Elements of Education

PARTNER SCHOOLS

Elements of Education Partners

2020-21 Framework

Mission and Vision

We believe all students have the right to high-quality educational experiences that develop their unique needs and passion.

The Mission of the Partner Schools is to change public education by emphasizing creativity and utilizing a fully inclusive model that educates the whole student through our core values of Empathy, Community, Balance, and Thinking.

We believe that schools should be mission-driven organizations that clearly define why they exist. Historically, public schools are created within specific geographic boundaries, serving the communities housed within them. A neighborhood public school reflects the values and needs of a particular geographic community. However, despite efforts to desegregate neighborhoods since the 1950s, they have only become more segregated by race and economic class over time and are often not designed to serve the most vulnerable community members (Baum-Snow & Lutz, 2011; Bellino, 2016). If public schools wish to offer every student an opportunity to pursue their unique passions and interests, they need to divorce themselves from the geographic boundaries that maintain segregation through decades of racial and economic inequities. The vision of the Partner Schools is to create a public school that accurately reflects the true diversity of an entire city, not just one neighborhood or community. By centering a school around a specific lens of learning, a public school can establish a diverse learning environment that provides opportunities for every student within a city to pursue their unique passions and interests (Smrekar & Honey, 2015). Furthermore, by focusing on one lens of learning instead of a comprehensive model of providing every pathway and program to every neighborhood separately, a school can devote more resources to a deeper and richer experience within that lens of learning. The idea that consolidating public high schools to increase economic efficiency has not proven true (Cooley & Floyd, 2013).

The Importance of Shared Values

A common question of school leaders is to ask of their institution, "is this school a mirror that reflects the values of our community or a garden that cultivates it?" (Dwyer & Hiscock, 2019). Most public high schools' comprehensive nature often overlooks establishing a set of shared values that dictate school initiatives, funding priorities, and school-wide achievement goals. We believe that schools must be mission-driven organizations whose members know why they exist and what values they share. Several organizational theory studies have shown the benefit of establishing and consistently displaying shared values with an organization (Huffman, 2003; Khazanchi et al., 2006; Posner et al., 1985). While the Partner Schools exist to provide access to high-quality educational experiences that develop every student's unique needs and passions, it is just as important to create shared values to define what our schools are not.

First and foremost, Partner Schools are not *comprehensive* high schools; our intent is not to replace or replicate traditional programs at larger, comprehensive models. Partner Schools exist to provide an alternative to the comprehensive model centered on the unique

needs and passions of a diverse population of students. Partner Schools are also not private or charter schools; they exist inside public systems to provide access to every student and work within a public system to create transformative change over time. By focusing on providing an alternative within the public system instead of siphoning off resources from the public system by creating an external option, we aim to partner with a school district to create lasting change and increased opportunity for all students.

The Four Pillars

Partner Schools are centered on four pillars that stand as our shared values. These pillars are empathy, community, balance, and thinking. We believe in **empathy** because it's essential in students' cognitive development to have the opportunity to learn how to identify with someone different from themselves (Bresler et al., 2009). Students in schools are often grouped and tracked by ability level. The result is a homogenous and segregated community that only allows students to experience the world alongside people very similar to themselves and simultaneously discriminates against students based on race, gender, and disability (Braddock & Dawkins, 1993). Through a truly diverse school community that accurately reflects the larger community, Partner Schools intentionally create heterogeneous classes and make space and time for character development that challenge students to think outside of their own experience. **Community** is a call for students and staff to recognize that they are a part of something bigger than themselves. A learning community comprises more than students and staff; Partner Schools are intentionally placed within a larger community context and take full advantage of the resources that a community has to offer. School structures are not designed to promote the individual over the collective whole. Our aim is for students to see their success in terms of how it has impacted their entire learning community's success. We believe in offering **balance** in education, focusing on the social-emotional and character development of students as well as the cognitive and academic. We believe in a blend of humanities, math, science, art, and technology to create an educational experience that prepares students for success in whatever field they pursue after high school. Staff develop curricula that blend project-based learning that allows students to demonstrate their skills through portfolios of real-world work with standards-based assessments that focus on core proficiencies. Finally, our value of **thinking** encourages students to focus on depth of knowledge rather than breadth of knowledge and to develop higher-order cognitive skills that focus on ways of thinking and learning rather than rote memorization.

Commitment to Changing Public Education

Partner Schools exist within the public school system, not apart from it like charter or private schools. While we have created policies and procedures that allow Partner Schools to function with more autonomy than a comprehensive school when it comes to staffing, curriculum, and budget, the intention is not to create a competing public school system but rather to strengthen the public school system by providing rigorous alternatives to the comprehensive model. We believe that by providing schools that exist to serve a particular lens of learning, students are more fully served by having the opportunity to choose their future.

Partner Schools further create systems and programs that serve the public good by sharing resources and ideas around the mission of collective impact; sharing a similar mission and focus with the public schools, we have a stronger impact by being a part of the system than by opposing it and working against it.

Collaborative Leadership

Partner Schools distribute leadership among multiple individuals with an intentional organizational design of shared responsibility and collaboration. As an organization, no one individual serves as the principal or executive director of any Partner Schools. Each school has two co-directors who share the leadership responsibilities drawing on each of their unique abilities to meet all their needs. Leadership is a complex and multi-dimensional responsibility that should not be left to one individual. Co-Director pairs build empathy and community over time, sharing responsibility, and creating multiple layers of accountability (Eckman, 2006). Co-directors develop inquiry teams following a PLC (professional learning community model) with leaders serving 1-3 year terms in their schools. These leaders, along with the co-directors, form the core leadership team at each school.

Leadership development follows a strengths-based approach to collaboration, identifying the needs of an organization and shifting the organization structure to allow leaders to use their strengths to fulfill needs rather than place them in positions where their deficits are exposed.

Systems Thinking & Continuous Improvement

Partner Schools utilize a 'systems thinking' approach to school design, development, and improvement, adopting an iterative process that is never complete (Bryk et al., 2015). Professional development days are embedded within the school calendar throughout the academic year to allow leaders to identify potential growth areas and offer targeted staff training for staff development. For two hours every week, staff meet to look at quantitative and qualitative student data in their inquiry teams and then participate in school-wide staff development centered around 'Plan-Design-Do-Act (PDSA)' cycles of improvement (Perla et al., 2013). Co-directors meet monthly with inquiry team leaders to share cycles of inquiry and identify variations in predicted outcomes related to student achievement. Specific attention is placed on systems of inequity and how students from groups experiencing oppression through racial, economic, and physical-ability biases are being supported, empowered, and prioritized. Staff are encouraged to take ownership of these systems and customize them around their unique capabilities that also serve the function of the school. Again, this is an iterative process that is never complete and requires continual analysis and attention. Annual and long-term strategic goals are developed by performing 'casual system analysis' to identify root causes of problems of practice (Bryk et al., 2015). Potential solutions and short-term goals are set by the co-directors every summer for the following academic year at a retreat dedicated to strategic planning and collaboration.

Partners schools also recognize and welcome the inherent systems complexity in public education, identifying the discrete part-whole distinctions in organizational structure, the specific and directional relationships between those parts, and the unique perspectives each school component can be viewed from (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2015). Figure 1 shows a model of constructs used within Partner Schools broken down into part-whole systems and showing each construct's interconnectedness within the larger mesosystem.
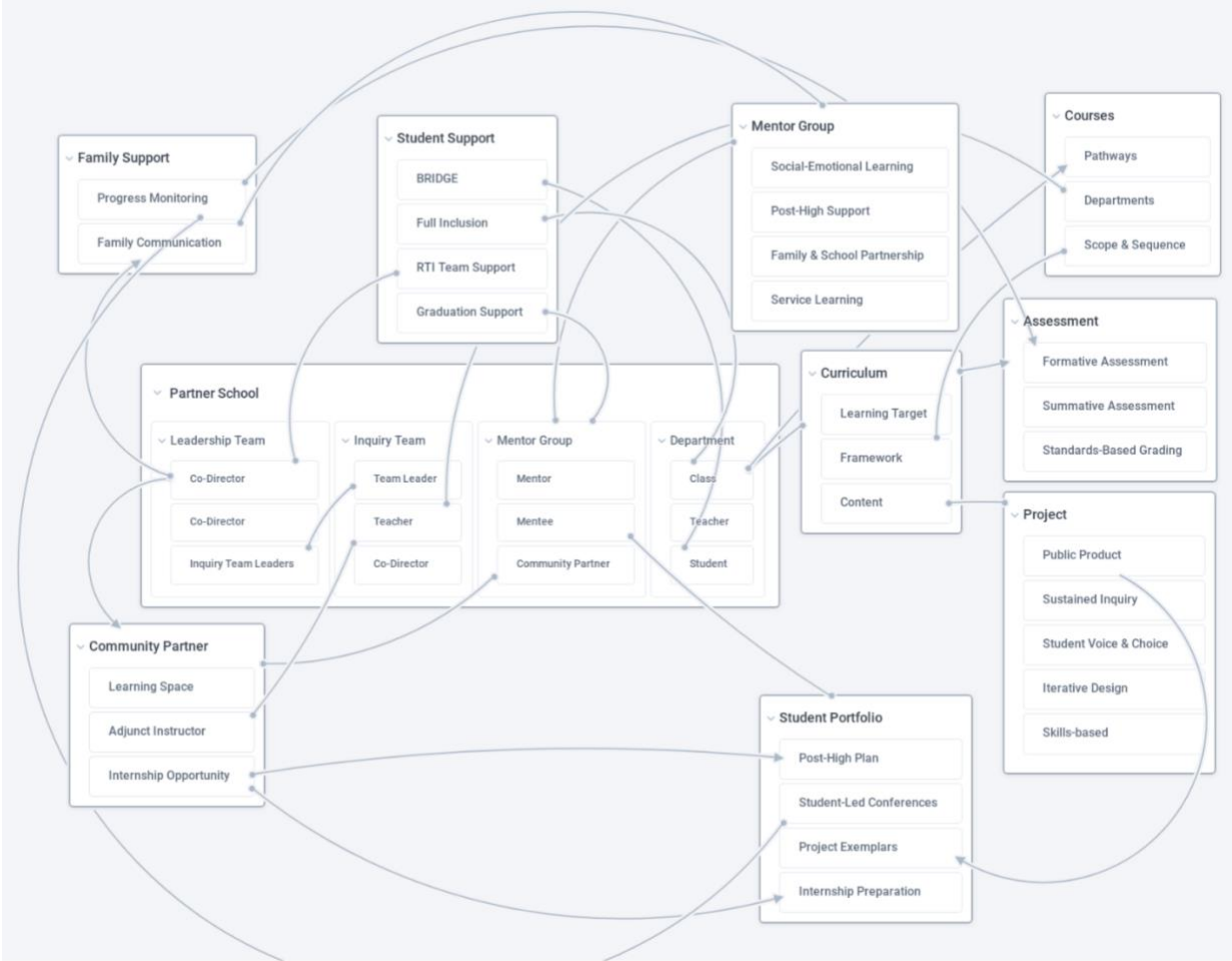

Figure 1- A Complex Part-Whole Relationship Diagram of Core Constructs within the Partner Schools Model

Each of these constructs can be broken down further into defining parts and viewed from multiple perspectives. The complexity of a Partner School system can be easier understood by looking at each construct from the perspective of one of the four pillars. Figure 2 shows how the rest of this framework will approach each program from each pillar's perspective.
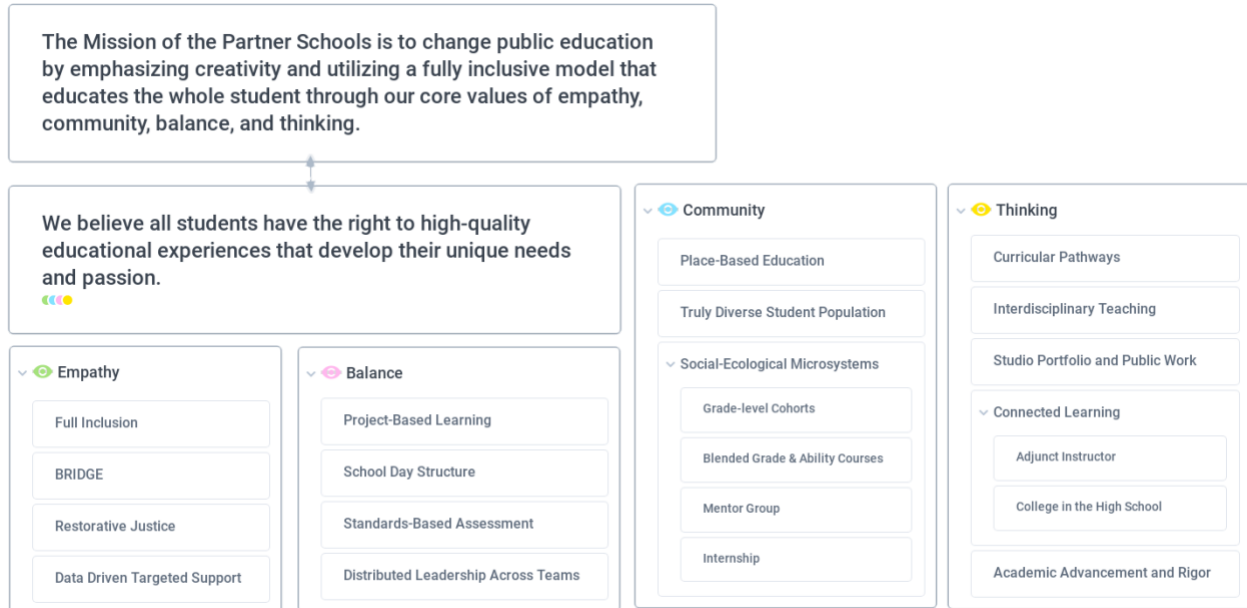
Figure 2 A mission-vison construct map from the perspective of four pillars

Community

Place-Based Education

Comprehensive secondary public schools are typically built on public land designed exclusively for school use and often designed to restrict access to the surrounding community. Partner Schools are physically located within a community by design to take full advantage of the resources a community offers and provide students with an academic and professional culture that is more real-world than a comprehensive high school (Schulte et al., 2020). Students are encouraged to interact with adults within a professional context connected to the school's lens of learning. This design also allows further partnership and collaboration within a community by sharing instead of duplicating resources. Because Partner Schools are part of the public school system, a partner school can leverage its assets to develop agreements with other community organizations to serve both the students and the public. School buildings, equipment, and even personnel can be shared in partnership with museums, park systems, non-profits with a shared mission and vision of serving youth, and college and university systems. In return, a partner school can maximize its assets to secure access to additional spaces, resources, and experiences for its students. The result is a place-based school design that is embedded within rather than isolated from a community.

"Understanding who we are in community, the nature of the relationships we are entwined in, and how to ethically navigate these relationships requires us to develop a connection to place" (Lowenstein et al., 2018., p. 40). Partner Schools begin by mapping the assets within a community and identifying areas of connection for students based on economic, ecological, and cognitive opportunities. Partnerships play a significant role in identifying opportunities for collaboration and integration of curriculum and sharing resources. It's

important to note that the responsibility of seeking out, developing, and maintaining these relationships falls entirely on the leadership of Partner Schools. "The importance of principal leadership for successful school-community partnerships cannot be overstated. Indeed, a qualitative study of teacher leadership for community involvement in three urban middle schools (Sanders, in press) found that lack of active principal support was a primary obstacle to successful community outreach" (Sanders, 32). In reality, developing partnerships with the community is a responsibility that is easily brushed aside for the more pressing issues of day-to-day school management. Sharing the leadership responsibility between co-directors (as opposed to placing the entirety of the job on one principal) helps to ensure that these essential responsibilities are not ignored.

Truly Diverse Student Populations

Multiple studies have shown that one of the largest school-related factors that impact overall student achievement is the socioeconomic and racial makeup of the student population (Caldas & Bankson, 1997; Reardon et al., 2019). Highly segregated schools create larger achievement gaps for poor and minority students, and integrated schools where populations are more diverse and students from poverty are spread evenly across multiple schools lead to a reduction in the achievement gap. Since the 1966 report *Equality of Educational Opportunity Report,* known commonly as the 'Coleman Report,' researchers have repeatedly shown that a high degree of racial segregation has existed in our public schools (Coleman et al., 1966). School reformers have spent decades working to re-integrate our public schools and reduce the achievement gap between White students and Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Native students. During the 1970s and 80s, the achievement gap saw a modest decline as forced integration of schools spread across the country (Reardon et al., 2015). While outside school factors have a significant impact on student achievement, recent studies have shown that not only does the socioeconomic status of the individual students affect their achievement, but the *concentration* of high-poverty students and *segregation* of minority students of their peers also has an extraordinary impact on exacerbating the achievement gap (Reardon et al., 2019). Partner Schools aim to intentionally create a truly diverse population by developing an admissions process that reflects a city's diversity more accurately.

For this to be possible, much care and attention must be paid to the admissions and application process. Partner Schools are driven by student choice, empowering students to make a decision about their own future based on the options available in their own communities. The primary goal of partner school choice is to provide access to a high-quality education centered on students' interests and passions. Some researchers have shown that school choice models in public schools (whether through private schools with vouchers, public magnet schools, charter schools or even on a macro scale through Tiebout choice) lead to furthering segregation that disadvantage traditionally marginalized populations (Henig, 1996; Mickleson, R.; Bottia, M.; Southworth, 2008; Saporito, S; Lareau, 1999). As a result, specific protocols need to be put into place to ensure that the incoming student population accurately and equitably represents the demographics of the community it serves. Applicants are placed in a school by a regional lottery, not based on achievement or ability. The application barriers also need to be eliminated, and extra effort needs to be put into reaching students from families

who traditionally have lacked the social capital to access opportunities in choice-based public systems (Louie, 2014; Smrekar & Honey, 2015). Neighborhood school enrollment reinforces decades of inequity achieved by geographic discrimination. It is the Partner Schools' mission to transform the high school enrollment system in public school districts to reduce segregation and inequity by designing an enrollment system around informed student choice.

The purpose of an application process is not to create a cut-score, identify more academically successful students for admission, or weed out academically challenged students. Instead, it is intended to be the first teaching tool in empowering students to make a decision about their academic future and to prepare them for an alternative approach to learning. Every student that completes the application process is placed into the lottery, with a representative proportion of students accepted from each neighborhood within a city. Any student that is not selected from the lottery is placed on a waitlist. Partner Schools must collaborate with existing public schools at the elementary and middle school level to develop relationships with families, teachers, students, and community organizations to ensure that every family has an equitable opportunity to choose their academic future.

Social-Ecological Model

Partner Schools carefully design a system around a student's sense of belonging and identity. Using Bronfenbrenner's classic social-ecological framework, each microsystem within a Partner School can be understood through its contribution to a student's identity and complex interdependence (Damon & Lerner, 2006). According to Bronfenbrenner, a student's relationship with the public school is part of a complex network of sociological systems nested within each other. Every student is part of a 'microsystem' both as a grade level and within a mentor group (along with the microsystems in their own lives, such as their family, sports teams, social groups, etc.). The combined interaction of these microsystems, or 'mesosystem,' also profoundly impacts the sense of belonging. Combined with the 'exosystem' of the entirety of a student's world and the 'macrosystem' of society as a whole, this classic social-ecological framework is the foundation for intentional heterogenous groupings within Partner Schools, from city-wide heterogeneous cohorts to mentor groups to mixed-grade level teams (Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

Cohort Model

Students are admitted to Partner Schools by grade-level cohort and stay with their cohort for all four years of their academic experience. Students are not accepted after the initial acceptance because the curricular model is built on a complete, multi-year framework and does not transfer or follow the same scope and sequence as a comprehensive school. Students are asked to commit to the school upon admission to minimize attrition and reduce the negative impacts of school mobility on achievement (Parke & Keener, 2011). Students are not accepted from the waitlist after the first year begins. If a student decides to break their commitment and leave early, they are not permitted to return, and their spot is not filled with someone from the waitlist. The mentor model allows for a cohesive four-year experience enabling strong relationships to be developed amongst mentees and between families and their mentor throughout their time at the partner school.

Mixed-Grade Level Teams

Students are grouped by grade level in many comprehensive school models and, outside of a few exceptions, stay within their grade level team for most of their core academic classes. Partner Schools exist to create a diverse learning community that encourages empathy and thinking and works to avoid tracking students by grade level or ability whenever possible. When students can work alongside older peers, they develop a deeper understanding of the scope and sequence of their experience (Gajadharsingh, 1991). Differentiation in a project-based setting is an essential component of mixed-grade level teams. Ability grouping is saved for specific intervention groups or grade-level classes for a singular purpose. Tracking students by ability level has been shown in studies to have both positive and negative effects on achievement depending on the type of tracking and the context Simply offering advanced level courses and auto-enrolling students in rigorous classes has not been shown to increase achievement in marginalized populations and, in some cases, even led to lost achievement. (Domina et al., 2019). Partner Schools focus on groupings through differentiation within a mixed-level classroom whenever possible.

Mentorship

At the center of cognitive growth is a strong relationship between students and teachers. Zaretta Hammond explains why this is true. "In a collectivist, community-based culture, relationships are the foundation of all social, political, and cognitive endeavors. This is consistent with the fact that all human beings are hardwired for relationships after living in communal, cooperative settings for millions of years" (Hammond, 72). The core of the student's relationship with the school and their family is through the mentor group. The mentor group consists of 18-25 mentees who typically stay with their mentor for their entire time at a partner school. Through the guided discussion of social problems through the lens of shared values, students develop a framework for meaning-making in the context of community (Vygotsyk, 1978). The mentor groups meet weekly as a group and individually with student and mentor to set and monitor academic goals based on a student's classes, long-term goals as part of their post-high plan, and socio-emotional goals stemming from the student's reflection and experience. Mentors are intended to be the primary contact point for the student and their family, providing guidance and support with the rest of a student's classroom teachers and connecting them with additional school resources. Academic and career planning starts and ends with the mentor and is highlighted throughout their mentorship journey.

Internship

During a student's four years at a partner high school, they must complete a semester-long internship within their broader community. The preparation for this internship starts in their first year. They develops their portfolio and interest profile and continues during their second year as they begin to explore a curricular pathway. In the fall of their third year, the student completes an 'Intro to Internship' class, which develops their student portfolio into a

resume, post-high plan, and an internship preparation pathway that finishes with them being placed into an internship in the spring of her third year. The internship is not always intended to indicate their career path, rather a real-world professional experience that introduces them to a chosen field's professional life. This experience then prepares the student to complete their final year at school with a set of classes connected more directly with their post-high plan. It equips them with the professional skills needed to succeed as a young adult in the workplace or college.

Empathy

Every human being has a complex schema developed throughout their life that informs how they make sense of the world. These schemas are formed by past experiences, deeply held cultural or personal values, and personal traits and make up what Luis Moll and others call "funds of knowledge" (Amanti et al., 2005). Learning to value each of these unique human perspectives by adopting a different lens from one's own is one of the essential social skills for working in collaborative teams. Stanford psychologist Jamil Zaki argues that empathy is like a muscle that needs to be strengthened intentionally and can 'atrophy' if not developed (Vedantam, 2020). This practice is the heart of empathy. Practicing empathy is woven into every aspect of Partner Schools.

Full Inclusion Special Education – every student has access to every class at Partner Schools. Their access is not limited by their physical, cognitive, or emotional disabilities.

Community-Based Mentorship – every student is a part of a mentor group for all four years of their high school experience, enabling them to build strong relationships with a diverse population outside of their typical peer group and across multiple grade levels.

BRIDGE – Every student spends at least one semester as a BRIDGE (Building Relationships In Diverse Group Environments), supporting a specific student's learning journey through peer-to-peer learning collaboration.
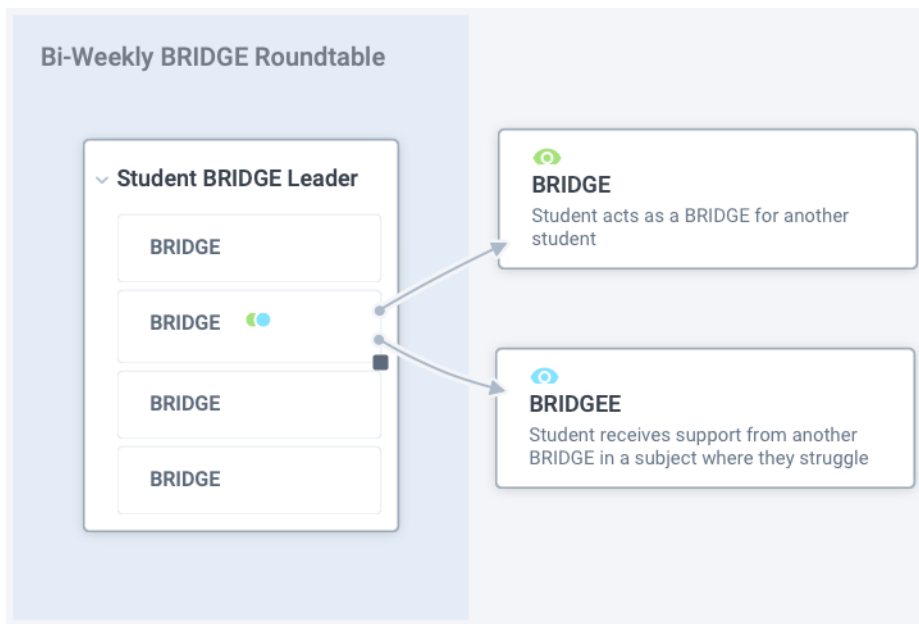
Full Inclusion

Partner Schools practice a full-inclusion policy for special education students, ensuring that every student is placed in a class centered around their unique passions and interests rather than their abilities or disabilities. While there has not been an empirical study directly comparing the social and academic progress of special education students in a full inclusion secondary model to that of a control group, some studies have shown that when students are moved to a full-inclusion classroom, they score higher in math and reading, earn higher grades, have fewer absences, and complete college preparatory classes at a higher rate (Kirby, 2017). Partner Schools have special education teachers who manage IEPs, collect progress monitoring data, and work with students' families, mentors, and classroom teachers to support students' academic, social-emotional, and professional growth. Because students are not grouped by ability in most cases, additional resources are utilized to ensure that differentiation is provided

for students with special needs within a full-inclusion classroom. Special education teachers often act as co-teachers, leading breakout groups for both special education and general education students or providing support to a classroom teacher in designing a lesson that offers proper differentiation for all students with specific learning needs. Lesson modification and targeted support are always pushed into the classroom rather than pulling students out of a classroom for targeted support.

BRIDGE

Every student is encouraged to spend at least one semester participating in the BRIDGE (Building Relationships in Diverse Group Environments) program. A bridge is a "near-peer" support with a uniquely identified skill within a particular area and volunteers to provide specific support for a student or group of students who need additional help in that area. It is common for a student to need the support of a bridge in one class and provide support as a bridge in a different class. The bridge program is built on an asset-based model of targeted support as opposed to a deficit-based model. Near-peer tutoring programs have found that the benefits extend beyond the student being tutored (Longwill & Kleinert, 1998). BRIDGEs learn valuable mentoring and self-reflection skills through iterative reflection and evidence gathering cycles and present to a cohort of other BRIDGEs on a bi-weekly basis. The bridge program utilizes a peer review feedback and assessment process throughout the academic term. Bridges receive a short training at the beginning of the term, are placed in a specific classroom-based on need, and then meet regularly throughout the term with other bridges during that period in the schedule to self-assess, provide and discuss evidence of their work as a bridge, and share problems of practice with their bridge peers. Their final review is a combination of self-assessment, feedback from the classroom teacher in which they are placed, and the bridge teacher supervisor's assessment.

Figure 3 - Bridge Program Outline

Restorative and Relational Approach to Discipline

Partner Schools utilize a restorative approach to discipline both within the classroom and across the school at large. It is vital for schools to balance accountability and support for all students in situations where harm is done to the community. Instead of relying on the extremes of punitive punishment through exclusionary discipline (which only emphasizes the needs of the community over the individual) or permissive therapeutics (which only emphasizes the role of the individual over the community), Partner Schools aim to provide both accountability when necessary and support to help students repair the damage that may have been caused (Morrison, 2003).
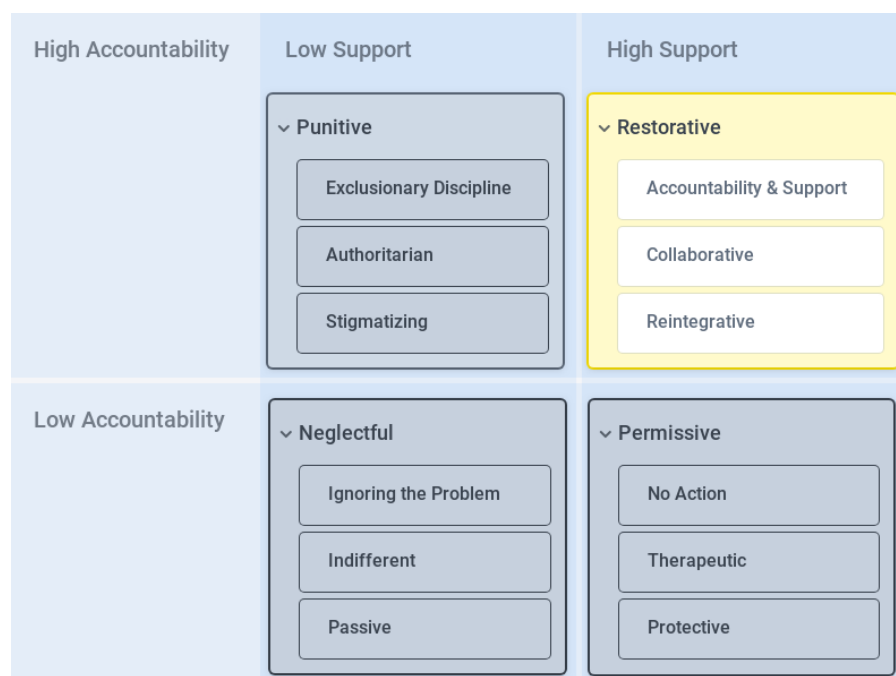
High Accountability	Low Support	High Support
	∨ **Punitive**	∨ **Restorative**
	Exclusionary Discipline	Accountability & Support
	Authoritarian	Collaborative
	Stigmatizing	Reintegrative
Low Accountability	∨ **Neglectful**	∨ **Permissive**
	Ignoring the Problem	No Action
	Indifferent	Therapeutic
	Passive	Protective

Figure 4 - Restorative Matrix of Accountability and Support (Wachtel & McCold, 2001)

Mentor groups are utilized to practice restorative skills to resolve conflict before it occurs, empowering students to practice and use a set of tools that can be used in times of crisis. Conflicts are addressed based on the damage an incident inflicts on the relationship between individuals and the school or classroom. Students are empowered to work to restore that damage to that relationship through mediation, reflection, and accountability. Victim-Author conferences are utilized when a conflict disrupts the learning environment. Whenever possible, conflicts are encouraged to be addressed within a classroom, and exclusionary discipline is only used when multiple approaches have been attempted to resolve a conflict and have not been successful. Teachers are empowered to set classroom norms as a social contract with their students and are encouraged to enforce those norms with support from student leaders.

Data-Driven Student Support

Partner Schools employ a student support team that utilizes a response to intervention approach (RTI) to identify students who need additional support. The student support team is typically made up of the special education teachers, one or both co-directors, social worker, and school security staff. The team meets weekly collecting academic, attendance, and behavioral data from teachers and mentors and identifies students that need targeted intervention as early in the academic term as possible. This information is then shared with mentors and the staff, so interventions and support can be coordinated and reinforced. The student support team utilizes a rubric for identifying which tier a student falls into based on attendance, academic performance, social-emotional needs, behavior, and outside school factors. These rubrics are also shared with students for self-assessment and are regularly calibrated to follow an 85/10/5 model, targeting the highest level of additional interventions for the level three (top 5%) and distributing remaining supports for the 10% of level two students. A partner school social worker provides access to short-term social-emotional counseling and coordinated access to long-term counseling through outside agencies when appropriate. The special education teachers oversee the management of IEPs and 504s and the Bridge program, along with co-teaching many classrooms pushing supports into the classroom. Originally introduced as part of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) as a strategy to identify students in need of special education services earlier in their academic career, RTI methods are highly effective practices for schools to use in targeting intervention support for students most in need (Murakami-Ramalho & Wilcox, 2012).

Balance

Project-Based Learning

Partner Schools use a project-based model for curriculum, encouraging staff to develop projects that support the school's lens of learning, provide students an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of a learning target, and are publicly displayed and critiqued by their peers and the community. Projects are differentiated for multiple abilities within a class. They are tied directly to state and national standards outlined by the scope and sequence defined by the inquiry team at each school. Students use class projects as evidence for their portfolio, and Partner Schools develop regular opportunities to showcase student work throughout the school year. Partner Schools align curricula in all disciplines around the "gold standard PBL" framework (Larmer et al., 2015).

Sustained Inquiry

Project-based learning is an iterative process that challenges the learner to engage in broad and rigorous questions that inspire a continuous quest for understanding. Projects are not meant to be worksheets, sample problems, or close-ended questions with no connection to a larger and deeper inquiry within a discipline. Projects often begin with a challenging problem or question, followed by a series of case studies of previous research highlighting a specific

problem and what prior work has revealed about the problem. The goal is to develop a sense of curiosity and wonder for a student, inspiring them to probe for a deeper understanding.

Authenticity

Projects need to be authentic both in the context of the problem itself and for the individual student. Authenticity stems from a deep sense of relevance, connecting the problem being studied to a real-world application. More than that, projects need to be relevant to the individual student and their personal and cultural reality. Projects need to produce a tangible product that can be used in the real world, with a measurable impact on students' world.

Student Voice and Choice

Projects need to be chosen by the student, guided by the instructor's curricular goals derived from learning standards. A successful project assignment for a class will include expected parameters and learning targets along with a high-quality exemplar. From there, students will have the ability to adapt elements of the project that connect to their interests and learning styles. For example, if the project does not contain writing standards, the final report might have the option of a written, filmed, or oral presentation deliverable. The balance between providing guidance and learning targets with student voice and choice is a delicate interplay that can change depending on the nature of the project and where it lies over the academic term.

Reflection

Providing an opportunity to reflect on the process and outcome is an essential part of project-based learning. Students learn the most utilizing the meta-cognitive skills exercised during the reflection phase. Reflection is often overlooked and skipped to save time, but authentic project-based learning cannot ignore this critical step. Scaffolding the reflection process using prompts within individual projects and over multiple years (adding more complexity to reflections over time) is essential. Using digital tools to develop tiered and progressive portfolios are effective strategies in creating a valuable reflection experience (Land & Zembal-Saul, 2003).

Critique and Revision

Students need to be given the opportunity to critique their work and learn how to critique their peers' work. This process also needs to be scaffolded, using gallery walks with modeled critique language, role-playing feedback meetings, and quantitative feedback forms aligned to rubrics to evaluate student work. Effective project-based learning also provides time for students to collect and reflect on peer feedback and make revisions. Advanced projects are iterative processes over long periods, with cycles of production, feedback, and revision repeating over and over. Students are encouraged to incorporate feedback into their process as soon as possible, developing a *minimum viable product* or *MVP* that can be tested and critiqued early and often.

Public Product

Partner Schools are heavily invested in providing students with opportunities to publicly showcase their work for their peers, teachers, and communities. Student showcases are built into the calendar on a regular basis both across the school and for individual classes. Considerable effort needs to be afforded to showcasing student work on a regular basis. It is also essential to guide students in showcasing work that is not complete. Public products of student work do not necessarily represent the pinnacle of their achievement, but rather a stop along the way to gather formative feedback that will shape future revision. Students are encouraged to prepare a digital portfolio of individual work that showcases some of their best work and documents their growth as a learner over time. These public portfolios eventually become their high school and beyond plan for graduation.

School Year and School Day

Partner Schools use an extended school day and operate on a "4x4+1" block schedule during the week. Students enroll in four 90-minute classes each academic term and take those four classes every day, Monday-Thursday. Friday is reserved for mentor group and staff collaboration and professional development. The school day operates from 8 AM to 3:30 PM and starts at 10:30 on Fridays. Partner Schools operate on a later start time than a comprehensive high school model, with a slightly longer school day Monday-Thursday. Recent longitudinal studies have shown increased attendance rates and lower incidents of depression and sleep-related academic issues with a later start time (Wahlstrom, 2002). The annual school calendar is divided into two semesters, with a month-long mini-term class between the two semesters. An all-school retreat bookends the school year at the beginning of the year and a micro-term at the end of the year.
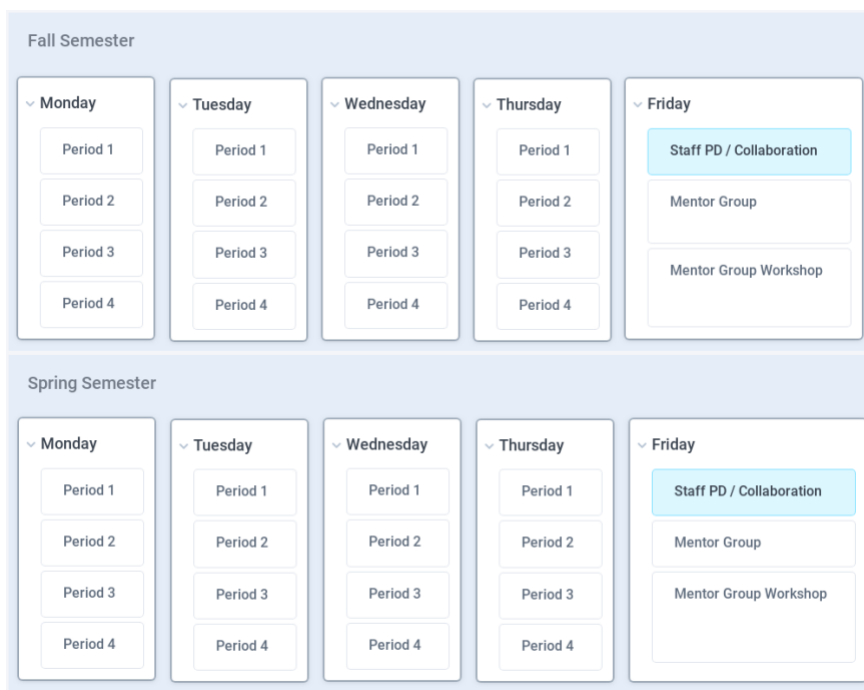

Figure 5 - Sample Student Year-Long Schedule

Standards-Based Assessment

Partner Schools utilize a standards-based approach to assessment throughout the academic term, measuring a student's progress towards developing mastery of skills and providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate that mastery through formative and summative assessments. A student's final grade in a course is translated into a 4.0 grade point average for their final transcript, but the letter grade is typically not assigned until the end of the academic term. Teachers and mentors work with students and families to recognize their progress towards mastery of a standard. Formative assessments can often be used to determine mastery across multiple courses. Project-based learning as a curricular model and standards-based assessment as a measurement philosophy combine to create a curriculum that allows students to demonstrate their academic and cognitive growth by exploring their unique passions and interests.
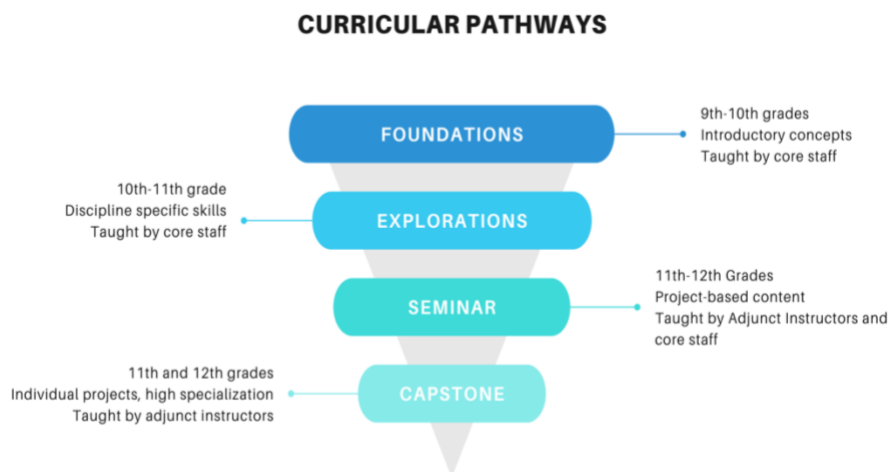
Distributed Leadership and Inquiry Teams

Teachers work collaboratively in inquiry teams and meet weekly to share student work, calibrate learning targets and assessment tools, and provide feedback on successful teaching strategies in each of their classes. An inquiry team leader leads each inquiry team. All inquiry team leaders meet monthly to set school-wide priorities and calibrate their teams' practices and outcomes. The result is a distributed leadership model, empowering leaders within each team to take ownership of their inquiry team's goals and outcomes, hold their team accountable to agreed norms and student growth goals, and share feedback with the co-directors on school-wide initiatives. Operational aspects of the school are shared across school leaders allowing co-directors to act more like project managers. Co-Directors work in pairs intentionally, dividing school management's responsibilities, family outreach, strengthening school partnerships, and strategic planning between two individuals working in a partnership (Eckman, 2006).

Thinking

Curricular Pathways

Designing a partner school around a lens of learning allows the school to develop specific pathways that support a student's progression through the pathway towards higher-level courses in their junior and senior year. The curricular pathways should be 'pyramid-shaped' with the most seat offerings at the lower level or foundations tier and the fewest

CURRICULAR PATHWAYS

FOUNDATIONS
9th-10th grades
Introductory concepts
Taught by core staff

10th-11th grade
Discipline specific skills
Taught by core staff
EXPLORATIONS

SEMINAR
11th-12th Grades
Project-based content
Taught by Adjunct Instructors and core staff

11th and 12th grades
Individual projects, high specialization
Taught by adjunct instructors
CAPSTONE

offerings at the highest level or capstone tier. Pathways encourage students to develop a four year sequence for their academic plan that moves them deeper into a field of study rather than taking various disconnected classes without a particular focus. Pathways also allow collaboration between multiple classroom teaches within an inquiry team to develop a scope and sequence across multiple years, distributing and scaffolding learning targets across the pyramid of a pathway. While some ability grouping develops naturally by identifying pathways, it becomes even more critical within pathways to look for opportunities to create mixed grade level groupings to allow younger students to see the work being done of older students in their pathway and interact with them regularly. Full-time classroom teaches typically focus on teaching the bottom part of the pyramid (fundamental and exploratory classes), hiring adjunct instructors for the more advanced courses (seminar and capstone classes) whenever possible.

Cross-Discipline Teaching and Collaboration

Throughout the school year, multiple opportunities are provided for teachers to work across disciplines and create integrated teaching and learning opportunities for students. During the mid-year mini-term, staff from various disciplines collaborate on one class that meets every day, all day for an entire month. This collaboration allows teachers to learn from peers outside of their inquiry team and to observe teaching strategies working alongside a teacher outside of their field of expertise. The opportunity for students is to see the connections between disciplines and to work on a project with multiple learning targets. The mid-year mini-term also concludes with a public display of student work, allowing peer review, feedback, and reflection. Teachers collaborate across inquiry teams at the all-school retreat in the fall to create lessons centered around the four school pillars and work within each school at the end of the year to develop a week-long micro-term class that engages students around a particular capstone project to finish the school year.

Student Portfolio and Public Work

Students being their four-year experience at Partner Schools by developing a portfolio of their best work during First Look. This develops over their four years and includes projects from pathway classes, projects, or portfolio pieces outside of class. During their junior year, this becomes their internship portfolio. Throughout their internship, the student continues to add artifacts to their portfolio. During their final year at the partner school, this portfolio serves as

their culminating project, high school and beyond plan, and public portfolio for the peers, family, and mentor. Regular opportunities are provided throughout the year to share student work with the public, including student showcases, design showcases, and public showings through community partners such as museums, businesses, colleges, universities, and supporting organizations. We believe that the most authentic learning occurs when students have regular opportunities to display their work publicly.

Real-World Learning through Adjunct Instructors

Along with full-time faculty, Partner Schools hire adjunct instructors who work alongside a teacher of record to provide additional instruction that is more specialized in specific fields connected to the school's lens of learning. Adjuncts are not certificated teachers but rather professionals who teach one or two classes per week around a particular and more highly specialized course. The adjunct instructor program allows students and staff to stay up to date around issues and practices within a professional discipline and gives students access to real-world learning by someone who is actively working in a specialized field daily. Adjunct instructors are not intended to be long-term positions but are rotated in and out based on the school's focus, the needs that arise each year in the master schedule, and through collaboration with the inquiry teams. Some adjunct instructors who become more invested in the school earn their teaching certificate and transition to part-time or full-time staff. The adjuncts report directly to a teacher of record on their inquiry team and occasionally participate in staff collaboration time on Fridays.

Academic Advancement and Rigor

Partner Schools do not create separate 'honors' or advanced placement tracks within disciplines. Instead, Partner Schools provide differentiation within mixed grade-level and ability-level classes. We believe that every student needs to be automatically enrolled in the most academically rigorous experience with the ability to opt-out or to seek more differentiation and scaffolding from a mentor or student services team member. Partner Schools do not offer a separate Advanced Placement pathways. Whenever possible, advanced courses are provided through college in the High School courses, offering dual credit for participating students in high school and college credit. Every junior and senior, by default, receive an opportunity to earn college credit in their English class, and many pathways offer advanced college credit courses that align specifically to the lens of learning at the school. Occasionally, Advanced Placement courses can provide a supplemental advanced course. Still, many demand a curriculum that doesn't provide the flexibility needed to offer a project-based lens with differentiation for multiple learning abilities.

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