Reinventing High School: Outcomes of the Coalition Campus Schools Project

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Long-standing critiques of large "factory model" high schools and growing evidence for the benefits of small schools, especially for the achievement of low-income and minority students, have stimulated initiatives in many cities to redesign secondary education. This seven-year study of the Coalition Campus Schools Project in New York City documented a unique "birthing" process for new, small schools that were created as part of a network of reform-oriented schools in a context of systemwide reform. The study found that five new schools that were created to replace a failing comprehensive high school produced, as a group, substantially better attendance, lower incident rates, better performance on reading and writing assessments, higher graduation rates, and higher college-going rates than the previous school, despite serving a more educationally disadvantaged population of students. The schools shared a number of design features, detailed in this study, that appeared to contribute to these outcomes. The study also describes successful system-level efforts to leverage these innovations and continuing policy dilemmas influencing the long-term fate of reforms.

KEYWORDS: *educational evaluation, school organization, school reform, school restructuring, small schools.*

In recent years, the large comprehensive high school has been a subject of growing critique as researchers examine the outcomes of various organizational models. "Factory model" schools have been criticized for their impersonal structures, fragmented curriculums, segregated and unequal program options, and inability to respond effectively to various student needs (see, e.g., Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985; Sizer, 1984). Some studies have found that, other things being equal, smaller schools appear to produce higher achievement (Haller, 1993; Howley, 1989; Howley & Huang, 1991), lower dropout rates (Pittman & Haughwout, 1987), lower rates of violence and vandalism (Garbarino, 1978; Haller, 1992), more positive feel-

ings about self and school, and more participation in school activities (Fowler, 1992; Green & Stevens, 1988; Howley & Huang; Lindsay, 1982, 1984). These outcomes appear more pronounced for students who are traditionally lower achieving (Lee & Smith, 1993, 1995). In addition, the belief that large schools are more cost-effective has been challenged by studies finding equivalent operating costs in small schools (Public Education Association, 1992) and lower costs per graduate (Stiefel, Berne, Iatarola, & Fruchter, 2000).

In response to these findings, there have been a number of efforts to create smaller, more communal school settings, especially in urban school districts where the failures of comprehensive high schools have seemed most pronounced. This article describes the outcomes of one such effort: the Coalition Campus Schools Project (CCSP), launched in New York City as part of a broader initiative to create small, new model schools during the early 1990s. The project replaced two large, comprehensive neighborhood high schools with eleven small schools and redesigned the campuses to include a set of small elementary and high schools, plus other service agencies. Over a seven-year period, the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching collected data about the school creation process, the new schools' designs and practices, and their outcomes.

This article reports findings for the first CCSP reform at Julia Richman High School and identifies policy issues posed by the large-scale redesign of schools in urban school districts. Although some of the schools that inspired this project have been studied previously, this is the first investigation of the outcomes of a second generation of schools that consciously emulated aspects of the earlier ones. It examines whether and how new schools can be created on the basis of successful designs rather than by relying primarily on the efforts of strong, charismatic leaders. This is also one of the first longitudinal studies to examine whether the effects of a group of new model schools are sustained over time. Finally, this study examines the policy context that has

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influenced the course of the reforms, with the aim of explaining the role of the district and the change process itself.

Background and Context

Launched in 1992, the CCSP was a collaboration between the New York City Board of Education and the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), a network of more than thirty New York City elementary and secondary schools that are members of the nationwide Coalition of Essential Schools. The project was part of the Board of Education's broader school restructuring initiative, begun by Chancellor Joe Fernandez in 1989 and continued through the terms of four subsequent chancellors. More than 150 new model schools were launched and housed in wings of existing large buildings or in small independent sites. The CCSP strategy gradually closed down a large campus by not admitting new students while hot-housing new schools at other sites. Later, some of these schools moved into the original large building with other small schools and social service agencies; the remaining schools occupied sites that served students in the original catchment area.

The CCSP replaced two of the city's more troubled high schools—Julia Richman High School in Manhattan and James Monroe High School in the Bronx—which served about three thousand students each. In a system that allows students to apply to academically competitive high schools or to a variety of schools of choice, these "zoned" schools are schools of last resort for many students not selected by others. In 1992, the city had twenty such neighborhood high schools, most of which exhibited high rates of academic failure. In that year, Julia Richman had a four-year graduation rate of 36.9 percent; the comparable rate for James Monroe was only 26.9 percent.[1]

Design Features

School size is not the only factor that influences student achievement. A number of studies have found that, all else equal, schools have higher levels of achievement when they create smaller, more personalized units in which teachers work together and students see a smaller number of teachers over a given period of time (Braddock & McPartland, 1993; Gottfredson & Daiger, 1979; Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). Researchers suggest that in such "communitarian" schools, students are better known and faculty develop a more collective perspective about the purposes and strategies for their work (for reviews, see Lee, Bryk, & Smith; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

A study of 820 high schools in the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) found that schools that had restructured to personalize education and develop collaborative learning structures produced significantly higher achievement gains and that the gains were more equitably distributed (Lee & Smith, 1995). The schools' practices included creating small units within schools, keeping students together over multiple years, forming teaching teams, assur-

ing common planning time for teachers, involving staff in schoolwide problem solving, involving parents, and fostering cooperative learning.

Not all small schools are successful. Those that incorporate fewer personalizing features and less ambitious instruction produce fewer benefits (McMullan, Sipe, & Wolf, 1994; Raywid, 1990, 1995; Wehlage, Smith, & Lipman, 1992). Some school-within-a-school strategies have reinforced academic stratification, producing greater success for some students and less for others (Ready, Lee, & LoGerfo, 2000). Intellectual content also matters. A study of more than two thousand students in twenty-three restructured schools found higher achievement on performance tasks for students who experienced what the researchers termed "authentic pedagogy"—instruction focused on active learning calling for higher-order thinking, extended writing, and an audience for student work (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1995). The NELS also found that students in schools with high levels of "authentic instruction" experienced greater achievement gains (Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1995).

The CCSP incorporated many of the features that, research suggests, should foster increased achievement and commitment to school: small learning communities organized around a common core of principles intended to prepare students to "use their minds well"; common academic standards supported by performance-based assessment; an interdisciplinary, "less is more" curriculum focused on inquiry and intellectual skills; small size and small pupil loads to enhance personalization; family involvement; student and teacher choice of school; and shared decision making (Center for Collaborative Education [CCE], 1993).

The CCSP schools' designs are derived from successful schools launched in the mid-1980s, in particular, Central Park East Secondary School, International High School, and the Urban Academy. The older schools, which mentored the new schools and provided staff for many of them, had established track records of succeeding with students who typically would have failed in traditional New York high schools. The schools routinely graduate more than 90 percent of their students and send 90 percent or more to college (see Ancess, 1995; Bensman, 1987, 1995, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995). Longitudinal research has also found that Central Park East students experience success once they reach college (Bensman, 2000).

All but two of the CCSP schools adapted their designs from the model of Central Park East, a high school of 450 students founded by Deborah Meier in East Harlem in 1985. As at Central Park East, teachers in most of the new schools work in interdisciplinary teams with groups of 40 to 80 students, to whom they teach a college preparatory, core curriculum framed by five "habits of mind." The five habits vary from school to school; a typical list might include weighing evidence, addressing multiple perspectives, making connections, speculating on alternatives, and assessing the value of the ideas studied. Teams of teachers work with cohorts of students for two-year stints from seventh through tenth grade. Class periods last 90 minutes or more,

enabling intensive study and research. For the eleventh and twelfth grades the schools have developed variations on the portfolios developed at Central Park East and the Urban Academy that engage students in performance assessments as a basis for graduation.

Two of the new schools serve students who have recently immigrated and follow the model of their mentor school, International High School. With a population of 100 percent limited-English-proficient students, International's collaborative, activity-based instruction supports students in learning English while engaged in academic study. Clusters of teachers plan for shared groups of students to whom they teach a thematic, interdisciplinary curriculum all day long. Seventy-minute class periods provide time for intensive project work that is evaluated through performance assessments and exhibitions.

A unique "birthing" process allowed older alternative schools to help mentor new schools into existence. The projects also linked clusters of small schools into educational networks of three to five schools that worked together. The Coalition of Essential Schools included the new schools in its technical assistance efforts, and CCE provided direct support for developing curriculum and school policy, securing space and supplies, and negotiating with the Board of Education. As we discuss later, the state and local policy contexts when the schools were created supported the development of these networks and the schools' performance assessment strategies. More recent policy changes make the continuation of these strategies more difficult and may influence the long-term success of the schools.

Methodology

Data for this report are drawn from New York City school record data on student characteristics, attendance, achievement, and graduation; program and policy documents from the Board of Education and CCSP schools, including samples of curriculum, meeting notes, e-mail exchanges, and Board of Education reports; examination of student work samples (portfolios, transcripts, research papers, and other assignments); observations of classes, faculty meetings, and portfolio presentations at each of the schools; semistructured interviews with students, teachers, and administrators from each school; and interviews with CCSP staff and Board of Education officials.

Data were collected in three waves: documentation of the planning and initiation years (1992–94), collection of record data on student outcomes during 1995–96, and additional on-site data collection during 1997–98, when the first two cohorts of students were ready to graduate. Over the seven years of the study, researchers conducted more than two hundred interviews, observations of classrooms and meetings, and focus groups with teachers, students, and administrators at the schools, as well as more than fifty interviews with administrators and external change agents charged with assisting the school start-up process. In the last round of data collection during the 1997–98 school year, our team conducted a total of 86 individual interviews with 22 Board of Education and school-level administrators, 28 teachers, and 31 students sam-

pled from across the schools, in addition to a larger number of informal conversations with students and teachers during the course of observation. In 1997–98 we observed 15 classes, 14 portfolio presentations, and 7 faculty meetings across the sample schools. We also observed 3 Julia Richman Building Council meetings, 2 CCE meetings, and 4 network meetings.

The student sample was selected, with principals' assistance, to represent diversity in terms of gender, age, race-ethnicity, socioeconomic group, and the full range of academic achievement. The sample included special education students, limited-English-proficient students, students with stable academic achievement, and others who had histories of failure. The teachers interviewed and observed were selected to represent each major content area, a range of years of experience and teaching histories (including some who had taught only in alternative schools and some who had previously taught at large, comprehensive high schools), and a balance in terms of gender, race-ethnicity, and grade levels taught. We observed classes in all academic areas. We randomly selected exhibition dates for observation and selected exhibitions representing a balance across content areas. We reviewed additional portfolio work of the students who were presenting.

Descriptive statistics were generated for the quantitative data on student characteristics and outcomes, and t tests were used to compare data from the new schools with comparable data from the school that they replaced (in the first wave of data collection) and from state-designated "similar schools" (in the later waves of data collection when similar schools had been identified).

Qualitative data were analyzed through an iterative process in which specific findings and themes from interviews and observations were culled from field notes and transcripts and then triangulated in reviews of data from different sources. The findings were organized according to several categories of research questions: evidence about school start-up strategies, issues, and obstacles; evidence about school organizational policies and practices (e.g., the organization of resources, time, and people); evidence about school practices in key areas such as curriculum, teaching, assessment, and advisement; and evidence about faculty and student views of their experiences of the schools. A process of conceptual clustering and open coding was employed to generate a series of potential themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These were then evaluated by examining their salience and consistency across data sources and respondent types, and a recursive process of coding was conducted to highlight the degree of consensus in different views and respondents' attributions of particular outcomes to specific school features.

The Launch: Replacing Large Schools With Small

In 1993, the Board of Education began phasing out Julia Richman. No new ninth graders were accepted at Richman, and the first six CCSP schools were launched to serve ninth graders who would have gone to Richman. The new schools—the Coalition School for Social Change (CSSC), Landmark High School, the Legacy School for Integrated Studies, Manhattan International

High School, Manhattan Village Academy, and Vanguard High School—were "hot-housed" off-site. The tenth-through-twelfth-grade students already at Richman continued through to graduation. As each class graduated, space was allocated to new schools that moved in.

The pioneer cohort worked under difficult circumstances: a short start-up period during a year when New York was experiencing budget cuts, asbestos removal crises, and burgeoning enrollments combined with shortages of space (Ancess & Ort, 1999). The project encountered snafus regarding space, student recruitment, hiring, purchasing, and other logistics. Four schools had to move at least twice during the first year. Nonetheless, six schools were launched with initial classes of ninth graders ranging from 57 to 91 students. By year 3 of the project, all eleven schools had been launched, and CCE was involved in creating fifty more schools as part of the Annenberg Challenge grant.

The early problems affected student recruitment. Late admissions, guidance counselors' reluctance to recommend schools that did not have a site, and the Board of Education's complex assignment procedures[2] produced a student body comprised mostly of students who had not applied elsewhere or had been rejected by their chosen schools in the normal admission process. Thus the CCSP student population included much greater proportions of low-income, low-achieving, and limited English-proficient students than the citywide average or the old Julia Richman High School (see Table 1). The first

Table 1

Characteristics of Students at Julia Richman High School, 1992–93, and Coalition Campus Schools, 1993–94

Student characteristic	NYC average	Julia Richman	CCSP average	CSSC	Landmark	Legacy	MIHS	MVA	Vanguard
% Minority	81.9	98.3	89.4	96.7	95.2	94.7	65.8	89.5	94.6
% Free lunch–eligible	36.3	32.3	69.6	73.6	64.3	58.1	97.4	64.9	59.3
% Chapter 1–eligible	n/a	36.2	48.1	41.8	45.2	46.1	n/a	31.6	75.7
% LEP	14.7	4.8	19.3	5.5	4.8	5.3	92.1	4.2	4.1
% Special education–identified	6.6	7.3	2.25	9.9	3.6	0	0	0	0
% Resource room participants	n/a	4.2	10.6	11.4	9.7	7.4	n/a	9.4	15.3
% Entering 9th graders reading at or above norms	n/a	41.1	34.1	37.5	28.4	35.7	n/a	47.1	21.7

Note. NYC = New York City, CCSP = Coalition Campus Schools Project, CSSC = Coalition School for Social Change, MIHS = Manhattan International High School, MVA = Manhattan Village Academy, LEP = Limited English Proficient, n/a = not applicable.

cohort of students in the CCSP schools included 70 percent eligible for free lunch, 66 percent reading below grade-level norms, 48 percent eligible for Chapter 1, 19 percent limited English proficient, and 13 percent identified for special education or resource room participation. (CCSP schools serve all students in regular classrooms with resource room support rather than in segregated special education classrooms. Hence they had a smaller proportion of special education students and a greater share of "resource room" students than did Julia Richman.) In the first year, about half of the CCSP students were overage for their grade, and a high proportion had failed the majority of their eighth-grade courses. Manhattan International High School, like its parent school, serves only recently arrived immigrants with limited English proficiency.

School Outcomes: The First Three Years

Despite late openings and midyear moves, within a short time all of the schools appeared to have succeeded in engaging more students in an educational process. Among them, the six schools registered an average attendance rate for their ninth graders of 88.5 percent by December 1993, as compared with an attendance rate of only 66 percent for ninth graders at Julia Richman the year before (New York City Board of Education, 1993). Indicators of school safety (e.g., incidence rates) also improved almost immediately. Research elsewhere suggests that increased attendance and reductions in misbehavior are common early outcomes in efforts to downsize schools (Corcoran, 1989; Fouts, 1994; Gordon, 1992; McMullan, Sipe, & Wolf, 1994; Raywid, 1990).

A more difficult task was addressing the high levels of educational need of the students who entered the schools. Each of the schools developed a variety of strategies to support the students it found itself serving. All used small advisory groups and long blocks of learning time to enable intensive work on skills. Support strategies ranged from group tutorial sessions to separate reading classes. All of the schools held parent conferences three to four times a year that focused on sharing students' work.

These efforts appear to have paid off to a substantial extent in the subsequent years. Despite the fact that their student bodies were more "at risk" than those of Julia Richman, by 1995–96 the six CCSP schools had established attendance rates well above those of the former school, and their average rates of student suspension, disciplinary incidents, and dropping out were far below the citywide and Julia Richman averages (see Table 2). This is not to suggest that there were no problems. One school, initially staffed with a large number of inexperienced and underprepared teachers, experienced a large exodus of students and teachers during the first year. After a new codirector was hired and a more knowledgeable staff assembled, the school's outcomes improved substantially. All of the schools had to struggle with students who had experienced little success, some of whom were not interested in adapting to new schools. With multiple moves of school sites and families who

Table 2
**Student Outcomes for Julia Richman High School, 1992–93,
and Coalition Campus Schools, 1995–96**

Student outcome	NYC average (1995–96)	Julia Richman (1992–93)	CCSP average (1995–96)	CSSC	Land-mark	Legacy	MIHS	MVA	Vanguard
Average daily attendance	85	72***	86.2	84.7	88.8	84.7	88.3	89.2	81.6
Incident rates	3.5*	3.3*a	1.2	0.9	3.3	1.4	0.4	0.9	0.5
Suspension rates	5.6		3.2	1.7	3.3	2.9	2.2	8.5	0.5
1-year dropout rates	4.5***	6.1***b	1.2	0.9	0.4	2.2	0.4	2.2	1.0
% Students making reading gains (3 + NCEs)c	43.6*d	52.4	56.9	55.4	51.7	65.9	n/a	63.2	48.2
% 11th graders passing RCT or Regents exams in:									
Reading	79.9	79.0	80.7	81.6	63.8	n/af	n/ag	83.7	93.8
Mathematics	74.9	57.5*	76.6	77.6	65.2	n/ah	n/a	79.1	84.4
Writinge	71.3	75.2	71.4	67.3	60.9	n/a	n/a	69.8	87.5
% LEP students making adequate language gainsi	65.4*	53.0**	91.2	100	90	n/a	74.8	100	n/a

Note. Data are from the New York City Public Schools Reports, "School Profile and School Performance in Relation to Minimum Standards," for Julia Richman High School from 1989–90 to 1992–93 and for each of the CCSP Schools from 1993–94 to 1995–96. NYC = New York City, CCSP = Coalition Campus Schools Project, CSSC = Coalition School for Social Change, MIHS = Manhattan International High School, MVA = Manhattan Village Academy, NCE = normal curve equivalent, RCT = Regents Competency Tests, LEP = Limited English Proficient, n/a = not applicable.
aIncident rate data for 1992–93 for Julia Richman are from the New York City Public Schools High School Operations Unit report entitled "Overview and Summary of Performance Indicators for Julia Richman High School, 1990–91 to 1993–94."
bJulia Richman's dropout rates prior to closure were as follows: for 1989–90, 10.8 percent; for 1990–91, 9.5 percent; for 1991–92, 6.1 percent.
cData for Julia Richman are for all students in all grades from 1992 to 1993; the data overestimate gains by not adjusting for the large number of students who dropped out. Data for CCSP schools are for ninth graders only from 1993 to 1994.
dData are from 1993 to 1994.
eThe data for Julia Richman overestimate pass rates because they do not reflect the special education and LEP students who did not attempt or did not pass the Regents examinations or RCTs. These students are included in regular classes in the CCSP schools.
fOf Legacy tenth-grade students, 62.8 percent had met the reading test standard in 1995–96.
gBecause all of them entered without English language proficiency, students at MIHS were not required to take standard Regents examinations.
hOf Legacy tenth-grade students, 64.1 percent had met the mathematics standard by 1995–96.
iThe percentage of LEP students gaining 3 or more NCEs on the Language Assessment Battery or testing out of LEP entitlement.
New York City and Julia Richman means were compared with CCSP averages. *t* tests of group means, one-tailed probability: *$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

had not proactively chosen the schools, many of the schools had high rates of student transfer in the first years.

Most of the students who stayed registered substantial progress. Along with continued strong attendance and school safety, achievement improved. Although there was variability across the schools (for example, Landmark students initially performed less well on most tests than did students in the other new schools), gains in reading and gains in language skills by limited-English-proficient students were significantly higher than citywide averages. Among CCSP schools, 91 percent of limited-English-proficient students registered annual gains of at least 3 normal curve equivalents on the city's Language Assessment Battery, as compared with only 53 percent of such students at Richman.

In addition, although the CCSP students were less affluent, more linguistically diverse, and initially lower achieving, eleventh-grade students in most of the CCSP schools were doing as well as Richman students and students citywide on the Regents Competency Tests in reading, writing, and mathematics. In 1996–97, eleventh graders taking those tests passed at higher levels than those of eleventh graders the year before. Students in the three CCSP schools for which state report cards included "similar schools"[3] achieved, on average, at significantly higher levels in reading and writing and comparably in mathematics. (One CCSP school scored slightly higher in mathematics than its comparison school and two scored slightly lower, but none of these differences were statistically significant; see Table 3.)

Students' high scores in reading and writing may be a product of strong emphasis on extensive writing and revision, which we observed in all of the schools. The schools' performance assessments evaluate other traits that the state tests do not examine—presentation skills, research abilities, persever-

Table 3
Percentages of Eleventh-Grade General Education Students Passing State Regents Examinations in CCSP Schools in Comparison with Similar Schools, 1996–97

Examination outcome	CCSP average	Similar school average	CSSC	Similar school	Land-mark	Similar school	MVA	Similar school
% Passing reading	93.6***	82.4	85.5	74.8	96.5	86.2	98.7	86.2
% Passing writing	85***	70.4	78.2	65.9	86	72.7	90.9	72.7
% Passing math	79.4	81.2	72.7	75.3	87.7	84.1	77.9	84.1

Note. Data are from the New York State School Report Cards, 1996–97. There were no comparison schools identified in the report cards for other CCSP schools. CCSP = Coalition Campus Schools Project, CSSC = Coalition School for Social Change, MVA = Manhattan Village Academy. *t* tests of group means, one-tailed probability: ***p < .01.

ance, and organization in tackling complex tasks. We did not have data that would allow an examination of differences in school outcomes in these domains; the differences are worth examining in a future study.

School Outcomes Five Years Later

The schools graduated their first cohorts of graduates by 1997–98. One of the schools, Legacy, had left the CCSP because of philosophical differences between the director and other members of the project. Among the five continuing CCSP schools, graduation and college-going rates exceeded citywide averages, and dropout rates were well below those of the more advantaged populations both in state-designated "similar schools" and in the city as a whole (see Tables 4–6).

It is important when evaluating high school outcomes to examine the extent to which apparent successes may be a function of keeping out or pushing out difficult students rather than improving their performance. The CCSP schools' formal policies aim to admit students from all achievement levels and to keep struggling students in school rather than to "weed out" those who have difficulty. Our qualitative data collection documented many staff efforts to help struggling students remain committed to school. We also examined the relationships of student demographics and cohort progress to student outcomes. If dropouts or pushouts were a common phenomenon, one would expect to see a change in student demographics over time, with more disadvantaged populations (such as low-income, linguistic-minority, and special education students) becoming a smaller share of total enrollments. Because of enrollment fluctuations caused by frequent changes of school sites in the first year, it proved impossible to track a consistent cohort of students from the first year of the schools' opening. However, four of the schools were able to track such a cohort of ninth graders from 1994 to 1998.

There are two ways to track graduation rates. First, the four-year graduation rate as recorded by many states and districts is the number of graduates in a given year divided by the number of ninth graders four years earlier. This statistic includes among the graduates those students who have transferred into the school in the intervening years and those from previous cohorts who graduated in more than four years. At the same time, it does not exclude from the denominator those transferring out of the school during the four-year period. The four-year graduation rate calculated in this way for the four schools with longitudinal data was 73 percent. By comparison, the comparably calculated four-year graduation rate for New York State in 1992–93 was 62 percent (Feistritzer, 1993).

New York City also tracks graduation rates for cohorts of students excluding entrants and transfers out during the intervening years. Calculated in this way, the four-year graduation rate of members of the 1994 ninth-grade cohort was 73.3 percent, significantly higher than the comparable New York City rate of 49.7 percent for the same cohort (New York City Division of Accountability and Assessment, Graduation Rate Statistics, *http://nycenet.edu/*

daa/reports). According to New York City data derived from seven-year lon-gitudinal studies of the individual classes of 1992–96, an additional 11 per-cent of the city's students generally graduate during their fifth year of high school and a total of about 70 percent graduate within seven years, a statis-tic that has remained stable throughout the 1990s (New York City Public Schools, 2000). By comparison, the six-year cohort graduation rate for the four CCSP schools was 84.6 percent (see Table 4).

This is noteworthy because the population of the CCSP schools included a significantly larger number of students who were overage for their grade, as well as nearly twice as many students receiving free lunches and special edu-cation students receiving resource room services (see Table 5). New York City tracking data show significantly lower graduation rates for all of these groups (New York City Public Schools, 2000). The annual event dropout rates for the five CCSP schools, despite their educationally needier populations, averaged 3.4 percent, significantly lower than the New York City rate of 6.7 percent.

Table 4
**Graduation Progress for CCSP Schools,
Ninth-Grade 1994 Cohort, as of 2000**

Graduation progress	CSSC	Land-mark	MIHS	MVA	Vanguard		Total
No. of entrants, 9th grade, 1994	61	84	66	56	32		299
Total no. of graduates, June 1998	33	51	48	56	30	218	72.9%
No. in 1994 cohort graduating in June 1998	26	39	44	38	15	162	54.2%
(% excluding transfers)							(73.3%)***
No. in 1994 cohort graduating after June 1998	7	7	7	2	2	25	8.4%
(% excluding transfers)							(11.3%)
No. in 1994 cohort graduating with GED	4	4	1	1		10	3.3%
(% excluding transfers)							(4.5%)
Transfers to other schools or districts	18	28	10	11	11	78	26.1%
Dropouts	3	6	4	4	3	20	6.7%
(% excluding transfers)							(9.0%)
Unknown	3	0	0	0	1	4	1.3%
(% excluding transfers)							(1.8%)

Note. CSSC = Coalition School for Social Change, MIHS = Manhattan International High School, MVA = Manhattan Village Academy. Numbers in parentheses are the percentages excluding transfers.
One-tailed probability: ***$p < .01$.
t tests of group means were used to compare this graduation rate with the New York City aver-age of 49.7 percent for the same cohort.

Table 5
**Student Demographic Data and Dropout Rates, With CCSP
and New York City Averages, 1998–99**

Student characteristic and dropout rate	NYC average	CCSP average	CSSC	Land-mark	MIHS	MVA	Vanguard
% Resource room participants	4.4	9.5***	9.5	8.4	n/a	7.1	13.0
% ELL	15.6	23.3	9.5	10.7	83.7	9.4	3.3
% Free lunch–eligible	44.2	72.2***	73.7	76.1	66.8	71.8	72.5
Annual event dropout rate	6.7	3.4***	3.3	3.3	5.2	2.7	2.4

Note. t tests of group means for CCSP average and NYC average. NYC = New York City, CCSP = Coalition Campus Schools Project, CSSC = Coalition School for Social Change, MIHS = Manhattan International High School, MVA = Manhattan Village Academy, ELL = English Language Learners, n/a = not applicable.
One-tailed probability: ***p < .01.

About 26 percent of the cohort of students who entered CCSP schools in 1994 transferred out by 2000. This compares with a citywide rate of about 21 percent during the same period. The transfer rates for the new schools were high in their first two years, when several of the schools had to move more than once because of space problems and lost students due to transportation and parents' anxieties about the disruption. As Table 5 shows, CCSP student populations continued to include many more low-income, limited-English-proficient, and special education students than the city average, suggesting that transfers were not a result of pushing out the more educationally needy students.

The schools exerted strong efforts to create college-going skills and expectations. Among 1997 graduates, college-going rates across schools ranged from 80 percent to 100 percent, averaging 86 percent. By 1998 the schools as a group sent 91 percent of their graduates to college (see Table 6). In addition to the many graduates who enrolled in various campuses of the City College of New York and the State University of New York, the schools sent graduates to a range of private and out-of-state colleges, including Bard, Barnard, Connecticut College, Hampshire, Long Island University, Manhattanville, Marymount, Rensselaer Polytechnic, Sacred Heart, St. John's University, South Carolina State, South Hampton College, Vassar, and Virginia Union.

Although the CCSP schools produce extraordinary graduation and college-going rates, their students do about the same on average as those in similar schools on standardized tests for college admission (see Table 7). In 1999–2000, SAT scores in four of the schools were about the same as those in similar high-poverty schools (averaging just over 700 for combined math and verbal scores), but a much larger share of students in the CCSP schools took the SAT (between 40% and 100%, as compared with 37% in similar schools). SAT scores were

Table 6
Postgraduate Activities of 1997 and 1998 Graduates

Postgraduate activity	CSSC	Landmark	MVA	MIHS	Vanguard	Total
1997 Graduates	30	40	31	41	24	166
No. going to college	25 (83%)	32 (80%)	31 (100%)	32 (78%)	23 (96%)	143 (86%)
1998 Graduates	33	51	56	n/a	30	170
No. going to college	33 (100%)	46 (90%)	49 (88%)	n/a	26 (87%)	154 (91%)

Note. CSSC = Coalition School for Social Change, MVA = Manhattan Village Academy, MIHS = Manhattan International High School, n/a = not applicable.

Table 7
School Demographics and Achievement Indicators, 1999–2000

Student characteristic and achievement indicator	CSSC	Land-mark	MVA	MIHS	Vanguard	Similar schools[a] average	NYC schools average
% Entering 9th–10th graders eligible for free lunch	74.7	87.0	60.5	65.8	79.2	67.5	66.2
% Minority	97.8	97.7	91.8	78.2	96.8	94.5	84.3
% ELL	9.1	10.6	9.2	72.6	12.5	14.6	12.2
% Scoring 55–100 on English exam	69.4	82.3	79.7[b]	n/a	n/a	71.3	81.7
Average SAT scores, verbal/math (% 11th–12th graders taking SAT)	356/360	370/365	411/429	331/386	350/346	373/372	444/471
	49.4%	62.2%	39.6%	100%	43.4%	36.6%	36.7%
% ELL students showing gains in English-language acquisition	96.2	60.0	73.3	87.5	n/a	72.1	66.4

Note. Data are from 1999–2000 High School Annual School Reports, New York City Division of Assessment and Accountability. CSSC = Coalition School for Social Change, MVA = Manhattan Village Academy, MIHS = Manhattan International High School, NYC = New York City, ELL = English Language Learners, SAT = Scholastic Aptitude Test, n/a = not applicable.
[a]Similar schools are defined as "those having entering 9th and 10th graders with similar characteristics, including percent ELL, overage for grade, average daily attendance, and standardized test scores."
[b]Data for 1999–2000 are not available; data are for 1998–99.

noticeably higher in the one school, Manhattan Village Academy, where fewer students (40%) were tested, a proportion that is nonetheless higher than the average in similar schools or citywide. English language learners continued to make greater gains than those in similar schools in two of the four schools reporting (Manhattan International and CSSC); they appeared to do about the same as those at similar schools at Manhattan Village and somewhat less well at Landmark.

Have student achievement successes been sustained over time? Because the schools have been operating on a state waiver and do not offer the battery of Regents examinations, we examined the only other test measures available for three of the schools. On the English Regents exams offered in 1999–2000 (when students could take the new or the old Regents exam or the now-extinct Regents Competency Test), students at Landmark and Manhattan Village did much better (about 80% passing), and those at CSSC did about the same (70% passing), as those in similar schools. It is noteworthy that the schools maintain these levels and have such low dropout rates because schools that keep low-scoring students in school generally have lower average test scores, all else equal, than those that allow or encourage low-achievers to leave. We found that college-going rates have remained stable.

A final outcome of the CCSP was the transformation of the Julia Richman campus. It now includes four high schools, including two of the CCSP schools (Vanguard and Manhattan International) and one of the parent schools (the Urban Academy), as well as a performing arts program, a special education program for junior high school students, a small vocational/technical program, and the Ella Baker Elementary School; a day care program coupled with a Teen Parenting Center; medical services offered by a neighborhood teaching hospital; and a professional development institute that collaborates with universities and the teachers union to provide seminars for teachers across the city. The other CCSP schools are housed in other buildings nearby.

Factors Influencing the Schools' Success

Several factors were consistently identified by respondents—and confirmed by our observations and document review—as important to the new schools' success. These included (a) small size; (b) structures that allow for personalization and strong relationships; (c) a carefully constructed curriculum aimed at specific proficiencies; (d) teachers' pedagogical approaches, especially their explicit teaching of academic skills and their ability to adapt instruction to students' needs; (e) a schoolwide performance assessment system; (f) the creation of flexible supports to ensure student learning, and (g) strong teachers supported by collaboration in planning and problem solving. These features, described in more detail elsewhere (Ancess & Ort, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, McGregor, & Zuckerman, 2000), are discussed briefly in this section.

It is worth noting that, because most students and all teachers select these schools through New York's school choice policies, it is unusual for staff or students to voice strongly negative views of their schools. Teachers must

volunteer time beyond normal school hours, and their willingness to do this is a hiring contingency; thus teachers are unlikely to choose to work in these schools if they are not committed to the practices they espouse. There is also a rigorous, school-operated selection process that enables the schools to develop a compatible and dedicated staff. Although the views we heard were strikingly positive, students did discuss their struggles in trying to meet the schools' standards, and teachers discussed the challenges of implementing a complex pedagogy for students with high levels of both personal and educational needs. As we discuss later, the degree of similarity across the schools was also unusual. One would expect greater variability in practices and outcomes than we found. We attribute this to the presence of an already-tested school design coupled with the strong coaching and network supports that were provided. We describe these later.

Small School Size

Nearly all of the individuals interviewed for our study emphasized the importance of small school size. Their comments focused on issues of safety and being known. A Landmark student commented, "There is less violence compared to bigger schools. Everyone knows one another. . . . Bigger schools are louder and crazier. No one will bother you here." A Manhattan International student noted, "We only have two hundred students. So we can ask questions. We and the teachers are very close." A Vanguard math and science teacher who had been teaching for three years said, "There is safety here. Students will come to me and say, 'I have a problem with . . . and I want to talk it out.' They don't fight." A Vanguard humanities teacher described "the family feeling," saying, "You are just not going to fall through the cracks here. You are an important individual. For the first time, [students] are seen as important individuals in the school system. I compare this with my experience in large schools with thirty-five students in a class, where kids fall through the cracks."

Personalization

As suggested by research on communal school models (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993), we found that strong relationships between and among students and faculty were central to participants' views of what enabled their success. Students often compared their school to a family and linked their achievement to their caring relationships with teachers. As one Vanguard student said, "School should not be mass production. It needs to be loving and close. That is what kids need. You need love to learn." Another, who was eligible for the most restrictive special education setting, said about his experience at Vanguard, "I was bad all the way back from elementary and junior high school. I would have got lost in the system. I would not have made it. I would have dropped out. I needed someone to be there to show they care about me for me to be motivated."

Teachers' commitment to students' learning was a common theme. A student at CSSC expressed the sentiments of others when he said, "Because the school is small, teachers have more time to help us. They don't go crazy and we get to learn better." At CSSC a student observed, "The teachers here care for you and your work. They know your potential and keep pushing you to do your best." A student at Manhattan International explained, "If we have personal problems like depression we can talk to the teachers. . . . The teachers know us really well because we always work together, one on one." A Manhattan Village Academy student explained, "I was pregnant last year. The teachers were really behind me. I am still in school and I'm doing well in my classes. The teachers push you here. They want you to graduate." These relationships extended to students' caring about their learning environment. One student exclaimed, "This is my first school where the kids get mad at each other for writing graffiti on the walls!"

Small Classes and Reduced Pupil Load

Neither caring teachers nor small school size would likely produce these outcomes if teachers still had to juggle the needs of 150 or more students each day. As in some other restructured schools, resource allocations in the CCSP schools emphasize core instructional functions (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998). All of the schools have created smaller pupil loads (usually forty to eighty) by using more of their resources for teachers and by having teachers teach fewer groups of students for longer blocks of time (70 to 120 minutes), often in interdisciplinary configurations. Students often take fewer courses at a time, generally four rather than six or seven.

Both students and teachers described how the low student-teacher ratios enabled teachers to support intellectually challenging work and to sustain a press for higher standards of performance. Linda Brown, a twenty-two-year veteran now teaching at Vanguard, explained:

> Small size means I can do a literature seminar with the bottom 20 percent of kids in the city. Kids who didn't read are reading books like *Jane Eyre* to write their essay. We can work with them during lunch. You find out who can't read, type, etc. These are the kids who would sit in the back of the room, be in the bathroom, and would deliberately get lost. I know dedicated teachers in big schools who teach 150 kids. They can't do this.

A student at Manhattan Village Academy reinforced this point: "This school will get the worst student to do the work. Teachers are not like this at other high schools where they have 100 kids. Troubled kids need attention and they can get it here. Kids can see other kids like them working." An unanticipated benefit was the focus that a smaller number of classes allowed for students. As a student at Landmark commented, "I really like that it's only

four classes that we take; in the old school you had to study a little on each subject and keep eight subjects in your head at once."

Advisement Structures

Other structural features that promote personalization include advisories that enable teachers to monitor students' progress. All of the schools created an advisory structure and used it to ensure connections to parents and attention to student needs. Landmark's advisory groups, which placed thirteen students with one adult for continuing academic and personal support, met five times per week. This teacher's explanation of the value of advisories was typical:

> We have daily conversations and know how they are doing. We contact parents. The advisor takes major responsibility. We may call in [the principal], but it doesn't get passed to the office to take care of kids' performance. It stays with us.

At Manhattan International, a weekly 70-minute cluster class allows teacher and students to "discuss a range of issues, such as the code of conduct, drugs, and school expectations, but also use that time for additional classroom support," noted principal Bill Ling. Counselors are attached to clusters and help faculty to craft interventions for students who are having problems.

Coherent and Purposeful Curriculum

The structures described above appear to help the schools to care more effectively for students. Equally important is how the schools facilitate intellectual development. The curriculum in each school is organized around "habits of mind," and the schools are explicit about their goal to send all graduates to college with skills that will enable them to succeed when they get there. All of the students interviewed informed us that they were expected to go to college, and they were keenly aware that most of the graduates did so. These outcomes appeared to depend on interactions among curriculum, instruction, assessment, student supports, and professional development.

The schools' curriculums focus on preparing students for the demands of college. Most of the assignments that we reviewed required the production of analytic work—research papers and projects, demonstrations and discussions of problems, experiments and data collection organized to answer open-ended questions. Worksheets and fill-in-the-blank tasks were rare. Extensive reading and writing were expected in all of the schools. Many classes required large end-of-course projects that included elaborate written documentation and were presented and defended orally. According to teachers and students, revision is a way of life. Faculty voiced the belief that students learn by tackling substantial tasks and getting feedback in relation to standards that guide their efforts to improve.

A high school history teacher who has taught for twenty-seven years and has been at Vanguard for five years explained how this instruction is supported by the schools' flexible scheduling and small pupil loads:

> I can use in-depth approaches and assign college-level research projects. For two months, each morning, we teach students research skills and essay skills so that they can do a minimum-20-page research paper in history. I give them internal motivation to come up against the challenge. They choose the topic. We develop their topic together. This gets them into the different sides of the topic. They are stimulated and internally motivated because it is something they want to learn. I take them to the Donnell Library. First I call the librarian and she gets books on their topics together. They browse through different books, take notes, and order their thoughts in an outline. All of this is challenging. Then the kids have to listen to their teachers and peers criticizing their work. Then they have to rewrite. They have to cite references, show evidence, and prove their thesis.

Manhattan Village Academy's director, Mary Butz, described how reading, writing, and data collection skills are taught explicitly in the context of major projects:

> We demand a lot of work. In the ninth grade, students work on an autobiography that emphasizes writing skills. In the tenth grade there is an intercultural project where we teach them research skills. They must use three sources, respond to specific questions, and make comparisons. As part of this work, students are taught research conventions such as compiling a bibliography, using multiple forms of documentation, and formats for report writing. The projects often combine library research with contemporary investigations in the community and studies of literature or the arts.

A humanities teacher at CSSC described how a recent project made curricular connections among history, fiction, and contemporary life:

> Last year we did a study of Latin America with a focus on the Dominican Republic. We read Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* to look at the extremes the dictatorship went to. We then went up to Washington Heights and interviewed senior citizens who had lived through this period. These interviews were powerful learning experiences for our students.

Although there are efforts to link the curriculum to students' own lives and interests, this linkage does not appear to limit the students' studies to their immediate concerns. The assignments often blend classical studies with multicultural content. In our sampling of student portfolios, we found that students had studied works by Allende, Brecht, Ibsen, Chekhov, de Maupassant,

Marquez, Arthur Miller, Toni Morrison, Poe, Sanchez, Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, Tolkien, and Richard Wright, among others. In social studies, students studied topics such as the U.S. Constitution, immigration, political prisoners, and Supreme Court cases. Some of the schools used curriculum such as the American Social History Project, which examines history from multiple perspectives. In science, students studied biology, chemistry, and physics, as well as aerospace and the environment. The arts were often integrated into other subject areas, and there were also opportunities to take arts courses.

The schools also prepare students for higher education by making arrangements for students to enroll in courses at local colleges. This practice began with Central Park East's requirement that all students take at least two of their courses on a college campus. These experiences enable students to learn about college demands firsthand. One student's account of his experience in a course on modern American history at a college in the City University of New York system reflects many other accounts that we heard:

> At first I was ready to quit because I felt I was not ready for it. But when I talked to my teachers, they gave me advice on study habits—how to manage time better, especially for doing homework for both my school and the college courses. I spent more time reading the books. If I didn't understand, teachers here would explain the material. They gave me other books. I took the midterm and did O.K. It gave me insight on what college would really be like.

Adaptive Pedagogy

Several instructional themes emerged during the research. These included explicit teaching of academic skills, use of multiple instructional strategies to enable success, and connection to students' own experiences to support understanding and motivation.

Explicit Teaching of Academic Skills

A key element of instruction in these schools is careful scaffolding for the learning of complex skills. In contrast to many high school curriculums, which assume that students have already mastered the skills of reading, writing, and research, the CCSP schools construct a curriculum that explicitly teaches students how to study, how to approach academic tasks, what criteria will be applied, and how to evaluate their own and others' work.

Sylvia Rabiner, founding principal of Landmark High School, described how skills instruction is built into Landmark's curriculum from the students' first days there:

> When students enter Landmark in the ninth grade, they are immediately taught how a library works. They are taught how to do a research paper. They are introduced to the habits of mind and rubrics that will be used to assess their work as they progress from grade to grade and,

ultimately, their graduation portfolios. They are taught how to do exhibitions so that by the time they defend their portfolios, they have had several years' experience in oral presentations.

All of the schools offer structured supports for the teaching of reading and writing, either as part of courses in the ninth and tenth grades or as a special class for students who need support in reading.

Multiple Strategies for Active Learning

Psychologist Robert Glaser (1990) has argued that schools must shift from a selective mode—"characterized by minimal variation in the conditions for learning," in which "a narrow range of instructional options and a limited number of ways to succeed are available"—to an adaptive mode in which "the educational environment can provide for a range of opportunities for success. Modes of teaching are adjusted to individuals' backgrounds, talents, interests, and the nature of past performance" (pp. 16–17).

In nearly all classes, we saw teachers consciously use multiple instructional strategies to give students various entry points to the material under study. These ranged from whole class lectures and discussions to guided inquiry, small group work, independent research, experiments, construction of models and products, and coaching of individuals and small groups. Most classes involved students in a variety of learning strategies that encompassed long-term projects as well as short-term tasks and engaged them in a range of varied activities.

In each of the schools, students commented that teachers did not assign only textbook work. Often the students drew contrasts with their previous schools. As one put it, "You get to create 3D models, do research, and exhibitions. You do projects. You come up with your own topics and problems. You create the questions and answer them. You write theme, plot, and character essays. You do visuals. [The teachers] don't want it to be boring for you." At Vanguard a student remarked, "Teachers work around the differences in how kids learn to help you complete your projects."

Small group work is common. The group work that we observed allowed students to take an active role in their own learning, but the work was usually highly structured through activity guides and was accompanied by active teacher coaching that anticipated student needs. One of CSSC's humanities teachers described how the use of group work that drew on various learning and performance modes was structured to promote growing independence:

> We want students to do independent work and work in cooperative groups. We get them started and they work independently. Teachers circulate among the groups. We have had success with students working this way. For example, in a recent project, students self-selected into groups, did research, close reading, individual writing

assignments, posters, and presentations. Each presenting group had to teach the class what they learned.

Real-World Connections

The curriculum often incorporates real-life applications. Teachers reported that this helped to sustain student interest and involvement in difficult tasks. A teacher at CSSC explained how a science class simulated the work done by environmental consulting firms:

> They identify a problem, make a plan for how to study it, do field work, and write up conclusions. Another class did a project with Central Park rangers, who are short staffed, and identified tree samples for them. This is real-world, meaningful work.

A teacher at Manhattan Village Academy described similar efforts to link academic content to the students' lives:

> We try to relate historical issues to the present day and have them form an opinion. We connected Fourth Amendment rights to locker searches when a book bag was stolen. We discuss individual responsibility and what you want the government to take over. We discuss and debate to get them to develop their thoughts a step further.

All of the schools place students in external learning experiences, such as internships and community service activities, that occur during the regular school day and are accompanied by seminars that help students to process what they are learning about the world of work. Linked to students' interests, these may include placements in hospitals, medical research labs, nonprofit organizations, social service agencies, businesses, and schools. The experiences are part of the core program for all students, not a separate track. They are intended to help adolescents assume responsibility, learn how to engage in the world outside home and school, gain an understanding of how various kinds of organizations operate, and explore their interests. Students reported that, even when they found they did not like their chosen work or setting or when they experienced conflicts on the job, their internships made them feel more capable, responsible, and confident about solving problems and succeeding in the world beyond school. Many said the commitments that they developed in these settings spurred them on in school and motivated them to persevere.

Performance Assessment

The effort to push students further in their thinking is another theme in teachers' as well as students' discussions. We observed this press in classrooms and exhibitions in each of the schools. A sense of press is supported by the schools' assessment systems, which set performance expectations that are

adjudicated in public hearings. All of the schools require students to complete a set of seven or more portfolios for graduation. These involve research papers, including a social science investigation and a scientific experiment, a literary critique, an arts product or analysis, a mathematical model or project, and an analysis of one of the student's internship experiences. Often, students complete autobiographies and graduation plans that look ahead to their futures. Traditional tests are also sometimes included in the portfolios.

The schools' portfolios vary in content and structure. However, all of the assessment systems include: (a) written and constructed or performed products requiring in-depth study; (b) oral presentation by the candidate before a committee of teachers and a peer, who assess the quality of the work and pose questions to test for understanding; (c) rubrics that embody the standards against which students' performances are judged; and (d) rating scales to assess students' products and oral presentations. To graduate, each student's committee must pass on his or her entire set of portfolios. The rigor of the process and the varying levels of skills with which students enter mean that, in all of the schools, some students take more than four years to graduate. The schools' content and performance standards are mapped to New York State's curriculum standards, with the result that the schools receive a state waiver from the Regents examinations.

The portfolios are not only evaluation instruments but also learning experiences that engage students in what Fred Newmann et al. (1996) call "authentic achievement." The tasks require students to organize information, engage in disciplined inquiry and analysis, communicate orally and in writing, solve problems, and make a cogent presentation before an audience. Students frequently remarked on how the portfolio experience deepened their understanding. Comments such as these were common:

> You get to do most of the thinking when you work with your portfolio. You have to explain in detail how to do something or why something is important, so that someone who doesn't know it can understand it.

> You take the role of the teacher.

> The portfolio makes you develop your writing. It makes more sense for us to have to do an oral presentation, to answer oral questions about our work to see how we learned English [from a new English language learner].

> When you take a test, you don't feel like you need to know it after it is done. The portfolio sticks in your brain better.

> You have to manage your time before, after, and during school to do the portfolio.

In our last wave of data collection, we observed fourteen students defending their portfolios before committees of teachers and peers. The exhibitions we observed reflected a range from work that was rated as marginal, which

students then revised, to work evaluated as distinguished. Even when the work was less developed and required multiple revisions, the schools enabled all of their students to produce these kinds of research papers and multipart projects, and in the process, to expand their skills and their ability to organize and persist at a complex undertaking.

At Vanguard, a recently decertified special education student could not be distinguished from a regular education student as he presented his history portfolio on the role of Japan during World War II, displaying knowledge of the geography of the region and of the politics of Japanese imperialism. At Landmark, a student deconstructed his development as a writer and reader over the course of his four years at the school by referencing specific papers he had written over those years. Using a set of overheads with quotes and diagrams and placing his earlier and later papers in parallel alignment, he graphically compared and contrasted his current knowledge with his former ignorance. He made a similar presentation on the changes in his capacity to analyze literature and in his literary preferences. Without interruption over a period of forty minutes, the student made a clear, tightly constructed argument on his development as a reader and writer.

In all cases, the committees questioned the presenters, scored the presentations according to the school's rubric, and presented their evaluations to the students. The conversations about the work probed the students' reasoning, asked for evidence supporting key ideas, and referenced the schools' habits of mind (e.g., drawing connections to other ideas, using evidence, understanding perspectives, presenting clearly and with appropriate use of conventions). The process was personally supportive but often substantively critical. Some students found that either their paper or their presentation did not yet meet the portfolio standard and that they would have to revise and re-present. Some met the minimal standard but decided to revise in response to the questions, to improve the quality of their work and obtain a higher rating (e.g., a "distinction"). Others met the standard and were satisfied with their work. They went on to work on other portfolios.

Flexible Supports

Access to challenging curriculum does not automatically translate into student success. The schools have sought to marry high standards with a variety of supports to help students negotiate the demands of the curriculum. Almost all of the schools make time available before or after school so that students can obtain help. Some schools have peer tutoring programs and/or Saturday programs. The schools use resource room supports for special education students to help them complete the same assignments that other students receive. Some of the schools secure external resources to support students. For example, Vanguard has a partnership with a school volunteer program to help students with SATs, writing, and math skills. Sisters with Choices—a group of women of color—provides role models and mentors for female students and offers group counseling and tutoring. The advisement system is also impor-

tant. As one teacher noted, "We look out after our advisees in all of their classes. Our conversations are informal but it gets them back in the groove if they have fallen out."

Collaborative Planning and Professional Development

The faculties of these schools are dedicated and, for the most part, highly skilled. As described later, the CCSP schools were able to negotiate a peer review process for faculty selection that allows them to evaluate teaching and collaboration skills. Many of the schools are connected to preservice and inservice programs run by local universities that prepare teachers for progressive practice, such as Bank Street, New York University, the New School, and Columbia University's Teachers College. The schools host student teachers and engage in collaborative projects through these networks. Although new schools must fight the battle of potential burnout, their well-developed pipelines, collegial environments, and close relationships with students mean that most of the schools have many more applicants than they can hire, even though the New York City schools in general have difficulty filling all of their vacancies.

Professional development and collaboration are built into all of the schools' schedules on a continuing basis. Faculty participate in external professional development, but most professional development is internal. The schools encourage teachers to learn about and from their colleagues' practice. Teachers meet regularly in teams that share students or subject matter for several hours weekly to plan curriculum and to discuss pedagogy and students. Teachers use these collaborative opportunities to examine students' progress, figure out how to adjust their instruction, and socialize new staff into the schools' approaches. Teachers reported that these meetings helped them to expand their individual teaching repertoires and develop a more collective perspective.

Bill Ling explained how teacher collaboration strengthens accountability at Manhattan International: "Everyone holds each other accountable for meeting the [school] goals. The clusters work together on the year's goals. They plan together, discuss kids together, they observe each other, and they support each other's development." Sylvia Rabiner noted that at Landmark

> teachers share what they are doing in a formal way in team meetings. They plan together and share what they have done. There is whole school sharing and there are summer institutes where we have more time to reflect. There is more coherence than in big schools where teachers work alone.

In a number of respects, these practices resemble those in "high involvement" business organizations (Mohrman, Lawler, & Mohrman, 1992) that place employees in staff groups with distributed expertise that take responsibility for problem analysis and decision making, as well as for the outcomes of their work.

System Supports for Innovation

New York's efforts to create new school models on a wide scale may signal the invention of the twenty-first-century high school in a city that embraced the factory model nearly a century ago. The CCSP was designed with a view that durable change requires the involvement of system leaders and the redesign of core operating procedures, processes that other change efforts have often tried to circumvent by managing innovation by exception. An initiative of this scope posed inherent provocations to the system, as norms and routines were challenged by redefinitions of school size, the nature of high school curriculum, methods of student assessment, and means for recruiting staff and students. We discuss the system implications of the change process below.

The use of school networks to support change was another systemic element of the reform. A surprising aspect of our findings was the relative degree of consistency in practices and outcomes across the CCSP schools. The extent to which the schools were able to develop sophisticated designs and practices and manage a range of difficult problems is unusual. This was supported by the fact that many of the new school "launchers" had been teachers in the older, successful schools and were mentored by expert veteran principals and teachers while belonging to an organization that could run interference as well as providing professional development.

The Use of Networks for School Development

Several networks supported the development of the CCSP schools. The national Coalition of Essential Schools provided intellectual resources for the schools' work. These included a set of principles and resources for implementing them—curriculum materials, assessments, protocols for exhibitions, conferences and other learning opportunities, and networks of other school practitioners with whom to consult. The local CCE created partnerships between older and newer schools that provided models of curriculum, pedagogy, and school design and staffed the initial hiring committees. Many of the new school directors were drawn from the faculties of CCE schools. The older schools "mentored" the new schools in a number of ways, including the creation of support networks for the principals and directors; one-to-one supports for directors in decision making and the creation of school governance and design strategies; provision of teacher staff development for developing curriculum, authentic assessments, portfolio systems, and teaching strategies; and sharing of materials and strategies already in use in the older schools.

Project members who were interviewed identified three important roles played by CCE: curricular support, fund-raising, and advocacy/intervention, especially with the Board of Education. Teachers at the new schools commented that they found the professional development that CCE sponsored useful in helping them to develop their curriculum and teaching practices. Almost all of those interviewed appreciated the funds emanating from CCE as a result of the Annenberg Challenge and other grants. The funding enabled schools to

continue programs and services that they would otherwise have had to disband. These included technology supports, arts programs, foreign language courses, tutoring for SAT exams, and after-school and Saturday programs.

Staff were grateful not only for extensive hands-on tutoring in the creation of programs but also for the way in which CCE negotiated with many divisions of the Board of Education about issues of space, staffing, curriculum, and assessment, especially during the first years of the project. This enabled more creative and systemic responses by the Board of Education, because the board could create policy for a group of schools rather than handling each one independently. As in the case of hiring procedures, this advanced the schools' practices and the board's policies in tandem.

District-Level Reforms

The new schools development process triggered important system reforms, including reform in the key area of selecting teachers. Traditional centralized Board of Education procedures for faculty hiring and assignment have been based on the assumption that teachers are interchangeable parts. However, the success of schools committed to a set of educational principles depends on their ability to hire faculty who believe in those principles and have the capacity to enact them. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the CCSP, with the cooperation of the Board of Education, negotiated a process for selecting staff based on a model developed earlier by International High School. A committee of teachers reviews resumes, interviews prospective candidates, and selects those most qualified for the available positions. Where teachers are equally qualified, seniority is the decisive variable. In the case of the CCSP schools, committees of teachers, some of them UFT-trained, interviewed and selected teachers for each of the new schools with UFT representatives observing.

This process resulted in several innovations. One school, for example, required a group of candidates to work together for 45 minutes to plan a curriculum unit and then reflect on the process with the committee. As committee members watched, they could gauge candidates' strengths and weaknesses in collaborative planning. Another school required candidates to submit a statement of their educational philosophy and to teach a class at Central Park East. The UFT was so pleased with the outcomes that the union introduced the process into contract negotiations and recommended its broader adoption. The contract now includes a peer selection process for teachers in all nontraditional schools, illustrating how innovation can be used as a lever to transform system policies.

Systemic Concerns

Inevitably, the level of innovation generated by the creation of more than one hundred new model schools over a period of only five years intensified the tensions between the diversity required for innovation and the standardization

assumed by the normal operating procedures of the Board of Education. Historically, the New York City schools, like other large urban school systems, responded to the need for innovation with *policy by exception,* which relegated innovative schools to the periphery of the system. The creation in 1983 of the Alternative High Schools Superintendency as the oversight agency for non-traditional schools is an example. Schools in this division have operated according to rules different from those for "regular" schools. Managing alternative schools at the margins has mediated the tension between system standardization and the freedom required for change. Many of the people we interviewed believed that this structural invention was critically important for the survival of the alternative schools movement in New York, in contrast to some other large cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles that underwent similar school reforms in the 1970s and eliminated them in the 1980s.

However, the creation of this special superintendency as a sort of "innovation silo," offering a safe place for new ideas, also reduced the need for core systemic change. This strategy worked well when innovation was at a low volume. However, as more new schools were launched, the Board of Education was increasingly challenged to reconsider its central modes of operation. As the alternative schools superintendent explained, it was possible to make exceptions from some rules, such as hiring procedures, when the process of designing and approving alternatives took minimal personnel and time. But the broad scale of the 1990s reforms made it organizationally impossible for the Board of Education to rely on the strategy of policy by exception to support innovation.

Inevitably, obstacles emerged because the organizational structures that were needed to support the creation of new schools were inadequate to this new mission. In accordance with classic bureaucratic segmentation of responsibilities to support specialization and division of labor (Weber, 1946), the New York City Board of Education developed over many decades a complex, departmentalized structure, which later lost fiscal support for the staffing that once had allowed it to function reliably. Insufficient staff and inadequate coordination among divisions created difficulties beyond the control of any individual working at the board or in the schools.

In some cases people were unable to accomplish their goals because no one had sufficient authority to solve problems that cut across divisions. For example, the director of the Office of School Facilities discussed the impossibility of coordinating the lawyers and architects who reported to different divisions: "It [is] irresponsible to commit to something that could stall at any stage. I have no control over the attorneys. People held me accountable, as though I could deliver, and I couldn't. I wish I did have the control." In other cases, such as purchasing, overly centralized authority meant that decisions regarding one hundred schools could be made by only one person, ensuring that no school would get the attention it needed in a timely fashion. Both insufficient authority and overly centralized authority can pose difficulties under normal circumstances; when a system is engaged in rapid reform they can create crises. Poor communication mechanisms exacerbated the prob-

lems caused by nonintegration of activities and functions. Many at the Board of Education suggested the creation of a team management structure to begin to reform the bureaucratic structures that impeded their efforts. Such a structure had not yet emerged when our research was complete.

The board confronted growing difficulty as previously modest innovations become more systemic and widespread. A senior official in the Fernandez administration explained:

> Like it or not, an institution like the Board of Education, with responsibility for over 1,100 schools and a million kids, is designed to meet the needs of the norm. Therefore it is also continuously in a position of having to be responsive to all sorts of regulatory, legal, and contractually limiting demands. A project such as this, seeking nontraditional arrangements for teacher selection, student admission, and space inevitably wants to do something other than the current rules and regulations allow. Therefore, for every aspect, someone has to spend time and energy finding a way through the regulations so that what happens is not entirely out of compliance.

As this statement implies, a continuance of policy by exception is organizationally impossible on an expanding scale when there are insufficient personnel to maneuver around traditional regulations. Even though the board's organization made this large innovation difficult to implement, its commitment to systemwide change also made it inadvisable to manage the work at the periphery. When school-level reformers asked to create a separate organization to respond to the new schools, Chancellor Fernandez rejected the idea, arguing that the board had to develop the capacity to respond in order to safeguard support for the initiative beyond his own tenure. Considering the turnover in chancellors in the years since, his concern appears warranted.

The Board of Education's dilemma was intensified by the knowledge that handling innovation through regular channels is risky if the organization cannot manage itself differently. Systemic organizational change requires a redefinition of turf, which, as Fernandez explained, "triggers fears. It all boils down to turf. . . . [It's] a fight [with] the established bureaucracy and the status quo." Fernandez's strategy for getting things done was personal intervention. Although often effective, this strategy reinforced the culture of hierarchy and required a continuous, timely flow of information to him, which proved unrealistic in a system the size of the New York City Board of Education.

The new schools initiative placed in relief the need for internal redesign of the central office and delegation of more responsibility to the field. A key question for districts launching school reforms is whether they will pursue an array of ad hoc initiatives managed by exception from established policies or whether (and how) they might change district operations and policy so that successful innovations become the norm. Research on how districts might rethink their work to better support teaching and learning has just begun to surface (e.g., see Elmore & Burney, 1996).

Although in fits and starts, reform has moved forward at 110 Livingston Street. Margaret Harrington, chief executive officer for K–12 instruction in 1998, pointed out that the new school initiatives had made an impact on the school system: "The BOE [Board of Education] is now more sophisticated in school redesign than before. Without the external work, the BOE would probably not have changed." Harrington noted both the growing acceptance of the small school idea and the growing appreciation of its nuances:

> Breaking down anonymity is important in all schools, especially in poor urban systems where kids do not have a support system. Big schools have a hard time doing that. Small schools create a culture that kids buy into and that parents feel is more responsive and [where] faculty feel they can make a difference. But small is not enough. [Schools] need professional development and commitment of staff and commitment of parents and kids that they have to do things differently. We need to create schools where kids and teachers can have relationships. Relationships have to be used to get good academics.

Harrington suggested that the Board of Education should begin to assess schools based on their results rather than on employee compliance with procedures—a sharp departure from bureaucratic norms. In its efforts to further institutionalize the process of reform in the late 1990s, the board at one point sought to eliminate the Alternative High Schools Superintendency and to move the new schools into the central bureaucracy. This idea was abandoned as it became clear that the central bureaucracy could not easily respond to the schools' needs or nurture the additional school creation that was still taking place. However, the new superintendent of the Alternative Schools Division sought to create standard procedures for the management of small schools. One goal of this process was to guarantee a minimum level of support so that no school would have to experience the obstacles that had existed in the past. This admirable goal was accompanied, however, by procedural requirements that reformers felt would undermine innovation. Schools were told, for example, that they had to hire certified principals instead of teacher directors (who had created most of the new organizations) and that they should hire assistant principals to manage the paperwork accompanying their new status as "regular" schools. Some practitioners argued that the traditional process for selecting principals in New York City favors those unlikely to support shared decision making or to challenge existing rules. Others noted that the personalization afforded by the new schools is made fiscally possible in part by their decisions to hire classroom teachers rather than administrative staff such as assistant principals.

The schools also felt that their effectiveness was threatened by the district's effort to mandate an increase in all school sizes to 600 or more students, both to deal with increasing enrollments and to give more students access to the education that the small schools provide. Although the Board of Education withdrew this policy in the face of protest, individual schools were pres-

sured to enlarge their enrollments by as much as 100 students in a year, raising concerns such as this one voiced by the Vanguard director:

> The pressure for us to increase our numbers is creating a lot of tension at our school. They are starting to destroy what we are trying to build. For so many of our kids this is their only stability, the only place where they have some caring adults.

A Vanguard teacher commented:

> Our numbers in classes have gone up. This is extremely difficult to handle. If we want to assign writing and have [students] revise, then the numbers must remain small, [otherwise] we have to dilute our writing assignments because it is too much for teachers to grade.

Other efforts to standardize procedures were viewed as potentially undermining the schools' success. For example, a proposed mandate that the schools schedule a set number of minutes for each subject area daily, even though their block schedules were in weekly compliance with state guidelines, threatened to limit the school's instructional options. A sympathetic Board of Education official noted:

> The uniqueness of the [CCE/CCSP] schools has not been institutionalized at the BOE. It is not recognized. The BOE sees the CCSP schools as being outside the system—not as serving kids as they see them needing service. There is a philosophical difference between the project and BOE. The BOE deals with mandates and lawsuits. Schools that set their own rules are seen as boutique schools.

It is not yet clear whether the effort to bring the new schools in from the margins will place the reforms on steadier ground and protect them in the long run, or whether the attempt to standardize their work could threaten the practices that have enabled them to be effective.

Policy Discontinuity and System-Level Accountability

When the CCSP was initiated in 1992, city and state agencies supported policies that defined the schools, such as small size, personalization, interdisciplinary instruction, and performance-based assessment. It was because of these innovations that parents, students, and teachers chose the schools and foundations provided start-up funds. However, as in past eras of reform, new officials in the state education department or new school district officials can supersede the decisions of preceding administrations without considering promises previously made to constituents who have supported the reforms.

In addition to periodic changes in the Board of Education's management philosophy with each new chancellor, the state education department has changed course as well. Whereas the former commissioner encouraged schools to create performance-based assessments and offered waivers from many of

the Regents examinations to schools with well-developed systems, the current commissioner has moved to end this practice. CCSP faculty believe that teaching to the largely multiple-choice Regents exams is at odds with the kind of teaching needed to encourage in-depth inquiry and analysis. Because the schools' portfolio assessment systems are integral to every aspect of their instructional programs, faculty believe that a discontinuance of the waivers will compromise educational coherence. The New York City Board of Education's Division of Accountability has supported the schools' claims, as it has moved toward greater use of performance assessments over the last decade. Others in the New York State Department of Education argue that if the quality of education in the schools is high, students should be able to take and pass the Regents examinations without deflecting the schools from their efforts. The comments of one school leader capture the level of tension felt by most school insiders: "What is hanging over us now is the imposition of Regents [examination] without any commitment beyond the waiver. I don't sleep nights over this. If we are forced in this direction it will absolutely alter what we are doing with portfolio. They are incompatible."

The changeability of policy raises questions of system-level accountability to parents and students, as well as to educators who commit themselves to developing new schools. It takes many years to bring serious reforms to maturity. Discontinuities in policy can undermine schools' efforts to stabilize their practices and to create internal accountability. Discontinuities also undermine practitioner commitment to change. As experienced staff in many districts often comment about recurring waves of reform, "Been there, done that." Or, "We tried that and it didn't last."

To be sure, not all innovations are successful, including many of the efforts in New York and elsewhere to create new schools. A critical question for policymakers is how systems can be accountable for providing the continuity that successful practice requires and be responsible to constituencies that have chosen educationally respectable innovations and have invested in schools that succeed. Automatic support of innovations marching under various reform banners, regardless of their success, would be irresponsible. Proponents of contracting and charter schools strategies (Hill, 1997) have urged contracts that provide renewable terms of operation (e.g., three to five years), within which innovations can operate undisturbed and then be evaluated for continuation. These strategies also pose dilemmas of how to assure accountability within the terms of a contract and how to assure continuation of useful innovations beyond the terms of the contract. Like many other districts, New York City must decide whether to maintain a policy of innovation at the margins or whether to transform its core operations so as to undertake widespread systemic change. A third choice is one that also has historical precedent—abandoning innovations when they conflict with new policies or with standardized routines. Many of the people we interviewed wondered aloud whether this reform would go the way of others before it or whether it would create new possibilities for schooling. The end of this policy story remains to be written.

Notes

[1]The four-year graduation rate reflects the proportion of a class of students who began as ninth graders in a school and, within four years, graduated from that school or any other in New York City or received a GED. Data are from the 1992–93 report *School Profile and School Performance in Relation to Minimum Standards,* New York City Public Schools, February 22, 1994.

[2]The process allows schools to choose half of their students from those who apply and assigns the remainder through a computerized system that uses test scores to produce a range of academic achievement. The schools and the Board of Education computer each select 50 percent of the applicants, with the following reading-level distribution: 16 percent above and 16 percent below the average grade level of applicants to the school and 68 percent near the average grade level. Preference is given to applicants residing in the zone of the high school. The Board of Education assigns additional zoned students at the beginning of the school year.

[3]Similar schools are defined in the New York City School Report Cards as those with a similar percentage of students eligible for free lunch and a similar percentage of English Language Learners.

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