



NEW HAVEN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

RACE TO THE TOP EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT FEBRUARY 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gibson & Associates (G&A) and Resource Development Associates (RDA) were selected in May after a competitive bid process to form the External Evaluation Team (EE Team) to provide regular reports of progress to inform both the program design and summative outcome analysis of New Haven Unified's Race to the Top grant. At the beginning of the evaluation process, the EE Team developed an evaluation logic model to illustrate the relationship between project activities and intended outcomes. To assess the implementation of the grant as well as the impact thereof, the EE Team uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, including a grounded theory approach to qualitative data analysis. As of February 2014, stakeholders from every site have been engaged in evaluation activities. We have also conducted district-wide focus groups with the pilot evaluation implementation teams and mathematics and language arts coaches.

The following table summarizes our key findings across all project areas, primarily drawn from surveys, focus groups, and interviews with teachers, principals, students, and parents. An overall finding across all project areas is that there are many new initiatives within the district occurring simultaneously; therefore it may take longer to see results in any one area, because teachers are being asked to master multiple content and skill areas at the same time.

Key Findings by Project Area

Project Name	Key Idea / Finding
1. Literacy and the Common Core	Teachers have found math and literacy professional development and onsite coaching to be effective, and describe a need for more and differentiated professional learning opportunities to build CCSS knowledge and teaching skills.
2. Community Connections	In general, all parents and students feel welcome and safe at school, but surveys indicate school-based connections are higher at non-Kid's Zone sites than at Kid's Zone sites.
3. Superintendent & Teacher Evaluations	Teachers and administrators described the current evaluation process as ineffective. Teachers and administrators in the evaluation pilot are enthusiastic by initial pilot activities.
4. Technology for Personalization of Learning	The District is building capacity, but teachers' skills and needs differ widely, and there isn't yet a common definition of personalization of learning.
5. Grading and Assessment	There is an emerging need for Common Core aligned assessments and a common grading system across sites, although most students perceive the current system to be fair, particularly in Language Arts.
6. College and Career Readiness	Most students and parents describe college as goal but most described minimal school-based preparation and activities.
7. Evaluation	The evaluation processes and structures are in place. Adaptations have been made to program design based on formative data results.
8. Leadership	According to focus groups, there is an increased foundation for trust among all stakeholders.

PROJECT AREA 7: EVALUATION¹

The evaluation processes and structures are in place.

Adaptations have been made to program design based on formative data results.

Description

The External Evaluation Team applies a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative data) to provide formative and summative data. We use a participatory approach and share our instrument design and process with District leadership. On a weekly basis, we post reminders of upcoming evaluation activities, and in our monthly reports, we review data. These discussions have led to modifications in implementation, such as changes in the distribution methods for the Chromebooks to address parent concerns. We have collected data from all stakeholders - using a combination of survey questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews, and applied a Grounded Theory approach to find emerging trends. We also compared data by subgroup analysis. The figure below describes the summary of data collected between June 2013 and January 2014.

Figure 1: Summary of Qualitative Data Collected

Focus Groups & Interviews	Surveys & Questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and Protocols Developed • 3 District-Wide Focus Groups Conducted (Coaches, Evaluation Pilot Teachers, Evaluation Pilot Administrators) • More than 250 parents, teachers, students & principals participated in onsite events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Surveys Designed & Implemented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000+ parents participated from all sites • Student Surveys Designed & Implemented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 2200 Student Surveys received • Teacher Baseline June 2013 • Feedback After Professional Development

Qualitative Data Analysis - Student Survey Data Methods

We collected survey data from more than 3000 students in 5th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades. For all sites, our survey return rate provided a 95% confidence rating and low interval (<5%) for each school site, suggesting the reliability of the data. We also conducted focus groups with a cross-section of student volunteers during lunch at all traditional sites and at Conley-Cabarallo. We analyzed data across all schools and programs. We used a significance t-test to determine distinctions to be found among ethnic-racial populations and between Kid's Zone and non-Kid's Zone sites. Significant differences are reported in analysis by Project Area. The full data reports from surveys are to be found in the Appendices.

Figure 2: Kid's Zone and Non-Kid's Zone Sites

Kid's Zone Sites (KZ) Chavez Middle, Emanuele Elementary, Hillview Crest Elementary, Logan High, Searles Elementary	Non-Kid's Zone Sites (NKZ) Alvarado Elementary, Alvarado Middle, Eastin Elementary, Kitayama Elementary, Pioneer Elementary, Conley-Cabarallo, Decoto Ind. Study
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¹ This is Project Area 7, but because it describes evaluation process, it is included first.

Parent and Guardian Data

There was greater variation in levels of participation from parents and guardians in surveys than in focus groups. Parent surveys were available in Spanish, English, and Tagalog, and in both paper and online formats. We had sufficient parent survey data from two sites to provide statistically significant data regarding parent perceptions of the individual school site. Over 1000 parents participated overall, reflecting 13% of non-Kid's Zone-school families and 6% of Kid's Zone-school families. Although seemingly not a high percentage of participation, it was sufficient to provide results with a 95% confidence ratio (and a 6% interval) to analyze overall district results as well as groups of schools, Kid's Zone and non-Kid's Zone sites. (It should be noted that parents were not asked racial-ethnic questions and therefore analysis by ethnicity was not conducted.) Focus groups were conducted after school at all traditional elementary and middle schools and before an event at Logan High School. Spanish translation was made available at all sites with a significant number of Spanish speakers. It should be noted that there was not a distinction among participation levels for focus groups between Kid's Zone and non-Kid's Zone sites. This may be because the parents that participated in focus groups from all sites were the most active and engaged parents.

Teacher and Administrator Data

Voluntary focus groups were held at each school site with teachers either at the end or beginning of the school day in October 2013. At the elementary level, a cross-section of teachers including specialists and primary and upper grade teachers participated. At the middle school level and at Conley-Cabarallo, participants included all subject areas. Two focus groups were held with teachers from Logan High School - one for mathematics teachers and one for English teachers. A 1:1 interview was conducted with each site administrator. In addition, focus groups were conducted across sites with the Math and ELA coaches, with administrators engaged in the evaluation pilot, and finally with the teachers engaged in the evaluation pilot program. No administrator was present during any of the focus groups. Names and identifiers were not used to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Quantitative Results

Our second quarter results focused on the 2013 student baseline data with student outcome on state standardized assessments, California High School Exit Exam and Advanced Placement results. This data was analyzed by a comparison group of sites (based on demographics and past assessment results). Further data analysis based on NWEA and student climate (disciplinary, attendance) results is forthcoming.

PROJECT AREA 1: LITERACY AND THE COMMON CORE

Teachers have found professional development and onsite coaching to be effective.

Teachers and coaches describe a need for more and differentiated learning to build CCSS knowledge and teaching skills.

Most students described being engaged in school.

Most parents agreed that their child's school had high academic standards.

Description

Teachers received intensive summer professional development and follow up professional development and coaching in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. The results below describe the perception of effectiveness of the professional development activities and perceptions related to academic standards and activities by teachers, students, administrators and parents.

Professional Development, Collaboration, and Coaching

Professional Development: Summer Intensives and Follow-Up

The overwhelming majority of teacher respondents rated each of the three summer English Language Arts and the Math Studio professional development seminars as "good" to "excellent." The following table summarizes the overall ratings for each PD seminar.

Figure 3: Teacher Overall Ratings of Summer Five-Day Professional Development Activities

PD Seminar	Post-PD	Overall Rating: "Excellent" or "Good"
Comprehension at the Core (CATC)	51	87%
Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC)	14	85%
Reading Apprenticeship (RAISE)	44	92%
Math Studio (Elementary)	83	79%

Follow up professional development sessions were conducted in Fall 2013 for CATC, RAISE, and Math Studio with generally positive feedback from teachers. Teachers described learning specific skills and strategies, and many noted that they particularly valued the time to collaborate and reflect with teachers, and how much they valued opportunities to see the strategies in-place with NHUSD students.

Teachers, however, noted that they wanted more differentiated opportunities relevant to their current knowledge base. For example after the CATC lesson study a teacher commented, "*The focus was definitely more procedural - how to do turn & talks, gradual release (which I feel our district has already covered well), and I felt we really didn't get into the strategy lessons in the depth I would have liked to see.*" Teachers also indicated that they wanted the emphasis to include technology and the Common Core: "*More time needs to be spent allowing teachers to be comfortable with the idea of 21st century learning and how Comprehension at the Core fits into the Common Core,*" and after a Math Studio professional development a teacher remarked: "*We need PD's on CCSS before creating lessons. I don't want to produce lessons that will not be useful in teaching CCSS.*"

Coaching and Collaboration

As part of the RTTD grant, all schools have Math and Language Arts coaches at their site. Teachers described coaching receiving in favorable terms: *"We have coaching available in both Math and English if you want it. They're very responsive and helpful and provide excellent feedback."* The coaches have found that they have developed constructive relationships with many teachers, particularly in teaching English language arts; they are still in the process of defining their role in providing support for teaching elementary mathematics.

According to principals and teachers, some grade levels and content areas are more effective at collaboration than others (*"Everyone meets but effectiveness varied. Most of my team members are very collaborative."*), but all feel that *"we don't really have enough time."* As one teacher described, *"We need more time and opportunities to collaborate with each other so we're not working in silos."* In particular, teachers, coaches, administrators and parents talked about the need for support for effective implementation of the Common Core.

Logan High School has developed innovative strategies responding to teacher leadership, with teacher-led professional development in a number of areas including technology and mathematics. For example, in mathematics, teacher teams are developing new curricula and assessments with a particular emphasis on developing a more engaging and successful 9th grade math sequence aligned to Common Core. This has resulted in teacher enthusiasm for the process and the product: *"What's really cool is that curriculum is being developed and it will be revised as it goes along and we will look at it together."*

Content Area: English Language Arts

Based on focus groups with teachers and students, the EE team found many common practices both within and across sites. Common teaching methods described by students included finding themes in literature and non-fiction, writing workshop, and vocabulary building strategies. At the elementary school, most students were far more enthusiastic about language arts (*"It's fun! I love it"*) than mathematics. At the high school level, students described challenge and engagement, *"The content is hard, but the way he explains makes it easy to understand. He focuses on us understanding, not how much how he covers in class."* Both students and teachers described opportunities for personalized learning experiences in this subject including journal writing and expository reading and writing: *"We have two books; independent reading book and class assigned book. We will write 16 essays in class."*

Content Area: Mathematics

In focus groups there appeared to be a range of strategies used frequently for teaching math, but fewer common strategies across different grade spans or amongst teachers at the same school. Some students reported classes comprised of general homework and independent practice assignments, while others described math classes that incorporated technology and project-based learning. In focus groups, student enthusiasm for the subject appeared greatest when they felt that teachers *"show how the math is going to relate to the real world."* Teachers also described observing higher levels of student

engagement with engineering projects and project-based learning. Demonstrating both the challenge in teaching mathematics and the dedication of New Haven teachers, in several different focus groups, students mentioned that their math teacher often stayed after school or during lunch to help provide individualized support for students in need of extra support. In focus groups, parents described math as a particularly challenging subject for parents to provide help for their children, and a few parents mentioned turning to Kahn Academy or private tutoring to address their student's needs in this subject.

Student and Parent Perceptions

Engagement in School

Across grade levels, the majority of students reported that they *work with their peers in class, share ideas during class discussions, and are creative at school*. Fewer high school students reported sharing ideas during class discussions while more middle school students reported engaging with other students and sharing ideas during class discussions.

Figure 4: Student Respondents' Agreement About Academic Activities

Student Survey Findings	Elementary	Middle	High
I work with other students in class. (<i>ns</i> = 891, 900, 1290)	94.6%	97.3%	94.0%
I share ideas during class discussions. (<i>ns</i> = 892, 895, 1290)	83.2%	86.2%	77.4%
I am creative at school. (<i>ns</i> = 892, 894, 1284)	89.4%	87.5%	89.0%

Non-Kid's Zone school student respondents reported a significantly higher level of agreement that they share ideas during class discussions and are creative at school than Kid's Zone respondents. In examining in-class participation rates across students of different ethnicities, African American students reported higher levels of participation than students of any other race across all grade levels, averaging 90% who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "*I share ideas during class discussions.*" Hispanic/Latino students reported the lowest levels of participation across all grade levels, averaging 78% who agreed with the statement.

Parent Perception of Academic Standards

The majority of *all* parents agreed or strongly agreed (3-4 on a scale of 1 to 4) that their child's *school had high academic standards*. Middle school parents had the lowest agreement with this statement (82%) and high school parents, the highest (89%). Non-Kid's Zone sites had a significantly higher level of agreement than Kid's Zone sites. In focus groups parents reported some concern about not yet understanding or knowing about the Common Core standards: "*We don't even know anything about Common Core. They should hold a meeting and give parents more information.*"

Figure 5: Parent Respondents' Agreement on Academic Standards

Parent Survey Findings	Elementary	Middle	High
This school has high academic standards. (<i>ns</i> = 503, 195, 200)	87.0%	81.9%	88.9%

PROJECT AREA 2: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

In general, most students reported feeling safe and connected at school.

Most parents reported positive and frequent communication with school sites.

Students and parents of Non-Kid's Zone sites had greater levels of agreement about positive connections and safety than students and parents at Kid's Zone sites.

Description

RTTT District funds have been allocated to complement foundation and other resources to support Kid's Zone after school, neighborhood, and community resources. Across the District, teachers received summer professional development and follow up training in developing Academic Parent Teacher (APTT) Teams to promote family education partnerships with parents. As of the data collection period, some of the school sites had already hosted their first APTT meeting, but, for most sites, many of these elements had just begun to be put into place. It is important to note that while this section provides baseline data on Project 2 overall, including student, parent, teacher, and administer perceptions and experiences, it does not address the implementation of Kid's Zone activities, which will be addressed in a later report.

Parent Perception of Communication

Nearly every surveyed parent agreed that *academic success is a shared responsibility between teachers and parents*. The majority of parents also agreed that they receive and engage in communication from their child's teachers and schools, with rates of agreement diminishing slightly for parents of high school students. Despite the overall positive ratings, there appears to be room for improvement. There was a low response rate for all parents (less than 15% district wide), with 13% of non-Kid's Zone school parents and 6% of Kid's Zone school parents completing the survey questionnaire. Respondents from Kid's Zone schools reported significantly lower levels of agreement for every item in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Parent Respondents' Agreement About Communication

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I feel welcome at this school. (ns = 581, 239, 233)	96.7%	89.5%	90.1%
The principal communicates with parents. (ns = 580, 240, 231)	92.6%	83.8%	86.1%
The teachers communicate with parents. (ns = 580, 240, 232)	95.0%	88.3%	77.6%
The school gives me the info I need to support my child's learning at home. (ns = 584, 241, 232)	92.4%	81.8%	79.2%
I regularly communicate with my child's teachers. (ns = 580, 238, 230)	87.8%	73.9%	64.3%
The school informs me about community resources and after school programs. (ns = 580, 239, 232)	91.2%	74.9%	69.0%

In focus groups, many parents described satisfaction with the access they had to their child's teacher(s): *"I feel like they do a lot by having parent nights, parent coaching with math and English once a quarter, teachers are all willing to answer questions and how to point them to resources at site or district level, make their parents aware of difficulties in class."*

Parents described e-mail or face-to face as their primary method of contact. Many parents described the value of ParentConnect, *"I look it up every single week and make sure it's accurate. Some teachers are not using it, but it's very user friendly. It's helpful."* Some parents at the high school lamented the fact that it wasn't updated as frequently by high school teachers, *"Some of the teachers here are behind in updating ParentConnect,"* Based on parent feedback, the use of ParentConnect does appear to vary by teacher and school site.

APTT Parent Presentations

As part of the grant, teachers received training to develop and implement APTT at their sites. Parents were asked about the event during focus groups. There was enthusiasm:

- *"Lots of parents came, and it was very exciting!"*
- *"We understand a little more about how the classroom works, and it's a great idea. I hope they continue doing it."*
- *"My children's teachers told us exactly what they do during the day. I really liked this."*
- *"My son's teacher gave us ideas on how to support our children learning process. They told us about games we can use at home."*

Some parents also made comments about timing and scheduling that prevented participation:

- *"I couldn't come. I have other kids to pick up."*
- *"I work. I couldn't go in the afternoon."*
- *"Only problem is that if you have multiple kids and you have to split up. Would have been nice to be able to talk to teachers more, there was no time for questions."*

Challenges and Suggestions for Improving Communication Systems

Parents made general suggestions about improving communication and access to support all parents, and in particular, non-native English speakers and Spanish speaking parents:

- *"Spanish families don't know how the school system works. Most of us don't know, and we want to support our children. The school communicates but sometimes the parents still don't understand the processes."*
- *"There's no outreach with language barriers, some people don't know how to use a computer, send email. I went to college and know how to help my son. The hard part is knowing the process of how school works here."*
- *"If there were a teacher from every grade level who could give parents an overview of what the kids will be studying, so that we could learn from them what the kids are going to be learning and how they are supposed to be learning."*
- *"The school could organize support teams, so that the parents can help in the classrooms. Currently we have 30 students per teacher. The teachers have to take care of details (copying, handing out work) that take away quality teaching time. If we could help with those details, the teachers could focus more on teaching."*

Students: Attitude and Connections to School and School Staff

Most students indicated very positive attitudes toward school and positive relationships with teachers at their sites. Approximately two-thirds of students indicated that they *are part of an extracurricular activity after school* that meets at least once a week. Fewer middle and high school students reported *having an adult at their school that they could talk to about non-academic problems* than elementary school students. Although the majority of all Kid’s Zone school students reported agreement on each item in Figure 7, students from non-Kid’s Zone sites reported higher levels of agreement.

Figure 7: Student Respondents’ Agreement About School Connections

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I like going to school. (ns = 892, 892, 1277)	91.0%	77.7%	70.5%
I have an adult at school I can talk to about academic problems. (ns = 0, 891, 1286)	N/A	74.1%	78.5%
There is an adult at school I can talk to about non-academic problems. (ns = 888, 887, 1289)	91.9%*	62.0%	63.1%
My teacher believes I will be a success. (ns = 889, 886, 1270)	96.2%	86.7%	89.3%

*Elementary students were asked to rate “I can talk to my teacher if I have a problem.”

Student and Parent Perception of School Safety

Students

The majority of students reported feeling *safe at school*, commuting *to and from school*, and in their *neighborhoods*. Slightly fewer middle and high school students reporting feeling safe than elementary school students, and respondents from non-Kid’s Zone schools reported a significantly higher level of agreement on all safety items (Figure 8) than respondents from Kid’s Zone schools.

Figure 8: Students’ Perception of School and Neighborhood Safety

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I feel safe at school. (ns = 889, 896, 1294)	92.4%	87.2%	86.5%
I feel safe coming to and from school. (ns = 886, 896, 1286)	94.0%	92.5%	87.3%
I feel safe in my neighborhood. (ns = 886, 894, 1285)	87.0%	91.4%	88.7%

Nearly all parents reported that they *believe this school is a safe place* with some variation by grade span - from 97% agreement at the elementary level to 89% at the high school level. Overall parents from non-Kid’s Zone schools reported significantly higher levels of agreement that their child’s school is safe, but this difference may coincide with differences by grade-span since Logan High is a Kid’s Zone site.

Figure 9: Parents’ Perception of School Safety

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I believe this school is a safe place. (ns = 582, 241, 233)	96.9%	94.2%	88.8%

PROJECT AREA 3: SUPERINTENDENT AND TEACHER EVALUATION

Teachers and administrators describe current evaluation process as ineffective.

Teachers and administrators in evaluation pilot are enthusiastic by initial process.

Description

The District has begun a pilot bringing together a team of four teachers and an administrator from four sites to draft a new evaluation system to be phased-in over time. The Pilot Teams will meet three times during the 2013-14 year collectively and throughout the year at their site.

Teacher Perception of Current Evaluation System

The Evaluation Team collected data from all sites on teacher understanding of the current evaluation system. Teachers reported a lack of clarity, *"What's the current policy? I'm not sure right now."* Some teachers remarked that they were uncertain of the process because they *"haven't been evaluated in years"* or hadn't had a formal evaluation *"since my third year of teaching."* Some teachers had questions about the timing of a new system, because they were also learning new curricula and hadn't yet adopted materials and assessments aligned to the Common Core.

Pilot Teachers' Perceptions

A focus group was held with the sixteen teachers engaged in the pilot. Teachers described the strength of the pilot model as the constructive and collaborative approach used by the District: *"It has made me feel more accountable, to myself, and to my students."* Another mentioned that, *"At first I was apprehensive and thought it could be punitive, I now see it as very useful."* There were two potential challenges in implementation noted: sufficient time for professional development growth and collaboration with their peers and site administrator and ensuring District tenacity in program design: *"The District has a reputation for starting and not finishing projects - or not giving enough time to do it well and then giving up on it and starting something new."* The impression overall is very positive. In parting one teacher described, *"This has been one of the best ways to roll-out a program. It should be the model for district professional development. Nothing about it feels top-down. We are building a better model because we are all engaged in this project together and all of our voices are being heard."*

Pilot Administrators' Perceptions

A focus group was held with the four administrators engaged in the pilot. Overall, they described the experience so far as positive: *"I am more hopeful of a better process for giving and receiving feedback."* Administrators also described the value found by teachers in creating collective goals, seeing that aspect of the pilot as a very positive experience: *"It's helping drive a more self-reflective process for teachers."* Administrators described the potential challenge of finding the time to implement the system with more than just a few teachers in one year, as the observation-evaluation cycle currently includes four meetings with each teacher - pre-observation, observation, observation de-brief, and goal-setting.

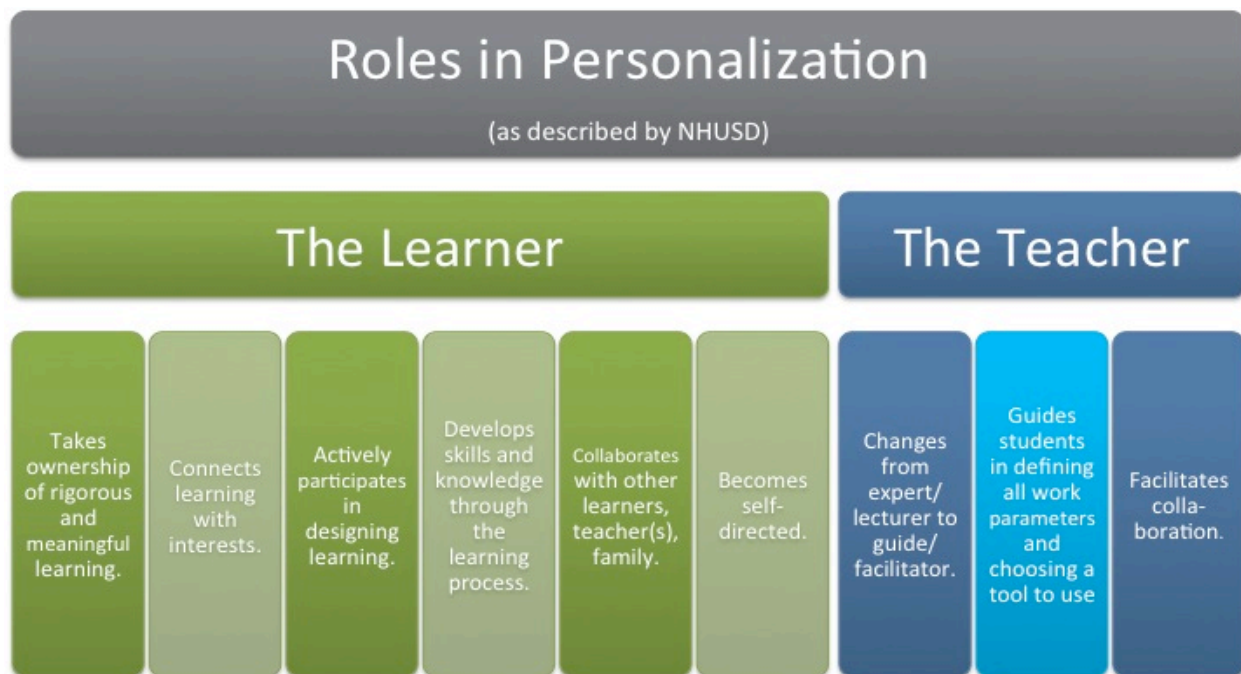
PROJECT AREA 4: TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONALIZATION OF LEARNING

The District is building capacity but skills and needs differ, and there isn't yet a common definition of personalization of learning.

Description

The District has been engaged in several activities to develop more personalized learning experiences. The District developed a plan to provide students and teachers with Chromebooks. The District implemented a summer technology professional development training with follow up trainings in December. The District has crafted a plan to support teachers in developing personalized learning environments for their students and has identified the roles for personalization (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Personalization of Learning



Teacher Use of Technology and Personalization of Learning

Overall Perspective on Technology Usage

In October 2013 focus groups, teachers described varied levels of technology use, as well as varied skills to be able to use technology as a teaching tool. Many described the challenges due to infrastructure issues at their site, as well as outdated student computers and limited useful software. A few teachers appeared to be "early adopters," and with their new Chromebooks, these teachers had begun to revise lessons and teaching methods. Teacher focus group remarks are consistent with administrator interviews. Nine percent of principals described more than half of their teachers using technology to personalize learning. The majority (64%) of principals described some (but less than half) of their faculty

currently using technology to personalize learning for students. The remaining 27% of principals described minimal use of technology to personalize learning for students.

Professional Development

Teachers participated in summer and ongoing professional development in using technology. Technology training in general has been more difficult than other content areas, for many reasons. During the summer, 140 teachers participated from K-12 all grade levels, making it difficult to tailor the training to different grade-span and technology needs. As one teacher wrote, *"Time would have been better spent at sites so we could target it better to specific age/grade/site needs. This also would have allowed for those ready to go on to do so or help others, and those needing more assistance could have gotten more one-on-one help."* Another teacher wrote after the three-day training, *"I'm not ready to use anything presented except for Google documents which I was already doing."* In the focus group conducted with coaches in January, the coaches described teachers having to re-learn the content based on when their students actually received Chromebooks. As one coach described, *"Even if you take excellent notes and write everything down, if there's a gap between when you learn it and when you do it, you'll need to re-learn it."*

December technology professional development appeared to have been more successful. Many more staff indicated readiness to implement the basic elements after the professional development session, although teachers continued to comment about the need for personalization of training: *"It would have been more helpful if we had differentiated training by skill level."* According to evaluation feedback, the approach designed for Logan High School teachers appears to have been more successful than the districtwide session. In the Logan model, teachers trained other teachers using tools that they have already implemented in their classrooms. As one teacher described, *"I liked that it was taught by Logan teachers which made it more tailored to our needs."*

Perspective on Personalization of Learning

Teachers described personalization occurring in different ways, including through English Language Arts curricula and tailored mathematics work for individual students. Many teachers lamented that they often teach to the middle due to class size, time constraints, and other challenges: *"We often teach to the middle. There are some struggling students who don't get the support and some high-end students who aren't challenged."* Another teacher mentioned, *"The number of children in our classroom makes it difficult to meet all their needs."* One middle school teacher described the difficulties in this way: *"In core the reading levels are so widespread. Kids reading at second grade level to the top of high school level. You can't scaffold that broadly."*

Some teachers described their own efforts to personalize learning through technology and project-based curricula. In terms of particular technology tools, a number of items were discussed including RazKids, Illuminate, Kahn Academy, and YouTube. One teacher described use of Google docs to support student-to-student collaboration and assessment design: *"Another thing I have tried is to create an assessment in Google docs. So instead of creating an assessment myself, they use Google docs and*

collaborate in different places. They learn how to do formatting, learn how to insert an equation in Google docs, do a lot of chatting, and come up with an answer key. And that test is used as an actual exam for someone else.”

Student Perception of Personalization of Learning

Technology Usage in School

Over a third of students reported using a computer during class, with higher rates of high school students reporting using a computer than elementary and middle school students. Middle and high school students were more likely to report that *computers help them do better in school* and that their *teacher uses a computer during class* than elementary school students.

Figure 11: Students Current Use of Technology (October 2013)

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I use a computer during class. (<i>ns</i> = 882, 892, 1282)	36.9%	36.9%	43.4%
My teacher uses a computer during class. (<i>ns</i> = 871, 882, 1281)	87.6%	94.6%	96.4%
Computers help me do better in school. (<i>ns</i> = 871, 887, 1276)	67.2%	84.6%	86.2%

Personalized Learning

Students discussed a range of experiences that indicate the degree to which learning is personalized at their school. Many discussed experiences within English classes that provided them with personalized learning through independent choice reading, expository writing, and journal work. Some described engaging in longer project-based learning activities in math, science or English. Many discussed teacher accessibility during out-of school time as a way to support their academic needs: *“Some teachers give you the opportunity to stay afterschool or during lunch and finish work. The teacher will also stay and help you with the work.”* Another mentioned, *“Last year when I was having trouble with math, my math teacher held after school tutoring.”* At the high school level, some students talked about teachers moving too quickly in order to cover material, *“My teacher goes exactly by the book. Doesn’t take the time if we don’t get it. Always just moves to the next lesson even if we don’t get it.”*

Parent Perception

Survey Data - Technology and Additional Support

The majority of parent respondents reported that their child uses technology for learning at school and at home. Most parents believe their child receives the extra academic help he or she needs from their school, although respondents from non-Kid’s Zone schools reported a significantly higher level of agreement than respondents from Kid’s Zone schools.

Figure 12: Parent Respondents’ Agreement About Technology Use and Academic Support

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
My child uses technology for learning at school. (<i>ns</i> = 581, 240, 231)	87.8%	88.3%	90.0%
My child uses technology for learning at home. (<i>ns</i> = 580, 238, 232)	95.9%	96.6%	97.0%
My child receives the extra academic help he/she needs from the school. (<i>ns</i> = 577, 237, 228)	92.4%	86.9%	84.2%

Focus Groups: Parents Describe Student Support Needs

During focus groups, parents described a range of supports received. Some parents described the challenges faced by teachers: *“Teachers have to teach to the middle because of number of students in each class.”* Many parents in the focus groups discussed wanting additional enrichment opportunities to challenge their students: *“There should be more support for kids who are already proficient but want to get ahead.”* Some parents mentioned use of Kahn Academy as a tool that they independently discovered and have shared with their child. Some parents described a desire for the Kid’s Zone after school program to have a greater academic focus that could support their students, rather than simply homework time. Some parents reported that they struggle to help their child succeed in school, *“I’m not good at math so if [my son] has a question, I can’t help him with it and then he can’t turn the homework in on time. If I had more information I could help him better.”*

Conversely several parents mentioned specific program and support they received. For example parents of students at Logan described additional support received through the Institute of Community Leaders and Puente programs. They described highly personalized learning experiences for their students that helped them to both do well academically in-school and plan for their future. Several parents of students with special needs described receiving appropriate personalized support for their child. One parent said, *“My daughter also has speech therapy, a psychologist, and learning one-on-one classes. I also receive support to understand my daughter’s needs.”*

PROJECT AREA 5: GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

There is an emerging need for Common Core aligned assessments and common grading systems across sites.

Description

As part of the Race to the Top grant, a Committee has been meeting to develop common grading systems and approaches across the district.

Teacher, Coaches, and Administrative Perceptions

While some sites appeared to have common systems within their grade levels according to interviews and focus groups, there does not appear to be a common approach across schools or across sites. Teachers expressed desire for more consistency in grading policies within grades, schools, and the school district, emphasizing that time constraints prevent collaboration among teachers: *“Authenticity of grades is important here, but I would also say there aren’t school wide policies.”* Another teacher described, *“We don’t have common assessments. We’d like to have time to develop these things. Most of us are all working alone on these things.”* Teachers also discussed concerns about implementing assessment practices that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards: *“[We have] some shared assessment systems, but no Common Core assessments.”* There was also a concern that *“[Report] cards don’t match Common Core State Standards, but it should be a district wide system. A child who goes from one site to another the teacher should be able to understand it.”*

Student Perception

The vast majority of all surveyed students reported that they feel that they are graded fairly. High school students report the grading in math and science classes as less fair than that the grading in other classes. During focus groups, students described using rubrics in English Language Arts that aided them in understanding requirements and making improvements. In high school students appeared to have some concerns that the weight of final grades were based on tests: *“Tests should be less a part of grades. Sometimes you do all your homework right, but if you don’t pass one test you go from an A to a C.”* Some students also described not understanding all teachers grading procedures: *“Sometimes it’s unfair because teachers aren’t always clear in their instructions around homework and grading.”*

Figure 13: Students Describe Perceptions of Fairness of Grading

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
The grading in school is fair. (ns = 876, 0, 0)	93.2%	N/A	N/A
The grading in math is fair. (ns = 0, 897, 1272)	N/A	82.9%	69.3%
The grading in English is fair. (ns = 0, 884, 1272)	N/A	90.4%	86.5%
The grading in science is fair. (ns = 0, 883, 1262)	N/A	89.2%	78.4%
The grading in social studies is fair. (ns = 0, 879, 1264)	N/A	90.6%	87.3%
The grading in electives is fair. (ns = 0, 880, 1251)	N/A	91.1%	89.7%
The grading in PE class is fair. (ns = 0, 877, 1245)	N/A	87.8%	87.4%

Parent Perceptions

The majority of parents at all three grade spans reported that they understand the grading procedures at their child's school and that they are informed about their child's academic progress. In focus groups, some parents reported that they understand their schools' grading and felt confident that they could address misunderstandings with their child's teacher: *"I understand the grades. All the reports come with translation in other languages on the back of the card. And if I don't understand something, I know I can always approach the teacher."* Other parents expressed concerns about the current grading system and NWEA assessments, and the move towards computer-based grading and assessments, particularly for young students- *"I don't think kinders are going to be accurately tested on computers. Not a test of academics but of their focus and technology skills."*

Figure 14: Parent Understanding About Grades and Academic Progress

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I understand the grading procedures at this school. (<i>ns</i> = 579, 240, 229)	84.6%	93.3%	90.4%
I am informed about my child's academic progress. (<i>n</i> =579, 241, 231)	92.9%	92.1%	89.2%

PROJECT AREA 6: COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

Most students and parents describe college as goal but there are currently minimal school-based preparation and activities.

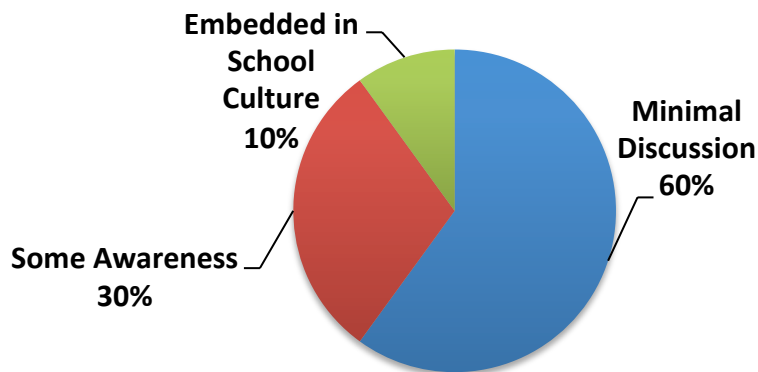
Description

The Race to the Top grant includes many provisions designed to improve access to college-careers for students. The grant hopes to improve college and career readiness first and foremost through the improved teaching and learning and personalization activities on campus, and additionally through the development of STEM academy programs, support for completion of the PSAT at each high school, and greater access to career technical programs and improved academic support.

Site Activities

The majority of principals identified a minimum level of college-career awareness at school. Only one administrator described college-career awareness as embedded within their school culture. Logan High School and Conley-Cabarallo had the highest degree of activity in this area. Logan college-career events including the onsite PSAT at Logan for all 10th graders, college site visits, and a career fair. At Conley-Cabarallo students received guidance and support in future planning that included training in financial aid applications and understanding the community college system.

Figure 15: Administrators Describe Current Level of College-Career Awareness at their Site



Parent Perception

Survey results revealed that almost all parents believe education is important for future success. While the majority of parents of high school students understand how to apply for financial aid for college, fewer reported that they receive support in how to prepare their student for college. During focus groups, parents at Logan cited specific programs, such as Puente and Institute of Community Leaders, and specific events, such as Junior Night, that help prepare students and parents for college.

Figure 16: Parent Aspirations and Understanding of Future Planning

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I believe education is important for the future success of my child. (ns = 584, 240, 233)	99.7%	99.6%	99.6%
I receive support in how to prepare my student for college. (ns=230)	N/A	N/A	63.5%
I understand how to apply for financial aid for college. (ns = 230)	N/A	N/A	90.0%
My child is already planning for a career or to go on to college after graduating high school. (ns = 0, 0, 228)	N/A	N/A	68.0%

Student Perception of College and Career Readiness

The majority of students reported that they believe *getting a college education is important* and that *what they learn in school seems meaningful* (Figure 18). High school students were less likely to report that they plan on applying to a four-year college and more likely to report plans to attend a community college. In focus groups, student future plans ranged from statistically likely (community college); to academically ambitious (surgeon); to highly aspirational (president, NBA player). In focus groups, some students indicated college-career oriented activities at school, but most discussed future planning occurring at home. Survey respondents from non-Kid's Zone schools reported a significantly higher level of agreement that *what they learn in school is meaningful* than respondents from Kid's Zone schools, and elementary students from non-Kid's Zone schools reported significantly higher level of agreement that *they will go to college after high school* than elementary students from Kid's Zone schools. Kid's Zone respondents reported significantly higher agreement that *they have opportunities to explore careers* and that *teachers help them plan for the future* than students at non-Kid's Zone schools.

Figure 17: Student College and Career Planning

Statement	Elementary	Middle	High
I believe getting a college education is important. (ns = 887, 882, 1270)	98.7%	99.0%	95.6%
What we learn in school seems meaningful. (ns = 881, 881, 1264)	93.4%	87.0%	74.2%
I have opportunities to explore careers in school. (ns = 868, 875, 1263)	42.2%	69.9%	80.8%
My teachers help me to plan my future. (ns = 878, 877, 1261)	71.0%	60.2%	65.1%
I will go to college after high school. (ns = 882, 0, 0)	97.3%	N/A	N/A
I plan on applying to a four-year college. (ns = 0, 875, 1263)	N/A	91.6%	73.3%
I plan on attending a community college. (ns = 0, 871, 1258)	N/A	42.6%	52.4%
I have an idea of what I will do after high school. (ns = 880, 882, 1270)	87.0%	79.7%	85.5%
I understand the requirements for high school graduation. (ns = 1270)	N/A	N/A	96.8%
I understand how to apply to college. (ns = 0, 0, 1270)	N/A	N/A	65.6%
I understand how to apply for financial aid for college. (ns = 1267)	N/A	N/A	45.5%
I know which classes I need to take to get into a four-year college. (ns = 0, 0, 1272)	N/A	N/A	74.7%
I have opportunities to take AP classes. (ns = 1260)	N/A	N/A	75.6%
I am enrolled in a career technical program. (ns = 1255)	N/A	N/A	19.8%

PROJECT AREA 8: LEADERSHIP

According to focus groups, there is an increased foundation for trust among stakeholders.

Description

The Leadership project area emerged after the grant submission as an area of growth. It includes developing shared leadership and responsibility for implementation of other project areas, and collaboration through the Guiding Coalition meetings and Instructional Leadership Team meetings.

Teacher Focus Groups

The External Evaluation Team asked teachers during focus groups about support they receive from both their site and district leaders, and opportunities for leadership development at their site. Teachers expressed positive experiences on the whole, although they did report a range of experiences. Some teachers discussed how recent changes in leadership have made it challenging to develop both momentum and communication systems: *"It's hard to develop a consistent relationship when you have new people all the time. It takes a while."* Another teacher remarked, *"With all of the turnover, the communication has lacked big time."* Conversely, one teacher spoke to the benefit of the fresh perspective new leadership can bring: *"If you have the same people in leadership over and over again, even if they tweak things a little bit, they can't think outside the box. We all get in ruts."*

Most teachers felt generally supported by their site leadership. One teacher remarked that they *"Always felt supported with respect to professional development. They keep us moving forward."* Another teacher described, *"The district has been very helpful and supportive"* about peer-led professional development. Teachers mentioned many leadership opportunities available for interested teachers, *"I feel like I've had a lot of leadership opportunities and that these opportunities exist for everyone. More than anything else administrators are trying to build capacity for teacher leadership, but I don't think everyone is interested in taking advantage."*

Several teachers described being unsatisfied with prior top-down or directive approaches to leadership and desiring, and experiencing, more transparent communication systems with the new district leadership. One teacher stated that *"I didn't feel that they were supporting us [with] what WE needed – it's what they thought we needed."* Most teachers were hopeful of the new Superintendents - *"The two that are there now. They complement each other's expertise."* Teachers described the Superintendents as actively listening to the voices of all stakeholders and developing a collaborative vision for the future: *"But some things in the past were very top-down and directive, not necessarily, a partnership. I think now there's more of a sense of shared vision."*

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This report is intended to provide information on stakeholder perceptions during the first year of the Race to the Top grant implementation. As described, the District is implementing eight project areas and there has been progress in most areas thus far. Teachers have described professional development and coaching in positive terms. There are efforts to build stronger partnerships with families through the Academic Parent Teacher Teams and parents and students report strong feelings of connection. The District has begun a pilot of a new teacher-administrator evaluation system that has thus far been well-received. The District has been engaged in distributing Chromebooks for teacher and student use to support personalization of learning through technology. While there have been activities toward implementing a more aligned grading system, new systems are not yet in place. Survey and focus group data reveal high academic and future aspirations from students and parents, but college-career conversations and activities are not yet embedded into the fabric of all sites. Most teachers describe feeling some degree of support from District and site leaders. A theme throughout teacher focus groups and administrator interviews has been the challenge of so many projects and activities occurring simultaneously, and the difficulty of achieving mastery in all areas at once.

Next Steps

An emerging concern is that students from non-Kid's Zone sites have significantly higher positive connections than Kid's Zone sites, which is one of the concerns that Kid's Zone was designed to address. In our next analysis, we will compare results along various quantitative data measures (NWEA assessments, attendance) for students at Kid's Zone and non-Kid's Zone schools. In addition, we will provide an overview of Kid's Zone activities to-date. We will also analyze data for the federal report; collect end-of-year survey data; and conduct end-of-year focus groups with teachers and students.