Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.

—Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations
Imagine cities and small towns across the United States—the most influential and powerful country in the world with an economy of $14 trillion—ensuring that all citizens enjoy the benefits of an excellent public education. Picture a nation where education successfully prepares all children for meaningful post-secondary experiences. Imagine the social, economic, and global implications of being able to ask every adult in any public school, “How are the children?” and hearing the response, “The children are well; yes, all the children are doing well.” (traditional Maasai greeting and response).

Researchers and educators at Talent Development Secondary recognize three main areas of challenge in American middle and high schools: apathy, anonymity, and poor academic preparation. Students at greatest risk for academic failure and dropping out often arrive in middle and high school performing well below grade level in reading and mathematics, and they often lack social, study and other skills necessary to succeed. They may not have the motivation to confront difficult schoolwork, or the family or community support necessary. In addition, schools often fail to show the connection between students’ tested areas of proficiency and the “real world” or to develop their full range of academic skills and personal talents for success in college and careers.

Traditionally, sixth and ninth grades are the most difficult, make-or-break school years as students navigate the transition from elementary to middle and from middle to high school. Their task is daunting: more challenging academics, new schools, unfamiliar teachers and shifting social alliances, all while undergoing profound physical and emotional changes. Adolescent students are often overwhelmed and isolated. These challenges are especially hard-hitting in low-income, at-risk communities where students struggle with poverty, gangs, family problems, and community violence.

As early as the sixth grade, researchers can identify a significant percentage of students who will ultimately drop out. Tragically, before dropping out, students signal their distress and disengagement with multiple years of low test scores, poor behavior, and weak attendance. Yet they often have limited or no access to essential academic and social supports that could keep them on track to graduation.
The Primary Off-Track Indicators for Potential Dropouts

- **Attendance:** less than 80-90% school attendance
- **Behavior:** an “unsatisfactory” behavior mark in at least one class
- **Course Performance:** a final grade of “F” in Math and/or English

Sixth-grade students with one or more of the indicators have only a **10% to 20% chance of graduating** from high school on time or within one year of expected graduation.

*Robert Balfanz and Liza Herzog, Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University; Philadelphia Education Fund.*

Our nation’s appalling drop-out rate impacts not only the students themselves but also the standing of the schools they attend, their communities, and ultimately the economic and social health of the nation. Adults lacking a high school diploma are hard pressed to find jobs that can support themselves, let alone a family. Our high percentage of dropouts (one in four students; three out of five low-income and minority students) threatens our social fabric and weakens our nation’s competitiveness in a global economy.
But we can interrupt this trajectory of failure. Intervening early and getting students back on track decreases the dropout rate and positively impacts middle grade and high school test scores, attendance, and overall school climate. Schools can ease the difficulty of the transitional years and enable more students to stay in school, achieve at higher levels, and graduate ready for college and career.

TDS secondary, a widely recognized research-based model, focuses its efforts on the high schools and their feeder middle schools that drive the nation’s dropout crisis. For the past 18 years, TDS has successfully helped dismantle America’s pipeline of poverty by building capacity for radical transformation of traditional American comprehensive schools.

The Talent Development model addresses not only students’ traditional academic goals but also their desire to find personal and career interests that will be strengthened across the secondary grades. Students will vary widely in personal talents—such as working well with people, building or fixing things, managing data or finances, creating artistic or imaginative objects, and demonstrating various character traits. These will be just as important as academic competence when it comes to finding success and satisfaction in life. Students need to develop a full range of academic and personal talents over their middle and high school grades.

The integration of academic and career education in TDS schools also directly addresses student apathy, both because students get regular chances to work on their individual talents and interests and they can better see the relevance of their academic program for their own adult and career goals.

What is Talent Development Secondary?

The Talent Development Secondary (TDS) model was designed as a result of partnerships among researchers and educators at Johns Hopkins University and faculty members at middle and high schools in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Since 1994, TDS has helped hundreds of schools across the nation reorganize in ways that promote strong relationships for students and adults; implement innovative, evidence-based curricula and instructional strategies; and build professional communities that support distributed leadership, shared decision-making, and increased capacity for continued improvement. Whole-school organizational reforms and student support create a personalized school climate conducive to
good teaching and learning where students are inspired to attend, behave, and try. TDS envisions widespread transformation of our nation’s schools into respectful, caring and motivating communities that challenge all students to develop their unique gifts and talents and realize their highest academic and human potential.

Program components include:

- Small learning communities and interdisciplinary teacher teams that build strong relationships among teachers and students and decrease student anonymity.
- A multi-tiered student support system guided by early warning indicator data that flag the need for intervention at the first sign of trouble and ensure that the right students receive the right academic and social-emotional interventions at the right time.
- A standards-based college preparatory curriculum for all students and the extra help needed to close achievement gaps and accelerate learning for struggling students.
- Opportunities for students to explore their own career interests and to choose an appropriate program to foster related personal talents.
- Schedules that extend learning time in core subjects while still allowing students to explore electives and enrichment activities.
- Professional development, including instructional coaching, that helps teachers continually improve their craft and deliver high-quality, engaging lessons employing teacher modeling, cooperative learning, hands-on activities, and scaffolded instruction.
- Upper-grade career academies in high schools that link learning to the skills needed for adult success.
- Family and community involvement strategies that engage families and provide the tools and supports they need to help their children succeed.
Multiple research studies indicate that TDS has produced significant, substantial and pervasive impacts on a range of important outcomes in both middle and high schools, including credits earned, and promotion and attendance rates.

- TDS schools were significantly and substantially more successful than non-TDS schools in preventing students from developing early warning indicators.
- TDS students were more likely than comparison students to earn on-time promotions each year in middle and high school.
- Students who attended a TDS middle school in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were 55% more likely to graduate on time than were comparison students.
What the Transformation Manual Includes and Why

In this manual, Talent Development Secondary offers a plan to help facilitators, school administrators, teachers, and other school staff establish and maintain a TDS school with fidelity. It solidifies TDS best practices to be implemented to better ensure student success.

“School Structure” includes information on the organization, structure and use of time in TDS middle schools, the TDS Ninth Grade Success Academy, and high school career academies. Each of the Four Pillars of Talent Development Secondary (teaming in Pillar 1, curriculum and instruction with professional development in Pillar 2, tiered student supports in Pillar 3, and can-do culture and climate in Pillar 4) is explored in detail. A brief explanation of each of the pillars (the “What”) is followed by research rationale (the “Why”) and a practical guide for implementation (the “How”).
The Talent Development Theory of Action: Student Outcomes, Challenges, and the Structural Foundations for Pillars of Change

It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult undertaking which, more than anything else, will determine its successful outcome.
—William James, American Philosopher and Psychologist
The Talent Development Secondary (TDS) model for reforming middle and high schools is based on a theory of action that begins by identifying desired student outcomes and the problems that keep students from achieving these goals in conventional schools. These barriers to student achievement help define the work Talent Development must do to lead a school turnaround. To meet this challenge, TDS developed four pillars of change that support the outcomes in the daily operation of schools. The foundation for the pillars is a school structure focused on the organization of space and time.

Figure 1 illustrates this TDS theory of action and also indicates how the chapters of this manual are presented. The apex in this figure represents the desired student outcomes (described in this chapter), which are supported by the Four Pillars that are the Talent Development Secondary operational changes in middle and high schools (described in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5), resting on an organizational foundation of space and time (also described in this chapter).
To understand why the structural foundation and operational changes are designed to enable the specific student goals, it is useful to examine the challenges that inhibit the success of many conventional schools. Figure 2 outlines the TDS theory of action that parallels the pictorial representation, but also contains the challenges that must be addressed. Reading from left of right in Figure 2 shows the causal sequence of how changes in one aspect lead to improvements in the next. Discovering the beginnings of this theory of action requires backward mapping of Figure 2 (from right to left) that describes how achieving the student goals depends on addressing core challenges. TDS addresses these challenges with operational improvements that rest upon the organizational structures.
### Figure 2 — Talent Development Theory of Action

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<th>Structural Organization Foundation</th>
<th>School Operational Improvements (Pillars of Change)</th>
<th>Challenges to be Addressed</th>
<th>Supports to Address the Challenges</th>
<th>Student Outcome Goals</th>
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<td><strong>1. Space (Size):</strong> Smaller Learning Communities</td>
<td>Teacher Teaming</td>
<td><strong>Student</strong> Replace “anonymity” with positive, caring student-teacher relations</td>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong> Strengthen commitment to change and shared responsibility for student success</td>
<td><strong>School</strong> Create learning climate that is safe, serious and sensitive</td>
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<td><strong>2. Time (Schedule):</strong> Extended Periods</td>
<td>Teacher Teaming</td>
<td><strong>Student</strong> Replace “Apathy” with engaging activities and relevance of program</td>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong> Provide data to diagnose student needs</td>
<td><strong>School</strong> Offer college prep for all, plus personal choice of career electives</td>
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<td>Interdisciplinary teams sharing same students</td>
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<td>Department teams</td>
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<td>Continuity of contacts</td>
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<td><strong>Can-Do Climate and Culture</strong></td>
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<td>Integration of academic and career education through student awareness and career academy choices</td>
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<td>Whole school and student-specific interventions</td>
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<td>Intervention tracking and effectiveness assessment</td>
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Student Outcomes

The ultimate goal of Talent Development Secondary is to produce student outcomes in three major areas: high school graduation, academic achievement, and personal growth.

Graduation

Every student is expected to graduate from high school as a result of being in a full TDS program. The model is designed to guarantee that every student, without exception, will earn a high school diploma, and be prepared for postsecondary education, training and/or work.

Academic achievement

The TDS graduate will achieve the academic knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college, training programs, or in demanding careers. Every student will be held to high standards in each of the core subjects across the secondary grades. TDS curricula and support systems will help them attain these standards.

Personal growth

The TDS model recognizes that there are broad categories of skills other than academic skills that loom large in life and careers. Secondary schools can, and should, play an important role in developing them. Differentiating activities and instruction across grade levels helps each student identify his or her interests and strengths. Providing students with curriculum choices and diverse learning experiences will help them develop their own interests and talents. Indeed, the name “Talent Development” was chosen to indicate the avoidance of programs that simply categorize students by existing skills or abilities. TDS embraces an approach that helps every student develop the full range of his or her academic abilities and personal talents.

Personal growth for students in TDS schools will include one or more broad categories of non-academic talents, including working well with people, building or fixing things, managing data or finances, and creating artistic or imaginative objects. At the same time, all students will be helped to develop and demonstrate responsibility and reliability, among other important traits, because they are important traits for both student and adult life.
TDS schools also address student motivation and engagement by broadening the outcome goals to include both academic achievement and career-related growth. Even if an individual is not at the top of the class academically, that student excels in other areas that will be a source of pride and accomplishment in related school activities. Moreover, students can overcome apathy about education when they see that their coursework is relevant to their own interests and adult goals.

The Work to be Done: Challenges of Secondary Education

Major challenges in secondary education in this country exist at the student level. With the right support from teachers and schools these challenges can be overcome (as outlined in Figure 2). The underlying problems of anonymity, apathy and poor preparation typically affect students as they enter middle and high school. An absence of data frequently inhibits teachers’ ability to understand the needs of different students, as well as their own readiness to deliver instruction to meet these diverse student needs. Teachers in high-poverty schools may also benefit from reflecting on their own commitment to change. A school may lack climate conducive to learning because it is not safe, serious, or sensitive to student needs. Because of high stakes pressure, schools may also resort to sorting or tracking students by achievement and preparation levels rather than committing to developing the talents of every individual to meet high standards.

Student problems to be solved

The structures recommended for TDS middle and high schools support improvements in daily activities and experiences that address student apathy, anonymity and poor preparation -- problems that prevent students from reaching the academic goals in most conventional high schools.

- **Apathy** is the weakness of students’ engagement because they feel their coursework has no connection to their interests and goals. Indeed, many middle and high school students do not have a clear picture of interests and personal talents that provide satisfaction and accomplishment. With some specific exploratory and self-awareness activities, however, most secondary students will discover their emerging talents and interests.
These talents and interests often correspond with college majors and adult careers, so aligning high school curricula and activities to students’ interests and strengths can connect them to both immediate satisfaction and the relevance of long-term goals. Accordingly, TDS structures the middle grades to add career awareness and personal discovery to student experiences and reorganizes high schools into career academies as the focus of study.

- **Anonymity** occurs in the absence of close relationships between students and adults in a mutually respectful and caring environment. Too often students attend large, undifferentiated middle and high schools where they feel no one really knows them well or is looking out for their interests and success. Not only are students more likely to attend school every day when they feel welcome and cared for, but they will also exert positive energies to please adults they respect and feel close to. TDS aims at smaller learning communities that encourage adults to invest in each student’s success, with different structures for middle and high school. In the middle grades, TDS uses smaller organizational units within the school (usually grade-level houses); small interdisciplinary teacher teams within each unit sharing a common group of students (usually 3 to 5 teachers with 100 to 150 students), or fewer teachers per student in the early grades (such as semi-departmentalization assignments before full departmentalization), and continuing teacher-student relationships across the grades to cement shared responsibilities (such as looping selected teachers for multiple-year assignments or a common homeroom mentor/advisor throughout the grades). Many of these TDS middle grades structures are similar to general organizational practices at this level, but well supported for teacher and staff commitment and implementation.

Anonymity is attacked in high schools with additional structural innovations. Because students in ninth grade are making the difficult transition to high school and at risk of getting off to a bad start they may never recover from, TDS is organized to give these students the close personal attention and support they need. There is a separate, self-contained Ninth Grade Success Academy with a climate of high expectations and close personal student-adult relationships. Within this academy several small
interdisciplinary teacher teams work with a shared set of students. Each team occupies contiguous classrooms for effective communication and coordination of the support program. The upper high school grades are structured as small, self-contained career academies covering grades 10–12 with 150 to 350 students each. Teacher teams also are formed along curriculum pathways within each career academy, and each student has a personal mentor. Students choose a career academy based upon self-exploration and school orientation activities during ninth grade, providing curriculum relevance along with personalization.

- School organization also addresses the needs of poorly prepared students. At each grade level TDS interventions use data to identify student needs and support students with focused extra help and assistance. Teacher teams and smaller learning communities in the middle grades make student monitoring and access to timely information easier. The same is true for high school, though on this level a temporary or permanent placement in Twilight School can be made available to students with unusual challenges. An after-hours, on-site alternative, the Twilight School gives students with problematic family circumstances or difficulties with adjusting to regular school, an opportunity to keep on track to promotion and graduation through carefully designed support and instructional programs.

**School supports to address challenges**

**School Safety**

School safety can be a major problem in some high schools. Too often the climate is chaotic. Cutting class and walking the halls during class time are accepted behaviors. Students may often be disrespectful of one another and of teachers, behaving like wary strangers rather than team members. Physical fights between students and other serious discipline incidents may be regular events in these schools.

Obviously, the first task in an unsafe school is for the adults to get it under control, eliminating the major distractions to learning, and ensuring that no one is afraid to come to school every day. But even when the school is calm, good learning may not be taken seriously. Students may view the school more as a playground than a work site. Students who have moved from a place where
learning had not been expected, to a TDS school where expectations are high, will often say “we have a ‘real’ school now where everyone is serious about learning.” Such a change in expectations is the result of TDS reforms. The adults can take charge of setting the tone for the major business of learning.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relations comprise the other dimension of a positive school learning environment. School should be a place where adults and students always interact with one another in a respectful and caring manner. A high school may suffer from toxic relationships, where some adults are actually afraid of many students and many students get enjoyment from giving teachers and administrators a hard time. When large groups of students feel they are anonymous, they feel empowered to get away with misbehavior. TDS aims to reverse negative interpersonal relationships.

Often, the improvements that create a safe, serious and sensitive learning environment are the first positive outcomes to quickly take hold in TDS schools. It is immediately obvious to both students and teachers that the learning environment is vastly improved by TDS changes in a previously dysfunctional high school. These early improvements can get everyone believing in e TDS and ready for the promised achievement gains that take more time and patience.

Teacher supports to address challenges

Teachers in high-poverty middle and high schools often feel themselves to be victims of otherwise well-intentioned district standards of accountability for student achievement. When faced with the challenges of teaching a common core middle or high school curriculum to a highly diverse student population, with many entering far below grade level, teachers often get most of the blame when high standards are not quickly met. When they are neither given the tools and support the job requires, nor recognized for progress on the way to high standards, teachers may be tempted to say it’s not their responsibility that students are not achieving.

Teachers in these situations may also be wary of recommended reforms. Not only may recommendations come and go in cycles of
district leadership, but external instructional directions may not allow for teachers’ professional judgments and discretion in working with students they know best. The current emphasis on formal test results with absolute standards also can lead to “test preparation” policies that teachers do not believe are good for real learning. Thus, many teachers in troubled middle or high schools may be resistant to the latest “reform model.”

The Talent Development Secondary approach aims to earn teachers’ commitment to the recommended interventions by involving them in planning initiatives that suit their school and the students who attend it, and by supporting them with preparation, materials and coaching for new course and instructional approaches.

Organizational Structures as the Talent Development Secondary Foundation

Before thinking about the details of staffing roles and relationships and instructional innovations that could help solve core problems, major school organization alterations need to be made if the daily changes are to make a difference. In particular, many schools are too big for the desired learning climate or teacher effectiveness. In addition, school time is too fragmented and inflexible to deal with student diversity and those who are ill-prepared for their grade.

Talent Development Secondary breaks up large buildings into small learning communities (SLCs), using somewhat different approaches for middle and high schools. The goal is to create a personalized learning environment where it is easier for adults and students to know each other well and to develop respectful and caring relationships. This implies that each SLC should be self-contained with distinct entrances, boundaries and traffic patterns. In addition, each SLC should have its own administration and guidance staff, as well as teaching faculty. This reduced number of adults and students makes better relationships possible.

SLCs facilitate good behavior. Adults can better model and enforce civility and eliminate class-cutting and hall-wandering because potentially disruptive students know they can’t escape detection. Teachers and staff can greet their students at the door each morning and send them off in the afternoon – creating general good feelings.

SLCs are further divided into interdisciplinary teacher teams that share the same students – creating an even more intense personalized learning environment. Indeed, teaming is such an
essential component of TDS that it is represented as one of the Four Pillars and described in detail in Chapter 2: Teaming and Small Learning Communities.

Structuring Space and Organizing Time In Talent Development Middle Grades

Like the proverbial middle child, the middle grades are often passed over – sometimes treated as an extension of elementary school and at other times burdened with the expectations of high school. But like that middle child, the middle grades have their own identity, as well as challenges and rewards. As our research shows, future dropouts can be identified as early as sixth grade, so these years cannot be glossed over in the hope that high school will fill in the gaps. The focus on middle school needs to be serious and tailored not only to the emotional and social needs of early adolescents, but also to their academics, so they are truly prepared for high school.

TDS middle schools help teachers understand these students and tailor climate and classes to the characteristics and interests of the middle years. The TDS school organization and instructional strategies support teachers as they help students make the sometimes tough transition from elementary to middle school and move them ahead to high school. The information that follows describes how space and time are organized in TDS middle grades.

Structuring Space

To create the desired SLCs, TDS middle schools revolve around interdisciplinary teacher teams where each team of teachers shares 100 to 150 students. This enables teachers to work with a manageable number of students and in so doing to teach strong, standards-based lessons and engage in continuous outreach to students and parents, creating a true community of learning. This is critical because research and experience indicate that the quality of student-teacher interactions and the quality of instruction are critical to attaining the levels of student motivation, effort, and engagement required for sustained academic progress and, ultimately, college readiness.

The SLCs in the middle grades can be organized either as grade-level houses or as two or more multi-grade houses. In the first case for a 6–8 middle school, there would be separate self-
contained parts of the building for each of the three grades. In the second case, separate sections of the building would be identified for up to 350 students across the three grades. In each instance, there would be within every house, two or more interdisciplinary teacher teams sharing the same students.

House organization should coordinate with interdisciplinary team formation. For example, in large middle schools where teachers teach more than one grade, separate houses that include all grades may be preferable. This allows for continued adult-student relationships and opportunities for older students to influence younger ones by example or with peer tutoring. In contrast, when the middle grades student population is smaller, such as in a K–8 school, the only way to create an SLC with teacher teams may be by grade houses having only one or two interdisciplinary teams.

Existing middle schools often have one of these forms of SLCs so the task for TDS is to implement the team structure to provide student support and encourage teacher cooperation, rather than restructuring the space itself. But in a new building or in a case where SLCs with teacher teams are not well-defined, TDS needs sufficient planning and start-up time to define the space and reorganize it to fit the plan.

Both the SLCs and the teacher teams within are important structures for providing personal support for students. Also, competitions about student attendance or honor roll achievements among houses and interdisciplinary teams can enhance student norms, build interest and provide incentives for desirable behaviors. Each SLC should be self-contained and well-defined by its own name and logo displayed attractively throughout.

Besides assigning a distinct teaching faculty to each house, it is best to have decentralized administrative arrangements. Each SLC should have its own principal or house leader with an office in the designated space. Usually there is also a whole school principal in charge of the education program and separate house officials.

The next chapter describes how the teams within each SLC are formed and how they function to personalize the learning environment and support individual student needs.

**Organizing time**

The TDS middle grades use extended 75- to 90-minute class periods to increase the amount of instructional time in core academic subjects. Extended periods also provide teachers with the time necessary for developing engaging and innovative
instructional strategies that differentiate instruction and afford students the time and flexibility to engage in guided and independent practice to build their core skills.

These extended periods allow for “double doses” of English and math daily. They also provide the time for a third dose of instruction for students who need even more help; this occurs in labs, such as Savvy Readers’ Lab, for small groups of students who meet for 30-40 minutes daily.

The extended period schedule also allows teacher teams time for common planning meetings without cutting into free periods used for grading, lesson planning and other necessities.

In the middle grades, especially in English Language Arts classes, most TDS schools will establish instructional practices, such as teacher modeling and student team discussions, using easier “high-interest/low frustration” reading materials in the first semester that set the stage for reading more advanced materials in the second semester.

### Structuring Space and Organizing Time

#### In Talent Development Secondary High Schools

**Organizing Time**

TDS high schools also use extended periods, but preferably in a more structured way. TDS encourages high schools to use a block, or 4x4, schedule -- four class periods a day of about 90 minutes each. This is especially needed for several reasons.

**Advantages of the 4x4 block schedule**

**More instructional time**

This schedule allows for more time in English Language Arts and math, using what TDS calls a “double dose” of instruction. Under this schedule, students complete a course in one semester so they can earn eight credits a year or 32 credits in four years of high school, compared to five or six credits a year using conventional 45- or 50-minute classes. This allows students time in their schedule for electives, honors and AP classes, and/or “acceleration” courses they may need to do well in required subjects.

To close skill gaps and help students meet the demands of their required courses, TDS offers unique first-semester courses in ELA.
and math that provide a transitional foundation for student success in the required high-standards courses (described in Chapter 3). The extended period schedule in two semesters makes possible this instruction for acceleration.

**Fewer teachers**

When the 4x4 schedule can be blocked so groups of students stay together for all major classes, the use of interdisciplinary teams of teachers who share the same students becomes possible. Four teachers (math, English, science and social studies) are assigned to a group of students, to not only teach the subject matter but also to address the students’ interpersonal and support needs (described in Chapter 2).

All TDS high schools use a 4x4 block schedule in the Ninth Grade Success Academy, and some are able to block the schedule for most students in the upper grades, as well. When this is not done, groups of students in the same career pathways are used to form teams in the upper grades.

**Flexibility for enrichment or extra help**

Some TDS high schools add a 30- to 45-minute course to the end of the day in a 4x4+1 arrangement (see Figure 3). This period can be used for arts and personal expression offerings or possibly an add-on for daily homeroom/advisory and counseling activities. This extra time can be created by either adding time to the day or subtracting 6 to 7 minutes from each period, or some combination thereof.

The 4x4 schedule can also accommodate a “triple dose” lab or tutoring sessions for those students who need even more time to close learning gaps. The lab or tutoring session can be a separate one-term offering in the 4x4 schedule, or a pull-out arrangement for part of the semester. The pull-out usually occurs during an elective where the activities are not in a prerequisite sequence.

**Positive climate**

The 4x4 schedule also contributes to a more healthy school climate of good discipline and mutual respect, simply by reducing the number of times classes change during the school day. With only four class changes, including lunch, the occasions for possible between-class mischief are reduced.
Opportunities for in-depth learning

Perhaps most importantly, extended instructional periods give teachers the opportunity to create in-depth learning activities enabling students to master both the functional operations of a subject as well as the conceptual understanding to critically apply the new knowledge. TDS schools want their students to use their minds not just their memories in studying each subject. The thinking skills that are characteristic of each academic discipline should be regularly exercised in Talent Development classrooms, so each learner can apply them independently. The longer class periods allow for the analytic conversations in whole class discussion and cooperative peer group learning situations. Project-based learning becomes possible as well as the enrichment activities that add to students’ enjoyment and mental growth. Compare these pedagogical approaches and rich learning opportunities to a 40-minute traditional class where it may take five minutes to settle in, and another 5 or 10 to review where the last lesson left off, leaving less than 30 minutes for instruction that will often be whole-class lectures or quiet seat work. The extended class period opens more possibilities for active student participation with in-depth learning activities.

Teacher team planning time

The extended period schedule also provides more time for teacher team planning (when students are in electives) without intruding on teachers’ free periods. The common planning time is a key ingredient in successful teacher teams, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Acceleration of instruction

Figure 3 shows how the 4x4 schedule can be used for acceleration instructional purposes, with some variations to meet local scheduling issues.

During the first semester an acceleration course is offered to teach or refresh the foundation prerequisites needed to be successful in the district’s high-standards required course during the second semester. The TDS curriculum development staff created acceleration, also called transition, courses in ELA and math for 9th, 10th and 11th grades with complete lessons to assure the foundation necessary for students to succeed in the required second-semester class. In addition, Freshman Seminar, a ninth grade, first-semester offering, helps students to develop social, study and college-prep skills. Sometimes the extended periods are split by a short lunch period. In Figure 3, class period 3 meets for
45 minutes as period 3A, with a 20-minute lunch period before the second half of the lesson as period 3B. Many schools are able to avoid this split by scheduling lunch periods at the end of a full 90-minute class. Large schools, however, may need to resort to a split lessons to accommodate all students.

Flexible elective scheduling

A block schedule period can be used for an elective during the first semester, which could be followed by a core course such as science the second semester. To find time for a “triple dose” lab or tutoring session in ELA or math, elective replacement schedules can be used, as illustrated in class period 4 of Figure 3. Using an elective, such as music or art, where different instructional units can stand alone rather than in a required sequence, small groups of students can be pulled out for part of the semester for extra help. For example, some students can be pulled out for a 6-week portion of the 18-week term, leaving 12 weeks for participation in the elective. Such an elective replacement schedule can give all needy students a triple dose of instruction in core subjects.

Twilight School opportunities

School time is also extended to add hours for a Twilight School in some TDS high schools. These alternative after-hours programs meet unusual student circumstances, such as family responsibilities, the need to work during the day, or serious problems of adjustment to the regular school routines. This is a temporary placement of a term or two for many students who need to develop the coping skills to return successfully to the regular day program. But some students may use the Twilight School for their entire high school program.

Pillar II: Curriculum and Instruction with Professional Development will provide more information about block-scheduled TDS courses.
## Figure 3 — 4x4 Schedule Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended Class Period (90 minutes)</th>
<th>Semester 1 (18 weeks)</th>
<th>Semester 2 (18 weeks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transition to Advance Math (Double Dose with Acceleration)</td>
<td>Algebra (Double Dose following acceleration course) Stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Strategic Reading (Double Dose with Acceleration)</td>
<td>English 1 (Double Dose following acceleration Course)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A (45 minutes)</td>
<td>Freshman Seminar (Academic and Social Skills course) Part 1</td>
<td>American History Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20 minutes —)</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B (45 minutes)</td>
<td>Freshman Seminar (Academic and Social Skills course) Part 2</td>
<td>American History Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Elective Replacement Option</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus 1 (30 to 45 minutes)</td>
<td>Homeroom/ Advisory or Personal Expression Elective</td>
<td>Homeroom/ Advisory or Personal Expression Elective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ninth Grade Success Academy and Upper-Grade Career Academies with Teams

Schools can ease the often-difficult transition to high school and enable more students to stay in school. As they face the social, emotional, physical and intellectual challenges of this stage of their development, students can easily feel overwhelmed, confused and alone. Most students who drop out of high school fall off track in their freshman year because they do not have access to the academic and social support they need. Helping students succeed in ninth grade will go a long way toward solving the dropout problem and ensuring brighter futures for at-risk students.

Schools can ease the transition to high school and enable more students to stay in school, achieve at higher levels, and graduate ready for college and career by creating a Ninth Grade Success Academy—a school-within-a-school uniquely designed to provide ninth-graders the challenge and support they need. This academy keeps ninth grade from being a failure experience, leading to grade retention and dropping out, and makes it a success experience for students who will stay on track toward graduation. A strong ninth grade academy serves as a bridge across the rough waters of adolescence, enabling students to be academically and socially prepared for the rigors of the rest of high school and postsecondary education.

High school students in the upper grades can often feel detached or alienated from their school because they get lost in an environment where few adults know them well or show concern for their well-being. They can also be bored and unmotivated with classes they find uninteresting, with little challenge to their maturing minds and little connection to their lives and plans.

Talent Development seeks to structure spaces for a personalized learning environment that meets the developmental stages of upper-grade teenagers and supports an instructional program that will interest students and connect them with their long-term goals. Separate career academies are organized as self-contained smaller learning communities that students choose because they cover a curriculum that’s relevant to them.
Structuring Space and Organizing Staff for a Ninth Grade Success Academy

Warren is entering ninth grade in a large high school in his neighborhood. His first day presents some challenges. First, he has trouble finding his homeroom and arrives late. He is given a schedule, but no map of the school, so navigating the many long hallways on three levels is difficult. As he attempts to find his class, he encounters a group of older boys who size him up and taunt him. When he finally reaches his class he realizes that he’s been placed in Algebra II, not the Algebra I class that he needs. He is sent to the guidance counselor’s office at the other end of the school where he waits in a long line for an hour before finally seeing the counselor. The problem is corrected, but the office visit causes him to miss his English I class. Through no fault of his own, he is a day behind in English and has a class absence on his record. He ends his first day of high school feeling confused, frustrated and anxious.

Warren’s cousin, Stacie, is entering ninth grade this year, also. She, however, is attending another neighborhood high school across town that has recently created a Ninth Grade Success Academy. She enters school through the ninth grade academy door where she is greeted by the academy principal. She heads immediately to homeroom; she knows where this is because it is close by and because she attended orientation days earlier. All of her classes are in the academy, which is separated from the rest of the school. She already knows many of her classmates and some of her teachers because she participated in the school’s Summer Bridge program where she received help on her math skills and engaged in community-building activities with other ninth-graders. She travels with the other members of her homeroom to each class and she is happy that she belongs to a team of students that has classes and teachers in common. Her teachers have obviously planned together – the expectations are clear and uniform across the content areas. Stacie leaves school feeling that this year may be her best ever.
Research findings

Research shows that ninth grade is a make-or-break year for many students. National, state, and local enrollment patterns reveal that large numbers of ninth-graders are not promoted because they do not earn the credits they need. District studies following individual students over time find that only a small percentage of ninth-grade repeaters go on to graduate. Conversely, most of the ninth-graders promoted on time do graduate.

These findings indicate that high schools are best served by doing all they can to ensure that their ninth-graders succeed. Studies also show, however, that most high schools do not make this investment and are neither organized nor resourced to provide the necessary supports. Freshmen typically enter high schools that are large and impersonal. They receive little guidance on course selection, are assigned the least experienced teachers, and are left largely on their own to navigate the rigors of high school academics and a challenging new social environment.

Research also shows that students who are falling off track for graduation can be identified using middle grades and ninth-grade attendance and course performance data. Yet, teachers and administrators are often not equipped to examine the data, identify ninth-graders in need of extra help, and respond accordingly. Many high schools face a huge challenge with their ninth-graders; large numbers enter below grade level in core subjects and with poor attendance habits. Without a new approach and focused support, ninth-graders will continue to fall off the graduation path, diminishing their own life chances and depriving their communities of their productivity, creativity, and leadership.

The TDS approach creates the Ninth Grade Success Academy as a unique teaching and learning community designed to enable teachers, administrators, staff and students to collaboratively and effectively diagnose and address individual student needs. The underlying principle of the TDS approach is that all students have gifts and talents and can learn and develop into mature, productive, responsible adults. Building a vital Ninth Grade Success Academy requires that everyone adopts this principle wholeheartedly and commits to putting students at the center of their work.

Research and experience tell us that high school teachers are likely to view themselves as subject specialists. The creativity and confidence that come with a solid grounding in one’s subject is an essential component of good teaching. More, however, is required of those who teach ninth grade.
Staffing
A Ninth Grade Success Academy must be staffed by skilled adults who believe that ninth grade students can be successful. Teachers must be willing to extend themselves, not only to further students’ academic development but also to attend to their social development. This means creating and sustaining relationships with students, providing extra help when they need it, and finding the right balance of “nagging and nurturing” to encourage them to do the right thing. This academy needs strong teachers and administrators who understand the pivotal role ninth grade plays in students’ lives, and who can create a learning environment characterized by high expectations and caring support.

Structuring the space
A self-contained space is the foundation for the Ninth Grade Success Academy that uses interdisciplinary teams of carefully selected teachers who can support the successful transition of the entering high school students. The academy has its own administrative, counseling and teaching staff, as well as space for administrative and counseling offices, and classrooms clustered in interdisciplinary teams. The academy ideally has its own entrance, and walls and doors that physically separate it from the rest of the school. Ninth-graders spend virtually all of their class time in the academy, passing through other parts of the building only as escorted groups, to go to the cafeteria, gymnasium or auditorium.

This school-within-a-school organization provides a safer, smaller, academically focused, and more personalized educational environment for students.
Space for Upper-Grade Career Academies

After a student is promoted from ninth grade in a TDS high school, he or she moves to an upper-grade career academy that students choose in the ninth grade.

The building space is organized into two or more career academies covering grades 10 to 12; each academy occupies its own physical space separate from the Ninth Grade Success Academy. Each career academy enrolls 250 to 350 students across the three grades, and each academy will include classes in all the college preparatory subjects, as well as elective courses that support the academy’s particular career theme.

Thus, a traditional high school in which each academic department is clustered in an area of the building is reorganized to spread the classes from each department through every academy. Ideally, each career academy has its own science and computer labs, but if necessary, accommodations can be made for access to centralized labs.

The school enrollment will determine the number of career academies. Small schools may support only two academies, while schools with more than 2,000 students may accommodate four or five academies. Dividing the school enrollment in grades 10 through 12 by 350 will provide an estimate of the number of career academies. Similar to the Ninth Grade Success Academy, each upper-grade career academy has its own well-defined space with its own entrance and traffic flow and attractive signs to identify its name and logo at the entrance and around its space.

TDS high schools select career themes and develop relevant course sequences for the upper-grade academies. Interdisciplinary teacher teams are also an important component of career academies, usually formed along career pathways. Students are prepared in the ninth grade to make their academy choice, using self-awareness and program orientation processes.
Start with a Plan To Restructure Space and Time

A great deal of planning will be required to implement the TDS model in schools that do not already have self-contained SLCs or extended instructional periods.

Reorganizing physical space, particularly in high schools, is initially the most disruptive phase of the planning and early implementation process.

Often existing middle schools will have some semblance of smaller units within the school and will be using teacher teams or have done so in the recent past. These organizational ideas then will not be new, and the recommended structures may already be in place. These traditional middle grade structures, however, usually require a strong renewal of teacher commitment, under the TDS framework and rationale. In addition, it may take significant time to adapt some alternative structural practices at TDS middle grades to conform to local circumstances. These might include semi-departmentalization, teacher looping, common advisor/mentor across grade levels and career awareness activities.

Planning in high school, however, often requires major structural changes. Many high schools have a departmental building structure where there is separate contiguous space for the faculty and chair of each academic discipline (English, math, science, etc.). Under the TDS academy structure, the school would completely replace this organization, with the Ninth Grade Success Academy and each upper-grade career academy in its own space with teachers from each discipline. The change often means that many teachers will relocate so every department has representatives within each academy. Each academy needs an office for the academy principal and administrative staff. The centralized guidance suite should also be disassembled, so individual guidance counselors reside within each academy. Separate entrances and separate student traffic patterns should be carefully planned for each academy. A process for staffing each academy is also needed, taking into account teacher preferences and instructional needs. The school will also need new signs to identify each academy and its space.

The 4x4 schedule of instructional time may be new to many high schools preparing to implement the TDS model. Teachers will need professional development for teaching in the extended period and time to reorganize their lessons and sequences to fit the new use of time. TDS facilitators can help teachers outline their lesson topics so the course syllabus gets covered in the 18-week term, and to demonstrate the opportunities for different in-depth learning activities using the longer periods.
The TDS planning phase will include many other key decisions, (such as career academy themes in high schools and career awareness in middle grades), but the organization of space into smaller learning communities and the preparation for longer instructional periods may be the most challenging, but also the most important. In other words, it is urgent that sufficient planning time and attention be provided for creating the structural foundations of space and time for a successful implementation of the Talent Development Secondary model.
Pillar I: Teacher Teams and Small Learning Communities

The Bedrock of Talent Development Secondary
A Talent Development Secondary (TDS) school is a unique teaching and learning community where adults are committed to the principle that all students can learn and create bright futures. In a Talent Development Secondary School, teachers, staff and administrators hold high expectations for student learning, attend to students’ academic and social development, adopt a caring and supportive approach to student problems, and work together to build a strong bridge to the next grade and beyond, all through their work on teams. There are a number of teams functioning within a Talent Development Secondary School including, but not always limited to: a leadership team, a transformation team, content teams, and interdisciplinary teaching teams. The teaming structure serves as an organizational feature that underpins all Talent Development Secondary components (pillars). Teaming is the first component or pillar of TDS because effective work within each pillar is dependent upon the teaming structures. The teams should be used wisely and supported well, as they can positively and effectively impact almost every aspect of school life.

What are the TDS teams and what do they do?

The School Leadership Team – This team often includes the building administrators, counseling staff, the Talent Development school transformation facilitator, interdisciplinary team leaders, academy leaders and the building union leader. School leadership teams meet at least once a week. The leadership team controls all matters having to do with the master schedule, budget (adhering to or honoring all district and state guidelines), and physical plant. As a professional learning community, the leadership team facilitates the instructional and organizational model, supports the teaching staff, and develops policies around school climate and student achievement. The TDS leadership team practices distributed leadership which allows for the empowerment of interdisciplinary teacher teams to make decisions that best meet the needs of the students they serve.
**The Transformation Team** – A school administrator, the TDS school transformation facilitator, TDS instructional facilitators, school-based instructional coaches, and community partners such as City Year or Communities in Schools are all members of this team. The transformation team should meet no less than once a week. This team works to coordinate and align efforts among team members and with the school leadership team. In collaboration with school leadership, the transformation team develops and continuously monitors the school transformation plan (see the appendix for the Transformation Plan template). The school transformation plan guides the day-to-day work of each member of the transformation team, is aligned with the school improvement plan, and delineates data-driven goals and benchmarks for student achievement, attendance and behavior.

**The Content Team** – Members of a content team can either be teachers who teach the same course (all English I teachers or all Algebra II teachers) or teachers who share a discipline (all English teachers or all math teachers). A content team of teachers who teach the same course would work to horizontally map and plan instruction and assessment. A discipline content team would vertically map and plan together. (See Pillar II: Curriculum and Instruction for more information on content teams, mapping and planning.)

**The Interdisciplinary Team** – This is the team that is at the very heart of the TDS model. Though structures vary between middle grades, 9th grade academies, and career academies, interdisciplinary teams in a TDS school are often made up of about five teachers – one math, one English, one social studies and, usually, one physical education teacher and one science teacher. These teachers share the same group of, ideally, about 75-100 students, depending on the class size and staffing ratios of the local district. While the team structure can vary based on the number of students served and local context, all TDS interdisciplinary teams share a manageable number of students, and a core group of teachers on the team share a common planning period. These teachers teach during the same blocks of time and have lunch at the same time. This schedule gives the team members time to work together and time for more instructional flexibility. Teams should meet for no less than 45 minutes two times each week. In addition to meeting with each other, members of the team will often meet with students and/or their parents to discuss students’ needs. Teacher teams also meet with community and business partners in an effort to connect instruction to the “real world.” Climate initiatives are also
developed and discussed at team meetings. As the central participants in all Early Warning Indicator (EWI) meetings, members of the interdisciplinary teams analyze student attendance, behavior and course performance and, with others, determine appropriate supports for students to help them to get back on a successful path. (See Chapter 4, Pillar III: Tiered Student Supports for more information on EWI work.) **Note:** In Career Academies, interdisciplinary teams generally correspond to a pathway under the larger career academy theme. Interdisciplinary teams in a pathway will be comprised of teachers of both elective and core subjects.

Interdisciplinary teaming allows teachers to:

- Work together to personalize and individualize the learning environment for each student.
- Build a strong climate of caring and support for students and staff.
- Share information and resources and provide each other with collegial support.
- Coordinate instruction, assessment and curriculum across subjects through interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Provide students with a constructive and united front on discipline and attendance.
- Promote students’ social attachment to school by providing them with a team identity and a group of adults who are looking out for them and to whom they can turn for guidance.
- Support less experienced or struggling teachers.
- Create social and study skill norms with *Mastering the Middle Grades* and *Freshman Seminar* that are shared across classrooms.
- Analyze student ABC (attendance, behavior, course performance) data.
- Get the right intervention to the right students at the scale and intensity required.
Why Teaming?

Talent Development Secondary would not argue that teaming is a new concept; it merely recognizes that it is a concept relevant to today’s students and today’s schools. The 1960s saw a great movement toward interdisciplinary work, with mixed results. Some important lessons were learned about the necessary supports for teachers in teams, but the most consistent lesson learned was that any plan implemented poorly is a bad plan. When all staff members understand the teaming structures and how they operate, and are provided with initial and on-going professional development on teaming practices, successful implementation is much more likely.

Teaming is used for a variety of purposes across the country. Teachers in public middle schools are probably most familiar with teaming, as most middle schools are designed around interdisciplinary teams. High schools have recognized the benefits of teaming; colleges and universities have learned that new cultural perspectives or technological advances draw from many fields at once, and this revelation has forced the creation of interdisciplinary teams.

Interdisciplinary teams have strengths, and, in some ways, even their challenges are opportunities. TDS teams benefit two entities in particular:

**The Students:** First and foremost, interdisciplinary teams have exclusive groups of students at their center. They provide multiple disciplinary perspectives on student learning. They encourage each teacher to be open to new perspectives and to sharpen his/her own. Interdisciplinary teaming is not easy, and most teachers must learn to become reflective and open. Teams that focus on interdisciplinary curriculum impact student learning and better prepare students for colleges that incorporate such structures. Teachers model expected behaviors that they know students will need to be successful and employable in today’s society.

**The School:** A school is more likely to be transformed when the people who work in it are working together to examine and improve teaching and environment. Accountability is essential, but the importance of the collective perspective of team members who respect each other as professionals and colleagues, and who work together to improve their practice, cannot be overstated. To change the practice of teaching in any meaningful way, professional learning communities are needed. A team is such a community. In addition, empowered teams take on many responsibilities traditionally handled by a few individuals in the
building, leaving these individuals with newfound freedom to focus on other essentials.

**How are Teams Created?**

Teams need time to meet during the school day, professional development that is customized to meet their needs, time and dedicated space for developing a plan, and time for monitoring, executing and adjusting the plan as needed based on student outcomes. Teams need a master schedule that allows an interdisciplinary team of teachers to share a manageable number of students, a common planning period, and programming that is aligned with state and district graduation requirements. These and other team needs are discussed in this section and in other chapters of the manual.

**A. What Teams Need**

**Time to Meet**

If teams are to be held to school, district and state standards, they must have significant time to meet, plan and build. In the Talent Development Secondary model, schedules for teacher teams include common planning periods during the regular school day. The common planning time should be data-driven and focused on discussions about improved instruction, student achievement, climate and individual student problems and solutions. TDS recommends that teams meet for no less than 45 minutes at least twice a week. This allows teachers to meet for EWI meetings (See Chapter 4, Pillar III: Tiered Student Supports for more information on EWI work.) and to handle other team issues. The highest functioning TDS teams typically meet more frequently, as their schedules allow, and as the needs of students dictate. Though part of the common planning period can be used to plan for and meet with students, parents and partners, each team determines how the time is used, and creates an agenda for each meeting.

Recommended team meeting activities would include:

- Discussing individual students, and developing action plans that address student problems and needs.
- Creating initiatives to counter trends of poor attendance, behavior or academic achievement.
- Regularly monitoring student data and providing support to students who have early warning indicators (EWIs).
• Discussing school business, schedules, and team goals, policies and procedures.
• Conferring with students and parents, an important use of team planning time. Student success is often influenced by collaboration between team members and parents. Early intervention can prevent problems from becoming unmanageable.
• Using determined protocols to examine student work for improved instruction.
• Planning and coordinating team assemblies, celebrations, and ways to reward student successes.
• Examining attendance, behavior and course performance (ABC) data to get the right intervention to the right student at the right time with the right intensity and to plan appropriate monthly celebrations for students who improved in these areas. (See Chapter 4, Pillar III: Tiered Interventions for more detailed information on ABCs.)
• Celebrating student and teacher success and accomplishments.
• Reviewing instructional activities every week and planning ways to reinforce common themes and skills across disciplines. This activity could provide the basis for future planning of interdisciplinary units.
• Examining strategies for differentiating lessons.
• Examining inclusive practices for students with special needs.
• Providing feedback and analyzing effectiveness of lessons.
• Coordinating academic, social and study skills through Mastering the Middle Grades and Freshman Seminar lessons.
• Sharing ideas, concerns, and resources to improve teaching and learning.
• Planning professional development mini-workshops led by team members or invited guests.
• Coordinating with business and community partners to provide authentic learning opportunities for students.
• Updating team records and calendar. Documentation is important.
• Evaluating team performance by consistently reflecting on successes and challenges.
• Enjoying social time with potluck lunches, birthday celebrations, etc. There should be time for socializing and bonding.
An Exclusive Group of Students

Interdisciplinary teams should share a manageable number of students/cohorts (classes/homerooms, 75-100 students in all) to enable teachers to better focus on individual student needs. Focusing on students is much more difficult if teachers do not share the same students. A sense of student belonging where the team provides that “home away from home” environment can be developed more easily when the master schedule reflects teaming as a priority.

Opportunities for Flexibility

Because they share the same group of students, team members have enormous flexibility in organizing the instructional day. As Merenbloom (1991) notes, “Flexible scheduling suggests that the order of each day need not be the same. Group size, the order of the periods, and the length of each period can vary.” Teams are encouraged to use the block schedule (see appendix for sample block schedules), which allows teachers to group and regroup students according to their needs. For example, the team may decide to rearrange teaching duties to create a special schedule for students who need extra time to prepare for an exam.

The Benefit of Distributed Leadership

Empowering teams to make decisions frees administrators from having to deal with minor problems or smaller questions. Distributed leadership allows those who know individual students best to make the decisions that will best suit the student and the situation. The model also allows for teachers to grow professionally and develop leadership skill sets.

Professional Growth Opportunities

Teams honor adults as leaders. Adults have needs as learners and people, and teacher teams can address these needs. In addition to supporting students, team members provide professional and personal support for each other. As teachers share information and ideas with each other, they foster a professional growth not always evident in more evaluative structures. Structured team meetings create time for professional growth.
Professional Development

Teams need professional development and guidance to develop and sustain themselves. An experienced facilitator who is well versed in team theory and best practices is needed to get a team started and to provide guidance during the teaming process. A TDS school transformation facilitator (STF) is typically prepared to help teachers build and sustain teams. An STF also helps teachers as they work to know their students.

Space

Team members need a room where they can sit down together in peace and relative quiet. If one of the team members’ rooms is consistently vacant, this room could be used. The faculty lounge will not work. A corner of the cafeteria will not work. If the team is to focus, plan and share ideas, the space must be one that is not being used by anyone else during the common planning period. Having a designated space becomes particularly important when the team is meeting with students, parents, or community partners. It is exceedingly important when student data are being analyzed and professional development sessions are being conducted.

Another space consideration is classroom location. TDS team members must have rooms that are in proximity. This will allow students to move to class much more quickly. Hallway space can be decorated with student work, congratulatory certificates and special team notices. Teachers will get to know students more quickly and the small, familiar environment where “everyone knows your name” will help to promote student success. Proximity allows for frequent communication.

Time to Evolve

Teaming can move a teaching staff toward effective and reflective practice. This takes time, however, and, just as Rome was not built in a day, teachers may not improve overnight. Teachers will need time to learn how to reflect upon and improve their practice. With appropriate time and support, most teachers will work to become reflective practitioners.

A Plan

All teams need a plan. Teacher interdisciplinary teams actually need to create, implement, review and revise four plans
throughout the school year: 1) a communication plan, 2) a climate plan, 3) an achievement plan, and 4) an attendance plan. A school transformation team must create and consistently monitor and update the school transformation plan (see appendix for transformation plan template). Depending on the district or state, a school leadership team often has a school improvement plan that is aligned with the school transformation plan and provides guidance, direction and goals for team members.

A Master Schedule That Accommodates Teaming

The creation of the master schedule is arguably the most important act for ensuring that the TDS model is implemented with fidelity. The school-based schedule creators may vary from school to school and year to year, but the school transformation facilitator is responsible for engaging in the scheduling process each year.

B. How Teams Are Scheduled

To this point, the teaming discussion has been applicable to both middle grades and high school. Scheduling to accommodate teaming, however, is different for the middle grades than it is for the ninth grade academy and career academies. For that reason, there will be a separate discussion of each. Sample schedules for middle grades, ninth grade academies, and career academies are available in the appendix.

Some things that middle and high schools have in common are:

- Interdisciplinary teams of teachers that share a manageable number of students (75-100).
- Team members that share a common planning period during the school day.
- Teams that function as the support units closest to the students and that focus on and respond most immediately to student needs.
- Teachers who support each other.
- Class periods that are extended (70-90 minutes).
- Schedules that are not created in an A-day, B-day format.
1. Middle Grades Scheduling

The TDS model advocates for a communal organization for middle grades: a learning environment that gives teachers the opportunity to work with smaller groups of students over a longer period of time. This structure allows for better student-teacher relationships. Interdisciplinary teams with common planning time work within a modified block schedule that allows for extended learning time. For students this provides:

- A Small Learning Community – Students are grouped in heterogeneous classes that travel together.
- A Positive Climate – Students have a learning environment that has a culture of achievement and personalization.
- Extra Help – Students who need extra support are provided with daily interventions during the instructional day.

Teachers benefit from this structure in the following ways:

- Interdisciplinary Teams – Teachers of multiple disciplines have time to discuss students that they share.
- Content Meetings – Teachers have time to discuss content and instructional practice with others who teach the same subject.
- Looping (option) – Teachers have the opportunity to move to the next grade level with their students, providing academic and social stability. This TDS-recommended option for middle grades helps to reinforce bonds across grade levels, strengthen student-teacher relationships, and promote mentoring.

In the recommended middle grades structured schedule there are several priorities:

- Extended Learning Blocks – Blocks of extended learning time provide opportunities for cooperative learning, Socratic seminars, “hands-on-minds-on” curriculum, project-based learning, and effective use of technology.
- Interdisciplinary Teams – 2-6 core teachers work together with an exclusive group of students.
- Flexible Scheduling – Time is made for electives, intervention courses and exploratory courses.
- Daily Common Planning Time – Teachers share one period with their interdisciplinary team members for planning and professional growth.
2. Ninth Grade Academy Scheduling

The process for scheduling a ninth grade academy is, briefly, as follows:

- The ninth grade team (leader, counselor, and teachers) determines courses to be offered in collaboration with school leadership using state and graduation requirements as a reference.
- The ninth grade team gathers data including, but not limited to:
  - The number of incoming students
  - Test scores, eighth-grade teacher recommendations, IEPs, etc.
  - The number of repeaters
  - Placement rubrics for double-dose courses developed by the math and ELA departments in collaboration with instructional coaches and facilitators.
- A sample academy schedule is developed.
- The number of teachers needed is determined.
- The staff is assigned.
- The teams are formed (or reformed).
- The students are placed into homerooms based on needs.

Reminder: Teachers do not loop in grades 9-12.

There are things that schools should consider when developing a schedule for a ninth grade academy. Some of these are:

- The teams are built around 3 (or 6) cohorts (classes/homerooms) of students who travel together throughout the day.
- Students are double-dosed in English and math as needed. Placement into double-dose courses is determined by a placement rubric employing multiple indicators developed collaboratively by teachers, counselors, instructional coaches and administrators who have examined relevant data. Note: The “dose” will be determined by student need. The double-dose course, therefore, could be to accelerate or remediate.
- Students are scheduled with the same teachers for first and second semester. For example, Transition to Advanced Mathematics and Algebra I are taught to the same class by the same teacher. The same would be true for Strategic Reading and English I, and Freshman Seminar and Social Studies.
• Team leaders have an additional release period to handle team business. TDS recommends that all team leaders be free during the first period, allowing them to support the opening of the school day, plan for class coverage as needed, and meet with each other to share best practices, challenges, upcoming team events and plans.

• Students who are repeaters should not be housed with new ninth graders. The plan for repeaters should be in place before the opening of school.

3. High School Career Academy Scheduling

Interdisciplinary teacher teams sharing the same small group of students are also needed in the upper high school grades for the same reasons as in other grades, but can be more difficult to schedule and sustain at this level.

The process for scheduling a high school career academy is, briefly, as follows:

• The Career Academy Teams and Pathway teams (leader, counselor, and teachers), in collaboration with school leadership, and using state and graduation requirements as a reference, determine courses to be offered based on student interest inventories completed in the ninth-grade Freshman Seminar course.

• The Career Academy teams gather data which include, but are not limited to:
  o The number of incoming 10th-grade and returning 11th- and 12th-grade students.
  o College and career interest inventories.
  o Test scores, ninth-grade teacher recommendations, IEPs, and other multiple indicators.
  o The number of repeaters.
  o Placement rubrics for double-dose courses developed by the math and ELA departments in collaboration with instructional coaches and facilitators.

• A sample academy schedule is developed by appropriate parties (assistant principal, academy leader, counselor, TDS support, etc.).

• The number of courses and teachers needed is determined by appropriate parties (assistant principal, academy leader, counselor, TDS support, etc.).

• The staff is assigned by appropriate parties (assistant principal, academy leader, counselor, TDS support etc.).

• The teams are formed (or reformed).

• The students are placed into homerooms based on needs.
Reminder: Teachers do not loop in grades 9-12.

Some things to consider when developing a career academy schedule:

- In a typical career academy, there will be about 350 students across grades 10 through 12.
- Generally, there are only two teachers in each major subject, so separate interdisciplinary teams are not possible for each of the three grades.
- Some upper-grades students will have individualized course schedules for repeating failed courses or enrolling in unique advanced placement offerings, so designing teacher teams around a schedule block may not be straightforward.
- There will be two or more elective course sequences within a career academy for the occupational pathways that are covered.
- **Pathway Teams:** One of the best ways to have teaming work well in the complex career academy structures is to organize them as "pathway teams" where about 100 students across the three grades are grouped with the 4 to 6 interdisciplinary teachers who provide most of their core academic and elective courses. This will be further simplified when a modified block schedule is used so all students in the same grade and elective pathway travel together for most of their courses. The teacher pathway team can focus on students one grade at a time in their joint planning periods.
- Like the Ninth Grade Success Academy, each upper grade career academy uses a 4x4 schedule that allows for double-dose courses in English and math with a first-term TDS acceleration or transition course followed by a second-term high-standards regular offering in the subject.
C. How Teams Are Built

Because interdisciplinary teacher teams are key to the organizational structure of a successful Talent Development Secondary school, and the TDS model creates safe, supportive environments where students receive needed individual attention, care should be taken to build teams well. This is achieved partly by dividing the school into smaller interdisciplinary teacher teams that share the same schedule. A successful middle school strategy, interdisciplinary teaming has emerged in high school reform efforts, especially in large urban areas where attendance and dropout problems indicate student disengagement.

Once team members are selected, the process of actually building a strong teacher team can begin. First, team members must get to know each other. Each team member needs to familiarize others with his/her personal and professional work style. A variety of activities (scavenger hunts, sharing of survey information, etc.) can be used for this purpose. Team members should plan multiple opportunities (both tightly and loosely structured) for getting to know one another better. In so doing, individual strengths will become apparent and roles within the team will be easier to determine.

The school transformation facilitator (STF) is typically prepared to guide teacher teams through this process and has several tools that may be used during this team-building phase. The team leader often works with the STF to plan and implement multiple and varied team-building activities.

Team Roles, Responsibilities and Considerations

1. Selecting a Team Leader

In a Talent Development Secondary high school there is a focus on shifting to distributive leadership. One of the ways to distribute leadership within a school is to allow those who work directly with students on a daily basis to be a part of the decision-making process. This can be done through the development of team leaders. Team leaders’ roles, job descriptions and
responsibilities will vary depending on school needs and local union and district agreements.

Generally speaking, a team leader is responsible for facilitating weekly team meetings and serving as the point person for disseminating and sharing information with the other teams within the academy, other academies and the administrators in the building. In addition, team leaders often serve as a resource for teachers on the team, providing information/support with: climate, discipline, instructional strategies, school protocols, available resources for teachers and students on the team, school procedures, and the coordination of interdisciplinary projects and topics.

2. Establishing Roles and Responsibilities within a Teacher Team

Highly effective teams ensure that each team member has a clearly defined role based on previously identified strengths. Each team member, then, provides “leadership” in some area of personal strength which contributes to the team’s overall effectiveness and success.

Team roles and responsibilities vary from school to school based on local circumstances, but the following roles generally exist in some form on every effective teacher team. The titles or names may vary slightly from school to school but the responsibilities are consistent.

Team Leader
- Mobilizes the adults on the team to focus on students and move them forward
- Oversees the academic and social performance of students on the team

Assistant Team Leader
- Works with team leader to create agendas for team meetings
- Facilitates team meetings when leader is absent
- Produces a team newsletter with student input
- Coordinates and facilitates team/parent conferences

Communicator
- Creates and disseminates all team communications with parents and students, business and community partners, school leadership and whole-school staff
- Maintains log of parent contacts in the team notebook
- Communicates all schedule changes to parents
Recorder
- Maintains team notebook with agendas and minutes of all meetings
- Maintains and consistently updates team calendar
- Arranges for and distributes all necessary forms, and copies materials the team will need
- Provides academy leaders, counselors, and team members with weekly summary notes of team meetings

Activities Coordinator
- Coordinates activities that build the leadership skills of individual students (and groups of students) within the team
- Includes both in-school positive reinforcement and communication with parents, staff and news media
- Plans activities for teachers on the team to build collegiality, cohesion, and trust
- Coordinates placement of decorations in the hallways and the creation of an academy theme

Data Manager
- Collects team data and ensures it is accurately reported
- Interprets data and shares data so everyone can understand its significance

Encourager
- "Catches" team members supporting students
- Plans activities for teachers on the team to build collegiality, cohesion and trust
- Recognizes teachers' professional, personal and educational accomplishments
- Thanks team members, school faculty, community partners, parents, etc. for their support with team events or projects
- Recognizes parents for supporting and guiding their children

Community Coordinator
- Establishes and maintains contacts with community and business partners
- Coordinates the development of ‘real-world’ experiences and opportunities for students
Researcher
- Researches topics of interest for teachers
- Shares current research and best practices with team teachers
- Shares recent articles and publications related to team experiences or goals

3. Establishing Team Norms

Norms serve two functions: 1) The process of creating norms allows everyone to think about what proper behavior on a team entails, and 2) norms help teachers to hold members accountable to the process without getting personal. TDS recommends that teams establish norms very early (preferably at the first meeting) in the teaming process so that when conflict arises, the team has an agreed-upon method of resolving the conflict that remains consistent. Norms that have been established and posted will be quite useful for any teachers who may be added to your team, and any parent, administrator, business partner or other faculty member who may attend a team meeting. Norms should be revisited periodically and modified to meet the needs of the team.

Some topics to consider when creating norms:
- Attendance
- Promptness
- Meeting place & time
- Participation
- Basic conversational courtesies
- Assignments

Examples of Group Norms
- Begin on time; end on time.
- Active engagement
  - Meetings will be designed to allow for each team member to be actively engaged in the meeting. Each member is expected to be attentive and involved in the meeting and its discussions.
- Respect opinions of others
  - Team members will listen and respect the opinions of others even if they do not agree with expressed sentiments. Attack ideas, not people.
- Cell phone etiquette
  - Cell phones will be turned off during team meetings.
- No side-bar conversations
  - Members will stay on topic and share thoughts and comments with all team members.
4. Delegating Responsibilities on Teams

Each person on the team has strengths and talents. TDS recommends that each person’s strengths, interests and talents be matched with appropriate team responsibilities. Below is a list of many team responsibilities:

- Lateness
- Climate
- Budget/supplies
- Fundraising
- Instruction
- Tutoring
- Detention
- Celebrations
- Interventions and supports
- Hallway decorations
- Trips/events
- Speakers/assemblies
- Communication with parents
- Communication with business and community partners
- Student leadership
- Students with special needs
- Record-keeping
- Collecting and sharing of data

5. Making Decisions

Early in the teaming process teams should agree on decision-making procedures. The school’s vision and mission statements, the principal’s stated vision and the district’s initiatives can help to guide this process.

Teams need to be clear about what decisions they are empowered to make. For example, in one TDS school teacher teams developed and implemented an incentive program for their students, while in another TDS school the teachers implemented a district-wide incentive program that the teacher teams supplemented to meet the needs of their students. Teams are advised to develop and agree to follow a decision-making process that best meets the needs of students, faculty, and local circumstances. Possible processes for decision-making include:

- Majority rule with minority rights
- Straight majority rule
- Majority rule with team leader veto
- Consensus
  o Fist: A no vote – a way to block consensus. “I need to talk more about this proposal and changes would be required before I’d vote to pass it.”
  o 1 Finger – “I still need to discuss certain issues and to suggest changes that should be made.”
  o 2 Fingers – “I am more comfortable with the proposal, but would like to discuss some minor issues.”
  o 3 Fingers – “I’m not in total agreement, but feel comfortable letting this decision or proposal pass without further discussion.”
  o 4 Fingers – “I think it’s a good idea/decision and will work to make it happen.”
  o 5 Fingers – “It’s a great idea and I will be one of the leaders as we begin implementing it.”

6. Handling Conflict (Don’t Make It Personal)
When conflict arises, everyone on the team needs to stay true to the established norms. This can be a great time to learn from one another. Perhaps the team has taken on a task that it is not prepared for at this time (ex. someone may not be ready for professional criticism from peers). If so, it is okay to wait until there is more trust among team members before tackling some issues. If the problem is personal, team members should enforce the norms and consider getting some outside help (administrator, counselor, etc.) when they have exhausted all resources on their team. Teams can grow and become stronger from grappling with tough issues. In fact, they have done so in schools across the country. No need to run at the first sign of conflict. The STF is available and prepared to support teams as they work to resolve conflicts.

D. How Teams Get to Know Students
What assessments of students are useful to all teachers? What things would students like their teachers to know about them? Careful consideration of these and other questions can provide powerful inroads for getting students engaged in the beginning of the school year.

A group of adults has formed (started to form) a team; now students are added to the mix. How will the team get to know its students?
There are a variety of ways.

1. **Contact with the Feeder School**

Teams of teachers can visit a feeder school or invite staff from a feeder school to visit them. In addition, upper-grade students in the middle or high school can visit the feeder school as peer ambassadors to highlight student activities, clubs and course offerings.

2. **Summer Correspondence**

Team welcome letters to students and parents, welcome postcards to students from advisory or subject teachers, and welcome phone calls from the team can be helpful in setting the stage for a successful beginning. A phone call can also alert teachers to changes in plans as some students may have decided to attend school elsewhere.

3. **Summer Bridge Program**

Over a couple of days teacher teams can involve their students in an orientation to the building, its resources and space; team building activities; “getting to know you” activities, and baseline testing. Getting parents involved is always a plus.

4. **Orientation**

On a day before school opens, interdisciplinary team teachers orient their students to the school building, the school program, the school expected behaviors and requirements, the team schedule, etc. Teachers should be certain to include some activities that students will find enjoyable (fun stuff), such as scavenger hunts, three-legged races, rope pulls, and other team competitions.

5. **First Week of School Activities**

- **Homeroom/Advisory Activities** – Students are explicitly taught school-wide expected behaviors as they relate to the classroom, lockers, hallways, stairways, restrooms, cafeteria, auditorium, computer labs and media center.
- **Mastering the Middle Grades and Freshman Seminar Orientation Lessons** – Students are introduced to middle grades or high school social and study skills through explicit instruction using well-developed lessons.
Pillar I: Teacher Teams and Small Learning Communities

- Teacher Created Inventories/Surveys – These inventories are designed to provide teachers with information that will be important throughout the year. The basics (name, address, phone number, parent/guardian name, etc.) would be included on the inventory, of course, but teachers can use these forms to learn other important information about students, as well. Teachers might ask students to share their best/worst school experience, their description of the ideal classroom or teacher, their personal short and long term goals, or a list of their “favorites.”

- Interviews – These can be student-student interviews or student-teacher interviews. Interview sessions should be carefully planned with clear guidelines for execution.

- Content Knowledge Activities – Some activities can be designed to gain insights into each student’s academic status.

- Town Hall Meetings – All students on the team meet with all teachers on the team in a location that will comfortably accommodate them. The team explicitly teaches students the expected behaviors and the procedures to follow for town hall meetings. At the first town hall meeting, students can determine a team name, color and motto. They might begin plans for a team mural, biography book, or community project. They could establish personal and team goals for attendance, course passing and test scores. The idea is to create a sense of belonging for students, an “all-for-one and one-for-all” approach to team life.

6. Plan for Late Registrants

Once classes on a team are formed, careful consideration should be given to how and where new students will be added.

- The team leader and/or counselor interviews the new student to gain information that will aid in making a class placement best suited to the student.

- The new student receives all materials that other students received at the start of school.

- The new student completes all inventories/surveys that were given to the other students on the team during the first week of school.

- The new student makes a contribution to any project that was completed by the students on the team when school started.

- The new student is paired with a “buddy” or student ambassador to help him/her get acclimated more quickly.
• The advisory/homeroom teacher conducts a one-on-one conference with the student. This teacher shares any new information at the next teacher team meeting.

E. How Teams Are Sustained

Sustaining teams is an intentional and continuous process. Teams never stop building, taking part in team-strengthening activities at least once a month. Teams should vary the activities as well as the activity venues. Throughout the school year, the STF can provide teams with a variety of team-building activities. Trust is a key component of high-functioning teams, and trust is built over time through team activities, interactions and teaming experiences.

Teams sustain themselves by:

• Holding each other accountable and honoring team norms
• Revisiting, reflecting upon and modifying team norms
• Having reflective conversations that include analysis of the progress toward goals, challenges encountered and solutions identified
• Assessing themselves quarterly

Team Assessment

In partnership with the team leader, the STF can facilitate quarterly team assessments. Assessment should include qualitative and quantitative measures.

1. Qualitative assessment will include reflection and discussion of questions such as:

• Individually, how are you communicating with your team members?
• How are we doing with building consensus and decision-making?
• What are our strengths and in what areas do we need to improve?

The STF is equipped with a number of teaming assessment tools that can be shared. Also, the STF can work with a team to facilitate the use of the teaming assessment tools.

2. Quantitative assessment will involve revisiting and monitoring the quantitative goals the team set when it created its four plans: climate, attendance, achievement, communication.

The goals of the school transformation plan and the school improvement plan would also serve as relevant quantitative
assessments to be monitored throughout the year. See a sample school transformation plan in the appendix.

Celebration

Given the nature of the work teacher teams do daily, celebrating success provides a critical form of sustenance. Sometimes it can be difficult for teachers to see the progress that students are making when they are continuously responding to students' needs. Teams need to plan to celebrate on a monthly basis. They should celebrate:

- Student achievement
- Student improvement
- Resolution of conflict
- Teacher professional achievement
- Teacher personal achievement
- Progress toward goals set during the initial team-building and planning weeks

Celebration is critical to sustaining teams, yet it is often the first thing eliminated due to time limitations, resources or pressing issues. STFs, team leaders and academy leaders need to make sure that time is set aside each month and resources are allocated for celebrating teacher team success.

Chapter Summary

Each team in a TDS school needs to be built, nurtured, and sustained to attain the highest level of impact on student achievement. The school transformation facilitator, team leaders, administrators and instructional support staff need to be intentional and consistent when modeling building, reflecting, sustaining and celebrating practices for all teams in a TDS school.
Pillar II: Curriculum & Instruction and Professional Development

Three Powerful Punches:
Curriculum That Closes the Achievement Gap
Instructional Practices That Make the Curriculum Work
Professional Development That is Grounded in Curriculum
If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn’t want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher’s job.

— Donald D. Quinn

Operating on the belief that all students can learn, Talent Development Secondary pairs research-based curriculum with high-impact instructional strategies to engage students and to close skill gaps where they exist. TDS not only provides acceleration courses to help students catch up, but also trains teachers to use effective instructional strategies in all ELA and math classes at every grade level. And, best of all, the curriculum and instructional strategies come with help in the form of instructional coaches and facilitators.

What does Talent Development Secondary offer?

I. Curriculum

TDS Courses

TDS middle grades courses/programs are designed with a variety of learning techniques and strategies that engage all students in rigorous reading, thinking, and collaborative work. TDS middle grades courses/programs (Student Team Literature; The History of US teaching guides and resource books, support material for a United States history course called A History of Us by Joy Hakim; The Story of Science teacher and student Quest Guides, support material for The Story of Science course by Joy Hakim) provide support for all students. The Savvy Readers’ Lab and The Computer and Team Assisted Mathematics Acceleration Lab (CATAMA) provide additional support for students who are considerably behind in reading and/or math. In addition, Mastering the Middle Grades (MMG), a course that builds study skills, social skills, self-management skills, goal-setting skills, organizational skills, and numerous other skills that will help ready students for work in
both middle grades and high school, is offered in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades.

**TDS high schools** are designed to provide acceleration for students who need it in an effort to prepare them for standards-based college preparatory courses. TDS high schools do not track students, promoting standards-based college preparatory courses for all. Before the school year begins, students are evaluated based on multiple indicators: grades, previous course performance and state, district, or alternative assessments to determine the level of individual support needed in math and literacy. To support success for students testing approximately two or more years below grade level in math and/or reading, double-dose intervention/acceleration courses are offered. In addition, Accelerating Literacy for Adolescents Lab (ALFA) and Computer and Team Assisted Math Acceleration Lab (CATAMA) are offered to ninth grade students in need of a triple-dose intervention. Also, Freshman Seminar, a course that builds 21st century high school and college readiness skills (more advanced skills than MMG), is offered to all ninth graders.

TDS course offerings appear on the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>TDS Courses/Programs/Labs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th, 7th, 8th</td>
<td>Student Team Literature/Talent Development Writing, A History of US: A United States History Course, The Story of Science, CATAMA Lab, Savvy Readers’ Lab, Mastering the Middle Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Strategic Reading, *Transition to Advanced Mathematics, ALFA Lab, CATAMA Lab, Freshman Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Reading and Writing in Your Career, *Geometry Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>College Know How (pilot only), Career Academy Blended Mathematics Lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th-12th</td>
<td>Infusion of content literacy strategies across grade levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The math sequence as it appears above reflects a typical schedule where Algebra I is offered during the freshman year, Geometry is offered during the sophomore year and Algebra II is offered during the junior year. Schools that offer these courses in a different sequence would need to adjust the sequence of the TDS math acceleration courses.

**Note:** Teachers responsible for TDS courses receive the support of instructional coaches.
Support for Core Course Instruction

**Middle School**

On the middle grades level, *Student Team Literature* is a research-based approach to the required English course. *A History of Us, A United States History Course*, can be used as the 8th grade U.S. history offering. *The Story of Science* can be used to enhance science courses in 6 through 8. For math, TDS recommends programs such as *Agile Minds* or other evidence based curricula designed to align to the common core. In-school coaching support is provided for English and math to ensure the use of effective instructional practices and strategies.

**High School**

The high school schedule should provide time for teachers to meet to horizontally map/plan the required English, math and history curricula. Vertical mapping/planning, also important, should be revisited at the beginning of each school year. These processes will be defined and discussed later in this section. In a TDS school, curriculum coaches and facilitators provide support for the mapping and planning processes. In addition, coaches assist educators teaching required core courses as they attempt to retain strategies and practices used in TDS acceleration courses, or strategies that have the most impact for student success.

**Curriculum Alignment with Core Standards**

TDS English and math acceleration and core course objectives are linked with many of the Common Core State Standards. TDS curriculum coaches and facilitators assist teachers as they work to align core-subject courses with the CCSS.
### Math Courses and Common Core State Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| TDS Transition to Advanced Mathematics (TAM) (usually 9th)          | • Created by teachers and TDS writers  
• Teach processes and proficiencies  
• Are designed to give students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in high school core courses  
• Address missed skills to prepare students for Common Core State Standards’- based math courses |
| TDS Geometry Foundations (GF) (usually 10th)                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| TDS Algebra II Foundations (AIIF) (usually 11th)                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| TDS Career Academy Blended Mathematics Lessons (CABM) (12th)       |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Core Math Courses: Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, etc.              | TDS math facilitators and coaches can support teachers’ planning to ensure that Common Core Standards are addressed.                                                                                       |

### ELA Courses/Programs Aligned With Common Core State Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6th, 7th, 8th | TDS Student Team Literature (STLit)                              | • Created by teachers, practitioners and TDS writers  
• Teach processes and proficiencies  
• Align with many of the new Common Core Standards  
• Address missed foundational skills to prepare students for core ELA courses |
| 9th   | TDS Strategic Reading (SR)                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 10th  | TDS Reading and Writing in Your Career (RWYC)                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11th  | TDS College Prep Reading and Writing (CPRW)                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th | Core HS ELA Courses: Eng. I, Eng. II, Eng. III, Eng. IV | TDS ELA facilitators and coaches can support teachers’ planning to ensure that Common Core Standards are addressed.                                                                                       |
II. Instruction

In a TDS school, instructional decisions are data driven. Teachers work with members of their teacher teams and with coaches to examine data (standardized assessments, project-based assessments, formative/summative assessments, student work, etc.) which provide the information needed to guide instructional decision making.

In a TDS school, student-centered classrooms promote cooperative learning and critical thinking. The extended class period allows sufficient time for not only explicit instruction, but also modeling, demonstrating and exploring. Acceleration course lessons provide a variety of activities to address differences in learning styles, and innovative instructional strategies and practices allow teachers to build on students’ interests and develop their strengths.

In a TDS school, professional development and coaching support, which promote the use of effective instructional strategies and practices across grade levels, is provided for all ELA and math teachers to increase student progress in core courses. Professional development may also be provided to interdisciplinary teams and other content areas as negotiated.

In short, appropriate curriculum is meaningless without the effective instructional practices to implement it. Research-based curriculum paired with high-impact, standards-based instruction work to promote student success in TDS schools.

III. Professional Development

In addition to various trainings (summer, ongoing PD sessions, etc.), TDS has two primary levels of teacher support: professional learning communities and in-classroom support. These systems provide teachers with sustained professional development, technical assistance and implementation support. To accomplish these goals, school-based instructional coaches assigned by the school or district work regularly with teachers, and TDS instructional facilitators make frequent, scheduled visits to work with school-based coaches and teachers.

Professional Learning Communities

Teachers in TDS schools belong to two essential professional learning communities: 1) The interdisciplinary team of teachers that shares the same students throughout the year, and 2) The content team of teachers that has instructional discipline in
common. These communities focus on student learning, work collaboratively and hold themselves accountable for results.

In-Classroom Support

TDS provides ongoing, daily support from assigned school- or district- based instructional coaches. Coaches assist teachers with planning and implementing, and hold focused debriefing meetings to help teachers reflect on their instructional practice.

Why the TDS Approach?

The recently published Common Core State Standards adopted by most states/districts dramatically illustrate the need for increasing the levels of skill development and conceptual understanding for all students. Schools across the country are stepping up their games to help students meet the standards. Though this is a daunting task for everyone in the business of education, it is especially challenging for those who work in schools with large numbers of students who arrive underprepared and considerably behind in reading and/or math. Talent Development Secondary (TDS) is designed to assist schools that face such challenges. The results of the studies described below make clear that a TDS approach to curriculum, instruction and professional development will help teachers to increase student achievement while closing gaps that threaten to hinder further student progress.

One study compared two different strategies for supporting underprepared math students: Stretch Algebra, in which students received twice the amount of time for algebra instruction during the year through 90-minute math classes each day; and Transition to Advanced Mathematics (TAM)/Algebra in which students also received a double dose of math class, but spent the first semester focusing on developing their intermediate math skills in TAM, followed by Algebra instruction during the second semester. (Paper presented at the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE) annual meeting, Washington, DC.) Results found that students in schools randomly assigned to the TAM condition experienced significantly higher gains in intermediate math achievement, and because of a very different set of classroom practices, had more positive attitudes toward math and high algebra achievement levels. One could argue that TAM/Algebra students were in a better position than Stretch students to succeed in more advanced mathematics. The TAM/Algebra students achieved as much in the domain of algebra...
after having four months of algebra instruction as Stretch students achieved after eight or more months of instruction. Because gaps were filled, TAM/Algebra students were on firmer footing for advancement.

(Balfanz, R., Neild, R., & Byrnes, V. (2011, March). Results from a Randomized Trial of the Transition to Advanced Math (TAM) Curriculum for Underprepared Freshmen.)

A second study set three conditions for supporting high school teachers who worked with struggling readers: 1. workshop only (Condition 1), 2. workshop and lesson materials (Condition 2), and 3. workshop, lesson materials and coaching support (Condition 3). Experimental comparisons of the three teacher support conditions (workshops, lesson materials, coaching) resulted in the following findings:

Coaching consistently and significantly contributed to stronger classroom implementations of recommended instructional practices for struggling adolescent readers. When time was nearly equal across conditions for a particular recommended component, the quality of instruction was always highest with coaching.


TDS curriculum, instructional practices and job-embedded professional development have been proven to benefit both students and teachers as they work to meet the Common Core State Standards.
I. Curriculum That Closes the Achievement Gap and Prepares Students for the 21st Century

In the early decades of the 21st century, it is vital that all students – regular, special needs, ELL, gifted, everyone – be taught the skills they will need to be successful in the world they will inherit. The courses created by Talent Development Secondary curriculum writers address 21st century skills at various levels of complexity while facilitating needed acceleration of learning for students who arrive with below grade-level skills in reading and math. Many of the study, social and technical skills needed for successful completion of middle school and high school and for adequate preparation for college and career are addressed in *Mastering the Middle Grades* (6th, 7th, 8th) and *Freshman Seminar* (9th). These skills are reinforced in TDS ELA and math core and acceleration courses and applied, as well, in core area courses. The strength that all TDS courses/programs bring to the curriculum table will be the primary subject of this section.

Special Note: All TDS courses/programs come with initial trainings, ongoing professional development sessions, all needed course materials and in-house coaching support. These levels of professional development support are explained in the Professional Development section of this chapter.

Mastering the Middle Grades and Freshman Seminar: On Your Mark, Get Ready

*Mastering the Middle Grades*

The *Mastering the Middle Grades* (MMG) curriculum prepares students for the academic and social challenges of middle school through explicit instruction in crucial high school-prep and study skills not often covered in their academic courses. This modular, three-year curriculum includes 40 lessons per year (designed for a 45-minute class period) and can be expanded or contracted to fit school schedules. *Mastering the Middle Grades* provides:
Pillar II: Curriculum & Instruction and Professional Development

- A comprehensive, three-year curriculum
- A teacher-friendly format
- Articulation with other TD middle grades curricula
- Incremental skill building, revisiting crucial skills each year with fresh lessons
- A developmentally appropriate focus on cooperative team learning

Crucial skills are built and revisited over the three-year stretch of the middle grades experience. These skills assist students as they navigate the challenging waters of the middle grades. A short-list of the skills/topics that are developed in *Mastering the Middle Grades* appears below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>A Short List of Skills/Topics Developed in These 6th, 7th and 8th Grade Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Orientation to Middle School</td>
<td>course introduction, beginning the year well, school rules, organizing for better results, setting goals, importance of attendance, time management, giving and receiving feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Study Skills</td>
<td>pre-reading strategies, memory tips, Cornell note taking, journal writing, outlining, test-taking tips, oral presentations, studying with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3: Social Skills</td>
<td>working in teams, asking for help, remaining calm when angry or under pressure, resolving conflicts, peer pressure, harassment, bullying, fighting, effective listening skills, dealing with authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4: Life Skills</td>
<td>problem solving, decision making, healthy relationships, managing stress, creating a caring community, evaluating websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 5: Career Exploration</td>
<td>self and career exploration, career and educational planning, interviews, the changing workplace, employment trends, exploring careers through volunteering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment in MMG**

Most assessments in *MMG* are formative and based on class activities, projects, presentations, and homework. Student performance can be assessed on a daily basis through these activities. In addition, unit projects or teacher-created quizzes and tests may serve as summative assessments. Grading may be based on student effort and participation as well as mastery. Talent Development has created student surveys that can be administered to measure students’ sense of their growth in study skills, social skills, life skills, and career exploration.
Note: If the *Mastering the Middle Grades* course is taught in a middle school that feeds into a TDS high school, the skills developed will be bolstered and extended by the TDS ninth grade offering, *Freshman Seminar*. Just as *MMG* helps to prepare students for the challenges of middle school, *Freshman Seminar* provides similar assists for students as they enter high school and become more serious about carving a path toward graduation and beyond.

**Freshman Seminar**

This ninth grade TDS offering, which was developed in 1999 and most recently revised in 2009, has effectively withstood the test of time. Schools where *Freshman Seminar* is in place in the Ninth Grade Success Academy report that students:

- Have fewer fights
- Have fewer disciplinary events
- Attend school more often
- Have acquired better study habits and time management skills
- Are better able to handle work in 10th grade and beyond
- Have acquired or improved their technology skills
- Work more seriously and with more self-understanding toward graduation, college and career

*Freshman Seminar* employs creativity as well as critical thinking and problem solving, and of the 21st Century Learning and Innovation skills, stresses communication and collaboration in virtually all of its 70+ lessons. In that skills taught in *Freshman Seminar* are reinforced in all other classes, *FS* is known as “the course that drives the team.” Each *Freshman Seminar* unit is comprised of 80- to 90-minute lessons. Each lesson has required materials, a daily behavioral objective, and includes an array of activities. A short list of skills/topics for each unit appears on the chart below.
### Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th><strong>A Short List of Skills/Topics Developed in the Freshman Seminar Course</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>brainstorming and goal setting, working together, building consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>Cornell note taking, mnemonic devices, active listening, outlining, giving presentations and public speaking, time management, study space, test preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers</td>
<td>The Holland Inventory, investigating careers, dream jobs and reality, writing a resume, completing a job application, the job interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Decisions</td>
<td>lifestyle and career, the tests you’ll need, different kinds of colleges, choosing a major, college costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Relations</td>
<td>the dynamics of conflict, approaches to conflict, problem solving, strategies for controlling anger, resisting peer pressure, dealing with authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>creating documents on the word processor; creating tables, charts and graphs; internet research; evaluating websites; copyright issues and plagiarism; Microsoft® PowerPoint; spreadsheet basics; using Microsoft® Excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Portfolio Presentation</td>
<td>7-13 lesson process in which students collect work from all of their classes, create a portfolio, and present their work to their parents or a staff member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessment in FS

Student performance is measured on a daily basis through class activities, projects and presentations and teacher-made quizzes and tests. Teachers can administer a survey to determine the extent to which students are continuing to use Freshman Seminar skills in the second semester of 9th grade and in the 10th grade.

### Why merge these courses into one?

While these courses have worked successfully for years as stand-alone options, an innovative partnership has brought together the best of these three programs.

Students benefit from the breadth of the Freshman Seminar curriculum, the exceptional resources both in print and online (with CSNav) from College Summit, and the researched-based resiliency training in Success Highways to reach the essential milestones of the course.
Something New

Beginning in 2012, some schools will experience two other curricula that have been folded into Freshman Seminar to deepen and broaden the skills already taught in FS. The lessons written for College Summit Launch and Success Highways support and strengthen the Freshman Seminar curriculum.

**College Summit Launch**

The College Summit Launch program is a three-year curriculum designed to extend our best practices of creating college-going culture in senior-level classrooms to students in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. Clean Slate is the name of the 9th grade course. The Clean Slate skills being infused into Freshman Seminar are the College Summit Core Understandings:

- **Self-Advocacy** encourages students to become empowered to speak and write about personal experiences, and confident enough to ask for support when necessary.
- **Academic Excellence** promotes student awareness of their academic strengths and areas of growth as a learner, and provides opportunities for remediation and enrichment. It also supports a student’s understanding of the importance of taking rigorous academic courses and being knowledgeable about college entrance requirements, including examinations and what they measure.
- **College 101** builds a college-going vocabulary, familiarizes students with the conventions of college life, and prepares students for the academic rigors of college through exposure to college level curricula and work.
- **College-Career Connection** enhances understanding of the correlation between success in a given field and completing the appropriate educational or training programs.
- **Financial Awareness** encourages students to consider the costs associated with attending college so that a savings plan can be developed. Also, personal financial responsibility is explored which includes real-world finances, and makes the connection between one’s level of education and salary potential.

**Success Highways: My Personal Roadmap**

Success Highways from ScholarCentric™ is a research-based set of intervention tools designed to improve academic performance and high school graduation rates. The Success Highways early-warning assessments provide educators with concrete data on which students are at risk of academic failure and/or dropping out and the underlying reasons why they struggle.
The Success Highways: My Personal Roadmap curriculum develops the critical resiliency skills that are scientifically linked to improved student engagement, achievement, and graduation rates. With the Success Highways curriculum, teachers can be sure that all students gain or maintain the ability to succeed in school.

The Success Highways intervention was developed over twenty years of research at the University of Wisconsin and a seven-year pilot program in an urban school district. Success Highways continues to be involved in efficacy studies with a number of rigorous research institutions including the Johns Hopkins University; Howard University; Mathematica, as part of an AT&T Foundation Dropout Initiative; Center for Education and Work at the University of Wisconsin, Madison School of Education; and the University of Colorado, Denver.

Also in the Works

College Know How is a TDS program “under development” that is being designed to provide 11th and/or 12th grade students with experiences that mimic those that they will encounter in their freshman year of college. In this program, ELA, math, social science and science mini- courses expose students to innovative and challenging subject matter and problem solving that should help prepare them for college-level thinking and work. For example, students will prepare for and participate in English seminar discussions after having taken notes on the written piece under discussion. They will attend a workshop that introduces them to time management, “college style.” Students will learn how to approach a professor or seek help in a resource center when they encounter difficulties in math or science. They will have a session on how to navigate the campus to best advantage, locating important resources such as the writing lab or the library. In short, the students taking this course will learn not only what will be expected of them as college freshmen, but also how to access help when needed.
Acceleration Courses: Getting Back on Track

TDS offers acceleration courses in ELA and math on both the middle school and high school levels. These courses are for students who are functioning below grade expectations in reading or math. Teachers are given additional time and instruction in literacy and numeracy to better equip them to successfully teach credit-bearing courses. Teachers use these TDS courses with the ultimate goals of placing the students back on track to graduation and acceptance into college.

Middle Grades Labs

**Savvy Readers’ Lab** *(6th, 7th, 8th)*

The *Savvy Readers’ Lab* provides strategic reading instruction for two cohorts of 15 students each per quarter or semester through exposure to various types of reading material, with emphasis on informational text. Students learn to construct meaning through reading and writing and to assume responsibility for their own learning. This enables them to experience success across the curriculum. *Savvy Readers’ Lab* has three major components:

- Guided Reading Instruction – Students decode, infer, predict, monitor for understanding, repair comprehension and increase vocabulary.
- Application of Reading Strategies – Students read, make note of strategies practiced, share their experience, and maintain journals.
- Rotation of Learning Centers – Students rotate among the computer center, writing center, games center, listening center and information center.

**Assessment in Savvy Readers’ Lab**

Assessment in this course is primarily formative to alleviate grade anxiety. Student progress is assessed in the following ways: journal entries, reading extension activities, leveled vocabulary software program, reaction grids, reading response grids, and writing activities that support the reading.

**Computer and Team Assisted Math Acceleration Lab**

*(CATAMA)* *(6th, 7th, 8th)*

*CATAMA* is an innovative, extra support math course that combines computer-assisted instruction, cooperative learning, and team tutorial assistance to increase students’ mathematical
procedural fluency, conceptual understanding and language development. CATAMA has three main components:

- Introduction Preview – Students preview the skills and concepts that they are deficient in, currently studying or will study in the near future in their core math class.
- Activities (team tutorial assistance and computer) – Students develop procedural fluency and conceptual understanding of important math topics.
- Conclusion – Students think about their own learning.

Assessment in CATAMA

Data determines the pace and content for the components of this lab. This data is gathered from the software program, student work and the regular math course. The data or student work becomes the focus of weekly communication between the CATAMA teachers and the core math teachers. The instructional coach can help facilitate these meetings. The following are examples of items appropriate for discussion and decision-making:

- Pre- and post-tests generated for each computer unit and lesson
- Conclusion activities such as outcome sentences, journaling, journal prompts, exit tickets, and self-assessments
- Open-ended problems collected during team tutorial assistance component

High School Acceleration Courses

English/Language Arts

The TDS literacy program is a comprehensive approach to instruction. Students work in a variety of learning contexts while applying a range of knowledge, strategies and skills. The TDS program recognizes and values what adolescents bring to the ELA classroom by ensuring that students are functioning successfully within their instructional range and receiving ample support to work with materials that would typically be within their frustration range.

Strategic Reading (9th)

SR is a research-based intervention course designed to provide adolescent learners with extra time to strengthen their reading and writing skills. SR offers a non-traditional approach to
accelerating students’ proficiencies in reading fluency and comprehension. The course has four main components:

- **Reading Showcase** – The teacher reads aloud and thinks aloud, modeling how readers use specific strategies to construct meaning and monitor their understanding of texts. The teacher facilitates an interactive reading by prompting students to engage in conversation, reflection and demonstration of their own thinking.
- **Focus Lesson** – The teacher targets a skill, strategy or concept (direct instruction), then the students practice in teams or pairs.
- **Student Team Literature** – Students read (individually and with peers), then engage in team discussion. Teachers assign students to cooperative learning teams and guide students through activities before, during and after reading.
- **Self-Selected Reading and Learning Centers** – Students have time to independently build fluency in reading and writing. Students are given frequent opportunities to self-select reading material for pleasure.

**Accelerating Literacy for Adolescents (9th)**

*ALFA Lab* is a triple-dose course created to build and strengthen literacy skills necessary for ninth graders who are challenged literacy learners. It is generally offered as a quarter or semester course during an elective period. Students work in small groups to receive guided instruction in reading and to maximize opportunities to reinforce and apply word knowledge, fluency, reading comprehension and writing skills. Curriculum units structure lab experiences to give students opportunities to apply skills and strategies around an organizational theme or topic and an essential question. ALFA components are:

- **Daily Launch** – This component provides an introduction to the lesson and also sets the purpose for the day’s learning.
- **Main Station** – This is the core component of the lab. It functions as a small group tutorial with a maximum ratio of six students to one teacher. The teacher facilitates interactive reading while promoting the use of reading strategies.
- **Satellite Stations** – A rotation through the following stations helps to reinforce needed skills: 1) Main Station – guided reading, 2) Wordology – word meaning and word parts, 3) Comprehension Connection – reading, responding to text-based questions, organizing information,
constructing written responses, and 4) Media Madness – use of technology to research specified information, listening comprehension, fluency, viewing, reading, and writing.

**Assessment in ALFA** The lab teacher maintains an assessment folder for each student that includes a compilation of on-going classroom based assessments. The data, along with the sample student products contained in the folder, are used to examine student performance and progress over time. Students are periodically assessed in the following ways: The Gates-MacGinitie Test (or other norm-referenced and grade equivalent reading test), Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS), unit tests, word inventories, writing samples, timed readings (to assess fluency), strategy checklists, anecdotal records, student/teacher conferences, oral presentations, student interest inventories, and student projects.

**Reading and Writing in Your Career (10th)**

*RWYC* provides students whose reading levels are still considerably below grade level with additional opportunities to become proficient readers and writers. In this course, students will also begin to explore college and career opportunities. Three thematic units pose the following questions: Who am I? Where am I going? How will I get there? These units involve students in a variety of activities that facilitate personal discovery and examination of post-secondary career options. Like *Strategic Reading*, this course has four main components:

- **Reading Showcase** – The teacher models strategies used by good readers.
- **Focus Lesson** – The teacher directly instructs students in a skill or concept that they will apply during that day’s Student Team Literature component.
- **Student Team Literature** – Teams discuss high-interest core texts of varying levels of difficulty related to the course theme.
- **Self-Selected Reading, Writing and Investigating Learning Centers** – Students work in one of three independent work stations: self-selected reading center, career resource center and publishing center.
**College Prep Reading and Writing** (11th)

*CPRW* moves the TDS literacy initiative forward by providing additional and sustained support to 11th-grade students who have not acquired the necessary skills for college and post-high school careers. Like *Strategic Reading* and *Reading and Writing in Your Career*, this course engages students in age-appropriate materials and topics while building their confidence and skill levels. The *CPRW* course has four major components:

- **Reading Colloquy** – This activity engages students in reading about the world outside of themselves (much like college), asks them to make educated, opinionated responses about what they have read, and holds them accountable for participating in discussion.
- **Focus Lesson** – Teachers instruct students in a skill that they will immediately apply to the day’s (or upcoming days’) literature exploration or project-based application. Teachers explain and model, and students practice.
- **Literature Exploration** – Students work intensively with an anthology of thematic reading, and with the support of Partner Discussion Guides, they read high-interest grade-level novels. They participate in discussions common to both college and post-secondary careers.
- **Project-Based Applications** – Students engage in authentic learning applications such as: delivering a two-minute persuasive speech, participating in a formal debate, completing the common college application, writing a research paper with emphasis on the early stages of gathering resources, and finding current-events articles that demonstrate the relevance of an upper-level novel.

**Assessment in TDS Acceleration ELA Courses**

The Gates-MacGinitie test (or some other norm-referenced test) is administered at the beginning (to determine eligibility) and end of each ELA acceleration course, and then at the end of the school year. In addition, TDS ELA courses have both formative and summative assessments. Teachers can formatively assess with brief constructed responses to text-based questions; rubrics for reading, writing, oral presentations and projects; steps in process check-ins; journal entries tied to performance-based tasks; check lists; informal demonstrations or presentations; and teacher notes on observations. Summative assessment is conducted with final drafts...
of formal writing assignments; literature tests; teacher-created assignments and tests; and some performance-based tasks.

**Mathematics**

*Transition to Advanced Mathematics* (9th)

*TAM* encourages students’ conceptual understanding of key ideas that underlie all high school mathematics and sharpens students’ overall basic mathematic skills. There are five key components:

- **Peer-Assisted Starter Activities** – This “Problem of the Day” activity supports students’ development of number sense and mathematical reasoning. Students are challenged to determine if given situations make sense in different mathematical contexts.
- **Setting the Stage** – An introductory activity links students’ prior knowledge to the topic of the day.
- **Whole-Class Discovery** – This part of the TAM lesson provides a wide variety of opportunities for students to re-explore concepts that were taught in middle school in a novel context. Topics and contexts were selected specifically to pique student interest and develop confidence in their ability to think mathematically. They also address the prerequisite areas needed for success in second-semester Algebra I. Assorted activities are built into each lesson.
- **Symbolize It and Math at Work** – Students explore the lesson topic further by completing exercises individually, with partners or in groups.
- **Wrap-Up** – Teachers have students complete outcome sentences, exit passes, or other activities that help students think about their thinking and reflect on what they learned.

*Geometry Foundations* (10th)

*GF* reviews basic algebraic skills and fosters students’ conceptual understanding of key ideas in high school geometry. There are five key components:

- **Peer-Assisted Starter Activities** – These “Problem of the Day” activities provide multiple entry points to non-routine problems, with many exploring spatial relationships.

**Note:** District benchmark assessment data is often used to determine if the instructional program is meeting student needs or requiring adjustment.
Pillar II: Curriculum & Instruction and Professional Development

- **Setting the Stage** – An introductory activity links students’ prior knowledge to the topic of the day.
- **Whole-Class Discovery** – These activities give students the opportunity to use tools and sometimes to construct objects that help them conceptually understand basic geometry topics: measurement, property of objects, and coordinate geometry.
- **Algebra Connections and Exercises** – These activities and exercises at the end of each lesson help students review and connect important algebra and geometry concepts. Each Algebra Connection exercise is linked to the geometry concepts covered in the lesson.
- **Wrap-Up** – Teachers have students complete outcome sentences, exit passes, or other activities that help students think about their thinking and reflect on what they learned.

**Algebra II Foundations** (11th)

*AIIF* is designed to help students build the “habits of mind” needed for success in Algebra II and to solidify concepts learned in Algebra I. The course emphasizes the connections between numeric representation, graphic representation, and algebraic notation. There are five key components:

- **Peer-Assisted Starter Activities** – These “Problem of the Day” activities provide multiple entry points to non-routine problems, with many exploring spatial relationships.
- **Setting the Stage** – An introductory activity links students’ prior knowledge to the topic of the day.
- **Whole-Class Discovery** – Each lesson begins with a motivational activity to engage students, and it proceeds through discovery activities designed to actively involve students in the learning process. Students work in partnerships or cooperative learning groups to complete these activities.
- **Practice Exercises** - These exercises help students solidify understanding. Teachers give differentiated individual and small group instruction during this time.
- **Wrap-Up** – Teachers have students complete outcome sentences, exit passes, or other activities that help students think about their thinking and reflect on what they learned.
Assessment in TDS Acceleration Math Courses

The TDS acceleration math curriculum (TAM, GF, AIIF) provides unit assessments and lesson quizzes, but teachers are encouraged to reflect on practices and to make instructional strategy changes after examining student work and other data. They are also encouraged to create their own assessments based on knowledge gleaned from the data.

Computer and Team Assisted Math Acceleration

(9th, 10th, 11th, 12th)

CATAMA is an innovative extra support math course (triple-dose) that combines computer-assisted instruction, cooperative learning, and team tutorial assistance to increase students’ mathematical procedural fluency, conceptual understanding and language development. CATAMA has three main components:

- **Introduction Preview** – Students preview the skills and concepts that they are deficient in, currently studying or will study in the near future in their core math class.
- **Activities (team tutorial assistance and computer)** – Students develop procedural fluency and conceptual understanding of important math topics.
- **Conclusion** – Students think about their own learning.

Assessment in CATAMA

Data determines the pace and content for the components of this lab. This data is gathered from the software program, student work and the regular math course. The data or student work becomes the focus of weekly communication between the CATAMA teachers and the core math teachers. The instructional coach can help facilitate these meetings. The following are examples of items appropriate for discussion and decision-making:

- Pre- and post-tests generated for each computer unit and lesson
- Conclusion activities such as outcome sentences, journal entries, journal prompts, exit tickets, and self-assessments
- Open-ended problems collected during Team Tutorial Assistance Component
TDS Support for Core Courses/Programs:
From Structured Courses/Programs to
Transference of Instructional Practices with
Mapping and Planning

Middle Grades Courses/Programs

**Student Team Literature** (*STLit*) (6th, 7th, 8th)

In TDS middle schools, the core English course program is taught using an *STLit* programmed approach. *STLit* is a researched-based, cooperative approach to teaching literature that is designed to strengthen students’ thinking, reading, writing and social skills. In *Student Team Literature*, students read teacher-selected, quality literature and non-fiction selections spanning a range of reading levels and linked to the common core. Instructional strategies used in this course help to engage and focus middle grades students. Students work in four- to five-member mixed-ability learning teams using discussion guides written to foster reading comprehension and critical thinking about literature and non-fiction pieces. Students read and, under the teacher’s guidance, complete each discussion guide during a week-long cycle of instruction that includes direct instruction, team practice and discussion, and individual assessment. After intensive vocabulary instruction in preparation for their reading, students:

- Silently read a portion of a selection
- Complete partner, choral or echo reading, which builds fluency and gives poor readers and second language learners a second exposure to text
- Discuss with their partners possible responses to questions and activities in discussion guides
- Record their individual brief constructed responses to the questions and activities
- Round out the *STLit* cycle by participating in literature-related writing activities and extension activities that involve art, drama, research and/or real-life connections

**Assessment in Student Team Literature**

Three assessment tools are available to teachers implementing *STLit*. Before assessment begins, partners quiz each other in preparation for literature and vocabulary tests in a process called “Selection Review.” Then students take literature tests that require brief, constructed responses, vocabulary tests that assess their
ability to compose meaningful sentences incorporating high frequency words they have practiced using, and optional standardized reading practice tests that are similar in format to the standardized tests used in most school districts throughout the country. Product assessment comes in the form of literature-related writing assignments. To determine students’ instructional range and to examine progress over time, teachers are encouraged to administer the Gates-MacGinitie test or other norm-referenced grade equivalent test three times each year.

**A History of US: United States History Course**

This TDS history curriculum supports instruction in middle grades United States history. The curriculum brings together Joy Hakim’s series of books, *A History of US*, with engaging lessons developed by TDS writers. Teachers can select to use any of the books in the series as curriculum which includes lessons, supplemental materials and assessments have been developed for each book.

The TDS United States history lessons:

- Are intellectually demanding for all students.
- Feature interactive, research-based teaching and student team learning strategies.
- Employ higher order thinking, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.
- Extend students’ reading and writing skills.
- Reflect the nation’s diversity and commonalities of backgrounds, points of view, and experiences.
- Contribute to citizen education.

**Assessment in A History of US: United States History Course**

Summative assessments follow each section of five or six instructional lessons. In addition, formative assessment tools are many and varied: writing assignments, interdisciplinary connections, simulations, focus activities, review and reflection activities, homework assignments and review games.
Transference of High School Instructional Practices

TDS acceleration courses come with built-in, research-based instructional practices. Teachers receive initial training prior to teaching these courses and they learn strategies for effectively moving students ahead in needed areas. Follow-up professional development sessions coupled with in-class coaching support provide the needed practice and guidance to build teacher confidence in the use of these strategies. Teachers should move with this confidence and their instructional practice proficiency into the second semester – the same instructional practices that were used to teach the acceleration courses can be used to teach the required academic core courses. Instructional coaches will assist with this transference of learned skills and strategies. The research-based instructional practices used in the TDS approach to both TDS courses and core courses will be explained at length in the instruction section of this chapter.

Mapping and Planning with Assessment in Mind

To ensure continuity of instruction within a school, and to make certain that instruction is aligned with core standards, teachers are encouraged to participate in curriculum mapping and planning. Teachers develop these maps and plans effectively if they complete them in their content professional learning team sessions. The vertical mapping and vertical planning is done with the entire content team, and the horizontal mapping and horizontal planning is hammered out by the members of the grade-level or course content teams. But, perhaps we get ahead of ourselves. Some defining of terms might be helpful.

Vertical Mapping

This mapping is done within content, but across grade levels. Teachers identify logical progressive skill development by determining what needs to be done on each grade level (or, as in math, for each course level) in order to ensure that students will be where they need to be at the end of the road. Skills identified as necessary for each respective level or course should be aligned with national standards. As targeted outcomes in English and math have already been identified in the Common Core State Standards, the job of the teacher teams is to align instruction with the stated outcomes. Unnecessary instructional overlaps can be avoided and gaps prevented when teachers work together to map out the curriculum in this way.

Example – If a 12th grader will need to learn how to “evaluate authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors’ claims, reasoning, and evidence” in
history class, what core standards must be addressed in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades for him/her to meet this standard in the 12th grade? If 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade history teachers pound that out together, continuity of instruction is more likely.

**Vertical Planning**

Planning follows mapping. In the example above, the mapping of progressive skill development is completed. Now teachers work together to plan activities and strategies necessary to accomplish the skill development. Appropriate assessments for determining student mastery at each level are identified, as well. In other words, first teachers map out the order of things, then they plan how to present them to students and determine how student progress will be assessed. Again, content professional learning teams provide the perfect venue for this mapping and planning.

**Horizontal Mapping**

This mapping is done within content by teachers who teach the same course (ex. English I, geometry, or U.S. history). The process is similar to the vertical mapping process, but now teachers are mapping skill development for one course, only. The content team determines what students should be able to do by the end of a unit or the end of a quarter. They work together to identify a subset of skills that must be mastered along the way if students are to successfully reach the goal line. Again, doing this together helps to ensure continuity of instruction.
Horizontal Planning

Planning follows mapping. After teachers have mapped out the sequence of skills as they need to be developed, they plan activities, reading selections, writing assignments, project assignments etc. that will lead students to a successful conclusion at unit’s end. They also identify appropriate formative and summative assessments for determining student progress. When teachers work as part of a professional learning team to map and plan curriculum and instruction, each teacher’s creativity and talent is highlighted and all share the load as well as the success.

Example – Horizontal planning allows teachers to create shared assessments, or to share assignments that will allow teachers to benefit from each other’s work: Teacher A creates all lessons and ancillary materials for Unit 1; Teacher B creates all lessons and ancillary materials for Unit 2, and so forth. In this way, each teacher benefits from the work of others, while focusing his/her attention and time on only one or two major topics during the semester. The experience and the results cannot be overestimated when comparing time-on-task to bang-for-buck.

Assessment

As teachers work together to plan their units of study, assessment of student progress is an important consideration. Matching a “type of learning” with a “type of assessment” can be problematic for teachers accustomed to quizzing and testing because it is Friday, or because the end of a segment of the unit has been reached. In fact, not all learning requires grade-assigned assessment. Teachers concerned about student progress informally assess students’ skill mastery daily, using what they learn to reassess the effectiveness of their instructional delivery and to determine if modifications need to be made. This type of formative assessment helps teachers to better design a path for success for all students. Summative testing is necessary, of course. Students’ work must be evaluated at logical points in a quarter or semester. However, teachers should help students understand the value of ungraded assessments as incremental measures of progress. In the contemporary climate of the ever-present state and district assessments and benchmarks, students shouldn’t be made to feel that passing grades on state and district tests are the only priority. In addition, students should learn the value of self-reflection as they make connections between effort/persistence and outcome.
Formative Assessment

This type of assessment is not typically graded for evaluative purposes. Its primary function is to provide the teacher with information about the progress of individual students or groups of students. Insights gained from such ongoing assessments can help teachers to adjust instruction, increase or decrease the pace of delivery, provide special help for individuals needing it, etc. Some common types of formative assessments are:

- Task-specific rubrics
- Checklists
- Informal quizzes
- Activity sheets
- Journal entries
- Exit passes
- Observation notes
- Conference notes
- Informal presentations

Summative Assessment

This type of assessment is typically graded. It includes standardized assessments as well as teacher-constructed tests, exams, projects, etc. Teacher-constructed assessments are evaluative in nature, usually administered at the end of a unit of instruction or at the end of a quarter or semester, and often are used as part of the grading process. There are many types of summative assessments, samples of which appear below.

- State assessments
- District benchmark assessments
- Unit tests
- Semester exams
- Unit project assessments
- Formal presentations
- Formal writing assignments

Those familiar with Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching will already have noted in Chapter 1 that TDS aligns with Danielson’s 4th domain; TDS’s alignment with the other three domains in Danielson’s framework will be evident in the descriptions of instructional and professional development best practices that are discussed in this section of Chapter 3 and the section that follows.
II. Instructional Practices That Make the Curriculum Work

Even the best curriculum must be implemented well to be effective. TDS pairs research-based curriculum with high-impact instructional strategies to create acceleration courses and some middle school core courses that build on students’ interests and develop their strengths. The instructional strategies used in TDS courses can and should be used in district core courses, as well. Why pull the plug on students the second semester when effective instructional practices and strategies have helped them to move ahead during the first semester? If teachers keep these practices in place, students have a better chance of continued progress as they tackle more challenging material in district-required courses. Of course, professional development sessions and regular in-class coaching support help teachers to transition from teaching TDS acceleration courses to teaching the district core courses.

Some of the practices/strategies that TDS encourages are:

1. **Creating a stimulating classroom environment** – TDS classrooms lure students out of the hallway. They are inviting, colorful and print rich. They include technology and media in the mix, and students are familiarized with “how to work the room” by having room orientation sessions early in the school year. A sampling of things that you might spy in a TDS room would be:

   - Desks arranged for teaming or group work – No straight rows of students peering at the backs of heads in a TDS classroom! Student desks are arranged so that teams of four can collaborate or engage in cooperative learning activities at appropriate times during a lesson. Some teachers even place needed lesson materials in the center of the desk grouping to cut down on time-off-task. Large bowls or containers from a dollar store work well for this purpose.
   - Word walls – To promote vocabulary mastery, teachers and students place words/terms and definitions on the wall where all can see. They remain there for easy reference, and students (yes, even high school students) develop a sense of pride as they realize how many new terms they can use with ease and confidence.
   - Stations or centers – Most TDS courses make good use of every part of the classroom (a table in the back of the room, a large window ledge, a labeled bulletin board with pockets made of construction paper or folders, a corner
with computers sitting on spare desks, a bookcase or book carousel, etc.) to create independent work stations or centers. Here students can practice math problems, enjoy independent reading selections, build on vocabulary, develop writing skills, and much more. Creative teachers know that the more appealing the centers look, the more likely they are to entice students to visit regularly.

- Posted, current student work – An old idea that still works. Students are still motivated by seeing their work showcased in attractive displays in the classroom or, even better, right outside the door in the hallway for the whole school or academy to see. Teachers are urged to keep these current. There is something a bit sad about seeing September’s work on the wall as Valentine’s Day approaches. Changing these work displays regularly motivates students to try harder each day.

- Relevant and colorful posters, visuals, graphs, charts, rubrics – These add to the attractiveness of a room, but also provide food for thought. If students are studying the Civil War, posters of important battles or generals can help to stir the imagination as students read about events. As with student work, however, keeping visuals current is important. If students are now studying World War I, it might be time to replace the poster of Ulysses S. Grant. If students are working on persuasive writing, the descriptive writing rubric poster might not prove helpful.

2. **Teaching in an extended class period with smaller class sizes** – TDS promotes limiting class size to 25 students and extending instructional time. Class times may vary slightly from school to school or district to district, but TDS courses are designed to be taught during periods ranging from 70-90 minutes. The extended class period allows sufficient time for not only explicit instruction, but also collaboration, exploration and reflection. Students have time to work cooperatively on assignments and projects. They have time to apply learned information to new situations and to become actively engaged in their own learning. The 4x4 high school schedule or 4x4 + 1 high school schedule provides the structure needed to accommodate the extended class period. See sample schedules in the appendix.
3. **Varying activities** - An extended class period necessitates varied instruction. A 90-minute period can quickly become a nightmare when teachers spend the entire period lecturing or having students read silently. Adults do not handle such well, so it should come as no surprise that students also find it intolerable. TDS courses, of course, provide teachers with the instructional variety needed to keep students engaged and motivated. Teachers are urged to provide this variety in their core courses, as well. Again, planning with content grade/course team members benefits each member of the team. Activities can be designed to bring difficult concepts/information to students in different ways to accommodate learning styles. Direct instruction can be followed by practice opportunities (team and individual). Time can be set aside in lessons for center activities and journal writing. The possibilities are many and decisions should be made by analyzing student data and determining needs. Teachers should do the planning together, though. The task will be easier and it will be more likely that the needed targets will be hit.

4. **Using Cooperative Learning** – Initially, teachers may find pairing, grouping or teaming students a bit challenging. Managing the talk and movement of teamwork can pose problems if prior planning and organizing are not in place. The benefits of having students work together when appropriate are many, however. Students have much to teach each other and much that they can learn from each other. As members of cooperative learning teams, students become actively engaged while working with others to construct meaning from a difficult piece of reading, to explore different approaches to a challenging math problem, to apply learned information to a new situation, or to synthesize aspects of a topic for better understanding. Cooperative learning activities are provided in all TDS courses, and teachers are taught how to team students effectively in initial TDS course trainings. Instructional coaches assist teachers who may struggle with the process in the beginning. In fact, coaches are prepared to assist teachers by modeling the process for them. Teachers should not shy away from providing this learning strategy for students. Planning, organizing and practicing with instructional coaches and team members will help to build confidence and competence.
5. **Delivering Explicit Instruction** – Students are helped by instruction that is logically sequenced with appropriate scaffolds and supports. Using explicit instruction, teachers provide the instructional elements and methods that students need to make progress. Some of those elements appear below.

- **Chunking** – Segmenting complex ideas into smaller chunks helps students to process new information. When teachers can break things down for students, students feel less overloaded and overwhelmed. In addition, using clear, concise, unambiguous wording reduces confusion.

- **Review** – To be sure that students have the prerequisite skills to move ahead, teachers should access prior knowledge and review prior instruction.

- **Modeling/Demonstrating** – Teachers can tell students what they need to do, or they can show them. Chances are good that showing them will result in better outcomes. Whether the teacher is modeling what good readers do by reading a selection aloud while demonstrating strategies to help with comprehension, or by completing a graphic organizer with information needed for writing an essay, students are greatly helped by “seeing” what is expected of them. TDS course components address this need for modeling. As teachers transition into core course instruction, they should remember that explicit instruction, which includes modeling and demonstrating, must be retained to ensure students’ continued progress.

- **Guided and Supported Practice** – Students can practice with members of their cooperative learning teams before attempting to put new skills to work on their own. Guided practice components are a part of all TDS courses and should be a part of all core course offerings as well.

- **Immediate Feedback** – Students should not have to wait for weeks to find out if a completed assignment met the standard. The sooner a student receives feedback on his/her performance, the sooner he/she can either remedy problems or move on.

6. **Making real-world applications** - “Why do we have to learn this? This has nothing to do with us!” Every teacher has heard questions or comments like these at one time or another. Most teachers realize the value in helping students see the connection between what they are learning and what they are living. Doing so not only motivates student involvement but also produces critical thinking. A student who connects learned information with real-world events or circumstances begins to
analyze and synthesize. TDS courses are designed to help students make real-world connections. Core courses should provide the same opportunities for students. Examples:

- Students are reading *The Wreck of the Medusa* by Jonathan Miles, a book about what was arguably the most famous sea disaster of the nineteenth century. They learn that the ship hits a reef, the incompetent captain and some privileged passengers board lifeboats, and almost one hundred fifty other passengers are left marooned on a make-shift raft... and all but fifteen of the marooned passengers die. Comparisons can be made to the *Titanic*, of course. Many students will have seen the movie that starred Leonardo Di Caprio. A much more timely connection can be made to the wreck of the cruise ship, the *Costa Concordia*, off the coast of Tuscany, Italy. The captain of the *Concordia* was charged with incompetence and abandoning his ship while passengers struggled to save themselves. After connections are made, class or team discussions about leadership responsibility, value of life, courage or lack of courage in the face of disaster, and many other topics can be followed by thought-provoking writing assignments that will require students to grapple with some fairly lofty ideas. A story about a shipwreck that took place in 1816 thus becomes an opportunity for development of critical thought by making a real-world connection that motivates discussion and debate.

- Students learning about logarithms in mathematics make connections to natural earthquake disasters, such as the 2011 earthquake off the coast of Japan that triggered a powerful tsunami. By studying the methods used to measure and record the magnitude of earthquakes, students begin to understand the world around them and how the language of mathematics describes patterns and phenomena in their world. Tying mathematics to earthquakes now gives meaning to mathematical symbols and expressions such as \( \log_{10} \) and \( 7^x \). Applying difficult mathematics such as logarithms to topics that may interest students motivates them to persevere through what might have been a memorization of arbitrary rules. Giving students experiences such as this brings personal value to learning mathematics.

7. **Providing recovery options** – Despite the best efforts of teachers and parents, some students fall behind, attend irregularly, and/or fail their courses. Other students exhibit
behavior patterns that, until changes can be made, seriously disrupt the regular school program. These students need help, but may not be able to work within the traditional school setting until patterns and habits improve. Saturday school, summer school, and after-school tutoring sessions may be options for those who have simply fallen behind academically, but the more serious cases may need to be dealt with differently. TDS encourages the creation of a Twilight School or Twilight Academy for addressing the needs of students who, for any of a number of reasons, find it difficult to manage during the regular school day. (To learn more about how a Twilight School/Academy can be created, see the appendix.)

8. **Holding report card conferences** – The value of feedback, helpful advice and personal encouragement can’t be stressed enough. Students need to know that there are people who care about their progress (or lack thereof). In addition, students benefit from being encouraged to take steps that will help them to move ahead and/or improve performance. For these reasons, TDS recommends that schools conduct report card conferences. These conferences can be held in the media center or another large room in the school, and students can be scheduled to attend by class. Ideally, the conferences are conducted by adults who do not teach the students – objective participants, if you will. These adults discuss the report card grades with students, talk to students about possible next steps, and issue certificates that indicate where the students presently stand academically. (To learn more about report card conferences, see Chapter 5, Pillar IV: Can-Do Culture and Climate.)
Pillar II: Curriculum & Instruction and Professional Development

An Important Note about Pedagogy and How Students Learn

Pedagogy Essential for Supporting Teaching and Learning

Pedagogy refers to the act, process, or art of imparting knowledge and skills. It involves the teaching skills required to impart the essential knowledge and content of a subject. Effective teachers display a wide range of skills and abilities and match strategy and technique to the learning experience. A teacher’s knowledge of content must be balanced with a solid grounding in effective teaching strategies. Teachers who are effective with pedagogy also account for the needs of individual learners who require diagnostics and adjustments to instruction.

Teachers who master the art of teaching are mindful of the importance of emotions and the social aspects of learning. Creating a classroom culture that is safe, comfortable, encouraging, and supportive is crucial. Creating a nurturing culture reduces students’ fear of failure and inspires even struggling learners to strive for excellence.

Expert teachers know the structure of their disciplines and the profiles of their learners. This information, along with knowledge of the common core standards, TDS curricula, and pedagogy essential for teaching and learning, guides the delivery of instruction and the assessments of student progress. The following chart shows four critical elements of instruction for lesson design that represent pedagogy essential for teaching and learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept Attainment</th>
<th>Gradual Release of Responsibility</th>
<th>Application of Knowledge and Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstration of abstract reasoning</td>
<td>• Explicit / direct instruction</td>
<td>• Project-based applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modeling thinking</td>
<td>• Guided practice with immediate feedback</td>
<td>• Authentic learning applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exploration / experimentation</td>
<td>• Teaching for understanding</td>
<td>• Independent application and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation</td>
<td>• Task analysis</td>
<td>• Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical Thinking / analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Media and technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Critical Elements of Instruction for Lesson Design
As TDS facilitators and coaches work with teachers to design lessons with the critical elements, a natural emphasis of three principles of *How Students Learn* established by the National Research Council of the National Academies (2005) will occur.

- **Principle 1: Engaging in Prior Understanding** (engaging students’ preconceptions and building on existing knowledge)
- **Principle 2: Understanding That Requires Factual Knowledge and Conceptual Frameworks**
- **Principle 3: Student Self-monitoring Enabled by a Metacognitive Approach** (thinking about thinking or knowing about knowing)

By using the principles of *How Students Learn* as they plan, teachers can help students: 1) link new knowledge to prior understanding, 2) gain procedural skill and conceptual understanding, and 3) reflect on their own thinking.

*The TDS Blueprint for Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction: Supporting a Culture of Success in the TDS Classroom* (see appendix) is a resource available to coaches and teachers. It identifies key instructional components that should be present in a TDS classroom. This student-centered approach to teaching and learning focuses on the role of classroom assessment and the seamless nature between formative assessment and instruction when teachers use multiple kinds of data to make data-based decisions about instructional practice and curriculum design. Teachers adapt instruction on the basis of evidence gathered and students use evidence to adjust their own learning. Classroom assessments reflect essential learning goals that allow opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding through “real world” applications.

TDS teachers are expected to achieve high fidelity of implementation of the targeted curriculum with the ongoing support of instructional coaches and facilitators. The layers of job-embedded support provided for teachers are vital to the implementation of essential instructional components and the design of instructional materials.
III. Professional Development That Is Grounded in the Curriculum

As Talent Development Secondary advocates the use of evidence-based and standards-based curricular materials and practices to increase student engagement, TDS also recognizes the need to assist teachers as they use these materials and practices. To successfully implement standards-based instruction in all classrooms, teachers need opportunities for deep learning of content, as well as opportunities to learn how to use effective and innovative strategies, practice those strategies in the classroom, and observe the effects on student learning. An effective system of professional development is needed to support TDS schools through this process.

In addition to district and school professional development, and TDS initial training and follow-up training, Talent Development Secondary teachers receive sustained professional development, technical assistance, and implementation support from JHU TDS instructional facilitators and school-based TDS instructional coaches. Talent Development Secondary PD focuses support in two areas: professional learning community (PLC) activities and in-classroom support.

In addition to working closely with instructional coaches, TDS instructional facilitators work with teachers, department heads and school administrators to design staff development, customize and align instruction with district standards and local initiatives, implement reflective teacher practices, and ensure strong implementation of acceleration and core curriculum. Talent Development Secondary holds the belief that just as all students can learn with the right supports to the right students at the right time, so can instructional practice be refined by giving the right supports to the right teachers at the right time.

TDS instructional facilitators assigned to the school provide support for instructional coaches and teachers, and coaches support teachers both in the classroom and in PLC meetings. The figure below illustrates this support model.
Pillar II: Curriculum & Instruction and Professional Development

It is possible that teachers will find themselves in a variety of professional learning communities. In TDS schools, teachers will typically belong to **interdisciplinary teams** that service small numbers of students who have the same set of teachers (See Chapter 2: Pillar I to learn how these teams are developed and maintained). Teachers will be members of **content teams** as well. Content teams might be comprised of teachers who teach the same course, or they might be comprised of teachers who share the same discipline (department teams). For example, a high school teacher may meet once a week with all of the English I teachers, and he/she may meet periodically with the entire English department. In these meetings, teachers map curriculum and plan instruction, examine core standards, look at achievement data, discuss departmental issues, plan activities, etc. Though teachers may/will belong to other PLC’s in the building (interdisciplinary, leadership, etc.), it is in the **content team PLC’s** that teachers reflect on instructional practice and make plans that foster content-area professional growth.

Though instructional coaches have a primary responsibility to all of the teachers in their content area, they also have a secondary responsibility to the instructional capacity of every teacher. They provide job embedded PD to all content teachers, but they can also provide PD around pedagogy and philosophy (extended period, differentiation, co-teaching, etc.) for teachers outside of their content area. Their first point of concern, however, is **always** the content-area teachers.
With the help of school-based instructional coaches, the classroom also becomes a learning opportunity for teachers. **In-classroom support** may include working with a coach to plan or refine lessons, observing as a coach models the use of a new strategy or an entire lesson, co-teaching with the coach when the teacher needs demonstration of only a portion of the lesson, meeting with the coach to debrief after an observation, or meeting to reflect on instructional practice.

TDS professional development, then, is job-embedded. Rather than a traditional one-size-fits-all approach to PD, the TDS approach is personalized. It is teacher-specific as well as curriculum-specific. It is an approach that promotes teacher inquiry and reflection. It focuses on three types of knowledge: 1) knowledge of the structure of the discipline, 2) knowledge of pedagogy (instructional practice), and 3) knowledge of the students.
Professional Learning Communities

What do PLC’s do?

Richard Du Four (2004) defines a professional learning community (PLC) as a group of teachers that focus on learning rather than teaching, that work collaboratively, and that hold themselves accountable for results. Following the basic assumption that the mission of schools is to ensure that students learn, the JHU facilitator works with the instructional coach and department chair to support content teachers as they meet to analyze and improve their practices. Teachers work in professional learning communities to: examine common core standards; examine state and district standards; develop common tasks; examine student work; look at achievement data and lesson studies; plan interdisciplinary lessons/units; align content standards; map and plan curriculum; create shared lessons and assessments; and take part in other activities that support student achievement.

When do PLC’s meet?

A TDS school schedule is designed to give daily common planning time to teachers who share students (interdisciplinary teams). In addition, TDS schools allow for dedicated time in the schedule for collaboration among teachers who share content (content teams). In other words, in a TDS school, teachers should not have to catch time to meet “on the fly.” There should be time during the school day dedicated to professional learning activities.

How are PLC’s supported?

JHU facilitators and school-based instructional coaches can assist teachers by facilitating the initial team meetings to establish norms and protocols. As teams become more comfortable with the process, team leaders may emerge. Teams may also decide to share leadership. JHU facilitators and instructional coaches can provide continued support in the following ways:

Content Teams: JHU and School-based Support

School-based instructional coaches should attend the content team PLC meetings. With the support of the JHU facilitator, the coach can assist content teams by:

- Establishing norms (see Chapter 2, Pillar I: Teaming, for more information)
- Establishing a calendar of meeting times (preferably weekly or bi-weekly)
• Sending out reminders and providing incentives for teachers to attend meetings
• Determining appropriate attendees (Does the entire content department need to attend or just teachers who teach the same course?)
• Determining a focus and creating an agenda for each meeting (For TDS acceleration courses, a predetermined agenda will be established for a two-day July/August PD, and monthly follow-up PD meetings will be scheduled that coordinate with the JHU facilitator’s visit.)
• Generating focus topics – samples below:
  o Lesson study
  o Shared reading
  o Standards alignment
  o Unit or end-of-course assessment
  o Student work
  o Instructional strategies
• Facilitating the meeting (Again, teachers can be trained to facilitate meetings as the year progresses)
• Serving as materials manager to make sure all teachers have common documents and information needed to work together as a team
• Providing celebrations and establishing a comfortable climate
• Assisting teachers as they map curriculum and plan instruction

Interdisciplinary Teams: JHU and School-Based Support

Meeting times for interdisciplinary teams are established and placed on the schedule before the opening of school. Instructional coaches and JHU facilitators may not always attend these PLC meetings, but they can support in the following ways when they do:

• Sharing methods for analyzing student work
• Making team instructional decisions
• Sharing successful instructional strategies
• Facilitating a shared reading
• Facilitating a lesson study
• Helping establish norms, agendas and protocols for working together
• Assisting with the planning of interdisciplinary units
In-Classroom Support

School-Based Coaches and In-Classroom Support

TDS instructional coaches are school-based staff members who provide ongoing daily support to teachers. Seventy-five percent of a site-based content coach’s time should be dedicated to facilitating the coaching cycle which includes planning, implementing, and debriefing with individual teachers. The remaining 25% of the coach’s time should be dedicated to planning for and attending content team meetings, planning and implementing training sessions for TDS acceleration courses, and attending to other related coaching tasks.

Traditional instructional practices have tended to be teacher-centered, where the teacher is the deliverer of information and the source of all knowledge. In recent years there has been a movement away from teacher-centered instruction. To help teachers shift their thinking and develop instructional practices that are more student-centered, TDS strongly promotes the job-embedded coaching model. Effective instructional coaches can help teachers reflect on their instructional practices, shifting the focus from teacher to student.

To provide support effectively, instructional coaches should be free of supervisory or administrative responsibilities. If coaches are to develop trusting relationships with teachers, evaluation must be removed from the equation. Coaches’ work with teachers must be kept confidential. When teachers know that what is discussed in planning and debriefing sessions, and what is observed during class periods will not be shared, they will more readily express their thoughts and concerns. Nothing will close down a relationship more quickly than the fear of having confidential information shared. Administrators are urged to respect the coach’s need to work confidentially with teachers in the building.

What is the coaching cycle?

TDS instructional coaches are trained to help teachers become more reflective about their instructional practice. As teachers critically think about what they do in the classroom each day, they begin to make instructional changes that positively impact student learning and achievement. To provide this assistance, coaches cycle through three essential processes with teachers: 1) planning, 2) implementing, and 3) debriefing. After the coach has moved
through the cycle with a teacher, the cycle begins again. This is illustrated below.

How does a coach create a schedule to accommodate the coaching cycle?

It is important to note that all components of the coaching cycle are equally important. If a coach helps with planning and implementing, but does not make time for debriefing, part of the point is missed. TDS coaches know this and create schedules to accommodate movement through the entire cycle. Coaches prepare and share weekly calendars with the teachers they support. The coach also shares the calendar with front office staff to ensure that he/she can be located if needed. With careful scheduling, a coach could complete the cycle with as many as 8 teachers each week. See the follow chart for a sample weekly schedule.
Silvia’s Coaching Calendar: Week of October 24th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debrief with Myriam.</td>
<td>Plan with Alta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period 1</strong></td>
<td>Plan with Danny for 40</td>
<td>Debrief with Danny for 40 minutes.</td>
<td>Implement with Karen.</td>
<td>Plan with Danny for 40 minutes.</td>
<td>Debrief with Danny for 40 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period 2</strong></td>
<td>Implement with Danny</td>
<td>Plan with Karen for 40 minutes.</td>
<td>Debrief with Karen for 40 minutes.</td>
<td>Implement with Alta.</td>
<td>Prepare next week’s schedule and send to teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan with Myriam for 40 minutes.</td>
<td>Plan for content meeting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debrief with Jennifer.</td>
<td>Share success data with math teachers at celebration lunch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period 3</strong></td>
<td>Plan for Wednesday content meeting.</td>
<td>Implement with Myriam.</td>
<td>Facilitate Looking at students’ work at content meeting.</td>
<td>Implement with Danny.</td>
<td>Implement with Malcolm.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period 4</strong></td>
<td>Implement with Linda.</td>
<td>Implement with Jennifer.</td>
<td>Facilitate shared reading discussion at content meeting.</td>
<td>Debrief with Alta for 40 minutes.</td>
<td>Plan with Troy for 40 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After School</strong></td>
<td>Debrief with Linda.</td>
<td>Call JHU facilitator for questions about debriefing conversation.</td>
<td>Help in afterschool tutor lab.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do coaches provide during the coaching cycle?

Every phase of the coaching cycle is important. To omit one phase would shortchange the teacher and compromise the effort. For example, in what way is a teacher helped by having someone briefly observe a portion of a lesson, and then briefly share feedback at the end of that lesson? Would the coach necessarily know what the teacher had planned to do if the coach had not been part of the planning process? Would the coach be able to adequately evaluate how the portion of the lesson observed fit within the context of the lesson as a whole? Had the coach been invested in the implementation of a lesson that had been co-planned with the teacher, both members of this partnership would be better prepared to discuss the effectiveness of content and delivery. Finally, if the coach only offers his/her own feedback, when does the teacher reflect on instructional practice? The debriefing process should include time for teacher reflection; it should not function only as a means for the coach to deliver bits of advice. With these thoughts in mind, prepare to learn what TDS coaches do to make the coaching cycle a valuable learning experience for teachers.

Planning

The planning phase of the coaching cycle is a clarifying conversation. That is, by the end of the conversation both the teacher and the coach should have clarity on the following:

- What will be taught?
- Why will this be taught?
- How will this be taught?
- How will student learning be assessed?

This planning conversation typically lasts 20 to 40 minutes, thus, in an 80-minute block schedule, the teacher would give, at most, half of a preparation period to planning with the coach. During this conversation the coach tries to elicit information from the teacher that would clarify goals, actions needed to achieve these goals, and evidence that would indicate whether or not goals were met. The coach offers advice only when the teacher is unable to articulate answers to the essential questions. Typically, however, the coach acts as the sounding board and withholds advice unless it is solicited. If the coach does offer advice, it is in the form of a menu of options, leaving final decision-making to the teacher. Last, roles must be determined. Will the coach have an active role in the lesson being planned? If so, what will that be?
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Goals: The coach begins the conversation with a discussion of what needs to be learned and, if applicable, why the material needs to be learned. Typically, the what, or goal/s, are reflected in lesson objectives and support state and/or district standards. The teacher should clearly articulate the goals to the coach, as these stated goals will guide the rest of the conversation and help the teacher to start reflecting on instructional practice. When a teacher is committed to specific lesson goals, there is more willingness to adjust practices to ensure that goals are met.

Evidence

The conversation now moves to formative assessment. At the end of this lesson, what evidence will there be that goals were met? The evidence indicator needs to be identified and should be analyzed for effectiveness during the debriefing phase. The teacher may have determined the nature of the evidence indicator prior to the meeting—a handout or an activity sheet, for example. If the teacher had not determined how student learning will be assessed, however, the teacher and the coach may need to design the assessment tool during the meeting. Most important: The evidence indicator must be able to indicate student success or failure in goal attainment.

Actions

Finally, the conversation shifts to instructional delivery. What will the teacher need to do if students are to meet the goals of this lesson? This conversation should include:

- Implementation of instructional strategies
- Management of materials
- Management of student groups
- Management of transitions
- Handling of content delivery activities
- Handling of discovery activities

This conversation leads to the development of a complete lesson plan.

 Roles

Specific roles for teacher and coach must be determined. Some options for selection are:

- The teacher may teach the entire lesson while the coach observes.
- The teacher and coach may teach the lesson together (co-teach).
- The teacher may teach some components and the coach may teach other components.
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- The coach may model the entire lesson while the teacher observes.
- The coach may model part of the lesson.
- The coach may collect evidence and data.
- The teacher may collect evidence and data.

During this part of the planning phase, data collection decisions should be made. If decisions are made together, there will be no surprises during the debriefing session. The teacher and the coach can work together to design the data collection tool. For example, the teacher may want data on the type and number of questions that he/she asks. The coach and teacher could then design a tool that allows for tallying the number of questions along a Bloom's Taxonomy continuum. See the following Tally of Questions chart. Other examples of data collection tools are provided in the appendix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English 101</th>
<th>1-13-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blooms Taxonomy Level</td>
<td># of Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application/Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis/Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tally of Questions**
Implementing

As previously mentioned, the implementation phase of the coaching cycle may find the instructional coach co-teaching, modeling a specific strategy or teaching an entire lesson. There should be clarity around roles prior to the day of implementation. In addition, the teacher and coach should agree that the coach will facilitate as needed during any lesson. This norm requires trust. The teacher must be able to trust that the coach will know when and how to step in to assist without diminishing the teacher’s authority or credibility in the classroom. For example, the coach may notice a small behavior problem about to brew, and will use a previously agreed upon gesture or hand signal to alert the teacher to the potential problem. Or the coach may sense that many students are struggling to understand a new concept that the teacher is presenting, so the coach will step in to model a different approach to the same problem. This collaborative approach benefits the teacher as he/she works to strengthen instructional delivery. It is important to remember, though, that the collaborative relationship is built with trust.

The teacher and/or coach will collect data and student work which will be discussed during the debriefing portion of the coaching cycle. They use this evidence to consider possible adjustments to instructional delivery. Once again, roles should be clearly defined. Will the coach be responsible for collecting and organizing student work? Will the coach be observing to collect data for future discussion? If data is being collected, it will be data that the teacher and coach collaboratively agreed upon. TDS coaches do not observe for evaluative purposes. Observations are focused and the teacher is involved in determining the focus. There are no “surprises” at TDS debriefing meetings. Both parties are “on the same page” where data collection is concerned. Note: Examples of data collection tools are available in the appendix.

In short, the coach becomes the teacher’s full-time partner during the implementation phase, providing assistance where the teacher feels it is needed and supporting in ways that will promote professional growth.
Debriefing

During the debriefing, the coach helps the teacher reflect on practices by referring back to the goals, the evidence, and the planned actions as they were implemented. In other words, does the evidence prove that the actions taken helped students to reach the goal or objective. The teacher and the coach determine if expected outcomes were achieved by analyzing student work. After that, they determine next steps. Some coaches and teachers find it helpful to use the Planning and Debriefing Summary. See the appendix for the Planning and Debriefing Template.

Initial Thoughts

The debriefing meeting begins with the teacher sharing initial thoughts on the success of the lesson. Did students meet the goal established for them? If not, what strategies might be changed or adjusted to produce better outcomes? The coach does not intervene and offer suggestions or advice. The coach’s role is to help the teacher articulate thoughts and to paraphrase the thoughts that the teacher shares.

Evidence

After initial thoughts are shared, the evidence is analyzed. Typically the evidence consists of student work linked to the goals and data collected by the coach and/or teacher. Of course, the collected evidence would have been agreed upon during the planning phase. After the teacher has time to analyze the evidence and data, the coach facilitates a discussion about what the data reveals. At this point, the teacher is reflective. The coach may offer a menu of ways to think about the evidence, but it is the teacher who must determine how the evidence supports or doesn’t support the goals of the lesson. The discussion that follows the examination of evidence may be open-ended, but should provide insight for both teacher and coach.

The coach may facilitate by suggesting methods for viewing the student work (evidence). Some examples:

1. The Three-Pile Method
   - Pile 1 would contain the papers of students who reached the goal.
   - Pile 2 would contain the papers of students who came close to meeting the goal.
   - Pile 3 would contain the papers of students who clearly did not meet the goal.
2. Pattern Identification Method

- Did those who failed to meet the goal have attendance problems?
- Were those who failed to meet the goal on sports teams?
- Were most of those who failed to meet the goal new entries?

The debriefing session is also used to examine the data collected by the coach. This is a more personal discussion, as it involves teacher performance. The awkwardness that might be connected to such a discussion is alleviated by predetermining the nature of the data to be collected. The teacher not only knows about the data collection, he/she helps to determine what that data will be. The TDS coach shares data with no one but the teacher. Again, this is a professional growth activity, not an evaluation opportunity.

An example of a completed data collection tool that could motivate teacher reflection and spark discussion appears below.

![Sample Data Collection Tool](image)

**Sample Data Collection Tool**

**Conclusions**

After the teacher has reflected on the data and evidence, the coach helps the teacher come to conclusions that either confirm a best practice is working or that an instructional practice should be
adjusted to better meet student needs. This is probably the most important step in the coaching cycle. Everything done in the first two phases (planning and implementing) has led to this point. Since the goal of this process is to help teachers become more student-centered by reflecting on their teaching practices, this is where the “heavy lifting” is done and where professional growth takes flight. The coach helps to facilitate the discussion, but the teacher is the one who must grapple with the findings and draw conclusions from them. Decisions that are made after the debriefing session could have a tremendous impact on student progress. For example, after reflecting on the collected data represented on the sample tool above, the teacher may conclude that his/her questioning level is consistently too low. Increasing the level of questioning, then, can become a focus of the next planning session. The teacher can do this with the coach’s help.

Next Steps

The coach addresses two types of next steps before the debriefing session ends:

1. **Determining instructional changes or adjustments** – Conclusions drawn from examining evidence and data determine if there is a need to change or alter instructional approaches. For example, if an examination of student work (evidence) shows that only 20% of the students are able to support a written claim by citing evidence from the reading, the teacher may conclude that more practice activities are needed. If the teacher has concluded from the data that 80% of questions asked are low-level questions, a plan can be developed to raise the level of questioning. If time allows, the teacher and coach could begin to work on changes before the meeting ends. Otherwise, another planning meeting can be scheduled.

2. **Determining dates and times for next cycle** - When the teacher leaves the debriefing meeting, he/she should know dates and times for all phases of the next cycle: planning, implementing and debriefing. The coach makes it clear that this job-embedded support is on-going and designed to help the teacher meet his/her instructional practice goals. Again, the teacher/coach relationship is built on trust.
How do JHU facilitators support the coaching cycle?

The JHU facilitator provides yet another level of support. In addition to providing teachers with initial content training, the facilitator can observe the teacher and coach as they move through the three phases of the coaching cycle to discern stumbling blocks or impediments to successful completion of each phase. The facilitator can recommend changes in the coaching process that will improve the outcomes for teachers and strengthen the teacher/coach working relationship.

The coach and facilitator determine the role that the facilitator will have during scheduled visits. The facilitator can provide all supports usually provided by the coach. The facilitator can model a lesson, a portion of a lesson or a strategy. The facilitator can observe to collect agreed upon data. In short, he/she can provide a second level of professional development support. A sample of a facilitator’s visiting schedule appears below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before School</th>
<th>Facilitator and coach meet to plan coaching cycle with teacher, Mr. Jones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 1</td>
<td>Facilitator and coach plan with Mr. Jones for 40 minutes during preparation period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2</td>
<td>Facilitator and coach implement with Mr. Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Facilitator and coach debrief with Mr. Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School</td>
<td>Facilitator and coach debrief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JHU facilitators provide support for coaches from afar, as well. Coaches contact facilitators as problems arise or questions need answering. Instructional facilitators maintain regular contact with instructional coaches and with them, plan and prepare for scheduled TDS technical assistance visits.

Chapter Summary

Research-based curriculum, when paired with high-impact instructional strategies and supported by job-embedded professional development, can effectively help to ensure student academic success. Content teams that map curriculum and plan instructional approaches together keep the school focused on meeting standards and achieving agreed-upon goals. Instructional
coaches are instrumental in helping teachers to become more reflective in their teaching practice. In short, the TDS approach to curriculum, instruction and professional development does indeed pack three powerful punches.
Pillar III: Tiered Student Supports

It Takes A Village
When students need help, they often don’t ask for it. Instead they try to attract attention in other ways. They may act out, skip out, or drop out. Committed teachers want to help these students, but often they do not know how to begin tackling the many challenges that the students present. Consider the following situation.

A team of four teachers shares and supports 120 students. One hundred students are reading two or more years below grade level, 50 were suspended during the previous school year, and only 70 attended every day during the first week of school. The teacher team feels overwhelmed, and doesn’t know which students to help first or how to proceed.

This section will be devoted to explaining how teacher teams and other school staff can begin to tackle seemingly insurmountable problems by establishing and implementing a tiered student support system.

What is a Data-Guided, Tiered Student-Support System?

Talent Development Secondary’s third pillar is a data-guided, tiered student-support system that uses early warning indicators and whole school and team, targeted and intensive supports to get the right intervention to the right students at the right time and at the right scale and intensity required. It is a system that helps teachers to help students.

The TDS tiered student-support system is most importantly about prevention. It is an approach that first and foremost aims to prevent problems, but also has components that kick in if problems are detected. The preventions/interventions are tiered as follows:

- **Tier I**: This tier is about preventing issues by anticipating common problems and taking action before, rather than after, the fact. Tier I supports are provided for all students.
Pillar III: Tiered Student Supports

To raise their attendance rates, to teach and reinforce expected behaviors, and to ensure a high level of achievement.

- **Tier II**: These interventions are designed for students who are not demonstrating success with only Tier I support and are struggling with attendance, behavior and/or course performance as a result. These tiered interventions work most effectively as group support, such as tutoring, anger management, or after-school activities.

- **Tier III**: Even when Tier I and Tier II interventions are delivered effectively, some students will still need additional support. This may be due to challenges that students are facing outside of school or it may be due to difficulties that students are having with school work. A student needing these interventions would continue to receive Tier I and/or Tier II supports, but also would receive personalized interventions because of more serious issues that keep him/her from engaging in the many facets of school life. In general, they may need one-on-one help, often from academic specialists, psychologists, counselors, or social workers in school, or from therapists, doctors or other clinical personnel off campus.

**Note:** A detailed description of how Tier I, II, and III initiatives can support a Can-Do Culture and Climate can be found in Pillar IV.

Many schools are familiar with Response to Intervention (RTI), a structured tiered intervention process aimed at identifying students with lagging achievement, and creating appropriate responses. ([National Center on Response To Intervention](http://www.rti4success.org/)) The TDS tiered intervention approach is similar to, and based on, many of the same research findings as the Response to Intervention (RTI) model (see website above) and the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) model ([Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports](http://www.pbis.org/research/default.aspx)). The TDS model, however, tiers interventions, not students, and emphasizes an integrated approach to attendance, academic and behavioral problems that is not generally seen in RTI or PBIS.

### Mapping the Available Resources

To operate an effective tiered intervention system, there must be a clear plan for supporting students, and awareness of available resources with a process for using them. Often called a **resource**
map” or “intervention menu,” the list of possible resources allows teachers and others to link students with appropriate supports expediently. The resource map includes whole-school Tier I supports aimed at helping students achieve at high levels and preventing them from falling off-track. It also includes interventions for students who have been unsuccessful with only Tier I support.

Why are data-guided, tiered student supports important for TDS schools?

The Public Health Department provides a good model for illustrating the benefits of preventive measures. At the beginning of cold/flu season many recommendations make their way into homes via television, newspaper, radio, internet, etc. People are told to wash their hands frequently, to sneeze into their arms, to get flu shots and to stay home if they are feverish. Many colds and bouts of flu are avoided this way. In addition, parents are reminded that their children should be receiving appropriate vaccinations for measles and other childhood diseases. Of course, despite all preventive efforts, some people still become ill. The doctor is then standing by to provide the necessary remedy for the more serious medical issues.

An effective tiered student-support system behaves much as the public health model does. A good dose of prevention keeps more students on track to graduation and beyond. When the preventive measures prove not to be enough, additional interventions must be put into place. At the most serious levels, this might involve the assistance of various specialists.

To understand why a tiered support system is needed in many schools, it helps to consider some findings. In the last decade, researchers have found that students who will eventually drop out of school begin signaling that likelihood as early as sixth grade. In an early Philadelphia study, later replicated elsewhere, the following key indicators were identified:

- Attendance – less than 80%
- Behavior – a poor behavior grade on final report card
- Course Performance
  - Math – an F in math
  - Literacy – an F in reading/English
- (Balfanz and Herzog, Center for Social Organization of Schools - Johns Hopkins, Philadelphia Education Fund)
While attendance, behavior and course performance (ABCs) are strong indicators for middle grades students, research is also clear that ninth grade is a "make or break" year. More students fail ninth grade than any other grade in high school, and a disproportionate number of students who are held back in ninth grade subsequently drop out. (Herlihy, C. (2007). *State and district-level supports for successful transition into high school.* Washington, DC: National High School Center)

Talent Development Secondary (TDS) has used this research to develop school-based strategies to regularly monitor student data and provide interventions to reduce student risk factors, thus reducing the number of dropouts. The ABC data have proven far more effective at predicting which students will drop out than previously used indicators, such as demographics and test scores. Because of new technology, the data that led to these indicators are readily available and frequently updated, eliminating the lag time that previously existed between a student’s slippage and someone noticing. The tiered intervention system grew out of this knowledge so that students could receive specific help as soon as there was a sign of trouble. The TDS tiered student-support system and the process for implementing it are explained in this section.

**How can our schools create a data-guided, tiered intervention system?**

The Talent Development Secondary (TDS) tiered support system is a strategic approach to keeping all students on the graduation path. It recognizes that students need varied levels and kinds of support, and that schools must organize to use their resources for a mix of prevention/intervention strategies. Unlike many systems that focus largely on behavior, the TDS system integrates assistance for academic, behavioral and attendance challenges.

Using an early warning system organized around specific ABC data available to all staff, the tiered support system identifies trends in need of preventive attention. It also identifies students with specific needs, and employs interventions targeted to those needs. The critical data needed for each student are attendance, behavior, and course performance data (the ABCs).
A sample listing of ABC data is:

**Attendance**
- Current attendance
- Current attendance by period
- Current tardiness by period
- Previous quarter attendance/tardiness
- Previous year(s) attendance/tardiness

**Behavior**
- Number of in school suspensions
- Number of out of school suspensions
- Number of suspension days
- Number of positive and negative comments on previous report card
- Number of office referrals
- Number of team referrals
- Previous year(s) behavior suspensions and referrals

**Course Performance**
- Current grades for each subject
- Previous quarter and mid-term grades for each subject
- Previous year(s) grades for each subject
- Credits earned

A sample listing of additional data may be:

- Attendance of other activities such as after school tutor class, athletic activities, club activities, etc.
- Benchmarks Scores
- State or District Test Scores
- other

In a TDS school, teams of teachers share the same group of students, and all teachers on the team have access to each student’s full profile. With research-based criteria, the teacher teams are able to identify quickly the students who have an off-track ABC indicator. The tiered interventions that are designed to prevent or correct off-track behaviors in the ABCs were defined earlier in this chapter. The process for implementing this tiered support system follows.
Tier I Supports: Whole School and Team Roles

In TDS, Tier I is about helping all students achieve at high levels and preventing them from falling off track in attendance, behavior and course performance (ABCs). The Tier I supports are designed to support everyone in the team/grade/academy and to address the needs of the school as a whole. Many of the TDS core components address specific challenges that are often seen in our partner schools. For instance, strong, engaging curricula is a primary source of Tier I support for all students. TDS has a framework and curricula designed to meet students where they are and to provide appropriate instruction that is engaging and rigorous. This often reduces attendance and behavior problems as students are more interested in their classes. Similarly, TDS Tier I supports provide strong plans and structures that promote attendance, teach expected behaviors, and create a welcoming, personalized environment. Teacher teams and other staff members analyze ABC data to identify patterns or trends. When a pattern reveals that a problem affects the whole-school population, the teams work to identify and implement a Tier I intervention that can meet the need.

First, trend or pattern identification in the ABCs must be discussed.

Identifying Trends

When a TDS school identifies a trend, a plan is designed to address it. For each identified trend the school creates a strategy.

1. Attendance Trends – Teachers start looking at attendance data even before the opening of school. They continue to monitor these data throughout the year. When whole-school trends in attendance present themselves, school staff members must determine if the appropriate Tier I interventions to counteract this trend are in place or if additional Tier I supports are needed. Some whole-school trends might be:
   - Large numbers of students arriving late to school
   - Numerous absentees on Fridays or Mondays
   - High absentee rate before a holiday
   - Daily attendance rates that fall below the AYP guidelines

2. Behavior Trends – Behavior trends that might impact a large portion of the school population could be:
   - High suspension rate during October
   - Majority of suspensions for fighting
Pillar III: Tiered Student Supports

- Majority of office referrals for class cutting

3. Course Performance Trends – Challenging course performance trends might be:
   - Majority of students failing Algebra I
   - Homework completion rates plummeting after October
   - A disconnect between student assessment levels and student report card grades

Tier I Supports: The Role of the Whole School

Certain whole-school structures, designed to meet specific challenges, need to be in place to ensure the proper implementation of Tier I supports. The administration, with the leadership team, interdisciplinary team leaders, TDS school transformation facilitator and other staff work together to accomplish the following:

- Small learning communities - Discussed at length in Chapters 1 and 2, these are essential for ensuring that the decisions are being made by those who work most closely with the students. When decisions are made within an academy rather than by those outside it, the plans that are devised are more likely to be appropriate and effective.
- Distributed leadership - When interdisciplinary teams and team leaders are empowered to make decisions that will impact the attendance, behavior and course performance of the students that they share, everyone benefits.
- Regularly updated data systems accessible to teachers – Systems that update daily provide the most useful data. These data should be easily accessible to teachers if the right supports are to get to the right students at the right time with the right amount of intensity.
- Acceleration courses – Described in Chapter 3, these courses provide students with skills and knowledge needed to advance in required high school courses. When students have gaps in their learning filled, they begin to see that graduation is not just a possibility but a probability. Their confidence grows, and with confidence and a sense of purpose, many students will start to attend school regularly and behave when they attend.
- Professional development and staff training – School transformation facilitators, school-based instructional coaches and JHU facilitators provide the needed support to enable teachers to learn new strategies, be reflective about their practice, and collaborate with their peers.
Pillar III: Tiered Student Supports

School, academy and team plans – The leadership team and others develop the school improvement plan. Academies and interdisciplinary teams create attendance, climate, achievement and communication plans. JHU facilitators assist teams with this planning process in an effort to be pro-active about addressing the issues that the teams are facing. These academy and team plans move beyond the strategies delineated in the school improvement plan as decisions are more group- and student-specific. See the appendix for sample academy plans.

Tier I Supports: The Role of the Team

There are specific courses of action that teams must take to implement Tier I effectively. Teams should work to do the following:

- Be pro-active with known challenges – Teams identify trends and immediately create measures to prevent future problems.
- Schedule regular meeting time – Teams must have regularly scheduled time to meet to discuss student issues. They should not be “grabbing time” when they can, but rather deciding on specific days and times and adhering to them.
- Display data – Publicly displaying academy and team aggregate data makes students aware of group progress in the ABCs and may lead them to reflect on their personal contribution to the outcomes.
- Create team plans – Teams develop plans for attendance, climate and achievement that support all students on the team.
- Understand their role in the tiered student support process – Teams are crucial to the prevention process. By understanding the need to create plans, analyze data, meet regularly, monitor student progress, etc., they increase each student’s chance for success.
- Track and monitor the progress of students – With frequent analysis of student data, teacher teams identify trends or individuals in need of attention. In this way teams avoid lag time between identification/diagnosis and remedy.
- Track and monitor interventions – Teams or specific members need to monitor an intervention to determine if
it’s working as planned. If it is not, they will need to adapt the intervention or try another approach.

- Add resources to the school’s resource map – As teams meet to determine interventions for groups or individual students, they will inevitably identify some resources that do not appear on the school’s master resource map. They should add these resources so that everyone in the school will have a full menu of available interventions.

### Tier II and III Supports: Whole School and Team

The Early Warning Indicator (EWI) meetings are the clearest examples of how teams work to identify student needs and appropriate Tier II and III interventions. Leadership and interdisciplinary team involvement is not limited to EWI work, however. Some of the important whole school and team work for these tiers is described below.

### Tier II and III: The Role of the Whole School

The leadership team must coordinate Tier II and Tier III supports across the school, creating a culture that provides a continuous intervention loop. Some of the leadership team’s responsibilities are as follows:

- Create a resource map – When determining interventions for these tiers, members of the leadership team identify initiatives, prospective partners and organizations inside and outside of the school building that could provide needed supports for students. See a sample resource map later in this chapter.
- Create a data system – This data system should be easily accessible to teacher teams and updated regularly (ideally, daily) to be most effective. Most often, leadership must determine how teachers will access these data.
- Plan Tier II and III interventions – After analyzing initial data, the leadership team can plan activities to accommodate groups of students or individuals who are identified with needs even before the school year begins. For example, identified foster children could be provided a monthly lunch date with someone qualified to offer encouragement and advice.
- Analyze effectiveness of interventions – In addition to looking at individual student data, the leadership team should be determining school trends, instructional staff trends, behavior trends, etc. The team should determine
the effectiveness of all interventions. What is working? What is not working? If something is not working, how can it be changed or adjusted?

Tier II and III: The Role of the Team

An interdisciplinary team’s Pillar III work is not limited to attending EWI meetings. Though EWI meetings are not only important, but also essential, teacher teams conduct other business that informs what they will eventually discuss in their meetings. A teacher team would:

- Add to the school’s resource map – See Tier I description.
- Track and monitor interventions – See Tier I description.
- Track and monitor the progress of students – See Tier I description.
- Coordinate among team members – Teachers plan and offer intervention suggestions as a team to most efficiently address student needs.
- Plan and coordinate with school partners – School partners provide various services. Teacher teams must coordinate efforts with these partners to maximize benefits for students. For example, if teachers coordinate/communicate with after-school tutors, the likelihood of student success is increased.
- Engage in data analysis, intervention assignation, and intervention assessment – Teams analyze patterns of student behavior and consult the list of available resources on the resource map. They determine the type of intervention needed (I, II or III). After the intervention is implemented, teachers assess its effectiveness for possible adjustment. See the appendix for information on tracking interventions – tracking tool.
- Conduct EWI meetings – See below.

Early Warning Indicator (EWI) Meetings:
Where the Rubber Meets the Road

EWI meetings are interdisciplinary teacher team meetings to create, coordinate and monitor interventions for students exhibiting early warning signs of trouble. It is during EWI meetings that teachers identify students in need of intervention in one or more of the ABCs. The purpose of the intervention/s is to ensure that students get back on track to on-time promotion and
graduation. The five essentials needed for setting the framework and building meetings appear below. See the EWI rubric in the appendix for a full description of the characteristics of effective EWI meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps in the EWI Process</th>
<th>5 Essentials for EWI Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Step A: Setting the framework** | 1. **Schedule**  
- A schedule that allows for 3-6 teachers on the interdisciplinary team to share and support 75-100 students  
- A master schedule that supports weekly common planning time for members of the interdisciplinary team  
| 2. **Teams**  
- Consistent attendance of EWI meetings by all staff members who work with students under discussion  
- A clear understanding of expectations for participation in meetings; clearly defined roles for team members; clearly understood responsibilities |
| **Step B: Building your EWI meetings** | 3. **Meeting/Facilitation Structures and Protocols**  
- Agendas, norms, and protocols that guide the work of the team and a focus list of students to be discussed  
- Strong, shared facilitation among team members  
| 4. **Tiered Interventions**  
- A map of all of the resources available to students  
- Alignment with EWI criteria for the ABCs  
- Supports that are appropriately connected to students  
| 5. **Student Level Data/Tracking Tools**  
- Updated student data in attendance, behavior, and course performance available for each meeting  
- Tracking tools to record decisions |

In addition to interdisciplinary team members, there are others who participate in EWI meetings. Some of these are essential participants; others may attend meetings only periodically.
Essential Participants

The school transformation facilitator

(STF) facilitates EWI meetings. He/she also trains teachers or team leaders to facilitate meetings. The STF’s responsibilities include:

- Developing a process for teacher access to ABC/EWI data
- Developing an agenda that identifies targeted students and sharing it with the team before the meeting (See sample EWI agenda in appendix)

Counselors and social workers

Identify students in need and match them with available resources. They provide team members with important information about students, including any support services being provided.

A special note about school partners: Some schools have partnered with programs such as Communities in Schools, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, or City Year. As the members of these programs work closely with students, they attend EWI meetings. They can create short and long term interventions and resource lists, share updates about students, or make sure that assigned interventions are carried out.
Other Possible Participants

Principals
Create a school schedule that allows an interdisciplinary teacher team to share students. He/she ensures that the EWI process is part of the school culture by providing teachers with initial training from the STF and by attending meetings periodically to observe and give feedback.

Assistant principals/academy leaders
Ensure that all teachers on the team attend each meeting and participate fully. They work with the team and others when EWI process challenges arise, and notify the principal if the EWI process stalls or stagnates.

Selecting Intervention Based on the School’s Resource Map
While the EWI meeting itself provides a venue and structure for discussions, the interventions are arguably the most important piece of the system. The Tier I interventions combined with Tier II and Tier III interventions decided upon at EWI meetings are the tools used to impact student progress.

The school (or academy) should create a resource map (see definition earlier in this chapter) before school opens, and expand and update it throughout the year. Teachers post this map during meetings and consult it to recommend interventions. For example, if 6th grade attendance is low, then resources to improve attendance should be put into place. These resources should be mapped to indicate the level of the problem (tiers of intervention) as well as the nature of the problem (ABCs). Below is an example of a resource map for behavior created by a teacher team. Additional samples of resource maps can be found in the appendix.
Pillar III: Tiered Student Supports

### Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier I - Whole School Interventions</th>
<th>Tier II - Targeted Interventions</th>
<th>Tier III - Intensive Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Freshman Seminar/ Mastering the Middle Grades</td>
<td>• Lunch bunch</td>
<td>• Referral to social worker/school psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Team-wide expectations/modeling or teaching behaviors</td>
<td>• Reflection Room</td>
<td>• Intensive anger management class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incentives (Caught You Doing Something Good, celebrations, etc.)</td>
<td>• Peace circles</td>
<td>• Outside agencies that deal with gang interventions, drug and alcohol counseling, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Peer mediation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Daily contracts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Daily contacts with home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parent conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At least quarterly a team should use its EWI meeting time to review data and student progress to identify trends that need attention. For example, compared to the first quarter of the previous year, the school may appear to have improved suspension rates. However, a closer look would indicate that a serious problem still exists. Though 17 suspensions may be far fewer than the previous year, if 16 of those are related to bullying incidents that escalated, there is still work to be done. In light of this, the team may decide to add a series of lessons for all students during advisory period to address bullying. The team might also decide to provide additional supports for the guilty parties.

### Chapter Summary

The data-guided tiered student support pillar in a TDS school has two main components:

1. An early warning system that includes data used by staff to make decisions about students
2. Interventions designed to meet the differing levels of student needs

An effective EWI system with targeted, tiered student interventions can help schools support all students, including the percentage of students with significant risk factors. It may take a village, as the African proverb states, but it can be done.
Note: Please see the appendix for samples of the following:

- Student data tracking tool
- EWI meeting agenda
- Cut point guide for tiered supports
- Intervention identification protocols
- Resource maps
- Student level data
- Academy plans

Reference Document

For an in-depth view of Early Warning Indicator and Interventions systems, a look into an EWI meeting and suggestions on how to create a focus list of students, see *Learning What It Takes, An Early Look at How Schools Are Using Early Warning Indicator Data and Collaborative Response Teams to Keep All Students on Track to Success* by Liza Herzog of the Philadelphia Education Fund and Marcia Davis and Nettie Legters of the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, 2012.

www.every1graduates.org
If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships—the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace. 

— Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Two Voices: Southeast Regional High School

Half these kids don’t show up, she says, and they wander the halls like roaches, skitter away when you approach.

Talk back all the time, throw books. Don’t even talk to me about getting them to do homework. I’m done here. I’m done.

Putting up some posters and papers on the walls isn’t going to do jack.

Don’t bother bringing in some ivory tower consultant to rah-rah us teachers for a day, then fly home.

Really, nothing can be done.

I didn’t think it would work but
We have these meetings with other teachers
And there’s power there, power working together
And I’m seeing the light come back
In these kids’ eyes, especially the boys,
this flicker of hope like maybe they can do it,

Catch up, go to college. Be somebody.
TDS believes that it is the responsibility of everyone—administrators, teachers, students, and parents—to pull together to create a positive, can-do environment that supports student learning. All adults in the building lead the way in believing that the changes they are implementing—teaming, academies, tiered support, new instructional strategies—will work. A fatalistic attitude—“Nothing we do will help us reach these kids”—is replaced with a hope grounded in research and reality: “These initiatives have worked in schools like ours. If we all pull together, change is possible.”

**What Characterizes This Can-Do School Culture and Climate?**

- Decisions about students are made as close to those students as possible—by teachers who know them and work with them daily.
- High expectations for students and staff are the norm.
- Collaboration leads to improved teaching and supports for students.
- Students and staff are recognized when they meet expectations.
- Students and staff believe they can improve, and are given the support to do so.

Administrators implementing the TDS program can rest assured that when done with fidelity, more students will graduate on time, and teachers will enjoy the confidence of using strategies that help students attend, behave and try. Parents can join the community of adults supporting their child to success. And most importantly, ALL students can experience success in middle school and high school. All this leads to a belief held by each person involved that this can be done. Believing it and seeing it can be a reality.

Teachers focus on implementing the changes that will make it possible for all students to stay on track to on-time high school graduation. Developing a shared vision with teachers and administrators paves the way for student buy-in. As middle and high school students are provided with multi-level support and “nagging and nurturing,” they find the will to persevere, catch up with peers and master challenging academics. Students are provided with opportunities to exhibit peer leadership through working on cooperative learning teams, serving as attendance
monitors, making morning announcements, and performing other targeted tasks. Parental involvement is encouraged and facilitated by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) Action Team for Partnership (ATP), and communication flows more easily between schools and homes. Parents have access to supports needed for student success.

TDS recognizes that if school climate doesn’t work, nothing else works. But rather than narrowly defining “school climate” as statistics related to attendance or suspension, TDS advocates a comprehensive, confident approach that views climate as structures and habits of mind that are infused throughout the school. Rather than a disparate series of assemblies or teacher training, the TDS climate program is as broad as organizational restructuring, and as specific as a report card conference. All four TDS pillars work together to create a supportive climate.

TDS believes in creating an environment where all students are known and supported, and that it is the collective responsibility of the adults and students in the school to overcome the obstacles which may prevent this (Wilson and Corbett 1999).

What are those obstacles to a safe, nurturing, can-do environment? In the typical large middle or high school, adolescents often get lost in the crowd. Teachers don’t know their students, students don’t know their teachers, and students’ individual needs go quietly (or not so quietly) unmet. This anonymity negatively impacts school climate and student effort.

To address this depersonalization and the propensity for students to fall through the cracks, TDS provides multiple organizational, academic, and interpersonal supports. Talent Development’s use of distributed leadership and teaming nurtures mutually supportive relationships at multiple levels: student to student, student to teacher, student to administrator, teacher to teacher, teacher to administrator, and parent to school. Thus, as all adults work together, students experience coherent instruction and upbeat support across disciplines and grade levels.

Talent Development’s can-do approach to school climate and culture is infused throughout the program’s design. TDS interdisciplinary teams (Pillar I) work together to provide academic, emotional, and behavioral support for a manageable number of students and build close home-school partnerships. A research-based curriculum, high-impact instructional strategies, and ongoing professional development build academic and social skills (Pillar II). Talent Development’s multiple levels of support (Pillar III) assist all students with targeted interventions. When school-wide
supports (Tier I interventions) are implemented well, most of students will attend, try, and behave.

Finally, specific school culture and climate initiatives (Pillar IV) identify and reinforce positive norms throughout the school, help support relationships between students, teachers, administrators, and parents, and make schools an exciting, encouraging place where students experience success.

### Why Does the TDS Can-Do Culture and Climate Program Work?

Students will not succeed unless they do three things: attend, behave, and try (Balfanz & Byrnes 2006). The Chicago Consortium on School Research has underscored the link between good course performance and high attendance as the strongest driver in achievement test gains (Allensworth, Correa & Ponisciak 2008). Thus, a comprehensive and integrated effort to improve student attendance, behavior, and course performance has the potential to improve both graduation rates and student achievement levels (MacIver & MacIver 2009).

The TDS culture and climate program is a systematic approach to improving or enhancing school culture by fostering learning environments that minimize student apathy or disruption and maximize student commitment, satisfaction, perseverance, and learning. Talent Development’s coordinated efforts facilitate a personalized, positive environment and provide the right supports to the right students at the right time, helping to create a safe, supportive community.

Students often fall off the graduation track at two critical junctures: sixth and ninth grades. As early as sixth grade, at least half of future dropouts in high-poverty schools begin signaling that they are disengaging by exhibiting negative patterns of attendance, behavior, or course performance (ABC’s) (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007). Their likelihood of eventually dropping out increases exponentially with the number of negative ABC’s occurring in sixth grade. Similarly, research demonstrates that ninth grade is the make-or-break year for many at-risk students; those who do not earn promotion to the tenth grade are much more likely to fail academically and leave school prematurely. Talent Development’s strong teaming structure, use of study skills/social skills courses in middle school and ninth grade, and strong Ninth Grade Success Academy and Career Academies are vital to help students navigate these challenging transitions.
Within each organizational unit, grade or academy, students receive a combination of “nagging and nurturing” that supports their academic and social development. TDS’s tiered interventions combine to create a can-do culture of success.

The nurturing environment fostered by smaller learning communities is enhanced by well-developed school climate initiatives that build school identity and enthusiasm for learning by celebrating and encouraging positive behaviors and attitudes while supporting students whose attendance, behavior, or achievement indicates a need for improvement.

How Does Our School Implement the TDS Climate Program?

Strategic interventions within each of Talent Development Secondary’s four pillars create a positive school culture and climate.

Pillar I: What Teaming Can Do to Support A Can-Do Climate

Organizational structures

First, TDS creates organizational structures that support a communal organization of schooling. Interdisciplinary teams, small learning communities, and innovative scheduling enable students to learn and teachers to teach in a more personalized environment. This establishes a strong climate of support for both students and teachers, where social attachments reinforce positive norms. Because they work with a smaller group of students for longer periods of time, teachers get to know students better and become more connected to them. Students, in turn, respond favorably to this more personalized learning environment (Wilson and Colbert, 1999) and form close social attachments with fellow students and teachers. Students embrace a team identity and understand the clearly-defined, shared expectations of the teachers on their team. Innovative scheduling also gives teachers flexibility in organizing their instructional day.
Small learning communities

By forming small learning communities, TDS schools foster relationships that create a climate conducive to teaching and learning. Each organizational unit functions as a team. TDS middle schools create interdisciplinary grade houses, and some middle schools may initiate “looping” so students engage with the same content-area teacher for multiple years. High schools do not loop, but create a separate school-within-a-school structure (Ninth Grade Success Academies, 10th-12th grade Career Academies) where teachers, administrators, and support staff work in a separate organizational unit in their own part of the larger school building.

Academy structure

TDS high schools are divided into separate academies that create a more personalized environment. As students begin and end the school day, they are greeted by name at their academy entrance by the academy principal. In most TDS schools, students wear a school shirt with the academy colors, and an academy lanyard with their identification card. This organizational structure creates a strong sense of identification. The academies link school learning to the skills needed for adult success, thus creating high motivation and a sense of relevancy for students.

School building modifications as needed

TDS schools’ self-contained academies at the high school level and interdisciplinary grade-level houses in 6th-8th grades build community, camaraderie, and supportive relationships between staff and students. A separate ninth grade academy and career-themed academies in grades 10-12 create an environment where students interact with a smaller number of teachers and peers who know them, care about them, and help them succeed. Separate entrances and other building modifications may be needed to ensure that students do not wander the halls of other academies. (For more information, see Chapter 1: Structure and Chapter 3: Pillar II: Curriculum and Instruction with Professional Development.)

Schedules that promote collaboration

In support of breaking away from traditional schedules with fixed times, Breaking Ranks quotes Prisoners of Time: Report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994):
“Unyielding and relentless, the time available in a uniform six-hour day and a 180-day year is the unacknowledged design flaw in American education.” (NASSP, 1996, p. 47.) Consequently, schedules and times are powerful drivers of TDS’ structural framework. Research indicates that extended periods can reduce student failure rates and improve student performance. TDS high schools’ flexible block schedule allows teacher teams to engage in distributed leadership, collaboration and data-driven decision making. Students move less frequently between classes, so less time is wasted in the halls. Similarly, TDS middle schools’ use of vertical houses ensures that common planning periods are built into the daily schedule. Because teachers map and plan together, instruction is more focused, and therefore students are more focused.

Common planning time enables teachers to plan integrated lessons, share information about the needs and performance of their students, and analyze data. This period can be used for student and parental conferences.

A sample of high school 4 x 4 block scheduling and a middle school schedule with common planning periods is included in the appendix.

School-home partnership team

Johns Hopkins University’s National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) is an integral partner in developing and implementing family and community engagement. An Action Team for Partnership (ATP) comprised of teachers, parents, the school transformation facilitator, and an administrator helps each school organize a sustainable, goal-linked program of family and community involvement so that all families are engaged in their students’ schools and school work in ways that contribute to success and on-time graduation.

Interdisciplinary teams

Last—but certainly not least—in this list of Pillar I contributions to creating a Can-Do Culture and Climate is the interdisciplinary team. Teacher teams are at the core of the TDS structure. They sculpt the positive culture that permeates the school, and are empowered to create an inviting and vibrant climate. Each grade or academy is organized into interdisciplinary teams that include teachers, counselors, and other faculty members who provide personalized attention. In a small school, a four-teacher group typically includes one English/language arts teacher, one social
Pillar IV: Can-Do Culture and Climate

studies teacher, a science teacher, a math teacher, and other teaching staff. The teams design, implement, and adjust whole-school policies regarding students’ academic responsibilities, attendance and behavior. They develop strategies, rewards, and interventions to increase student attendance and keep all students on the path to academic success. These policies provide a consistent and fair set of procedures for all classes and reduce the number of students needing additional interventions. Teams collaborate to identify individualized strategies and interventions for the most troubled and disruptive students and also consult with other school support professionals to address some of the non-academic needs of students.

As interdisciplinary teams meet with families/caregivers, they can provide a fuller picture of the student’s status and progress. Handled properly, parents should get a sense that they are members of the problem-solving team. Students understand that their teachers are united and concerned about their school performance. The team can also help “depersonalize” conflict a student may be experiencing with a particular teacher.

Interdisciplinary teams, which include core course teachers and other professionals, work with a manageable number of students.

The interdisciplinary team’s responsibilities include the following.

- **Positive behavior expectations** The team develops and prominently posts positive behavior expectations for the team’s area of the building (classrooms, halls, lunchroom, etc.). Collectively, the teams ensure that the school foyer,
bulletin boards, hallways, and display cases provide positive reinforcements about culture and climate. To facilitate this, each TDS school should buy a poster maker and laminator. Bulletin boards should include pictures and names of students and staff whose behavior supports school achievement and climate (such as students and staff of the month). A chart of attendance data, the honor roll, and other awards should be included. Display cases should inclusively reflect excellence in academics, art, and athletics.

- **Budget for climate initiatives** In cooperation with school administrators, the team establishes a budget for climate initiative awards as simple as a certificate or as expensive as a t-shirt with the school logo. TDS suggests a school with 500-800 students budget $2,000 — $2,500 for incentive awards.

- **Attendance** The team encourages on-time, daily attendance by setting policies (such as determining that three tardy notices triggers a phone call home), and interacting with late/absent students and their parents. The team helps parents and students understand the academic consequences of being late or absent and helps them figure out a way to support daily student attendance.

- **Grading policies** Schools or districts might have policies regarding grades and the numerical values for what constitutes a failing grade, etc. Beyond these district-level policies or school-level policies, the teams work together to establish coherent policies that promote unity and success.

- **Behavior intervention** The team helps develop and implement alternatives to suspensions such as daily progress reports, classroom meetings, behavior contracts and time-out rooms. It addresses the most serious offenders with the goal of extinguishing disruptive behaviors. The team includes those who deal with student behavior (behavior intervention specialist, social worker or guidance counselor, in-school suspension teacher, general and special education teachers, school security personnel, etc.). The team meets weekly and monitors the results of interventions, which progress from least restrictive to more seriously restrictive. As a last resort, the team may determine that a change in placement is best for the school and the student.

- **Climate initiatives** In conjunction with other teams and the leadership team, the interdisciplinary teacher team produces and promotes school-wide celebrations,
incentive initiatives, and other Tier I interventions. These events should be planned and placed on the school calendar early in the school year. The calendar should also include events sponsored by other teacher teams and school support groups.

- **Staff events and professional development** The team plans staff appreciation events and climate/culture professional development trainings to help implement positive behavior supports and bully prevention.

## A Team Approach to Classroom Management

Because the interdisciplinary team collectively establishes classroom policies and procedures, they can anticipate, prevent, and minimize disruptive student behavior. Students know what is expected and experience the continuity and consistency that leads to a positive climate. The team discusses general classroom management concerns. The following suggestions may be useful as teams discuss how to handle classroom management.

- Establishing classroom routines so students can predict what happens next and can stay on track. This includes determining what it means to be on time and ready for classroom work; posting the classroom schedule, goals, objectives, and due dates of assignments; providing easy and predictable access to materials/supplies; explaining specific ways to enter and exit the room; assigning seats; explaining how to turn in papers and what information goes on them (i.e. name, date, section, etc.); informing students of policies on making up missed assignments; and posting student grades by student identification numbers (this also enables students to see if they have any missing assignments).

- Determining where to post exemplary student work in the halls and classrooms.

- Establishing a classroom reward system based on compliance with classroom expectations and rules (such as positive phone calls home, Caught You Doing Something Good tickets, homework passes, etc.).

- Assigning projects that focus on getting to know students (such as an individual story board of the student’s favorite music, sports, hobbies, goals, etc.). This helps teachers connect to and bond with students.

- Deciding when and how to conduct team problem-solving meetings, classroom problem-solving meetings, or
meetings where students reflect on their current status and set goals.

- Establishing a continuum of responses to inappropriate behavior: non-verbal or verbal call to order, teacher proximity, redirects for individual students, seat changes, student problem-solving conferences, student goal setting contracts, daily progress reports, or phone calls home.

Teachers must actively pursue relationship building to strengthen social bonds with the students. If individual teachers have problems with classroom management, veteran teachers can share management strategies with newer teachers in team meetings. If positive relationships have been established prior to a conflict, staff members have a better chance of quelling the disturbance. Strategies to discuss with other teammates include the following:

How to create a calm environment:

- greet students when they enter the room
- talk quietly to them in the hallways and cafeteria
- comment about things of interest to students
- make three to four positive statements for each negative statement
- invite students to help with a project
- speak kindly to students as they leave the room
- teach and reinforce expected behaviors as needed and through social skills lessons in *Mastering the Middle Grades* and *Freshman Seminar*

How to recognize appropriate behavior:

- assign additional desired responsibilities or class chores
- give positive feedback to parents/caregivers
- distribute certificates of merit
- give verbal praise
- provide written positive feedback such as thank-you notes
- allow a few minutes of free time
- play music in class as a reward
- compliment students in front of another staff member
- post student work
- shake hands with students
- provide computer time
- provide fun time
- conduct class outside
- allow students to sit in a seat of importance

How to respond to student misbehavior:

- talk to the student privately, never in front of the rest of the class
• let student know you are aware something is bothering him or her
• use active listening and paraphrase the student’s concerns
• help the student identify the emotion
• ask open-ended questions to better understand the problem and help find a solution
• try to provide an activity that the student prefers that can be done independently
• give the student a job that requires movement
• get the student involved in something positive
• if the student has been taught relaxation techniques, ask him or her to begin doing them
• use a pre-arranged signal that alerts the student to the need to calm down
• acknowledge that the student is in control of his or her own decisions
• express confidence that the student will make the right choice
• explain what the student is doing that is non-compliant
• offer the student choices that are compliant and that will help him or her get back on track

How to de-escalate student misbehavior:
• exhibit non-threatening body language: maintain eye contact, stand more than an arm’s distance from the student, relax your arms in front of your body and open your hands; relax your facial expression; speak in a calm voice
• remain calm; model the desired behavior
• set clear limits
• remove potentially dangerous items
• acknowledge any signs of cooperation the student makes
• redirect student using the corrective sandwich technique (Start with a positive statement, issue the reprimand, and end with a positive statement.)
• avoid arguing with students, yelling, or engaging in power struggles
• remain respectful of students at all times
• try to understand the trigger that is causing misbehavior (conflicts with other students, academic pressure, changes in routines, etc.)

When students exhibit aggressive/out-of-control behavior:
• remain calm
• protect yourself and others as much as possible
• step away from the student
• send for help as you assess the situation
• seek to have the student removed or remove the rest of the students from the room
• maintain your dignity and whenever possible, the dignity of the offending student

Distributed Leadership in a TDS School

Roles and Responsibilities in Promoting a Can-Do Culture and Climate

Every individual in the school plays a role in establishing and maintaining a spirit of perseverance and optimism. The following personnel assist the interdisciplinary team in promoting a positive school culture:

Administrator

The administrator leads the charge in establishing a can-do spirit among staff and students. He or she oversees effective implementation of the TDS program and allocates resources for climate initiatives (personnel, budget, rooms, time). Budgeted items include: Mastering the Middle Grades and Freshman Seminar curriculum, posters, celebrations, incentives, and (if applicable) National Network of Partnership Schools fee. He or she designates space for events/celebrations and, if desired, an in-school suspension area, reflection room and/or late room. The administrator approves dates for climate/culture events, professional development related to climate/culture.

Front office staff

School secretaries may answer the phone with the school slogan or theme, such as “Hello, this is Arthur Ashe Middle School, where excellence is expected.” They may produce monthly calendars or newsletters of activities, and communicate with parents about attending events honoring their students. They may enter data into the school-wide information system or provide attendance or suspension information to the interdisciplinary team.

Non-teaching staff

Students may have positive relationships with security monitors, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers or other non-teaching staff. These staff members may be invited to participate in
interdisciplinary team meetings on occasion, participate in climate initiatives, or pass out school bucks to well-behaving students.

**Social worker and/or school counselor**

These individuals play a vital role in helping students increase attendance, course performance, and appropriate behavior. They may be part of EWI meetings where interventions are determined, and help the team provide student awards, celebrations, and incentives. They may use group therapy to help larger numbers of students during a short amount of time address anger, hostility, loss/separation, grief or adjudication issues. They conduct functional behavior assessments for regular education students to determine why a student behaves inappropriately and with the team, they decide on appropriate interventions.

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**Pillar II: What Curriculum & Instructional Strategies Can-Do to Support Culture and Climate**

Talent Development’s innovative approach to curriculum and instruction creates an environment where students have the support they need to master challenging academics.

**Teaching staff**

The interdisciplinary teacher team is the heart and soul of the school and its climate/culture. They build positive relationships with students and help them learn to address problems in healthy ways. They consistently teach expected behaviors and reinforce positive behaviors through school-wide lessons about behavior standards in every area of the school. They explicitly teach positive social skills using *Mastering the Middle Grades, Freshman Seminar*, additional lessons as needed and school slogans that promote attendance, positive behavior, and course performance, such as the High 5 As and Bs. They may hold short classroom meetings where they guide and mentor students or teach problem solving, decision making, and goal setting. They deal with students who need extra behavior management support. They monitor, evaluate and report student behavior, and nominate students for awards and honors such as student of the month.
Block scheduling for high schools

Using an extended class period (70-90-minute blocks) has numerous benefits for students and teachers, including additional instructional time in math and/or English language arts to allow struggling students to catch up to their peers. Teachers have time to model skills for students, engage them in cooperative learning activities, offer authentic assessments through project-based learning, and create individual learning centers where students can focus on the specific skills and content they need to succeed. Because students spend less time in the hallways, there are fewer behavior incidents while classes are changing. Teachers stand in their doorways to monitor the halls when classes are changing, and know all the students on their team. Students do not wander into other areas of the school where they are unknown by the adults.

Double dosing or accelerated learning opportunities

Students who have fallen behind are not left there; they are given multiple opportunities to catch up and excel. TDS provides research-based, structured curricula for reading and math courses for students who need additional support in grades 6-11. At the middle school level, students enroll in double-dose courses concurrently with their required core courses. In high schools, students fill conceptual and skill gaps and engage in guided and independent practice to build core academic skills before taking required core courses. Students who start to experience success are less likely to misbehave.

Cooperative team learning

Consistent use of engaging cooperative team learning activities encourages students to build interpersonal relationships and social and leadership skills that foster a sense of responsibility and ownership for a positive school climate. Cooperative team learning facilitates healthy, guided interaction between students and maximizes student interest and learning potential.

TDS coaching cycle

Students who are highly engaged are more satisfied with their school experience and are less likely to “act out” due to boredom or frustration. Instructional coaching and professional
development provide teachers with the ability to continually improve their craft and deliver high-quality, challenging, engaging lessons to all students. Teachers grow in their ability to provide differentiated instruction employing teacher modeling, cooperative learning groups, hands-on learning activities, and scaffolded instruction that maximizes the impact of every class period.

**Instruction in 21st century high school and college readiness skills**

Entering sixth and ninth graders take *Mastering the Middle Grades* and *Freshman Seminar*, respectively, to ensure a smoother transition from elementary to middle school, and middle to high school. These courses foster skills essential to success in middle and high school—and in life, including goal setting and self-management. Even students performing at or above grade level may require help with organization, time management, technology, and study techniques. Some students also need help forming and maintaining healthy relationships with peers and adults and managing conflict. The courses also feature units on careers, during which students begin the process that will culminate in the selection of career academies. In *Freshman Seminar*, they explore these topics, as well as high school and post-secondary school decision-making. *Mastering the Middle Grades* is offered as a one-semester elective or advisory course in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. *Freshman Seminar* is usually offered during the first semester of 9th grade in a block schedule, and is often followed with a social studies course in the second semester.
Pillar III: What Tiered Student Supports Can-Do to Support TDS Culture and Climate

Talent Development’s coordinated system of tiered supports creates can-do school climate where student persistence is encouraged, rewarded, and supported through increasingly targeted interventions. Three tiers of support address student behavior, attendance and academic progress, reinforce positive behavior and reduce off-task behavior. The interdisciplinary teacher teams monitor interventions to increase the consistency of interventions and ensure that student needs are addressed at the appropriate level.

Tier I Interventions: School-wide

Tier I interventions are available for all students and teach and reinforce the expected behaviors of the school. They prevent students from falling off the graduation track by motivating students to achieve, behave well, and attend school every day on time. They include the organizational supports described in previous sections (school reorganization, strong academic curriculum, double dosing and other recovery options, and social skills curricula such as *Mastering the Middle Grades* and *Freshman Seminar*).

The Early Warning Indicators System

The EWI system informs teachers and support personnel as soon as students begin to demonstrate off-track behaviors in attendance, behavior, or course performance, and supports constant evaluation of the effectiveness of whole school, extra, and intensive support systems. In weekly meetings, interdisciplinary teams analyze EWI data, assign and assess interventions, and determine the professional development needed to strengthen student-teacher interactions and to support high-quality instruction in every classroom. Teams also use report card grades, benchmark scores, and other instructional indicators to determine which students need additional academic help, as well as those who are ready to succeed in rigorous college prep courses. These meetings, as well as the larger EWI system, are facilitated by an experienced on-site facilitator.
Acceleration courses

In a TDS school, students who are performing two or more years below grade level have the opportunity to catch up with their peers by taking double-dose or acceleration courses in math and reading/English language arts.

Social skills curricula

TDS schools proactively teach expected behaviors to all students with engaging lesson plans in *Mastering the Middle Grades* and *Freshman Seminar*. Students learn goal setting, self-management, listening skills, conflict resolution, bully prevention, and how to work together with other students on cooperative learning teams. Teachers on interdisciplinary teams know when various skills are taught, and can reinforce them in other classes. In addition to the *Mastering the Middle Grades* curriculum, several middle school ELA titles explore the theme of bullying.

School-wide positive behaviors supports

Students are taught how to behave appropriately in the classroom and common areas of the school, and all members of the interdisciplinary team reinforce expected behaviors. All schools should develop and publicize norms or phrases that represent their overall goals for behavior, such as “Attend, Try, Behave” or the TDS High Five A’s and B’s to reinforce behaviors and attitudes fundamental to success in school and life: *attendance*, be on time and present every day; *achievement*, be ready and prepared to learn; *attitude*, be respectful; *accountability*, be responsible; and *awareness*, be safe. This message is reinforced with colorful posters and celebrations.

Climate data analysis and report generation

Climate can be measured by observations, interviews, and analysis of data, including student suspension, discipline referrals, and student and staff attendance data. Use of multiple measures helps TDS staff monitor progress and efficacy of interventions. See a sample climate survey in the appendix.

Interviews or surveys should be conducted annually by the leadership team and interdisciplinary teams to determine what staff, students and parents think and feel about the school, and to identify areas of concern or recommendations for improvement.
Annual climate surveys of students and staff can be used to design school improvement plans and other proactive strategies. Monthly analysis of suspension and attendance data by grade, section, gender, age, regular/special education and English language learners can provide insight on positive or negative trends and highlight needed areas for intervention. Monthly reports to the school leadership and interdisciplinary teams should indicate referrals by student, type of infraction, time of day, average number of referrals per day, and location. Analysis of these specific behaviors will help leadership determine how best to allocate resources, including personnel, during specific times of the day.

At the high school level, student leaders can be trained to input and analyze attendance data and present it to their homerooms.

**Late room**

Some TD schools establish a Late Room, or a central location where tardy students are processed and if needed, provided with extra support to attend school on time. Staff help students understand the reasons why they are late, develop solutions, and set and monitor goals for on-time arrival. Parents are notified of tardiness, and historical data is collected on the frequency of lateness.

**Report card conferences**

These conferences are designed to prevent academic failure and help students stay on track. Every student meets one-on-one with a caring adult who doesn’t work directly with the student (usually recruited from the local business community) to discuss grades, attendance and behavior. Conferences are held each quarter after students receive their report cards. The goal is to draw out factors that may be preventing students from excelling, such as health issues, loss of a loved one, pressure to join gangs, math anxiety, etc. The mentor’s notes on the discussion help guide and inform interventions that can help the student overcome any issues that have surfaced. These issues may not have surfaced in any other setting in the school. Community business partners are ideal conference mentors because students are often more open about their struggles with people they do not know than with school personnel. Business partners can share their own struggles, providing hope and optimism for students as well as insight into what it takes to succeed. Also, business partners understand how to help students reflect, set goals, and monitor their progress toward academic growth. In some cases, these mentors continue
working with students throughout the school year, even offering internships. (See the appendix for sample handouts given during report card conferences.)

**Monthly climate/character campaigns**

Schools can hold campaigns targeting disruptive behaviors (such as fighting, cursing, truancy, etc.) based on school data, and explicitly teach replacement behaviors for the targeted behavior. The goal is to teach and reinforce the new skills in fun and interesting ways. Note: The school poster printer is essential for these campaigns as well as for other climate initiatives such as classroom cooperation/attendance contests, reinforcement of the school theme, and the monthly calendar of events.

**Climate calendar of events**

This is produced annually, updated as needed, and widely disseminated to students, staff, and parents. It includes awards, celebrations, clubs, and other positive initiatives taking place. It might include birthday announcements, student/staff of the month, Caught You Doing Something Good! rallies, and other events. These climate activities should also be included on teams’ calendars.

**School theme**

The school theme should be displayed throughout the building, and in the main foyer and office. It can be used as a greeting by the front office staff when answering the telephone. It can teach students academic and/or social skills, such as excellence, character, etc. Some school themes include the school motto or mascot.

**Classroom cooperation/attendance contests**

Homerooms or sections/academies compete for the highest score based on their use of expected behaviors in core subject classrooms. Highest scoring class is honored with a pizza party or ice cream social.
Student of the month

One boy and girl are chosen from each grade as Students of the Month based on being the most improved, following school-wide expected behaviors, or by impressing the staff in other ways. They receive tokens of appreciation such as certificates, bumper stickers, letter to parents, etc., and their names/photos are posted on a school bulletin board. Quarterly, students of the month and their parents have a lunch, dinner, breakfast or other “Event with the Principal” that allows students, family members, and school community leaders to interact in a casual, comfortable and positive setting.

Staff of the month/staff appreciation

Staff member of the month may receive a certificate, a public announcement of the award, and use of a dedicated parking space. A photo/name may be posted on a school bulletin board. The designee may be elected by staff, students, or by alternating between the two. Staff appreciation events (held twice a year) build camaraderie between the staff and administrators.

Student-led morning/afternoon announcements

Procedures for determining who will deliver announcements and what will be included should be decided by the interdisciplinary team. Announcements might include: school-wide expected behaviors, school pledge, school theme or motto, school song, upcoming school/club events and positive school news.

Honor roll

Students who achieve honor roll status each quarter are recognized publicly in an assembly or announcement. Certificates and notification letters are sent to parents. Names and criteria for inclusion are posted prominently on a bulletin board.

Caught You Doing Something Good

Once a month during lunch, three or four winners are randomly selected from all CYDSG ticket holders to receive prizes, such as a gift bag with gender-neutral items. Students deposit their CYDSG tickets in a bucket and a winner is chosen. Students earn CYDSG tickets for following expected behaviors in classrooms or common areas. It is important that a budget be set aside for these incentives.
School-family-community partnerships are essential because each component powerfully influences student development. In addition, family and community resources play a major role in the college and career emphasis of the TDS model. Family and community resources are also critical in creating learning experiences tied to a student’s career interests. Families need to work with schools in the college awareness, selection, and application process throughout the high school years. Research indicates that strong school-family partnerships enhance the learning outcomes of students and are effective in middle and high schools with the proper programmatic approaches. Similarly, community influences can be marshaled in support of school programs and have a significant impact on their effectiveness. TDS schools work with the National Network of Partnership Schools to develop action teams of parents, teachers and others to organize and sustain programs of family and community involvement. NNPS increases student success by providing research-based concepts and strategies; providing professional development conferences and workshops; and highlighting and sharing best practices of parental involvement and community connections.

Tier II Interventions

Tier II interventions are carried out by the interdisciplinary team plus additional personnel as needed, and address those students who are falling off track and/or have difficulty following school rules. These interventions take place primarily in groups and are arranged by teacher teams or school support personnel such as counselors, social workers, and others in mentoring and guidance capacities. Students needing these interventions are identified on at least a monthly basis. As effective interventions are administered, the number of students needing tiers II and III interventions should decrease. If the number of students needing this increases, the interdisciplinary team and other personnel should analyze possible causes and guide appropriate interventions. For example, perhaps support staff during lunchtime should be redeployed for greater supervision in certain areas, or more adults are needed in the back hallway during dismissal. Tier II initiatives include:

EWI system

Because the Early Warning Indicator system immediately flags off-track behaviors in attendance, behavior or course performance, teachers and administrators can address the effectiveness of
existing support systems. As teams analyze data in weekly meetings, they assess interventions and determine what additional whole-school or targeted responses would support a more positive school climate and high-quality instruction. (For more information, see Chapter 4, “Tiered Student Supports.”)

**Mentoring/near peers provide a second shift of adults**

In some TDS schools (and in Diplomas Now schools), a second shift of adults is available through partnerships with City Year, Communities in Schools or other organizations to mentor the most at-risk students via group or individualized interventions. A representative from each of these partner organizations would attend EWI meetings.

**Tutoring**

TDS provides double-dose academic courses to help students who are significantly behind grade level catch up to their peers. For some students, additional individualized attention may be needed to close achievement gaps and boost student resiliency. Tutoring assistance may be provided through partnerships with local businesses or non-profit organizations (such as Communities in Schools or City Year).

**Reflection Room**

Some schools include a Reflection Room which offers teachers and students a release from mounting pressure in the classroom. Students who display disruptive behaviors may be escorted to this quiet and peaceful setting for up to two class periods. The teacher's behavior referral form (see appendix for sample) helps the student reflect on the disruptive behavior and develop more positive coping/problem solving strategies. Students must display evidence of a change in attitude and an ability to stay on task to return to classes. Parents are notified and are helped to understand why the student is not in the classroom. A lack of cooperation may result in a referral to in-school suspension.

**In-school suspension**

The interdisciplinary team may decide that some non-violent behavioral infractions are intractable enough that the offending student should spend one to three days isolated from the rest of the student population in a designated Success Suite. Students
learn cognitive behavior management skills as they complete academic assignments. Students must demonstrate an understanding of the behaviors that led to the suspension and must show they know how to avoid the same situation in the future.

**Therapy/counseling**

An evaluation of EWI data and student demographics may indicate that group therapy/counseling might be helpful for students dealing with trauma, abuse, grief, loss, and the effects of community violence. If the school guidance counselor or social worker is overloaded or unable to provide this, an administrator could solicit *pro bono* counseling from community partners.

**Behavior contracts**

Students and their parents can sign a behavior contract which states that the student understands certain behavior is unacceptable. The student agrees to improve and carry a daily progress report from class to class each day for two weeks. The daily progress report allows each of the student’s teachers to rate student compliance with behavior expectations and assignment completion. A parent is required to support this process and may receive a copy of the daily progress report.

**Tier III Interventions**

These interventions target students who routinely have difficulty following school rules and expectations. These intense interventions are primarily delivered in one-on-one settings by school personnel (psychologists, counselors, or social workers) or therapists, doctors, or other clinical personnel off campus. Tier III interventions include:

**Therapy/counseling**

While a school counselor or social worker may provide group therapy opportunities, this may not be sufficient for some students who struggle with intense trauma. The school may be able to work with outside social workers, juvenile justice employees, or other professionals to arrange individual therapy for emotionally vulnerable students.
Functional behavior assessments/behavior intervention plans

If the school staff includes a behavior intervention specialist, he or she can work in concert with the interdisciplinary team to conduct functional behavioral assessments to address specific behavior and develop interventions. An assessment should identify the student's specific social, emotional, environmental, and academic factors that lead to problem behaviors. After an assessment, behavior intervention plans can be developed based on a fuller understanding of underlying causes of student misbehavior.

Peer-to-peer supports such as peer mediation or teen court

Research indicates that peer mediation helps peers resolve conflict, learn communication and problem-solving skills, verbalize and clarify their needs, and take responsibility for their actions. These interventions help build nurturing relationships and can result in reduced bullying, suspensions, and expulsions, and improved school climate and higher attendance.

Outside agencies providing student services in and out of the building

Collaboration with outside agencies that provide services in and out of the school building can result in greater support for more students. Schools should have a designated point person to connect with outside agencies deploying personnel in the building. Understanding the services agencies provide (and maintaining a list of agencies, their services and contact information) may help the school gain additional assistance with widespread student problems such as fighting, gang affiliation and drug abuse, and address needs of Tier II and III students.

Case management

Case management of students needing extensive emotional, behavioral, or physical support and interventions is handled by the school counselor or social worker with support from the field manager, regional manager, and (if applicable) any school partners such as Communities in Schools. These individuals seek community resources and integrate whatever additional wrap around services are necessary based on assessed student needs.
And Finally,

**Pillar IV: A Can-Do Climate for Students and Staff**

TDS recognizes the importance of positive, supportive school culture and climate. Establishing an atmosphere where students and teachers believe success is within their grasp requires focus, commitment, and perseverance.

Administrators implement the Talent Development organizational structure and curriculum. Teams of teachers learn to work together to get to know a manageable number of students, set coherent policies, reinforce standards, and bring the weight and authority of the team to bear when students exhibit inappropriate behavior. They regularly access EWI data to quickly flag students who need interventions. Relevant professional development and the coaching cycle ensure that teachers deliver lessons that are engaging and relevant to the real world. Students dare to persevere and persist because they have the necessary supports to overcome any learning gaps and master challenging coursework, thus reducing their tendency to misbehave out of frustration or to cover their shame. They are explicitly taught the organizational and social skills they need, and have opportunities to explore how their schoolwork connects them to possible careers through *Mastering the Middle Grades* and *Freshman Seminar*. Finally, parents can support their students’ success because they know their child’s teachers and are welcomed in Talent Development’s personalized learning environment.

**Aligning to PBIS Mandates**

Many schools and districts are mandated to implement Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). The TDS climate program aligns well with PBIS recommendations. If the school establishes a PBIS-mandated separate climate team, this team can work with the TDS School Transformation Facilitator to mesh these requirements with the TDS model. The climate team can oversee many of the functions usually assigned to a portion of the leadership team, and should include at least one member of each interdisciplinary team as well as a member of the leadership team, a counselor, and other staff. In addition, the school may hire additional personnel to fulfill mandates of PBIS, such as a behavior intervention specialist or an in-school suspension teacher. The interdisciplinary team may decide to include these professionals in team meetings.
Chapter Summary

The multiple challenges that students, parents, teachers, and administrators face today—especially in at-risk communities—require a multifaceted approach. Schools implementing the Four Pillars of TDS with fidelity help all involved believe that they can do this, that students can succeed and graduate, that teachers and administrators can implement effective strategies and work on teams to offer the right supports to the right students at the right time. Closing the achievement gap and helping at-risk students graduate on time is not a utopian, unreachable goal if committed teams of adults pull together to provide the support needed. This is already being done in dozens of Talent Development Secondary schools across the country, and research confirms this. Working together, students and staff can create a culture of support and success.
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