LBUSD Small Learning Communities – Year 3 Interim Evaluation Report
Cabrillo High School 2007-2008

Overview of the evaluation:
In August 2005, LBUSD received a 5-year federal grant to implement small learning communities (SLCs) in three high schools – Poly, Cabrillo, and Jordan. The goals of the grant, which align with the districts' high school reform initiative, include a commitment to:
1) improving student achievement while at the same time attempting to close the achievement gap,
2) building the capacity of teachers to lead, and
3) improving the culture and climate of high schools.

SLCs are geared towards raising student achievement through the personalization of education by developing structures and processes that encourage deeper and more meaningful relationships between teachers, teachers and students, as well as between students themselves.

The SRM Evaluation Group at UCLA was hired by LBUSD as the external evaluators for this SLC grant. There are two general purposes for this SLC evaluation:
A) To understand how SLCs are being implemented so that we can develop "lessons learned," make mid-course corrections, if needed, monitor progress, and understand what aspects may have contributed to effects and
B) To understand the effects of SLCs on achievement and attitudes towards achievement, culture and climate at school(s), and structure and process of developing leadership capacity.

There are five general areas where we are collecting and/or analyzing data:
1. SLC Development and Implementation
   a. Leadership Capacity
   b. Teacher to teacher interaction
2. Personalization
   a. Student to teacher interaction
   b. Student to student interaction
3. Equity and Access
4. Student Attitudes towards Achievement
   a. Academic
   b. Post Secondary
5. Collaboration (with parents and/or community)

Data will be collected and analyzed using multiple methods, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Evaluation Results: Year 2 (2006-07) Summary
In this second year of implementation, the SLCs at Cabrillo, Jordan, and Polytechnic High Schools are well on their way to being developed or further supported. As evidenced by the logic models, the leadership team at each school has thoughtfully considered what activities are to be conducted and what outputs and outcomes should be evident as a result of these activities. However, the results of the student survey indicated that awareness of SLCs and their identities will need to continue to be developed, particularly at Jordan and Cabrillo.

When looking at academic behavior, the student survey results seem to indicate that academic behavior is not reflective of college knowledge. Students at Poly High School, specifically, seem to be more aware of college issues. However, while academic behavior across schools is relatively the same, there is some variation in college knowledge. For example, although Poly High School students seem to have more college knowledge, their academic behavior is similar to students at the two other schools.

While most students indicated they participate in making decisions about their schools, a high percentage of students also reported not partaking in similar processes within their SLCs. However, students are feeling comfortable in their SLCs, and the majority of students like participating in their SLC activities.

Survey results about student-teacher communication reflect the fact that though students in general do not feel as though their recommendations for instructional changes are considered, they reported feeling academically challenged and supported by their teachers. Also, a small percentage of students across the three sites feel comfortable discussing academic as well as personal problems with their instructors. Results from the student survey pertaining to student-student interaction show little variation in terms of students' respect for each other and no clear affinity for peers enrolled in the same SLC over those who are not, with the exception of students at Poly who reported feeling closer to peers within their SLC. Additionally, while survey results indicated that students do not frequently speak with their peers about academically-oriented issues, most feel their peers support and encourage them to do well and to value educational opportunities that are available.

In general, the staff members at each school understand the purpose and vision behind implementing SLCs and they strongly believe that SLCs will help raise student achievement. However, there is not as strong agreement on whether SLCs will help improve the systems and processes at the school. The most rewarding aspect for the staff seems to be the increase in collaboration and better relationships with both teachers and students.

The biggest challenge to implementation appears to be finding time for the staff to share ideas and instructional strategies, and opportunities for collaboration. Another challenge is to make sure that the staff becomes comfortable with how SLCs are being implemented and that there is full staff buy-in. A third challenge is the need to make sure that all student groups are being adequately served.

Interim Evaluation Results: Year 3 (2007-08)
The following are results from a mid-year survey administered to the staff. At Cabrillo, a total of 123 staff members returned their survey (108 – teachers, 9 – counselors, 6 – did not indicate a position). Of the 123 staff members, 110 indicated that 'yes' they are part of an SLC, 5 stated 'no' they are not, 4 did not know whether they were part of an SLC, and 4 did not respond to the question. Table 1, below, shows the distribution of staff members by SLC who responded to the fall survey.

Table 1. SLC distribution at Cabrillo High School, LBUSD SLC Staff Survey, Fall 2007.

SLC	SLC Affiliation			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
CSFITT	10	0	2	12
CHOC	23	0	1	24
CSSJ	23	0	0	23
ISC	17	0	1	18
CED	11	0	1	12
CAT	20	1	0	21
No response	5	5	3	13
Total	109	6	8	123

SLC Implementation:
On the survey, staff members were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements asking about SLC implementation. The responses for the Cabrillo staff can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Percent agreement on statements by staff members at Cabrillo High School, Fall 2007.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not App.	**N**
1. I understand the vision and goals for implementing small learning communities **at this school.**	11%	18%	48%	21%	2%	122
2. I understand the vision and goals for **my SLC.**	12%	17%	39%	29%	3%	122
3. I am comfortable with how **my school** is implementing small learning communities.	29%	37%	29%	3%	3%	119
4. I am comfortable with how **my SLC** is being implemented.	20%	32%	33%	10%	5%	122
5. I believe that forming small learning communities will help **this school** raise student achievement.	8%	26%	44%	21%	1%	119
6. **The school** provides time on a regular basis for the sharing of information, ideas, and instructional strategies.	9%	22%	47%	20%	2%	123
7. I am able to navigate through **the district's** administrative procedures.	19%	27%	35%	5%	14%	119
8. I am able to navigate through **the school's** administrative procedures.	15%	26%	44%	8%	8%	120
My SLC provides teachers with opportunities to collaborate on decisions that will:						
9. improve student achievement.	13%	29%	39%	13%	7%	122
10. improve systems and processes at the school level.	15%	37%	31%	11%	6%	123
11. improve systems and processes at the department level.	18%	39%	22%	13%	8%	123
12. identify areas for professional development.	15%	29%	36%	11%	9%	123

Staff members were also asked: 1) What has been most rewarding, so far, when it comes to Small Learning Communities?, 2) What has been the biggest challenge, so far, in implementing Small Learning Communities?, and 3)What additional resources do you feel you will need to successfully implement SLCs?

By far, the most rewarding aspect for staff members has been increased staff collaboration and the sharing of ideas with fellow colleagues around possible SLC activities. Other rewarding aspects of SLC implementation have been mentoring students and following their progress towards reaching academic and career goals. However, several staff members also reported that while there have been great ideas generated, few ideas have yet to be implemented.

One of the biggest challenges to SLC implementation, so far, according to the Cabrillo staff has been that staff members are not aware of which students are in their SLC. Similarly, the staff indicates that students themselves are not aware of which SLC they belong. Related to these challenges may be the fact that scheduling issues are also a primary concern. According to the survey responses, students are not scheduled to have classes with their corresponding SLC teachers. Another challenge to implementation has been a lack of buy-in, at all levels – administrative, teacher, and student.

Some additional resources needed for successful implementation, as suggested by the staff, include: time (for planning, teacher collaboration, getting to know students, increasing SLC awareness); funding (for fieldtrips, SLC elective classes, time for planning) and professional development, particularly for learning about models of successful SLCs.

Changes in Culture and Climate:
Staff members were also asked whether or not in their opinion, the culture and climate of the school has changed with the implementation of SLCs. At Cabrillo, 75% of those who responded said 'no' and 25% said 'yes.' Amongst those who said yes, the primary positive change seems to be with staff interaction, specifically more collaboration and communication between departments. However, some of the changes that were cited by the staff included such things as increased frustration because of a lack of focus on specific SLC goals/activities and little opportunities to offer an SLC elective.

Points of Reflection:
- There has been an increase in sharing of information and staff collaboration, particularly between departments. How can this be sustained? Further utilized?
- Teachers do not know in which SLCs the students in their classes belong. Similarly, students are not aware of which SLCs they are in. How can SLC awareness be increased?
- While many good ideas around SLCs have been generated, the next steps towards implementation of those ideas have not happened. What is needed to push forward and take those next steps?

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