages students' Chinese language in deepening their science knowledge in English.

There is considerable collaboration between the English and Chinese departments, and the instructors have tried to find ways to align some of the content of their classrooms to give

**Figure 9. Sample Formative Assessment Questions from Biology-ESL Class**

*These questions were posed in whole class, small groups, pairs, and individual ways for students to respond during the above lesson.*

- How do biotic organisms interact with each other?
- Describe biotic interactions.
- Explain examples of biotic interactions.
- Who is benefiting from this scenario?
- Who is getting hurt? Explain your answer.
- Make a prediction and share with your group what you think and why.
- Explain how this interaction benefits the cuckoo bird.
- Why is this an example of parasitism?
- Write three important things you learned from today's lesson.
- Write two things you thought were interesting.

**Figure 10. Sample Student Task from Biology-ESL Class**

**Symbiotic Interaction/Relationships**

Direction: Read each description and find out how two species interact with each other. Under Positive/Negative Relationship, put a "+" next to the species who is benefiting from the interaction. Put a "-" next to the species who is getting hurt from the interaction. If it's neither, then put "0".

+,-,0	Name of relationship	Description
		Yucca 丝兰 flowers are pollinated 授粉 by yucca moths 蛾. The moths lay their eggs in the flowers and the eggs hatch. The larvae eat some of the seeds, and spread them around. Both species are happy.
		Mistletoe 槲寄生 takes water and nutrients from the spruce tree. This is good for the mistletoe but bad for the tree.
		Oxpecker birds get a good meal by eating the ticks 蜱 found on a rhinoceros 犀牛. The rhinoceros get a free cleaning. Both species are happy.
		Remora fish 鮟 attach themselves to a shark's body. They then travel with the shark and eat scraps from the shark's meals. This neither harms nor helps the shark.

students multiple entry points to engage with literature. One of the examples shared by the principal and the ELA teacher was the use of the novel *Joy Luck Club* in both their Chinese and English classes. Written originally in English, the story tells a trans-generational tale of four mother-and-daughter pairs navigating between the two settings of San Francisco and China. The English class, composed of EP students, read the novel in English and students in the Chinese class read it translated into Chinese. The Chinese and the English teacher had the opportunity to plan out a number of their lessons and tried to find ways to integrate these classes in the form of literature circles so they could discuss and debate the author's use of language and overarching

themes found in the novel.

Throughout the reading of the novel, students are guided with instructional scaffolds that allow them to practice and develop reading skills (e.g., comprehension, summarizing, analyzing, questioning, predicting, etc.). An example of instructional scaffolding that allows student to access language and content is shown in Figure 11.

Lastly, as observed in a Regents-level biology and chemistry class, teachers had embedded Common Core literacy standards for writing, reading, and speaking within unit and lesson tasks, for example by prompting students to write explanations of biochemical processes, predict and justify outcomes, and explain pH levels, all of which are aligned with the discourse practices found in the both the Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core State Standards. The task design included multiple entry points at which students could demonstrate their thinking about the content, allowing students to make sense of cognitively demanding and complex ideas through multiple approaches, both independently and in group settings. Unified language and content learning and well-thought-through formative assessment practices are major cornerstones of this school's learning design.

**Figure 11. Literature Circle Study-Access to Language and Content**

<p>Your job is to summarize the text. A summary is a brief paragraph that identifies the key points and main events. Don't retell every single detail, but make sure your summary is complete. It should answer the questions of: Who? What? Where? When? Why? And How?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure you use your own words.</li><li>• Remember, you are only summarizing a part of the book, not the WHOLE book. Don't copy too much from the text. Retell the story in your own words choosing only the important events.</li><li>• To prepare, you should read the story for general comprehension instead of studying literacy devices.</li><li>• Present the summary early in the discussion so that everyone can remember the plot.</li><li>• Aim for a 5-10 minute summary (1-2 min/chapter).</li><li>• Other students can ask the summarizer to repeat the summary if that helps everyone understand the plot a little better.</li><li>• At the end of your summary, make a prediction about what you think will happen next.</li></ul> <p>Take notes on the key details in the beginning, middle, and end of each chapter. Then write your prediction.</p>			
Chapter 1	Beginning	Middle	End
<p><i>Your job is to read the text closely and record new and interesting words/phrases that you discover. Focus on single words or very short phrases.</i></p>			

- Select SEVEN words/phrases from the text.
- Choose the most important or challenging words and short phrases.
- Copy the sentence that has the word/phrase; use a dictionary to find the definition; copy the dictionary definition; and explain the definition in your own words.
- At least TWO words/phrases must be special uses of common words. For example, you can ask your classmates questions like, “What do you think \_\_\_\_\_ means in this situation?” or “Why does the writer repeat the word \_\_\_\_\_ eight times in the first two pages of this story?”

During the discussion, you will share the words, and your group members will write them down.

Word/Phrase	Sentence and Page #	Dictionary Definition	Definition in your own words OR question about the word/phrase (at least 2)

### III. School Climate and Culture: Bolstered by a Commitment to College Readiness

A recent alumna and currently a freshman at a local college shared the following story with our team when we asked her about ways the school encouraged her to take academic risks so she can take more rigorous course work in preparation for college.

My guidance counselor encouraged me to take both Global and U.S. History simultaneously in my freshman year. It was difficult at first. The readings [were] hard. My history teacher helped me throughout. I did well on U.S. Regents [Exam] and then, I could take AP History in sophomore year. The English level is higher and could be difficult, but I told myself I could do it anyways. I didn’t tell my teacher that the reading was difficult, but then at the parent teacher conference, the teacher recognized that the readings could be difficult.

The teachers are always there to help even though they have their own families to take care of. They are willing to help, especially when you tell them in advance. They are always there to help you and tell you that you can achieve your goals.

This short excerpt is an example of how the leadership and staff create a climate where students have opportunities to engage in “productive struggle” (Dweck, 2006) such that students’ goals are attainable and their efforts leads to feelings of increased self-efficacy or belief that one can achieve certain goals. This commitment to student success is pervasive in and outside of the classroom, supported by the leadership and staff, and reinforced by the students’ hard work ethic. Familial and parental support also plays an important role in students’ lives. Here, many of the families have entrusted the school community and their children freedom and independence to guide their own pathways. This subsequent subsection will discuss ways that the school community has worked together in creating a college-going culture and how students have responded to and excelled in this environment.



### **Commitment to College Readiness Standards**

Often after a full school day from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and participation in afterschool activities such as badminton, dance, and tutoring clubs, students log even more hours at school in the evenings and at times until the early morning. One of the parents we interviewed commented on how her son spends his afterschool hours:

Although there is a lot of homework, my son is also attending some after [school] programs. He always stays in the school until 6 p.m. and studies late into the night. Last time I was here, the principal told me not to worry if my son is late going home because he is helping out others at the school.

While students acknowledge that there is an exceptionally strong work ethic expected of them, they know that these incremental processes of learning are preparing them for success in college. An alumna commented on how her initial dislike of a particular topic was shifted by her science teacher's expectation that she develop deeper understanding, rather than cursory knowledge, of the material. She noted,

I don't like science, but I HAD to work on it. I first just had to memorize it rather than understand it, but our science teacher took it as you should understand it. She used examples and related to real life. The class wasn't as boring and I started to understand. The teachers try different ways to help if they know students aren't getting the material.

Similarly, the teachers we interviewed discussed how they design lessons to develop relevant connections to students' lives, and set clear expectations that students will complete their homework and come to class prepared to learn from one another. When asked about her students, an ESL teacher reiterated, "The students persevere and are far-sighted. They ask themselves, 'What do I need to succeed in America and in college?' Every Saturday they are here for SAT prep." One 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and History teacher explained that, like many teachers, she "gives 30-45 minutes of homework per night and about 1.5 hours over the weekend." This type of workload resonated with most other teachers we interviewed. Across our various classroom observations, we noted that teachers created opportunities in class for students to engage with rigorous core content—often in pairs or small groups where students can practice using the language in the academic contexts. The learning is further extended beyond the classroom through homework assignments and small projects, many of which are intended to allow students to solidify what they've learned from class and/or prime themselves for subsequent lessons.

Another driving force that helps the staff ensure high levels of student success is advantaging the NY Regents graduation requirement as one of the bars of success for students. Students are encouraged to work toward a Regents diploma with Honors. That is, students are encouraged to aim for a high pass of 90 or more on the Regents exam, rather than a score of 65 or above which gives students only an "Advanced Designation." We were told that in the chemistry class we observed, in addition to the regular coursework, students spend a portion of each week examining and practicing released test questions as part of their homework assignments.

### **Precision in Planning and Guidance: Incremental Steps toward College and Career Readiness**

From the moment potential students are matched to the school in the spring all the way to the start of the school year, the leadership and guidance teams work together in planning out the

academic and college-preparatory program that best suit the needs of the incoming and current student body. The teams consider both the in-school time as well as the out-of-school time (after school, weekends, and summers) to be critical development and growth periods for their students. As a result, the teams focus a considerable amount of attention on planning the types of courses that best suit the academic and linguistic needs of students and figuring out how to tailor learning experiences so that students will graduate from Dual Language successful in their post-secondary lives.

When asked about school practices or strategies that undergird the school's theory of action for ELLs, Principal Yan explained,

We have 23% ELLs, but if you look, 80% of our students are former ELLs. We don't have any programs specifically. We have multiple levels for ESL courses, so that students have enough contact within 45-minute classes. Kids can test out of the ESL program, but that doesn't mean they are proficient. We give the students ESL support for all four years. Most ESL students have three periods of English for four years. You have to look at what their needs are. Everyone takes the writing class here, a college writing class. We started that for ELLs. We also use the English Regents goal of 65-75, and we make all students take the college writing class.

As described by Principal Yan, the school focuses the programming based on student needs, sets high and achievable standards for their ELLs, and provides the necessary support for students to be successful in their coursework. Courses actually vary year-to-year based on the growth and achievement of the students. The guidance team takes note of all incoming students' academic records in the spring along with their scores on a language proficiency test given by the school, and designs courses that can meet the students' needs.

Students begin the college-going process at the start of their freshman year when they are introduced to the guidance team and begin to talk about the opportunities that are available for students over their course of their academic careers at Dual Language. The strength of the relationships that the guidance team has built with students can be seen in the perpetual buzz of students that congregate in and outside of the guidance offices. There's a mutual respect between the students and the guidance team in that the guidance team approaches each student holistically, garners student trust, and anticipates situations before they grow to be more difficult problems.

During students' sophomore and junior years, students meet with the guidance team in small groups of four during the school year and on Saturdays to set goals, plan out action items needed for the college application process, share concerns and questions, and check in on progress toward college-going goals. By senior year, students are working with the counseling team on a one-on-one basis, planning campus visits, completing applications, writing and editing essays, prepping for interviews, making sense of acceptance packages, selecting the right school, and communicating the college transition to families. A snapshot of the school's afterschool schedule can be seen in Figure 12.

The alumna mentioned previously who is now at a local college recalls her senior year experiences in preparing for college:

Figure 12. Afterschool Schedule



I remember in September of my senior year, we would get links to different college programs. The college team took us to college campuses. They highly encouraged us to visit schools even though it may not be a right fit. I found that to be useful. They found different links and sights for us to see and learn more about the world. If I just Googled it myself, I would see pictures that are online but I wouldn't see the real [picture] of what the life is.

The guidance team works tirelessly to give students realistic expectations of what college is like and connect students' high school experiences with the continued rigor that exists in college life. Because a number of these students are the first in their family to attend college, the school makes sure that its graduates have realistic and ambitious aspirations so that they are prepared to enter and succeed on their own in college.

The leadership and guidance team also actively partners with community-based organizations in supplementing students' experience in preparation for college. Some of the collaborations include Junior Achievement, Chinese-American Planning Council, High School Heroes, NY Cares, City Colleges of New York, and Kaplan. Each of these programs provides enrichment for

students and guidance in getting them ready to apply for and to succeed in college. For example, Junior Achievement brings volunteers to the economics class to discuss personal finance, and offers “High School Heroes,” a program in which more advanced students teach personal finance to younger students. Students also go on job shadows to various companies that work with Junior Achievement. Locally, the school’s partnership with the *Chinese-American Planning Council* expands the relationship from the student level to family workshops that guide the technical aspects of the college application process. There, students and families are provided with technical assistance in completing financial aid forms and can attend workshops that build family understanding of the college-going process in a number of languages. In addition, New York University, Whitney Museum, Behind the Book and Classic Stage Company are other partners of the school.

### Developing Trust and Independence

The school has heavily invested in staffing its student support services for their 416 students (2014-15 figures). They fund for two full-time and one half-time guidance counselor as well as one full-time college counselor. Additionally, Assistant Principal Uzzan leads and teaches college preparatory courses on Saturdays for juniors and seniors. In this work, Uzzan spends time learning about students' strengths and goals as they prepare their college applications. In turn, she uses knowledge about the students' goals, aspirations, and needs to bolster how the teaching and guidance staff supports students toward college and career readiness. This additional time and course structure on Saturday mornings, together with the high ratio of counseling and college support staff members to students, allows a tremendous level of individual attention to students and their families.

The guidance team shared a student’s recent experience as a new arrival from China:

We had a student that was coming in late, and we noticed the change of his demeanor. We started counseling him, we realized he was dealing with a lot of stuff. His mom was in China, and his dad works 18 hours a day. He was lonely, not fitting in, probably wanting to go back to China. Even [after] just a few weeks of counseling, he was totally transformed. Really watching the little things, the little signs that things are not [going] right, is really to know the students.

The above description is not atypical of the range of students, especially ELLs, who are at Dual Language. The guidance team described to us that often students may be born in the U.S. and sent back to China to live with relatives, returning to finish high school. Other students travel by themselves and live with relatives or guardians, or have parents who work two daily shifts in addition to weekends to support their family. Fostering a sense of independence among students takes time and patience for students and staff members. A parent coordinator who works in conjunction with the guidance team described what she’s noticed about some of the ELLs at the school:

For me, working with ELLs, I notice that the kids from China are usually shy, more quiet and timid. When I was first working here, I would notice kids who wanted to ask me something but they were too afraid to do so. So they passed by my office again and again. I realized that I had to go out and talk to them. You really have to make them feel comfortable. They feel safe and secure in an environment [where] they can speak up.

## **Collaborative Professional Development: An Organic Process Focused on Improving on the Teaching and Learning Experience**

Dual Language has recently developed an early release day on Friday afternoons when the instructional, guidance, and leadership team come together to learn from one another, share ideas, and problem solve. The principal is able to achieve this by shortening each class by about eight minutes over the course of the week to have a dedicated 1:20-3:00 p.m. Friday block of time devoted to professional learning for his staff.

When the school first started, the principal was able to organize common planning time with the smaller staff. As the school grew, the principal faced challenges in getting the same teachers to meet at the grade level teams and by department levels during common planning time. As a result, the school moved toward an early release model on Fridays. These Friday sessions are semi-structured such that some sessions are more formal professional learning workshops with specific themes (e.g., growth mindsets, learning from student assets) led by members of the school team or by external providers, and other times are opportunities for grade level and/or subject specific teams to meet and discuss teaching and learning topics.

What stands out about the instructional staff here is their reflective nature, tremendous openness to sharing their practice, and motivation to collaborate and learn from one another. Teacher candidates who are interested in working at Dual Language are recruited for their passion in their subject area, their personal motivations and histories in working with ELLs, and a deep desire to open up their practice and learn from one another. While every teacher here is an expert in her own right, each teacher has a mindset of continuous improvement to maximize the academic aspirations and potential for their students. Everyone takes responsibility and works as a team to make sure every student leaves High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies biliterate in English and Chinese, and ready to be successful in post-secondary institutions.

The school is actually undergoing a transition in staffing as some members of the founding staff have begun to retire while others have been recruited to serve in leadership positions at other schools. As a result, over the past couple of years both the principal and assistant principal have been actively recruiting for just the right candidates, and they keep ongoing relationships with attractive candidates whom they can call on as positions open up at the school.

## **Mentoring and Strong Collegiality Among Teaching Staff**

New teaching staff who make it past two rounds of sample lessons and multiple interviews with the principal and assistant principal are automatically matched up with a formal mentor or colleague who can help them adapt to a new school culture and provide necessary guidance and resources to be successful with the students. These mentor/mentee relationships are fluid. In addition to having formal mentors, new teachers often organically gravitate toward colleagues who are in the same subject area or work with the same students. For example, the ESL teachers and content teachers collaborate informally during their Friday professional learning time. ESL teachers talked about working with the content area teachers in their grades and trying to build on the themes and topics that students are learning in their core classes. A 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade ESL teacher described her mentor/mentee relationship:

[My mentee and I] meet multiple times a week, sometimes multiple times a day. We share resources. She's a first year teacher. The relationship is interchangeable and



interdependent. We *coexist* and are *co-equal*.

There is also a significant amount of informal learning among colleagues during their prep periods, before school, and after school hours. Teachers who are interested in observing a colleague's classroom or working with fellow teachers can request to have coverage for their classes if their prep periods do not overlap with one another. This practice has a number of benefits for the teaching staff. First, new teachers have the opportunity to learn how their colleagues support student learning. Second, teachers have a chance to see how their own students interact and learn outside of their own classroom setting. Lastly, this practice of opening up teachers' classrooms supports a school culture where colleagues are *encouraged* to open up their practice and learn from one another.

More formally, the school works with an instructional coach, compensated by state and district professional learning funds, who coaches individual teachers and co-plans with the leadership team during Friday afternoon work sessions from 1:30-3 p.m. The instructional coach from Generation Ready<sup>22</sup> described her work:

It's more about professional learning, not professional development where we're *doing* something to them. It's about learning together. We look at data. We observe classrooms by visiting teachers. We survey the teachers and together do the [professional learning] calendar. It's organic. It's a needs-based development for teachers. We did decide that this year, we focus on "mindsets" and "knowing your students" —and we went from there.

We developed teams as well. Whatever we introduce, we get into teams and figure out how can we apply [the new concept or idea]. And in two weeks, we come back together, discuss and share what worked, what didn't work. In other groups, we look at particular needs that teachers have.

The coach has collaborated on and off with the school team for the past decade, working closely with teachers in refining their practice, and helping teachers integrate new strategies into the teaching and learning culture in their classrooms. It's not about doing some "strategy of the week," by which teachers are forced to try out ideas without input on how they will improve learning. Instead, the coach works with the teachers and encourages them to lead their own classroom inquiry by asking reflective questions about their own teaching, gathering student feedback and data on what's working, and trying out approaches that improve student learning.

## IV. Conclusion

There is not a particular program or curriculum—no "magic bullet"—that serves as the major driver of work at High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies. The school team works incredibly hard to ensure that each and every student graduates and *thrives* in their post-secondary lives. The school's resources are allocated and the major decisions are made with a view toward student strengths and needs, in order to build a comprehensive and intentional program of support based on where students are, how they develop, and how best to support

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<sup>22</sup> Generation Ready is a professional learning services provider, <http://www.generationready.com/>.

them in meeting ambitious yet achievable goals. The school team, parents, students, and community partners work thoughtfully in building trust and knowledge across cultural barriers, and together, *everyone* shares the responsibility toward the successful outcomes of the student body.

This school wisely starts with their students. The teaching and guidance teams move quickly to understand the students' goals and aspirations and work with them closely in designing the course sequences and guidance supports that will move them toward college and career readiness. The deliberate focus on two languages allows the staff and students to see that language proficiency is a valuable learned asset that can be used to develop students' knowledge across various content areas. Teachers and staff who are part of this outstanding community understand and *value* this perspective and have the tools and resources to support their students. They also share cultural and linguistic backgrounds with students, and approach students and their families with pride, understanding and respect, which translates into considerate relationships among students as well.

The work is ever evolving as the student body changes yearly, but this visionary team designs and adapts the school to meet the laid-out commitment and focuses intently on getting their students to maximize their potential. Their consistently extraordinary outcomes demonstrate that there is much that we can learn from their efforts.

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# It Takes a Village Academy

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## I. A Peek Inside an ITAVA Classroom

In Ms. E.'s<sup>23</sup> Global Studies classroom, English Language Learners (ELLs) are busily completing a “Do Now, Think-Pair-Share” activity. Heads down, they intently scribble in their journals describing the sequence of events that led to the outcome of the Vietnam War. Then, in pairs, the students share what they’ve written, discussing any differences between the events they’ve described. This activity builds on previous lessons, and requires students to externalize their prior learning, to be specific about events, and to include details in their answers. It is also an effective way for the teacher to assess whether the students are understanding the content and effectively engaging in academic discourse. As they are completing this activity, the teacher circulates to check students’ progress and to answer questions. At one table the teacher works with a pair of students, finding multiple ways to assist students’ understanding of the word “sequence.” First she uses context to convey the meaning. When the students are still struggling to understand, she then tries a Spanish translation, and finally the students comprehend when she provides an explanation of the term in English.

After all of the pairs have written down the ideas they’ve produced together, they relate their responses to the entire class and engage in a lively teacher-led discussion. After one student speaks, Ms. E. recasts her answer to the whole class. Then another student makes the connection between the Vietnam War and communism, and the teacher draws out a fuller answer by asking the entire class, “Which part of Vietnam was Communist?” As the class discusses the events that led to the war, the teacher continues to point out, elicit, and teach content vocabulary and high frequency academic vocabulary in the context of the lesson. For example, at one point she asks, “What is the significance of that?” When students seem to struggle with this, she asks, “What does the word ‘significance’ mean?” before restating her question.

At different points during the lesson the teacher uses visual aids to help students connect to the topic. She projects a *Time Magazine* cover of Ho Chi Minh on the white board and displays maps of Vietnam and Cambodia. After choosing a volunteer to read a paragraph about the Vietnam War displayed on the white board, another volunteer paraphrases the events of the Cambodian invasion in her own words. The teacher gives a short lecture about Pol Pot and students copy down notes, while the teacher illustrates her explanations with pictures on the white board. After the mini-lesson, the teacher and students continue to discuss aspects of the war, including a discussion of what “civil war” means, the Khmer Rouge’s antagonism toward Western culture, and connections to other historical events. The students then independently read a longer excerpt of text about the Vietnam War.

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<sup>23</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

With instructional support from their teachers, ELLs at It Takes a Village Academy (ITAVA) can be found engaging with complex, grade-level texts that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Teachers can be found using a wide variety of strategic scaffolding and modeling strategies to move students toward higher levels of comprehension and greater language and academic proficiency. Focused academic language study and literacy skills development is a shared responsibility of all teachers at this school and researchers observed students actively engaged in academic language-rich activities. Teachers were seen facilitating use of and access to academic vocabulary and complex language structures in a variety of ways.

As illustrated in this lesson, teachers routinely assess, activate and reinforce prior learning with “Do Now” activities that require students to show evidence of their learning. Think-Pair-Share strategies give ELLs the opportunity to practice English, while also providing students with time to write a response to a question before having to share orally. Moreover, these strategies give students additional time to discuss ideas with neighbors before sharing their conclusions with the class. Purposeful grouping observed in most classrooms motivates students to participate because it allows them opportunities to negotiate their understanding of content in English and/or in their home language with a partner in a less public and potentially less embarrassing way, and then voluntarily share out with the class when they have confidence that they can express their ideas effectively.

Regular use of visual scaffolding at ITAVA builds interest and understanding of content, aids in comprehension of information, reinforces learning, and gives students more confidence in what they learn. Consistent routines across classrooms free students up to concentrate on concepts rather than procedural steps. Graphic organizers help students to see connections, relationships, and patterns between ideas, and realize how information is organized and grouped. In fact, student-generated posters such as word walls, story maps, and concept diagrams were evident here and are ubiquitous in all ITAVA classrooms.

This case study will illustrate the ways in which ITAVA’s staff is unified in its commitment to improving instruction and services for ELLs. It will demonstrate the school’s high learning standards and the emphasis it places on evidence of learning. It will also show how this vision and these efforts are fundamentally driven by the context-specific needs of this particular school and its student population, and grounded in a collaborative, dynamic approach to improving structures and practices to better support the changing needs of students.

## II. Introduction

It Takes a Village Academy, situated in the diverse neighborhood of East Flatbush in Brooklyn, has been ranked by *U.S News and World Report* as among the top ten performing high schools of the 503 high schools in New York City<sup>24</sup> and boasts impressive graduation and college-going rates, especially for ELLs. According to New York State’s School Quality Report, in 2015, 83%

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/new-york/districts/new-york-city-public-schools/it-takes-a-village-academy-13324>.

of students who began there as ELLs ultimately graduated within four years—as opposed to 33% citywide.<sup>25</sup> The report also tells us that ITAVA is exceeding targets on benchmarks related to student progress, student achievement, school environment, college readiness, and closing the achievement gap. In fact, at ITAVA 80% of students take rigorous courses such as computer engineering, biotechnology, philosophy and Advanced Placement (AP) classes and almost every student graduates with at least six or more of college-level credits.<sup>26</sup> The school has a robotics team that competed and won the FIRST Tech Challenge competition at the national level in 2011, and has received special awards for design in robotics in that competition the last four years. This award-winning robotics program is 90% ELLs. According to the 2015 School Quality Report, 96% of parents say that the school staff works hard to build trusting relationships with them.<sup>27</sup> This school also serves an extremely diverse population of students, many of whom are educationally- and economically-disadvantaged, making their extraordinary success all the more remarkable. Our research indicates that the keys to the tremendous, nationally-recognized success of students at ITAVA include a welcoming and multicultural school climate, visionary and tireless school leadership, and a highly intentional educational design focused on college readiness.

### III. School Climate and Culture

#### School Context

In the past few decades, waves of West Indian immigrants have moved into East Flatbush where It Takes a Village Academy is located. This working-class neighborhood is over 90% Black, and over 50% of Blacks are foreign-born, primarily from the Caribbean.<sup>28</sup> ITAVA reflects the demographics of the neighborhood, with a student body that is 90% Black, 6% Hispanic, 1% White and 3% of other background (see Figure 1).<sup>29</sup> ITAVA students are mostly from Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, and other Spanish-speaking countries, and some also have come from Yemen, and Madagascar, Bangladesh and Uzbekistan. Most students are recent immigrants with U.S. education levels of middle school or below. Eighty percent of ITAVA students qualify for free lunch.<sup>30</sup>

Twenty percent of ITAVA's students are designated as ELLs, and this population is highly complex, representing different levels of language proficiency, socioeconomic status, academic experience, and immigration history. Some ELLs have transferred in from middle schools in New York City or other areas, while some have only recently arrived from their countries of origin. Eighty-seven percent of ITAVA students are Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE),<sup>31</sup> and a number have come from other types of challenging situations in their home

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<sup>25</sup> Regents exams are statewide standardized examinations in core high school subjects in New York State, which must be passed in order to graduate. See <http://www.nysedregents.org/> and Appendix III.

<sup>26</sup> Data provided by school.

<sup>27</sup> [http://schools.nyc.gov/oa/schoolreports/2014-15/school\\_quality\\_snapshot\\_2015\\_HS\\_K563.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/oa/schoolreports/2014-15/school_quality_snapshot_2015_HS_K563.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2003nhp-brooklyn.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Demographic snapshot <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/data/default.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/data/default.htm>.

<sup>31</sup> Figure provided by school.

**Figure 1. Demographic and Performance Data (2014-15)**

<i>Demographics</i>		<i>College &amp; Career Readiness</i>				
			School	Borough	City	State
Size	566	4-year Graduation Rate	92%	70%	70%	75%
Asian	1%	4-year ELL Graduation Rate*	83%	32%	33%	31%
African American	90%	College Enrollment Rate	79%	53%	53%	-
Hispanic	6%	College Ready	19%	34%	35%	-
White	1%					
English Language Learner	20%					
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	80%					
Students with Disabilities	13%					

Source: schools.nyc.gov and data.nysed.gov  
 Notes: 4-year June graduation rates are presented. Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma and exclude those earning either a special education (IEP) diploma or GED. College enrollment rate represents percentage of students who graduated from high school and enrolled in a college or postsecondary program within six months. For information on college ready index, please see: [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov).  
 College readiness rate represents percentage of students who met the City University of New York's standards for avoiding remedial classes.  
 \*4-year ELL Graduation Rate is for 2013-2014 (source: data.nysed.gov)

countries.

Historically, East Flatbush was known for its high concentration of poverty and violence. Though this has begun to change in recent years, as New York City in general has seen a decrease in crime, this area of the city still faces many troubles, adding to the challenges faced by ITAVA’s staff, students, and their families. Figure 1 further illustrates the demographics of the school, as well as the success achieved in the face of complex social and economic challenges.

Given the diversity of its student body, ITAVA believes that the presence of a diverse school staff reduces student alienation and isolation and creates an inspiring and welcoming school climate. ITAVA staff believes that students should see and interact with racially- and ethnically-diverse role models who have achieved success in both school and careers. Indeed, many members of the staff speak two or more languages, and school leadership prioritizes the hiring of teachers and staff that reflect the demographics and language groups represented at ITAVA. Near the school entrance hangs a wall poster with pictures of school staff alongside information about their myriad achievements, their diverse countries of origin and the many languages they speak.

Appreciating the enormous bounty of linguistic capacities among ITAVA’s students, the school emphasizes to students and parents the importance of retaining their primary languages. Educational experts recommend that teachers who serve ELLs be “culturally proficient biliteracy teachers” and view “students’ cultural backgrounds of language, race, gender, and

socioeconomic status as assets on which to construct their educational experiences” (Quezada, Lindsey and Lindsey, 2012, p.6). Teachers at ITAVA thoroughly embody this mindset, as can clearly be observed in each of the systems and structures in place at the school.

The school itself is housed in the former Samuel J. Tilden High School building, which is an impressive monolith built in 1930. ITAVA shares the Tilden campus with two other high schools and an elementary charter school. Despite challenges of space, as well as students’ high poverty levels and diverse educational backgrounds, It Takes a Village Academy succeeds at fostering an exceptional sense of community, belonging, and respect for cultural diversity.

### **“Come in!”: Caregiver Involvement at ITAVA**

Families and other caregivers are an integral source of student learning and development and It Takes a Village Academy believes that students and schools benefit greatly from caregivers’ active participation in the process of educating students. ITAVA staff implicitly understands the importance of relating to caregivers as strategic partners in the education of their children and see it as their role to do everything that they can to promote this relationship. Evidence of this ethic starts the minute the students and their families or other caregivers enter the campus, and a full-time family coordinator facilitates these efforts. Staff works diligently and conscientiously to convey that the school is a warm, caring place, ensuring that visitors are greeted by welcoming signs and responsive staff and that information and guidance is provided in a language that parents understand, which is terrifically impressive in a school with such a wide array of language backgrounds represented. Teachers make it a point to invite parents to take part in classroom activities and to communicate an open-door policy in their classrooms. One parent, praising the school’s atmosphere commented, “It’s a totally different experience from other schools in the sense that they are welcoming. They say, ‘Come in’ and I can come in on Tuesdays at 12:00 p.m. and have a meeting with all of them.” Another parent told us, “It doesn’t matter what time I come in... I can come in and a teacher will take their lunch hour or [meet] in the evening on their own time to talk with me.” One parent was brought to tears describing the way that the school has supported her daughter academically as the family deals with her chronic illness. This young woman has been able to keep up with her studies because teachers and staff at ITAVA keep in close contact with her family and provide her with assignments and the extra support she needs to complete her school work.

One key way that ITAVA continually and strategically connects with caregivers is through regular communication with the home through phone calls and electronic communication in the language chosen by the caregivers. If children are absent or tardy, the home is immediately informed. Caregivers also receive regular updates in their language of choice on the student’s progress and timely notice when performance is slipping. One parent noted,

If the teacher sees that something isn’t going right, they’ll give us a call. They are on top of everything. Let’s say for some reason [the students] aren’t getting the right amount of credits, [the school will] give you a call. Even when [the students are] doing great, [the school will] give you a call and say, “He’s doing fine.”

The school’s philosophy of care is evident in the support networks, resources, and learning opportunities they provide to the families of their students. For instance, English classes are offered, along with computer literacy and other offerings. One parent reported feeling excited to participate in the upcoming, free CPR class because he’s able to learn crucial life-saving skills

that would otherwise be inaccessible to him. The school has also provided various supports to caregivers with regard to housing information, resources for free or low-cost medical providers, culturally-relevant mental health services, and immigration referrals. These are integral supports that will improve the quality of life for students and their caregivers, leading to better student learning and healthier communities.

ITAVA staff has identified some barriers to family and caregiver engagement that make it a challenge to create and sustain meaningful involvement. Parents come into the school community with a variety of prior cultural backgrounds and experiences with schools. They may also face a variety of conflicting pressures and expectations such as work obligations that may impede their active involvement. Furthermore, many ITAVA students immigrated to New York without their parents and may live with other family members or with members of church organizations that took the children in. To better overcome these challenges, ITAVA is working hard on practices and policies that will support strategic and continual engagement between home and school more systemically. For instance, a parent coordinator was recently hired to help further engage parents in the school community, to liaison between the families and the school, and to act as a contact with the community organizations that provide services to students and their families. In order to improve attendance at the school's annual open house, ITAVA holds two open houses at different times of the day so that caregivers who cannot take time off from work may attend. Bilingual and bicultural staff at the school and district is instrumental in helping ELLs' parents communicate with the school and in resolving any issues or concerns that these parents might have about their children's education.

Although school staff reports that ITAVA parents and other caregivers hold high expectations for their children and see college as a means to success in the U.S., because of background experiences and life circumstances, college for their children may seem like an unreachable goal to many of them. Understanding that some parents may not come into the school with the expectation that their children will attend college, ITAVA respectfully provides a structure for enhancing caregiver knowledge about and access to higher education and for helping those at home assist their children in pursuing appropriate courses in high school and in navigating the transition to college. Caregivers of ITAVA's ELL students feel that they are tremendously well-supported in helping pave students' pathways to college and career success.

### **Keep Your Eyes on the Prize: School Leadership**

Principal Marina Vinitskaya and her assistant principals are key figures in It Takes a Village Academy's continued growth and student success. Vinitskaya took leadership of the school in 2007 with a clear vision of the kind of school that she wanted to co-create. The vision that she had for ITAVA was that every student would be respected and would thrive academically. She said,

We have a very heavy immigrant population...children who come from low performing middle schools. If you don't respect what they bring, if you don't respect their parents, if you don't respect your colleagues... Yes, they might speak with an accent, but they have better knowledge [than you do] in the subject area.

An immigrant herself, she navigated the New York school system with her own children, and what she experienced frustrated her and gave her a fiery passion for enacting systemic change in the structures and supports for immigrant students. The school's staff admires her ability to lead



the school toward her vision. According to the 2015 School Quality Report, 97% of ITAVA teachers—as opposed to 85% citywide—report that the principal displays instructional leadership.<sup>32</sup>

The members of the administration at ITAVA seem to implicitly understand that leaders' actions establish the vision and the pedagogical design of the school, and they show their staff their commitment by leading and supporting school-wide and pedagogical efforts and changes that they believe will better meet students' needs. For example, Vinitskaya took and became qualified herself to lead professional learning courses in Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL).<sup>33</sup> Vinitskaya has in fact offered QTEL professional learning opportunities every year since. She has encouraged school staff to take QTEL courses as well, and most of the teachers and administrators have done so.

Because Vinitskaya is strong in math and science, she hired an assistant principal that is strong in the liberal arts so that they would complement each other in providing supervision and leadership to teachers in the content areas. As a district leader explained,

[Vinitskaya] understood right from the beginning that it's a school and you're the educational leader as the principal, and has stayed true to that. As much as she's good on the other end with the data and use of resources and the budget, she understands though the eye on the prize is about the instruction.

Vinitskaya also demonstrates this commitment to instruction by personally tutoring students in math during the first period of the school day.

In addition to guiding instruction, the leadership team is extremely skilled at using data to make sound decisions about how to support students and improve student outcomes. Because the team is deeply committed to continually improving school structures and pedagogy to support learners, data-driven decision-making is focused on program, instructional, and curriculum effectiveness and on maintaining focus on educational achievement. One district leader noted,

[The principal] has always been meticulous with her data, always understanding the importance of it, but also understanding the translation of how this can dictate our next steps, tell us what we need to be looking at and what adjustments need to be made. Because data is not just about analyzing it and saying, "Well this is the trend." How does this become indicative of next steps?

Typically, accountability systems for ELLs have focused on those still designated as "limited English proficient." Academic achievement data for reclassified former ELLs have historically been grouped with data for Never-ELLs. However, according to Vinitskaya, in New York that has changed, and data is disaggregated for the two groups. This allows the school to track reclassified students' achievement data for whether they are keeping up academically with Never-ELL counterparts. At ITAVA, the school closely tracks former ELL students because, as

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<sup>32</sup> [http://schools.nyc.gov/oa/schoolreports/2014-15/School\\_quality\\_guide\\_2015\\_hs\\_k563.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/oa/schoolreports/2014-15/School_quality_guide_2015_hs_k563.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> A framework developed by Aída Walqui at WestEd that undergirds the school's language development framework and helps teachers to reconceptualize approaches to content, language and literacy learning and teaching and supports pedagogy that helps ELL students to become college- and career-ready. See <http://qtel.wested.org/>.

the principal said, “Many of them will drop out of high school if the school doesn’t take care of them.” Leadership’s attention to data as a driver to instructional improvement has been picked up by teachers, who have themselves become masterful at using data to support their own instructional decisions.

According to a network partner,<sup>34</sup> ITAVA’s visionary staff was at the forefront of New York schools adopting the Common Core State Standards and rigorous curricula aligned to those standards, and participated in a citywide pilot project to test the standards before they were rolled out. The network partner praised the school, which stood apart from the vast majority of other schools:

[ITAVA] embraced [the new standards]... No one said, “It can’t be done,” or “It’s too hard,” “Not our students because they don’t have the language,” or “How do you have 16-year-olds coming into 11<sup>th</sup> grade able to read Hamlet? They can’t even read the common language, how are they going to read Old English?” None of that was what we heard coming out of this school.

ITAVA offers teachers many leadership opportunities and finds ways to provide teachers with the extra pay to support those roles. For example, academic leaders and department leaders are chosen by seniority and expertise, and are compensated. In addition, teachers are paid to teach in the before- and afterschool tutoring programs. If teachers have a skill or interest, such as sports, robotics, or technology, they are encouraged to apply for funds to run a club or sports team. One teacher stated, “Everyone is involved in something.” Teachers participate in hiring as well. Every year, teachers create a hiring committee that works on interviewing questions, to help the administration which takes part in final interviews. Teachers also help observe lessons that are modeled by prospective candidates.

School-community partnerships are intentionally and thoughtfully leveraged to support the unique needs of the school. For instance, the school works with CAMBA,<sup>35</sup> Mail8, Counseling in Schools,<sup>36</sup> Haitian Engineers, and Haitian Doctors to offer students and their families much needed and culturally-appropriate resources and supports to improve their quality of life.

In addition, school leadership is very entrepreneurial in applying for and obtaining grants for the many academic and extracurricular offerings at the school and in creatively funding team teaching, extended learning programs, and extracurricular offerings. In describing some funding strategies, the principal explained the use of resources:

Some teachers come at 8:30, some come at 9:30. I stagger their schedules. And then, I don’t use money for too many administrative people on board. I, just now in our eighth year, hired a second VP, because our college and social-emotional component is a big one and we need someone to have those skills to oversee the program. I don’t believe that

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<sup>34</sup> Schools in New York City have network partners that are contracted by the district to offer them the type of support that schools typically receive from districts. See Appendix III.

<sup>35</sup> A nonprofit agency that provides services that connect people with opportunities to enhance their quality of life, <http://www.camba.org/>.

<sup>36</sup> A nonprofit organization that promotes the emotional and social growth of children so that they can thrive in school and succeed in life, <http://counselinginschools.org/>.



[having] many APs will make the difference. I believe that it's the quality of the people that make the difference.

The school leadership's inspirational commitment, deep involvement at all levels, unflagging focus on continuous improvement, and highly creative use of resources help explain why this school consistently provides such extraordinary outcomes.

### **A Commitment to Success**

Given the widely-varying needs and incoming abilities of It Takes a Village Academy's students, it is a complex challenge to provide students with the opportunity to meet rigorous grade-level academic standards and graduate college-ready. However, this school is profoundly committed to the idea that all its students will graduate college- and career-ready, prepared to go to college without needing remediation and to acculturate well to the college environment. A member of the leadership team explained,

Graduation is one piece, but being able to stay in college and sustain college work is another piece. We try and make sure that they get used to the college environment, that they get used to pressure, that they get used to tests and deadlines.

The whole culture of the school revolves around this commitment, and to fulfill it, the school provides a rich college-preparatory curriculum and heavily leverages students' cultural and linguistic assets. The school climate is centered on fostering opportunities for intellectual engagement and curiosity in all of its students, and the staff's investment in ITAVA students' futures is palpable.

A network leader who works closely with the school noted,

All kids should be exposed to and provided the same opportunities... I know that this school in particular embraces that, and you see that with trips, with cultural activities, with partnerships with universities, with pushing these children even though they come here with what others might consider a disadvantage. It's not a disadvantage, it's an advantage to come to a multicultural city and know another language. It's an asset, it's a plus. So I think that that's what is beautiful about this school is that they embrace that and celebrate that and help the children to work from that perspective.

Throughout the school day and across the disciplines, ITAVA students are challenged to become active participants in civic society and to achieve high academic standards with rigorous content. A network leader stated,

One of the teachers has students who spoke at a United Nations General Assembly—ELLs were involved in that. I go into classrooms and see students reading high school literature, not dumbed-down literature—the science content, the college courses, the expectation that students graduate here with college credits, the expectation that all students will go to college. And I have to say, the administration cracks the data day in and day out to see what's going on with their students.

A climate of trust and academic exploration defines this school's culture. Students have a sense that they are expected to take risks, that the teachers are cheering on their growth, and that they will be praised for trying out their ideas even if their language may not be "perfect." One teacher

noted, “These are good students who are interested and not afraid to try new things.” However, it is the staff and teachers who intentionally create the climate for risk-taking, and explicitly convey the message that students’ contributions are valued regardless of their level of English proficiency. It is this climate that encourages a growth mindset and a sense of self-efficacy, which enhance students’ motivation to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

## IV. Support Structures

### There Are Very Few of Us Who Have Left: Teacher Support

It Takes a Village Academy’s dedicated, passionate teachers are tirelessly driven to impact the lives of their largely ELL and immigrant student population which has been traditionally underserved in the school system. According to interviews with various staff, the teacher attrition rate is very low, and one teacher noted, “I was with Ms. V. when she started at the school, and there are very few of us who have left.” This dedication and passion on the part of the teachers plays a crucial role in the outstanding level of student accomplishment at ITAVA. When teachers are motivated to help their students connect with their learning, and they exhibit passion about what they’re teaching, and it ignites in students a willingness to explore. Teachers’ dedication to student success also cultivates a sense of self-efficacy in students who are being told that they *can* and *WILL* graduate college- and career-ready. However, it would be difficult for teachers to maintain the level of commitment that they do without the administrative implementations and structures that are in place to support them.

Dr. Ken Rowe, an educational expert in teacher quality, asserts that,

There are strong empirical grounds for believing that teachers can and do make a difference and that consistent high quality teaching, supported by strategic professional learning, can and does deliver dramatic improvements in student learning. (2003, p. 27).

Teachers need significant support to implement the type of rigorous yet scaffolded instruction that is called for by Common Core and that is in evidence at ITAVA. There are numerous structures that offer teachers meaningful support in developing excellence in teaching and opportunities for professional learning and leadership roles. The leadership team has developed a well-articulated professional learning plan, and team members lead site-based professional learning at ITAVA. Professional learning has been designed to assist teachers in the mastery of instructional strategies that help their diverse student body acquire the rigorous disciplinary performance and language and literacy demands expected of them. As mentioned previously, the school provides a five-day, site-based summer professional learning in QTEL. Principal Vinitskaya believes this approach works very well for students, noting,

It really helps you to develop a unit of study, go into [students’] prior knowledge, bringing all those strategies together, introducing literature, fiction and nonfiction, not in a simplified way, but helping them to understand the text.

The school leaders and district coaches also offer site-based, day-long workshops catered to the specific needs of ITAVA staff. For example, one workshop focuses on analyzing and interpreting student data, and then using that data to make informed decisions that positively affect student outcomes. Another workshop engages teachers in evaluating ITAVA’s ESL

program and strategizing about how to strengthen the areas of weakness. Teachers also receive a weeklong professional learning session in instructional strategies for Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), and six full days of professional learning for social studies instruction. Teachers also receive training from the NYC Office of ELLs. When asked about resources that the district provides to support ELLs at ITAVA, a district coach with a specialization in ELD instruction explained,

I facilitate a wide menu of professional learning sessions... I run a series of ESL meetings. We offer in-classroom support. I'll go in and view some instruction, debrief, co-plan, [and ask] "What are you doing for these students?" ... We meet with the teacher teams and engage in conversations with the teachers.

Numerous studies have evidenced the powerful effects of professional learning communities (PLCs) on both student and adult learning, and this evidence supports the assumption that students achieve at higher levels when schools embrace and support PLCs (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Though New York City public schools have only recently started to build in time during the school day for professional learning for teachers, ITAVA's dedicated staff began doing that when the school opened. Through the principal's careful planning of the teacher and student schedules, teachers are also offered built-in time for collaboration both within and across content areas. For example, teachers meet twice a week, once for a grade-level meeting in which they share teaching practices and engage in critical dialogue about how to improve instructional efforts for their particular students, make student progress transparent, discuss coordinated interventions for students who are not demonstrating improvements in proficiencies, and collaborate on cross-curricular units of study. At the other meeting they gather by department to do curriculum planning and work on horizontal and vertical alignment of that curriculum. The lesson plan template shared across the teaching community delineates the key components of cross-curricular lessons that the school community believes will make the best use of every teaching moment. (See the included Supplementary Materials for a copy of the shared lesson plan template.) Teachers share an understanding of what makes a great lesson, including steps that flow sequentially, a review of prior knowledge, an attention to developing deeper understanding based on new concepts and skills, inclusion of scaffolding to help all students acquire those concepts and skills, attention to language development, and formative and summative assessments built into every lesson or unit. These meetings are centered around the notion that the fundamental purpose of the school is to produce high levels of successful student outcomes, and that the staff is collectively responsible for those outcomes.

### **Student Supports: Student-Centeredness is the Underlying Mindset**

It Takes a Village Academy takes a student-centered approach to education in order to maximize student engagement and learning. This student-centered approach is particularly successful with ELL students whose educational needs are highly individual and complex because those students are learning not only academic content but also how to use a new language and often how to get along in a new society and culture. Student-centeredness is observable in every facet of this school's structures, policies and practices, and the exemplary student support systems in place at ITAVA are a notable illustration of this underlying mindset.

### **Social-Emotional Supports: A Second Family**

It Takes a Village Academy staff understands that sustained and integrated social-emotional

learning (SEL) helps to engage students, build trust, foster community, and improve achievement. Many ITAVA students face tough challenges inside and outside of the school walls, and addressing social-emotional needs is essential to their academic success, and a heavy focus of students' advisory period. The staff is heavily focused on improving students' skills in self-management, responsible decision-making, self- and social-awareness, and relationship skills. The school also works incredibly hard to provide supportive, caring, and trained staff members who are readily available to meet with students and offer guidance, whether during advisory, or in the offices of the guidance counselors and other administrators. As a network partner noted, "Every single student in this building is known by almost every single teacher." This responsiveness strengthens students' connectedness to school. Students respond to this caring school community by treating its staff like family. Teachers report that students see the school as a place of refuge. As one staff member put it, "We have to kick them out at night. They don't want to leave." A counselor said,

Everybody works for the benefit of the student... You'll see the office is filled with kids. [The principal] is a second mother to them. They call me daddy, or *papi*. They need parental relationships if they can't find them at home. They come here and they get it.

Students are offered emotional support through a well-developed and effective advisory program at ITAVA, with a student-to-teacher ratio of 10-to-1. Upon enrollment, students are assigned to an advisory teacher for the remainder of their high school careers. That advisor offers them social-emotional support, and can act as an advocate for struggling students with other teachers. As one counselor explained,

The advisor has that close knit relationship with that student... We don't look at it as a teaching period, as it's more or less a roundtable, more informal, getting to know the student... It's important to have the student have an adult to go to if you have an issue. To have this one person, and to build that relationship with that one person... You need to address the social-emotional issues. It's not just about academics, but about the whole child.

Students' monumentally positive academic outcomes at ITAVA may partially be attributed to personalized relationships with the advisors and to the trust that the students place in their academic mentors, which allows the adults to intervene or provide support and access to resources where necessary. Based on our interviews with mentors and students, we suspect that these relationships play a significant role in serving as a conduit for motivation to learn and for mastery of college-ready curriculum.

### **College and Career Readiness: All Students Graduate with at Least Six College Credits**

College and career readiness has become a priority for the nation at large and this focus is quite apparent at It Takes a Village Academy, where there are well-defined pathways to college with postsecondary alignment. Students are told that no matter what, they absolutely *will* be college-ready by the time they graduate. Researchers have demonstrated that humans attempt to make meaning of the world around them and that learning takes place when we are involved in the process of achieving larger goals and life purposes (Bruner, 1986; Wenger, 1998). In other words, learning takes place when there is a socially-determined purpose for it (Glaser, 1992). In light of this, at ITAVA attention is being given to involving students in setting their own learning goals and helping them work toward their passions. In addition to social-emotional support,

ITAVA's advisors also offer students highly personalized learning support, helping them develop individual learning plans and assisting them with college and career preparation. Because the staff supports students in identifying their purposes for learning, and helps them set goals for learning at multiple stages in the academic process, ELLs at this school are more likely to persist in their efforts to become college-ready.

For low-income and ELL students, the challenge of applying to college can be confusing and overwhelming. At ITAVA many parents and caregivers have not had the opportunity to attain high levels of education, and thus do not have the expertise to help their children understand the mechanics of preparing for and succeeding in college. College counseling is a strong component of ITAVA's program from the moment students enroll. Every student must participate, and the expectation that they will be college-ready is reinforced by the policies, structures, and partnerships of the school. The advisory teachers help students to develop an academic plan for reaching their goals, and they discuss with students any challenges that arise, and provide step-by-step support for them in researching colleges, meeting the eligibility requirements for certain fields, writing college applications, and applying for financial aid.

The day is long at ITAVA. Both for students whose dominant language is English and for ELLs, there are morning tutorials that run from 7-8:30 a.m. Afterschool tutorials run from 4:15-6 p.m. These tutorials allow for targeted interventions such as content/credit recovery and for academic supports for low-performing students. ITAVA also offers Saturday school where students can come for language classes as well as for college credit bearing courses and Regents and SAT exam prep courses. In addition, in 2015-2016, extended days until 5:15 p.m. will be mandated for ELL students and students who are struggling or need to make up credits in order to graduate. This school is continuously developing ingenious new ways to bolster its students' academic skills, in order to fulfill the school's commitment that students will be prepared to succeed in college and careers, and ensure that none fall between the cracks.

ITAVA has very strong collaborations with colleges and can be considered an Early College High School (ECHS). Opportunities for ELLs to participate in college credit-bearing courses begin in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. If the students are eligible, they are strongly encouraged to attend these courses. Participating colleges also review potential college credit-bearing course curricula offered by teachers at ITAVA and, if approved, students will only pay a small fee to take these courses and receive college credit upon completion. ITAVA also collaborates with City University of New York (CUNY), enrolling qualifying students in its "College Now" program, which offers dual-enrollment and college readiness programs for secondary students on site as early as 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Similarly, New York City College of Technology (City Tech) offers Saturday college credit-bearing courses focused on technology, and Medgar Evers College offers college courses during the last period of the school day. Most ELLs at ITAVA attend these courses. Students can also receive college credits through the Long Island University Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP), Kingsborough Community College, NYU's Robotics program, and Monroe College. ELLs participate in all these college-credit gleaning courses. All students at ITAVA graduate with at least six college credits, and the most ambitious can graduate with 18 credits.

## V. Educational Design

### Academic Opportunities: Whatever is Needed to Achieve at Grade Level and Beyond

It Takes a Village Academy offers ELL students a college-going program of study with rigorous, relevant, and varied curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and a staff absolutely committed to challenging and supporting their content and language development. The staff believes that with adequate support, their ELLs and under-prepared students *will* master college-preparatory coursework, and the school creates trajectories of opportunity which these students follow toward successful academic outcomes. In addition, much of this curriculum as well as numerous extracurricular offerings reflect the cultural backgrounds of the students. For example, soccer is a huge draw at this school because many of the students come from countries where soccer is the most popular sport. In Figure 2 are some of the courses and extracurricular activities that students may take.

ITAVA carefully aligns resources, structures and supports so that students can meet the high expectations set out for them, and the same creativity that is applied to the use of resources is seen in the planning of courses and schedules. For example, small classes, block scheduling, extended learning time, and advisories provide structural support to those ends. Fiscal resources are carefully allotted to provide programming and equipment that best meet the students' learning needs. The leadership team believes that traditional classroom schedules fail students and that course schedules need to be customized by the school to meet the needs of the population. Because of this, even the block schedule is not based on the most common forms of block scheduling wherein each class meets every other day for an extended period, but instead the leadership team makes deliberate and creative choices in scheduling to help each student receive the lion's share of instruction in the areas that are most important for her academic success. For instance, students might meet for social studies six times a week, and animation class twice a week. In addition, the leadership strives to keep class sizes small so that underprepared and ELL students receive more individual attention. A typical English class size is 20 students as compared to the citywide average of 25.8.<sup>37</sup>

The leadership team programs each incoming student's day individually according to the student's needs and to successfully prepare them for the Regents exams. It is the staff's absolute conviction that regardless of a student's past educational experiences, ITAVA *will* prepare them to achieve at high levels. The school understands that it is important for ELLs to enroll in rigorous courses that will help them prepare for college-level academic work, and offers students the opportunity to enroll in a wide range of AP courses. The school finds that these opportunities are strong motivators and have a positive impact on students' perspectives on their own abilities. One teacher noted, "The Advanced Placement class I teach—that in itself is a motivation for my ELLs. They feel elated, they are so honored that they are in that class." The leadership team believes that being an ELL should not be a barrier to rigorous academic content. An achievement coach in the school network remarked, "[The students] may not have exact command of the English language, but [the teachers] put in place whatever is needed so that students can still achieve on grade-level content and beyond."

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<sup>37</sup> <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/data/classsize/classsize.htm>.

## Figure 2: Examples of Courses and Extracurricular Activities at ITAVA

AP COURSES: Calculus AB, Chemistry, English Language and Composition, French Language and Culture, Physics B, Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism, Spanish Language and Culture, United States Government and Politics, United States History, World History, (Online: Computer Science A, Physics B)

LANGUAGE CLASSES: Arabic, French, Haitian-Creole, Spanish

EXTRACURRICULAR: Art, Chorus, College Internships, Dance, G-12 Science Program with Brooklyn College, G-12 Technology Program with NYU, iLearnNYC, Local Community Service in Hospitals and Banks, Math Challenge, Model United Nations, Modern Dance Program, Multimedia, Music, 'Peace Corps Fellows' Afterschool Program, Peer Tutoring, Robotics, Science (Brooklyn College), Theater

BOYS PUBLIC SCHOOLS ATHLETICS LEAGUE (PSAL) SPORTS: Soccer, Basketball, Bowling, Cricket, Football, Outdoor Track, Swimming, Tennis

GIRLS PSAL SPORTS: Basketball, Bowling, Cricket, Football, Outdoor Track, Swimming, Tennis

The school offers students seven weekly hours of English, with four hours focused on ELA and three focused on literature or culture. The teachers for these two courses plan together so that their curriculum is aligned and affords teachers the opportunity to support students' content and skill development. In addition to four hours of math, students also receive two hours in a History of Math course that is modeled after a course at New York City College of Technology. This course helps students understand where mathematical concepts came from, how they are applied in the world, and how they fit together, providing a purposeful learning experience. It also gives them a foundation in the discourse of mathematics so that they can successfully navigate the language demands of their practice-oriented math course. The teachers of the math and History of Math courses work together to align their curriculum so that students receive instruction in crucial concepts and information in concert with their regular math coursework. Moreover, ITAVA offers both regular grade-level science courses and one two-hour course in the literacy of the sciences. In addition to teaching discipline-specific academic language and literacy skills, this course supports scientific research skills.

Students also take four hours of social studies, two hours of technology, and two hours of art classes per week. The leadership believes that arts education is extremely beneficial for ELLs because it helps students acculturate to the U.S. context and allows students to share their own culture with their peers. This aligns with the Common Core's emphasis on the ability to understand other perspectives and cultures.

The school also offers separate language courses in Haitian Creole, French, Spanish, and Arabic so that students can continue to gain home language and literacy skills. These courses are either offered during the regular school day, or in Saturday school during extended programming. Students who are English proficient can also choose among such language courses for their foreign language requirement.



The future success of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners partially depends on their technological ability and their ability to learn through technological modalities, and the development of these skills is another priority at ITAVA. Blended learning opportunities abound at the school and students use educational software such as “Think Through Math,” “Study Island,” “Academic Vocabulary,” and Achieve 3000, all of which they can access at school and at home to help bolster and individualize content learning. iPads have been ordered so that students will have ready access to software and the ability to do online research. ITAVA also leverages tech to scaffold content and language learning through blended classrooms. The school integrates technology for literacy instruction, math instruction, and homework assistance.

ITAVA is inspiring its diverse learners to thrive in STEM education by strengthening the academic pipeline for its students in those fields. Students coming from low-income backgrounds are underrepresented in the STEM fields, and are rarely afforded the opportunity to gain the experience and education that allows them to access those fields. ITAVA seeks to improve STEM education for low-income and ELL students by providing them with opportunities to participate in curriculum and exciting, hands-on enrichment programming that bolsters their science, technology, and math skills. The robotics program is an afterschool program run by two of the tech teachers. It meets twice a week for an hour and a half and provides a hands-on, creative way for students to connect their science and math learning to interesting and fun projects. To increase student persistence, it is also vital to surround students with a community of STEM professionals. To this end, the club has a relationship with NYU Polytechnic. Professors from the university come and teach at the school, and students go once a month to meetings at NYU, where they visit a real engineering lab. They take field trips as well, such as visiting a company that makes flying robots. The teams are made up of fifteen students each, and there is an all-girls’ team. The participating students are a mix of ELLs and English proficient students, and many have gone on to fields in mechanical engineering or technology.

### **Approach to Instruction for ELLs: We Understand the Struggles**

I think that it also helps that a lot of our staff, and Ms. V and myself, we are second language learners ourselves, so we understand the struggles when it’s about learning another language.

--Vice Principal Anthony Veneziano

### **Scaffolded, Rigorous Use of Language in Content Areas: The Overriding Drive**

Driven by the new Common Core Standards, a shift in our thinking about how language and literacy instruction should be approached has occurred (Bunch, Kibler & Pimentel, 2013), and language skills are coming into much greater focus. The Common Core Standards and Next Generation Science Standards articulate the rigorous, linguistically-heavy expectations that students should be able to negotiate complex texts, use evidence in text to justify their views, and generally be able to read, write, listen, and speak in the discourses of each discipline (Santos, Darling-Hammond & Cheuk, 2012). Reflecting this language-focused reconceptualization of education, researchers claim,

The overriding drive in current changes occurring in second language teaching is the need to teach language through something essential and meaningful to the student. When the goal is to prepare students for academic success in classes taught in English, then ESL



is best taught through lessons that teach meaningful mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts concepts simultaneously with second language objectives. (Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2003, p. 310).

The explicit language development framework undergirding the instructional practices across courses observed at ITAVA provides students with both challenging content and high levels of appropriate scaffolding to access that content. This framework reflects the QTEL principles developed by Walqui and van Lier (2010), and articulated in an interview with Walqui (2010, p. 26):

- Sustain academic rigor in teaching ELLs
- Hold high expectations in teaching ELLs
- Engage in quality interactions with ELLs
- Sustain a language focus in teaching ELLs
- Develop a quality curriculum for teaching ELLs.

Because teachers have received professional learning in the QTEL approach, these foundational principles are evident in their classroom practices and translate into positive impacts on student learning outcomes. With these principles as a basis for their students' academic and language development, all teachers at ITAVA can be seen using developmentally- and culturally-appropriate teaching strategies to help students engage in meaningful activities and tasks that reflect rich, discipline-specific content, while explicitly supporting the development of discipline-specific language competencies needed to engage effectively. Indeed, ITAVA displays 2014-15's instructional focus:

Interdisciplinary teacher teams will scaffold language demands to support the development of syntax (arrangements of words and phrases to create a well-formed sentence) as well as general and domain-specific academic vocabulary across all content areas.

As a network partner put it,

In most classrooms, if not all, you will see “word work” and attention to language going on in the classroom. Even if it's not in the lesson, it's there in the background and it's something teachers really think about when they plan units of study and when they co-plan about the language that students need to unpack the content.

Reading and writing skills development is the domain of all of the content teachers at ITAVA. One teacher noted, “Whether it's math, science, English, social studies, we're all focused on reading... Always focused on academic vocabulary you need for that reading.” Another teacher added,

The second part of literacy development is the focus on writing, because our students struggle with writing. For example, in each academy they are focusing on different purposes... In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy they are focusing on students writing in complete sentences. Across the board everyone should be focused on well-developed paragraphs using textual evidence. Then we move onto developing essays.

ITAVA uses an integrated ESL/content area program model wherein a content teacher and an ESL/bilingual teacher co-teach, and/or a teacher is dual-certified in ELD instruction and a content area. ELD teachers are strategically hired for both their ELD training and their content area expertise. When hiring decisions are made, the leadership, whenever possible, hires teachers that are dual-certified in ELD and a content area. A former physics teacher from Jamaica who is now certified to teach ELD teaches the Literacy in Science course. In co-taught classes, the ELD teacher may take the lead on lessons but have content support from the content area teacher and vice versa. This allows different instructional foci to emerge as teachers with different expertise take the lead, and helps each teacher learn strategies that support students' content and language development. The principal noted,

The ESL teacher team teaches with the social studies teacher because you have to push those subjects. They have to take those exams. So ESL teachers provide language support, content teachers provide content support and they teach together. It also gives the opportunity for a social studies teacher to learn how to provide scaffolding, how to introduce vocabulary, how to differentiate texts we give to the students, how to differentiate questions...all those different components. You can provide PD forever, but teachers have to see each other in action. This is where the real PD happens.

ELLs, as well as all learners, also need opportunities to verbally articulate and build upon their ideas with peers, in order to practice the disciplinary uses of language they must master. Students at ITAVA were consistently observed engaging in meaningful interactions with their peers, through intellectually rich content, texts, and tasks. Many classrooms provided ample opportunities for collaboration among students with grouping and pairing strategies such as Think-Pair-Share, Turn-and-Talk, jigsaw activities, and table groups. Facilitated by scaffolding practices, students were observed actively listening to each other and building on each other's ideas. For example, in one science class, the teacher read a complex text aloud with students, and then provided ample opportunity for students to negotiate the meaning of the text in pairs and as a whole class. Finally, the students got into groups and did a jigsaw in which one group found the problems that the text discusses, while the other group found the solutions to the problems. They then shared out to the entire class. In one AP Biology class, students were asked to read an informational text on an experiment that was conducted, related to mussels and phosphate. They were first asked to interpret what they read with a table partner, sharing out what the experiment was testing, and justifying their answers by persuading their partners with relevant evidence from the text. In the conversation<sup>38</sup> in Figure 3 below in which students were asked to interpret what the experiment was trying to test, students were heard negotiating information and offering each other corrections in comprehension.

Students and the teacher were also observed engaging in analytical, thoughtful, well-reasoned class discussion about the text, and using inference skills to apply to experimental scientific methods in general, as seen in Figure 4.

Through careful questioning the teacher created a discussion that led the students to develop knowledge and deeper understanding of key scientific ideas (hypotheses, variables) as well as an

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<sup>38</sup> All excerpts were not exact quotes, but rough approximations of student conversation as taken by note-takers and observers.

### Figure 3. Students Negotiating Information and Offering Corrections

**Student 1:** They was trying to find out if the mussels would grow in that water with the phosphate.

**Student 2:** Yeah, but they had a control group with the same water, but without the phosphate, so they could compare to see if that water made the mussels grow faster.

### Figure 4. Analytical Classroom Discussion

After the students have had a chance to collaborate in small groups to discuss the experimental methods used in the mussels experiment, the teacher asks students to share what they learned about experimentation methods.

**Student:** The point of conducting an experiment...

**Student:** You need to have different control groups and experimental groups.

**Teacher:** Was the experiment set up properly?

**Student:** Not enough. There weren't enough variables in the experiment.

**Student:** I thought it was enough because they were just trying to measure whether phosphate affects mussels.

**Student:** Yes, it was enough. It was accurate because they were just trying to measure phosphate and they had enough.

**Teacher:** Why do we set the conditions the same except for the testable variable?

**Student:** When we set up experiment we have to set up the variable to test.

The teacher gives them one more minute to review the case study and then explains that they will go over the questions on the hand-out.

**Teacher:** What were they doing?

**Student:** They set it up and set the conditions for the experiment.

**Student:** It didn't tell us what the results were but they told us what would happen if they didn't set it up right.

**Teacher:** Why did the students set it up with close to identical conditions and what would be thrown off if they were different?

**Student:** Like the temperature of the water.

**Teacher:** Then you'd change another variable.

**Student:** It might change the results and you wouldn't find the answer to your hypothesis.

**Teacher:** How would you change the hypothesis if mussels died in both aquariums?

**Student:** Well then, maybe there was something else affecting the mussels besides the phosphate.

understanding of the processes (experimental methods) scientists use to study the natural world. It also engaged students in the discourse of the discipline, reinforcing discipline-specific language.

Subsequent to this activity, the teacher showed a brief clip of a video about the doctor, John Snow, considered the father of epidemiology. This video illustrated how Snow used scientific methods to trace the source of a cholera outbreak in 1850s London. He then asked students to discuss how Snow discounted his original hypothesis (foul air), and the methods he used to trace

the outbreak to its source. Students were asked to use their critical reasoning skills to apply their knowledge about scientific methods to this particular situation.

Many of the teachers at ITAVA also place a great deal of focus on citing textual evidence to support ideas. When asked about the standards, one teacher remarked about the importance of citing textual evidence,

It's pretty much what we have to do on a daily basis, because we're constantly working with documents. We're constantly working with something where they're going to have to cite a source, they're going to have to explain a person's point of view, or have an argument for or against a certain idea. So if you're reading it, you're going to have to cite from it. Using primary source documents and knowing the difference between a primary and secondary source and knowing how to put all these things together—it's a little bit of a challenge at times.

Researchers observed this emphasis on citing textual evidence across courses at ITAVA. For example, in the graphic organizer in Figure 5, students were asked to answer questions about a text on Italian history, and to provide textual evidence to support their answers before sharing out with their group. These kinds of organizers were seen in many classes we visited.

**Figure 5. Textual Evidence Graphic Organizer**

Answer the following question in complete sentences and be prepared to share.

Group Discussion Question: Can you elaborate on the reason why the economy was transformed in Italian towns after the 13 <sup>th</sup> century?	Textual Evidence
Your opinion/claim:	
Your group's opinion/claim:	

The use of graphic organizers in many of the observed ITAVA classrooms helps students to collaborate together to represent their ideas and learning, organize information learned, and grasp rhetorical structures. Graphic organizers supply the necessary framework for students to engage in learning activities that require them to use language meaningfully because they scaffold

rhetorical structures such as categorizing, inferring, summarizing, comparing and contrasting, evaluating, etc. For example, students in an ELA/ESL lesson on Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* were observed filling out graphic organizers related to the material at hand. Each pair of students provided evidence of dialogue from the text that illustrated how Walter Lee Young's character develops throughout the text and then, in another column, analyzed what the dialogue showed about the character's development. In a classroom where students were reading Chinua Achebe's book *Things Fall Apart*, student-made graphic organizer posters served to anchor learning throughout the unit and reinforce the content-specific vocabulary and rhetorical structures commonly used in the discipline. The displayed posters included vocabulary words from the text; close reading activities; literary elements from this text; gender roles, religion, music, art, dance, and other cultural features of the book's characters; and the Common Core standards addressed in this unit. Eventually, because students internalized the rhetorical framework inherent in making claims and supporting them with evidence, students begin to build this valuable practice into their own skills repertoire, making them stronger and more competent learners with the ability to make stronger claims on their own without the scaffolding. These graphic organizers support language development in that they encourage students to pay attention to the linkages between the content itself and the specific vocabulary and language structures needed to successfully negotiate the content.

Attention at ITAVA is also paid to vocabulary development and the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction in the content areas. Most classes, including mathematics, science, and ELA courses, displayed word walls with words that were essential to understanding concepts in that discipline as well as critical academic vocabulary that crosses disciplines. In addition, vocabulary is developed in the context of texts while students are reading. This attention to vocabulary development in context was consistently observed in classroom conversations. In one science class where students were reading about the Burmese python population explosion in Florida, the teacher read the text from the screen and then asked individual students to read the text and circle words they did not know. The students circled the words "non-native" and "disrupting." In the second sentence they circled "food chain" and "reduced." The teacher then defined these terms in context using the picture and other words in the sentence. In a biology class, students were engaged in an activity where they were analyzing a particular experiment, and students were clearly conversant in the discipline-specific language (e.g., experimental methods, control group, experimental group, variable) needed to effectively engage in the analysis. In a Global History class, a leveled reader with defined vocabulary was used to support vocabulary development for ELLs and space for annotations was provided (see Figure 6).

In addition, Achieve 3000, a technology-based reading and writing program, is used in concert with classroom instruction at ITAVA and provides leveled readers of the same texts, tailored to each student's reading proficiency. As leadership explained, "When [students] test out and they are ready to move and join the regular classes, they're not behind. They're on the same level and exposed to the same curriculum."

Another important scaffolding strategy ITAVA teachers use is flexible grouping wherein students are grouped in a variety of well thought-out ways according to the demands of the task and student needs. A few teachers discussed some of these grouping strategies in the following interview excerpt in Figure 7.

**Figure 6. Leveled Reader, Global History**

Annotation Column	Venice: Italian City State	Vocabulary
	<p>Venice was founded in the fifth century by people fleeing from Attila the Hun. They settled on a group of islands on the northeastern edge of the Italian peninsula. Since the land was not very fertile, the early Venetians had to depend on the sea for a living. They fished in the Adriatic and produced salt from the seawater. They exchanged their products for wheat from towns on the mainland of Italy. They also traded wheat, wine, and slaves to the Byzantines for fabrics and spices.</p> <p>Shipbuilding however, was the primary industry in Venice. During the Crusades, Venetian ships provided transportation to the Holy Land. By the 13th century, Venice was the most prosperous city in Europe. The city became rich by collecting taxes on all merchandise brought into its harbor. Venice built huge warships that protected the valuable cargo of its merchant ships from pirate raids. With the vast wealth from trade, many of the leading families of Venice vied with one another to build the finest palaces or support the work of the greatest artists.</p>	<p><b>Founded – created</b></p> <p><b>Wheat – a crop used to make bread and pasta</b></p> <p><b>Prosperous – rich and wealthy</b></p> <p><b>Cargo – objects being transported</b></p> <p><b>Raids – attacks on someone</b></p>
<p>Remember to annotate on the margins !! Read carefully and underline words you do not know.</p>		

**Figure 7. Discussion Among Teachers About Student Grouping Strategies**

**Teacher 1:** When there's an assessment at the end of the week, over the weekend I try to look at how each student performed. I believe in heterogeneous grouping, because if I group them homogeneously, the slow learners will never get to our goal. What I believe is that there has to be someone in that group who will tutor them. I have what you call the tutor/tutee. There will be four members in the group, tutor/tutee, tutor/tutee.

**Teacher 2:** I group in a different way. I group by needs in the beginning... However, when the students start acquiring more language, I group them by language proficiency, which helps me to differentiate.

**Teacher 3:** It doesn't mean that the student that ends up in a certain group will stay there the whole year. Every week we change. It's flexible.

**Teacher 4:** I teach ESL and I divide students based on their learning styles. Also, most of the time, in heterogeneous groups. I put students together based on their different learning levels so that students can work together to help each other to reach instructional goals. But, [it] depends on the assignment.

**Teacher 5:** Also, in my case, I use mostly homogenous groups, because it's very important to shape my assignments so that each student is engaged and participating. Because if you have one student who can solve the problem, and the others don't even have time to think it through... At the same time, in terms of language, I try to have one student who can help me in terms of language translation; otherwise I won't even be able to explain the instructions to others.

In an Algebra/Trigonometry class, the teacher paired students on a task according to the previous day's assessments of students' grasp of the instructed concepts. A student that scored high was paired with a student who scored low, and the teacher described them as tutor and tutee, instructing the student who scored high to support the other student in learning the concepts. In another classroom, students who were discussing a nonfiction text were placed in groups according to their primary language. According to the teacher, this allowed them to negotiate the meaning of the text they were reading through their primary language and to discuss the text more deeply than they would be able to in English. Indeed, students were animatedly discussing the text with each other, and all students appeared motivated to contribute. In an ELD/ELA classroom, students were working in table groups of four, collaboratively finding answers to questions and supporting evidence from the text *Things Fall Apart*. The questions were not only comprehension questions, but also required higher order thinking skills to infer information about meanings and characters. Students appeared to be homogeneously grouped, but it was evident that students greatly benefitted from working together, and all of the students were heard contributing to the learning of others in their groups as they discussed their ideas.

Deliberate, purposeful modeling is another highly effective instructional strategy, which allows a teacher to demonstrate expected academic behaviors and to provide examples of effective student work. A teacher noted, "We do a lot of modeling. Modeling what the expectations are, what is the language, what does the work look like, what we're expecting from [students]. Because different students need different supports."

Other language scaffolds are also in place for ELLs. For example, teachers provide sentence frames for students who need that support. Home language scaffolding is very strong at this school. The school leadership is aware of the second language acquisition literature that emphasizes the efficacy of using first language (L1) literacy to support second language (L2) literacy learning (Chu-Chang, 1981; Cummins, 1981; Gudschinsky, 1977) and of the sociocultural importance of maintaining first language and literacy skills. When teaching newcomer students, especially in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, teachers who can do so offer L1 support to help students access academic content. One student described how she learned to use French-English cognates to assist her understanding of the texts she reads and writes at school. She said, "When I'm writing my essays, I use my French to connect it to the English. Most of the words are connected."

ITAVA is not a bilingual education school, because the parents chose not to have this model, but many content area teachers are fluent in (and often native speakers of) the students' home languages, and the school structures its program so that these teachers help to facilitate the ELL students' transition to an all-English instructional program. Teachers provide academic subject instruction in the home language to the extent necessary, so that students are able to negotiate

content in their home language, but the ultimate goal for students is English proficiency, and to this end, students also have exposure to teachers who are native speakers of English. For example, newcomer students will have two math teachers, one from Haiti who speaks Haitian Creole, French, and Spanish, and another who has a strong native command of English. A teacher also remarked that, especially at the beginning of the school year when students have very limited English, students discuss issues in their home languages in groups, and then teachers choose one person to represent the group's discussion to the class in English. Home language materials and bilingual dictionaries are provided in all of the ITAVA classrooms. Students use translation applications on the computer. In addition, the Regents exams are provided in the student's dominant language, except for the English Language Arts exam.

### Clearly Stated Learning Aims and Objectives: They Know Exactly What's Required of Them

With such high goals to achieve, teachers at ITAVA keep instruction tightly focused on the goals at hand. Nearly all of the observed lessons at ITAVA had clear learning aims, objectives, and success criteria that were posted, articulated, and often reiterated throughout the lesson. Teachers also often provided clear roadmaps by breaking down the steps to those goals into activities or assignments that scaffolded their learning toward the stated aims. For example, in a class that was part of an ELA unit on Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, the posted aim and objective, which were focused on using critical thinking and analysis, were as shown in Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8. Aim and Objective of A Raisin in the Sun Lesson**

**Aim:** How do we analyze character development through the character's significant actions and dialogue?  
**Objective:** How does Walter Lee Younger develop or change throughout Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*?

The teacher started this lesson with a "Do Now" activity that asked students to reflect on how the main character changed during the course of the play. This reinforced the previous day's learning on character development wherein the entire class analyzed Walter Lee Younger's character. After the entire class discussed how the character had changed, students were asked to pair up and analyze a different character's development, providing evidence from the text to support their claims. In this lesson, the activities were clearly designed to support the aims and objectives, and broke down the aim and objective into chunks wherein students moved from more heavily-scaffolded analysis activities to more independent ones.

### Assessment

One of the most important roles in assessment is the provision of timely and informative feedback to students during instruction and learning... (National Research Council, 2001 p. 87)

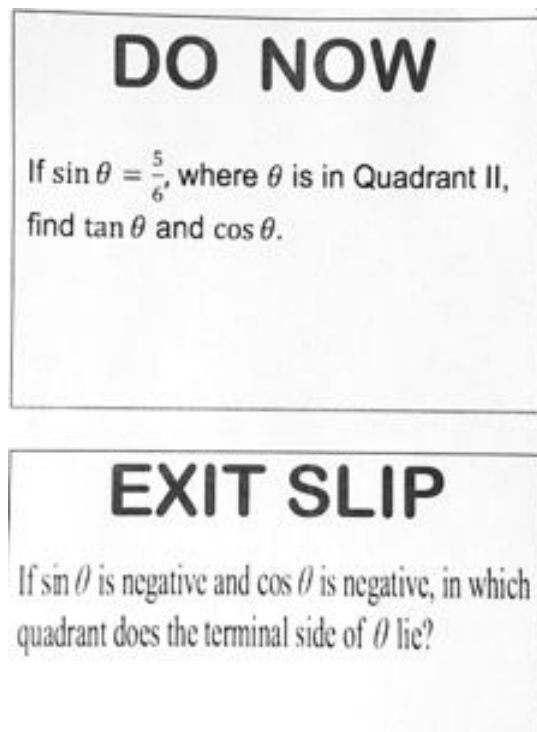
So that students are pushed to ever higher levels of rigor as soon as it becomes possible to do so, decisions at ITAVA about what each student needs are continuous, data-driven and based on individual student progress and needs, as opposed to labels. In fact, students may be moved from



one class to another at any point in the year depending on their performance. Individual student progress according to formative assessments, achievement data, and other measures is watched closely throughout the year and discussed in teacher teams and among administration.

According to Margaret Heritage (2007), formative assessment practices are powerful tools that provide information about student learning in relationship to learning goals and are important components of a comprehensive assessment system. These practices help teachers gauge where students are in order to adapt instruction to meet individual and rapidly evolving student needs. Formative assessment practices were observed throughout the classes at ITAVA. For example, at the beginning of each class period, many teachers used a 5-10 minute “Do Now” exercise to revisit the previous day’s learning and to reteach concepts that proved difficult for students. Use of “Exit Slips,” an activity or problem assigned at the end of class to assess understanding of the day’s lesson, was also commonly seen in the classroom. An example of both a “Do Now” and an “Exit Slip” can be seen in Figure 9.

**Figure 9. “Do Now” and “Exit Slip”**



One teacher explained about her end-of-lesson formative assessments,

After a whole lesson on equations, at the end of the lesson we give them a question [that] requires a whole class discussion, or they need to submit an essay about what they learned today, or they need to explain what was the most difficult problem. It’s a simple question, but it requires them to explain it using academic vocabulary.

Another teacher reported on the many ways that he formatively assesses throughout the day:

I use the “thumb-up” method. Also just to check for understanding, I circulate, ask small groups a series of questions to see if they are really getting it or if I need to go back and teach it another way.

Teachers reported using these assessments to plan instructional interventions, to change instructional practices to better meet students’ needs, and to help students to monitor and assess their own progress.

Rubrics can be an important way for students to assess their own learning and to make focused changes to meet the expected criteria. In addition, rubrics provide a way for teachers to provide clear and direct feedback to students on their assignments for performances. When asked about formative assessment practices, a teacher explained, “One of the things we use a lot is the rubric when we do essay writing, or for whatever subject you’re in. So they know exactly what is required of them.”

An important component of assessment is giving students the opportunity to articulate evidence of learning through a process of questioning and discussion that helps them to externalize their thinking (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Questions and rich discussions, between a teacher and students or among students, allow students to explain or expand upon their reasoning or evidence and how they arrived at a particular solution or opinion. In the vignette in Figure 10, this process is illustrated through one ELA/ESL co-taught class.

**Figure 10. Vignette from ELA/ESL Co-Taught Class**

Students are sitting in table groups of four in this brightly lit classroom. There are multiple student-made graphic organizer posters which are hung throughout the room. In this ELA/ESL class, Mr. L.<sup>39</sup> is reading aloud an excerpt from Chinua Achebe’s book *Things Fall Apart*. As he reads, he periodically stops to ask clarifying or comprehension questions (e.g., What is a locust? What does it mean when the author says the bow snapped? What do you call it when you use a word or phrase to describe something else that’s unrelated?). This practice not only provides clarifications, but through metacognitive modeling also demonstrates how to actively read texts.

After Mr. L. finishes reading the chapter excerpt, both teachers direct students to begin group work. Mr. L. projects instructions on the smart board and Ms. R. verbally explains the instructions for their task. Ms. R. says, “Open your books to Springboard 3.11, ‘Understanding a pivotal chapter,’ page 162.” They then model the activity and direct each group to take a question and provide an appropriate answer with supporting evidence from the text with a page number. Each set of desks has home language and/or English language dictionaries for students to use during their activity. The questions, which ask readers to employ critical reading skills such as drawing inferences, analyzing information, and comparing texts to other texts, are as follows:

1. How has Nwoye changed and what has caused the changes?
2. Describe the arrival of the locusts. What is the reaction of the people of Umuofia?
3. Do you think that Ikemefuna suspects that he is going to be killed? Why or why not?
4. How does Okonkwo feel about Ikemefuna’s death? How does Nwoye feel?
5. Genesis 22:1–19 of The Bible presents the story of Abraham and Isaac. What similarities and differences are there in the sacrifices of Isaac and Ikemefuna? How does this incident illustrate the

<sup>39</sup> Pseudonyms are unrelated to teachers’ actual names.

novel's father/son motif?

6. How do you think the death of Ikemefuna will affect the relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye?

As the students are doing the activity, they appear to understand what is expected of them, and to be comfortable in completing it. Meanwhile, Mr. L. and Ms. R. circulate among the groups and ask clarifying and extension questions (e.g., When you 'affect' someone, what does that mean? Do you know the story of Abraham?) and answer student questions. The students are busily discussing questions and asking each other where evidence is located.

**Student:** I think he feels bad and maybe like he goes a little crazy.

**Ms. R.:** Where does it say that?

The student looks through text.

**Student:** Here. "Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like snapping of a tightened bow."

After the students are finished with their tasks, the teachers direct each group to present their answers and evidence to the whole class. The other students are expected to take notes on each of the answers. The ELA teacher, Ms. R. takes the lead for this portion, with the ELA teacher, Mr. L. providing support. One spokesperson from each group takes a turn talking.

**Student:** Nwoye has changed the way he acts because now he wants to be more manly. He kinda acts more like a man.

**Ms. R.:** What do you think caused this change?

**Student:** His father. 'Cause he wants to please him but he's also afraid of him.

**Ms. R.:** What is your support?

**Student:** It says Okonkwo was inwardly pleased at his son's development, and he knew it was due to Ikemefuna.

Ms. R. then points out where the student is making an important point, but asks for more evidence of his fear.

**Ms. R.:** Yes, he was afraid of him and wants to please him. How do we know he's afraid? Where is the support?

The student then points to a passage that supports this answer. She also asks her fellow students if they want to add something else to that. A student from another group then asks a clarifying question to that group. Ms. R., satisfied with the student's answer, moves on to the next group's answer. She prefaces the questions, making an explicit reference to the literary term.

**Ms. R.:** Actually this is a Biblical allusion, guys.

The next student then explains what she's going to do.

**Student:** Today we will present the differences and similarities between the story of...

For emphasis, Ms. R. repeats an important point that the student makes about these two texts. After the student speaks, Mr. L. asks for a quick summary of what she said and the student easily summarizes her group's main points. Mr. L. then extends students' learning.

**Mr. L.:** An allegory is when you can connect something in this story to another story or text. What happens in the Bible story?

Students then talk about the story of Abraham and Isaac.

**Mr. L.:** What do you think about Okonkwo killing his son?

**Student:** You can think of it like [...]

**Mr. L.:** Any other questions?

**Student:** I wanted to say that maybe it's his fear that is dominating him because he's afraid of appearing weak.

In the vignette above, the teacher used questioning to externalize student thinking and assess student understanding. For example, when a student was talking about the changes that Nwoye had experienced, Ms. R. asked the student what she thought caused those changes. This question allowed the student to externalize the inferences she made about the character in order to gain a deeper understanding of his behaviors. Ms. R.'s next question about support assessed the student's ability to provide textual evidence for her answers. When the student didn't quite understand that Ms. R. was asking for textual evidence of Nwoye's fear and answers with textual evidence to support the father's feelings, Ms. R. praised her for the point and evidence she did provide and then more explicitly rephrased the question. When Ms. R. asked the group to explain what happened in the Bible story, she was tapping into students' prior knowledge and assessing their understanding of the literary device, the Biblical allusion used in this text. She then explicitly instructed them in the literary term used for this device. In addition to the formative assessment practices we see demonstrated, this lesson also reflects a sociocultural theory of learning wherein the students were being apprenticed into critical thinking practices in the context of an apprenticeship with the teachers and their peers in this community of practice. The teachers' formative assessment practices aid students in refining their understanding of the content and of disciplinary language and practices.

## VI. Conclusion

Studies have shown us that ELLs' academic achievement is a structural issue that must be addressed by all educational stakeholders (Callahan, 2005; Oakes, 1985). In order for ELLs to succeed in college and careers, it is critical for educators and administrators to have a profound understanding of all of the variables that contribute to successful student outcomes in terms of graduation and college and career readiness indicators. Schools must also be prepared to address cultural and linguistic diversity by exploring research-based theory and practice around ELLs and culturally-diverse students.

Changes that are small and programmatic or that only affect individual variables often have small effects on learning outcomes and success rates in schools, especially when it comes to schools that serve culturally- and linguistically-diverse populations of students. ITAVA provides a model for how one school has combined many variables, including abundant structural supports and a profound commitment to college and career readiness, to create the conditions

under which ELL students not only graduate ready for college, but ready to *thrive* there.

Some of the variables described above include the following:

- A commitment to the idea that all students can and *will* succeed.
- A visionary and dedicated leadership team that manages staff, resources, data, and processes to continually foster school and student outcomes improvement.
- Strategic support systems and opportunities that help teachers to collectively develop professionally and that catalyze instructional excellence, especially with regard to the learning needs of the particular population they serve.
- Powerful instructional practices that support both content and literacy and language development in concert.
- Rigorous academic coursework and the support systems to access it.
- A climate that embraces and reflects the languages, cultures, and experiences of diverse students, parents and staff and that provides a joyful and engaging learning environment for all kinds of students.
- Intentional, strategic School-Community-College collaborations.

Given the deliberate and strategic efforts we have seen enacted at ITAVA, there is reason to feel optimistic that schools can respond to the challenges of serving an increasingly diverse U.S. student population and providing ELLs with access to the opportunities typically afforded their more affluent, English proficient counterparts. This inspiring school has shown us that we have a momentous opportunity to shift the paradigm for underserved ELLs in this nation.

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## VIII. Supplementary Materials

### Lesson Plan Template (adapted from document provided by school)

Lesson Components	Instructional Moves	Scaffolds/Assessments/Supplementaries
Unit/Lesson		Tri-State Rubric Cognitive Rigor Matrix Text Complexity Rubric
Essential Question(s) based on the lesson's aim and mini-lesson.		
<p><b>INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE/AIM</b> Please review the instructional objective with the students after Do Now.</p> <p>To be written as a learning outcome (What will the students learn at the end of today's class?) Aligned to Common Core Standards and/or Content Standards</p>		
<p><b>DO NOW/MOTIVATION</b> (1e and 1f) Please keep this to 7-10 minutes</p> <p>Check for understanding</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• K-W-L</li> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Give me (prompts)</li> <li>• Brainstorm</li> <li>• Concept formation</li> <li>• Thumb it</li> <li>• Fist of Five</li> <li>• Quick Write</li> <li>• Primary and secondary source documents</li> <li>• Videos, audio, photos, graphics.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MINILESSON</b> (15-20 minutes) Teach Model Demonstrate</p> <p>Daily Check for Understanding: higher-order thinking questions to assess student learning)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modeling</li> <li>• Shared reading and writing</li> <li>• Read-aloud-think-aloud</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Demonstration</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Guest speaker</li> <li>• Graphic Organizer</li> </ul>
<p><b>GUIDED PRACTICE</b> Check for Understanding</p>		
<b>INSTRUCTION/LINK</b>		Ask students to repeat the instructions in their own words.

<p>INDEPENDENT WORK (15-20 minutes) (Independent Work Group Work (Pairs, Triads, Quads) (2.2)</p> <p>Check for Understanding Assessment for learning questions Task rubric/checklists</p> <p>Data and rationale for the design of the assessment. (3d)</p>	<p>(How will you know they have learned the instructional objectives? What is the evidence/data?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning centers</li> <li>• Projects</li> <li>• Contracts</li> <li>• Role Play</li> <li>• Problem based</li> <li>• Inquiry</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Independent study</li> <li>• Accountable Talk</li> <li>• Quiz, test</li> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Conferences</li> <li>• Self-reflection</li> <li>• Demonstration</li> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Learning Log,</li> <li>• Reflective journal</li> <li>• Checklist</li> <li>• Portfolio</li> <li>• Rubric</li> <li>• Share Out</li> <li>• Fish Bowl</li> <li>• Socratic Seminar</li> </ul>
<p>SHARE OUT (5-10 minutes) Questions that extend or deepen thinking</p>		<p>Self- and peer-evaluation</p>
<p>EXIT CARD (3-5 minutes) Check the Aim Check for understanding</p>		<p>Have the students achieved the instructional objective? What is your evidence?</p>
<p>HOMEWORK</p>		<p>Extension/Enrichment</p>



# Manhattan Bridges High School

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## I. A Brief Look into the Classroom: Tidal and Solar Energy

Halfway through Ms. P.'s<sup>40</sup> Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science class period, we observe a group of five students hurriedly shuffling through their materials and briefly consulting with one another in preparation to deliver a group presentation on types of energy and their applications for household use. The class is currently studying energy resources and pollution in preparation for the upcoming AP test.

As the five students assemble at the front of the classroom, Ms. P. drums up excitement for the presentation on “Tidal and Solar Energy” by complimenting the group for submitting outstanding work. On the board, the students have projected their PowerPoint presentation. They begin with a student introducing solar energy and its core principles. As soon as he is done with his slide, a second student follows with a description of how solar panels work, speaking first in English and then giving the explanation again in Spanish. Meanwhile, the remaining fourteen 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the class, seated in groups of three to four, listen intently while taking notes. Another student, third in line to present, delivers his portion of the presentation in Spanish as well. The shift from English to Spanish in the middle of the presentation is fluid and natural—it is evident that Ms. P. and her students view it as a normal, everyday part of the classroom experience.

Before the remaining students in the group deliver their portion of the presentation, Ms. P. pauses to summarize a major takeaway. She asks the class whether they understand the concepts presented. This leads to a short discussion about how much energy an average house uses and whether solar energy would be an efficient way to power a house. Throughout the discussion, which takes place mostly in English, we note that the students’ understanding of the presentation is not hampered in the least, but is instead enriched, by the shifts from one language to another as the means of communicating the presentation materials. Likewise, the students delivering the presentation seem confident in their understanding of the material and are able to convey the key points in the language of their choice. The teacher and her students are focused on the crucial understandings related to solar energy, with the language of transmission as just that—a vehicle to facilitate and enable understanding, which students are free to choose using their best judgment.

The seamless shifting of languages to promote content understanding in Ms. P.’s class is an example of the practice of translanguaging (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011), a standard instructional technique at Manhattan Bridges High School. In this case study, we will explore the many ways

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<sup>40</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

in which Manhattan Bridges leverages the knowledge that students arrive with to help them achieve greater success in college and careers. Specifically, we examine the multilayered, comprehensive learning design via which the school integrates language, academics, and social-emotional learning supports to shape an exemplary program for its students. Among these characteristics, we also discuss in detail their language development framework, student supports, staffing, and parent and community partnerships.

## II. Introduction

Every weekday morning, over 2000 high school students converge from as far away as the Bronx upon a large, rectangular, red brick building in the Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood of Manhattan. After checking in at the front desk, 529 of these students go past the glass-enclosed kitchen of the culinary high school and make their way to Manhattan Bridges High School on the third floor. Like many smaller schools in New York City, Manhattan Bridges shares a building with five other high schools. With long corridors lined by bulletin boards and classrooms stretching down the length of the building, someone unfamiliar with the school may initially have a hard time knowing where one school ends and another begins.

Since its founding in 2003, Manhattan Bridges High School has distinguished itself as a high-performing school that very effectively prepares students, many of which are English Language Learners (ELLs) and former ELLs, for college and careers. U.S. News & World Report has identified it as one of the best high schools in the state and nation (2015), and its students have received numerous awards and accolades. During the 2014-15 school year, the school boasted a 4-year graduation rate (94%) that far superseded city (70%) and borough (71%) percentages.<sup>41</sup>

The school embraces a unique instructional design. Students can choose between two STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Academies—engineering or information technology (IT)—and they can apply to either the Transitional Bilingual Program (for newly-arrived native Spanish speakers) or the Dual Language Spanish Program. To the students, parents, and staff, Manhattan Bridges is a family, a place to call home, and a celebration of their cultures and languages.

### Implementing a Clear, Intentional, and Purposeful Vision

At the heart of all the work that happens at Manhattan Bridges is a clear, consistent vision—shared by teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and students—of the school’s overarching purpose, which is entrenched in all of its systems and practices. When Manhattan Bridges opened in 2003, founding (and current) principal Mirza Sanchez-Medina’s goal was to create a school in which ELLs would have the same access to postsecondary opportunities as all other students. The school serves a predominantly Spanish-speaking population with a high proportion (41%) of students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE).<sup>42</sup> The aim is for *every* student who attends Manhattan Bridges to leave prepared to go to college, graduate from college, and entertain a full range of educational and career opportunities.

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<sup>41</sup> [http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School\\_Quality\\_Snapshot\\_2015\\_HS\\_M542.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School_Quality_Snapshot_2015_HS_M542.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> According to Assistant Principal George Lock, the percentage of SIFE students fluctuates from year to year and figures are difficult to pin down; however, the Manhattan Bridges student body has been up to 41% SIFE in its history.

**Figure 1. Demographic and Performance Data (2014-15)**

<i>Demographics</i>		<i>College &amp; Career Readiness</i>				
			School	Borough	City	State
Size	529	4-year Graduation Rate	94%	71%	70%	75%
Asian	0%	4-year ELL Graduation Rate*	67%	32%	33%	31%
African American	0%	College Enrollment Rate	68%	56%	53%	-
Hispanic	100%	College Ready	42%	39%	35%	-
White	0%					
English Language Learner	53%					
Students with Interrupted Formal Education	41%					
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	100%					
Students with Disabilities	2%					

Source: schools.nyc.gov and data.nysed.gov

Notes: 4-year June graduation rates are presented. Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma and exclude those earning either a special education (IEP) diploma or GED. College enrollment rate represents percentage of students who graduated from high school and enrolled in a college or postsecondary program within six months. For information on college ready index, please see: [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov). College readiness rate represents percentage of students who met the City University of New York's standards for avoiding remedial classes.

\*4-year ELL Graduation Rate is for 2013-2014 (source: data.nysed.gov)

Another key component of this vision is the belief that language development is a resource, and that English is a tool to help students become college- and career-ready, rather than an end in itself. Therefore, Manhattan Bridges aims to prepare its students to be fully bilingual and biliterate in academic Spanish and English, so that they can use both languages in service of their learning and in their lives.

The vision of the school is additionally inspired by a social justice mission of breaking the cycle of marginalization for underserved youths, including Spanish-speaking youths who have grown up in New York City, whom the dual language program is designed to serve. As a result of this social justice perspective, many of the adults at Manhattan Bridges see themselves as activists, working to empower their students to take pride in their home culture and language, and to believe in their unbounded capacity for success. As part of this effort, students are taught to use multiple social, emotional, and academic resources to overcome roadblocks in their academic and personal lives. This work is embedded not just in varied social-emotional support services the school provides but also in instruction, lessons, and daily interactions with students. This vision of student success serves as a guidepost for the many practices the school has put in place to create an exemplary place of learning for ELLs. Approaches are multilayered and intentionally designed to target various elements over the long run. If one strategy doesn't work, then there is another one in place to help tackle the issue, whatever it might be.

Teachers at Manhattan Bridges share a language development framework that views Spanish as an asset that should be welcomed in the classroom as an instrument of meaning making. To

make sure they have the most appropriate instructional materials to serve their student population, teachers have worked in teams to create and refine their own curriculum over the years, resulting in instructional materials that are both engaging and rigorous.

**Figure 2. Manhattan Bridges’ School Vision**

1. Provide access to academically challenging college preparatory coursework in Humanities and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) to all of our underserved former and current Spanish-speaking English Language Learners to meet the demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy.
2. Focus on developing students’ skills in bilingual academic language and communication, and career readiness.
3. Empower students to appreciate and use their native cultures and language as a personal and professional asset.

Source: Manhattan Bridges High School Instructional Expectations Guidebook

### III. Language Development Framework: Translanguaging

Based on our observations and discussions with staff members, Manhattan Bridges High School purposefully and meticulously organizes its instruction according to a language development framework known as translanguaging (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). This framework celebrates maneuvering fluidly between multiple languages—much like a skilled opera singer shifts pitch—and values the varied fluencies of students (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). Below we explain the pedagogical theory behind this framework and provide numerous examples of how the school integrates this approach into its instruction and curriculum.

#### Translanguaging

The pedagogical practice of translanguaging is an integral component of Manhattan Bridges’ language development framework. As described by one administrator, translanguaging is the practice of encouraging students’ access to both their home language (among this school’s ELLs, typically Spanish) and English, so that they feel comfortable using either language to make sense of what they are learning or to express their thoughts. Because in translanguaging students formulate and strengthen their understandings using resources from both languages, they can attain greater mastery of academic material at the same time that they become more confident users of academic English (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011), an outcome directly related to the school’s vision for its students.

In order to strategically utilize translanguaging to support academic and linguistic development, researchers stress that this type of pedagogy must be “dynamically centered on the individual students’ language practices” (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011, p.391). In other words, teachers should not treat students as a homogeneous linguistic group, but rather should be able to work with the multiple academic experiences, proficiencies, and backgrounds that students bring to the classroom.

To implement these practices, researchers suggest seven principles that support a dynamic, plurilingual classroom environment (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). These are: heterogeneity, collaboration, learner-centeredness, language and content integration, language use from students up, experiential learning, and local autonomy and responsibility. Manhattan Bridges High School's ethos and practices wholly reflect these principles, and we explicitly illustrate a few examples below.

- *Heterogeneity*. As will be discussed later in this report, the staff approaches students as a heterogeneous group and their instructional program is designed to leverage that diversity. Although Manhattan Bridges' students primarily come from Spanish-speaking backgrounds, they differ in a number of important ways. For example, some students have been well-educated in their home countries, while others have had interrupted formal schooling. Some students are literate in their home language or English or both, while some are not literate. Some have been in the U.S. for part of their education, or have gone back and forth between their home countries and the U.S. While most come from Latin American countries, the cultures within and among these countries differ. Family backgrounds are diverse, and some students are separated from parents for various economic and political reasons. Thus, teachers and support staff at this school take great care to construct an individualized and dynamic educational plan that changes as regular assessments show progress.
- *Collaboration*. Manhattan Bridges classrooms were also seen to be highly collaborative places. In fact, the teachers interviewed related that they design lessons so that students are evaluating and learning from each other. Heterogeneous groups of students were seen working on challenging, and many times experiential, projects in almost every classroom observed, and all students were actively contributing.
- *Learner-Centered*. Our team saw students at Manhattan Bridges using translanguaging practices to actively and collaboratively construct content knowledge and develop analytical skills, with the teacher acting as facilitator. This contrasts with the traditional classroom in which the teacher is the main linguistic input and the students play a more passive role. For instance, in a Native Language Arts classroom in which students were studying *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, the teacher facilitated a classroom discussion to elicit the characteristics of a play. Students then collaborated together to create a rubric that would be used to evaluate plays that student groups would later write together and perform. The design of the project allowed students to become active contributors to meaning making and knowledge building throughout the project.
- *Language and Content Integration*. Evidence of language and content integration was prevalent throughout the school. Classrooms at Manhattan Bridges are language rich environments, in which scaffolds are put in place to provide students with the opportunity to use language to access the content. In all classrooms, "content is the driver" (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011, p.396), with linguistic support being provided to access it. From collaborations between ESL and content area teachers, to sentence

frames, explicit vocabulary instruction, and process writing practices, students are supported each step of the way to master rigorous content.

In addition to understanding the value of home language use in academic content and language and literacy development, educators in plurilingual classrooms pay close attention to the translanguaging practices of students in order to adjust their own instructional practices to support students' intellectual and linguistic growth in both languages (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). This means helping students become cognizant of their own language practices in the varying contexts in which they engage so that they may become competent users of language in college and in society at large.

For example, in Ms. Y.'s<sup>43</sup> social studies class, students were observed working with a bilingual text on the social structures of the Mayan civilization. Students were reading the text independently while the teacher moved from student to student quietly asking questions and then asking if students had any questions. Since the text was in both Spanish and English, the teacher showed the students how to use one text to help facilitate comprehension in the other. In one instance, a dual language student whose home language was English had difficulty with some of the Spanish text. Ms. Y. suggested that the student read the same section in English first, and then try the Spanish. She also suggested the student look for similar words in both languages, known as cognates. The teacher in this case recognized that the Spanish text was challenging for the student, and she used instructional strategies to help her access it. These instructional strategies involved developing metalinguistic awareness about features that were similar in both languages, and about how reading the text in the dominant language and comparing it to the target language version can assist understanding of it in the target language.

### Valuing the Home Language

At Manhattan Bridges, our team observed students' home language (typically Spanish at this school) being treated as an important asset to students' success in college and careers as evidenced in part by instruction that values and represents culturally-relevant subject matter. Indeed, the instructional expectations guidebook for the school states that one of their school visions is "to empower students to appreciate and use their native cultures and languages as a personal and professional asset." It also states that one of the goals of the dual language program is to "develop and draw upon culturally relevant texts, materials, and resources in order to facilitate and support the achievement of our Latino students."

Students themselves have internalized this inclusive view of language development. One student attested, "One of the goals of our school is to have English, and keep our Spanish too, because they know we're going to have more opportunities being bilingual. So they're trying to balance both." In keeping with this view, language learning is seen as a tool to facilitate understanding, not a goal to be achieved in isolation.

To help students build their native language skills, there is a focus on developing Spanish literacy throughout the curriculum, as well as through a strong Native Language Arts program that is aligned to the English Language Arts curriculum, so that students can transfer skills such

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<sup>43</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.

as argumentative writing from Spanish to English. Students are expected to graduate as fully bilingual and biliterate users of academic registers in both languages.

One of the ways in which Manhattan Bridges encourages biliteracy is through the offering of AP Spanish Language and Literature courses. A teacher noted,

[Students] take Spanish throughout [their academic career], because we believe this is a school to produce bilingual students. We want them to build up their English as a second language, but we do not want them to lose their Spanish. That is why we have a very strong AP Spanish program.

A vignette from one of these AP Spanish classes is provided below.

### Figure 3. Classroom Vignette: Valuing the Home Language

In Mr. K.'s<sup>44</sup> AP Spanish course, the class is discussing the Spanish literary movement known as the "Generation of '98." Students have come to class prepared to share their critical analysis of three literary forms of poetry: *El Romance*, *El Soneto*, and *La Silva*. Sixteen students sit in groups of three while peer group teams take turns presenting their critical analysis in Spanish. During the presentations, students in the audience actively listen, ask questions, and evaluate the presentations based on a rubric that the teacher has distributed. One group of young girls presents their analysis of an Antonio Machado poem, paying particular attention to the symbolism within the text. A student in the group argues that the author uses precise language to describe the rich versus the poor, and she points to specific language in the text that describes the wealthy as "cold" and the poor as "humble." At the end of the presentation, another student in the group reveals her thesis: Machado uses parallel constructions to describe the lived experiences of each class.

As illustrated in the classroom example above, the expectations for students in this school in terms of successfully grappling with complex texts and abstract ideas are extremely high. In this class the questions posed by students in the audience led to an insightful, student-driven discussion in which students challenged and built on each other's ideas to deepen their understanding of the complex text. The assignment had both complex cognitive and language demands, in both English and Spanish. It required students to read, write, listen, and speak in both languages. (See Supplementary Materials A. for a sample plan of an AP Spanish lesson.)

### Strategic Use of Language Instruction

The use of both Spanish and English as languages of instruction at Manhattan Bridges is highly strategic. Spanish-dominant instruction is more prevalent in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, which contain more newcomers and ELLs. While translanguaging is still common in upper-grade classrooms, English is emphasized more than in the lower-grades in order to prepare students for the Regents exams<sup>45</sup> and for English-dominant environments in college. Students in upper grades

<sup>44</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.

<sup>45</sup> Regents exams are statewide standardized examinations in core high school subjects in New York State, which must be passed in order to graduate. See <http://www.nysedregents.org/> and Appendix III.



are encouraged to draw from both languages in order to make sense of what they are learning (translanguaging), but they are expected to come back to the original language of the text. In Ms. H.'s<sup>46</sup> history class, for example, students were observed analyzing images from the Great Depression era. While Ms. H. consistently used English to explain and question students, the students themselves used Spanish freely to engage in the analysis. A graphic organizer written in English supported the activity, but students used Spanish in completing it. Finally, students were given narratives written in English that they were then required to match with the images. Ultimately, students had to be able to compare their own analyses done in Spanish to the text written in English. Language practices by students and teachers were “flexible and dynamic, responding to their need for sense-making in order to learn” (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011, p.397).

In order to motivate their students to practice their academic uses of English, teachers do not penalize students for their “errors” while writing in the second language, focusing instead on the content of their writing. One teacher indicated her classroom policy, saying, “I grade [assignments] on the content, and [students] are not penalized for any errors that they might be making [in English] because I want them to learn.” Another teacher described a similar policy whereby she gives students extra credit for writing in English: “They like that, [because] they are able to weed out any fear of repercussion to produce in the second language and know that I am there as a support to help them learn rather than to be marking their grade down.” One student agreed, noting,

They focus more on telling you, “It’s okay to make mistakes”... I believe that it has to do with the confidence and the connection that you feel with the teachers and the students... It doesn’t matter if you make ten mistakes in one sentence, you wouldn’t mind if you’re with someone that you’re comfortable talking to.

Like everything else at Manhattan Bridges, the approach to students’ development in Spanish and English has been carefully and purposefully thought out. The use of Spanish as the dominant language of instruction in lower grades fortifies students’ native language literacy and allows them to transfer valuable skills to English. Teachers use scaffolds in strategic and intentional ways to encourage their students to make the transitions from Spanish to English. Ms. H., from the example above, walked us through how she integrates content and language in her classroom, by explaining,

There’s an activity that we are doing today that starts mostly with images, because images can provide access in any language. We start the topic by doing a breakdown of things that they observe in an image—a conclusion they can draw from an image. Then we transition from there into documents. So we are putting English content language words into these ideas that they already have. In the meantime, they are writing about all of this and they write in English or Spanish. After they read the documents, they look at the images. Today they have to match images to documents and draw conclusions from both about the particular topic that we are discussing... Then they have to write a reflection, a comparison. Today’s topic is the Great Depression. They are comparing the Great Depression to the Great Recession...[so we start] with something that provides an

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<sup>46</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.



entry point for every student and then slowly build from there. They are working in groups, so...if it is something that they can't handle, somebody in their group can help them out. They always have dictionaries. They can always ask me to translate... Those are some of the ways that I build the language. By starting at a point where everybody is comfortable and then building up.

Students are exposed to English in all classrooms, but by the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, they are expected to transition primarily to using English as they get ready for college. All the time, the norm of translanguaging allows students to harness the resources of either language to solidify their understanding of the material. Finally, the goal of biliteracy for all students validates students' achievements in both languages and gives them extremely marketable language competencies for their future careers.

## **IV. Learning Design: Career Academies and Curriculum Development**

### **Career Academies: Engineering and Information Technology and Computer Science**

Proudly displayed on the many bulletin boards that line the hallways of Manhattan Bridges are samples of exemplary student essays, bright poster presentations, and descriptions of assignments and their accompanying rubrics. Alongside projects on “The Yellow Wallpaper” (an important work of American feminism) and the women’s suffrage movement are posters that illustrate the hardware inside a computer, AutoCAD drawings of a house’s interior, and spreadsheets created using Microsoft Excel. While many of the skilled teachers at Manhattan Bridges work hard to make their subjects relevant for students, the two STEM academies at the school make classwork especially engaging and personally relevant to students’ lives.

Manhattan Bridges has partnerships with the National Academy Foundation to offer two career and technical education (CTE) academies for students, one in engineering and the other in information technology (IT) and computer science. Students who enter the school apply to one of the two academies.<sup>47</sup> Students who successfully complete the IT program can receive industry certification in A+ and iC3 by the time they graduate, and students in the engineering academy have access to industry internships and credit-bearing college courses.

The power of these CTE academies is that they help students to see the immediate purpose of what they are learning in school for their future career aspirations. One student commented on her experience,

You have the opportunity to do [Work-Based-Learning] and job shadowing in and out of the academy. We have the opportunity to go to AT&T and NBC Universal...to see the outside world. To see what it means to be in an office the entire day and to interact with professionals who are telling us about their experience and guide us... They review your résumé and give you networking skills... They help you with your personal development and expose you to what comes next.

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<sup>47</sup> It is possible that a student may be removed from their academy if they are failing core courses. However, this is only done in a small number of cases.

In their pre-engineering or IT classes, students are able to complete hands-on projects such as breaking down a computer or formatting a hard drive from scratch. Everything they learn in the classroom has a direct connection to a real-world career application. Even if they decide not to pursue careers in engineering or IT, they have built a repertoire of knowledge and skills—tools and resources that they can rely on when they need to in the future. Most importantly, these experiences help students to understand why they are in school and how their hard work is helping them to prepare for college or career.

Parents also see the value of the career academies for motivating their students. One parent of a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student explained that he chose the school for his son because of its focus on mathematics and engineering. The engineering courses have since helped his son decide on a career path, which is to become a car designer. The parent credited the engineering academy's courses with helping his son to develop a vision for his future and to stay motivated to achieve his career goals.

The caliber of the instructional program for students is one of the most noticeable and impactful strengths at Manhattan Bridges. A language development framework that privileges both Spanish and English empowers students to leverage their home language skills in their development of English and their understanding of complex content material. The faculty has turned the challenge of finding suitable curriculum for ELLs into an opportunity to create their own engaging, rigorous, and inspiring materials for their students. A culture of teamwork has spurred teachers to collaborate to improve their curriculum and instructional practice, as well as align their courses with one another so that students experience a cohesive sequence of study. The use of common guidelines and scaffolds across many classrooms provides students with a foundational set of strategies to help them tackle higher-order thinking skills such as argumentative writing. Finally, the opportunity to take experiential STEM coursework with real-life applications, along with teachers' efforts to incorporate current events into their lessons, creates classroom experiences that are intrinsically motivating for students.

### **Curriculum Development: Preparing for College and Careers**

At Manhattan Bridges, teachers design their curricula to ensure that students are prepared for college and career success. The selection of compelling, complex texts that are embedded in instructional units encourages discussion and acquisition of academic language. As an example, we have included a glimpse of a classroom where students review a story relatable to their own experience.

The lesson detailed in Figure 4, which combined the use of fiction, nonfiction, and multimedia, is an example of the highly purposeful instruction that takes place in classrooms at Manhattan Bridges High School. Over the years, teachers have designed learning experiences that engage students' critical thinking and language skills to prepare them for college and careers. They have been able to do this in part because of the flexibility teachers are afforded over the design of curricula as well as their extensive collaboration with one another.

When the school first opened in 2003, teachers quickly realized that there was a dearth of good curriculum at the high school level that provided authentic and rigorous instruction, with meaningful assessments, for ELLs. The typical English as a Second Language curriculum, focused on grammar and simplified readings, was not going to help the school fulfill its mission

#### Figure 4. Challenging Text: “Here is New York” by E.B. White

In Ms. T.’s<sup>48</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> grade Honors English class, during a lesson entitled “Shall I compare thee to NYC?” students are engaged in a lively class discussion of the essay “Here is New York” by E.B. White. They are asked to select sentences that surprised or interested them, and to comment on whether their own experiences living in New York City resonate with White’s observations. As students share their sentences aloud and explain their reasons for selecting their sentences, the teacher teases out student comments that tie back to the concepts in the lesson objectives, such as humor, irony, or metaphor. She also pushes students in their use of language by asking them to express their ideas in different ways, or to provide evidence for their assertions by going back to the text. Next, students read a new nonfiction article from *The New York Times* about a video sonnet project and watch one of the videos in preparation for reading Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 144.”

of developing students into biliterate scholars prepared for college and careers. Faced with this need, the teachers at Manhattan Bridges drew from a variety of professional learning resources, such as Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL)<sup>49</sup> and balanced literacy,<sup>50</sup> to adapt and create many of their own curricular materials, guided by the set of standards that students are expected to master. Teachers at the school are expected to develop engaging units, lessons, and assessments that are aligned with the Common Core Literacy Standards, Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), and the Manhattan Bridges school mission and theory of action.

Over time, teachers have worked together to map out course sequences, create course materials, and revamp those materials. District-issued textbooks are used as resources that teachers have augmented and supplemented with their own materials, such as restructured readings, guiding questions, and differentiated activities for students at various levels. There are also shared instructional practices and priorities across the school, such as scaffolding, formative assessment, and argumentative writing, that provide a highly cohesive learning experience for students.

For many teachers, this process of careful curriculum development and lesson planning is an iterative process, as they frequently reflect on how well their curriculum is meeting the needs of their students and continuously refine it to make it stronger. The teachers emphasize their flexibility and resilience in their approach to planning: if something is not working, they are more than willing and eager to tweak it to make it better.

One English teacher described the English department’s approach to curriculum development as a constant cycle of doing, reflecting, and tweaking. After trying different pre-packaged curriculum materials and realizing that everything had to be adapted extensively, teachers in the

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<sup>48</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

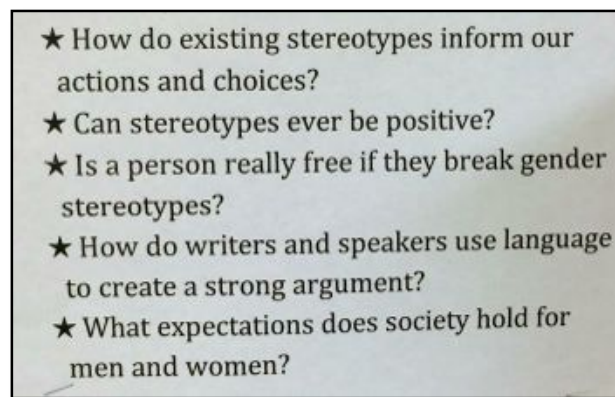
<sup>49</sup> A framework developed by Aída Walqui at WestEd that undergirds the school’s language development framework and helps teachers to reconceptualize approaches to content, language and literacy learning and teaching and supports pedagogy that helps ELL students to become college- and career-ready. See <http://qtel.wested.org/>.

<sup>50</sup> A reading program that integrates various instructional and pedagogical tools, such as read alouds, guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, and word study, to ensure mastery of written and oral communication using phonics and whole language.

department ended up writing their own curriculum, which has been through many phases. The original English curriculum had been organized around genre studies, but teachers soon realized in practice that this was not as engaging for students as a thematic approach. Whereas with a genre emphasis, students might get stuck on a unit covering a type of literature they do not enjoy, a thematic approach allows students to access different types of writing within a unit built around a compelling central question, such as, “What is the role of integrity in life?”

Based on this insight, a handful of English teachers have built a curriculum guided by the big essential questions (see Figure 5) they want students to answer using literature, which are in turn derived from the interests of the students and from the teachers’ years of teaching experience.

**Figure 5. Essential Questions**

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- ★ How do existing stereotypes inform our actions and choices?
  - ★ Can stereotypes ever be positive?
  - ★ Is a person really free if they break gender stereotypes?
  - ★ How do writers and speakers use language to create a strong argument?
  - ★ What expectations does society hold for men and women?

The curriculum weaves in touchstone works of literature, such as those of Shakespeare, with shorter, nonfiction selections, often tied to current events, that intersect with the essential question being explored and show the students the relevance of what they are studying. So, for instance, the incorporation of an article from *The New York Times* into a lesson about a Shakespearean sonnet in the English class described in Figure 4 illustrates the thoughtful and creative curriculum development that has taken place over the course of many years at Manhattan Bridges. In Figure 6, we provide an additional example of the integration of engaging text in the classroom.

With teacher facilitation, ELL students are able to access and negotiate complex grade-level texts. But the students in Mr. B.’s classroom went beyond comprehension of these texts and displayed a number of sophisticated analytical reading practices. They moved into evaluation and analysis of the texts. For example, using the *New York Times* obituary article, they analyzed Grass’s moral high ground in light of his confession of Nazi involvement, and concluded by negatively evaluating his moral character. In the second example, students analyzed and compared the conditions of the prisons and debated whether the mayor was involved in corrupt political dealings. We also saw how the teacher encouraged students to connect their personal and cultural backgrounds to the text’s topic of social class.

As a result of teachers’ continuous refinement of their curriculum, the math, science, career and technical education, history, and native language arts departments have developed curriculum

**Figure 6. Engaging Text: Articles from the *New York Times***

In Mr. B.'s<sup>51</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts class, eleven students, nine of whom are ELLs, are sitting in pairs going over an introductory activity in which they discuss articles from the *New York Times* that piqued their interest. For homework, students are encouraged to seek articles that they want to share with the entire class. The first student describes an article he's read about the death of the Nobel Prize winning author, Gunter Grass. The student shares that according to the article, Grass, to the shock of many, revealed his involvement in Hitler's SS Army after publishing pieces which made himself into a moral authority and a critic of militarism and nuclear armament. The students assert that Grass is a hypocrite and go on to elaborate their reasoning. Meanwhile, Mr. B. pushes back, asking students to think about the moral dilemma that Grass confronted as a teenager, and why this might have been difficult for him.

The next student discusses an article about the overcrowding of Rikers Island jail, where some prisoners have been held for two years without a conviction, and the New York City mayor's stated attempts to reduce the jail population. The students make connections between the current situation at Rikers and the historical events that led to the Attica Prison Riots of 1971. They compare how authorities have dealt with prisoner overcrowding and a lack of decent conditions, and they question whether the current New York mayor is adequately addressing the overcrowding situation. Some students reveal that they think that the mayor is protecting the guards due to the influence of the prison guard union.

After this intro activity, the group delves into a Do Now activity, building on the previous day's reading. During this activity, Mr. B. encourages students to draw on their own experiences, as well as reach out for help from their peers and teacher. The point of this lesson is to examine the implications of social class and assumptions about this concept in their everyday lives and education. Challenging vocabulary is learned in context and posted on the front board as the discussion evolves.

maps, with the goal of horizontal and vertical alignment within the department across classrooms and grade levels. (See Supplementary Materials B. for a sample curriculum map.) Many teachers have compiled their curriculum maps, lesson materials, and handouts into comprehensive binders that encompass the curriculum for the classes they have taught, so that other teachers can come into a class and have a curriculum to use or modify. (As noted earlier, see Supplementary Materials A. for a sample lesson plan.) Because teachers at Manhattan Bridges are given the opportunity to influence curricula, they develop the knowledge and experience to craft high-quality instructional materials and they have a sense of ownership over what they teach in their classrooms. Furthermore, students are exposed daily to rich, rigorous, and thoughtful lessons structured to develop their academic and language skills.

### Shared Instructional Practices

Another element of the learning experience for students at Manhattan Bridges is the use of common instructional practices across classrooms, such as scaffolds, formative assessment, and a focus on argumentative writing. Instructional strategies are multilayered and ingrained in the practices of the school staff.

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<sup>51</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.

According to the teachers at the school, they have embraced scaffolding to a point where it is natural and internalized. One teacher shared, “We see a worksheet and we already know we need to break it down here...” In most classrooms, our researchers saw abundant supports available to students in the form of organizational charts, graphic organizers, visual aids, word walls, guiding questions, and rubrics. Because teachers have generated their own curriculum materials, they have been able to embed significant scaffolds throughout their lessons to help students access the material and to push their thinking. The incorporation of such scaffolds is highly strategic. For example, because the new Regents exam in English Language Arts now requires that students complete a piece of argumentative writing, Manhattan Bridges has introduced a school-wide emphasis on argumentative writing, and each subject has implemented at least one argumentative writing unit. Our team observed that teachers use a common argumentative writing guide, which includes scaffolds such as the MEAL acronym—Main Idea, Evidence, Analysis, and Link (see Figure 7). Because students encounter consistent expectations and tools for argumentative writing across various subjects, they are more prepared to do the higher-order thinking that these writing tasks require. In Figure 7 is an example illustrating how teachers at Manhattan Bridges strategically scaffold instruction for students.

The acronym MEAL used in this example is explained in the accompanying images. DEAL represents: develop a claim (D); add evidence and analyze it to support claim (A); report, rebut, counter claim (R); and end with a strong conclusion (E). STEAL stands for speech (S), thoughts or feelings (T), effects on others (E), actions (A), and looks (L). These acronyms had been introduced to students in their ESL classrooms, and now they are able to apply them in their subject-area classes as well.

Because of the consistent supports Ms. H. and other teachers have built into their lessons, the students in this U.S. History class are able to successfully engage in a challenging task that requires critical thinking and communication. Other classrooms at Manhattan Bridges, across grade levels and subject areas, similarly make use of these same strategies.

In addition to the widespread use of scaffolds to support student learning, we observed that teachers also used a wide variety of formative assessment practices, such as Do Now’s, short Post-It Note quizzes, and questioning, to check for their students’ understanding. In several of the classrooms we observed, for example, teachers would start out with a Do Now exercise to review the previous day’s material or key concepts from the unit and to check for student understanding. As an example, in one 9<sup>th</sup> grade ESL class, the point of the day’s lesson was to use background knowledge to analyze the characterization of a fictional character in the novel they were reading. The teacher asked students to partake in an opening class exercise where she showcased a picture of two boys in blue shirts with a girl sitting in between. The girl has a certain expression on her face and is talking on the phone. Students had to write about the picture in their journal by interpreting what the people in the picture were doing and where they were.

Individual students would then read their descriptions aloud to the class, and subsequently other students were asked to paraphrase what the first student read. Through this method, the teacher was able to gauge student progress in deductive reasoning and knowledge construction.



**Figure 7. Consistent Instructional Practices and Scaffolds: DARE, MEAL, & STEAL**

In Ms. H.’s<sup>52</sup> U.S. history class, students are working in teams of three to analyze visual documents from the Great Depression in order to determine the artists’ points of view. Students use a graphic organizer to document the details of the images and their similarities and differences, and they are able to draw from a list of expression starters, such as “What is the significance of \_\_\_\_\_?” to help move along their discussions. On the board are three acronym charts—DARE, MEAL, and STEAL—to help students find evidence to support their reasoning.

<u>Organization for the Argumentative Essay</u>	
<b>Argument: a statement, reason, or fact that persuades others that an action or idea is right or wrong.</b>	
<b>Main Idea – Your claim or position</b>	<b>The main idea is one sentence that expresses support for your argument. It must be written <i>in your own words</i>.</b>
<b>Evidence</b>	For example, _____
	According to the text “_____”. This shows _____
	The text states “_____”. This means _____
<b>Analysis</b>	This is important because <u>(express a universal truth)</u> .
	If _____ then _____
	<u>(say your evidence in other words)</u> shows that <u>(express a universal truth)</u> because _____
<b><u>Counterclaim:</u></b> <i>Report and Reject</i>	Others may say that _____. However this is would be incorrect because _____
<b>Link to argument</b>	This proves that (argument) because _____
	The argument that (argument) must be true because _____
	The most logical conclusion we can draw from this is that (argument) because _____

### Collaborative Planning

When argumentative writing became a requirement on the new Regents exam, the English teacher mentioned in Figure 4, Ms. T., knew that students would need more practice reading nonfiction articles and supporting their written claims with evidence, beyond the seventy-two minutes of English class they have each day. She wanted to figure out how she could work with other departments to incorporate reading and writing into other subject areas as well, without overburdening the content teachers who are also trying to cover their own curriculum.

<sup>52</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

After talking to the science department, Ms. T. teamed up with physics teacher Ms. O.,<sup>53</sup> who was also eager to incorporate more literacy into her teaching. Together, they decided to create an interdisciplinary unit focused on the question of how new football helmet technology can bring about a change in the rate of concussions in the sport. After asking students to bring in articles about the topic, the two teachers selected six articles for them to read. While Ms. T. worked with students to digest and take notes on the articles, Ms. O. worked with students to clarify concepts related to Newtonian laws of force and non-Newtonian fluids. Even though the topic is a complicated one, requiring an understanding of heavy science concepts as well as the use of sophisticated literacy skills, students felt less burdened because they were able to focus on the same topic for both their English and science classes. To help her students make further disciplinary connections, Ms. T. connected the unit to their reading of *Lord of the Flies*, asking her students to discuss whether football is a savage sport. She also asked her honors English students to investigate the overrepresentation of minorities in football. Students became so engrossed in the topic by the end of the unit that they designed their own experiments to see if a football helmet filled with a certain fluid would change the force inside the helmet, applying their understanding of non-Newtonian fluids. As the culminating assignment of the unit, students wrote formal argumentative essays about the scientific and sociological implications of football, in which they established a claim, a counterclaim, and a rebuttal, using their nonfiction articles as sources.

This fruitful collaboration between two teachers across departments is just one example of the strong culture of collaboration and teamwork that shapes curriculum planning at Manhattan Bridges. In this interdisciplinary unit, students were able to develop their skills in argumentative writing while reinforcing their understanding of key scientific principles. Other productive collaborations have taken place on campus as well, such as the U.S. History teacher teaming up with the Spanish team to teach a poem by Ruben Dario about Teddy Roosevelt in Spanish. Across the school, teachers view their colleagues as valuable resources in lesson and curriculum development. The teachers themselves have voted for their professional learning time to be common planning time, and they appreciate that the administration has accommodated their requests for shared planning periods without a lot of bureaucracy. Teachers also spoke positively about the benefits of having peer observation teams that support them to learn from each other and improve their practice after visiting each other's classrooms.

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<sup>53</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.



**Figure 8. Integrated English and Physics Lesson Description**

██████████ 11<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA/ESL Teacher, and ██████████ Physics teacher joined forces to ask students this questions:

**Can New Technology in Football Helmets Increase Players' Safety?**

Students read six articles about the subject, delved into the physics of force and speed, and used their extensive knowledge to write a formal argumentative paper about the topic. The papers had to include a claim, counterclaim and rebuttal, a conclusion and a clear explanation of the science as well as sociological implications of football. Additionally, students were taught to use MLA format to cite their sources.

**Common Core Standards Addressed:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A  
Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C  
Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.D  
Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.E  
Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.1  
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts, attending to important distinctions the author makes and to any gaps or inconsistencies in the account.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.2  
Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.5  
Analyze how the text structures information or ideas into categories or hierarchies, demonstrating understanding of the information or ideas.

### Can New Football Helmet Technology Result In Increased Player Safety?

Scientific Concepts	Socio-Cultural Concepts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newtonian Laws</li> <li>• G-Forces</li> <li>• Rotational vs Linear Forces</li> <li>• Magnetic Field</li> <li>• Non-Newtonian Fluids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of Violence in Humans</li> <li>• Is the NFL complicit in the concussion crisis?</li> <li>• Ethical dilemma : Over-representation of minority players in football</li> </ul>
<b>ACADEMIC SKILLS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Comprehension and Notetaking</li> <li>• MLA Format</li> <li>• Formal Argument Writing: Claim, Evidence, Counterclaim, Rebuttal, Conclusion</li> <li>• Glossary Vocabulary and Tier Two Vocabulary</li> </ul>	
<b>PROCESS</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Students found articles related to topic.</li> <li>2) Both teachers vetted articles, selected six that provided a good balance.</li> <li>3) Science formatted articles into Cornell Notes Style</li> <li>4) ELA teacher modeling reading, highlighting and notetaking</li> <li>5) Teachers made a packet which included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All articles</li> <li>• Argument outline sheet</li> <li>• Essay outline sheet</li> <li>• MLA Format Guide</li> </ul> </li> <li>6) Physics Teacher taught the scientific concepts, ELA teacher taught and reviewed articles, linking them to socio-cultural concepts.</li> <li>7) Concepts were reinforced and extended in both classes.</li> <li>8) Students filled out their argument outline sheet.</li> <li>9) Teachers taught students MLA style</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Honor's Extension:</b> For students in the Honor's ELA classes, students were given an additional article about hormones in fruit flies that explain male aggression. Additionally, students were expected to link the concept of violence in sports to their enduring understandings of <i>Lord of the Flies</i>.</p> <p><b>Physics Extension:</b> [redacted] pre-taught Newtonian laws of motion, which then became the basis for their understanding of this topic. Students became so engrossed in the topic, that they conducted their own experiment with Non-Newtonian fluids and their ability to protect an egg. Another lab organically followed as a result: if a bullet is shot it will cause a piece of hanging wood to move; this can be calculated if you know the weight of bullet. Replacing the gun with a straw and a bean blown at a cup was used instead.</p>	

## IV. Multi-Layered Student Supports: Ensuring Success

The major thing I like about the school is the fact that you feel comfortable...with everything you do... The teacher, if they have to tell you something in Spanish because you don't [understand] in English, they don't have any problem with telling us the word or the concept in Spanish. So I believe that that's one of the things I like the most about the school, because it makes you feel comfortable and it makes you go outside that self...

You feel comfortable with everybody... The teachers are always there to help you—it could be a personal problem, it could be an academic problem, it could be any problem, and they're always there for you.

–Student

The sense of efficacy and belonging expressed by the student quoted above was shared by others with whom we spoke as well. For many students, the school is a second home, a family. Because of the widespread effort on the part of staff members to challenge all students with high expectations while supporting each student academically and emotionally, students at Manhattan Bridges feel empowered to be agents of their own success. The school intentionally aims to use its various supports to help students understand the social, emotional, and academic tools at their disposal to help them learn life and school skills, such as how to avoid failure, apply strategies for organization and meta-cognition, set goals, and participate in self-expression.

### **Individualized Programming**

Student support at Manhattan Bridges starts the moment they enter the school. In describing the theory of action for the school, Principal Sanchez-Medina explained,

We're looking at the child and the need of the child. What has really defined us is that we build the structure around the student, as opposed to pushing the kid into a particular structure... So every decision we're making, we're looking at: Who are our students? Where do we want them to be?

This approach of starting with the child, respecting her individuality, and being open to different pathways to her success is the guiding principle behind the extensive individualized programming that each student receives when she arrives at the school. When a student enrolls at Manhattan Bridges, counselors and teachers work together to build an educational program designed specifically for that student, based on her educational history and test scores. Because many students are newcomers who bring transcripts from foreign schools with them, the guidance counselors work to validate the coursework students took in their home countries to determine their progress toward graduation.

To help place students in the appropriate classes, the school has designed original placement tests based on the Regents exams in math, English Language Arts, science, and Spanish, and revised those tests each year. After deciding that the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) was too general to provide sufficiently differentiated information about students' English language skills, the staff developed their own level-set assessments to determine ELL progress and guide individualized programming. Based on students' level-set and placement exam results, they are given individualized schedules that focus on their specific needs. In addition, if a teacher is specialized to work with beginner ELLs or SIFE, the school works very hard to make sure those students are placed with the right teachers. As one teacher described the process,

[Students] don't just get tested for English. They also get tested for Spanish literacy...and they also get tested for math. All of this results in individualized programming... We don't track, but what we do is provide that individualized programming. Students are

grouped according to a class where the teacher can really work on what [the student] really needs.

There is also a great deal of flexibility in adjusting students' schedules and programs to ensure they are placed in the right courses. Students retake the level-set assessments each semester, and if their level does not match their placement, or if teachers notice that students are not appropriately placed, the school works quickly to adjust the student's schedule. The master schedule has been set up such that it is easy to do this—for example, all ESL classes are in the same period so that students can be moved in ESL level without disrupting the rest of their schedule. The result is that students are not tracked into stock schedules by groups, but have highly individualized programs based on a combination of their language and subject-area needs.

In addition, the school works very hard to encourage students to take advanced courses and meet their postsecondary goals. Honors and AP courses, for example, have a mixture of students at various proficiencies of English. One student described the efforts the school made to ensure that she received the best coursework possible to be college-ready, noting,

I'm a special case in this school, because in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I took two math courses in the same grade, at the same time. I used to leave the school at 7 p.m. because the school wanted me to take two AP math courses... So they try to do everything possible—they fix the schedule with the teachers, they fix the schedule with everybody in the school, in order for you to get the maximum so when you go off to college, you're very prepared, you're ready to do what you have to do.

**Figure 9. AP Course Offerings**

<b>Humanities</b>	<b>Math &amp; Science</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English Language and Composition</li><li>• Spanish Language and Culture</li><li>• Spanish Literature and Culture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calculus AB</li><li>• Chemistry</li><li>• Environmental Science</li><li>• Macroeconomics</li><li>• Statistics</li></ul>

The block schedule at Manhattan Bridges complements the individualized student programming. It includes an extended day (with the exception of Wednesday alternate dismissals) that allows for instructional flexibility. Teachers at the school are very mindful of the ways in which the schedule interacts with learning: “When you have a block schedule, you have to think about how to put something together for that specific student.” Additionally, Assistant Principal George Lock noted that the block scheduling allows teachers to have more instructional time per student, more time on task, and smaller roster sizes per teacher in most cases, to allow more individualized attention per student. For example, teachers are able to delve deeper into specific topics and allow more time for critical thinking and sophisticated student work, such as essays, PowerPoint presentations, or models. Below, we include a sample of two student schedules for the 2014-15 academic year.

**Figure 10. Manhattan Bridges Sample 10<sup>th</sup> Grader Schedule**

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	-	-	-	-	-
2	Spanish 3	College & Career	Spanish 3	Intro. to Engineering	Spanish 3
3	Global History	Intro. to Engineering	Intro. to Engineering	Global History	Global History
4	Lunch				
5	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry
6	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry
7	Chemistry	Chemistry	Chemistry	Chemistry	Chemistry Lab
8	English	English	English	English	English
9	-	-	-	-	P.E.

**Figure 11. Manhattan Bridges Sample 12<sup>th</sup> Grader Schedule**

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	-	-	-	-	-
2	AP Environmental Science	AP Environmental Science	AP Environmental Science	AP Environmental Science	AP Environmental Science Lab
3	AP Calculus	AP Calculus	AP Calculus	AP Calculus	AP Calculus
4	AP English	AP English	AP English	AP English	AP English
5	AP English	AP English	AP English	AP English	AP English
6	Lunch				
7	Health	Civil Engineering	Civil Engineering	Health	Health
8	Participation in Government	College Counseling	Participation in Government	Civil Engineering	Participation in Government

As can be seen in the two sample schedules, each program is individually suited to specific students. In Figure 10, the student receives concentrated support in geometry, whereas, in Figure 11, an emphasis is placed on English.

### Social-Emotional Support

The adults at Manhattan Bridges view social-emotional support as a crucial part of what they do, and therefore it is integrated thoughtfully throughout their work. The school recognizes the needs of the whole child and gives systematic attention to students' social and emotional well-being and skills—such as coping with failure, stress control, realistic and adaptive goal setting, planning, decision-making, and motivation—in order to ensure that they thrive academically and personally in this highly rigorous environment and beyond. The approach is not limited to any one or two models, and incorporates multiple organic and interwoven strategies.

The counselor and support staff play an important role in providing social-emotional support for students. If students are having a hard time adjusting to the school, one of the three counselors

has lunch with those students to figure out what can be done to make the school environment better for them. Despite their workloads, the counselors work hard to talk to all students and get to know them on a personal level. They communicate closely with students' teachers, collaborating with them if a student has a hardship or will be absent for a long time. The counseling staff also works to ensure that students feel connected to their home environment and culture, collaborating with institutions like the Puerto Rican Family Institute<sup>54</sup> to provide extra support. As another layer of support, a dedicated attendance coordinator monitors students' absences and investigates if students are absent for three or more days, often conducting home visits to gain a better understanding of a student's situation.

The school takes a flexible, team approach to supporting the social and emotional needs of students, which helps students view Manhattan Bridges as a second home and an extension of their family. A youth development team comprised of teachers, guidance counselors, and a parent coordinator also works to ensure that students' voices are always heard. The team solicits feedback from students, examines student progress, and works closely with parents to surface student concerns and improve the student experience. Having consciously built a caring and nurturing environment for their students, the staff quickly notes if something is wrong and works as a team to provide support. For example, when one of Ms. T.'s students was coming late to class every day, she grew increasingly concerned. And when the student finally confided in her that she was late because she needed to take her autistic little sister to school in the morning, Ms. T. arranged a meeting with the student, her mom, and her counselor. During the meeting, Ms. T. and the counselor let the student and her mom know that she is a strong and talented student, and that Ms. T. would work with her to make sure she still masters all the material in the class, despite being half an hour late each day. Ms. T. and the counselor demonstrated their understanding that the family is juggling many responsibilities, and stepped up to do what it would take to support the student. At the end of the meeting, the student was overwhelmed with emotion by the knowledge that her teachers understood her family obligations and were willing to work with her to help her succeed.

The school's efforts towards building student confidence and resilience constitute intentional and meaningful work that is integrated not just in the support services but also within classrooms. Classes incorporate numerous activities that help build social-emotional skills. Teachers foster an atmosphere of respect and safety among students within their classrooms, emphasizing their shared experiences as English learners and reminding them that they are there to help each other. Teachers also work hard to connect and build relationships with students. As a result, students feel welcomed by their teachers and classmates and are not afraid to make mistakes in class. As one student emphasized, "[Teachers are] willing to teach you and make you feel comfortable. Then you're not afraid of doing things that many other people won't." In the supportive environment that is part of the school culture at Manhattan Bridges, teachers do not just view themselves as teachers of subjects, but rather of young people with individual needs and aspirations. Teachers work closely with the support staff to lower the barriers to students' paths to success. Students, in turn, trust that the adults on campus have their best interest in mind and feel acknowledged and supported in meeting the high expectations of the school.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.prfi.org/>.



Assistant Principal Lock also discussed how the social-emotional support at Manhattan Bridges includes a focus on life skills. He said, “Manhattan Bridges goes further by helping kids learn to avoid failure.” The school gives students strategies to help with organization, meta-cognition, goal-setting, and self-expression, to help students believe in their future, achieve the college and career goals they set for themselves, overcome the obstacles they may face in life, and hold themselves personally responsible for reaching their objectives. Every problem is used as a learning opportunity. For instance, if a student has an issue with a teacher, the school helps her resolve it and then points out how the skills involved will be useful in college, when dealing with professors. The ultimate goal is to build students’ personal life skills “toolbox” so that students can use their tools when they confront difficult situations. Principal Sanchez-Medina shared,

We are looking at access all the time. Our job really is to look for ways to take roadblocks out and have [the students] walk... I’m not going to carry the child. I’m going to teach them how to walk and develop that process so that they can say, “I feel confident.” But, if you fall, we will be here to pick you up.

Even in the face of the tremendous challenges these inner-city youths face, Manhattan Bridges sees its individual students thriving increasingly over time and succeeding in college and careers as a result of all the school’s concerted work toward social-emotional support and youth development.

### **Academic Student Supports: “It’s Okay to Ask for Help”**

To ensure that their students thrive in a climate of high academic expectations, Manhattan Bridges has created an extensive set of programs to support students academically during the time they are not in classes. Before the school day begins, the school offers beginner ESL classes, tutoring, and enrichment opportunities such as dance, music, and piano to ensure that students have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. After school, students can take advantage of Regents, SAT, and ACT preparation; tutoring; homework help; credit recovery; and enrichment opportunities such as robotics and internships. Clubs typically meet on Fridays and many are organized by teachers and students, sometimes the result of projects in class. For example, the student newspaper came out of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade Honors English Language Arts class. Teachers offer tutoring and Regents and AP exam preparation for their students on Saturdays. Teachers are willing to go above and beyond to help their students, often coming in early in the morning, staying in their classrooms during lunch to make themselves available to students, and volunteering their time on Saturdays to provide academic interventions. One parent attributed her son’s success to the extensive tutoring that his teachers provided. After receiving tutoring from his teachers, sometimes until as late as 7 p.m., her son started getting better grades and is now in honors classes as an 11<sup>th</sup> grader. She is confident that the tutoring and academic supports at the school have been integral to his success.

Students provided countless testimonials of the many ways in which their teachers have helped and supported them. They recognize that they have very dedicated teachers who model hard work and are willing to push them, wherever they are in their learning. One student described teachers asking their students to come at 7:45 a.m. to prepare for the AP exam, because they believe that students can pass the test. Another student described how her teachers have worked with her before and after school, providing her with additional materials to help her improve her English. Yet another student expressed appreciation that her teachers will work with her during

lunch to give her the extra help she needs, and never make her feel rushed during these tutoring sessions.

School-wide, there is an emphasis that “it’s okay to ask for help.” Teachers celebrate students for asking for help and acknowledge that asking questions is a good intellectual exercise. They want their students to be assertive and able to advocate for themselves when they transition to college. As a result, the students at Manhattan Bridges feel extremely comfortable expressing their academic needs and soliciting help from each other and from their teachers. Students know that they can always find help from their teachers when they need it, and that asking for additional support is not stigmatized. They also take comfort in the fact that many of their teachers are also immigrants who have gone through similar experiences of learning English and adjusting to a new culture, and thus intimately empathize with the needs of their students.

Teachers at Manhattan Bridges also work hard to foster their students’ love of learning, often tailoring their methods to individual students’ learning preferences. The students astutely recognized that their teachers are focused on helping them learn the material deeply, rather than just getting the lesson over with. The teachers take the time to know their students and their learning styles. One student praised her teachers for not just creating a strong learning environment, but for engaging students’ creativity as well. As an example, she talked about a teacher who recognized her love of reading and writing and gave her advice about what she can read, along with tips to improve her writing. Another student recalled not understanding a topic in science until her teacher told her to try a different approach: write a story about the topic. After trying this method, she scored a 100 on the test.

The students’ accounts of their classroom experiences paint a portrait of a faculty of teachers who go above and beyond in supporting their students’ academic success, by offering their time for extra support, flexibly accommodating their students’ learning styles, and tapping into students’ creativity in order to nurture their curiosity and authentic understanding.

### **A Commitment to Success, and the Support to Make It Happen**

“High expectations, ...extensive support, and putting students first,” is how one teacher described the “mantra” of Manhattan Bridges High School. Indeed, this powerful school culture of commitment that *every* student will succeed, based in part on acknowledging and supporting their individual circumstances, is one of the key reasons that students at the school feel safe to take academic risks and hold themselves accountable for their own learning.

The high level of academic rigor at Manhattan Bridges begins with the school’s graduation requirements. Instead of the 44 credits typically required of high school students in New York City, Manhattan Bridges requires that students earn 54 credits in order to graduate. Even though the state requires only three years of math, the school has every student take four years of math in order to graduate STEM-ready. The school has strong AP offerings to challenge students at the upper levels, and because one of the goals of the school is to produce bilingual students adept at both English and Spanish, there is a robust AP Spanish and AP Spanish Literature program. In addition to making advanced courses available, the school also makes sure that students take full advantage of these opportunities to challenge themselves through close guidance in the course selection process. Recounting how difficult it is to drop an AP class, students affectionately describe one of their guidance counselors as someone who “doesn’t play.” If they



wish to drop an AP class, the counselor makes them write an essay explaining why they wish to drop the class, and provides so many reasons for why they should stay in the class that the students usually relent. The students appreciate that the counselor gives them a hard time because she wants them to have the best preparation for college.

Inside the classrooms, teachers also communicate consistently to students the belief that all of them are capable of success, and students are quick to pick up on this notion. As one student put it,

They push you. They are flexible, but they want you to improve. So they won't let you just stay in the basic level. They want you to be the best you can... They know you're capable. They won't let you be lazy... They're going to ask everything of you—that's their rule... They asked for 100% of me.

When this student moved to the U.S. one year ago, she did not know a word of English, but after her teachers made her talk, read, and write every day, she is now in an Honor's English class. Students also understand that the purpose of these high expectations is to help them become prepared for college, so when their teachers push them in class to explain their thinking and make their ideas clearer, they eagerly rise to the challenge.

Coupled with this high level of rigor is also a keen understanding of and appreciation for the students on the part of the staff members on campus. Staff members at Manhattan Bridges are quick to attribute much of the school's success to its students. One teacher elaborated,

We are successful...most importantly because we have students who are willing to do the work... Our kids are putting a lot of time into this. This doesn't happen in a vacuum. This happens because kids come in at 7:45. They're leaving here at seven at night. They're here on Saturdays. They are taking the tutoring class. They put in the extra time for the Regents exams... We are very demanding.

Another teacher confirmed that a lot of credit is due to the students at the school, who demonstrate tremendous personal courage and “just won't quit.”

At the same time, the staff also demonstrates a great deal of sympathy for many of their students' struggles. One teacher explains that some of her students work until 2 a.m. to send money back to their families, or they live in homeless shelters or other desperate conditions. Yet, while being sensitive to their students' needs, teachers nevertheless do not make excuses for students or lower their expectations of them. The tone of the school is: “Of course you're going to graduate. Of course you're going to do it.” Teachers balance their understanding of their students' varied circumstances with holding students accountable by making sure they get the work done, even if they need to provide some flexibility in how and when the students complete the assignments. They do not let students slide because of personal hardships, but rather support their students in meeting a high academic bar despite those hardships. Ultimately, the teachers at Manhattan Bridges consistently make clear to their students that they can *all* succeed in meeting the tremendously high expectations of the school, regardless of the challenges they face.

## V. The People at Manhattan Bridges

We are a team of teachers that are not afraid of work. We understand that we might do double or triple the amount of work [that] some other schools [do], and we're not afraid of that. We're very daring, and if something needs to get done, we'll do our very best. [Principal Sanchez-Medina] has a very strong vision for the school, and that has kept us grounded. We know what we want. We know where we're going...

–Teacher

Indeed, behind the high-quality classroom instruction at Manhattan Bridges is an incredibly dedicated and experienced team of educators working together to serve its students, guided by a clear vision of the school's purpose.

### School Leadership: A Team Effort

Herself a migrant from Puerto Rico, a former ELL, and a former bilingual high school science teacher, Principal Sanchez-Medina is intimately familiar with the life experiences of the students at her school, as well as with the demands that face a classroom teacher working with newcomer ELLs. Since opening Manhattan Bridges High School twelve years ago, Sanchez-Medina has steadily built the school into a recognized college preparatory program for some of the city's most underserved students, while remaining extremely reflective about the work that still needs to be done.

The school's approach is strongly motivated by a social justice mission of making a positive difference in the community, and teachers and staff are seen as being equally motivated by the goals of social justice. Taking a cue from the critical education theorist Paulo Freire, the school leaders believe that they are agents of opening the minds of students to critical thinking, decision-making, and metacognition, so that students can have the skills to open doors for themselves and access the full range of opportunities available to them.

Principal Sanchez-Medina along with the rest of her team, such as Assistant Principal Lock, have come to see *emotional* intelligence as an extremely important aspect of the leadership. The leaders of the school see their role as that of caregivers who understand when to push or relent, when to celebrate success or get back to work, and how to speak to people so as to motivate them. Specifically, the leadership team believes that the success of the school requires mutual respect among themselves, the students under their care, and the adults who work with them. With this in mind, the principal has advanced her understanding of both child and adult development and learning, so that she can make the school a place of trust and care for her students. To help her better communicate with teachers on her faculty, Sanchez-Medina has used exercises from Dr. Gary Chapman's (2015) "five love languages" to determine how her teachers and students prefer to be supported. She acknowledges that it is necessary to understand and respect both teachers and students: "There is a lot of emotional intelligence that we consider in this process. You cannot just think about the 'IQ'. You also have to also think about the other [areas of development]..." Similarly, Assistant Principal Lock notes the importance of emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning in ensuring that students have the necessary tools to succeed in their lives:

The culture of our school cannot be underplayed. We build an environment where every student is comfortable and feels safe to take chances. This facilitates spoken language acquisition.

Another strength of the leaders at the school is their keen understanding that building a successful school requires a forward-looking vision and a long process of continuous reflection and improvement. Guided by their vision of a high-performing school for Spanish-speaking newcomers, they have built a staff of people who share a common understanding of the school's mission and they have gradually added layers and structures to the school. Principal Sanchez-Medina, for example, emphasized that it takes a long time to create a successful school, and that the process requires a great deal of humility and hard work, explaining,

Don't look at the school where it is now. Look at the school where you want it to go, so that you are building your infrastructure, the staff, the professional development...that the common vision is built towards that. Every year, you are building a layer to get there. There has to be an understanding of where I want to go. And then there has to be a process of constructing. It doesn't just happen...you have to build that process. As you are building the structures, you need to build the people, the team, and you need to know them. There has to be a common understanding.

Being an effective leader also means being a *learning* leader. As Sanchez-Medina put it, "As a leader, you also need to be developed... You need to check your ego at the door, and you need to sit down and learn... You need to assess your learning, where you are in this process." When she realized that she did not have sufficient knowledge of balanced literacy practices, for example, she attended the professional learning workshops alongside her teachers so that she could learn for herself.

Although Manhattan Bridges has been recognized repeatedly for its many achievements, the school leaders readily acknowledge that they are still miles away from where they want to be, even if they are moving in the right direction. Sanchez-Medina celebrates the successes of her staff and students, such as a strong School Quality Review just three months back, but she does not dwell on them, focusing instead on the work that still needs to be done. Some of the school's plans for the future include a 9-14 program that awards not just a high school diploma but also an associate degree, the introduction of the International Baccalaureate program, and the possible addition a gifted program for ELLs.

### **The Faculty and Staff: Hiring and Coaching**

The "beautiful thing" about Manhattan Bridges, according to one teacher we spoke to, is that it is staffed by people who care about what they do and who are willing to put in the extra time. He described the faculty as a "learning community" made up of teachers who have a passion for teaching and learning. The teachers trust that there is a solid vision in place and a team of hardworking people willing to put it into action. The teachers are also very flexible in responding to the needs of the school. One science teacher with a background in biology taught herself how to do computer coding so that she could teach the technology course on campus. The staff is comprised of experienced, veteran teachers, many of whom have worked with ELLs for a long time.

That Manhattan Bridges is staffed by a team of highly driven, dedicated, and experienced teachers is far from accidental. Bringing onboard a talented group of educators has been an intentional part of the school-building process, and the school's hiring and coaching practices reflect this emphasis on teacher quality as a priority.

In her hiring process, the principal first assesses the needs of the school in terms of programming. She figures out what subject area, field of expertise, or group of students requires additional staffing. Next, she thinks about how a new hire would potentially fit into the existing team—perhaps she needs someone to lead an initiative on campus, or a team player that will gel well with a particular subject-area or grade-level. Once she has weighed the needs of her program along with the needs of her team, she develops a very specific profile of the kind of staff member she needs to hire. And once she has developed this profile, she does not settle—she waits for the right person to fill the role.

After screening prospective candidates with an initial interview, Principal Sanchez-Medina invites the candidate to campus to meet with a panel of interviewers, composed of teachers, staff members, parents, and sometimes students. The interview panel asks questions of the candidate related to classroom management, instruction, planning, student voice, and involvement with the community and with extracurricular activities. The panel also asks candidates about their strengths and areas of growth. Finally, candidates teach a demo lesson to showcase their instruction.

If the interview panel advocates for the candidate moving forward in the interview process, the candidate is invited back to meet and attend meetings with the team she will be working with, so that the team members can make sure she is a good match for them. The principal then identifies a potential mentor among her existing staff to help the new hire with her transition. In addition to assessing a candidate's fit with the needs of her program and the team, Principal Sanchez-Medina also looks for mature professionals who are able to model proper behavior and ethics to their students. Because of the student population at Manhattan Bridges, Principal Sanchez-Medina also requires that her teachers be willing to attain a bilingual extension or ESL certification for their teaching credential. Another set of qualities she looks for are those of a caretaker—someone who can see all children's potential. To this end, she looks for candidates who understand child and adolescent development and care deeply about guiding students to maximize their potential.

Once a candidate passes through the rigorous hiring process, the new staff member is paired with at least one mentor within the same discipline to help ensure a smooth transition to the school. Principal Sanchez-Medina holds the new teachers to high expectations, yet she provides them with ample support and coaching. Assistant Principal Lock shared, "We aim to hire people with strong content knowledge and then we develop their pedagogical expertise." For Principal Sanchez-Medina and other administrators on campus, their supervision of their teachers is not just an evaluative process. Rather, it is an ongoing dialogue with teachers that involves pre-work, coaching, modeling, and reflection to promote their development. One teacher described the coaching and mentoring relationship in the following manner:

I have worked closely with [Assistant Principal] Lock, since the beginning of 2012. Throughout our 3-year work relationship...he has not only demonstrated to be a very competent supervisor, but also a mentor and coach. Most importantly, he properly supports the development of teachers. Through his coaching style of supervision, he allows teachers such as myself to constantly improve upon their practice by soliciting self-reflection and actionable goals. His nonjudgmental inquiry approach greatly enhances a teacher's ability to plan, reflect, and problem-solve ways to bring about high student achievement. For example, though many teachers at the school are rated "effective" and "highly effective," we are encouraged to share best-teaching practices, share resources and form inquiry teams to further improve pedagogy.

Imparting the same growth mindset that characterizes the principal's leadership of the school, administrators encourage teachers to reflect constantly about what is working in their classrooms, what can be improved, and what their commitments are for the following year. If teachers hit a rut, administrators work with teachers to find a solution.

Principal Sanchez-Medina sees her role as one of encouraging people to enable them to make a difference and transform. When she and other administrators see examples of excellent instructional practices, they celebrate these successes by highlighting them in staff emails or at faculty meetings. On the other hand, if teachers are not willing to grow in their practice, Sanchez-Medina is also not hesitant to suggest that they might not be a good fit for the school.

As a result of the deliberate and careful teacher selection process and the attention to teachers' ongoing professional learning and growth, the turnover at Manhattan Bridges has been relatively low. During the 2012-13 academic year, for example, the turnover rate stood at 11%, and 66% of the teaching staff had a master's or doctoral degree.<sup>55</sup> Overall, the teaching staff is fairly experienced with the majority of teachers having spent more than ten years teaching at the school—and approximately half of the teachers have been at the school for their entire teaching careers (see Figure 12). Currently, the school has 28 teachers who are fully bilingual in Spanish and English, and almost all have Bilingual Extension credentials. Finally, teachers come with diverse backgrounds in engineering, politics, computer science, and literature.

**Figure 12. Teacher Experience**

Number of Years at MBHS	Number of Teachers
10+ years	14
5-9 years	10
1-4 years	9
Source: data.nysed.gov; interview data.	

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<http://data.nysed.gov/reportcard.php?instid=800000057132&year=2014&createreport=1&teacherqual=1&teacherturnover=1&staffcounts=1>.

## VI. Parent and Community Partnerships

Another critical driver of Manhattan Bridges High School's success is the strength of its relationships with parents and community partners. The school believes that collaborating closely with parents and community-based organizations is essential to providing students with a full range of supports and opportunities, and it has worked very hard to cultivate relationships with these crucial allies.

### Parent Connection

At a typical Manhattan Bridges parent teacher association (PTA) meeting, 55 to 60 parents are in attendance, for a school that has just over 500 students. This high attendance rate is the result of relentless and persistent work on the part of the staff to outreach to parents as partners in their children's education. The parent coordinator calls and sends newsletters to parents constantly to maintain open lines of communication and keep parents informed. She and other staff members have an open-door policy for parents and are conscious of the challenges that prevent some parents from coming to the school. For instance, the coordinator provides parents who have inflexible work schedules with a letter to give to their employer certifying that they were at their children's school. The parent coordinator, office staff, guidance counselors, and many of the teachers and administrators on campus are also bilingual in English and Spanish, which further helps parents feel comfortable visiting and becoming involved at the school.

Parents themselves also appreciate the open communication provided by the school. One parent said that in preparation for parent conferences, the school provided parents with questions to ask teachers, which was a useful tool to help her share responsibility for her child's education. She is grateful that her son's teachers call or email her if her son is experiencing any problems, and work with her to develop an improvement plan. She feels comfortable reaching out to anyone on the staff and trusts that they are there to help her child. She also spoke highly of the parent presentations offered by the college counseling staff about the college application process, which helped her become very clear about college requirements and the financial aid process. Because of the openness and consistent communication on the part of the teachers and staff at Manhattan Bridges, parents of students feel free to share their ideas and concerns and become more involved with their children's education through their participation in school activities.

### Community Partnerships

As part of the Cornell University Hydroponics Program and Internship, student interns are paid to work after school with a university professor to conduct research on growing lettuce, cabbages, and fish hydroponically. One student intern proudly shared that the salad and fish served in the school cafeteria come from the hydroponics program. Because she is interested in becoming a scientist, the opportunity to take part in the hydroponics research has given her a preview into the work that scientists do. Beyond this, the program has also given her a taste of what it is like to be a college student.

The Hydroponics Program is one of the many partnerships Manhattan Bridges has forged with organizations outside the school in order to provide students with opportunities to stretch their high school experience. Through a partnership with College Now at The City University of New York, students are able to take College 101 and courses in psychology and criminal justice at the

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, allowing them to graduate from high school with up to sixteen college credits. Summer programs at St. Joseph's College New York and Fordham University provide students with SAT preparation, and the Options Center at Goddard Riverside Community Center gives students additional one-on-one college counseling. Students also speak enthusiastically about the many opportunities available to them to take part in job shadowing experiences at companies such as Verizon, Juniper, AT&T, Ernst & Young, and American Express. Professionals from Verizon and Juniper come to campus to work with students on their résumés and coach them in their personal and professional learning. These powerful out-of-school experiences with industry professionals help to expose students to new career fields and allow them to see the connection between what they are learning in school and their future goals.

Beyond these opportunities to extend students' learning, Manhattan Bridges has also sought to provide students with adult role models. Through a far-reaching partnership with the organization iMentor, students in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades have been matched to professional mentors from across New York City. Mentors meet with their mentees during monthly events and provide another layer of support to help students focus on their college and career goals.

Students and their parents alike value the wealth of opportunities available for helping students to explore their goals. One parent credits the iMentor program with helping her son to find a vision for his future and become more motivated to overcome the obstacles in his way. Recognizing the purpose of these programs and opportunities, a student eloquently explained, "Our school, they . . . want you to be successful in high school, be successful in college, be successful in life. That's the basic goal."

## VII. Conclusion

There is no shortage of stories about students at Manhattan Bridges High School who have achieved remarkable successes despite daunting challenges, and staff members well up with pride when talking about these students. One senior who has been in and out of homeless shelters throughout high school had just received a full ride to her first-choice university. A former student who had been removed from her home by Child Protective Services is now pursuing a master's degree in social work so that she can help kids like herself. The adults at Manhattan Bridges are their biggest cheerleaders.

Driving these students' successes, beyond their grit and determination, is an outstanding school filled with hardworking people who have an unwavering commitment to their students. Guided by a mission of shaping newly-arrived Hispanic youths into bilingual scholars who are fully prepared for the rigors of college and careers, the teachers at Manhattan Bridges have designed an instructional program that fully develops students' language skills and content knowledge, while stimulating their intrinsic desire to learn. An entrenched staff culture of teamwork and collaboration allows teachers to draw from each other's strengths in order to push their practices. Their multilayered approach has ensured that initiatives become ingrained and long lasting, but still flexible enough to allow for improvements and modifications along the way. At Manhattan Bridges, there is no "silver bullet," but rather a comprehensive approach to ensure that students succeed.

The adults on campus are united in the commitment that all students will succeed, while providing countless academic supports and staying attuned to students' social-emotional needs so that they are set up toward this end. Finally, by including parents and community organizations as indispensable partners in this endeavor, the school has created an expansive network of partners to support its students and stretch their horizons.

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## VIII. Supplementary Materials

### A. Sample Lesson Plan

**Subject: AP Spanish Literature & Culture**

<b>Stage 1- Desired Results</b>	
<p><b>Established Goals: REPASO/ REVIEW:</b> Students will review the poems in the Reading list and will expose a given subgenre or movement as a group.</p>	
<p><b>Understandings:</b> Students will understand...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of structure of a poem.</li> <li>• The subgenres and its cultural importance</li> <li>• Historical and cultural context/ Spain-Latin America.</li> <li>• The connection diverse cultures and how it can be observed in the use of language.</li> <li>• The benefit of the fusion of different cultures.</li> <li>• Imperialism, Gender issues, Duality, Interpersonal relations...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Essential Questions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ¿De qué manera las perspectivas de una cultura afectan la representación de eventos históricos?</li> <li>2. ¿Cómo revela la literatura los cambios en la percepción de los géneros masculino y femenino?</li> <li>3. ¿De qué manera han servido los factores socioculturales como instrumentos de cambios (o no) en la representación de los géneros?</li> </ol>
<p>Student will know....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complexity of a human being and the connection it has with a given language, land, culture, and the concept of God.</li> <li>• The Historical background of Barroco and the society of Spain.</li> <li>• The new structure teatro del Barroco.</li> </ul>	<p>Student will be able to... <b>Understand the Theme</b> <b>La construcción del género:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) El imperialismo</li> <li>2) Las relaciones sociales</li> <li>3) El sistema patriarcal</li> <li>4) La sexualidad</li> <li>5) La tradición y la ruptura</li> <li>6) La dualidad del ser</li> <li>7) El tiempo y el espacio</li> </ol>
<b>Stage 2- Assessment Evidence</b>	
<p><b>Performance Tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group presents the information of the genre assigned, following the information requested, and it will be evaluated by the teacher and the students.</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence: 1. Características del subgénero, con evidencia. 2. Corriente literaria, algunas características 3. Breves apuntes biográficos 4. Brevisima información del contexto 5. Temas, evidencia 6. Vocabulario 7. Figuras retóricas y su posible función 8. Tono del poema.</p>
<p><b>Self-Assessments</b> While taking notes, students will be given time to fill out a rubric that will be given to the group.</p>	<p><b>Other Evidence, Summarized</b> Students will ask questions to clarify ideas or to further comprehend what's being presented.</p>
<b>Stage 3 Learning Plan</b>	
<p><b>Learning Activities:</b> Class discussion</p>	

## B. Sample Curriculum Map

# 9 Grade Nine: Global History and Geography

1	2	3	4	5	6
UNIT 1: The First Civilizations (ca. 10,000 B.C.E. – ca. 500 C.E.)	UNIT 2: Expanding Interregional Networks, Exchange and Encounter (ca. 500 – ca. 1500 C.E.)	UNIT 3: The Ottoman and the Ming Dynasties (pre-1600 C.E.)	UNIT 4: Transformation of Western Europe and Russia (1514 – ca. 1750 C.E.)	UNIT 5: Africa and the Americas (pre-1600 C.E.)	UNIT 6: Interactions and Disruptions During the First Global Age (ca. 1400 – ca. 1750 C.E.)
SEPTEMBER – MID-OCTOBER	MID-OCTOBER – MID-DECEMBER	MID-DECEMBER – JANUARY	FEBRUARY – MID-MARCH	MID-MARCH – MID-APRIL	MID-APRIL – JUNE
<p><b>Essential Question:</b> Why do civilizations rise and fall?</p> <p><b>Inquiries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In what ways did the Neolithic Revolution change political, social, and economic organization?</li> <li>2. How did early out-of-basin river valley outposts adapt and modify their environments to meet their needs?</li> <li>3. In what ways were early belief systems and religions the same or different?</li> <li>4. Why did classical civilizations decline, expand, and ultimately decline?</li> <li>5. What features did early civilizations share? What features were specific to a location? —</li> </ol>	<p><b>Essential Question:</b> What is meant by globalization? What defines a global age?</p> <p><b>Inquiries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In what ways do technological advances contribute to historical turning points?</li> <li>2. Why is ca. 400 – 1500 C.E. in Western Europe sometimes referred to as The Dark Ages or The Middle Ages? What circumstances brought Europe back “into the light”?</li> <li>3. What made Constantinople a geographically desirable location?</li> <li>4. How did the rise and fall of the Mongol Empire affect the movement of people and goods throughout Eurasia?</li> <li>5. How did advances in technology lead to changes in trade?</li> <li>6. What techniques did the Aztec/Cahuelco employ to extend their?</li> <li>7. Was China the center of the world in ca. 600 – 1500 C.E.? —</li> </ol>	<p><b>Essential Question:</b> What sustains an empire?</p> <p><b>Inquiries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did the dominant belief systems of the Ottoman Empire and Ming Dynasty affect their political and social organization?</li> <li>2. In China's trade with Europe, who benefited more from the exchange?</li> <li>3. Was the pirate navigation being place in China during this era motivated by the same factors as European exploration?</li> <li>4. What factors contributed to the longevity of the Ming dynasty? What factors threatened Ming hegemony?</li> <li>5. What factors contributed to the longevity of the Ottoman Empire? What factors threatened Ottoman hegemony?</li> <li>6. Was the Battle of Lepanto a turning point in world history? Why or why not? —</li> </ol>	<p><b>Essential Question:</b> Why are some events considered turning points in history?</p> <p><b>Inquiries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What factors led to a renewed interest in Greco-Roman art and philosophy (classical heritage) throughout Europe?</li> <li>2. Trace the roots of the Renaissance and Enlightenment Afro-Asian or European?</li> <li>3. What were the various regions that grew out of Catholicism? How did they differ?</li> <li>4. Why was centralized political power a trend throughout societies in Europe, Asia, and Africa?</li> <li>5. How did the work of the enlightened philosophers raise questions about the existing social and political order throughout Europe?</li> <li>6. What implications did arts to royal power have on political events in England and the Americas? —</li> </ol>	<p><b>Essential Question:</b> How are a society's achievements judged?</p> <p><b>Inquiries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What role did trade play in uniting and dividing people in Africa pre-1600?</li> <li>2. What roles did women play in various African societies? How does it compare to European societies at roughly the same time?</li> <li>3. What were the characteristics of slavery in some African societies pre-contact with Western Europe? What were the characteristics of slavery in the Islamic world?</li> <li>4. What evidence can be used to show that the Aztec and Inca societies were complex prior to the arrival of European explorers?</li> <li>5. How did the kingdoms of Africa and the Americas trace their collective history? —</li> </ol>	<p><b>Essential Question:</b> How did the Encounter transform the Atlantic World?</p> <p><b>Inquiries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did technologies and ideas that diffused to Europe from Hispania, Africa, and Asia make Atlantic exploration possible?</li> <li>2. How did commodities (sugar, tobacco, silver) drive European colonization?</li> <li>3. What were the ecological, demographic, and economic transformations resulting from the Columbian Exchange?</li> <li>4. What were the characteristics of the trans-Atlantic slave trade? What role did Europeans and Africans play in the development and proliferation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade?</li> <li>5. How did the first global age transform gender relations?</li> <li>6. How did technology, trade, and conflict begin to shift power relationships between the Europeans and Asian empires and kingdoms? —</li> </ol>

# Marble Hill School for International Studies

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## I. Inside the Classroom: 11<sup>th</sup> U.S. History

As we enter Mr. X.’s<sup>56</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History classroom, students are vigorously writing down the lesson aim in their history notebooks. Today, they are learning about how the Korean War set a new precedent for American foreign policy. The opening Do Now exercise asks students to reflect on who should make decisions about whether or not the U.S. enters a war. Students chat among each other debating the nuances of government’s role with regard to war as Mr. X. circles around the room checking homework. On the wall, we see a colorful list of history-specific vocabulary aimed at helping students use this language in their write-ups.

After several minutes have passed, Mr. X. asks students to read the lesson aim out loud, which is posted in the front of the room. It is clear that some students do not understand the word “precedent,” so the teacher asks the class to brainstorm what they think the term means. One student raises her hand and suggests, “It’s an unwritten rule or law—something that other presidents have done.” Mr. X. sums up her definition in another way by suggesting that it is “like a tradition.” Students then share out their small group discussions about the Do Now exercise with the whole class. One group notes that they believe the president should have control over declaring war, because he has special executive powers. Meanwhile, another group notes that Congress should be making decisions about declarations of war. A student raises his hand and adds to the conversation by stating: “I agree with Sarahi.<sup>57</sup> It should be Congress [who makes the decision].” He argues that Congress “balances the system” of power, and in a democracy it should be elected representatives from each state who make these sort of important decisions. Additional students chime in, agreeing or building upon their peers’ answers, in a lively debate on the matter. One student expresses her sentiment that it should actually be the American people who make decisions about entering war. Her classmate disagrees that the public should be involved in this sort of decision-making, stating, “You choose the president for a reason!” Mr. X. recasts what the student has said: “Yes, we might have some uninformed voters.”

As the conversation comes to a close, Mr. X. refers students to the day’s reading and accompanying handout on the Korean War. Students transition towards a different activity where they learn about containment policies.

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<sup>56</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

<sup>57</sup> Pseudonym is used.

In crafting the lesson, Mr. X. created an interesting and lively academic conversation. Students were given the opportunity to discuss their ideas with their small groups, and then encouraged to engage in a discussion in which they constructed arguments and created meaning with one another about the precedent of executive power, congressional oversight, and the role of citizens in important decision-making. These types of classroom opportunities allow ELL students to build their academic and language skills as they construct arguments and critique the position of others with evidence to justify their views.

At Marble Hill School for International Studies where Mr. X. teaches, text complexity and language instruction are seamlessly integrated across subjects. Scaffolds are commonly used to ensure that students can access rigorous materials and use evidence to formulate and justify their ideas. The school's brochures speak to the institution's "[focus] on international studies, global awareness, and world languages," and elucidates that it is set on "[promoting] understanding and knowledge of other cultures as [they prepare] students for the future." This vision is embedded not just in classroom instruction but also in the structure of the school, which recruits a student body comprised of 50% ELLs and 50% English proficient students in each incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade class.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, the school requires all students to learn a second or third language, offering English (for ELLs), as well as a choice between an Asian language (Japanese or Chinese) or Italian (for English proficient students, including reclassified former ELLs). Students study the language for three years.

In this case study of Marble Hill, we aim to highlight the key features of the school that have led to extraordinary outcomes for its students. Among the most salient characteristics of the school are a deliberate learning structure and instructional program (which includes an ambitious portfolio experience and a focus on inquiry-based learning), professional development and opportunities for teacher collaboration, a strong leadership team, a commitment to student success along with a system of supports for students and families, and partnerships with outside organizations.

## II. A School for International Studies

The Mission of the Marble Hill School for International Studies is to develop in each student the necessary skills to acquire and apply knowledge. Students will be provided with a social, emotional, and physical environment that is nurturing, supportive, intellectually challenging, and conducive to learning. Students will be empowered to become self-directed, life-long learners inspired by their personal quest for understanding of themselves and the global society in which we live.

–Marble Hill Website<sup>59</sup>

Marble Hill School for International Studies was founded in 2002 by a group of five teachers, an administrator, and a counselor. It has been more than ten years since the school first opened its

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<sup>58</sup> The term "English proficient" refers to students who have never been classified as ELLs or who were formerly ELLs but have been reclassified.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.marblehillschool.org/about/AboutUs.html>.

doors, and during this time period the school has boasted great academic achievements for its students with a 91% four-year graduation rate (compared to a city average of 70%) and a 77% college enrollment rate for its graduates (compared to a 53% city average) during the 2014-15 school year.<sup>60</sup> Parents rave about the school, often noting that its ratings are among the highest in the Bronx borough of New York City, and students and alumni similarly share in the enthusiasm. Indeed, the school and its staff have received a variety of accolades, such as from *U.S. News and World Report* in 2012<sup>61</sup> and various organizations, including the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) teacher fellowship.<sup>62</sup>

Marble Hill is a small but highly diverse school. Its student body speaks over thirty-five different languages and represents forty-nine countries from around the world. The languages spoken most commonly by students at the school include Spanish, French, Arabic, Bengali, and several African languages. The staff is deliberately selected to be equally diverse, boasting an assortment of experiences. Most of the teachers at the school, for example, have lived abroad and speak a second or third language and are therefore quite empathetic to the concerns of the student population.

**Figure 2. Demographic and Performance Data (2014-15)**

<i>Demographics</i>		<i>College &amp; Career Readiness</i>				
			School	Borough	City	State
Size	449	4-year Graduation Rate	91%	62%	70%	75%
Asian	9%	4-year ELL Graduation Rate*	79%	31%	33%	31%
African American	24%	College Enrollment Rate	77%	43%	53%	-
Hispanic	61%	College Ready	62%	22%	35%	-
White	5%					
English Language Learner	30%					
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	91%					
Students with Disabilities	9%					

Source: schools.nyc.gov and data.nysed.gov

Notes: 4-year June graduation rates are presented. Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma and exclude those earning either a special education (IEP) diploma or GED. College enrollment rate represents percentage of students who graduated from high school and enrolled in a college or postsecondary program within six months. For information on college ready index, please see: [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov). College readiness rate represents percentage of students who met the City University of New York's standards for avoiding remedial classes.

\*4-year ELL Graduation Rate is for 2013-2014 (source: data.nysed.gov)

<sup>60</sup> [http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School\\_Quality\\_Snapshot\\_2015\\_HS\\_X477.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School_Quality_Snapshot_2015_HS_X477.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> See <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/u-s-news-world-report-ranking-top-50-high-schools-new-york-city-full-list-article-1.1154950?pgno=7> for rankings.

<sup>62</sup> See <http://www.marblehillschool.org/PDF/PressRelease.pdf> for information about NEH teacher fellowship.



Grounded in the core belief that learning should occur through meaningful experiences, the structures and design of the school are all intentionally organized to support an inquiry- and project-based approach to education. Lessons are designed deliberately to integrate content, literacy, and language for all students with the ultimate goal of preparing students to be global citizens who understand the world they live in, and who are successful in their post-secondary and career lives. Assessments are all-encompassing, incorporating content and metacognitive skills. Marble Hill values multilingualism, and students' ability to feel safe taking chances and comfortable at the school particularly supports their spoken language acquisition. The school also cultivates a multicultural community, which helps bolster these feelings of comfort and safety among students. In the subsequent sections of this report, we delve into the various structures and designs that support the vision of Marble Hill.

### III. School Structures: Organizing for Success

Marble Hill provides an educational experience focused on international studies, actively creating an environment that allows students from varied cultural, national, and linguistic backgrounds to thrive. The school believes that students learn best in heterogeneous, multicultural, and multilingual settings that employ varied instructional approaches. Marble Hill perceives being fluent in more than one language as a great asset—not just for the student, but also for the entire school and community at large. One unique element of the school, therefore, is that *all* students at the school are required to learn a second or third language, including English for ELLs, and Japanese, Chinese, or Italian for English proficient students.

The school organizes its structures deliberately to support its mission as a school for international studies and help realize its goals for students. This begins with a proactive intake process to recruit a diverse student body of 50% ELLs and 50% English proficient students. Marble Hill also offers two different types of programs, the ESL and International strands, to target support and services to its diverse student body. Block scheduling and “looping” (a practice wherein teachers instructionally follow a cohort of students for more than a year) allow for increased instructional time, which in turn enables teachers and students to spend more time getting to know each other, and gives teachers the opportunity to build depth, coherence, and continuity across lessons.

#### The Intake Process

Marble Hill believes that a diverse student body is an asset, and the principal explained the rationale behind the unique model in which half of the students are ELLs:

We knew we wanted to bring together ESL [English as a Second Language] and [English proficient] students because of our own background. Coming from a large high school in the South Bronx...all of us were ESL teachers, and we knew that ESL students were very much relegated to a separate wing, separate classes, and the two strands never met. The one thing we knew is that the drive, the backgrounds, academically, ethnically, everything, was so rich in the ESL population, that we knew those two strands needed to come together to bring more diversity and more reality to a school population.

One of the ways in which the school approaches enrollment challenges is through the active recruitment of students from all different cultures, such as Yemen or Africa. The school's Parent Coordinator (PC) speaks with interested parents to answer questions and concerns, and current students proudly give tours of the school to prospective students. In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, enrollment typically ends up consisting of 50% ELL and 50% English proficient students, as planned. Throughout the years, however, these percentages might shift as ELL students are reclassified as English proficient.

Once students are enrolled in the school, the intake process involves a variety of tests to ensure that the student is placed into the appropriate courses and program. Assistant Principal Wanda Dingman discussed the intake procedure in further detail:

The Home Language Survey [is administered] to see if the kid should be tested for ESL... We try to do it immediately before they even have a schedule, because if you don't [test immediately] you are creating a schedule that is not even appropriate for the kid. Another big part of this for us is that we have a very, very big SIFE [Student with Interrupted Formal Education] population... We [also] have a lot of kids who come from middle school who are *incorrectly* identified as SIFE, so there is a lot of work that goes into that as well.

By identifying the academic and social-emotional needs of the students upon arrival, the school is able to design individualized programs that best fit their needs, and targeted support is administered immediately.

Recognizing that the high school transition may be challenging, especially for ELL students who are new to the country, Marble Hill invites enrolled students to attend a Summer Bridge program aimed at building skills such as note-taking and basic reading and writing. (See Section VIII for more detailed information about student supports over the summer.)

### **Programs: ESL and International Strands**

As previously mentioned, there are two main programs at the school: the ESL program and the International program. Within these two programs, there are four main strands for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders: (A) English proficient students enrolled in learning either Italian or Chinese (depending on which is offered that year), (B) intermediate and advanced ELLs, (C) English proficient students enrolled in learning Japanese, and (D) newcomers, beginner, and SIFE ELL students. The four strands allow school staff to strategically target supports and services to meet student needs and to build a community of students. There is a strong, school-wide alignment across the strands with regard to inquiry, project-based learning and other teaching practices.

All students take classes in the same subject areas during their freshman and sophomore years. (Only students who have already taken a certain class are exempt from this rule.) Marble Hill additionally requires that all students, including English proficient ones, enroll in a second language. ELL students, however, must take English as their second language. This setup allows ELL students to potentially take *two* periods of English during their freshman and sophomore years. They also receive two English credits for the required English and the elective English

classes. English proficient students, meanwhile, have a choice between Japanese, Chinese or Italian (depending on offerings). Staff commented on the fact that ELL students are often motivated to pass their English exams so that they can be reclassified as English proficient because they are excited to enroll in Italian, Chinese, or Japanese classes.

### **Student Grouping: School-Level and Within Class**

During freshman and sophomore year, students tend to move through courses together as cohort groups. For example, beginner ELLs in the ESL program are placed in classes with other ELLs throughout the day so that they receive support tailored specifically to their individual needs. Advanced and intermediate ELLs similarly travel together in a cohort group for all academic classes, although they are mixed with English proficient students for art and physical education. Assistant Principal Dingman shared,

The goal is to give those ESL kids two super solid years of language instruction plus sheltered content instruction. In their first two years—except for classes like art, gym, and advisory—their content classes are with other ELLs.

The aim is that students will have built up enough English language skills that they are able to participate in a class with English proficient students in the later years. Thus, depending on their proficiency level, by junior year ELLs are typically mixed in with English proficient students in content classes, such as history or science. However, some upperclassmen ELL students may still be in ELA/ESL classes, while other ELLs may be in a mixed ELA course with English proficient students. A student commented on the program structure,

I like the fact that being an ESL student, when you start in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, it's only ESL students. You feel more comfortable being in a class with students who don't speak English just like you, instead of being mixed with those kids who are fluent in English and make you feel uncomfortable... So they place ESL students together until 11<sup>th</sup> grade...when they mix everybody altogether.

Within classes, students are placed in heterogeneous groups at the beginning of the year. Teachers then adjust these groups strategically throughout the year. One teacher shared,

We've had a lot of PD about giving assessments and then making groups from that data... I think people sometimes group by level, and other times you want to group high and low. It depends on what you are teaching.

School leadership always asks questions about grouping and placement decisions during class observations, and through professional learning, teachers come to consider language scaffolding every time they group students. A teacher commented, "It's really something that we are taught to think about every time we do our groupings."

### **Block Scheduling and Extended Day**

Students at Marble Hill attend eight periods per day, which allows for extra instructional time. By extending the school day, all students receive the added support they need to learn language



and content skills. In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, students have double periods of the same content class, as needed. For instance, some students attend back-to-back Algebra classes taught by one teacher. This structure allows the teachers to slow down and go in depth. In Figure 3 is a sample class schedule for freshmen students, either in the ESL or International program. Every student also has an advisory period (see Section VIII for more information).

**Figure 3. Freshman Year Courses**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Humanities – 1 hr 30 min</li><li>• Algebra or Geometry – 1 hr 30 min</li><li>• English / ESL – 1 hr</li><li>• Environmental Science – 1 hr</li><li>• Foreign Language or ESL – 1 hr</li><li>• Physical Education – 1 hr 40 min (2 days/week)</li></ul>
Wednesday (shortened day)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advisory</li><li>• Art, Drama, Dance or Film</li><li>• Health</li></ul>

### Looping

Marble Hill implements a “looping” model, which allows teachers to instructionally follow a group of students for a set number of years. Originally, this practice began in 2002 and 2003 within the history and English departments. It soon developed with the foreign language teachers as well, who currently follow a cohort of students for up to three years. The foreign language-looping model proved to work so well that the principal was “floored with what the students [were] doing by year three,” and the school decided to expand the model to other content areas in subsequent years. School leadership has always recognized that teachers’ ability to loop with students is an incredible asset. Thus during the 2015-16 academic year the school is making a strategic move to allow the 9<sup>th</sup> grade humanities teachers to “loop up” to 10<sup>th</sup> grade, because 10<sup>th</sup> grade is the test year, and it is one of the more difficult Regents exams. Having the same teacher loop with students for 10<sup>th</sup> grade saves teachers the time of getting to know the students and what they have already been taught.

Decisions about looping, however, are not taken lightly. Careful planning goes into the decision-making process when determining which content areas and which teachers to include in the model. The principal explained,

Sometimes we don’t loop, because of a certain teacher’s strength with a group of students... We have teachers that are particularly fantastic content teachers working with [ELL] students, and specifically our [beginner ELL] students... We are not going to have a teacher teach our [beginner] ELL students if they are not strong with them.

Additionally, the school ensures that teachers who participate in the looping model receive multiple professional learning opportunities and support. Typically, new teachers are not assigned to participate in the model. Instead they are given two to three years to prepare and adjust. School leadership believes that when teachers have to change things too much every year (as is often necessary with a looping model), it leads to teacher burnout. In this sense, the school supports and nurtures its teachers to ensure that they are able to provide the best instruction possible.

## IV. Learning Design: Instructional Practices, Assessments, and Curricula

As stated clearly in the school’s core beliefs about education, at Marble Hill, “student learning is the chief priority and focus of the school.”<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, instruction is strongly focused on a project-based, inquiry approach to learning that provides valuable and meaningful learning for students. Teachers at the school are encouraged to take into consideration each student’s “unique gifts, passions, and rights” when designing lessons. There is a powerful conviction among staff members that *all* students have the ability to learn and become successful citizens of society. Diversity of languages and cultures is certainly celebrated at this international school, and a focus on language fluency can be observed throughout classrooms. In this sense, instruction at Marble Hill is intensely engaging and personalized to the needs of every student.

One of the most unique elements of instruction at Marble Hill is the portfolio experience. In place since the school’s inception, the purpose of the portfolio program has always been to “provide multiple means for students to speak meaningfully about what they’ve learned” (NYCDOE, 2013). This performance-based assessment guides many elements of unit design and lesson planning, as teachers engage in school-wide practices of project-based learning. Furthermore, curriculum is designed to support these needs by developing cross-subject and cross-grade coherence.

### Instructional Practices: Project-Based Learning and Scaffolding

#### Project-Based Learning

Teachers at Marble Hill are expected to design a variety of project-based learning opportunities for their students. Typically, this form of learning possesses the following characteristics: students working on realistic problems, students having control over their learning, teachers serving as coaches and facilitators, and students working in pairs or groups (although this is not always the case) (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). More importantly though, research suggests that when executed effectively, project-based learning can enable students to make gains in “factual learning” that supersede or are equivalent to more traditional methods of instruction (Thomas, 2000). Project-based learning also aims to go beyond the mere development of content knowledge and encourages students to reflect on how they can transfer their skills to new areas.

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<sup>63</sup> <http://www.marblehillschool.org/about/AboutUs.html>.

Students at Marble Hill are required to take part in four projects per year in each class (two per semester). Teachers, students, and staff members informed us about the numerous multifaceted and engaging projects that have occurred at the school. In a Global History class, for example, sophomores worked on a “Gandhi project” that required them to conduct research on India and produce a brochure with their findings. Tenth graders in a science course participated in a project that involved looking at DNA evidence of their teacher’s dog to find out information about the pet and produce articles and lab reports. One science teacher mentioned that she tries to provide hands-on activities and practical applications to make her lessons more engaging.

All projects generally take up to four weeks to complete and this focused shift allows students to go in-depth on a topic. One student noted that the projects are useful because they prepare them for college. Teachers see projects across all the disciplinary areas and they frequently share ideas among one another. The project presentation affords teachers the opportunity to learn about the practices of their colleagues and get to know the diversity of students. For ELLs, project-based learning is especially beneficial. Projects give students something to “grab onto” as they learn a new language. Through project-based learning, language is used in an *authentic* way for a specific purpose. Furthermore, since group work is a vital component of many projects, ELLs are able to talk to each other and can develop understandings in their home languages with one another as well as create meaning in English.

Although the school has no set format for the structuring of projects, the main goal, according to Assistant Principal Dingman, is to design lessons that will “get students to use what they know and extend that knowledge to new ideas.” Teachers are encouraged to use a project template with which they can delineate the project objectives, key Common Core standards addressed by the project, guidelines, reflection, and scoring rubric for the activity. (See Figure 5 for a sample outline.)

Much of the work for project-based learning at Marble Hill is done *in class*. This is especially useful for newcomer or beginner ELL students who may not have the resources or know-how to conduct research on their own as they transition into a new school system. As they progress, however, the work for projects becomes increasingly independent. Furthermore, teachers make sure to identify a set of skills that students should be working towards mastering in the course of completing the project. Lessons are centered on highlighting the skills that are necessary to complete each task along the way. Since all projects have multiple tasks that build to the final deliverable, teachers collect intermediary work as students move forward with completing the project tasks. This allows teachers to assess student understanding and provide feedback to help students produce a high quality product.

### Scaffolding

Teachers at Marble Hill ensure that their students are able to access both content and language material through scaffolds. During our classroom observations, we saw various examples of teachers providing useful and relevant scaffolds to support student learning. For example, in one

**Figure 5. Project Template**

<b>Grade/Class:</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Teacher:</b>
<b>Project Title:</b>		<b>Due Date:</b>
<b>Project Description:</b> <i>What will the students be doing in this project and what is the rationale?</i>		
<b>Objectives:</b> <i>Upon completion of this project you will be able to</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Identify key learning objectives</i></li></ul>		
<b>Key Common Core Standards:</b>		
<b>Guidelines:</b>		
Written Work/Materials		
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		
Task 4:		
<b>Reflection</b> Write a reflective essay explaining the following questions. Be as specific as you can in your responses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teachers identify key questions the students should address in their essay.</li></ul>		
<b>Scoring Rubric:</b>		

10<sup>th</sup> grade Algebra class, Ms. B.<sup>64</sup> instructed students to form groups of two. She gave each group an envelope with small strips of paper, which were printed with exponents, equations, or expressions, and then she asked, “How can you tell if it is an expression or an equation?” The class discussed the question, and then moved on to complete the activity in groups. On the board, Ms. B. had written the instructions, which read:

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<sup>64</sup> Pseudonyms are unrelated to teachers’ actual names.

There are ten answers. Some have two cards that match to make an answer, while other answers have three cards that match. Record your answers on the answer sheet. Hints: (a) some expressions might match another expression, (b) some expressions might match an equation, and (c) for some, you might have to write your own match on the strip.

This card matching, hands-on activity helped students see how to put equations and expressions together in a guided manner that supported their thinking. Beyond this, however, the student discourse that emerged from the activity—as students wrestled with authentic math concepts, made mistakes, learned from each other, listened, conjectured, and explained—ultimately allowed students to build knowledge *and* language simultaneously.

Meanwhile, in an 11<sup>th</sup> grade history classroom, Ms. J.’s class was discussing the policy of containment during the Korean War, a policy that aimed to prevent the influence of Korea from spreading in the region. To contextualize the conversation, Ms. J. had a map of Korea at the front of the room, and in the discussion about containment, she reminded students of the meaning of this term by pointing to a filled water bottle to show how the water was *contained* inside the bottle. To ensure that her class understood the concept, it was clear that Ms. J. wanted to present the material in a new, visual way to make certain that her students could relate a complex idea to something they could understand.

In line with our observations, teachers also indicated that the classrooms are “very scaffolded,” with one explaining, “I know if I do a writing assignment, I will put sentence starters on the wall, or fill in the blanks to help them complete their own thoughts.” Another teacher shared that he includes “lots of visuals all the time.”

Scaffolding practices at Marble Hill aren’t exclusively the domain of teachers, however. In one classroom we observed, students also engaged in scaffolding for one another, as illustrated by the example in Figure 6 below.

### **Figure 6. A Closer Look: Scaffolding Practices in the Classroom**

In one 9<sup>th</sup> grade Algebra classroom, 27 intermediate and advanced ELLs (including four special education students), are working in groups of 3-6 to review the quadratic equation. Two teachers, participating in a mixed team-teaching model, are circulating around the room. Students are to complete at least one of the word problems that have been set up for them at the four stations. The first station needs the most support, and Ms. C. works with this group the longest. Students are not allowed to move to the next station until they “get it.” The second station asks students to find the roots for the quadratic equations, prompting them to recall which methods they can use to do so. The third station requires students to solve for the vertex of the equation. Lastly, the fourth station has various word problems that students have to solve without teacher support. Students work diligently within their groups.

The class illustrated in Figure 6 had a great deal of discussion and peer support. Again, students were constructing meaning for one another. At one station, for example, one student explained to another that he needed to factor the equation. With the help of more knowledgeable partners, the students built on each other's comments and worked together to solve the problem.

### Language and Literacy

Staff indicated that students' home languages are used on an "ad hoc basis" to support learning. In general, if a teacher speaks the language, there may be interactions in the student's home language to provide scaffolding. However, teachers primarily use English in mixed-language classes, and students are instructed to use a dictionary when appropriate. Teachers also encourage students to use their peers as resources, but if there is a student who speaks a different language in a given group, students are asked to speak in English. When discussing her experience teaching beginner ELL students, a teacher indicated that "[students] can talk to the other students in the class in their own language sometimes to get help...and eventually, you are able to group them by different languages, and they can practice their English."

As we saw in classrooms, teachers integrate language and content teaching and learning in their lessons. For example, in one 9<sup>th</sup> grade Japanese classroom we observed, a teacher seamlessly wove language and content objectives throughout. The aim of the lesson was to learn about the differences between Japanese and European feudalism, and the objective was to have students engage in an exercise that would allow them to compare and contrast the two systems. The teacher handed out an article on the topic (see Figure 7) and instructed students to read the text together in their small groups.

Students began the exercise by underlining text that was indicative of each type of system. Certain phrases (e.g., "family **lineage** [ancestry/hereditary] and honor were of great importance in medieval Japanese society") were identified as evidence about Japanese feudalism, while others (e.g., "in Europe...the **lord-vassal** [dependent landowner] relationship was seen as mutual [join/shared] and contractual") were identified as evidence about European feudalism. After amassing information about feudalism in both societies, each student group categorized emerging evidence in a chart. In crafting the activity, the teacher modified the text, bolding and defining key vocabulary. To help students better decipher the complex language of this passage, she has also flagged, in boxes, words and phrases, such as "than," "of course," and "in other words," that relate parts of the text to each other. Her ultimate expectation was for students to use evidence from the text to form and defend opinions about the differences between the two feudal systems.

All classes for beginner and intermediate ELLs are taught in English by teachers who are either ELL certified or who have extensive training in TESOL. Teachers across the board use standardized reading and writing protocols. Reading strategies are commonplace in ELL classrooms. For example, students are taught the "seven habits of good readers" and "tier I, II,




Figure 7. Excerpt from Japanese World Literature Lesson

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**DBQ Japanese vs. European Feudalism.**

**DIRECTIONS:** While reading compare & contrast feudalism in Japan & Europe. **Underline evidence.** Also take note of **transition phrases, which are boxed** and make writing more **developed**. After reading, complete the chart.

Japan's feudal culture was in many ways **more like that of** feudal Europe **than** China. The warriors, who were known by the generic term of *samurai* "servitors," placed great **emphasis** [importance/attention] on the military **virtues** [character traits] of bravery, honor, self-discipline, and the **stoical** [calm/brave] acceptance of death. Lacking any religious **injunctions** [bans/rules against] against suicide, they commonly took their own lives in defeat, rather than accept torture and possible **humiliation** [disgrace/embarrassment] in capture. Suicide by the **gruesome** [horrific/frightening] and extremely painful means of cutting open one's own **abdomen** [stomach] became a sort of **ritual** [tradition/custom] used to demonstrate will power and maintain one's honor. **Vulgarily** [crudely/tastelessly] called *harikiri*, or "belly-slitting," but more properly known as *seppuku*, this form of **honorable** [admirable/respectable] suicide has survived on occasion into modern times. Suicide by less difficult means is still considered an acceptable and basically honorable way to die.



and III words.”<sup>65</sup> Additionally, students at all levels are asked to “chunk” their readings and to find the main takeaways or to generate some form of critical response to the text. For writing, the school uses paragraph structures, such as MEAL (Main Idea, Evidence, Analysis, and Link). This strategy is not just for ELLs; since many students struggle to structure their writing the school uses the same technique for English proficient students. Teachers furthermore develop goals for both content and language development. A teacher mentioned that they look at the goals separately when they are planning, but that it is easier to merge the two together when they implement instructional practices in class. School-wide practices and structures for reading and writing facilitate the uniformity of teaching and expectations. This also ensures that when ELL and English proficient students are mixed together in 11<sup>th</sup> grade content classes, they are all on the same page.

In the example in Figure 8 below, we describe how Mr. H.<sup>66</sup> structured a discussion about the climax of a story and scaffolded the activity to enable students to construct a persuasive

<sup>65</sup> The “seven habits of good readers” refers to strategies that encourage students to make connections, ask questions, create images, identify important ideas, make predictions or inferences, monitor meaning, and synthesize information. These strategies have been adapted or modified across schools and districts but maintain the general structure described above. Tier I, II, and III words were identified by a team of researchers to describe vocabulary programs’ role in improving verbal processing skills. For more information, see McKeown et al (1985).

<sup>66</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

argument defending their selection of the plot climax.

### Figure 8. A Glimpse into Engaging Discussions in English World Literature

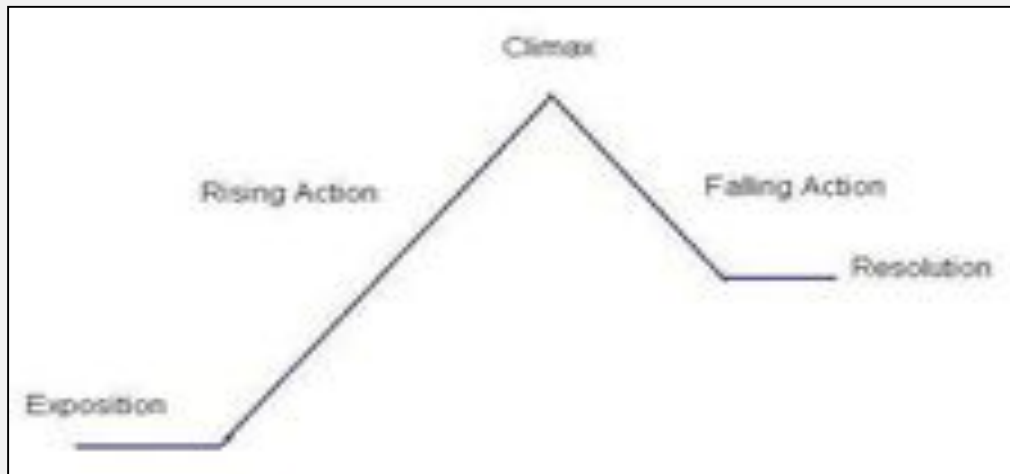
In Mr. H.'s 9<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts class, we observe 18 ELL students sitting in groups of 2-3. On the board, the teacher has written the goals of the day's lesson:

**Aim:** How do we analyze the narrative structure of *The Secret Life of Bees*?

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify and defend a selection from the novel as the climax of the story.

**Do Now:** What is the climax of a literary work? What is the climax of the story *The Secret Life of Bees*?

Mr. H. asks students to “share at their table what they wrote and come up with a definition” based on the “Do Now” questions. While students share their responses, he circulates around the classroom asking questions and challenging students to think deeper. After the whole-class discussion, he instructs students to write their definition of “climax” on a note card. When students complete this task, Mr. H. reads each note card aloud adding information to a graphic organizer projected on the white board. In the center of the graphic organizer is the word “climax” and spanning from the center are the note card ideas, which have written on them: the “point of the story,” the “biggest change,” “the most interesting part,” and the “turning point,” among other responses. He then draws a plot structure on the board, which resembles the following graphic:



After this whole-class activity, Mr. H. asks students to select the part of the novel they think is the climax and to read it to their group. Then they need to justify why they picked that passage as the climax. Finally, the group needs to select one of the scenes as part of their explanation and share out with the class. The teacher pushes his students to look at the symbolism as they read the text. And much like all students at Marble Hill, they are expected to incorporate a Main Idea, Evidence, Analysis, and a Link (MEAL) while constructing their argument.

As can be observed in the preceding example, Mr. H. uses various supports to help students construct meaning. First, he integrates the use of ELA disciplinary language, referring to the



various elements of a plot: “exposition,” “rising action,” “climax,” “falling action,” and “resolution.” He also provides students with multiple access points to grapple with the concept of a plot “climax” by having students brainstorm in small groups expressing the meaning of the term in their own words (writing on notecards the “point of the story,” the “biggest change,” etc.) and by providing a visual representation of a plot structure. He additionally structures the activity using school-wide conventions for lesson goals (clearly stated at the beginning of the lesson) and encouraging students to use paragraph structures (the aforementioned MEAL) to help them organize their argument.

### **Portfolio Assessments**

Ever since it opened its doors back in 2002, Marble Hill has used a system of portfolio presentations to ensure that students have opportunities to engage in deeper learning. Principal Kirsten Larson explained how the decision to implement the portfolio program was largely related to taking into consideration the unique needs of all their students:

Knowing that we were looking at joining [English proficient] and ELL populations in the 50-50 model that [didn't] exist in a very deliberate way and had not existed anywhere else at that time, and knowing the needs of ELLs to be able to use language in meaningful ways...we wanted to make sure that our assessment system was rigorous and meaningful and allowed students to be able to show what they were learning and to use language.

Having observed portfolios at other schools and being aware that the school was interested in implementing project-based learning “as a way for students to get deeper into content and to have a more extended learning project,” Marble Hill’s leaders decided that this would be a good idea.

The portfolio assessment program, which is built into the grading policy, provides multiple means for students to reflect and speak about what they have learned throughout the academic year. At Marble Hill, portfolio presentations occur twice a year, every year, for every grade level,<sup>67</sup> and the entire process takes two weeks to organize and complete. Many practices throughout the year though prepare students for the presentations. For example, 9<sup>th</sup> grade advisory classes help students with presentation skills, and as mentioned previously, teachers scaffold their lessons to ensure that students master the necessary skills needed for project completion.

Although the program has been slightly modified over the years, each semester students typically select and present for one hour on one project from every class, totaling six projects, to one staff teacher they have not had during that year. During the presentation, they are expected to revise and present their best work, use language in a meaningful way, reflect on how they have grown, and talk about how each project relates to other subjects.

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<sup>67</sup> Note that 12<sup>th</sup> grade students present a portfolio only during the winter semester. In the spring semester, they assemble a “Senior Exit Project” (see Section VIII for more information).

Since its inception, 12<sup>th</sup> grade portfolios have focused on presenting projects and research in a unified way and typically incorporate a discussion about student goals and educational plans. Recently, however, Marble Hill has implemented different structured focuses for the lower grades. For example, during the 2013-14 school year, the school added a metacognitive element to the freshmen portfolios, aimed at getting students to reflect on *how* they worked to learn the content material. Students were asked to bring their notebooks with them and explain for which class they have had the most success in keeping notes and organizing information. Figure 9 provides some examples of questions posed to students.

**Figure 9. Sample Portfolio Metacognitive Reflection Questions**

1. How did this project help you understand how humans are affecting biodiversity?
2. Did this project help you improve your *research* skills? Explain.
3. Did this project help you improve your *writing* skills? Explain.
4. What specific steps did you take to complete this project?
5. How did writing this piece make you feel?
6. What was difficult about this project? What was easy?
7. If you did this project again, what would you do differently? Why?

In order to make the evaluation process work smoothly, teachers write out guidelines for staff to use during the student presentations. These guidelines are standardized across the school to ensure that students and teachers are familiarized with them prior to the evaluation. The guidelines include information about the project, reflection questions, content questions, prompts, and possible responses (NYCDOE, 2013). Figure 10 includes samples of the type of questions students are asked. (Also see Supplementary Materials A. and B. for examples of student and evaluator guidelines.)

**Figure 10. Sample Portfolio Reflection Questions**

#### **Humanities**

##### *Project Clarification Questions*

1. What is a claim? What is a counterclaim?
2. Explain one: Who deserves Jerusalem? Why? Or, do you think Columbus was guilty or innocent? Why?

##### *Course Content Questions*

1. What was the Protestant Reformation and why was it important?
2. How was the Renaissance a turning point in world history?
3. Where were the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca Empires located? Explain how *each* empire adapted to their environments? What kind of scientific advancements did they have?

## **Environmental Science**

### *Project Clarification Questions*

1. What does endangered mean? What endangered animal did you study? What are the causes of endangerment? How are we trying to *save* this animal?
2. What is the difference between a direct quote and a paraphrase? In a research paper, how do you write a direct quote versus a paraphrase? Why must all research (direct quotes or paraphrased) be cited?

### *Course Content Questions*

1. What is the difference between global warming and ozone depletion (the hole in the ozone layer)? You *must* answer this question by discussing: pollutants, human activities that cause each, and impacts of each. Use the diagram addendum to explain each concept.

Teachers can use a standard set of reflection questions that are developed school-wide, but they are strongly encouraged to develop questions of their own to ask students (NYCDOE, 2013). This shift occurred after considering the Universal Design for Learning framework, which promotes the adaptation of curriculum for all students by providing multiple means of presentation, action and expression, and engagement (NYCDOE, 2013).

One distinguishing feature of the portfolio program is that the final presentations are conducted one-on-one rather than via a panel, as is usually the case in other schools. Part of the reason that the portfolios are presented one-on-one is that students are required to present every semester, and coordinating a panel of community members, school staff, and peer colleagues would have made the incorporation of portfolios more challenging. Additionally, unlike other portfolio programs that are highly student-driven or highly dictated by the staff, Marble Hill developed a program that allowed for more back and forth between students and teachers. Projects are not entirely student-driven, but students are given a choice about what projects to select and present on. Furthermore, students are encouraged to practice their presentations with each other during Saturday school and receive support from teachers if necessary. Feedback is provided shortly after the presentation so that students can adjust accordingly. Students get responses and results right away. They are assessed on language use, dress code, coming on time, and being well-prepared. In addition to being assessed on presentation, they are also given feedback on their fluency, which is defined as “ease and confidence in subject matter and its presentation” (NYCDOE, 2013).

In general, the structure for the portfolios has been left largely intact since its original form, but several tweaks have been made over the years to improve the process. Most importantly, the school has reduced the number of projects that are covered each semester from three to two. Teachers had felt that the depth of the lessons wasn’t great when they covered three projects per semester, so the reduction has allowed teachers to focus on creating more meaningful projects that delve deeper into the content and allow students more time for reflection and revision.

Portfolios provide a number of benefits for students. One student commented on the usefulness of the portfolio experience: “I like the fact that every semester there are portfolios at the end. It’s a way to practice [for] job interviews.” The portfolios also provide unexpected benefits since they are an excellent opportunity for teachers and students to get to know each other well. Through this process, all teachers get comfortable with ELLs and all levels of students. Since ELL students have to do their presentations in English, they are also able to practice speaking while teachers simultaneously learn more about the linguistic needs of the students. Additionally, the portfolio experience is invaluable for teachers who teach primarily one group of students (either ELLs or English proficient students). For teachers of ELLs, it is important that they remain aware of what English proficient students are doing and how they are performing. Since the goal of the school is to ensure that all students have equal access, it is helpful for all teachers to have a frame of reference about the ultimate goal for all students, and this is facilitated by the portfolio evaluations. Similarly, teachers of English proficient students have the opportunity to assess how the ELL population is performing.

Thus, the portfolio assessment experience is a key feature of Marble Hill’s instructional program. It provides the school staff an opportunity to get to know their students, provide direct, immediate feedback, and allow for the development of language and speaking skills in a way that is aligned with each student’s learning goals.

In addition to the portfolios, there are other summative and formative assessments administered to students at the school throughout the year, including notebooks, homework, and tests. Teachers mentioned that they also employ Do Nows and exit slips, which aim to assess where students are. For example, in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade Global History classroom, a teacher posted a Do Now exercise on the white board, which read: “You have probably heard of Nelson Mandela, a famous South African leader. Do you know what he did and what he was fighting against?” Students proceeded to discuss the question in groups, and after several minutes debriefed with the entire class. Students shared the following information: “He’s an activist,” “He fought for the rights of Black South Africans,” and “He became president of South Africa.” Meanwhile, one student noted, “I think that he used the same method as Gandhi.” The teacher probed, “What method was that?” and the student responded, “Nonviolence.” Throughout this exercise, the teacher was able to gauge the initial level of understanding among her students as they embarked upon a new unit on South Africa. Additionally, she was able to detect the ways in which students made connections to other units.

The multiple forms of evaluation allow teachers to monitor the progress of their students—especially relevant for teachers of ELLs, who are encouraged to use data to determine class groupings and to maintain a handle on student progress.

## Curriculum

Another way in which Marble Hill develops student learning of content and language is through an explicit emphasis on cross-subject and cross-grade coherence. Teachers and administrators have undergone whole-group professional learning around curriculum mapping and unit planning to make sure everyone is spiraling up from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade and gradually increasing the

rigor of the instruction. However, it is ultimately the work of individual departments to develop curriculum. Teachers must abide by certain non-negotiables when creating curriculum, but departmental teams do have a certain degree of flexibility and autonomy in this process, which they build on and continue to refine over the years. Teachers typically make their own materials, particularly for SIFE students.

For the past three years, a group of teachers and administrators has also been participating in professional learning that focuses specifically on how to create curricular coherence under the new Common Core State Standards. The school is aiming to examine curriculum across departments and then by grade level, looking for consistency. Every year, teachers who have undergone professional learning work within their departments asking themselves grade by grade what standards need to be addressed, and where to circle over those same standards across grades, aiming to make modifications and improvements on an ongoing basis. Based on Common Core State Standards and guidelines for Regents exams, teachers are constantly adapting and improving the curriculum to meet students' needs. Every teacher designs lessons that allow the students to interact in meaningful ways. Higher order, open-ended questions and prompts stretch student thinking and guide discussions. The principal explained,

[We] determine ourselves what are some of those things, looking at the Common Core...that we need to change? What are we keeping? And what do we need to still change? It has been an ongoing process for the past three years, and it will continue.

In fact, this is how curriculum development is viewed at Marble Hill—as an ongoing process. School leadership believes that every year curriculum needs to be tweaked.

The school also intentionally and strategically develops curriculum that is aligned with the key activities at the school, such as the portfolio experience. For example, even though the portfolio presentations occur once every semester, all courses are designed to include two project-based learning experiences that feed into this experience. Curriculum planning is not something that takes place day-to-day, however. Given the rigorous demands of this type of work, administrators and teachers work on these tasks during larger periods of professional learning days.

In certain cases, the curriculum comes from an external partner. For example, College English is a City University of New York (CUNY)-based curriculum, focused on building strong foundations in communications and preventing students from being placed in remedial courses once in college. CUNY provides the school with a highly engaging curriculum. Students study psychology in the first semester and sociology in the second semester. They use the Socratic Seminar in the teaching and learning, and the course also increases the reading of nonfiction.

Additionally, the school has a Common Core-aligned math curriculum that it adopted from the Silicon Valley Math Initiative<sup>68</sup> (SVMI) in 2010. According to Assistant Principal Dingman, the curriculum is designed to “include re-engagement and multiple assessments.” For example, the

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<sup>68</sup> <http://www.svmimac.org/>.

curriculum includes formative and summative assessments for each unit, and the activities within it are inquiry-based with authentic problems. In this way, teachers have been able to integrate Marble Hill projects into the SVMII curriculum. Many activities also ask students to interpret academic uses of language in mathematics, which increases language acquisition and literacy among ELL students. The curriculum also incorporates team-oriented exercises that empower students to assess their own progress. Although SVMII is not intended for a particular group of students, such as ELLs, Marble Hill has worked with a coach for the past five years to tailor the program directly for their student population. By examining student work and assessments, teachers are able to determine what needs to be retaught and to strategically group students. Thus, the overall approach of the curriculum is directly aligned with the school's philosophy of assessing, re-teaching, and providing targeted support.

## V. Professional Learning and Teacher Collaboration

Teachers work together to co-plan. Most have been together for a long time. For example, the ESL and history teachers co-planned a unit on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They traveled to Israel together and designed unit projects together that culminated in a student debate.

–Principal

Marble Hill teachers meet by grade level and departments to problem-solve, design lessons and share strategies to address students' needs. Professional learning at the school is strategic and regular, and teacher collaboration is abundant, both structured and unstructured.

### Professional Learning

The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) mandates four professional learning days per academic year. At Marble Hill, however, professional learning is planned weekly, and Wednesdays are shortened days for students to allow teachers a common time. During these hours, the staff receives training on a variety of instructional approaches. For example, teachers have learned to use the Danielson framework,<sup>69</sup> a tool that helps educators identify elements of teaching that promote student learning. The school has a committee to help make decisions about the professional learning opportunities. One person from each discipline is represented, and the group sets the professional learning agenda for the year.

In the second semester, teachers typically use their professional learning time for grade level groups to focus on inquiry. Inquiry has been a school-wide practice since 2002, but the level of attention to this practice has varied over the years. During the typical inquiry process, teachers study the academic performance of a group of focal students who are outside the sphere of success as they test diverse strategies to increase their academic and language development. The goal is to develop a set of strategies and interventions that work for diverse groups of students by studying a small group.

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.danielsongroup.org/framework/>.

## Teacher Collaboration

All teachers at the school are part of a disciplinary and grade-level team that works on curricular development, grade level articulation, and general support for each other. For example, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade teams partner up to teach ESL and U.S. Literature, or ESL and other AP courses. Although certain types of collaborations are structured, there are also a lot of informal opportunities for co-planning. One teacher observed, “There is a lot of informal collaboration in the break room,” and another noted, “Teachers share with others as learning partners.” Another staff member said,

There is so much informal collaboration at this school. Any time you go into the staff room, you get that... Like the two [Global Studies] teachers are going to be working together to make sure that they are moving at the same pace. The math teachers are doing the same thing. Right now the Algebra ESL is a unit behind so they are all trying to figure out how to pick that up.

The culture of collaboration makes it possible for teachers to design interdisciplinary, project-based learning lessons that are stimulating and engaging for students. Beyond this, collaboration also encourages teachers at Marble Hill to learn from one another as part of an ongoing process of developing and honing their instruction to better meet the needs of their students.

## VI. Shared Leadership: Setting a Vision, Selecting the Right Team, and Focusing on Instruction

The leadership is very strong... distributed, more than, say, “top down.” Everybody gets the sense that they are accountable for the students here... It’s an inclusive model... There is a lot of transparency about the work. It’s a very coherent approach to leading.  
-New Visions Administrator

At Marble Hill, there are numerous individuals spearheading efforts to enable students to excel in college and careers. Since the founding of the school by a group of educators, the vision for the school has always been a shared one. The current principal, Kirsten Larson, was a founding member and she continues to hold herself and the rest of the school accountable to the original mission. Marble Hill staff consistently reported that the principal has a very clear vision that holds true to the original vision of the school. They also noted the ways in which the leaders of the school diligently and meticulously planned all elements of the school from its very inception. One staff member reflected,

The six of them that created this school did not leave a stone unturned. How they had the foresight to think of all of the possible things that could go wrong...and make sure that they had something in place for that, is incredible.

In an effort to describe the ways in which the school leadership team at Marble Hill has created an effective program for all its students (including ELLs), this section will discuss key features of the leadership at Marble Hill by noting the ways in which the school has crafted a clear,



shared vision, assembled a strong team of educators who help carry out that vision, and focused attention on instruction.

### **Clear, United Vision for Student Achievement**

The founders of Marble Hill, which included, among others, the current principal, assistant principal, and school counselor, had a very clear vision for the school from the very beginning. The principal shared, “Our overarching vision is to prepare all students to be college-ready, citizens of the world, and understand the various cultures of the world. And we want students to see that being bilingual is an asset.” The former principal of the school, who still works closely with Marble Hill through the New Visions network, similarly described the vision:

The vision of the school was to create a school that [gave] equal access to ELLs... I knew that usually the gap is quite huge in terms of performance, and I also knew that reasons for the gap were that there was not an effort to bring rigorous work to our ELLs and to use the interdisciplinary approach of teaching ESL through content... Part of it was also that everybody would be a learner of a second language, and that was manifested in the design of the school—everybody must take a second language when they enter here. Ideally, the teachers had to have experience with learning a second language...and at the end of four years, these students would have the opportunity to attend college.

Thus, the goal was to design a school for both ELL and general education students, while ensuring that all students had equal access to college and career opportunities. Everyone at the school shares this same vision to prepare students for college and beyond.

### **Strategic Hiring**

To carry out the vision and mission of Marble Hill, the leaders of the school have put together an experienced team of educators. Although not quite as diverse as the student body they serve, the teaching staff at Marble Hill consists of individuals who have lived outside of the country, who speak other languages, and who place value on language and diversity. Most teachers are ESL certified, have travel experiences, and speak another language. They were in the Peace Corps or the JET Programme,<sup>70</sup> like to travel, and have lived abroad. Most importantly, the school has experienced staff members who know the mission of the school. There is very little teacher turnover.

The assembling of this team requires that Marble Hill staff actively recruit and seek out candidates that are a good “fit” with the culture of the school. Ninth grade teachers are carefully chosen through a deliberate hiring process. First, prospective teachers are interviewed by both school administrators and other teachers. Next, they are asked to conduct a “demo lesson” for all kinds of students (including general education, ELL, and special education). After the “demo lesson,” the observing administrators, teachers, and students provide feedback on the demo. A teacher may give her own assessment about the lesson regarding what went well and what didn’t go so well. Sometimes there is a “mock process” to determine how well aspiring applicants work with others at the school. For example, the school examines the dynamics of group planning sessions as the applicant interacts with other teachers from the school. Overall openness to

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<sup>70</sup> <http://jetprogramme.org/en/>.

feedback is a key characteristic they consider when making hiring decisions. They only hire people who are open to feedback and have an understanding of how to learn.

Additionally, the school has a tight-knit leadership team that consists of the principal, the two assistant principals, and the school guidance counselor. The team divides its duties and responsibilities. For example, when it comes to teacher observations and grade-level teams, Assistant Principal Dingman is responsible for 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Principal Larson is in charge of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and Assistant Principal Paul Parris is responsible for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. Programming is largely the domain of Larson, Dingman, and the school counselor, while safety issues fall under the responsibility of Parris (who is considered the “unofficial dean”). The school counselor is also largely in charge of 12<sup>th</sup> grade graduation concerns. Teacher voice is incorporated into decision-making through the “professional development team,” by which a teacher from every department helps with determining professional learning needs throughout the year.

### Focus on Instruction

Another element of the leadership of the school is the intense focus on instruction. One feature unique to Marble Hill is that *all* administrators teach one class a semester. This helps school leaders become better acquainted with students and gain a deeper understanding of student and teacher needs. Assistant Principal Dingman, for example, teaches ESL. Additionally, the requirement that administrators teach classes has the effect of keeping class sizes down. Each administrative team member is responsible for a grade level, which allows for administrators to collaborate closely with teachers for that specific grade level. This practice contributes to ensuring that all staff is aligned towards the same vision for students.

## VII. School Culture

More than anything, the culture at Marble Hill is characterized by a commitment to success for all students. The school is always looking to maximize the potential of students. Everyone believes that students can achieve and there is a strong sense of efficacy and agency exuded by teachers and students. Success stories abound. One student recalled how he wanted to drop AP English because it was too difficult, but his teacher and counselor said, “No, you can do it. We will help you.” He is now happily enrolled in the class. A parent related how his son came in at 11<sup>th</sup> grade speaking very little English and is now graduating and going on to university. Another student shared,

This is not like most high schools... This is a high school that prepares you for college... I would recommend this high school to all my friends if they want to go to college and work hard, but this is not a high school where you want to be lazy.

By maintaining a high degree of rigor and a commitment to prepare each and every student for post-secondary success, along with a strict but structured and supportive system, Marble Hill ensures that students are able to reach their college and career goals. Below we describe some of the steps that the school has taken to sustain a rigorous academic culture while still providing a safe, nurturing, and welcoming environment.

### **A Commitment to Success**

As part of enrolling in the school, all students, including SIFE, know that they are expected to learn English, pass the Regents exams with high scores, and get into a college of their choice. They are told from their first day of school that Marble Hill is a college preparatory school. In fact, the school imposes rigorous graduation requirements that exceed state mandates (see Figure 11). Teachers and administrators push and support students to be the best that they can be. They communicate to students their belief that every individual student is capable of success, so students believe in their potential. Students understand that it is okay to make mistakes, but they know they are expected to take some responsibility for and ownership of their learning and growth.

### **A Diverse, Multilingual Family**

The school actively pursues the establishment of a diverse student body, with students coming from a large number of different countries and speaking different languages. Students commented on the diversity of the student body as a key attraction. For example, one student explained, “I like this school because it’s international and you get to meet people from not only one country but worldwide... You can learn about different cultures.” Another student similarly mentioned, “I like the languages that they offer... Other schools mostly [only] offer French or Spanish, but here you get to learn different languages that most students don’t learn about...like Japanese or Italian. I really enjoy that.” Meanwhile, the staff was also highly appreciative of the varied experiences that students and staff contribute to the school. One staff member commented,

I think that exposing our students to diversity is a big plus at our school. It is something that we encourage since the minute they come in. Even when we are advertising, marketing our school...it is one of our big pluses... For us, it’s not a matter of what group you belong to... We are one big family, and we all learn from each other.

In addition to the high level of rigor, students note that their teachers and school staff play prominent roles in helping them keep up with the academic demands of their courses. Students report that they can always find help from their teachers when they need it and that they feel comfortable asking for help. They indicated that the school is like a family, and that they recognize that they have very dedicated teachers and school staff who are always willing to push them and support them, regardless of where they are in their learning. One student told us, “If anyone cuts any class, they will call your parents.” Another student added that staff also calls home “if your son has dropped a grade, or if your son is missing homework.” A different student shared that a staff member made a personal visit to his home to follow up on him because he had consistently been late to school for two weeks.

Figure 11. Marble Hill Graduation Requirements

	Minimum STATE Graduation Requirements 44 Credits	MARBLE HILL SIS Graduation Requirements 60 Credits	Desirable College Entrance for CUNY & SUNY
<b>ENGLISH/ ESL</b>	Minimum of 8 credits (4 years)	Minimum of 12 credits (4 years)	Minimum of 8 credits (4 Years)
<b>SOCIAL STUDIES</b>	8 Specific Credits (4 years) Global History 1,2,3,4 US History 1&2 Government Economics	8 Specific Credits (4 years) Global History 1,2,3,4 US History 1&2 Government Economics	8 Specific Credits (4 years) Global History 1,2,3,4 US History 1&2 Government Economics
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>	Minimum of 6 credits	8 Credits (4 years)	4 years & higher level Math and passing Algebra 2 / Trigonometry (or higher level course)
<b>SCIENCE</b>	Minimum of 6 Credits: • 2 Life Science & Lab (Living Environment) • 2 Physical Science & Lab (Chem, Env. Sci, Earth Sci, Physics) • 2 Life or Physical Sci.	Minimum of 8 Credits: • 2 Life Science & Lab (Living Environment) • 2 or more credits: Physical Science & Lab (Chem, Env. Sci, Earth Sci, Physics) • 2 or more credits: Life or Physical Sci.	4 years & higher level Science (Physics, AP Bio, AP Physics) • 2 Life Science & Lab (Living Environment) • 2 Physical Science & Lab (Chem, Env. Sci, Physics) • 2 Life or Physical Sci.
<b>ARTS</b>	2 Credits (Art, Music, or other Art credit)	2 Credits (Art, Music, or other Art credit)	2 Credits (Art, Music, or other Art credit)
<b>HEALTH/ PE (PHYSICAL EDUCATION)</b>	7 Semesters of PE 1 Semester of Health	7 Semesters of PE 1 Semester of Health	7 Semesters of PE 1 Semester of Health
<b>MISCELLANEOUS/ GUIDANCE</b>	7 Additional Credits or Electives	8 Semesters of Advisory 4 Semesters of Com. Service (11th & 12th grade years) 1 Sem. of College Readiness	Electives in areas of interest or higher level courses if possible
<b>REGENTS/ COMMON CORE EXAMINATIONS</b>	<b>Regents Diploma (5)</b> • Common Core ELA - 65+ • Global Regents - 65+ • US History RE - 65+ • Common Core Math - 75+ (passing score on one Math Exam: Algebra, Geometry or Algebra 2) • Science RE - 65+	<b>Regents Diploma (5)</b> • Common Core ELA - 75+ • Global Regents - 65+ • US History RE - 65+ • Int. Algebra or Geom 75+ • Science RE - 65+ <b>Advanced Diploma(9):</b> • 2nd Science RE - 65+ • 2nd & 3er Math RE - 65+ • Foreign Language - 65 + 6 • Foreign Language credits <b>Adv. Diploma w/Honors (9):</b> • Average of 90 on all 9 Regents	<b>Regents Diploma (5)</b> <b>Minimum Scores:</b> • Common Core ELA - 75+ • Global Regents - 65+ • US History RE - 65+ • Math RE 1st 80+ , 2nd 65+ • Science RE - 65+ <b>Advanced Diploma(9):</b> • 2nd Science RE - 65+ • 2nd & 3er Math RE - 65+ • Foreign Language - 65 + 6 • Foreign Language credits <b>Adv. Diploma w/Honors (9):</b> • Average of 90 on all 9 Regents
<b>OTHER:</b>		<b>Development of Leadership Skills, Personal Interest, and Service to Community</b> through participation in: • Clubs, sports, extracurricular activities • Internships, mentoring programs, community service • Exchange /travel programs • College Now	<b>Development of Leadership Skills, Personal Interest, and Service to Community</b> through participation in: • Community Service • Clubs, sports, extracurricular activities • Internships, mentoring programs • Exchange /travel programs

## VIII. Student Supports

As discussed in the previous section, Marble Hill is committed to preparing *all* of its students for success in college and careers. The leaders and educators at Marble Hill hope to prepare students to become “citizens of the world,” capable of developing into lifelong learners and contributors to society. In order to accomplish this mission, the school provides more than just excellent instruction. It also offers an array of support services for each individual student, which includes everything from college prep and other academic supports to mentorship opportunities.

### Intensive Support for College and Career

Given that Marble Hill is a college prep school, it is not surprising that the main focus of most student support services at the school relate to college and career readiness. The school has recently hired a full-time college advisor with grant money from the College Bound Initiative (CBI)—a partner organization that empowers youth to achieve success beyond high school. This partnership has helped expose Marble Hill students to more opportunities. For example, the school hosts two college fairs a year with fifty-nine colleges and college representatives who come to present and talk with students. The school also offers an SAT Saturday Prep program for students, as well as college-level courses in psychology and sociology. Other opportunities to enroll in on-campus college courses during junior and senior year are made available through the College Now program in partnership with Lehman College.

One of the key features of the CBI program is a College Readiness Class (CRC) for 12<sup>th</sup> graders. In the first semester of their senior year, students take a course in which they research colleges four days a week for one hour a day; write college research papers, essays, and personal statements; apply for financial aid; and assemble college applications. College representatives attend the class regularly to answer questions and help students make decisions about where to apply. The program prompts students to question their future and the role education will play in it. It also helps students navigate the college application process. One student shared that they visit colleges, even those that are out of state.

Marble Hill additionally requires that seniors conduct community service research projects. According to one student,

We are required to do 110 hours of community service by the end of our senior year. You can do more and get awards... I was working in Van Cortlandt Park... I was helping clean the park, learning how to plant things, and [identifying] what plants are dangerous.

As part of community service, students can also help translate and interpret for parents at the school, though one student said,

The school encourages students to go outside of school... They want you to look it up for yourself, find a place or site to do community services. If you do [community service] in school, if you do it for an hour they [count] it as thirty minutes—it’s a way of pushing you to go outside to do community service.

There is also a College Seminar, which consists of an exit project focused on preparing students for college, conducting research, preparing résumés, and reflecting on their educational trajectory. The “Senior Exit Project” occurs in the form of an interview process, but it is geared around college. Students must submit an explanation about the college selections they made, a college-level English paper, a community service paper, and a personal essay.

Students are also encouraged to enroll in the variety of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered by the school (see Figure 12), and they are highly cognizant and appreciative of the extensive support behind them to ensure that they achieve their college and career goals. One student said, “Different high schools have different policies... Some of them don’t even do the Regents...no projects. I wonder how they pass their classes.” Another student observed, “You get to have great teachers, who help you, who make you go to college, who are always motivating you.”

**Figure 12. AP Course Offerings**

<b>Humanities</b>	<b>Math &amp; Science</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Literature</li> <li>• English Language</li> <li>• European History</li> <li>• Spanish Literature</li> <li>• Spanish Language</li> <li>• U.S. History</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• Calculus</li> </ul>

Advisory course offerings have shifted throughout the years, but currently advisory is offered one day a week. It was necessary to reduce the number of advisory hours to allow more time for certain academic subjects. Ideally, an advisory teacher follows a cohort of students throughout her academic career and serves as an advocate for a student. As part of this role, advisors are encouraged to oversee student academic progress by gathering information about grades, attendance, and behavior; provide support whenever needed; and foster communication between the school and home. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the focus of advisory is on socializing, adjusting to high school, learning study skills, and beginning to familiarize students with the college process. In later years, students are taken on college visits and their focus is more on post-secondary college and career success. Teacher lessons for advisory courses are continuously being “created, adapted, and shifted” to fit the needs of the students.

### **Preparing for Graduation and the Regents Exams**

All students in New York are required to participate in the Regents examinations, which serve as the standardized testing system of the state.<sup>71</sup> College-bound students need to obtain high scores across a variety of subjects in order to receive the Regents Diploma. The process is as follows: during freshman year, students only take one test—the Algebra Regents exam. Their sophomore

<sup>71</sup> See <http://www.nysedregents.org/> and Appendix III for more information.



year, students then take three tests—Geometry, Living Environment, and Global History Regents exams. These tests, particularly the Global History exam, which is taken after a two-year course and requires essay writing, are particularly demanding. (See Figure 13 for a sample writing prompt from the June 2015 Global History Regents exam.<sup>72</sup>) Students who need more time or who do not pass math or science-related Regents the first time are enrolled in a third or fourth semester of the course as needed. For example, some students have to retake Algebra or Chemistry. The principal said that it sometimes takes students three semesters to pass the Regents exam in chemistry. These courses are not mere “supports”; instead, students get full credit for taking these classes.

**Figure 13. Sample Writing Prompt from Global History Regents Exam**

**Essay**

*Directions:* Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Use evidence from *at least four* documents in your essay. Support your response with relevant facts, examples, and details. Include additional outside information.

**Historical Context:**

Throughout history, empires such as the **Roman**, the **Ottoman**, and the **British** have faced various problems that led to their decline. The decline of these empires has influenced changes in societies and regions.

**Task:** Using the information from the documents and your knowledge of global history, write an essay in which you

Select **two** empires mentioned in the historical context and for **each**

- Describe problems that led to this empire’s decline
- Discuss how this empire’s decline influenced change in a society and/or a region

Since obtaining a “Regents Diploma” constitutes a large role in graduation and college readiness, the school ensures that students graduate achieving this goal by providing Saturday school (for students who need to review for the exams), summer school (for students who want to prepare for the August Regents exams), and afterschool tutoring (for students who want to review for exams).

In the example in Figure 14, Mr. D.’s focus on deforestation is particularly relevant, since the Regents exam for Global History often has an essay question asking students to select and write about a global issue. Typical Regents exam questions include writing portions that ask students to respond to thematic essay prompts as well as document-based questions.

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.nysedregents.org/globalhistorygeography/615/glhg62015-examw.pdf>



### Figure 14. A Closer Look: Regents Preparation

A small group of ten 11<sup>th</sup> graders who had not passed the Regents exam in Global History are prepping to take the test again. A big challenge for these students has been the notoriously difficult essay requirement, and today's lesson aims to provide students with background knowledge to understand the context of these types of test questions.

On the board, Mr. D.<sup>73</sup> projects three short video clips—one of logging in the Amazon Forest, one of strip mining, and one of a harvester machine—and asks students to discuss with a partner what is happening in the video and what they see.

After students consult with their partners, Mr. D. checks for comprehension by asking, “What is deforestation?” Student pairs respond appropriately, and Mr. D. moves on to pass out a handout with pictures of the environment. The pictures include images of people cutting trees, planting trees, carrying firewood, etc. Students are to look at the pictures and determine if it is a cause, effect, or solution for deforestation. Again they work in pairs and then share out with the whole class. Mr. D. emphasizes how deforestation is an important global issue, just like overpopulation, poverty, and global warming. Students are then to use the information from their discussion about deforestation to write a persuasive essay arguing that this is the *most* important global issue—giving reasons for this position, providing evidence, and suggesting possible solutions to the problem.

#### Other Supports

Beyond college and graduation preparedness, Marble Hill also offers various other academic supports for struggling students as well as career enrichment opportunities. For example, the school hosts a three-week Summer Bridge program, which 40-50% of students attend. This program is geared towards providing support for students with literacy challenges. There is also an afterschool class aimed at SIFE to help them develop academic skills. One-on-one tutoring is offered to all students after school or at Saturday school from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., although some of the afterschool tutoring has been cut due to lack of funding in recent years.

Through a partnership with the New Visions network (see Section X for more information), the school is also able to offer the iMentor program. Freshmen and sophomores are paired with business mentors who speak the same home language as their assigned students. Students email mentors once a week, meet once a month, and after a year, go on fieldtrips with mentors. After the first year, mentors can take students to their workplace and events. The school's plan is for the mentors to follow students all four years. Mentors can also come in to speak about careers on Career Day.

Extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs are plentiful. One student mentioned, “We have a lot of clubs—fashion, dance, health, chess, yoga, Asian club, Hispanic Culture club.” Another student discussed an exchange program in which over spring break, her sister went to China for two weeks, and then Chinese students came to Marble Hill for two weeks.

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<sup>73</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher's actual name.

Social-emotional supports and referral services are also offered at the school. Students receive services such as physical examinations, immunizations, and mental health and vision services through the School-Based Health Center and Center for Community Health and Education (CCHE) located on the first floor of the campus. Community partners, like Changing the Odds, a youth development project offered by the Morris Heights Health Center, also support the needs of Marble Hill students. One staff member commented on the need for these services and the social-emotional challenges faced by some of their students:

Students come from various different countries...[and] there's an adjustment period. I experienced it myself coming here at the age of thirteen. We try to make the students understand that, yes, we understand this is a different way of living for you. And we try to guide them... We are lucky to say we have a school-based clinic in the building with two child psychologists, so we use their services a lot. It's very helpful, because a lot of times our students come here and leave their families behind, whether it is one parent or both of them... So, it's not always just about an adjustment period. It's coming here with half of your family staying back home. That is something that takes a toll on our kids, and a lot of times they don't know how to deal with it... They need the liaison in between them to help them navigate.

The case of a small group of Yemeni boys who arrived in the 2014-15 school year illustrates how Marble Hill provides targeted social-emotional and academic services to support ELLs. These SIFE students were placed into the ESL program strand for newcomers, SIFE, and beginner ELLs, which is geared towards establishing basic communication skills, and gives special attention to SIFE. These students were grouped together so that they could support each other in their primary language. They were also given additional supports, such as small group skill classes (e.g., numeracy or computer and typing classes), book clubs that use engaging texts to support literacy, lunch groups with counselors and teachers, access to the SIFE library (which includes low-level/high-interest books for small group or individual use), and participation in the Explorers Club (which gives students an opportunity to go on weekend fieldtrips to various cultural institutions in New York City), as well as Saturday school. Assistant Principal Dingman described the services for SIFE students:

We did get a SIFE grant...and we are really trying to get programs up and running for these kids. The thing that we do is we have mentoring after school, five kids to one teacher, based on what their [needs] are. So if it is a literacy issue we move those super low-[literacy] kids together with someone who is well-versed in helping them... A lot of times we are expecting them to do Regents level work, but...they really have a gap. So [we are] trying to fill that gap while still trying to keep them afloat in school, working after school and on Saturdays to fill in the gap.

Although there is no “typical” day for a SIFE student, Marble Hill generally provides them with multiple supports. Much like newcomer and beginner ELLs, they are placed in a double period English class to promote literacy and to foster deeper relationships of trust with teachers. Because Marble Hill individualizes programming, however, interventions and programs may

vary by student. Those who need the most support may have a different set of weekly activities than students who are more advanced.

## IX. Parent Involvement

I love the [school], activities, travel, everything they offer... The teachers and the patience they have taken with each one [of my kids]... No school is superior. I am grateful that they gave me a note and worked with me...but I have even more appreciation because they have opened my eyes to how to help [my kids]... My daughter is in a college program now.<sup>74</sup>

–Marble Hill Parent

At Marble Hill, leaders and staff recognize that partnering with parents is a major component in ensuring that students are able to meet high expectations for college and career success. Typically involved in everything from attendance, dress code, and diversity, to college preparation, parents report feeling welcomed as a part of the school. Marble Hill has been able to maintain positive relationships with parents in order to work as a team in helping students succeed.

Because Marble Hill has been identified as a top school in the Bronx in recent years, the parent population is changing to include middle-class, well-educated parents in addition to the many immigrant parents with little formal education or English proficiency. Balancing these dynamics is at times challenging for school staff. They sometimes face difficulties in reaching out to the non-English speaking families, but they overcome this barrier by hiring translators, creating a welcoming environment, and providing support for all families. For example, to address language barriers, they have a staff that speaks Spanish, Bengali, Urdu, and several African languages, and they frequently use the New York City Department of Education’s phone translation services, specifically for some African languages. The school taps their students for help with translation, which has an added advantage of helping parents see how valuable it is to speak more than one language. One staff member commented,

When [parents] come in, they are surprised by the fact that the principal speaks three different dialects and [the assistant principal] speaks different languages too. They are impressed by that, and they feel even more welcome...

The school also hosts events to acknowledge and celebrate diversity. They boast of their “International Dinner,” in which over 150 parents bring food and everyone wears traditional outfits. When asked about how the school handles diversity, one parent expressed that the school respects all countries and treats families with respect.

Furthermore, Marble Hill provides workshops for parents on a variety of topics, including drugs, bullying, immigration, ESL, graduation, college, and financial aid. Representatives from the local police department also come in to talk about gang prevention and safety. In the spirit of

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<sup>74</sup> Parent quotes are translated to English from other languages.

maintaining open communication with parents, the school hosts frequent parent-teacher conferences, sends parent newsletters in preferred languages, and hosts an online grading and homework site. The principal makes it a goal to call five parents a day to check in, as a way of encouraging ongoing trust and engagement in school activities.

In addition to all of the outreach, events, supports, and services, Marble Hill also encourages parents to be involved in the governance of the school. They have a Parent Council and a Parent Association that meets on the last Saturday of each month. Parents report being as involved as they can be. When the school staff members call, they give parents a reason for the meeting, and then parents can decide if they need to come in or help.

One parent explained, “The [staff] here always has an open door for you and they make themselves available at any time to respond and give us the best advice.” One mentioned, “When I least expect it, I am visiting the teachers, the principal, the counselors... I am a personal friend [of the staff],” illustrating the feeling of camaraderie parents have as part of the Marble Hill family.

### **Focus on College and Career**

Specific elements of parent outreach are focused on preparing families for helping their students succeed in college and careers. Marble Hill has a full-time Parent Coordinator who serves as a liaison between the school and the parents. Her role is to answer enrollment questions about the school and to provide workshops for parents on a variety of topics, but also to help explain graduation requirements and to aid in navigating the college system. Parents explained that there are various events that focus on college applications and financial aid. Some also mentioned that there are field trips to universities and Saturday college-prep programs. One staff member reported that the school also ensures that parents are aware of some of the instructional elements of schooling: “[Our role also involves] making parents understand new regulations or new systems, ... even the Common Core [State Standards], and having them understand this in their languages.”

## **X. Partnerships with Outside Organizations**

A variety of external partnerships have contributed to Marble Hill’s ability to grow its vision, build its organizational capacity, and provide extended experiences for its students. Marble Hill, like many schools in New York, works with an external “network partner” that provides a particularly high level of support, in this case, the New Visions network.<sup>75</sup> New Visions helps Marble Hill analyze data about students and provides access to numerous services, including an online grading system, a math program (Silicon Valley Math Initiative), and extended opportunities for ELLs through the iMentor program. The principal explained, “We get a lot of value from New Visions. They provide innovative data and information systems...[and], they provide professional development and wonderful data tools.”

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<sup>75</sup> Schools in New York City have network partners that are contracted by the district to offer them the type of support that schools typically receive from districts. See Appendix III.

## New Visions for Public Schools

New Visions is a Partnership Support Organization (PSO) serving seventy public schools across New York City. The organization's aim is to provide support to educators by providing "the tools and training they need to analyze student performance, diagnose problems and design solutions to improve instruction," and to work with school staff and community organizations to "provide ambitious, rigorous instruction and to design curricula that are relevant to students' lives and aligned to college and job skills" (New Visions, 2015).

Marble Hill's relationship with New Visions has shifted over the years. Since partnering together, New Visions has assigned a School Support Facilitator (SSF) to help with a number of support activities related to curriculum development, observations, instruction, and feedback on sustainable practices. For example, New Visions has helped the school look for extra sources of funding and has trained Marble Hill leaders in conducting observations using the Danielson Framework. The SSF has also served as a "broker of resources." She makes professional learning recommendations on services to secure, such as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP),<sup>76</sup> Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL)<sup>77</sup> training, iMentor, and online grading programs.

In more recent years, however, the focus of the support has shifted more towards the effective use of data. More specifically, New Visions helps the school look at individual student patterns and holds strategic data check-ins to identify students at risk of graduation. The principal explained that the role of New Visions is more focused on:

...understanding the systems that the [Department of Education] has already, understanding the inaccuracies of that system and the inefficiencies of it. One big shift they have made...is looking at how those data systems really shift what we do in schools to make our work that much more effective with the end goal of making sure students get to graduation... They look at things like programming. How are you programming? How are you providing the appropriate classes? Or making sure you are [providing appropriate classes]. Really having systems where that data is accessible...and where you can manipulate it enough to determine what is needed.

With these supports, Marble Hill is able to leverage opportunities to ensure that they efficiently achieve their school goals.

## Other Partners

In addition to the partnership with New Visions, there are many other outside groups Marble Hill contracts with. Some of these are paid partnerships and others are affiliated with New Visions.

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<sup>76</sup> A program designed by Jana Echeverria, MaryEllen Vogt, Deborah Short with Pearson. See <http://siop.pearson.com>.

<sup>77</sup> A framework developed by Aida Walqui at WestEd that undergirds the school's language development framework and helps teachers to reconceptualize approaches to content, language and literacy learning and teaching and supports pedagogy that helps ELL students to become college- and career-ready. See <http://qtel.wested.org/>.

All of these collaborations are geared towards offering opportunities for students to prepare for college and career success. As previously mentioned, College Now offers students the opportunity to enroll in college-level courses and earn college credit at Lehmann College while still in high school, and again, Changing the Odds is a youth development project offered by the Morris Heights Health Center, with the aim of engaging youth in healthy behaviors and helping them learn life skills.

Other partnerships include Dream Yard (focused on drawing, dance, and poetry extracurricular activities), Minds Matter (a college preparatory program for high achieving students), and the South Bronx Action Group. Collectively, these partnerships and services support Marble Hill in achieving its mission of helping students develop the necessary skills to “acquire and apply knowledge.” By selecting these partnerships in a strategic way that is aligned with its vision, Marble Hill is able to maintain a strong focus on its goals while still obtaining support from external partners. Assistant Principal Dingman stated, “We realize that we cannot do this alone. We work with many other organizations to support our ELLs.”

## **XI. Conclusion**

Overall, Marble Hill is a school with a purposeful learning and instructional structure; a commitment to success for all students; a tradition of shared leadership; and numerous supports for teachers, students, and families to ensure academic success. This school has structures and practices that are very intentionally and thoughtfully designed, and it provides a caring, respectful environment for staff, students, and families.

Indeed, these practices have allowed Marble Hill to create a multilingual community that is focused on “international connections, global awareness, and language learning.”<sup>78</sup> By providing a diversity of opportunities for students to learn languages and learn about other cultures, and participate in an engaging inquiry-based, project learning experience, the school is able to develop the academic skills that students need to be successful in college and career. Social-emotional supports (such as advisory, iMentor, referrals, etc.) coupled with caring staff members also foster a safe and nurturing environment where students can be empowered to achieve their goals.

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<sup>78</sup> <http://www.marblehillschool.org/about/AboutUs.html>.

<https://scale.stanford.edu/system/files/beyond-basic-skills-role-performance-assesment-achieving-21st-century-standards-learning.pdf>.

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### XIII. Supplementary Materials

#### A. Student Portfolio Guidelines

<b>STUDENT Portfolio Presentation Guidelines</b>		
Grade/Class: 9B	Subject: Literacy	Teacher:
Project Title: Who are You? Reflecting on My Past		Date:
<p><b><u>NOTEBOOK DISCUSSION:</u></b> <i>You will be expected to bring your notebook for any ONE class of your choice. Be prepared to answer the following questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why is it important to have an organized notebook?</li> <li>2. What class is your notebook from and why did you choose to bring it to this Portfolio Presentation?</li> <li>3. Has this notebook style worked best for you? Why? Be specific or give examples.</li> </ol>		
<p><b><u>Note to Student:</u></b> For each subject area your evaluator will allow approximately 10 minutes.</p>		
<p>I. (1 minute) <b><u>Project Materials:</u></b> <i>Present your written work/materials to the evaluator.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">A. <b><u>Required Materials – 10 points:</u></b></p>		
Project Materials for <b><i>Who are You?</i></b>	<u>Point Value</u>	
Task 1: PowerPoint planning Worksheet (10 Points)		
Task 2: PowerPoint slides using teacher feedback for improvement (20		



points)	
Task 3: Presentation (submit your rubric) (30 points)	
Task 4: Note Taking from student presentation (20 points)	
Task 5: Reflection (10 points)	

Total = 10 pts.

<u>Project Materials for</u> <b><i>Reflecting on My Past</i></b>	<u>Point Value</u>
Task 1: Plot Diagram	
Task 2: First Draft with Written Feedback from the Teacher	
Task 3: Final Copy of the Memoir	
Task 4: Reflection	

Total = 10 pts.

**B. Material Presentation – 10 points:** Your written materials must be organized and neatly presented.

II. (3 minutes) **Project Reflection Essay – 20 points:** Show and present your project reflection essay to your evaluator and be prepared to address and discuss the following points.

**Project 1: Who are You?**

- What was this project about?
- Whose presentations (choose at least 2) were the best? Why? Be specific.
- What are the three most important things you learned in this project?
- Why do you think this project was given?

**Project 2: Reflecting on My Past**

- What specific steps did you take to complete this project?
- How did writing this piece make you feel?
- What was difficult about this project? What was easy?
- If you did this project again, what would you do differently? Why?

III. (5 minutes) **Portfolio Discussion Questions – 30 points:** Your evaluator will ask you the following questions. Prepare answers in advance so that you can speak fluently about them.

**A. Project Clarifying Questions:** If you did not explain the following in your project reflection, please answer...

<u>Questions for <b>Who are You?</b></u>	<u>Questions for</u>
1. What are at least 5 things you must remember when creating a PowerPoint slide presentation?  (Everyone will answer this question)	1.

2. For this project you learned a lot about your classmates. How might this help you in the next few years at Marble Hill?	2.
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<u>Questions for <i>Reflecting on My Past</i></u>	<u>Questions for</u>
<p>1. What are the stages of a story's plot? Please Describe what happens at each stage.</p> <p>Which of these do you think is the most important to a story and why?</p> <p>Which of these were easy for you to write? Which were difficult?</p> <p>(Everyone will answer this question)</p>	1.
<p>2. What type of feedback did you get from your teacher on your drafts?</p> <p>How did this help you improve your work?</p>	2.

**B. Course Content Questions: Be prepared to answer all of the following questions.**

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
<p>1. We spent a lot of time in class creating questions about our readings. Why is this important?</p> <p>What are some types of questions?</p>	1.

<p>What is a Blood Diamond? How is it relevant to the book we are reading, <i>A Long Way Gone</i>?</p>	
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IV. (1 minute) Semester Review – 10 points: *Be ready to discuss the following questions.*

1. How have you grown as a student in this subject?
2. What is one goal that you have for yourself in this subject?
3. What are the steps you will take to reach your goal?

V. Professionalism – 15 points: Make sure that you use appropriate language & demeanor in your presentation. Punctuality is very important. Be ready at least 10 minutes before your assigned time.

Unexcused rescheduling will receive zero points for punctuality.

VI. Fluency– 5 points: Rehearse your presentation. Show that you have confidence in the subject matter.

Use your notes appropriately.

## B. Evaluator Portfolio Guidelines

<b>EVALUATOR Portfolio Presentation Guidelines</b>		
Grade/Class: 9	Subject: Environmental Science	Teacher:
Project Title: Endangered Species Research Paper		Date:
<p><b><u>Note to Evaluator:</u></b> For each project please allow appropriate time, based on the number of projects being presented, approximately 10 minutes each. Score students for each section of the presentation using the Portfolio Evaluation Sheet. Instructions for each section are written in <i>italics</i>.</p>		

I. (1 minute) Project Materials:

A. Required Materials – 10 points: *Review the completeness of the following materials according to their weight out of 10 points:*

9A/B/C	
<u>Project Materials</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Research Notes	3
Rough Draft	1
Final Draft	5
Reflection	1

Total = 10 pts.

B. Material Presentation – 10 points: Written materials are organized and neatly presented.

II. (3 minutes) Project Reflection Essay – 20 points: *Ask students to show you the reflection assignment and present it to you orally. Students should address the following points and may read small parts of their essay.*

8. What was this project about?
9. How did this project help you understand how humans are affecting biodiversity?
10. Did this project help you improve your RESEARCH skills? Explain.
11. Did this project help you improve your WRITING skills? Explain.

III. (5 minutes) Portfolio Discussion Questions – 30 points:

A. Project Clarifying Questions:

*If the student did not explain the following in his/her presentation, please ask...*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1. a) What does endangered mean? b) What endangered animal did you study? What are the causes of endangerment? How are we trying to SAVE this animal?	a) A species that is in immediate threat of becoming extinct b) <b>Some causes of endangerment:</b> habitat loss, illegal hunting, pollution, introduction of non-indigenous species, by catch, overfishing  c) <b>Some conservation efforts:</b> Captive breeding, reintroducing endangered species, protecting habitats, laws, monitoring programs.

<p>2. a) What is the difference between a direct quote and a paraphrase?</p> <p>b) In a research paper, how do you write a direct quote versus a paraphrase?</p> <p>c) Why must all research (direct quotes or paraphrased) be CITED?</p>	<p>2. a) A direct quote is a sentence that is taken directly (word for word) from an information source. A paraphrase is a sentence that is based on information from another source but is put “in your own words.”</p> <p>b) A direct quote must be written within quotation marks. A paraphrase is not written within quotation marks. BOTH a direct quote and a paraphrase must be followed by a citation (the number of the information source as it appears in the Bibliography.)</p> <p>c) Because otherwise it is plagiarism.</p>
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B. Course Content Questions: *Students should be asked to answers as many questions as time allows.*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
<p>1. The documentary <i>The Cove</i> was watched and discussed in class.</p> <p>a) Describe what the film was about.</p> <p>b) Explain, in detail, how the film demonstrates ecological concepts of  <b>-exploitation for personal gain</b>  <b>-threats to biodiversity</b>  <b>-bioaccumulation</b>  <b>-stewardship</b></p> <p>c) Explain Japan’s counterargument in favor of dolphin hunting.</p> <p>d) Share your opinion. Whose side are you on and why?</p>	<p>a) <i>The Cove</i> documents the efforts of a group of activists to expose the slaughter of dolphins in a secluded cove in Taiji, Japan. From September to March, dolphins are routinely herded to shore and either sold to dolphinariums or slaughtered and sold to Japanese consumers (improperly labeled as whale meat).</p> <p>b) <b>Exploitation:</b> Fishermen and dolphinariums benefit from selling dolphins or charging admission for dolphin shows. <b>Biodiversity:</b> So many dolphins are killed in the cove that the population cannot recover. The practice is unsustainable and even though the dolphins being hunted are not endangered now, they could be if the practice continues.  <b>Bioaccumulation:</b> Dolphins are at the top of the marine food chain and therefore large amounts of the heavy metal mercury have accumulated in their bodies. <b>Stewardship</b> is the responsible use and protection of the environment. There are 3 types: <b>Donors, Doers, &amp; Practitioners.</b> The team assembled in the movie consisted of doers and practitioners. The movie may have been funded by donors.</p> <p>c) Counterarguments: Japanese tradition; dolphins are not protected because not considered whales by the International Whaling Commission (even though they are small cetaceans) so Japanese law applies; fishermen are adhering to Japanese laws and catching quota; the method of slaughter is humane (quick and painless)</p>

2. A) What is the difference between global warming and ozone depletion (the hole in the ozone layer)? You **MUST** answer this question by discussing

- **POLLUTANTS**
- **HUMAN ACTIVITIES** that cause each
- **IMPACTS** of each.

Use the diagram to explain each concept.  
(Evaluators use the addendum in folder or copies provided.)

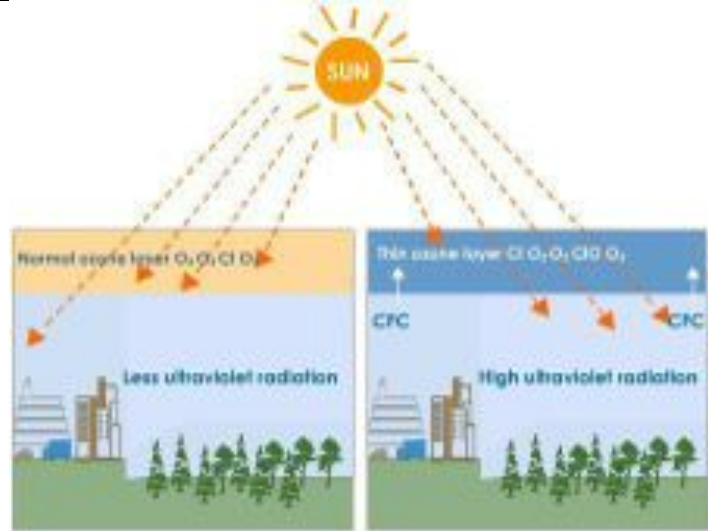


Students who want to draw on the diagram should bring their own copy \*\*\*

**FOR EVALUATORS ONLY. DO NOT SHOW STUDENTS.**



- **Global Warming** is the increase in Earth's average surface temperature.
- It is caused by atmospheric **pollutants** such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous and sulfur oxides, and ozone. These pollutants trap heat in the atmosphere (greenhouse effect).
- **Humans** add excess amounts of these pollutants in the air by burning fossil fuels (cars, factories). Also, deforestation reduces that amount of carbon dioxide that trees take up via photosynthesis (leaving more CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere.
- **Impacts** of global warming include climate change characterized by extreme weather (hurricanes, droughts which also damage crops), ocean acidification, phytoplankton loss, polar ice caps and glaciers melting, sea level rise, and flooding in coastal areas.



**Ozone depletion** is the lessening of ozone gas in the stratosphere (upper layer Earth's atmosphere). Stratospheric ozone prevents most harmful Ultraviolet rays from reaching Earth's surface. Ozone depletion is caused by **pollutants** such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and nitrogen dioxide. CFCs come from products like air conditioners, refrigerators, and aerosol spray. Nitrogen dioxide is a byproduct of combustion so sources are automobiles and industries.

**Impacts:** ozone depletion results in more UV rays reaching Earth, leading to cataracts, skin cancer, and damage to crops and phytoplankton.

IV. (1 minute) Semester Review – 10 points: *Have students discuss the following questions.*

1. How have you grown as a student in this subject?
2. What is one goal that you have for yourself in this subject?
3. What are the steps you will take to reach your goal?

V. Professionalism – 15 points: Student uses appropriate language & demeanor in presentation. Punctuality. Unexcused rescheduling will receive zero points for punctuality.

VI. Fluency– 5 points: Ease and confidence in subject matter, proper use of notes and ease of presentation.



# New World High School

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*Case Study Author: Diana Mercado-Garcia*

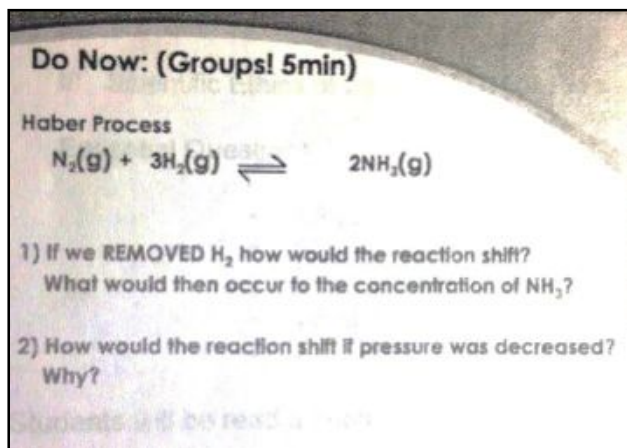
*Site Visitors: Lydia Stack, Steven Weiss*

## I. A Glimpse into New World High School: Science in the Face of Ethics

Inside Mr. W.'s<sup>79</sup> chemistry classroom, twenty-seven 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders enter the class. Students go directly to their assigned tables, pull out their notebooks, and start to work together on a “Do Now” exercise posted on the Smart Board. It is evident that they are familiar with this routine and have encountered it before across their different classrooms. Each group of four contains a student leader who is especially proficient in mathematics and can help others. This is because, unbeknownst to students, their seating assignments were carefully and intentionally selected by Mr. W. to ensure a good working relationship at each table.

As the clock ticks by, student groups wrap up their assignment. Mr. W. reviews the warm up exercise and gives a recap of key concepts for the unit. “What is ‘concentration stress’ versus ‘pressure stress’?” he asks. The aim of today’s lesson is to understand how the Haber process, which removes ammonia from nitrogen and hydrogen, incorporates and uses the Le Chatelier principle. Mr. W. specifically breaks down today’s goals by posing various “essential questions,” geared towards provoking discussion and debate among the students: Why does a system want to shift? How could the design of the Haber Process be used to speed up other similar reactions? Should scientists consider ethics in their research? (See Supplementary Materials A. for the full lesson plan and B. for the student handout.)

**Figure 1. “Do Now” Chemistry Exercise**



Students take turns reading aloud a document on the topic before they delve into another small group activity. The blurb they are reading exposes some of the controversies about the Haber

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<sup>79</sup> Pseudonyms are unrelated to teachers’ actual names.

process—a discovery made by a German chemist, Fritz Haber, that had two important applications in the world: the creation of a synthetic fertilizer that helped to boost food production worldwide and the production of machines that were used to make poisonous chlorine gas. Students’ two-fold task for the day therefore includes learning about LeChatelier’s principle in relation to the Haber process while also considering the ethical impacts of the scientific processes they are learning about.

On the board, academic vocabulary words—such as equilibrium, phase equilibrium, stress, shift, reactants, and products—are posted. Mr. W., who speaks English, Spanish, Arabic, and Bengali, knows that this is helpful for students as they write their responses to the writing exercises. Their language objective for the day is to use LeChatelier’s terms: “stress” and “shift.”

As students continue working in groups, excited chatter breaks out, and Mr. W. hops from group to group asking questions and probing students to reflect on ethical dilemmas.

Mr. W.’s carefully orchestrated lesson on kinetics is an example of the type of interactive, engaging instruction that takes place at New World High School. His seamless integration of ELL literacy with New York State science standards, which require that students understand how LeChatelier’s principle is used to predict the effect of stress on a system at equilibrium, is present throughout. Students are challenged to verbalize an explanation of how stresses affect reactions, using scientific terms, but they are also asked to verbally and textually debate and construct an argument about an ethical dilemma in science: should scientists consider ethics in their research? Are scientists responsible for the impact of their findings? Mr. W. explains the reasoning behind his lesson design:

I have always thought that science should be taught through an inquiry-based model... I think it really works the best with ELLs. Rather than just giving them a formula and giving them notes, I try to make sure I give them a lot of group discussions. Equilibrium...can be a very dry topic in chemistry, and it is very difficult to design experiments for this topic because you need access to professional chemical laboratories to control pressure and you can’t do this in the classroom. So I thought I could do the literacy part of it by giving them a historical example of Fritz Haber... so I think this made the topic more interesting, because it made it more tangible and cross-curricular.

High academic expectations coupled with quality interactions among students and teachers, a strong language focus, and quality curricula are the norm across classrooms at New World High School to ensure that all students graduate college- and career-ready. Throughout this report, we will explore the rigorous and deliberate instruction, geared towards improving academic knowledge and English language proficiency, that is at the core of New World, as well as the various support structures that work together to reinforce and strengthen the goals of the school.

## **II. From Inception: A Focus on Preparing ELLs for College and Careers**

Located in the Bronx borough of New York City, New World High School officially opened its doors in 2005. At the time, New York Unified School District was undergoing small school reform under the leadership of Mayor Michael Bloomberg with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other philanthropic agencies (see Appendix III). Large, comprehensive

high schools with a history of low performance were closed down in favor of creating new, small secondary schools. Principal Fausto Salazar, along with a small team of educators, seized this remarkable opportunity by assembling an innovative plan to establish a school specifically designed for English Language Learners (ELLs). Reflecting back on his experience as an immigrant from Ecuador, Principal Salazar said, “I opened this school so that I could offer everything that I possibly could to these students.” From the school’s inception, the leadership at New World aimed to create a program that would prepare students who were not “naturally English-fluid” for college and career success. As stated in one their pamphlets, the school is “centered around the language acquisition needs of all students in all subjects” to ensure that all students acquire and develop “the skills necessary for success by infusing ESL into all content areas of instruction.”

The academic programming of the school clearly reflects this ambitious vision. Administrators and educators focus on developing engaging and meaningful curriculum and instruction, such as Mr. W.’s lesson described in the introductory vignette, aimed at promoting not just content knowledge and literacy but also English proficiency and critical thinking skills using pedagogically-appropriate approaches for ELLs. New World expends many resources to ensure that this type of instruction takes place across classrooms. Administrators support teachers by providing feedback, offering numerous professional learning opportunities, and encouraging teachers to conduct action research to reflect on and accordingly change their practice.

Support for ELL students at New World is not just academic in nature, however. Recognizing the significant social, emotional, and mental health barriers that ELLs may face while transitioning to a new country and culture, the school integrates social-emotional supports to create a safe, healthy learning environment and help reduce non-academic barriers to college and career success. Community building, through outreach to parents and guardians, also helps to establish lasting ties and a sense of partnership and collaboration between the school and families for helping students achieve their goals. The technology consultant at the school observed the remarkable sense of cooperation and coordination at New World:

One of the things that really works well here is that the staff, at any level, tries to connect with the kids—and, not just with individuals, but also with the families. You can ask any staff member about any kid, and they know what is going on... School is not just instruction, but it is also about being a part of something.

Accordingly, the organization of instruction, structure of student and teacher supports, and collaboration with external partners, parents, and community members, are all cohesively aligned. Elements of instruction and structure reinforce one another to achieve New World’s mission. By constantly focusing on “what works” for students and staff, the schools promotes open dialogue among staff about how to continuously improve instruction, student learning, teacher supports, and the overall school offerings. Constant reevaluation of instruction, frequent teacher collaboration and inter-visitations, and feedback from peers and administrators allow the school to modify and tailor as needed. It is a school that never settles for mediocre results and that consistently seeks to improve the educational experiences of its students.

In this case study, we examine in closer detail the elements, as briefly described above, that have enabled New World High School to achieve such positive outcomes for ELLs. The most salient characteristics of the school’s success involve the outstanding leadership team, a consistent and

highly aligned instructional program, carefully targeted professional development opportunities geared at meeting the needs of teachers, numerous student supports, a shared culture of high expectations, and the ability to leverage external partners to support the school mission.

### Who Are the People of New World High School?

New World High School is home to a flourishing community of individuals. With a student body that represents forty countries and twenty languages, it is a beacon of diversity that boasts extraordinary results for its population of ELLs. Students at the school come from all over the world—including Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, El Salvador, and many other countries—and some students speak three or four languages. Additionally, there is variety in terms of prior levels of schooling. Back in their home countries, students may have attended a private or public school or none at all. Furthermore, students arrive with different proficiency levels in their home languages.

Most students at New World arrive as newcomers with limited English proficiency. Throughout their high school career, however, they make significant progress. According to the School Quality Review, during the 2014-15 school year, for example, 88% of students at New World graduated within four years, as compared to the borough average of 62% (see Figure 2).<sup>80</sup> The review additionally points out that 45% of students graduated college ready as compared to the city average of 22%, and that post-secondary enrollment at New World (59%) is also higher than city (53%) and borough (43%) averages. One external provider noted the outstanding academic growth of the students:

I've been here five years...I have watched the students from their freshmen year when they are in level one to the time they are in chemistry. It's amazing. They come with very limited language skills, English language skills. And...they do so well. I think it's the credit of the training [the teachers] receive... The teachers have become very skilled at using these techniques to help these students to arrive at the level where they can actually take high-level courses, math and science courses...and do well.

The staff is also culturally- and linguistically-diverse. Administrators themselves speak four different languages— Spanish, Arabic, Albanian, and French—and the school hires teachers and staff that are sensitive to the needs of ELL students. The staff's shared cultural experiences with students help them to serve more easily as role models for students. New World is able to recruit its multicultural workforce through collaborations with local colleges, generating a pipeline that has attracted committed teachers to the school. Currently, five staff members at the school completed an internship at the site. The staff carefully reviews applications and résumés of prospective employees. Assistant Principal Mithat Gashi shared that they “take [their] time to thoroughly discuss challenges, expectations, and supports with prospective staff who apply for a position.” The result is a young, multi-ethnic, multicultural staff that is highly committed to the vision of the school.

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<sup>80</sup> [http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School\\_Quality\\_Snapshot\\_2015\\_HS\\_X513.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School_Quality_Snapshot_2015_HS_X513.pdf).

**Figure 2. Demographic and Performance Data (2014-15)**

<i>Demographics</i>		<i>College &amp; Career Readiness</i>				
			School	Borough	City	State
Size	408	4-year Graduation Rate	88%	62%	70%	75%
Asian	14%	4-year ELL Graduation Rate*	53%	31%	33%	31%
African American	9%	College Enrollment Rate	59%	43%	53%	-
Hispanic	66%	College Ready	45%	22%	35%	-
White	8%					
English Language Learner	63%					
Newcomer	23%					
Former ELL	27%					
Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)	19%					
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	95%					
Students with Disabilities	6%					

Source: schools.nyc.gov and data.nysed.gov  
 Notes: 4-year June graduation rates are presented. Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma and exclude those earning either a special education (IEP) diploma or GED. College enrollment rate represents percentage of students who graduated from high school and enrolled in a college or postsecondary program within six months. For information on college ready index, please see: [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov).  
 College readiness rate represents percentage of students who met the City University of New York's standards for avoiding remedial classes.  
 \*4-year ELL Graduation Rate is for 2013-2014 (source: data.nysed.gov)

### III. School Leadership: Visionary, Strategic, and Instructional Leaders

I'd like to mention one thing that is very emblematic of [New World's] success. I think leadership is everything...I don't think you can have an outstanding school without a great *leader*, and in this case you have a great leadership *team*.

–External Provider

Steering the success of New World High School is its three-person leadership team, a group of energetic and passionate individuals who are highly invested in ensuring that all students receive a rigorous academic experience while obtaining English language proficiency. The three administrators—Principal Fausto Salazar, and Assistant Principals Mithat Gashi and Hassan Tmimi—having immigrated from Ecuador, Albania, and Morocco respectively, and frequently draw on their own experiences as learners of English to design a program that specifically meets the needs of its diverse student body. As one example, the principal in describing the social-emotional services at the school said, “I go back to my own experience as an immigrant. I was considered a middle class student at home, but [in school] I was at the bottom. You think that you’ll never get out...so one of the things that we have is a very strong counseling team.” Staff that works with the leadership team describes them as close-knit, “finishing each other’s

sentences,” and aligned with a common vision for the school. Principal Salazar worked closely with his team to build New World from the ground up. The visionary, strategic, and instructional leadership team has played an undeniably important role in the positive outcomes at New World High School, by setting the tone for the entire school, and by being the architects of the existing model and developing the necessary structures, programs, and instruction to ensure ELLs’ college and career readiness.

### **Inspirational and Visionary Leaders: A Promise of Success for All**

Research on school leadership is prolific, and there are endless debates about what constitutes an effective leadership style for a principal. However, some researchers note that “transformational” leaders are highly effective in “stimulat[ing] and empower[ing] followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes” (Bass & Riggio, 2006)—these leaders are accessible, supportive of staff, and communicative. At New World, the entire leadership team exhibits these traits common to inspirational and visionary leaders. Faculty and staff frequently described them as collaborative, cooperative, responsive, strongly attentive to the needs of each individual student, and united around a common vision for the school. According to Assistant Principal Gashi, he and the other administrators frequently engage in “ongoing formal and informal dialogue with teachers on topics that improve the school environment, student learning, and teacher professional growth.”

One external provider mentioned that they had never seen a team work together with such collaboration. As an example of the unity between the administrators, an external provider recounted his experience working with the team on a professional development activity:

It was not required...but, as a group, the three of them observed each teacher together. They *insisted* upon doing every single one of the observations together. What does this represent? First of all, this represents a holistic picture of the staff... They are aligning their own practices around assessment so that there is inter-rater reliability... I have never seen a leadership team spend as much time talking, aligning, reaching consensus. And then, of course, the entire faculty picks up on this.

The principal and assistant principals were also described as placing a personalized focus on each student at the school. According to one external provider, “They don’t try to fit a square peg into a round hole. They look at each student individually.” Support staff indicated that the leadership team members, in addition to regularly meeting with counselors and other staff to obtain an update about the progress of students, also make themselves accessible to students. One staff member explained, “When I tell other people that the assistant principals help students, they can’t believe it. [The assistant principals] will sit down with [students], and they will go over work with them.”

Staff also shared how they felt inspired, valued, and respected by the leadership team. One staff member indicated, “I don’t feel like I’m coming to work every day. It’s a joy. This is my family.” Another staff member mentioned that the principal is always communicating with the school staff to ask, “What do you think about this idea?” A previous teacher at the school also mentioned how New World’s leaders inspired her to improve as an educator:

Mr. Tmimi made me a better administrator. That was hard for me because it didn't come



naturally, but I enjoyed my role as the administrative head of [a] department. I wanted to prove to Tmimi that I could do it. I wanted to get better for him to see that I could do it. I honestly believe that the reason New World is successful is not because of individual student success or because each one of the teachers are necessarily amazing (although that's probably true too!). A big part of New World's success is...[that] the culture of the school motivates teachers to do better than just “good enough.” The leadership and culture of the school holds teachers accountable and motivates teachers to expect more of themselves... [My previous] experience [has] taught me how rare and special it is to work for an organization that has strong leaders. It is very rare and cannot be replicated although they may try.

Beyond being highly collaborative, respectful, communicative, and inspiring, the leadership team also puts forth a clear vision for New World High School that focuses on providing support structures for ELLs and teachers. The assistant principals explained that all staff and faculty must be familiar with what they are doing and how they are doing it with relation to the larger school vision—it is something everyone needs to believe in and know at the school. An external provider observed, “The teachers see the same vision, working toward high performance. They see the vision that the leadership sees. So it’s really a team collaboration.” A staff member agreed, noting, “There is a lot of collaboration among us all to figure out how to service the students.”

### **Strategic Leaders: Plan of Action for Success**

Having an inspirational and visionary leadership team may help inspire and motivate the staff to work towards a shared vision, but a clear-cut strategy for how to achieve these goals is also necessary. At New World, the strategy for accomplishing goals for student outcomes emanates from leadership’s mission. A Fordham Network administrator<sup>81</sup> explained that, “[The school] focus is on learning English...and their methodology has grown out of this.” The structure of the school is built on a pillar of student and teacher supports to ensure that nobody slips through the cracks.

Case study research has suggested that isolated interventions not aligned with the core mission of a school are less likely to result in desired student outcomes than are actions closely related to the objectives of the school (Datnow et al., 2006). At New World, the leadership is acutely aware that high levels of programmatic coherence are necessary to achieve school-wide goals. Decisions spanning scheduling and external resources, for example, are always guided by the mission of the school. When asked about the most important elements for creating a successful program, Principal Salazar advised others to “look at the mission of the school...and do not deviate from it.” He gave an example of a time when he was approached by an organization during his early years as a school principal at New World, and he had to make a difficult choice:

An organization came and said, “We are going to give you this, this, and this. College trips, and tutoring classes.” You name it... I said, “Okay. What do you need from us?” And they said, “I need you to separate the kids. I want the kids that are going to the fields of medicine...” And I said, “What are you really asking for here?” Basically, they wanted

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<sup>81</sup> Schools in New York City have network partners that are contracted by the district to offer them the type of support that schools typically receive from districts. See Appendix III.



the ‘best’ kids. And I said, “I can’t do that... I think these kids are going to do well wherever they go, but I need resources for the other kids... I want what you are offering for *every* kid. I cannot go back and tell some kids that you can have this but others can’t.” That’s not what this school is about.

As careful decision-makers, the leadership team ensures that the activities that take place at New World are always aligned with the core mission of the school. The assistant principals, for example, described their programmatic approach towards “early success.” The school schedule gives students extra instructional time to ensure that students become high achievers early in their academic career. Ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders take two periods of integrated math and English each day to get up to speed. Students are continually assessed and moved out to more advanced work when ready. Principal Salazar noted that this strategy allows the school to save resources for the later years since the intensive support in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade helps to prepare students for more advanced courses, reducing the need for remedial help as students progress. Beyond conserving resources, this strategy also helps the school target academic interventions in more productive ways. Because ELL students face particular challenges in becoming college and career ready, such as overcoming language barriers while being held to the same rigorous standards of learning as English proficient students, time is a valuable resource. Studies have shown that it can take ELLs four to seven years to achieve academic English proficiency (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000), so intensive interventions and increased instructional time early in their high school careers are critical to ensuring that they graduate on time and ready for college and careers.

### Leaders in the Classroom

Research indicates that as instructional leaders of the school, administrators must be knowledgeable about instructional issues and focused on aligning programs and structures at the school to improve instructional practices (Elmore, 2000). The leadership team at New World ensures that they are involved in all matters of instruction. The group helped develop the curriculum and instructional structure for the school from its inception, and frequently they conduct observations and provide instructional feedback to their staff. An external provider told us,

I’ve been in many, many schools, and this is one of the few schools I’ve been to where the principal actually goes to observe classrooms. There are a lot of principals who do not do that and simply delegate the task to the assistant principals... I join them, and we all go in together to see science classes... After the observation, we will spend about half an hour to an hour discussing the ratings and the justification for the ratings.

The leadership team’s expertise plays a large role in their ability to do this. Collectively, the three administrators at New World taught math and social studies for over twenty-five years at the secondary level (and Assistant Principal Gashi at the post-secondary level as well). An instructional consultant explained, “They *were* teachers, and they have gone through so many different systems... You have to respect a person who has been in the classroom. They have taught, and they know how to talk to staff.”

The leaders at New World also pull on their instructional coaches and support staff to develop their staff’s capacity. Assistant Principal Gashi noted, “Instructional specialists from partner

organizations provide targeted support to individual teachers.” Additionally, an “action research” program promotes the emergence of instructional leaders among the school’s teachers. At the beginning of the year, all teachers are required to identify a research question and track progress on this question throughout the course of the year in collaboration with other teachers and administrators, with the end goal of presenting their findings at the conclusion of the academic year. (More details about this professional learning experience is provided in Section V.) Teachers related that administrators were “in tune” with the classroom practices of all teachers, but that there was not a specific leader by department. Instead, they said, “We are all leaders” of instruction. This shared leadership creates among teachers a sense of collaboration and ownership over the instructional practices at school.

## IV. Learning Structures and Programming

The instructional program at New World is thoughtfully designed and distinguished by structures that converge to ensure that all students are exposed to rigorous, college-preparatory content while simultaneously obtaining English language proficiency. Characterized by a “looping” model where teachers follow a cohort of students throughout their high school career, New World also uses specific student grouping and assessment approaches that allow staff to design the best instructional program for each student. Additionally, many of the academic supports are built into the structure of the day and are embedded in the everyday practices of the school. For example, the schedule has been reformatted to allow for added instructional time and electives.

### Instructional Organization: Looping

A fundamental element of New World’s instructional model involves “looping,” an approach that enables teachers to assume a cohort of students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and stay with them until graduation. Although there are some scheduling challenges—for example, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders may need to take different Advanced Placement (AP) courses and therefore may have different teachers—all students generally have the same content teachers all four years. This system allows for an extraordinary sense of consistency and accountability. Since teachers stay with students year after year, they know the students well and take full responsibility for each student’s learning. When discussing “looping,” one teacher shared,

It gives us an opportunity to really get to know our students. We know their strengths and weaknesses. And we know what happened in previous years in terms of curriculum. I know exactly what they didn’t get to. I know exactly what I might have skipped last year.

Another teacher related how the model facilitates classroom management and allows for teachers and students to develop trusting relationships. One teacher stated, “We get to know them, but they also get to know us. They really form a bond with you... If they come here from another country, it can be so overwhelming. But this [looping] is something that is consistent for them.” For ELLs, forming a trusting bond with a teacher can be a source of motivation for participating in classroom discussions. Likewise, teachers are able to develop better lessons that are more aligned with the needs of each student.

## Continuous Evaluation of Student Placement and Monitoring of Learning

New World uses various formal assessments to identify students by English proficiency level and facilitate the allocation of supports. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, all incoming students are assessed across content areas and English proficiency using the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Based on the results of these assessments, students are identified as belonging to five “ESL levels”: (1) newcomers and beginners, (2) low and intermediate, (3) high intermediate and advanced, (4) advanced ready for English, and (5) English Language Arts. Similar levels are used in math, science, and social studies. Students are also initially designated on the basis of taking the LAB-R [Language Assessment Battery Revised]<sup>82</sup> exam. Students are identified this way, based on ESL level, to facilitate the allocation of supports.

However, students may only be identified with an initial English proficiency level temporarily. Teachers are constantly reassessing student placements and administering other forms of assessments throughout the school year to ensure that students are receiving the most rigorous academic program. Cases in which students are reassigned after several months are commonplace. For example, a student with strong English acquisition skills may have improved their language skills sufficiently enough to move to another level within three to four months, or a student with strong math skills may require a change in her schedule halfway through the year. Assistant Principal Gashi noted, “Generally, these are students who have a strong background in their native language... [so] their teachers recommend to move them up.” The decision to move students to a different English proficiency level, however, is a collective process—one that is taken very seriously by a student’s teachers (both current and future), as well as administrators. Principal Salazar told us,

Even after [initial designations], we meet with the teachers to ask, “How is this working out?” and we make adjustments, so we look at multiple things. Every term, we sit together to see which kids can be moved. This [decision is made] not just with the ESL teachers... The entire team has to agree to move a student.

In order to demonstrate the necessity of a placement shift and to design the best academic schedule for a student, teachers and administrators use the most up-to-date information, including classroom observations, student work, writing samples, grades, and formative and summative assessments.

Within a class, it is possible that there will be students with various language abilities. Principal Salazar commented on the diversity of proficiency levels within classrooms: “In each block, we have different levels, but not too far apart. You can’t have in the same class kids that are close to proficient and at the same time kids who have just arrived to this country.” Strategies to support students therefore vary based on ESL level: the more basic the level, the stronger the scaffolding. As students progress through their program, the aim is to remove most (although not all) of the scaffolds. Teachers use a number of formative and summative assessments to monitor student learning. One teacher said, “We test all the time... midterms, final assessments.” Teachers

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<sup>82</sup> Since this interview took place, New York State has replaced the LAB-R exam with the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL), a better-aligned, abbreviated version of the NYSESLAT (see [www.p12.nysed.gov](http://www.p12.nysed.gov)).

additionally use methods like quick writes, exit slips, and follow up questions. One teacher shared, “I also ask students to develop their own ‘how’ or ‘why’ question—and, you can immediately tell whether they are on a superficial level or a deeper level.” This continuous assessment is done with the intent of ensuring that all students are grasping class concepts—teachers typically do not move on until students understand the material. Summative assessments give teachers the opportunity to determine whether student learning has occurred after a set period of time, which is useful for monitoring progress towards proficiency in set standards. Meanwhile, the practice of consistently administering formative assessments is especially relevant for enhancing teaching practices to increase student learning. As ELLs face the demands of learning content and language simultaneously, it is important for their teachers to detect misunderstandings early on to ensure that they can provide the appropriate supports (Alvarez et al., 2014). An English language teacher noted how she uses formative assessments to alter her practice:

I try to do writing activities... I’ll teach a grammar point and then make them use it. From there, I give them 15 minutes to write about it... I use that to see if I need to go back and reteach it. I’ll use it to see if I need to regroup.

Below in Figure 3 is an example, observed by our team, demonstrating how a teacher structured a lesson to first establish student understanding of historical facts and then to provide a unique opportunity for students to showcase their learning of the information, allowing the teacher to formatively assess their progress.

Evident in this example are the numerous ways in which the teacher, Ms. T., scaffolds the content to make sure that all students are comprehending the task at hand. Also notable is the way that she structures the lesson to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of historical facts in varied ways. Before students begin work on their own, Ms. T. reviews historical facts about Mussolini’s regime by asking questions that prompt students to refresh their knowledge of previous lessons. She defines academic words embedded in the texts, and shares graphic organizers with key information. Her objective is to ensure that students understand the historical context before they begin to work on their own, and she is able to gauge their initial level of understanding through conversation. Ms. T. assesses student learning in a deeper way, however, through the actual exercise, which requires students to write a historically accurate letter from the perspective of a fictional citizen. In this way, students have the opportunity to integrate historical facts creatively while forming an opinion that may depart from that of the teacher. This type of assessment is particularly helpful for ELLs, as researchers have suggested that in order to foster a student’s ability to make sense of complex text, “ELLs may be well served by opportunities to explore—and justify—their own ‘textual hypotheses,’ even if their initial interpretations diverge from those of the teacher” (Bunch, Kibler, & Pimentel, 2011).

### **Block Scheduling: Maximizing Time**

Recognizing that credit accumulation is an issue for many ELL students who want to attend college, New World meets the academic needs of its students through its unique instructional arrangement. There is block scheduling, with nine periods a day and almost seven hours of daily instructional time, and academic supports are embedded throughout the instructional day. All 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students are required to take an extra class in English and math. Core subject teachers of English, math and science teach these double periods, and the setup is intended to

### Figure 3. A Brief Look into Global Studies: Ensuring Student Understanding

In a 10<sup>th</sup> grade Global Studies class, we see twenty ELL students sit in small groups of five. Ms. T.<sup>83</sup> begins class by asking students to reflect on their homework and what they accomplished yesterday. One student raises his hand to recap the lesson from the previous day: “We learned about the problems that Italy was going through during the 1920s and 1930s.” On the whiteboard, the lesson objective for the day is written clearly: “How did dictators rise to power in the 1920s and 1930s?” A student reads the goal out loud to the entire class, and then Ms. T. switches modes to explain the purpose of the assignment.

Today, students will write a diary entry from the perspective of Italian citizens living during the time of Mussolini’s regime. The entry must include a historically accurate description of the issues faced by Italian citizens at this time, an explanation of their fictional citizen’s opinion, and a description of the fictional citizen.

During this period of whole-group discussion, Ms. T. offers an example of a diary entry by sharing some model text. She also encourages students to think critically about how they will write their entry before they break out into small group discussion. She asks, “Do I support or oppose Mussolini?” And follows up with, “What does *oppose* mean?” She additionally helps students recall previously learned information by asking them to brainstorm possible challenges faced by Italian citizens during that time period: “What were some of the issues? Go back to your reading if you don’t remember.” She checks for understanding before proceeding, “What did Mussolini want for women?” On a document camera, a graphic organizer is displayed. It contains attributes of dictator Benito Mussolini—the country and political system he represents, the government he replaced, and his ideology. Once students select a fictional citizen to write about, they then have to go back to the readings to look for connections that would be relevant to that citizen. Ms. T. shares underlined text from her reading as an example.

Students open up their notes and readings from prior days. These documents are heavily annotated with information to help them understand the text. As the class transitions to independent or small group work, students are given the choice to work individually or with their peers. Ms. T. circulates around the room reviewing assignments while students begin their work to find evidence to support the fictional citizens’ opinions of Mussolini.

provide additional support via instructional time for all students while also leaving room for electives, such as art or dance. The principal explained the rationale behind this added support:

We are spending a lot of time in credit recovery and a lot of money on credit recovery. So instead of having credit recovery, I give them extra classes now. This will give them better options. Later on, I don’t have to put that much money in credit recovery. I’m taking that money and using it to hire extra teachers. This also gives me less of a need for afterschool tutoring. I’m taking that money and putting it to the extra period. I don’t need that much summer school.

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<sup>83</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

**Figure 4. Sample Student Schedule for 12<sup>th</sup> Grader**

	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
7:55 – 8:40	Advisory	English/ESL	English/ESL	English/ESL	English/ESL
8:42 – 9:27	Advisory	English/ESL	English/ESL	English/ESL	English/ESL
9:29 – 10:14	Economics	Economics	Economics	Economics	Economics
10:16 – 11:01	College Writing	College Writing	College Writing	College Writing	College Writing
11:03 -11:48	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus
11:50 – 12:38	<i>Lunch</i>				
12:40 – 1:25	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus	Pre-Calculus
1:27 – 2:12	Physics	Physics	Physics	Physics	Physics
2:14 – 2:59	PE	Physics Lab	PE	Physics Lab	-

Advisory is also a core element of the schedule, geared at providing support for college and career readiness. Beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, advisory is used to help students develop academic, personal, and social skills for success. Basic skills such as notetaking, social skills, navigating the school, and acclimating to the culture of New World are emphasized in the earlier grades. College counselors regularly visit the classes to inform students about colleges, internships, and other opportunities. In the latter years, the emphasis is on college applications. Advisory typically consists of one forty-five minute period a week, though there is flexibility. Some students take a ninety-minute period while others opt out depending on their needs. The curriculum for advisory used to be based on a program called “American Dream,” but this has evolved over the years and the school has instead developed a program based on experiences with past cohorts.

For struggling students, academic interventions play an important role in ensuring a personalized approach for each child. New World employs the use of a targeted intervention system in which a team of counselors, teachers, and administrators share data on student progress in order to monitor interventions. The system involves parents in the process to help them be aware of strengths and weaknesses of their children. These academic interventions also serve as a way to share with students what is expected of them in order to demonstrate improvement. Working collaboratively, counselors and teachers meet for case conferences during grade level meetings to talk about what is working and what is not working for a student. The aim of these meetings is to figure out how to support the student academically and socially. Recommendations may include referrals to Saturday Academy or even to the Health Clinic.

### **Extended Learning Opportunities**

Outside of the regular school day, New World offers other notable academic supports. PM School is offered in the afternoons for students who need credit recovery or for those who need to review for the Regents exams.<sup>84</sup> One teacher noted, “It is programmed into their schedule.

<sup>84</sup> Regents exams are statewide standardized examinations in core high school subjects in New York State, which must be passed in order to graduate. See <http://www.nysedregents.org/> and Appendix III.

Anybody can come and stay after school. Everyone knows that there is a teacher here [at PM School] or on Saturday to help with anything.” Another teacher suggested that she requires afterschool attendance, saying, “I make it mandatory for my students who are failing to come after school... Almost every single day, I have at least a few kids in my classroom. I think it’s a great resource for students...”

Saturday Academy is another support that is offered to students for an additional boost. Activities on these days include reviewing of concepts for the week, reviewing for classroom exams, making up homework, or practicing for standardized tests (such as the PSAT, SAT, ASVAB, Regents, or AP). Students report that these services are highly useful. One alumnus explained,

Most of the students here use [afterschool or Saturday school] for one reason or another. For example, I used it for trigonometry or sometimes for chemistry...Algebra II—I wanted to step up my game in that class. I wanted to be the best at it, so people offered the afterschool programs to me. It was very helpful.

**Figure 5. Sample Saturday Academy Schedule**

ELA Preparation	9:00 – 12:00
SAT Preparation Living	9:00 – 12:00
US History	9:00 – 12:00
Online/Global History	9:00 – 12:00
Spanish	9:00 – 12:00
Algebra II	9:00 – 12:00
Environment/Earth Science	9:00 – 12:00

## V. Common Instructional Practices and Support for Teachers

New World views language learning as being embedded throughout a student’s experience with content. Students are expected to work on rigorous academic tasks while learning language. Common instructional practices—aiming to ensure that students are always “reading, writing, listening, and speaking”—ensure high levels of consistency across all classrooms. In order to maintain consistent instructional practices, the school provides teachers with a wide range of professional learning opportunities. This section of the case study discusses New World’s instructional model in detail by exploring how the school designs instruction for its student as well as how it supports teachers in order to carry out the instructional vision of the school.

### School-wide Strategies: SIOP, QTEL, Literacy, Engaging Lessons, and Use of Home Language

Across the board, all teachers at New World High School are expected to use a version of Pearson’s Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)<sup>85</sup> instructional method in their classrooms. The SIOP is a framework for organizing instruction consisting of eight elements:

<sup>85</sup> A program designed by Jana Echeverria, Mary Ellen Vogt, Deborah Short with Pearson, see <http://siop.pearson.com>.



(1) lesson preparation, (2) background building, (3) comprehensible input, (4) instructional strategies, (5) interactions, (6) practice and application, (7) lesson delivery, and (8) review and assessment.

One of the aims of the model is to improve instructional practice by encouraging teachers to include a variety of assessments with assorted objectives to test varied skills at differing levels of ability. As part of this effort, it is commonly recommended that all lessons include a content objective and a language objective that are displayed at the start of class to empower students to take ownership of their learning. In almost all of the classrooms we observed, we indeed noticed that teachers adhered to these recommendations. A 10<sup>th</sup> grade Global Studies course, for example, had the following lesson objectives posted prominently in the front of the class:

- Content Objective: Students will be able to analyze different primary resources to see how the government of Russia practiced censorship.
- Language Objective: Students will be able to infer information from photographs, discuss this with a partner, and write about their inferences.

The consistency of using content and language objectives across classrooms facilitates learning for ELL students, who can use the learning goals to “become self-regulated and autonomous learners” able to assess their own levels of understanding and improvement (Alvarez et al., 2014).

Additionally, SIOP suggests that teachers integrate student backgrounds and prior knowledge into the lesson design. A perfect classroom example to illustrate this point is Ms. D.’s<sup>86</sup> lesson about air pollution that we observed during our visit to New World, described below.

### **Figure 6. Brief Look at an Earth Sciences Classroom: Air Pollution**

Ms. D.’s twenty-two 9<sup>th</sup> graders are brainstorming various sources of pollution when we enter the classroom. The front screen shows a slide that reads, “Air Pollution: harmful substance in the air or atmosphere.” Ms. D. reads the definition of “air pollution” aloud and asks students to copy it into their journals. Once this task has been completed, Ms. D. broadcasts a video about air pollution that specifically focuses on how smog, smoke, and fog contribute to the problems of acid rain. As the video clip wraps up, she begins a discussion about air pollution. The slides at the front of class now display images of a volcano, factories, and cars emitting tailpipe smoke. She asks her students, “What do you see?” Several students raise their hands. One calls out “smoke” and another responds “fumes.” After a brief discussion, she then asks students to think about the effect of pollution on people, and as she transitions into this conversation, the slide shows a picture of a person coughing.

Ms. D. passes out a handout with the same images as the PowerPoint presentation along with a close reading that contains a word box on air pollution. The page-long reading contains the following excerpt:

New York City is a place with many \_\_\_\_\_. But with a big population of people, we also have a high population of cars, buses, and trains. We use natural resources to power these methods of \_\_\_\_\_. The problem with using natural resources is

<sup>86</sup> Pseudonym is unrelated to teacher’s actual name.

that some resources cannot be made again. You can only use them one time. These resources are called \_\_\_\_\_.

Students begin working on their handout, some reading aloud with partners and others moving along at their individual pace.

In this classroom example, we are able to see how the teacher uses visuals to help students make sense of the conversation. She also follows up with guiding questions to assess whether students understand the key concepts. Her ability to use students' "pre-knowledge" enables her to craft a lesson that students are likely to follow. Additionally, she brings the discussion from an abstract level to a local level. By placing the conversation about air pollution in the context of New York City, students can more readily draw from their own experiences and observations to make sense of the lesson.

Despite a push for consistency across all classrooms, administrators acknowledge the need for flexibility, and the principal noted, "Different teachers have different strengths... I want to keep that creativity. So we adjusted SIOP. Teachers appreciate that freedom, but there are non-negotiables as well." Some of the non-negotiables include promoting literacy across all subject areas, and engaging students in meaningful lessons through inquiry-based methods, promotion of critical thinking, and incorporation of real-world experiences. Rather than providing "watered-down" curriculum, students are exposed to rigorous curriculum that is aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Curriculum is adjusted and adapted to fit the needs of students to ensure that it is always in line with their ability. Examples of the ways in which teachers implement these practices in their classrooms are plentiful, and we have included another classroom vignette and samples from class observations below. (See the Supplementary Materials section for sample lesson plans).

### **Promoting Literacy**

The CCSS and NGSS require that students develop language and literacy skills across content areas. New World has addressed this aim by focusing on strategies that ensure ELL students comprehend texts across subject areas. By way of illustration, an ELA teacher described how she considers all content classes, observes what vocabulary is necessary, and embeds academic language from other disciplines in her classroom. In the vignette in Figure 7, we take a closer look at the ways in which she integrates language and literacy skills in her lesson.

As illustrated in this example, language and literacy are integrated throughout New World lessons. Ms. F. clearly sets out to meet a variety of CCSS ELA-Literacy standards, such as having students "cite strong and textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly" and encouraging students to "determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). She additionally ties in language standards, by asking students to demonstrate command of standard conventions about capitalization and grammar. This is all carefully scaffolded, however. The teacher is aware that simply exposing her ELL students to challenging text will not result in the intended outcomes. Instead, she helps students understand the novel's text by reviewing academic vocabulary that is necessary for comprehension.



One student raises his hand to share that he thinks the characters have a good relationship. Ms. F. probes further, requesting that he give an example of what he means by “good relationship.” The student replies, “He is always taking care of him.” Students continue brainstorming while working on their writing assignment for the day, which is structured as follows:

**Part 3. Directions:** Based on the DVD and the text, in your own words, write a paragraph describing the relationship between Lennie and George. Make sure you capitalize Proper Nouns.

1. First, describe George.
2. Second, describe Lennie.
3. Third, describe how they treat and react to each other.

Students can productively work on this writing task because earlier in the day, Ms. F. led an exercise on vocabulary and grammar. During a period of “recited spiraled vocabulary,” students had reviewed key terms, such as:

American Dream, child labor, Civilian Conservation Corps, crash, depression, drought, Dust Bowl, depression, economic crisis, economy, Great Depression, immigrant, income, infrastructures, irrigation, migrant, New Deal, powerlessness, ramshackle settlements (Hoovervilles), sewing, sharecropper, speculation, stabilize, stock market, tenant farmer, unemployment, union, and Work Progress Administration.

Additionally, Ms. F. had reviewed the difference between common and proper nouns as well as the rules of capitalizing for each.

Indeed, research suggests that students who have greater mastery of academic registers of language are more readily able to demonstrate their learning and critical thinking within a specific discipline (Schleppegrell, 2005)—a critical element for ELL achievement. One math teacher explained this expectation:

[Students] have to justify their reasoning; they have to write, check for complete sentences, have a protocol when they present [in front of class]. They are not just doing problems—they are writing, justifying.

Similarly, a science teacher indicated that the NGSS standards of “citing evidence for claims and drawing conclusions and inferences” (NGSS Lead States, 2013) are incorporated into his lessons. However, he noted that whenever students were addressing these standards, he also expected them to “use appropriate transition words” and “use scientific terms such as ‘valid’, [and] ‘sample sizes’.”

### Engaging Students in Meaningful Lessons

In an effort to maintain high levels of student interest, teachers at New World work hard to develop a curriculum and deliver instruction that is engaging and connected to students’ lives.

This type of instruction aims to raise thought-provoking questions about real world issues rather than relying on established facts—it encourages students to take control of their own learning, to make connections across content areas, and to explore questions that may not have a definitive answer.

One way in which teachers at New World accomplish this goal is through the integration of essential questions. One ELA teacher shared that her essential questions prompt her students to “tie it all together” and make connections across units and content areas. Examples of the questions include: How do societies protect and violate people’s rights? How are individuals and societies affected by the economy? How does reading fiction and non-fiction text deepen your understanding of US history?

The connection to real-life experiences is something that is also highly relevant to teachers at New World. As part of their curriculum, they want to engage students in activities that connect with students’ lives. For example, the school partners up with the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), a non-profit, Canadian organization that encourages students to become involved in philanthropic projects in their own communities. Currently, they offer a program for 12<sup>th</sup> graders in economics. According to the principal, the goal is to:

...get them to find out, “What are the social needs in their immediate community?” Students break up in teams and identify high need areas in the community. Once they have identified the needs, they research to find out which charities or organizations have been established to address these needs, and narrow it down to one organization that they want to learn more about. All students are involved in teams of five to six, and each team selects one organization... They look at data, conduct interviews, and prepare a presentation.

After the first phase, students progress onto the second portion of the initiative where they share findings with a committee of judges composed of three students and two staff members. The panel selects the finalists, and then these groups go on to the final round. The winning team receives \$5,000 from YPI to spend on the issue that students identified. In this way, students are able to engage in real-world experiences within their community.

### **Use of Home Language**

Our team observed that a school-wide emphasis on promoting English language proficiency created a certain level of uniformity with regard to the use of home language across classrooms. At New World, home language use is more prevalent in the earlier grades; the expectation is that students will eventually transition to more English. Students expressed appreciation for the use of home language, explaining, “Many teachers speak our language when we need to understand something.” But they also said that they were expected to transition out of this as they progressed through English proficiency levels. One teacher shared her thoughts on the importance of promoting English use: “It is important for students to speak English—especially the lower level students.” She did not want students to rely their home languages.

## Professional Learning Opportunities

New World provides an array of targeted professional learning activities aimed at improving classroom practices and encouraging teachers to continuously reflect on their practice. Leaders determine how to allocate professional learning through observations and feedback cycles, and a professional development committee (composed of a teacher from each department) also makes recommendations about needed supports. At the end of each year, all teachers conduct item analyses of summative assessments to identify areas for future growth, which led to the formal adoption of the SIOP model at the school, among other changes. In sum, professional learning at New World is receptive towards the needs of teachers. One external provider stated,

There is a lot of professional activity here, and there is a lot of retention here. Teachers do not run away. One of the reasons that they don't run away is because they are engaged in professional dialogues. There is a sense of camaraderie here and support. They will run away in schools where there is no one to guide them and where they don't grow.

Teachers have fifty minutes of common planning time each day four times a week along with three hours a week of formal opportunities and intermittent daylong events throughout the year. Both assistant principals explained that they expect all of their teachers to think critically about how lessons are designed, and the principal mentioned that the school tries to provide all of the necessary tools to allow teachers to accomplish this goal. An added benefit is that teachers remain aligned to the instructional vision of the school.

New World monitors the implementation of new instructional practices through a variety of informal and formal mechanisms that work in support of each other— rubrics, reflections, inter-visitations, classroom observations, debriefings, and support from instructional specialists at partner organizations all play a role in the effective execution of professional learning. By fostering a culture of openness and collaboration, New World cultivates dedicated teachers who are always looking for ways to grow and improve their practice. Assistant Principal Gashi shared,

We believe that our immediate feedback through observations combined with the lesson study, integrated with classroom inter-visitations and debriefing, as well as examining student work collaboratively has helped teachers design academically rigorous tasks and improve their questioning-discussion techniques.

## Action Research

Since 2008, all teachers at New World receive training on conducting action research. Aligned with the core values of the school, this form of professional learning is intended to promote *ongoing* critical examination of instruction among teachers. They are expected to test their own hypotheses of instructional practices and adjust the delivery of instruction based on the results of their inquiry. Most importantly for teachers of ELLs, inquiry involves not just teaching and learning but the social and environmental elements of the classroom that may impact outcomes for students. In this sense, the process is an opportunity for teachers to learn about how students learn language and content as well as how students experience the classroom environment.

Every year, faculty meets with administrators to review student writing and data on assessments. Together, the administrators and teachers go over how to design a rubric, reflect on student work,



set goals for the year, and establish research questions. Since students loop with teachers every year, it is possible for teachers and administrators to set specific goals for each student. As the year goes on, teachers take notes on their research question, analyze student data, and discuss what they are finding. Based upon these findings, they make changes to their teaching or shift the way they deliver instruction and reflect further on the changes made. The process involves observing and supporting student and teacher growth. Administrators provide feedback to facilitate this process through the use of rubrics and in-person meetings. The end result is a formal presentation at the end of the year. All results from the action research activities are posted on a shared drive accessible to the entire staff and faculty for future use.

To prepare teachers for this work, New World invited consultants from Lehman College to help their staff learn how to develop questions and brainstorm issues to research. In 2008, a Lehman College faculty member provided targeted training for teachers to conduct classroom action research. Since then, Mr. Gashi and Mr. Tmimi have met with individual teachers to provide guidance, support, and training on classroom action research on a yearly basis. Principal Salazar related that there is a protocol that teachers must follow, but that they can decide on “basically any area” in which to conduct their research, including pedagogy, homework and its effects on outcomes, or use of technology.

The school was interested in developing this action research program to formalize its thinking and procedures. The principal indicated that it is a way to “minimize misconceptions and look at actual data.” For example, if there is an impression that students do not want to participate in challenging material, this may just be “an idea circulating among staff” that is not based on data. In an effort to diminish these types of misconceptions, action research actively aims to remove some of the guesswork. Teachers commonly use this work to implement changes in their practice. One instance led to the realization that teachers needed to reduce the amount of information that they provided to students during homework to prevent them from becoming overwhelmed. However, the principal noted, “You don’t compromise rigor. You make adjustments.”

### **Teacher Collaboration: Common Planning and Inter-visitations**

Researchers have long demonstrated the importance of collaboration between teachers of ELLs (Varghese & Jenkins, 2005). When focused on student learning, teacher collaboration can have great impact on the success of implementing instructional strategies across classrooms (He, Prater, & Steed, 2011). Collaboration additionally creates a sense of shared responsibility among the staff, and promotes the idea that everyone is responsible for both the academic and linguistic success of all students (He, Prater, & Steed, 2011).

Recognizing the importance of collaboration time for teachers of ELLs, New World provides plenty of opportunities for teacher collaboration by department and grade level. During common planning time, teachers are expected to examine student work together, share activities with each other, present lessons to the team, and reflect on their instructional practices. The goal is to enable teachers to share their expertise, and integrate disciplinary knowledge with language development to enhance ELLs’ academic performance.

In order to ensure that effective teacher collaboration takes place, the staff carves out common planning time for teachers twice a week on Mondays and Tuesdays. This time is split between



department and grade-level teams. During this collaboration time, teachers develop rubrics, which can vary by grade and English proficiency levels. Many of the rubrics are based on the Regents exams, but they are also developed and modified by teams of teachers who work together. Generally, collaboration time gives teachers the space to reflect on their practice or to create new instructional and evaluative tools as a departmental or grade level team. One teacher reflected on the experience of collaboration and its effect on teacher practice:

We as English teachers work very closely with the staff. We talk about the language... We meet with various teachers by grade level. We also do inter-visitations where we see other subject areas. We also examine student work... [There are] all kinds of interactions between the staff. We talk about language. If we are having trouble with an idea or a concept, we ask, "What kind of vocabulary are you using? How are you structuring your sentences?" Between the English and Social Studies department, we are trying to be more consistent with the language that we use for the essays.

In this sense, the common planning time is used to help teachers grow professionally by encouraging them to reflect on their practice and identify areas of growth to improve student learning. Assistant Principal Gashi shared how it also "promotes trust and ownership in teacher teams." Teachers are given the opportunity to become leaders and gain deeper understanding of their practice.

Inter-visitations are another common part of teacher professional learning at New World. Each teacher at the school conducts classroom observations of other teachers in their content as well as across subjects. To prepare for the visitations, teachers meet before and after the class visits to discuss data and share findings. These meetings are held to ensure that teachers make the most out of the visitations, and their visits are focused on specific growth areas for the classroom. All of these activities allow teachers to ultimately improve their planning, delivery, and assessment of instruction.

The nature of teacher collaboration at New World across subjects and grades prompts teachers to think about instructional alignment and about consistency across classrooms. It sparks innovation and ideas across departments. According to one teacher, "We are not just in one group the whole time. We are not just in our department. We talk a lot with other departments as well." The informal elements of collaboration are also useful. According to one teacher,

We collaborate informally too. [The science teacher] and I talk about physics—"What are you teaching math-wise?"... We are doing a unit about waves, and that was perfect... It helped a lot that [the science teacher] and I were talking.

### **Formal Opportunities**

New World also provides formal opportunities for professional learning. All first year teachers, for example, go to classes to help them understand their students and to learn strategies for working with ELLs—this includes SIOP training and workshops in which all teachers are expected to participate. Additionally, over fifty percent of content area teachers and the principal

have participated in Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL).<sup>88</sup> In previous sections, we have described the elements of SIOP; QTEL, however, incorporates different elements that New World staff integrates into their teaching practices.

Unlike SIOP, which focuses on the gradual development of language by promoting teacher input which is adjusted or simplified to meet students' level, QTEL proposes a pedagogy focused on the simultaneous development of disciplinary ideas, analytical skills, and language characterized by challenging material and high levels of support. QTEL promotes the rigorous development of students' academic skills through participation in deliberately-scaffolded interactions beyond their level of competence. Through deliberately-constructed scaffolding, students are able to elevate their performance to the next level, and as a consequence develop the necessary academic abilities to become increasingly autonomous learners. QTEL teachers are supported to experience, reflect on, and craft these scaffolded invitations to students. Assistant Principal Gashi notes that QTEL strategies also "support language acquisition through content knowledge, which is the norm in [New World]." Based on this type of training, teachers design lesson plans that engage students in deep thinking, in which students are expected to deepen their understanding of content using the four modalities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The implementation of new learning strategies is monitored through classroom visits and ongoing discussions with teachers. Gashi noted, "We look at implementation, and that includes planning for instruction, delivery, and reflection." Following school-wide professional learning events, administrators also meet with departments and individual teachers to discuss concerns about shifts to instructional practices. There is an emphasis on capturing data and following up immediately with verbal communication and feedback. Intervisitations and debriefings may also be used to pay attention to specific instructional approaches. Teachers additionally noted that New World administrators are highly supportive of seeking other resources. One teacher shared, "We are always asked if you want to go someplace [for professional learning]. [The administrators] will have someone cover your class." The impact of these trainings is evident in this school's extraordinarily successful classrooms.

## VI. Support Services to Help Students Thrive

At New World High School, we believe in developing and enhancing the skills and the talents of each student... We at New World tailor the program to accommodate each student's particular needs.

-New World "Best Practices" Pamphlet

At New World High School, all structures are centered on the vision of the school to provide world-class instruction for each individual student that will prepare them for college and career success. The school offers myriad academic and social-emotional support services as well as enrichment activities for their students aimed at achieving this goal. Principal Salazar describes the rationale behind the expansive support structure:

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<sup>88</sup> A framework developed by Aída Walqui at WestEd that undergirds the school's language development framework and helps teachers to reconceptualize approaches to content, language and literacy learning and teaching and supports pedagogy that helps ELL students to become college- and career-ready. See <http://qtel.wested.org/>.

We have worked out a system in which at the center is [student] support. There are so many requirements in this state, and they keep increasing... When you have kids who just came from other countries and they are learning how to put words together, it would be a crime not to have supports in place.

### College and Career Readiness

A major focus for New World is ensuring that students are prepared for success in college and career. Fighting against the notion that ELL credit recovery is too big of a challenge to overcome, the school proudly announces that it is geared towards preparing immigrant students for an academic trajectory, even if students are undocumented. The university counselor stated their expectations clearly:

We are very college focused. We say that from day one—in fact, when we have 8<sup>th</sup> graders coming to visit the school, we say, “We are a college-focused school. If that doesn’t feel right to you, you may want to look at other schools because we will push you and prepare you for university.”

The school offers abundant resources to ensure that this vision of college and career readiness is met. One of the resources New World provides is an SAT preparation course. This service is provided through the school’s partnership with Fordham University, and is specially customized for the needs of New World High School. One network administrator discussed the service, saying, “We have supported the school as an organization through offering Kaplan services for SAT [support]... We met with staff and the administration so that we could tailor the program specifically to the needs of students.”

New World also has a full-time university counselor who helps students with a range of college preparation activities. Her duties include helping students with college application requirements, organizing an advanced writing class for 11<sup>th</sup> graders to work on writing their “common app” essay, letting students know about graduation and college requirements, organizing college visits, assisting students and families with financial aid applications, and generally providing academic counseling for all students. She spends time setting goals with each individual student and regularly visits classes to ensure students are on track to get into college. Students report that there is abundant help with college and that they constantly receive email reminders to submit materials by deadlines. One student expressed that it was helpful to have relationships between professors and students explained to them, and that s/he enjoyed listening to alumni come back to answer questions about college life.

The principal is constantly on the lookout for out-of-school opportunities, such as job shadowing and internships, to help bridge the connection between what students are learning in school and their future goals. Recently the school hosted several scientists who conducted online webinars with students. The principal explained,

It happened that we were studying genetics in the science class, and [the scientist’s] colleague was working in the genetically modified food (GMO) industry. So it was such an interesting presentation. There was time for questions and answers for my students. And [the conversation] shifted from the scientific world into the geopolitical and

economic part of [science]—in Europe things are different than here...and the kids were excited.

Other supports to prepare students for college include peer tutoring, mock Regents, summer school, and college credit courses. In their junior and senior year of high school, some students are allowed to enroll in college-level courses through a partnership with Lehman College and the College Now program at City University of New York (CUNY).

### **Caring for the Whole Child**

In addition to the various academic support and outreach services provided to students through the programs at the school, New World offers various programs and services to bolster non-academic aspects of the students' lives. A team of support staff, which includes an attendance clerk, a school admissions secretary, a community assistant, a data assistant, a technology consultant, and the university counselor, works in collaboration to monitor attendance, academic achievement, and student behavior. These positions exist to ensure that students' academic and social-emotional well-being is attended to. The principal explained, "Besides instruction, there is the social-emotional support. We have students that on the surface may look happy, but they come with so many challenges. And we have to make sure they overcome those." The Community Assistant similarly mentioned that the school works as a team to help all students, even if it means walking with students to help them feel safe on the way to and from the bus or subway. She said, "We get to know new kids by establishing rapport so kids trust us."

Counselors report working closely with the Changing the Odds program at the Morris Heights Health Center to refer students to nurses, social workers, or psychologists. The community assistant notes that they frequently "keep track of the kids and how they are feeling... Are they having any problems?" Furthermore, the university counselor noted, "Counselors...keep an eye on students to see what is going on in school. Some kids have posttraumatic stress and are referred for special counseling." Another staff member added,

We already know which kids are the ones that need help—once we know what group they are in, we focus on that. We talk to them, and we try to get into their heads to see what is going on at home, at school, with grades. We have a tight communication with the staff. So sometimes the kids might not tell us the whole truth, but we already know some of the truth. We manipulate the situation to work for both of our benefits. Once they see that we are very serious with them...there is trust.

### **Outreach for Targeted Student Populations: SIFE, New Arrivals**

Although New World has a relatively low number of Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), the school allocates numerous supports for these students. All teachers at the school receive a file to notify them of the SIFE in their classes. Furthermore, an English as Second Language (ESL) teacher spends three days a week after school working with these students to get them up to speed. This extra class in the afternoons allows students to develop skills that they missed. Peer tutors are also assigned to students for individual assistance. Teachers report that the range in academic proficiency varies across students—some students require heavy levels of supports while others are able to advance more quickly. New arrival students are also given similar support services. When a student is admitted after the start of the

school year, they are required to attend extra classes in the afternoons in order to help them catch up.

### **Enrichment Activities**

Another element of New World's supports for students includes a number of enrichment activities. As indicated by the principal, "A lot of the international schools and a lot of the schools that deal with ESL students say that credit accumulation is a problem." This typically means that extracurricular activities are cut from the program in order to make room for more instructional time. However, the principal, who "strongly believes in music, arts, and sports," worked with his staff to allow for additional instruction as well as for supplemental, enrichment activities. By scheduling these classes during the last period of the day, the school was able to hire full-time music, dance, and art teachers. Related to their ultimate goals as a school, the belief is that these activities help students continue the learning of concepts and language by providing students with the opportunity to become well-rounded in multiple academic and non-academic disciplines.

Extracurricular events at the school include "oral histories" in which individuals share stories of immigrant experiences living in the Bronx, "passport to New World" which is a multi-ethnic celebration of music, dance, and food, as well as a yearly talent show. Several dance clubs also exist to teach students about different cultures through Latin and Middle Eastern dances. The school also holds competitions for mock trial, math challenges, financial workshops, and essay contests. All of these activities are part of the enriching experience that will prepare students for college and careers.

## **VII. School Culture: What Else Can We Do for Students?**

They really take the time to analyze who you are as a student, but they also take the time to know who you are as a human, and what are your experiences, so they can build on and know how to address you as an individual.

—New World Alumnus

New World is characterized by a strong culture of high expectations for all students. Teachers frequently communicate their belief that every individual student is capable of success, and are constantly pushing and encouraging students to believe in their potential. The school is also built on a culture of mutual respect. Students, teachers, and staff reported feeling valued and appreciated by each other. The community assistant explained, "We are all valued here, and we are appreciated here. We are family here." Overall, the school staff has built a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for students. The attendance clerk likened the school to a "second family" for students and faculty. Staff commonly speaks about students as their own. One staff member described, "They are our children inside and outside of school... We want them to see [themselves] doing better than us." The goal is to establish trust, rapport, and a sense of consistency. As the technology consultant stated,

One of the things that really works well here is that the staff, at any level, tries to connect with the kids. Not just with individuals but also with the families. You can ask any staff member about any kid, and they know what is going on.

In this portion of the case study, we take a closer look at how the school has built a demanding but also nurturing culture aimed at understanding the child and their home environment.

### **A Commitment to Success**

The network support provider described the culture at New World that is committed to every single ELL graduating ready to thrive in college and careers:

One of the global reasons I feel that they are so successful is that there were always high expectations for students. A lot of people look at ELLs [with] a deficit model, and the kind of services they provide are remedial. This school knew the students would learn English, keep their mother tongue, and...[students were] expected to graduate high school within a reasonable timeframe...and go on to higher education. When you start with high expectations, there is a different mindset in doing the work.

The principal reiterated this idea by explaining, “Our goal is not a high school diploma. Our goal is preparation for college. Those are two different things.”

As an example of the way in which the school is committed to success for students, one support staff member shared that all students are expected to take “Regents exams until they get a [score of] 80—they pass at 65, but that is not good enough... Why? The colleges consider 80 to be college ready.” Alumni similarly related they were very challenged at the school to do their best. One alumnus said, “They have a lot of expectations for you. History classes were the ones that I had to step up. [The message from the school is] you are going to all learn.” Current students also agreed that the staff and faculty push them to do better and that they never give up on them.

### **Valuing Diversity**

Through talent shows, cultural events, and other extracurricular activities, the school celebrates its diversity. A support staff member shared, “There is a multicultural show that they put on every year. [Students] dance and sing. They dress according to their home [country]. It makes them feel that they are not only here in America, but they still have their roots.” A New World alumnus described,

One of the good qualities of the school is that it is so humanistic in terms of the teachers... You don’t really feel out of place, because it is so multicultural and diverse. You can really find your place here. Everybody comes from different places and identifies with your experiences.

Students also indicated that teachers “accept you as you are and try to help you” and that they “treat you with respect when you make a mistake.”

### **Working with Parents**

Recognizing that the school must work in collaboration with parents and families in order to ensure college and career readiness, New World makes a significant effort to reach out to parents with the goal of involving them in the school experience. The principal noted,



In terms of outside support, it is extensive counseling and outreach. I meet with 90-95% of the families once their kids come to my school... Right [from] the beginning, I tell them, “This school is different than other schools, and this is what we are going to expect.”

One of the main ways in which the school connects with parents is by ensuring positive and consistent communication. By maintaining a welcoming environment for parents from the very first interactions with New World, the staff is able to maintain strong and trusting relationships. For example, the School Admissions Secretary mentioned, “It’s very interesting when we don’t speak the same language yet we are all on the same page. It works. And I think it works because of our rapport, our happiness, and our willingness to help these students.”

Furthermore, the school makes a concerted effort to make phone calls to parents every single day in the language of choice. New World has interpreters in most languages through a service provided by the city’s department of education. Teachers also have one period each Wednesday for parent outreach. One teacher shared, “We call home all the time. The office calls, we call home, we log when we call home... We all know when something is wrong. And we all try to help the students.” As evidence of the incredibly high expectations that New World sets not just for students but also families, one parent recounted her experience with the school’s outreach: “They call or send a letter before an event. Most of the time they call... If my daughter is even a minute late, they call.” The increased attention on attendance and tardiness relates directly back to their mission of rigorous academic instruction—if students are not in school on time every day, then they are missing valuable learning time.

The school also provides a variety of parent education courses, which are geared at preparing families to support their children for college and careers. The network administrator explained that they help to put on workshops for parents and they help with questions about financial aid. They invite parents to two all-day college fairs, with over eighty college representatives in- and out-of-state.

Parent outreach, however, is not without its challenges. Staff members spoke of cultural barriers that needed to be addressed. The network administrator explained some of the parent interactions, saying, “We met with the parents—some parents were a little uncomfortable with having students going out of the borough... There is a cultural context. So we alleviated concerns by answering questions.” A support member of the staff emphasized the importance of constant follow-up: “Parents work a lot, some have more than one job, so it is difficult for them to come to school. So we call them. We follow up if they don’t respond.”

## **VIII. Coherent Partnerships with Outside Organizations**

External providers and outside organizations often serve the purpose of offering support services, such as instructional coaching for teachers, professional learning, leadership coaching, or student services, that a district or school is not capable of providing. Navigating the array of services available to schools and districts, however, can often be a daunting task. Outside organizations may suggest practices that are not aligned with the vision of the school and partnerships can go awry for a variety of reasons.



New World prevents diversions by ensuring that partnerships with external organizations are purposefully and carefully selected to *augment* and *improve* the existing practices at the school. Although New World collaborates with a number of outside organizations, including Fordham University’s Graduate School of Education, College Now, and the NYC Leadership Academy among others, they are able to sustain fruitful partnerships by respecting the work of their partners and by maintaining a sharp focus on their mission. The focus of their partnerships is always on improving the quality of instruction with targeted support for individual teachers. This section reviews how New World’s work with external partners helps to bolster their vision for preparing ELLs for success in college and careers.

### **Fordham University**

Since 2007, New World High School has been working in collaboration with Fordham University through the Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP) (see Appendix III for more details on New York City schools’ “network partnerships”).<sup>89</sup> As explained on the Fordham website, this partnership is “dedicated to applying...research in the service of K-12 teachers, administrators, students, and parents, as well as to education and government agencies to enable all children to achieve and succeed academically.”

According to one of the network administrators, this is a “very different way of a university working with a school. It is not the usual placement of student teachers and/or graduate fellows.” Instead, this partnership is geared towards providing a wide range of support services for the school. The network’s relationship with New World involves academic support and non-academic human resources budgeting. Fordham’s role is extensive—they have provided aid with regard to transportation, building location, space utilization, professional learning, compliance, and data systems training. Essentially, the network helps with whatever is necessary to strengthen the “unique design” of the school.<sup>90</sup>

Most notable is how New World has leveraged this partnership to provide targeted instructional support for teachers and help with curriculum design. One Fordham administrator reflected, “They really had their curriculum, and they really knew what they wanted to do. So I will not and cannot take credit for that...but, to help it be successful? That is when we would come in.” In collaboration with administrators, Fordham conducts conferences with school leadership to define areas of need. As one example, in the early years of the school, when the principal noticed that the science program needed to be refined, Fordham worked closely with leaders and teachers to improve science curriculum and instruction. They helped hire science teachers and placed a retired science teacher to serve as a coach and mentor to the staff as they developed the new science initiative. The coach would observe classrooms, provide feedback, and meet with teachers to infuse better strategies.

In later years, instructional specialists and coaches were expanded to all content areas as needed. Since coaches are not at the school every day, staff at the school provides guidelines to instructional specialists on how to support teachers. The current structure, according to Assistant

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<sup>89</sup> [http://www.fordham.edu/info/21062/the\\_center\\_for\\_educational\\_partnerships](http://www.fordham.edu/info/21062/the_center_for_educational_partnerships).

<sup>90</sup> As of July 2015, the New York City Department of Education restructured Partnership Support Organizations (PSO) and replaced this support through the seven Borough Field Support Centers. New World, however, continues to maintain its relationship with Fordham University.

Principal Gashi, includes “meetings with teachers to review and discuss what the teachers plan to teach, followed by classroom visits, and debriefing to reflect and plan for next steps.” He believes that this structure has been the best way to help teachers improve their practice.

Fordham also offers a variety of other professional development opportunities for teachers, such as QTEL, SIOP, math education and systematic science programs, as well as mentoring services for leaders and staff. In order to take advantage of the support offered by its external partner, New World staff consistently responds with receptivity and follow-through. A Fordham administrator shared, “There is a sense of openness. I see that the teachers acknowledge when we are working as a team...and there is receptivity to us.” Additionally, the Fordham administrator mentioned,

We as an organization have offered a SIOP workshop, and staff is always present at those professional development activities. That is key. You see that the staff leaves the building, comes back, and then we see the results of the implementation... Staff that goes out to train comes back to share.

In other words, the leaders and teachers at the school place value on their partnership, and teachers are routinely expected to take part in coaching and professional learning services and to work together as a team. This practice ensures that staff is on the same page with regard to their training.

### Other Partners

New World High School also works very closely with a number of organizations to provide professional learning for faculty and administrators, and college and career opportunities as well as health services for students. One such organization is the NYC Leadership Academy, which is a nonprofit organization that helps to prepare educators to “lead schools that accelerate student learning” and that increases the “capacity of systems across the country to develop and support” educational leaders.<sup>91</sup> Another partnership that provides professional learning services is Lehman College. New World High School is part of Lehman College’s professional learning network. Meanwhile, the College Now program provides other opportunities for college and career readiness by offering college classes to juniors and seniors on CUNY campus as well as “college prep” programs to coach students through the application process. New World served as a pilot site for online college courses through CUNY’s School of Professional studies, and the school continues to offer courses through this program. Additionally, New World serves as a hub center for Lehman College to train Noyce Scholars—a scholarship funded by the National Science Foundation that supports students in obtaining a Bachelor’s and Master’s in STEM fields. The Changing the Odds program at the Morris Heights Health Center is a school-based health center focused on developing life skills, and also works closely with New World to address the social-emotional needs of their students.

Once New World has partnered with an organization, the school maintains positive relations with external partners by being communicative and remaining open to feedback. Outside organizations report feeling valued and welcomed at the school. One external provider noted, “The administrators are very cooperative and receptive. They are not defensive. They listen and

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<sup>91</sup> <http://www.nycleadershipacademy.org/about/index>.

try it out.” Meanwhile, another provider shared,

It’s an incredibly organized school...there’s an incredible sense of trust among all three [leaders] as well as their teaching staff. That’s why when you suggest something to teachers, they don’t take it as an offense—they look at it as a way to try new things.

Despite the high number of partnerships with outside organizations, New World is able to maintain a level of programmatic coherence that allows them to avoid getting derailed with interventions and services that are not in accordance with their mission. As previously mentioned, the leaders serve as liaisons between the outside organizations and the school to make sure that there is alignment between the services provided by the partners and the needs of the school.

## IX. Conclusion

New World High School is a truly exemplary school that prepares *all* its ELLs to not just succeed but *thrive* in college and careers. The leadership team is deliberate in designing structures and practices to ensure that all activities are aligned with their vision. The school maintains a caring, nurturing, and respectful environment for students, staff, and families while also demanding a great deal of its students. Instructional practices are shared across teachers, and administrators provide numerous supports for their staff to ensure that they are able to perform their best. The focused, diligent work of the school results in great outcomes for their students—not just in terms of college and career, but also in terms of building a community that values diversity and allows students to succeed. As the network administrator stated and is clear to our team as well, “This school could really be a model for people to visit and learn about... The ingredients are here.”

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## XI. Supplementary Materials

### A. 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Chemistry: The Haber Process: Science in the Face of Ethics (Lesson Plan)

New World High School Daily Lesson Plan			
	Teacher: [REDACTED]	Section: 34	Date: Wed 4/22/2015 Pd 3
Unit/Topic:	Unit 7: Kinetics		
NYS Standard	<p>3.4i At equilibrium the rate of the forward reaction equals the rate of the reverse reaction. The measurable quantities of reactants and products remain constant at equilibrium.</p> <p>3.4j LeChatelier's principle can be used to predict the effect of stress (change in pressure, volume, concentration, and temperature) on a system at equilibrium.</p> <p>(3.4v) Describe the effect of stress on equilibrium, using LeChatelier's principle</p> <p>3.4g A catalyst provides an alternate reaction pathway which has a lower activation energy than an uncatalyzed reaction.</p> <p>(3.1xxiii) Entropy is a measure of the randomness or disorder of a system. A system with greater disorder has greater entropy.</p> <p>3.1mm Systems in nature tend to undergo changes toward lower energy and higher entropy.</p> <p>4.1c Energy released or absorbed by a chemical reaction can be represented by a potential energy diagram.</p> <p>(4.1ii) Read and interpret potential energy diagrams: PE of reactants and products, activation energy (with or without a catalyst), heat of reaction</p> <p>4.1d Energy released or absorbed by a chemical reaction (heat of reaction) is equal to the difference between the potential energy of the products and the potential energy of the reactants.</p>		
Aim:	AIM: How did the Haber Process use Le Chatelier's Principle?		
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SWBAT: Review Concentration stress to system using Le Chatelier</li> <li>2. SWBAT: Review pressure stress to system using Le Chatelier</li> <li>3. SWBAT: Explain the benefits of Haber Process</li> <li>4. SWBAT: Explain the detriments/impact of the Haber Process</li> </ol>		
Do Now:	<p>Students will review how to predict shifts due to concentration stress and pressure stress</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> <p><b>Do Now: (Groups! 5min)</b></p> <p>Haber Process</p> <math display="block">\text{N}_2(\text{g}) + 3\text{H}_2(\text{g}) \rightleftharpoons 2\text{NH}_3(\text{g})</math> <p>1) If we REMOVED <math>\text{H}_2</math>, how would the reaction shift? What would then occur to the concentration of <math>\text{NH}_3</math>?</p> <p>2) How would the reaction shift if pressure was decreased? Why?</p> </div>		
Direct Instruction:	<p>Teacher will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review DO NOW</li> <li>b. Review Concentration stress</li> <li>c. Review Pressure stress</li> </ol>		

d. Read/select students to read Haber Process "Ethics" activity

e. Essential Questions

- i. What is equilibrium?
- ii. What is Le Chatelier's principle
- iii. What is Le Chatelier's principle?
- iv. What constitutes a stress?
- v. Why does a system want to shift?

Guided Practice

(SEE ATTACHED WORKSHEET)

Students will be asked to work on a text based activity. The article is an adapted version of a scientific/historic articles written about the Haber Process. Students will be asked to answer questions on two components:

II. Le Chatelier's Principle behind Haber Process

Essential Questions

- How does increasing the concentration affect the system?
- How does decreasing the concentration of a substance affect the reaction?
- How do shifts in reactions affect products/reactants?
- Why is a "see saw" used as an analogy for Le Chatelier's principle?
- How does pressure shift a reaction?
- Why does high pressure favor fewer moles of gas and vice versa in terms of KMT/particle behavior?
- How could the design of the Haber Process be used to speed up other similar reactions?

III. Scientific Ethics of Impact of Haber Process

Essential Questions

- What are ethics?
- Should scientists consider ethics in their research?
- What benefits did the Haber Process provide?
- What is the negative impact of the Haber Process?
- Are scientists responsible for the impact of their findings? Why?

Students will be read a quote and asked to discuss if Haber's Nobel prize should be revoked.

Exit Slip (Reflection)

Exit Slip: Impress Ms.  
(Group Discussion: 5min)

"Some people over time wanted to revoke the Nobel Prize from Haber. However, they did not offer finding out that in the context of all the isomers, Haber's methods were used by the Nazis to create the gas chambers used to murder millions in the Holocaust - including his relatives.

Discuss in groups if you believe Haber's Nobel prize should be revoked.



Assessment:	Students will be assessed on ability to verbally explain effect of catalyst and visually draw this into a diagram.  See attached rubric for assessment of ability to solve in class molarity problems.	
Homework	None	
Vocabulary	New > Equilibrium > Phase Equilibrium > Le Chatelier's Principle > Stress > Shift	Spiraled ✓ Reactants ✓ Products

Classroom Seating Chart (Constructed Using Math and Science Proficiency)

Group Leaders in Red are especially proficient in mathematics (80+ in Algebra 1 and Passed Alg2/Trig)

Computers and Lab			
			(S) Smart Board (Chalk Board)
			WHITEBOARD

**BOLD STUDENTS:** Stronger MATH proficiency allowing them to be more proficient group leaders to help others. Grouping also based on behavior and work- rapport.



Assessment:	Students will be assessed on ability to verbally explain effect of catalyst and visually draw this into a diagram.  See attached rubric for assessment of ability to solve in class molarity problems.	
Homework:	None	
Vocabulary	<b>New</b> ➤ Equilibrium ➤ Phase Equilibrium ➤ Le Chatelier's Principle ➤ Stress ➤ Shift	<b>Spiraled</b> ✓ Reactants ✓ Products

Classroom Seating Chart (Constructed Using Math and Science Proficiency)

Group Leaders in Red are especially proficient in mathematics (80+ in Algebra I and Passed Alg2/Trig)

<b>Computers and Lab</b>			
			(S) <b>Smart Board</b>
			(C) (Chalk Board)
			<b>WHITEBOARD</b>

**BOLD STUDENTS:** Stronger MATH proficiency allowing them to be more proficient group leaders to help others. Grouping also based on behavior and work- rapport.

### Rubric to Assess Student Responses/Solutions

Level	Indicators
Proficient	Substantial ability to verbalize explanations of how stresses to system affect/shift reaction. Accurate and fully outlined solutions designating correct usage of principles of equilibrium. Higher order comprehension of passage text, higher order inferences on figurative language etc. Strong argumentative reasoning in written responses. Able to verbally and textually debate on ethics as well as present to class.
Intermediate	Good ability to verbalize explanations of how stresses to system affect/shift reaction. Accurate solutions designating correct usage of principles of equilibrium. Strong comprehension of passage text, basic understanding of inferences on figurative language etc. Logical argumentative reasoning in written responses. Good proficiency in using vocabulary albeit with difficulty in pronunciation. Ability to write in group/verbally participate in debate.
Beginner	No ability to verbalize explanation of Le Chatelier's principle. Inaccurate solutions of effects of stress. Lower proficient understanding of text and struggles to comprehend the inferences present in text. Needs translation of vocabulary to gain understanding. Ability to verbally participate in debate and conceptualize ethical issues.

#### Language Objectives

SWBAT: Use Le Chatelier's terms such as stress/shift

SWBAT: Promote ESL literacy in preparation for SAT inferences/ELA Regents

## B. 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Chemistry: The Haber Process: Science in the Face of Ethics (Student Handout)

### Haber Process: Science in the face of Ethics

#### Background:

Humankind is largely fed by food grown with synthetic chemical fertilizer. Because synthetic fertilizer requires a plentiful supply of nitrogen, inventing a process to fix it in ammonia was daunting. Attempts were made for over 100 years. Then in 1909 Fritz Haber, a German chemist, solved the problem in principal by removing the product ammonia immediately after synthesis and increasing the pressure in the machine chamber. In 1910, Carl Bosch, pioneering new engineering methods, to use the process for other types of reactions. Known as the Haber-Bosch Process, it is now responsible for growing about half of the world's food. It was one of the greatest inventions of the 20th century. **Without it, 30-40% of the world's population would not be alive.**

: Haber Process



Essentially, the Haber Process involves using atmospheric Nitrogen and \_\_\_\_\_ to produce Ammonia.

This reaction is reversible so the scientists used Le Chatelier's principle.

1) Haber removed  $\text{NH}_3$  as soon as it is produced. Explain which direction this would shift the reaction and why.

2) Another way the Haber Process sped up the forward reaction was to increase the pressure. Explain which direction this would shift the reaction and why in terms of ENTROPY.

### The Controversy:

There is no debate about the good Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch did for humanity by inventing the method used to make synthetic fertilizer. It was what they did afterward, during World War I, that is controversial. During war time, there was a huge need for growing large amounts of food to nourish the millions of troops fighting overseas. During this time, Fritz Haber became the director of the Institute for Physical Chemistry.

Fritz's Haber process breakthrough led to machines that were then also used to make large amounts of poisonous chlorine gas. He actively participated in its development and was an advocate for its use, even though poisonous gas was banned by the Hague Conventions of 1864 and 1907. His wife, also a scientist, committed suicide ten days after the first use of chemical warfare. Some believe she did so as a protest. Fritz Haber was the proud recipient of the Iron Cross as an award for his work. Gas warfare killed over 1.3 million people in World War I.

Carl Bosch, working for BASF, a giant German company, converted the ammonia production he helped engineer into munitions production for World War I. Ammonia is the key to fixing nitrogen, the chemical necessary to make either fertilizer or explosives. Both Haber and Bosch were richly rewarded, within Germany with honors and money, and outside of Germany - both won the Nobel Prize. But both were directly responsible for the deaths of millions of people in WWI.

Read the following letter and then answer the question that follow

### "War Criminals"

There is no question that Haber and Bosch were geniuses. But to be remembered as a good human being it takes more than brilliance. It also requires using one's intelligence to determine how to exercise one's brilliance. A key component in doing so is having a conscience. To have a conscience requires considering how one's actions affect other human beings. Neither Haber nor Bosch respected the lives of other human beings. Each turned away from the good science can produce and headed down the path of evil, using science to kill people with chlorine gas or bombs. The legacy a society applies to a person is an underutilized moral tool. Choosing how society remembers a person is important in that it instructs others on the importance of behavior. In the case of Haber and Bosch, it instructs society on the potential destructive power of science, if science is performed without ethics. Haber and Bosch chose to use science to kill people, activities that should not be ignored as if they never happened. Society holds science up as a tool that is good for humanity. But without ethics science has just as much power to harm humanity. Bill Foegen, who made the key insight that led to the eradication of smallpox, said, "What is it that is better than science? Better than science is science with heart, science with ethics, science with equity, science with justice." Haber and Bosch ignored all of these, so society's memory of them should be as killers, as war criminals.

3) Explain the statement "society holds science up as a tool that is good for humanity". Do you agree or disagree with this quote and why.

### Group Exercise

: Haber Process



- 1) Using the concentration laws, provide one change to concentration to shift the reaction forward.
- 2) Using the concentration laws, provide a change to concentration to shift the reaction left (reverse).
- 3) What change in pressure could cause the reaction to shift in the REVERSE direction.  
Why would Haber be **furious** with this technique?

### Homework

#### "Patriots"

I argue that we should conclude Haber and Bosch are patriots, rather than claim the authority to draw an arbitrary moral line separating the "good" scientists from the "bad." Many great scientists did things we would rather they hadn't done. Werner Heisenberg, one of the greatest physicists of all time, led the German effort to build a nuclear bomb during World War II. Many American physicists worked on the Manhattan Project, which led to weapons that killed thousands of Japanese civilians. We might like to imagine that science is somehow above, or separate from, politics and the events of the world, but it is not. Scientists are often patriots who wish to serve their country, an impulse we generally view with sympathy today. Haber himself was known to say that "A scientist belongs to his country in times of war and to all mankind in times of peace." He also justified gas warfare by claiming that it would break the stalemate in the trenches, and save more lives than it destroyed. We may view these statements today as naive at best, and quite possibly mercenary or disingenuous, but it is also hard for us to see the world as a German living at the time would have. Rather than banish these scientists for their less savory actions, we should let them serve as a powerful reminder that science is value-neutral, and it is we humans who use it for good or ill.

Explain the statement "A scientist belongs to his country in times of war and to all mankind in times of peace". Do you agree/disagree with this quote and explain why.

C. ESL: The Effects of the Great Depression on Individuals and the American Dream

New World High School Daily Lesson Plan			
	Teacher: [REDACTED]	Section: ESL Class 34 (periods 5 and 7) ESL Class 32 (periods 8-9)	Date: April 22, 2015
Unit/Topic:	The Effects of the Great Depression on Individuals and the American Dream		
Essential Questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does loneliness affect humans?</li> <li>• How has the idea of the American Dream changed since the Great Depression?</li> <li>• How does the balance of social and economic power affect our society today?</li> </ul>		
Course Justification and Goals:	<p>Research proves that English Language Learners benefit from multiple exposures to deepen their understanding of a topic. Due to the reading and writing demands found on both the Social Studies and English Language Arts curriculum, our school has found utility in aligning the Social Studies and English Language Arts curriculum.</p> <p>In 11<sup>th</sup> grade, students study American History, so our curriculum is aligned to the content of American History. My goal is to deepen students' understanding of American History through primary source documents and literature. In examining the American History curriculum, I noticed a focus on mainstream society, while voices of women, minorities, and immigrants were often excluded. <b><u>This course is developed to enforce students' understanding of American History by exploring the issue of social justice through the histories and stories often neglected by the mainstream.</u></b></p> <p><u>Units:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Indians             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Colonization, Haudenosuantee people</li> <li>- Trail of Tears</li> <li>- <u>The Pearl</u></li> <li>- Modern Day: mascots, broken treaties</li> </ul> </li> <li>• African Americans             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Slavery</li> <li>- <u>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</u>, by Mark Twain</li> <li>- Civil Rights Movement</li> <li>- Police brutality, Black Lives Matter</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Economic Justice and the American Dream (The Great Depression)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Children of the Great Depression</u></li> <li>- <u>Of Mice and Men</u></li> <li>- Mechanization of food industry</li> <li>- Food deserts</li> <li>- Migrant workers and rights</li> <li>- School food choices</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What does it mean to be an American today? (a look at narratives and texts that analyze struggles and victories of our diverse population)</li> </ul>		
Unit Justification:	Through this unit, I hope to examine the effects of the Great Depression on individuals, as well as the American Dream. By analyzing a non-fiction and fiction text, students will be able to hear multiple perspectives and discuss the reality of the American Dream today.		



<p><b>Common Core Standards</b></p>	<p><b>Speaking and Listening: <i>Comprehension and Collaboration</i></b>          CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1          Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1B          Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.</p> <p><b>Reading Informational Text: <i>Key Ideas and Details</i></b>          CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2          Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.</p>
<p><b>Aim:</b></p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>How did the Great Depression influence American society, especially children?</p> <p><b>Content Objective:</b>          Read one chapter from the text <i>Children of the Great Depression</i> with a group. Identify the key details and main idea from this text. Analyze the chapter in the context of our essential questions.</p> <p><b>Language Objective:</b>          Use respectful, academic language to analyze the text.  <i>"I think that this is an important detail because ___."</i></p>
<p><b>Do Now:</b></p> <p><b>(10)</b></p>	<p><b>Directions:</b>          Copy our new unit title and essential questions in your notebook on a new page. Then, use your knowledge of U.S. History and personal experience to write a reflection, below.</p> <p><b>Unit Title:</b>          The Effects of the Great Depression on Individuals and the American Dream</p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does loneliness affect humans?</li> <li>• How has the idea of the American Dream changed since the Great Depression?</li> <li>• How does the balance of social and economic power affect our society today?</li> </ul> <p><b>Reflection:</b>          Now, choose one question that interests you. Use your knowledge of U.S. History and personal experience to write a reflection to answer the questions. Reflections should be at least 5 sentences.</p> <p>Students will share their reflections with a partner, and then volunteer to share their responses with the whole class. Teacher will draw a connection between the Civil Rights Movement and the importance of economics, specifically highlighting the March on Washington for jobs and Freedom.</p>



<p>Mini-lesson: (20)</p>	<p>Project Introduction: Teacher will say: <i>We will work in groups to read, summarize, and analyze one chapter from the text <u>Children of the Great Depression</u>. Tomorrow, each group will use what they learned from each chapter to create a poster summary. Groups will teach the class using the poster.</i></p> <p><i>In your group, first read and summarize the text to answer the 5 Ws. Everyone will have a job:</i></p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reader,</li> <li>- Summarizer,</li> <li>- Recorder,</li> <li>- Questioner,</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>The reader will read the text so that everyone in the group can hear it. The summarizer will stop the reader when the text identifies one of the 5 Ws (who, what, where, when, why). The recorder will take notes about the 5 Ws. The questioner, if you have 4 people in your group, will stop after each page to ask a comprehension or analytical question. By the end of your chapter, you should have completed the 5 W chart. Let's practice it together.</i></p> <p>Class will practice reading the first paragraph in the chapter. The teacher will choose one student to be the reader and one to be the recorder at the ELMO. The teacher will act as the summarizer.</p> <p><i>After you've read the text to identify the 5 Ws, you must work to analyze the text. You will review the text together and identify 2 key details from the text and one key image. Record this quote, or describe the image, and then analyze why these quotes are important. Using this information, work with your group to determine the main idea of the text. Let's practice it together.</i></p> <p>Teacher will again model completing this graphic organizer, as well as the method of forming a main idea through discussion.</p> <p><i>Finally, you must connect this chapter to an essential question from this unit. Think about what this chapter teaches you, and think about how that connects to any of the three essential questions.</i></p> <p>Teacher will model this through a think-aloud. <i>I noticed that the boy says that his low point is observing his father crying. That connects to me because I can remember when I saw my father crying. Now, he was crying because my grandmother had died, but I was just a child, and I felt helpless; I really didn't know how to comfort my dad. This boy saw his father crying, and I think that connects to the third question about economic power. I'm sure the father felt like he had lost his economic power- his ability to support his family, and that must be a terrible feeling. It could also connect to the second question about the American Dream... maybe the father felt like his dream was slipping away. Watching your family succeed is definitely a huge part of the American Dream, so I think that I'm going to write a reflection about the second question, and how the loss of economic power would certainly influence a person's motivation or feelings of capability to achieve the American Dream.</i></p>
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	<p>Teacher will then redirect students towards the packet with the project steps and graphic organizers.</p> <p><i>So, you will work with your table to complete your assigned reading, similarly to how we just did this short section together. Follow these steps, and check them off as you complete them. If you would like to take notes in your notebook, you certainly may, however it is not mandatory for this assignment. The recorder is the key note-taker here. Do you have any questions?</i></p>
<b>Group Work: (55)</b>	<p>Teacher will answer all questions and then divide students into groups, assign chapters, and students will begin their work, following the steps as outlined above.</p> <p>Teacher will monitor group work to ensure that they are on task and correctly analyzing the text. Teacher will also take notes about students' speaking abilities, targeting those students who are still struggling to master English according to the NYSESLAT.</p>
<b>Closing (5)</b>	<p>Teacher will thank students for their hard work and focus. Then, teacher will ask students to assess where they are in their project and whether they will be ready to make their poster tomorrow. Students will then complete an exit slip listing one helpful behavior that they did today to aid in their group's success and one way they could improve for tomorrow.</p>
<b>Assessment:</b>	<p>Formal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graphic organizer completion</li> </ul> <p>Informal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes about participation while assisting groups</li> </ul>
<b>Differentiation</b>	<p>Students will have choice as to their role. Students at a higher proficiency level may enjoy the challenge of "questioner" while students still struggling to master English may prefer the role of "recorder."</p>
<b>Reflection:</b>	

# Conclusion

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The case studies presented in this report offer new insights as to the structural elements that are implemented at these schools to support successful development of English proficiency and high levels of academic achievement among English Language Learners (ELLs). While the six schools differ in many ways—some emphasize the importance of bilingualism while others focus on the importance of preparing students to participate in a global society—they all, either knowingly or unknowingly, conform to a three-part process meant to ensure ELLs benefit from quality programs and services. In its 1981 ruling in *Castañeda vs. Pickard*, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals established that schools must provide students who are developing English proficiency with an educational program that (1) is based on sound educational theory, (2) is implemented effectively with sufficient resources and personnel, and (3) is regularly evaluated in terms of its effectiveness. All six of these schools implement a school model that is grounded in sound educational theory intended to prepare ELLs for academic success—or, given the parlance associated with standards of today—prepare students for college and careers. The six schools support their programs with a robust set of resources and highly skilled and supported professionals devoted to supporting ELLs’ academic success. Likewise, all six schools employ mechanisms (both formal and informal) that enable educators to understand students’ academic and social-emotional needs so that they may adjust programs and services accordingly.

While many schools across the country claim that they adhere to what has come to be known as the Castañeda standard, this in and of itself does not yield success comparable to what we see in these schools. What should not go unnoticed about these schools, what is wholly unique, is that each was designed with ELLs heavily in mind. From their inception, the founders of these schools began with a clear vision of and singular focus on improving the educational outcomes of ELLs, building into each school a “can do” attitude accompanied by the establishment of structures and practices that, when refined over time, have yielded extraordinary results. The practices employed in these schools are not only essential for ELLs’ success but, as the performance data show, they also benefit *all* students. By attending to ELLs, these schools actually create an environment such that all students can excel, especially those who are low-income and otherwise traditionally outside of the sphere of academic success. These schools serve as models for the rest of the nation with regard to the high educational outcomes that are possible for students who have traditionally been underserved in public school settings. The challenge for educators who seek to emulate these schools is to completely re-envision the way in which programs of study are structured and supported. ELLs must be at the center of such improvement efforts. Schools must be designed or re-designed with consideration for *their* needs. Too frequently schools force ELLs to conform to an existing instructional model, built with a different population in mind.

Although the schools profiled in this study are small (each has fewer than 600 total students enrolled), readers of this report should not discount the relevance of our findings for larger, comprehensive high schools. For example, these case studies have highlighted a number of successful practices that most of these schools share and which, with careful planning and sufficient resources, can yield similar results in larger school contexts. These schools

- Value cultural and linguistic diversity and leverage students’ cultural and linguistic capital for learning;
- Deliberately hire and support staff with relevant backgrounds and experiences and who are committed to ongoing development and growth and share leadership’s vision;
- Develop strong and unified language development frameworks that integrate content, analytical practices, literacy skills development, and language learning;
- Benefit from the support of their districts and states, which creates the conditions that allow for tremendous innovation; and
- Partner with the community and with local colleges and universities to offer students a diverse array of academic and career-advancing supports.

The establishment of these and numerous other practices seen in these case studies is possible in *every* school, given a clear and focused vision and mission. The schools serve as exemplars of what can be achieved when learning environments take into account students’ collective and individual needs and respond with practices and structures tailored to ensure students’ success. What these schools demonstrate is that quality preparation for college and careers is not a privilege that is bestowed upon those fortunate enough to live in affluent communities and thriving economies. Rather, it is a privilege that is available to *all* students when school communities are fully engaged and fully committed to enacting a clear, coherent, and equitable vision.

# Appendix I: Methodology and Data Sources

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## School Selection: Models with Effective Outcomes

This study sought to identify a small set of schools in the US with highly-effective outcomes for ELLs and former ELLs. Upon identification of these schools, our research questions were:

- What are important school practices that combine English language development instruction with discipline-specific language demands?
- How can school leaders design their learning environments so that time spent in and out of the classroom has positive and *accelerated* outcomes for ELLs?

Our team took multiple approaches in culling potential schools for this study. This included a systematic data analysis of college and career outcomes from key states and school districts in search of potential high schools with effective outcomes for ELLs, as well as outreach and interviews with educators who work closely with ELLs, and public nominations. We used a three-step process to identify schools:

1. Our research team identified the five school districts and ten states with the highest ELL enrollment, and the ten states with the highest growth rates of ELLs.<sup>92</sup>
  - a. For each of these districts and states, we examined all public high schools based on the following set of quantitative measures: ELL graduation rate, ELL college- and career-readiness (CCR) success indicators (i.e., college-ready graduation, standardized test results, state-defined CCR indicators), ELL access to college prep curriculum (i.e., Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment for college credit), ELL postsecondary outcomes, % ELLs, total enrollment, student race/ethnicity summaries, and free and reduced lunch percentage.
  - b. For each state and/or district, our research team then identified a subset of schools that had demonstrated stronger than average academic outcomes when compared to similar ELL population samples at the district or state level.
2. At the same time, we created an online system where individuals could nominate schools that have demonstrated success with ELLs. Within that nomination form, we asked nominators to address the following set of questions as applicable to their school site.
  - a. Describe the success of the school in terms of traditional (e.g., academic achievement test scores, ELL rate of reclassification, graduation rates) and/or non-traditional (e.g., measures of social-emotional well-being, community engagement, special awards) measures.

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<sup>92</sup> Data extracted from the National Center for Educational Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/>.

- b. How is the school organized to support ELLs' academic language development? (How are courses organized for ELLs? What types of collaborations take place among staff, such as between academic content and ESL/ELD specialists? Is there shared learning time within the master schedule? How do teachers grow their professional expertise?)
- c. In what ways does the school support ELLs' academic language development together with preparing them for college, career, and community readiness?
- d. Describe the school culture and climate. (How does the school leverage the cultural and language assets of the students and the community? How is the school staffed to reflect and respect the students' cultural and linguistic makeup?)
- e. Is there a clear and ambitious mission and vision that shapes the school's work with ELLs? Describe the school's mission and vision. How does the leadership support this mission and/or vision?
- f. We also reached out within our local *Understanding Language* network of colleagues and asked them to contribute potential school sites that our team would consider as a possible case study school. These colleagues included researchers, practitioners, and policymakers working in the field to advance knowledge about ELL education, and/or working directly with ELL educators or ELLs directly. From both the online nomination process and our outreach among our networked colleagues, we received a total of 80 unique school nominations from the field.
- g. Our team then took the list of 80 schools and eliminated nominated schools that did not have strong quantitative academic and postsecondary outcome measures<sup>93</sup> for ELLs, had fewer than ten ELLs in their most recent graduating cohort, or had less than 5% ELLs in their high school program.

This process gave us a sample of 28 schools with a range of geographical distribution across the country. From this list of 28 schools, we compiled qualitative school profiles that included specific program design related to ELLs, school mission and vision, and student demographics. This information was gathered through online research. Once we created these school profiles, we narrowed the sample by identifying a set of ten schools that had strong achievement and college-going outcomes for ELLs; demonstrated a vision, history, and commitment to educating the diversity of ELLs through their school culture and practices; represented a range of program models; represented a range of geographic locations; and had student bodies representing a range of socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Our team invited each of the ten schools to submit preliminary information to help us further narrow down our pool of schools. Of the ten schools, two school declined participation, and one school was not responsive. In the end we focused our efforts on seven schools across three states,

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<sup>93</sup> Examples include: ELL graduation rate, ELL college and career readiness (CCR) success indicators (i.e., college-ready graduation, standardized test results, state-defined CCR indicators).



and we had informal phone conversations with these schools' leaders so that we could better understand how they designed and cultivated learning opportunities for the diversity of ELLs at their sites. The probes we used were similar to the initial set of nominations questions (A-E) posed on page 3.

Our team arranged site visits with each of the seven schools. Of these seven high schools, five schools are located in New York City, one is located in Boston, and one is located in a rural district in California. Though we did complete site visit at the California school, we ultimately chose not to profile it in the report due to a lack of reliable ELL reclassification data to compare California schools. The six schools ultimately profiled are Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy (Boston, MA), High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies (Manhattan, NY), It Takes a Village Academy (Brooklyn, NY), Manhattan Bridges (Manhattan, NY), Marble Hill School for International Studies (Bronx, NY), and New World High School (Bronx, NY). A snapshot of their demographics, achievement outcomes, and mission statements is included in Appendix II.

## **Data Collection**

During the spring of 2015, teams of two or three researchers conducted intensive site visits to each of the seven schools for a total of two to three days per site. In preparation for these visits, our team developed protocols for classroom observations, interviews, and focus groups built around gathering evidence on our two key research questions given in the previous section. Samples of key protocols are also included in Appendix V. Our team worked closely with the school site liaisons (either the principal or an assistant principal) to coordinate the scheduling of interviews, focus groups, classroom visits, and general logistics of the site visits. Site visitors took notes during the interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations, and our team worked together after the site visits to address any contents of the notes that were unclear or that lacked sufficient detail. At the end of each visit, the site visit team also wrote up two or three pages of debrief notes that highlighted unique and salient practices of the school pertaining to ELLs. Each site visit team also joined the full research team on a one-hour debriefing phone call within one week of the site visit. In addition to the field notes taken during the visit, the summary notes, and the notes from the debriefing phone call were considered as part of the qualitative data for each school. The section which follows details the types, depth, and quantity of data sources we collected during our visits.

### **Qualitative Data Sources: Analysis of School Culture, Design, and Practices**

The qualitative data sources collected across schools are found in Table 1, Summary of Data Sources. Our data sources came from three key sources: interviews and focus groups, classroom and school observations, and documents and artifacts provided by the school and available online. Interviews and focus groups were requested with the principal (one interview at the beginning and one at the end of the visit), teachers of ELLs, district (and in NYC, network) supervisors, parents, alumni, students, as well as any other school staff whose work was highly relevant to ELLs or their families (these typically included counselors, APs and coaches). Some data also was gleaned through informal communication with school leaders preceding and following the site visits.



Also after the site visits were completed, the research team met as a full team in an all-day meeting to discuss key themes and trends found within each school site and began to identify salient evidence to help us answer our two key research questions. With a broad outline of key themes at hand, the writing team organized and coded the evidence thematically and wrote in-depth cases for each school. The writers shared drafts with the site visiting teams and the full research team, revised the drafts based on feedback, sent the drafts to the schools' leaders (principal and usually assistant principal as well) for review and feedback, and revised based on schools' feedback. Once all of the case studies were completed, our team analyzed the cases as a set to determine key takeaways and important lessons to be identified within our larger report.

**Table 1. Summary of Data Sources**

Data Sources	Description	Quantity
Interview and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants included principals, assistant principals, coaches, teachers, district supervisors [and in NYC, network supervisors], guidance and support staff, community partners, family members, alumna, and students.</li> <li>• Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30-120 minutes in duration</li> <li>• 63 total sessions</li> <li>• 117 total participants</li> </ul>
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom observations</li> <li>• Written field notes were taken during the full site visit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom observations were 10-30 minutes in duration.</li> <li>• 143 total classroom sessions</li> <li>• Field visits lasted 2-3 days.</li> </ul>
Documents and artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School documents included student and family handbooks, brochures and flyers related to school program, sample student and school schedules, event flyers and calendaring posted in hallways, and district and state produced school-reports.</li> <li>• Classroom documents included sample lesson plans, student tasks/worksheets, curriculum guides, and course syllabi.</li> <li>• Documents gathered from school websites include school and district profiles and related archived news.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 350 print and online documents</li> </ul>

# Appendix II: School Descriptors

## At-a-Glance School Demographics and Academic Outcomes

	<b>Boston International High School &amp; Newcomers Academy<sup>94</sup></b>	<b>High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies<sup>95</sup></b>	<b>It Takes a Village Academy</b>	<b>Manhattan Bridges</b>	<b>Marble Hill School for International Studies</b>	<b>New World High School</b>
<b>School population</b>	381	416	566	529	449	408
<b>ELL</b>	83.7%	24%	20%	53%	30%	27%
<b>African American</b>	43%	3%	90%	0%	24%	9%
<b>Asian</b>	3.7%	89%	1%	0%	9%	14%
<b>Hispanic</b>	50.7%	6%	6%	100%	61%	66%
<b>White</b>	1.3%	2%	1%	0%	5%	8%
<b>Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander</b>	0.0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic</b>	1.3%	1%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Students with Special Needs</b>	1.7%	2%	13%	2%	9%	6%
<b>Free/Reduced Priced Lunch Eligibility</b>	99.5%	89%	80%	100%	91%	95%
<b>4-year Graduation Rate (2015)</b>	77% (City: 67%)	97%	92%	94%	91%	88%
<b>4-year ELL Graduation Rate (2014)</b>	100% (City: 61%)	94%	83%	67%	79%	53%
<b>College Enrollment Rate</b>	100% (City: 66% <sup>96</sup> )	90%	79%	68%	77%	59%

<sup>94</sup> 2014-2015 Enrollment Data,

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00350507&orgtypecode=6&>  
and <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/school/boston-international-high-school>.

<sup>95</sup> All NYC data from [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov).

<sup>96</sup> From Boston Public Schools at a Glance (2013-2014) report, in a survey of the Class of 2013 about post-graduation plans, 3452 students reported the following *intentions* at the end of the school year: attending 2-, 4- year college, or other post-secondary school options.

## School Mission Statements

### **Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy**

Our mission is to foster family and community partnerships to ensure students will be college ready, and motivated to pursue a life of learning and civic engagement.

### **High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies**

High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies is dedicated to preparing its students to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We are devoted to providing quality instruction and guidance counseling to promote the academic and social development of our students as well as their linguistic capacity, cultural appreciation, and international and global awareness. Our goal is for each of our students to grow intellectually, morally, socially, culturally and personally so they are ready for the next stage of their education and are able to realize their full potential.

### **It Takes a Village Academy**

It Takes a Village Academy's (ITAVA) mission is to help students gain academic skills and knowledge, promote an understanding of, and respect for, diverse cultures and languages, support active and responsible citizenship, and inspire in our students a lifelong love of learning and pursuit of excellence. In keeping with our three core values of communication, character and critical thinking, all students study and will become proficient in a foreign language, participate in an Advisory group focused on character development and community building and participate in meaningful discussions and projects that will engage their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

### **Manhattan Bridges High School**

Manhattan Bridges is founded on the belief that mastery of communication skills in both English and students' native language is key to realizing a student's potential in a multicultural society. We are committed to assisting students in maintaining the richness of their native language and culture and celebrating their individual differences while providing them with a sense of place in their community and society as a whole. Our mission is to ensure that students develop the bilingual speaking, reading, writing and listening skills designed to prepare them for higher education and/or the work force.

### **Marble Hill School for International Studies**

The mission of the Marble Hill School for International Studies is to develop in each student the necessary skills to acquire and apply knowledge. Students will be provided with a social, emotional and physical environment that is nurturing, supportive, intellectually challenging and conducive to learning. Students will be empowered to become self-directed, life-long learners inspired by their personal quest for understanding of themselves and the global society in which they live.

### **New World High School**

Our mission here at New World High School is to help students who are not naturally English-fluent. Our teachers and the rest of our staffs will make sure you are successful in learning how to write, read and speak English and to pass all your Regents in time.

# Appendix III: Educational Policy Contexts of New York City and Boston Public Schools

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This appendix is intended to provide information on New York City and Boston Public Schools' policy contexts so readers can understand how our case study schools operated and developed within their local contexts over time.

## New York City Educational Context

### Regional Structures and Small School Reform

Between 2003 and 2010, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein embarked on a massive reform effort known as the *Children First Initiative*. Facing the reality of a decades-long 50% city graduation rate, they created this initiative to institute better and more equitable academic outcomes. Under *Children First* the city's school governance systems and the schools themselves were fundamentally restructured. The school boards were shut down and ten regions of 120 demographically-mixed schools were created. Regional superintendents were hired by the mayor to oversee school improvement efforts. Over this time, the city's education policy resulted in the closure of many large, poor-performing public schools, and increasingly favored small schools, some of which were funded by the Gates Foundation. The city also instituted required core ELA and math curricula tied to increased accountability practices across schools, and invested heavily in their implementation. In addition, teacher pay increased and recruitment and hiring practices were revamped. An academy to train principals to re-invigorate struggling schools was established and principals were given more autonomy in teacher hiring and allocation of resources for the most high-need students. In return, principal performance reviews were implemented and tied to reward systems. Policies were implemented whereby high school students are able to choose the schools they apply to, and schools effectively competed for students (1, 2).

### Common Core Standards Implementation and Bilingual Common Core Initiative

Other important changes that have been implemented in New York City in recent years include the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as well as the launching of the *Bilingual Common Core Initiative* to develop new English as a Second Language and Native Language Arts Standards aligned to the Common Core.<sup>97</sup> According to EngageNY, standards that have been developed as part of the aforementioned initiative “provide points of entry for students of all language proficiency and literacy levels to access grade level Language Arts content as described by the new New York State Common Core Learning Standards” (3). These standards are now called New Language Arts Progressions (NLAP) and Home Language Arts Progressions (HLP).

### Blueprint for English Language Learners Success

The *Blueprint for ELLs Success*, produced by the New York State Education Department (NYSED), is a set of principles intended to guide educators to prepare ELLs for college and

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career readiness beginning in pre-kindergarten and continuing until high school graduation. This blueprint assumes that *all* teachers are teachers of ELLs and must design and deliver appropriate instruction for them. It also assigns responsibility to school and district leaders for meeting ELLs' needs. It states that educators and school and district leaders are responsible for delivering instruction that is grade-appropriate, academically rigorous, and aligned with the CCSS. Bilingualism and biliteracy are judged as assets, and the blueprint requires that schools provide opportunities for second language development and academic language development in the students' home languages. Educators should engage parents as partners in their children's education. The expertise of ELL educators and professionals should be leveraged to increase the professional capacities of all teachers in this area. According to the blueprint, ELLs' language, culture, and prior knowledge should also be leveraged as instructional assets. Finally, instructional practices should be informed by appropriate assessments of students' proficiencies and needs.

### **Regents Exams**

Developed and administered by the NYSED, the Regents exams are the state's elementary and secondary standardized tests required for a Regents diploma. For higher performing students, they may earn an "Advanced" or an "Honor" designation on their Regents diploma. Some educators have used this set of assessments as a form of college and career readiness indicators.

### **Institutional Support for ELLs**

The Chancellor of New York City's Department of Education (NYCDOE), Carmen Fariña, has created a new position entitled "Senior Executive Director of the Department of English Language Learners and Student Support," with the objective of closing the achievement gap between ELLs and English proficient students. The NYCDOE reports that, in their efforts to offer ELLs equity and access to a quality education, this office "offers multiple resources including a high quality professional development series, Common Core-aligned lesson samples and documents, and an ever-growing video library" (4). Moreover, in 2011, the NYCDOE developed a comprehensive plan to support ELLs that promises to increase the number of bilingual teachers and programs, to provide timely language proficiency screening, to hold principals accountable for ELL progress, and to increase parental choice options.

More recently, Governor Cuomo signed a bill in 2012 to recognize bilingual and biliterate students by awarding them a *Seal of Biliteracy* upon graduation. This bill may encourage schools to see the efficacy of using two languages as instructional tools, and to see the value of multilingualism.

### **Boston Public Schools Context**

Boston is one of the most diverse public school systems in the country. Nearly half of its students speak a language other than English at home, one third are considered limited English proficient, and students hail from over 135 different countries. Poverty is high—more than three quarters of its population are low-income and qualify for free or reduced lunch.

### **Reform of Governance and Structures**

Much like the New York City Department of Education, Boston Public Schools (BPS) came under mayoral control in 1992, and Superintendents Thomas W. Payzant, Michael G.

Contompasis, and Carol R. Johnson respectively led the district in steady academic improvements. Tommy Chang is the most recently elected superintendent.

To drive reform, Boston created a series of pilot schools with school-based autonomy with regard to staffing, curriculum, scheduling, professional learning, and allocation of resources. At the same time, the district increased accountability measures through the use of performance benchmarks. BPS also offer families a choice of a variety of high school options, in what they call a “managed portfolio approach.” These school options are intended to offer students personalized learning environments and high quality instruction.

### **Ensuring Equal Opportunities for ELLs**

In October of 2010, Boston Public Schools reached a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure equal opportunities for ELLs as required by the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The summary of the settlement includes the following:

... the Boston Public Schools agreed to assess the English proficiency of an estimated 7,000 students who were not previously tested in all four language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and to ensure that all potential ELL students are properly identified and accurately assessed in the 2010-11 school year. In order to serve its ELL population, the Boston Public Schools agreed to provide ELL students with Sheltered English Immersion in their core content classes, such as math, social studies and science; to deliver English as a Second Language instruction consistent with state guidance; and to train and hire a sufficient number of teachers to serve its ELL population. (5)

An assistant superintendent was appointed to oversee the Office of English Language Learners (OELL), and an English Language Learners’ Task Force was formed. This team has since improved assessment and placement practices, prioritized fiscal resources, and strengthened teacher training and programs to address the disparities of educational outcomes for ELLs. The OELL vision is as follows:

All English Language Learner students in the Boston Public Schools will acquire 21st century bi-literacy skills and cross-disciplinary knowledge required to succeed in college and/or careers. Boston Public School students, as future leaders and active citizens, will shape the science, economies, and policies of the second part of the 21st century. (6)

To meet this vision, BPS has invested more than \$10 million to expand ELL services and enact extensive reforms. They describe some of their accomplishments and goals:

- We have increased the capacity of programs just for English language learners (ELLs).
- We are working toward establishing Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) programs in schools that are closer to the communities where students live.
- We have changed student assignment rules for ELLs. All English language learners are offered SEI programming and guaranteed language development services.
- We are preparing more teachers to effectively teach our English language learners.
- We are identifying and purchasing appropriate materials to better serve English language learners.

- We have opened Newcomers' Academy to serve newly arrived, high school age English language learners, and expanded language testing and counseling about school choices at the Newcomers Assessment and Counseling Center.
- We are working to create and maintain a welcoming school climate for English language learners. (7)

As a result of these improvement efforts, both graduation rates and standardized test (MCAS) scores have improved over time for ELLs in the Boston Public Schools.

**Notes:**

(1) The information about New York City school reforms included in this brief was taken from O'Day, Bitter, & Talbert's introduction to the 2011 volume entitled *Education Reform in New York City, Ambitious Change in the Nation's Most Complex School System*.

(2) This brief is not intended to address the relative efficacy of school choice, small vs. large public high schools, or increased testing, nor whether they produce increased innovation with regard to ELLs. Such an analysis would require a statistical study that is beyond the scope of this paper. However, information about these reforms should deepen discussion of instructional improvements for ELLs in a variety of contexts.

(3) EngageNY is a platform housing reform-related resources and developed by the state's education department. For more information see: <http://www.engageny.org/about>.

(4) Source: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/ELL/default.htm>.

(5) Source: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/departments-justice-and-education-reach-settlement-boston-school-committee-ensure-equal>.

(6) Source: <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/251>.

(7) Source: <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/4693>.



## Appendix IV: Key Concepts Defined

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College and Career Readiness – While a variety of definitions for college and career readiness exist, we use the term broadly in this report to mean that a high school graduate has the academic and social-emotional skills and knowledge that our case study schools believe are necessary to enter college without remediation, and succeed in college and careers.

English Proficient – Refers to students who have never been classified as ELLs or who were formerly ELLs but have been reclassified.

Language Development Framework – People’s best thinking (which is informed by research and practice) about how students’ languages develop; the theory of language learning that permeates the school.

Leadership – The people who create, refine, and sustain practices and structures in the school community to ensure shared responsibility and accountability for student success.

Learning Design – The way that educators in the school organize and enact the entire instructional experience; practices that are enacted intentionally in all classrooms (e.g., use of students’ cultural and linguistic resources, scaffolding, instructional tasks, assessment, pacing, grouping, etc.). The teaching and learning coherence within the school.

Never-ELLs – Refers to students who have never been classified as ELLs.

Professional Learning – Learning that educators experience to further and complement their existing professional skills. May occur in conventional professional development settings; in community with peers, mentors, study groups or networks; as part of action research; on the job; or outside of the work setting.

Programming – The strategic ways in which schools create specialized schedules and course sequences for CCR (e.g., newcomer academy, length of the period/course to match the needs of the students) and place students into those for language, academic or social-emotional purposes.

Reclassified – Refers to former ELLs who have met local criteria and are now considered to be English proficient.

Structures – The way in which schools allocate and organize time, resources, and staff to ensure that students are CCR (e.g., ESL is done in an integrated ESL/ELA block; looping in which the same teacher follows his/her students through several grades, common staff planning time).

# Appendix V: Sample Protocols

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## Principal Interview Protocol

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### A. School Features [20 min]

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**I would like to start by asking you some questions to get a better understanding of the school as a whole.**

1. Can you describe your school's **approach to ELL instruction**?
  - a. What **drives and informs** your instructional approach for ELLs?
  - b. How is instruction **organized** for ELL students? For example, are students grouped by proficiency levels, etc.?
  - c. How are the **English language development** needs of students addressed?
2. How much **collaboration**, if any, is there at your school between teachers?
  - a. Specifically, **between ELD teachers and subject area** teachers?
3. What kind of **academic supports** are available at your school to help ELL students succeed (e.g., tutoring, after-school programs, wraparound services, college/career counseling)? Probe for details.
  - a. To what extent do you perceive these supports to be **effective**?
  - b. What **evidence** do you use to evaluate effectiveness?
4. What are the **structures** at your school that contribute your ELLs high levels of achievement? Probe for details.
5. Do you have a **step-up to high school program**?
  - a. Are **all students** required to attend? If not, what is the attendance criteria?
  - b. What are they **trying to accomplish** in this program?
  - c. How is it **designed**?
  - d. **Who teaches** in the program?
  - e. How is it **funded**?
  - f. What has been the **impact**? How do they know?
6. Does your school offer **summer school**?
  - a. Are **all students** required to attend? If not, what is the attendance criteria?
  - b. What are they **trying to accomplish** in this program?
  - c. How is it **designed**?
  - d. **Who teaches** in the program?
  - e. How is it **funded**?
  - f. What has been the **impact**? How do they know?
7. Does your school offer **Saturday school**?
  - a. Are **all students** required to attend? If not, what is the attendance criteria?
  - b. What are they **trying to accomplish** in this program?
  - c. How is it **designed**?
  - d. **Who teaches** in the program?
  - e. How is it **funded**?
  - f. What has been the **impact**? How do they know?

8. Do you have an **extended school day**? If so, what do students do during the additional time? Probe for details.
9. Is there an **advisory period**? If so, **what do teachers do** during that time? Probe for details.
10. How many **prep periods** do teachers have to prepare for their courses?
11. Does your school have a **block schedule**? If so, please describe it.
12. What are the **strengths** of the academic programs that serve ELLs at this school?
  - a. How about **areas for improvement**?
13. Do teachers **plan their lessons together**?
  - a. Is this true for **all subjects and grades**?
  - b. Do **ESL teachers collaborate with content area teachers**? If so, what does this collaboration look like?
14. To what extent are ELLs at your school provided instruction that is aligned to the **CCSS and NGSS**?
  - a. **What makes you say that?** How do you know? What evidence helps you affirm that?
  - b. What do you think is necessary to help your ELLs be successful in mastering content aligned to these new standards?
15. What kind of **social and emotional supports** (or student support services) are available at your school to help ELL students succeed (e.g., bilingual counseling, SEL programs)?
  - a. To what extent do you perceive these supports to be **effective**?
16. What role do students' **home language(s)** play, if any, in classroom instruction?

**Follow up with questions below if the answers have not surfaced in the responses above.**

17. Can you tell us briefly about the **history, mission, and goals** of your school?
18. Can you describe the **surrounding community** and neighborhood in which the school is located?
19. Please describe your school's **vision** for ELLs?
20. Do you have a set of **principles** that guide your work with ELLs? If so, please describe them.
21. What is your school's **theory of action** to help ELLs succeed and graduate college and career ready?

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## B. Professional Development [5 min]

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1. **Who decides and plans** the PD offerings at your school?
2. How is it **organized**?
3. How much **time and resources** are dedicated to professional development? (% of budget) (How often, for how long?)
4. **Who** is required to attend?
5. How do you decide on the **content** for the professional development?
6. **How do you know it is making a difference?** What **evidence** informs your opinion?
7. Can you describe any **professional development** focused on ELLs that you been able to offer or attend?
  - a. How would you describe the **quality** of these experiences?

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### C. Strategies for Success [15 min]

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1. Can you describe (if you haven't done so already above) some of the **strategies and resources** that your school implements to better meet the needs of ELLs with regard to:
  - a. **Leadership?** What is your **leadership structure and strategy** to support ELLs? How did you arrive at that structure and strategies?
  - b. **Instruction, curriculum and assessment?** **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - c. **College and career readiness?** **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - d. **Use of data?** **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - e. **Use of time?** **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - f. **Use of fiscal and human resources?** **How did your school arrive** at those decisions and strategies?
  - g. **School climate?** **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - h. **Hiring** of staff (e.g., additional support staff: family liaisons, guidance counselors, etc.)? **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - i. **Evaluation** of staff? **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - j. **Strategic partnerships** with outside organizations? **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - k. **Technology?** **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
2. Can you describe the **motivation and preparation toward college** of the ELLs at your school?
  - a. What **expectations** do staff members have about ELLs' plans after high school?
3. Do you have **plans or priorities for further increasing the success** of ELLs at your school? If so, what are they?
4. How do you view your **role in providing leadership** and guidance with regard to instruction for ELLs at your school?
  - a. How **involved** are teachers in **decision making** at this school that affects ELLs?
5. How much **autonomy** do you have in terms of making instructional decisions regarding ELLs?
6. What **support or guidance do you receive from your district** in setting the direction of ELL instruction at your school?
7. Do you **have connections or networks with other schools/school leaders** that serve ELLs? Tell us more.
  - a. Does the school benefit from **outside sources of funding**, e.g., philanthropic grants, donations from local businesses, funds raised by a school community foundation, etc.? If so, how?
8. What **evidence** do you use to **assess the effectiveness** of your strategies and the quality of your program for ELLs?
  - a. On the ELLs' journey to **graduation**
  - b. **After graduation in college** or entering **careers**
9. To what do you **attribute the success** of ELLs at this school?

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### D. Parent Engagement [15 min]

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1. How well does your school **engage with parents** of ELLs?

- a. How could your school **improve**?
2. How do you **involve and support parents**?
  - a. How do you involve and support parents **as students prepare for college and careers** beyond graduation?
3. **What language(s)** does the school use to communicate with parents of ELLs?
4. What are the **organizations** that parents in general and parents of ELLs participate in, and what are their core functions? (Probe for existence of school site council, ELAC (CA), PTA, and successes/struggles of parent organizations.)
5. What kind of efforts does the school make to acknowledge **cultural backgrounds** of ELLs and their parents?
  - a. What are any **challenges** in this area?

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#### E. Accessing District Resources [10 min]

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1. What are resources outside of your school that you leverage to support ELLs? Probe for the following:
  - a. How do you **secure district resources** (fiscal and human) to **support ELLs**?
  - b. How does the **district fund ELLs** (e.g., weighted formula, categorical funds)?
  - c. Is there **district-supported professional learning** (past or present) for teachers and principals?
  - d. Are there any **district policies in support of ELLs**? If so, what are they?
  - e. How do you leverage the resources of district departments to **support integrated literacy/language/content learning**?
  - f. How do you leverage the resources of district departments to support the **social and emotional needs of ELLs**?
  - g. How do you leverage the resources of district departments to support **the needs of parents of ELLs**?
  - h. How do you **leverage resources external to the district** such as Foundations, Community Based Organizations and Institutions of Higher Education to **prepare ELLS for college and careers**?
  - i. How do you use **district professional development offerings** to build capacity to support ELLs?

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#### F. Close [5 min]

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1. To close, is there anything I haven't asked you about your school or your ELL practices that you'd like to comment on?
2. Is there **anything that we have missed during our site visit** that you would like to let us know about?

## Teacher Focus Group Protocol

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### A. Instruction & Assessment [15 min]

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**As I mentioned, our primary focus for this visit is to learn about how your school creates a learning environment that meets the needs of English Language Learners. I will begin by asking you questions about your classroom practices, and then I will ask broader questions about the school.**

1. Can you tell me a bit about the **students in your classes**? For example, describe the **cultures** represented, the levels of **prior education**, and the **language** backgrounds.
  - a. How would you describe student **engagement** in class? (Probe for examples, such as levels of participation, motivation, etc.)

**I'd like to get a better sense of how you address the instructional needs of the ELL students in your classes.**

2. Can you tell me about your approach to ELL instruction?
3. Can you briefly give us an overview of your **vision, goals and/or theory of action** for ELLs?
  - a. Do you have a set of **principles** that guide your work with ELLs? If so, please describe them.
  - b. To what extent do you **integrate content-focused instruction and language development**?
  - c. Do you have a **language development framework** (set of research informed practices) that informs your practice? If yes, please describe.
  - d. **How do you develop** units and lesson plans? (If **project-based learning** or **cross-curricular/interdisciplinary** tasks/projects come up, follow up.)
  - e. **How do you go about deciding** what you'll teach and how you'll teach it? Is there a specific **approach** you are expected to use for serving ELL students (e.g., use of native language, language support, content support)?
  - f. What role do **ELP standards** play in your teaching, if at all?
4. To what extent are ELLs at your school provided instruction that is aligned to the **CCSS and NGSS**?
  - a. **What makes you say that?** How do you know? What evidence do you have to support that statement?
  - b. What do you think is necessary to help your ELLs be successful in mastering content aligned to these new standards?
5. Describe how you **group** students of different proficiency levels in English and for what purposes.
  - a. Do you encourage ELL **participation and learning in group work** and discussions? If so, how do you structure these interactions?
6. How are the **English language development needs** of students addressed?
7. How do you use **formative assessment of** students in your class?
  - a. **What do you do with this information?**
8. What **challenges**, if any, do you face with regard to **improving academic outcomes** of your ELL students?
9. How are students' **home languages** used in class, or on homework assignments, if they are at all?

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## B. School Features [15 min]

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Now I would like to ask you some questions to get a better understanding of the school as a whole.

1. How much leadership do teachers in your school exercise? And for what purposes?
2. How much **collaboration**, if any, is there at your school between teachers? For what purposes?
  - a. Is this true for **all subjects and grades**?
  - b. Do **ESL teachers collaborate with content area teachers**? **When** and **how**?
  - c. To what extent do you find collaborations **useful**? **Why**?
  - d. Probe for collaboration around creating **interdisciplinary** tasks/projects.
3. What kind of **academic supports** are available at your school to help ELL students succeed (e.g., tutoring, after-school programs, wraparound services, college/career counseling)?
  - a. To what extent do you perceive these supports to be **effective**?
4. What are the **structures** at your school that contribute to your ELLs' high levels of achievement? Probe for details.
5. Do you have a **step-up to high school program**?
  - a. Are **all students** required to attend? If not, what is the attendance criteria?
  - b. What are they **trying to accomplish** in this program?
  - c. How is it **designed**?
  - d. **Who teaches** in the program?
  - e. How is it **funded**?
  - f. What has been the **impact**? How do they know?
6. Does your school offer **summer school**?
  - a. Are **all students** required to attend? If not, what is the attendance criteria?
  - b. What are they **trying to accomplish** in this program?
  - c. How is it **designed**?
  - d. **Who teaches** in the program?
  - e. How is it **funded**?
  - f. What has been the **impact**? How do they know?
7. Does your school offer **Saturday school**?
  - a. Are **all students** required to attend? If not, what is the attendance criteria?
  - b. What are they **trying to accomplish** in this program?
  - c. How is it **designed**?
  - d. **Who teaches** in the program?
  - e. How is it **funded**?
  - f. What has been the **impact**? How do they know?
8. Do you have an **extended school day**? If so, what do students do during the additional time? Probe for details.
9. Is there an **advisory period**? If so, **what do teachers do** during that time? Probe for details.
10. How many **prep periods** do teachers have to prepare for their courses?
11. Does your school have a **block schedule**? If so, please describe it.
12. What are the **strengths** of the academic programs that serve ELLs at this school?
  - a. How about **areas for improvement**?



13. What kind of **social and emotional supports** are available at your school to help ELL students succeed (e.g. bilingual counseling, SEL programs)?
  - a. To what extent do you perceive these supports to be **effective**?
14. What kind of efforts do you or other staff at the school make to acknowledge **cultural backgrounds** of ELLs and their parents?
  - a. What are any **challenges** in this area?

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### C. Strategies for Success [10 min]

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1. Can you describe (if you haven't done so already above) some of the **strategies and resources** that your school implements to better meet the needs of ELLs? For example, with regard to [probes]:
  - a. **Instruction, curriculum and assessment? How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - b. **Instructional Leadership?** What is your instructional leadership structure and strategy to support ELLs? How did you arrive at that structure and strategies?
  - c. **College and career readiness? How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - d. **Use of data? How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - e. **Use of time? How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - f. **Use of fiscal and human resources? How did your school arrive** at those decisions and strategies?
  - g. **School climate? How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - h. **Strategic partnerships** with outside organizations? **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - i. **Technology? How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
  - j. **Hiring** of staff (e.g., additional support staff: family liaisons, guidance counselors, etc.)? **How did your school arrive** at these strategies and resources?
2. What is the **role of the school leadership** here in supporting quality education for ELLs?
  - a. How **involved** do you feel in **decision making** at this school that affects ELLs?
3. To what do you **attribute the success** of ELLs at your school?
4. What **evidence** do you use to **assess the effectiveness** of your strategies and the quality of your program for ELLs?
  - a. On the ELLs' journey to **graduation**
  - b. **After graduation**, in **college** or entering **careers**

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### D. Accessing District Resources [10 min]

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1. What are resources outside of your school that you leverage to support ELLs? Probe for the following:
  - a. How does the **school administration respond when you ask for fiscal and human resources** to support ELLs?
  - b. How do you leverage the resources of district departments to **support integrated literacy/language/content learning**?
  - c. How do you leverage the resources of district departments to support the **social and emotional needs of ELLs**?
  - d. How do you leverage the resources of district departments to support **the needs of parents of ELLs**?

- e. How do you leverage **resources external to the district** such as Foundations, Community Based Organizations and Institutions of Higher Education to **prepare ELLs for college and careers**?
- f. How do you use **district professional development offerings** to build capacity to support ELLs?

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E. Close [5 min]

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1. To close, is there **anything else** about your school or your ELL practices that you'd like to comment on?