

Long Beach Unified School District ~ Lakewood High School
Small Learning Communities (SLCs) Initiative
Year 1 ~ Staff Spring 2008 Survey

Staff Survey Participants:

- One hundred thirty staff members from The Arts, ATM, GLOBE, HERO, Merit, Odyssey, and PALMS. ATM staff had the most participation at about 17% of the total while GLOBE had the least at 5%. Approximately 15% of staff indicated that they did not belong to an SLC, about 5% noted that they belong to multiple SLCs, and 3% did not identify their SLCs.
- Teachers comprised the majority (80%) of survey participants. Those teaching 10th grade had greater participation (approximately 24%) than those teaching in other grades.
- Approximately 39% indicated being assigned to their SLCs while about 35% reported having had a choice.

SLC Development

In general, the majority of staff report positive experiences with the development of SLCs at Lakewood High.

- Staff understand SLC purpose and goals (71%), understand their role in their SLCs (60%), have time to meet with SLC teams to share information (discuss students' academic progress, curriculum needs, etc) (76%), and have time to meet to satisfy their SLC goals (52%).
- About 67% of staff indicate that the Master Schedule is adjusted to strengthen the SLCs.
- While staff report having opportunities to suggest modifications to SLCs (61%), about 52% of staff point out that students are not afforded those same opportunities.
- Approximately 48% of staff report that the culture and climate of the school has changed with the development of SLCs. When asked how the culture and climate has changed, staff provided the following answers: more teacher collaboration, teachers more stressed, stratified SLC system creates perceived/actual inequity, bonding within SLC but not between, tracking, more personal/friendlier, students know each other better/sense of belonging, more social classes which can be disruptive, more cheating, and improved teacher/ student relations.
- Staff report the following as the most rewarding aspect of SLCs: teacher/curricular collaboration, connections/communication with students, improved student behavior, student-focused community/sense of belonging, graduation rate increase, expansion of AP to all students, seeing students grow academically, interact with students outside academics, career night, outcome charts, ownership/pride, and no rewarding aspect.
- Staff report the following as the most challenging in developing SLCs: teacher buy-in, time (to develop SLC purpose/goal/mission, to develop cross-curricular assignments, to work more closely with students), understanding role of SLCs and keeping themes in lessons, school/class size, teacher/staffing constraints, A-G requirement push, achievement disparity, recruiting strong students/less non-motivated students, students segregated by SLC, SLC placement (arbitrary, special education students), inter-SLC tension/stigma attached to some SLCs, foreign language requirement, overcoming tracking, discipline when students know each other well, Master Schedule problems, electives (incorporation and flexibility to choose), and money.
- To help further develop SLCs, staff mentioned a variety of resources. The more common were: time, money, teacher planning/ collaboration time (common conference periods), professional development time, teacher buy-in, support from administration, smaller class

size, additional staff, understanding special education needs, community outreach/involvement, learn from established SLCs, equity among SLCs, Master Schedule that supports SLCs, and scheduling seniors.

Curriculum & Instruction

The majority of staff report more SLC-related activities outside the classroom than within.

- More teachers (44%) teach at least 50% of classes within their SLC than not (32%).
- About 49% of staff reported collaborating with members of their SLC grade level teams and approximately 57% of staff indicated that SLC teams pursue professional development goals consistent with SLC needs.
- The majority of staff disagreed that SLC-specific data is used to inform instruction (48%) or that lessons are designed with SLC theme in mind (45%).

Personalization

Staff report high levels of personalization within their SLCs.

- Staff feel a sense of belonging in their SLCs (59%) and identify a climate of trust among students, between student and teachers, and among students, teachers, and administrators (62%).
- Staff report having students receive guidance on course selection and college/career planning (58%), having students talk to them about non-academic problems (68%), being aware of how students are doing in non-academic areas of their lives (63%), and talking to teachers about students who might be struggling academically (79%).
- Staff report having high expectations for all students (72%), providing students with prompt feedback and regular progress reports with specific suggestions for improvement (68%), and changing lesson plans because of student suggestions (42%).
- Staff indicate that administration, teachers, and staff work together to assist students who may be at risk of failing (73%).

Parent & Community Relations

SLCs has developed stronger relations with parents than the community.

- Staff report having regular contact with parents to inform them of their child's progress (67%) and indicate that the school supports family and community involvement in planning, reviewing, and improving SLCs (59%).
- A majority (46%) of staff agree that strong connections exist within SLCs to the community that provide students with the opportunity to engage in activities related to college and career interest.

Student Achievement

Staff report that expectations for achievement are communicated clearly and college awareness among students is high.

- Staff report clearly communicating goals, standards, and expectations for achievement and behavior to students (66%) and feel confident that upon graduation, students will be prepared to succeed in the college or career of their choice (64%).
- Staff report talking to students about how to get into college (81%), informing students how to pay for college (58%), and tutoring students who might need additional academic support (55%).
- Staff report students knowing about the A-G requirements (71%) and having equal access to rigorous courses in all SLCs (49%).