

Cullen Middle School

Case Study

University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project (UT CULP)
Houston Cohort • August 2011



Acknowledgments

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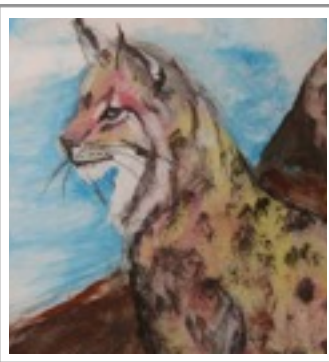


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Executive Summary

The Cullen Middle School Case Study was conducted by the University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project, Houston Cohort in the summer of 2011. The following research question guided the study:

What school-wide systems should be developed to

- improve student achievement?
- develop highly effective teachers?
- engage internal and external stakeholders?
- improve the community perception?

Improving Student Achievement

While improving student achievement campus-wide is multifaceted, this section focuses on four topics that Cullen Middle School (CMS) might consider: student engagement, teacher expectations, Gifted and Talented (GT) program selection procedures, and development of academic vocabulary.

Recommendations

- Implement school-wide and classroom specific academic vocabulary systems.
- Incorporate cooperative learning opportunities at least once a week in every classroom.
- Emphasize high teacher expectations through use of “No Opt Out” and “Right is Right” techniques.

Developing Highly Effective Teachers

In order to support highly effective teachers, CMS could focus on the following: implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), improving mentorship and teacher support systems, and employing campus-wide feedback systems.

Recommendations

- Develop a committee to plan activities to monitor student success and foster relationships between teachers and students.
- Implement PLCs that focus on student achievement.
- Strengthen the C.A.R.E. model by scheduling regular opportunities for feedback and adding a peer-to-peer coaching component.

Engaging Internal Stakeholders

Engaging students continues to be a concern for educators. Research reveals that the following are effective strategies suggested for implementation at CMS: after-school programs, social work support, and positive behavior systems.

Recommendations

- Implement after school programs that provide academic assistance, enrichment, and recreational activities.
- Implement a School-Wide Positive Behavior System (SWPBS)

Engaging External Stakeholders

The engagement of external stakeholders is pivotal to student performance. Increased collaboration with parents, community, and students positively affects student achievement.

Recommendations

- Establish the position of Cullen Home-School Liaison Specialist (CHSLS), who will strategize, organize, and spearhead community engagement efforts.
- Reorganize and redevelop the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA).

Improving Community Perception

The principal, faculty, and community members acknowledge that the CMS community has mixed perceptions about Cullen. Literature indicates that the marketing of urban secondary schools is a national challenge. This section provides specific strategies to improve the community perception of CMS.

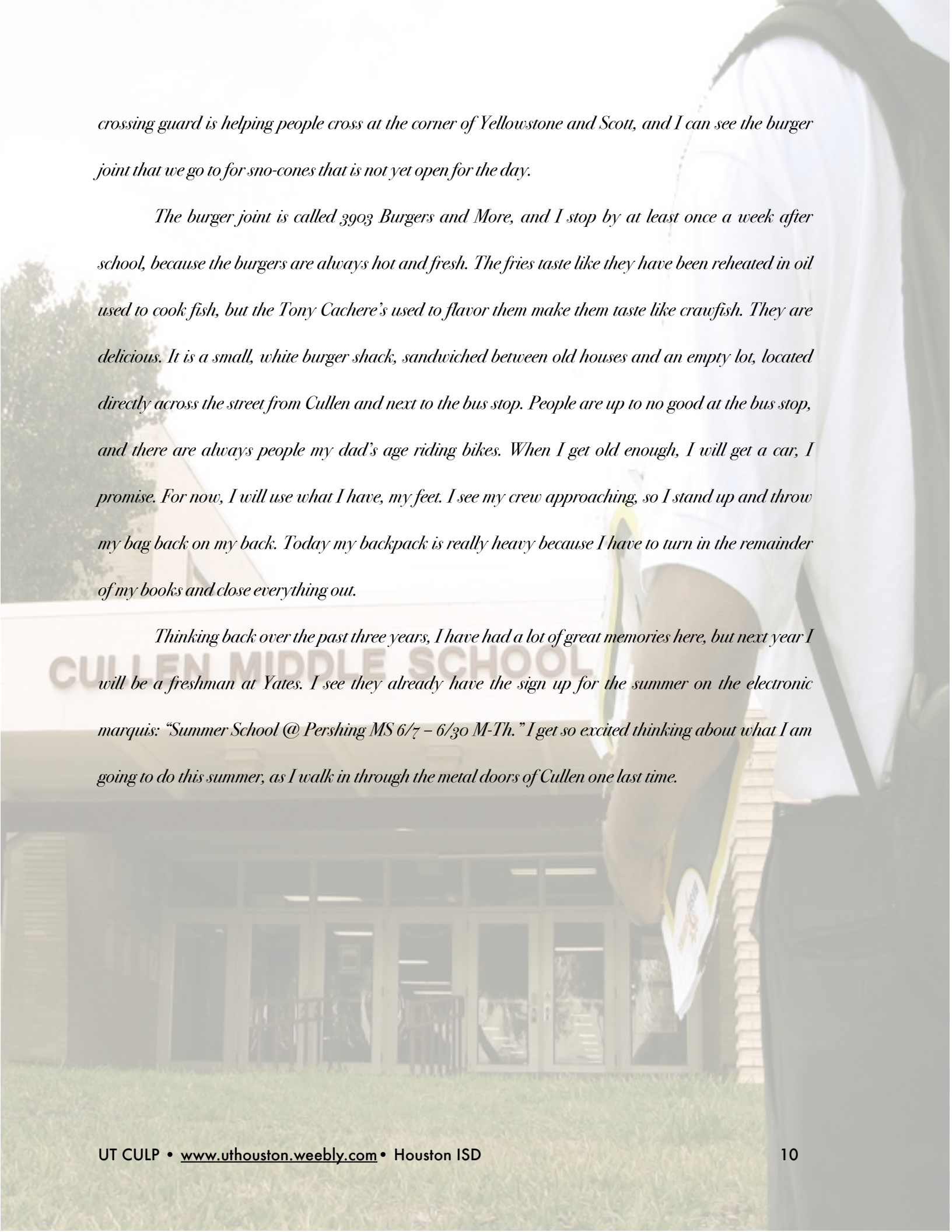
Recommendations

- Design a comprehensive annual public relations and marketing plan.
- Implement a system to support students who enroll late or transfer into Cullen mid-year.
- Establish a coalition of city and district officials, businesses, and professional non-profit organizations to promote Cullen.

Vignette

I have taken the same route for the past three years. It is hot, but what is new, this is Houston. Stepping out of my house, I am moments away from the intersection of Scott Street and Old Spanish Trail. I like walking everyday because I get to catch up with my friends before I get to school and have to “buckle down” for six or seven hours. After taking the same route for so long, I feel like I can do this with my eyes closed. I have been through this shopping strip more times than I can count. This is how it goes: HEB shares the space with the Texas Department of Human Service, The Tooth Doctor, A-1 Dollar store, and the Houston Beauty Shop. Despite what people will tell you, everyone is real cool around here. From the outside, you would not be able to tell that with all of the building windows being covered with burglar bars.

Continuing past the barred windows, sometimes I stop at the vending machine outside of HEB to return my Redbox rental and to get a soda, but today I do not have time. I continue towards the park. It is my shortcut, and shaves a few minutes off of my walk. The park is the hot spot, where we all hang out before and after school, but does not look the part. Rather than thick green grass, like I see on TV, my park walkway is covered in dirt, broken glass, and bottle tops. It is called George T. Nelson Park, and I do not know who George Nelson is, but this is usually where we hoop in the afternoons after school. I sit down at the picnic table for a second to wait for my crew before continuing on to school. Sitting here, I can see the whole community. There is a truck driving by with Spanish music playing, the



crossing guard is helping people cross at the corner of Yellowstone and Scott, and I can see the burger joint that we go to for sno-cones that is not yet open for the day.

The burger joint is called 3903 Burgers and More, and I stop by at least once a week after school, because the burgers are always hot and fresh. The fries taste like they have been reheated in oil used to cook fish, but the Tony Cachere's used to flavor them make them taste like crawfish. They are delicious. It is a small, white burger shack, sandwiched between old houses and an empty lot, located directly across the street from Cullen and next to the bus stop. People are up to no good at the bus stop, and there are always people my dad's age riding bikes. When I get old enough, I will get a car, I promise. For now, I will use what I have, my feet. I see my crew approaching, so I stand up and throw my bag back on my back. Today my backpack is really heavy because I have to turn in the remainder of my books and close everything out.

Thinking back over the past three years, I have had a lot of great memories here, but next year I will be a freshman at Yates. I see they already have the sign up for the summer on the electronic marquis: "Summer School @ Pershing MS 6/7 – 6/30 M-Th." I get so excited thinking about what I am going to do this summer, as I walk in through the metal doors of Cullen one last time.

History

1954- PRESENT

Cullen Middle School (CMS), located on 6900 Scott Street in southeast Houston, is part of the Houston Independent School District (HISD), the seventh largest district in the nation and the largest in Texas. HISD encompasses 301 square miles of the greater Houston area and serves more than 202,000 students (Houston Independent School District, 2010). Founded in 1836, Houston is the



fourth largest city in the United States with an estimated population of 2.25 million (City of Houston, 2010). Known for its booming economy, Houston is home to the Texas Medical Center, NASA, and the headquarters of many energy companies (City of Houston, 2011). Within Houston, Cullen is located in the Old Spanish Trail/South Union neighborhood. CMS is situated in a neighborhood with government subsidized housing on one side and homes of mostly retired community members on the other. The majority of the community is African American and about 15 % of residents are Hispanic (City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). Additionally, about 1 out of every 5 births in the neighborhood from 1999-2003 were to mothers 10-19 years of age (City of

Houston Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). Lastly, 34% of the population lives below the poverty line (City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).

While researching the history of Cullen, we discovered that little historical information exists about the school, including the exact date CMS opened to students, and its surrounding area. In fact, it is difficult to find information about CMS on the Internet. As evidenced by the grocery truck that delivers food in the low-incoming housing near CMS, the students at CMS seem to live in isolation from the rest of the greater Houston community.

Most of the interviewees indicated low parental involvement at CMS, but the history of Cullen's opening paints a different story. On November 21, 1954, roughly 400 parents of students at Foster Elementary School met to choose the name of the new middle school that HISD was about to open in their neighborhood. The parents chose to name the school after Ezekiel W. Cullen, because of his contribution to education in Texas. In addition to being a jurist, legislator, and lawyer in the 1800's, he was famous for "laying the basis for an eventual Texas public-education system" by starting land endowments for public schools (Long, n.d.).

Although little is known about the Cullen of the past, there is much information currently available about the student population. The school's population is mostly African American with a steadily growing Hispanic and English Language Learner (ELL) population. From 2005-2010, the Hispanic population grew from 16% to 20%. The majority of the students (92%) qualify for free or reduced lunch. Additionally, the staff is 82% African American (HISD School Profile, 2010).

In recent years CMS has seen changes in both enrollment and leadership. In fact, since 2006 there has been a steady decline in enrollment with a total of 745 students in 2006 and only 639 students in 2010 (HISD School Profile, 2010). A previous principal's long tenure to which lasted until 2008, was followed by a principal who served for two years. The current principal, Clayton Crook

served as principal at an exemplary elementary school in HISD and completed his first year as principal at CMS during the 2010-11 school year.

Purpose

The University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project, Houston Cohort 2011 partnered with the Houston Independent School District to conduct a case study of Cullen Middle School. As future school leaders, the cohort participated in this case study to learn about school improvement. Principal Crook cooperated in this study with the expectation of receiving authentic feedback that will positively impact CMS student performance. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. Additionally research was consulted to make sound recommendations to facilitate school improvement for Cullen Middle School.

Methodology

Study Preparation

In preparation for the CMS case study, the cohort read, analyzed, and discussed research articles, chapters from *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* by Sharan B. Merriam (1998), as well as case studies conducted by previous University of Texas CULP cohorts. Also, *The Principalship: New Roles in a Professional Learning Community* by L. Joseph Matthews and Gary M. Crow (2010) proved relevant and useful in our research.

In order to adhere to research standards, all cohort members completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) training necessary to pursue research involving human subjects. All matters pertaining to our case study were completed in accordance with IRB standards.

Study Design

The cohort created questions to be posed to the study participants and planned the data collection needed, including faculty interviews, community walks, and interviews with various community members. Cohort members also observed and documented various areas within the neighborhood surrounding CMS. Concurrently, the cohort reviewed pertinent CMS data and documents. The specific documents and analysis processes are detailed in later subsections. Finally, the cohort made use of online file sharing such as Google Docs and Dropbox, to facilitate timely collaboration amongst all members.

Data Sources

Qualitative and quantitative sources were used by the cohort for the collection and compilation of data from personal interviews with district personnel, CMS faculty, and various community members. Additionally, personal observations were recorded at CMS and in the neighborhood surrounding Cullen. Multiple documents including, but not limited to, the 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan, the 2009-2010 CMS Student Handbook, the 2009-2010 CMS Faculty and Staff Handbook, the 2005-2010 School Profile, current TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports, and preliminary 2011 Pearson TAKS reports were utilized. These sources were useful in informing the study of CMS.

Participants

For this study, the cohort interviewed an HISD School Improvement Officer, the CMS Principal, a sample of faculty members, and community members, including residents, church personnel, and business owners.

Limitations

Although the cohort was committed to maintaining research validity, there are limitations to this process that must be recognized. The greatest limitation of the study was the amount of time; the study was completed in eight weeks. Typically, case studies extend over a longer period of time than that which was available to this cohort.

Because this case study was completed during the summer, our sample of faculty participants was limited, and the faculty who participated did so on a voluntary basis. Also, no students were formally interviewed. Additionally, because summer classes for CMS students were housed at an alternate campus, we were not able to observe teachers or students in their regular classroom settings.

Finally, we did not complete a ‘member check,’ a system of checking with study respondents to verify accuracy. For these reasons, this case study should be viewed as a modified case study.

Data Analysis

After completing the interviews, the cohort transcribed them to capture the participants’ thoughts as accurately as possible. Subsequently the cohort made use of the affinity process—a diagramming and brainstorming method employed to organize large amounts of data—to develop two meta-categories, each with three subcategories, as outlined on the table below.

Culture of Learning	Community
Student Achievement	History
Teacher Capacity	Internal Perceptions
School Culture	External Perceptions

These categories provided a pathway for further inquiry and research related to the case study and recommendations.

The concept of triangulation, “using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings,” was exercised throughout the process to increase validity of the case study (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Finally, to organize the abundance of information into a relevant, useful, and cohesive document for CMS, a guiding question was developed to structure the case study. What school-wide systems should be developed to:

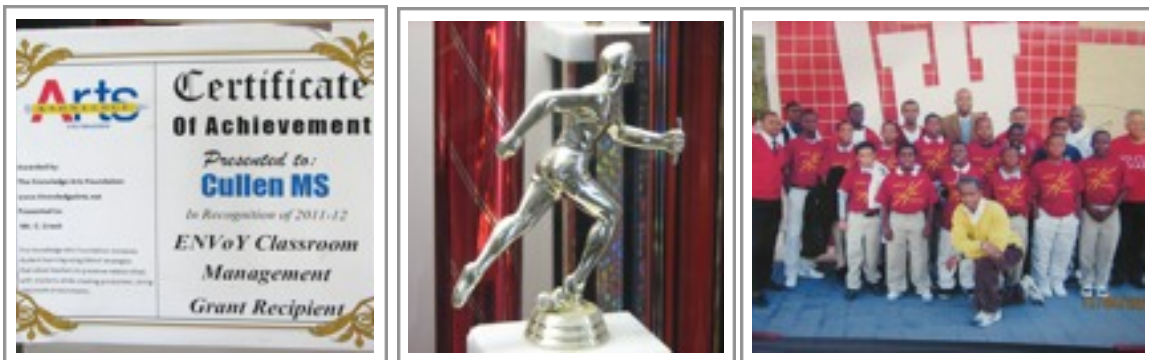
- improve student achievement?
- develop highly effective teachers?
- engage internal and external stakeholders?
- improve the community perception?

This case study will attempt to answer this question based on our collective experience, research, and related studies. Each section that follows contains a research literature review, findings specific to CMS, and recommendations for consideration pertinent to each subheading of the guiding question.

1. Improving Student Achievement

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student achievement is a broad topic on which much research has been done to identify causes of low achievement and possible strategies to remedy the situation. This review focuses on four components that affect student achievement: student engagement, teachers' expectations, Gifted and Talented (GT) program selection procedures, and development of academic vocabulary.



Student Engagement

Experts suggest that student engagement is one of the greatest factors in improving achievement. Although some educators feel that discipline is an obstacle in achievement, research demonstrates that if teachers involve students in class work, students will remain on-task. Haberman (2005) notes that effective teachers avoid discipline problems by assigning tasks which students don't perceive as too easy or impossible. When teachers engage students, discipline problems diminish and student achievement improves. Monroe (2006) said, "When students are intellectually immersed in the academic tasks at hand ... they are clearly more likely to become productive citizens" (p.106). To

further strengthen student learning, grouping low ability students with high ability students in cooperative learning activities at least once a week benefits students at all levels (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001).

Cangelosi (2000) states that, “The more work [teachers] put into [their] preparation before class, the less [they] will need to do to maintain a smooth operation” (p.100). Studies show that teachers who plan engaging and relevant tasks encourage students to cooperate, engage in the learning, and deviate less into off-task behavior. Hord (2009) recommends that principals encourage teachers to plan learning that is interactive, engaging, and focused on student needs and curriculum.

Teachers’ Expectations

The research is uniform in demonstrating a positive correlation between teachers’ expectation and student performance. Research suggests that teachers behave differently with students based on their expectations of them (Gill, 1999). Teachers who perceive students as inherently deficient hold lower expectations for student performance, lower their teaching standards, exert less effort, and water-down their lessons (Warren, 2002).

In classrooms with lowered expectations, students are given very little independence, few challenging assignments, and little interaction with peers. Students may also be seated further away from the teacher, praised less often for success, criticized more frequently for failure, called on less frequently, and provided with briefer, less accurate feedback (Gill, 1999). Conversely, in classrooms where teachers have high expectations, students are offered challenging learning opportunities, greater freedom of choice and independence, and opportunities to work collaboratively with classmates (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006).

The impact of teacher expectations varies with respect to student race. While the achievement of White students is more likely to be influenced by parent expectations, that of African American

students is strongly correlated to teacher expectations (Ferguson, 2003). Interestingly, even when the teacher rates her relationship with students as negative, African American children are more likely to rate the relationship positively (Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Tyler and Boelter attribute this to African American students' desire to become closer to teachers, who students use as a resource to successfully navigate the school world.

Selection of Students for Gifted and Talented Programs

Nationwide, minority students are underrepresented in Gifted and Talented (GT) programs. After being nominated by a teacher or parent, students must successfully complete a series of screening activities to qualify for GT programming. Since this process may rely on a single nomination, certain students will never have the opportunity to participate in the selection process. As Oakland & Rossen (2005) mention, "the nomination process has a significant impact on disproportionate representation" (p. 58). Those students not nominated are not considered by the GT committee and thus are ineligible for GT programming. The biases of an individual teacher have the potential to determine a student's admission into the program in the absence of checks and balances. Bigelow (1993) argues that some teachers believe that "poor, minority children cannot possibly be gifted" (p. 13). Such a mindset eliminates students from GT program consideration as it leaves them without an advocate.

Minority students encounter a variety of challenges while seeking GT placement. As Vanderslice (1998) notes, students often lack the academic schema needed to perform well on the required assessments. According to Ford (1998), "minority students are likely to be placed in low-ability groups and non-college preparatory tracks, decreasing the likelihood that these students will be identified as gifted" (p. 8). Further, Whiting's (2009) data show that the overall mean achievement scores for African American male students are below those of other groups in the basic subject areas. If

minority students are placed into lower tracks and special education courses, it automatically eliminates the students from the possibility for GT identification.

Academic Vocabulary

One of the difficulties struggling readers have with content-specific texts is their unfamiliarity with academic vocabulary (Harmon & Hedrick, 2005). The less time students spend reading in the content areas, the more underdeveloped their skills with these types of texts (Brozo & Flynt, 2008). Both English Language Learners and native English speakers may become “word callers,” students who read text rather easily but do not deeply understand the meanings of the words they are reading. Not surprisingly, “word calling” may mislead teachers into believing that fluid word reading is equivalent to comprehension (Kelley, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Faller, 2010). Implementing a solid academic vocabulary program across the curriculum is beneficial to all students regardless of their reading and language abilities. Based on their research, Baumann and Graves (2010) define academic vocabulary as:

“A domain-specific academic vocabulary or the content-specific words used in disciplines like biology, geometry, civics, and geography; and general academic vocabulary or the broad, all-purpose terms that appear across content areas but that may vary in meaning because of the disciplinary itself” (p. 6).

Domain-specific academic vocabulary provides students with the academic background knowledge they will need to interpret content in their academic courses (Baumann & Graves, 2010). Despite its low-frequency and content-specific words and phrases, domain-specific academic vocabulary provides students with words and concepts that strengthen their content. In contrast, general academic vocabulary provides a scaffold between the disciplines. Student achievement is

positively impacted when the understanding and implementation of academic vocabulary is supported across the curricula.

Data link academic vocabulary to improved student achievement. Dunn, Bonner, and Huskee (as cited in Flynt & Brozo, 2008) discovered that students who received direct and meaningful vocabulary instruction increased reading comprehension scores by as much as thirty percentile points. Effective academic vocabulary systems in all core subjects provide the critical word knowledge foundation students need to comprehend and analyze content from a variety of texts.

Improving Student Achievement

FINDINGS

Analysis of CMS's school profile and the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator (AEIS) data over the past six years reveals a school making gains in some areas yet simultaneously requiring aid in others. Each grade level made gains in all subjects in passing percentages on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test between the 2010 administration and the 2011 administration (See Figures 1-3). With sixth and seventh grade math increasing over 18% in passing across heterogeneous groups, the data clearly revealed positive student achievement on standardized testing the school is clearly focus on TAKS. "Our interventions are working. We basically have school six days a week, and Monday through Friday we have after school tutorials," explained one CMS faculty member. It was further explained that in-school tutorials were held during enrichment periods and have even been extended over holiday breaks.

Since the 2009 TAKS administration, seventh grade writing and eighth grade social studies have shown high levels of students meeting the passing standard. In fact, the 2010-2011 AEIS data identified eighth grade social studies and seventh grade writing as achieving Exemplary status.

Figure 1: Percent Met Standard 6th Grade TAKS

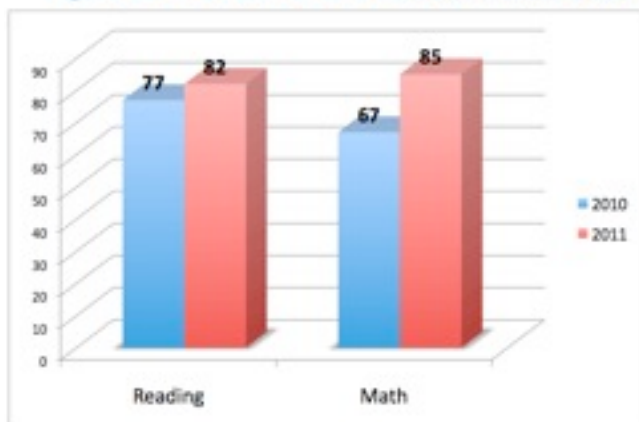


Figure 2: Percent Met Standard 7th Grade TAKS

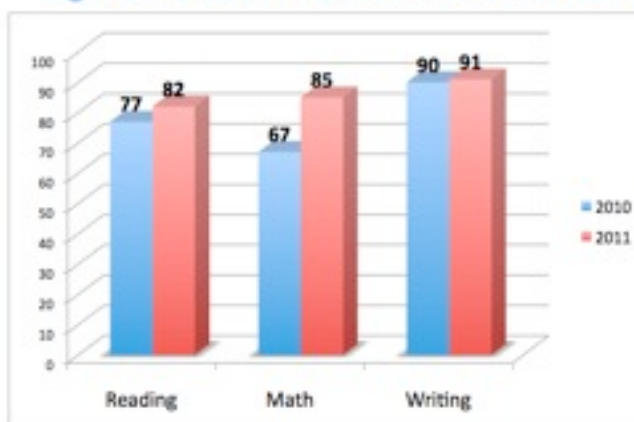
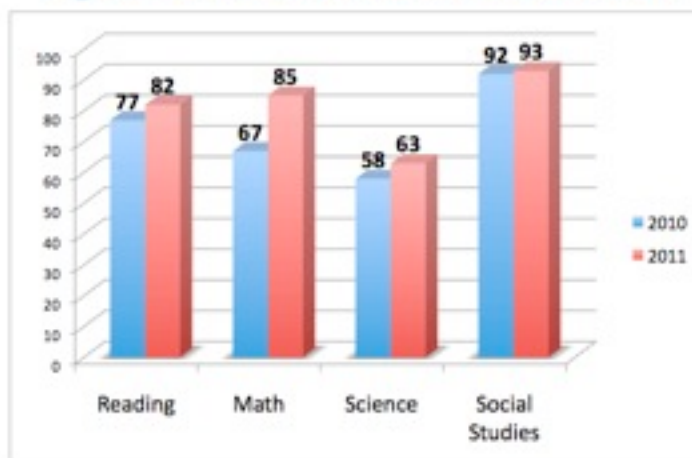


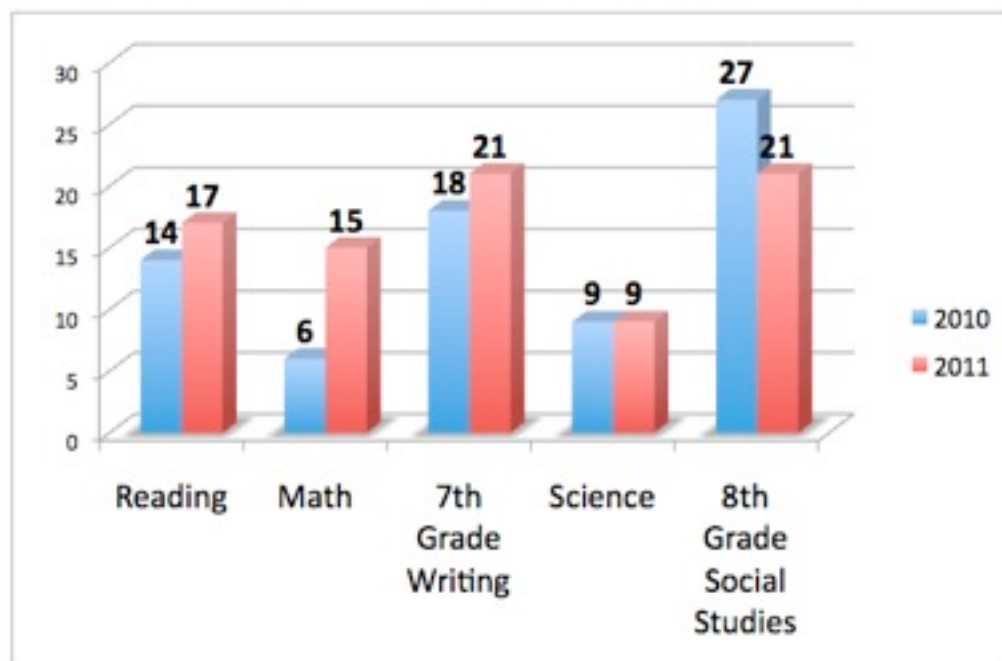
Figure 3: Percent Met Standard 8th Grade TAKS



With the Texas Education Agency (TEA) phasing out the TAKS test and implementing the more rigorous State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test, there is a demand for higher student achievement. As rigor increases on state standardized testing, it is imperative to look at academic rigor. In the 2006-2007 school year, 63% of CMS classes were identified as honors classes,

but by the 2009-2010 school year, the percentage of honors classes had fallen to 13%. However, despite the decrease in labeled honors classes, the total 2011 TAKS Commended Performance percentages as compared to the 2010 TAKS Commended Performance percentages increased in math, reading, and seventh grade writing (See Figure 4). Faculty members expressed frustration regarding the everyday classroom progress students are making, with one teacher explaining that, “Test scores and grades don’t match up.” Based on the 2010-2011 first, third, and fourth six weeks honor roll lists, on average only four students in the entire school earned all “As” and fifteen students earned “As and Bs.” While CMS is making progress on state assessment, findings reveal the need to continue and strengthen this process.

Figure 4: 2010-2011 Percent Commended Performance for the sum of all grade levels.



Improving Student Achievement

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for your consideration.

1. Implement school-wide and classroom-specific academic vocabulary systems.

Academic vocabulary provides a foundation in all content areas and positively impacts student achievement. It is recommended that a school-wide system for both general academic vocabulary and content-specific vocabulary should be introduced, developed, and supported in every classroom. *See Appendix - Section One: Student Achievement Documents: A & B.*

2. Incorporate cooperative learning opportunities at least once a week in every classroom.

Cooperative groups in middle school classes have different emphases and goals; however, each can successfully engage students in classrooms. *See Appendix - Section One: Student Achievement Documents: C through G* for supporting documents.

3. Emphasize high teacher expectations through the use of common instructional strategies such as “No Opt Out” and “Right is Right” techniques, from *Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov.

Teach Like a Champion is CMS’s 2011-2012 book study selection, and the book emphasizes a culture of high teacher expectations. Since the faculty is familiar with the text, a school-wide commitment to implement specific strategies will contribute to actual practice and development of common expectations for students. “No Opt Out” reinforces the teacher expectation for all to succeed, and “Right is Right” sets a high standard for correctness in a classroom and forces students to perform accordingly.

2. Developing Highly Effective Teachers

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout this section, the concept of “highly effective teachers” is examined, particularly its correlation to fostering relationships with students and other faculty. This review focuses on three components that develop highly effective teachers: professional learning communities (PLCs), professional development, and instructional coaching.



What is a highly effective teacher?

Love and Kruger (2005) note that highly effective teachers create a community of learners who resemble an extended family, perceive teaching as a part of their calling, and have high expectations for the success of all students. Similarly, Duncan-Andrade (2007) identifies five traits of highly effective teachers: a critically conscious purpose, a sense of duty, preparation, Socratic sensibility, and trust. The major theme of relationships weaves through the literature on effective teachers. Research implies

that without these relationships, it is almost impossible to motivate students and ultimately achieve academic success.

Fostering Relationships with Students

Flynt and Brozo (2009) state that effective teachers “understand the importance of building meaningful relationships with students as a context for greater participation and more enthusiastic learning” (p. 536). A middle school study conducted by Strahan (2008) identifies how teachers increased the number of successful students through specific relationship building techniques. Strahan (2008) finds that “not only could [teachers] describe in detail the emotional, physical, cognitive, intellectual, and family needs and circumstances of students in their classes, they addressed these needs by responding to students as individuals” (p. 4). He further explains that “when a student learns to trust a caring teacher, he or she can begin to take chances, find the will to invest effort in a task, and receive the guidance needed to improve skills. Trusting relationships thus constitute a ‘threshold’ of action, a point beyond which meaningful learning can occur” (p. 5). Moreover, Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2001) agree that “when teachers believe their students are competent and reliable, they create learning environments that facilitate students’ academic success” (p.14).

Fostering Teacher Collaboration around Instruction

Studies show that teacher collaboration about instruction is “linked to positive changes in teacher practices, higher expectations for students, the willingness to use innovative materials and methods, and improved student achievement” (Thibodeau, 2008, p. 55). In Thibodeau’s study, “the resulting instructional changes led to less teacher-directed learning and more student-centered practices in many classrooms. These strategies also allowed teachers to grow from one another and

gain an increased sense of security in knowing that they could rely on one another for multiple areas of expertise” (p. 59).

Coaching and Professional Development

Research on effective teachers also highlights the importance of two fundamental practices: the use of peer-to-peer coaching and job-embedded professional development. Peer coaching is defined as “a collegial process whereby two faculty members voluntarily work together to improve or expand their approaches to teaching. Peer coaching may be reciprocal, with each partner serving as coach to the other, or it may be one-way with one partner serving as the coach and the other as the recipient of the coaching” (Huston & Weaver, 2008, p. 6). Reciprocal coaching is most effective with experienced staff who have similar levels of experience, while one-way coaching is best used as a mentor-to-mentee relationship where the senior teacher serves as the coach and the other faculty member looks to the coach for assistance (pp. 8-10). Little (2005) asserts that peer coaching empowers teachers by creating “communities of teachers who continually engage in the study of their craft [as well as] an interactive reciprocal relationship among professionals” (p. 87). Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) contend that there must be blocks of time for teachers to plan collaboratively, strategies for team planning, sharing and learning, and cross-role participation from various teachers, administrators and others on campus.

Scheeler, Ruhl, and McAfee (2004) found that feedback and professional development are essential to help teachers inform their instruction. Moreover, Knight’s (2007) research cites that the teachers who showed the greatest gains had coaches with high expectations who provided affirmative and honest feedback. While the most successful schools capitalize on the use of authentic feedback, Reeves (2003) notes that time is a constraint. Similarly, Yost (2006) asserts that in order to develop highly effective teachers, administrators need to provide teachers with “opportunities for success” to

facilitate growth, and that “teachers need knowledge of how to reflect as well as time to think about their practice” (p.61). This research indicates that effective teachers engage in substantive relationships with their students and colleagues.

Developing Highly Effective Teachers

FINDINGS

Data from the CMS interviews suggest that some teachers have been successful in developing positive relationships with students. As one faculty member stated, “We have pockets of success stories and good relationships and good rapport.” However, this faculty member added that, “we have pockets of the opposite. We have teachers who yell and put kids out of the classroom for minor infractions.” One faculty member cited discipline as an issue in student-teacher relationships: “I think what causes the bad relationship is when ... the relationship becomes toxic because the kids are not being disciplined.” Overall, interviewees expressed a desire to develop meaningful relationships within a system of high expectations to, therefore, expand opportunities to create connections.

Data from the CMS case study also suggest that the campus is in the developmental stages of building a professional learning community. CMS has adopted an observation protocol for administrators to give teachers feedback about their performance, often referred to as ‘walkthroughs.’ The focal points of this walkthrough system are Community, Alignment, Rigor, and Engagement, also known as the C.A.R.E. model. Faculty interviews revealed differences in perceptions of the C.A.R.E. model. Based on faculty responses, feedback given by administrators appeared to be primarily for evaluative purposes, not coaching. Comments suggest a need for sufficient time for professional growth and reflection. Statements such as, “we get feedback. It doesn’t affect me, really, at all,” and

“They [administrators] ...come in and look for lesson plans, so they can see exactly what we are doing. It doesn’t affect the way I teach,” indicate that observations are not consistently used. Another faculty member recalled, “I never sat down about feedback with [Principal Crook]. I got a sticky note, but no detailed analysis.” Feedback received by another faculty member was perceived as untimely.

On the other hand, Principal Crook stated, “I have a strong coaching piece here at Cullen and with my administrative team, I am very explicit on what I expect.” He explained, “I, along with my administrative team and any support staff, we’re constantly coaching teachers and there is a strong conversation piece and follow-up on the feedback I give them.” While Principal Crook envisions the C.A.R.E. instrument as a tool to “coach teachers to greatness,” the data shows that it is not yet being fully implemented to achieve those results.

Some CMS faculty also expressed a desire to collaborate with each other more often. Comments like “[collaboration between teachers] needs to really happen” and “something [needs to be] set up in the school where teachers can have time to diagnose and dissect problems” suggest that Cullen educators seek collaborative time to discuss pedagogy. One CMS educator had heard about Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and acknowledged the meetings, but believed they turned into gripe sessions. The data reveals that not all faculty share a common vision for peer coaching at CMS. Another faculty member felt that teachers “are never encouraged to watch other teachers.” An additional member of the faculty asserted that “as a campus, we aren’t ready for teacher-to-teacher observations using C.A.R.E.; we are working towards that.” One member of the faculty voiced another view, saying that teachers “are getting burned out. [We weren’t] getting the support we needed.” Principal Crook and CMS teachers acknowledge the need for additional opportunities to sharpen their craft. Time for PLCs has been built into the 2011-2012 schedule to allow content-area planning time. The recommendations that follow may be used to strengthen teacher effectiveness.

Developing Highly Effective Teachers

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for your consideration.

1. Develop a committee to plan activities to monitor student success and foster relationships between teachers and students.

Monthly activities should be implemented to give the teachers structured time to learn about the students, more about their backgrounds, and foster stronger relationships. The CMS Student Information Sheet can be used to help teachers and students learn more about each other. After gathering this information, teachers can use it to inform school-wide systems. *See Appendix - Section Two: Developing Highly Effective Teachers Document: A* for supporting documents.

2. Implement PLCs that focus on student achievement.

PLCs are strengthened by ensuring that all practitioners, including teachers and administrators, meet regularly to discuss pedagogy, content area strategies, review lesson planning, and track student data. PLCs may use the meeting PLC Agenda Template, Campus Data Dialogue Protocols 1 & 2, or other protocols to guide weekly meetings. *See Appendix - Section Two: Developing Highly Effective Teachers Documents: B & C* for supporting documents.

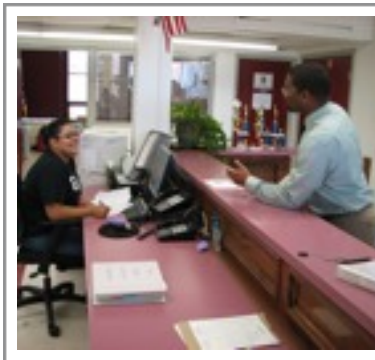
3. Strengthen the C.A.R.E. model by scheduling regular opportunities for feedback and adding a peer-to-peer coaching component.

Develop a system for teacher/administrator face to face feedback following C.A.R.E. walkthroughs and utilize peer-to-peer coaching that is independent of the formal review process. Provide time and focused protocols for teachers to observe one another and debrief their observations.

3. Engaging Internal Stakeholders

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research suggests that student achievement depends on student engagement and systems of student support. Jones (2008) explains that in order for teachers to address struggling students, they must reflect on the elements that contribute to student engagement, considering the student as a whole. This review focuses on student programs and school-wide behavior initiatives that can be used to involve, connect, and engage students.



Student Programs

Research shows that students who experience a sense of school community are more academically involved and have better attendance and behavior (Battistich & Hom, 1997). Bregman, Fredricks, and Hackett (2010) state that organized after school programs positively impact youth development, especially at-risk youth.

School-Wide Behavior Initiatives

School-wide Positive Behavior System (SWPBS) is a three-tiered intervention model, which focuses on preventing negative behaviors while promoting school safety and supporting academic achievement (Sugai & Horner 2009). Within the SWPBS framework, interventions are designed to meet students' individual needs. In the first tier of prevention, behavioral assistance is provided to all students; in the second tier, interventions are provided for students who do not respond to the first level of interventions; in the final tier, students who do not respond are further assisted through more individualized and intense support (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

Systems to increase teacher and student engagement are vital in creating a shared emotional connection through membership and integration (Bregman, Fredricks & Hackett, 2010). Literature suggests that after school programs and the implementation of SWPBS can promote an environment for student achievement (Battistich & Hom, 1997; Sugai & Horner, 2009).

Engaging Internal Stakeholders

FINDINGS

After school activities are one way to foster greater student engagement and a sense of belonging. Several faculty members spoke about programs that were previously offered at CMS, such as 21st Century Learning and Communities in Schools (CIS). Community members mentioned the CMS pool and wondered if it could be used after school or during breaks. No one interviewed was certain about why these programs no longer exist on the campus, although they viewed these and other programs as being important to student engagement.

Principal Crook stated, “Discipline has to be classroom management and a school wide focus. Everyone has to do their part in that particular setting, in that particular situation with discipline in our school.” He continues to explain that discipline forms and suspensions are not effective classroom management skills. However, the effective component is the student-teacher relationship. In interviews, CMS faculty identified discipline as an area of significant concern. Some faculty viewed discipline as inconsistent, and some perceived a disconnect between teachers and administrators. It was expressed that, “Teachers lack the support from administration. But when it comes time to deal with the consequences, there are no consequences, and the kids pick that up real quick. And it spreads like wildfire.”

Faculty and staff at CMS identify discipline as an area of significant concern and interviews reveal different expectations. Administrators, teachers, and most importantly students will benefit when this is addressed.

Engaging Internal Stakeholders

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for your consideration.

- 1. Implement after school programs that provide academic assistance, enrichment, and recreational activities.**

These activities could include teacher-sponsored clubs or utilize outside services such as 21st Century Learning. Student-generated ideas can also provide opportunities for students to be engaged. *See Appendix - Section Three: Internal Stakeholders Document: A* for supporting documents.

2. Implement a School-Wide Positive Behavior System (SWPBS).

SWPBS involves all internal stakeholders in developing common core values that serve as the basis for consistent campus-wide practices. Additional support for tiers two and three could be provided through a social worker or through Communities in Schools (CIS) in conjunction to the other interventions in place at CMS. One free resource for the implementation of SWPBS is Dr. Jane Ross, Positive Behavior Support Coach and District Advisory Council Co-Chair in Austin ISD. Dr. Ross has offered to advise CMS if assistance is needed with this recommendation and many research-based free resources are available. *See Appendix - Section Three: Internal Stakeholders Document: A* for supporting documents.

4. Engaging External Stakeholders

LITERATURE REVIEW

When parents are engaged in the school community, student achievement, attitudes, and interest in learning improve. Additionally, research suggests that cultivating and sustaining these relationships enables the school to receive valuable feedback from the community. This review focuses



on building sustainable business partnerships and fostering parental involvement.

Building Sustainable Business Partnerships

Current research suggests a shift in the approach to school reform from the school effectiveness era of reform, focused on the characteristics of high-functioning schools, to a more ecological approach, combining the internal characteristics of a school and its relationship to its environment (Beabout, 2010). This approach emphasizes that school leaders be more intentional about developing sustainable partnerships with external organizations while simultaneously performing their leadership functions within the internal environment. “Low-risk” relationships like

business partnerships (i.e. relationships where the school is the passive recipient of services or resources) are beneficial to urban schools, but are unlikely to contribute directly to closing the racial achievement gap (Beabout, 2010). Even in cases where businesses fund staff development, these donations have little influence on instructional procedures. Still, schools which serve mainly low socio-economic status and minority students often rely on the kind of budgetary support that these relationships provide.

The benefits schools derive from external relationships, as outlined in Beabout (2010), include access to the community's feedback, ideas, resources, and political networks. Of these benefits, meaningful community feedback is perhaps the most sought after. It is important that school leaders understand that whether or not relationships with external organizations are formalized, they do exist. The most important of these external relationships are those intended to increase parental involvement (Beabout, 2010).

Fostering Parental Involvement

Research is clear about the correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. Langdon, Meyer, Redding, and Sheley (2004) tracked the academic growth of students in Illinois' Solid Foundation program, which was designed to systematically foster discussion of learning - not just fundraising, discipline, or athletics - between schools and parents. Over the course of two years, the Solid Foundation schools demonstrated twice the academic growth as the control group. By involving parents in substantive ways, the schools boasted significantly more growth than the state of Illinois on average. Additional scholars (Harris & Goodall, 2008) agree that among the non-school factors of school achievement, namely socio-economic background, parents' educational attainment, family structure, ethnicity, and parental engagement, it is parental involvement which is the most robustly

connected to achievement. They explain that while parental attendance at school-wide events can help build school community, it does not affect student achievement unless it explicitly and directly makes connections to learning and academic behaviors outside the classroom (Harris & Goodall, 2008). These scholars also note that middle class parents use “the vocabulary of teachers,” have supportive social networks, and have access to both transportation and childcare, making attendance at school events or conferences easier and more comfortable (p. 280). The Solid Foundation study reiterates the need to draw in parents who are not as likely to volunteer (Langdon, Meyer, Redding, & Sheley, 2004).

To target less-involved parents, Akins High School (AHS) in the Austin Independent School District created a new position on their staff. The Parent Liaison Specialist (PLS) is tasked with building positive partnerships between the school and the community and empowering parents to support the development and academic success of students (B. Cherry, personal communication, July 18, 2011). At Akins, the PLS is responsible for services that range from assisting parents with rent to conducting GED classes. AHS’ implementation of the PLS position is unique to its needs, which highlights a primary characteristic of the position: while the PLS has great potential, the position is nebulous. The success of the PLS position relies on the creative problem-solving and initiative of the liaison herself (B. Cherry, personal communication, July 18, 2011).

As Cherry explained (personal communication, July 18, 2011), the selection of a liaison with the appropriate skills is key. The liaison must have strong interpersonal skills and little anxiety about meeting new people. The PLS will experience rejection from many parents initially, and will need to be emotionally resilient. Success in this role requires the ability to make decisions without direct supervision or constant direction; in the interview process, the principal may want to require candidates to develop and present their own plans and vision for the position. Finally, to fully execute

this role, the parent liaison will need strong communication skills, proficiency in the languages spoken by parents, as well as basic proficiency with office technology (B. Cherry, personal communication, July 18, 2011; Orozco, 2010; Zoppi, 2006).

According to Cherry, a large part of maintaining the group's message is maintaining communication. Parents need to know about meetings early enough to plan for transportation and childcare, and they need to know the agenda and its relevance to their children (B. Cherry, personal communication, July 18, 2011). In addition, parents who cannot attend at the specific meeting times should have options for contributing, and information should be disseminated in a variety of ways, including email, text messages, callouts, or by going in person to apartment complexes and other public areas for meetings.

Finally, Cherry notes the value of using a school's parent-teacher organization as a means of developing parent capacity. As Cherry (personal communication, July 18, 2011) explained, many parents in the schools she studied began as simple classroom volunteers, but increased their responsibilities and education to become more involved, some even obtaining teacher certification. As parents' social capital and the level of organization of the group builds, so will the complexity of work completed by the parent-teacher group. If parents see that their contributions are valued and can connect them with tangible improvements in achievement, the group's legitimacy and effectiveness will increase.

Engaging External Stakeholders

FINDINGS

Reflecting this research, the principal acknowledged that when parents feel empowered in their relationships with teachers they advocate more effectively for their children, making teachers less likely to engage in practices deemed detrimental to students. The principal offers one example regarding the practice of giving students zeros for missing work:

Now you go to the more affluent school districts and the child says, “I am not doing it,” and the teacher gives a zero. Some parents are coming and they want to know why. They want to know, “Why did you not call me when it happened? Why did you give a zero?” So teachers are less likely to give a zero...they will make sure that kids do the work. So that’s something that I’m trying to embed in this culture.

Many members of Cullen’s internal and external communities recognize a need to strengthen relationships with the community, but they have not reached consensus about its importance or the most effective parental involvement strategies. One faculty member stated that “the key is kids, not parent involvement. We should stop seeking parent involvement. Sometimes kids can’t depend on the parents.” Another faculty member disagreed, arguing “we have to stay on those parents and invite them to everything. Call them.” Concerns about parental involvement are not confined to faculty. A member of the Cullen community explained, “Cullen could be better than what it is. If we could educate the parents, that would be a good start.” These divergent voices reflect a lack of consensus and reveal a need to establish a common vision and develop systems to support parental and community involvement.

Engaging External Stakeholders

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for your consideration.

1. Establish the position of Cullen Home-School Liaison Specialist (CHSLS), who will strategize, organize, and spearhead community engagement efforts.

The CHSLS' duties should include informal home visits, initiation of business partnerships, organization of formal parent meetings, the facilitation of communication between teachers and parents, and development of systems to help parents advocate for their children. *See Appendix - Section Four: External Stakeholders. Document: A* for supporting documents.

2. Reorganize and redevelop the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA).

Because research is so clear about the difference between superficial, simple parent involvement and the kind of instruction-focused parent involvement that actually affects student achievement, the PTSA's focus must also be clear. To have the maximum impact, the PTSA cannot be limited to social tasks like fundraisers and celebrations; parents must be integrated into the instructional discourse of the school in meaningful, substantive ways. Administrators and faculty should develop ways to reorganize the PTSA and could consider the use of student performances and student-led conferences as ways to engage parents.

5. Improving Community Perception

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past twenty to thirty years, inner city schools in the United States have experienced a decrease in student enrollment. Research suggests that the introduction of charter and magnet schools into districts across the nation has “led to more competitive environments” where public schools face “considerable competition from other schools for funds, resources, examination success, pupils, and public esteem” (Oplatka, 2007, p. 208). As charter schools have become more popular and drawn from public school enrollment, marketing urban public schools has become critical (May, 2006). This review focuses on marketing strategies to address aspects of external perception: marketing in a changing world and the principal’s role in marketing.



Marketing in a Changing World

Although student mobility varies widely among schools, incidences of mobility are significantly higher in urban school districts with a high minority population. Furthermore, accountability ratings and student and parent satisfaction can impact the marketability of a campus (Rumberger, 2003). Howe (2010) finds that parents of the present generation of secondary students distrust the

competence of the educational system, posing additional difficulties for student recruitment. This shift signals a necessity for adjustment in secondary school marketing, and schools must justify performance in every area from physical safety to academic achievement (Howe, 2010).

Charter schools often cater to parents seeking higher standards, smaller class sizes, and a more supportive environment than public schools (May, 2006). Many parents consider public schools inferior because of their traditional practices and lack of program variety (English, 2009). To market themselves, schools must identify parent and student needs, then advertise programs that will satisfy the expressed requests (Li & Hung, 2009). When student and parent needs are met, the likelihood that they will promote the school to others increases (Oplatka, 2007). In addition, public schools in low socioeconomic settings are highly marketable when school leaders and teachers seek a connection with the family of every child through school events, conferences, and community involvement (Suffren & Wallace, 2010).

The Principal's Role in Marketing

Marketing functions traditionally have not been part of the role of school administrators, but research indicates that effective principals take personal accountability for the marketing of their schools (English, 2009; Ford, 1998; Goldhaber, 1999; Hill-Brisbane & Easley-Mosby, 2006; Howe, 2010; Oplatka, 2007). Positive word-of-mouth advertising thrives when a principal is actively engaged in marketing a school. By utilizing the local media, influencing community members, and partnering with leaders of neighboring schools, the principal can positively impact the school's perception (Oplatka, 2007).

Engaging External Stakeholders

FINDINGS

According to AEIS reports, CMS has experienced high mobility rates from 2008 to 2011. Principal Crook identifies Cullen's image as a major contributing factor to students' high mobility rates: "Definitely the image, and perception of the school is a challenge... I would love to have my kids back here at Cullen...the 200-250 that choose to go somewhere else." Some faculty members have acknowledged Principal Crook's efforts to improve the school's image: "The principal has good ideas. He's trying to make the school look better," explained one faculty member.

While some faculty believe Cullen's image is improving, they still indicate areas of need, such as safety, discipline, and expansion of academic programs. Various community members and campus faculty stated that CMS would not be their first choice of school for their children, they most often cited school fights, a perceived lack of resources, and drug use in the community as their reasons. A former Cullen student whose employer is in the community expressed that she feels "less safe working in the area because of the drugs." Other concerns included a desire for improved discipline, more diverse academic programs, and an expansion of extracurricular activities at CMS.

Cullen faculty members stated that a collective school effort to share positive information to parents would significantly change parental perceptions of CMS. One business owner echoed this sentiment, stating that although she works very close to the CMS campus and would find it convenient to send her middle school age child there, she may choose another campus because she received specific correspondence marketing that educational institution: "I have never received any correspondence from [Cullen] by phone, mail, or email, but I would like to." Business and nonprofit owners also expressed interest in establishing a relationship with CMS, as well as a desire to be

approached by an administrative figure. One community member stated that Principal Crook has been a recognizable presence in the community (i.e. working the carpool line, speaking to elementary schools, meeting with church pastors), but other stakeholders wanted a more personal, hands-on approach.

Improving Community Perception

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for your consideration.

1. Design a comprehensive annual public relations and marketing plan.

The plan should include a calendar of events that outlines the target audience, marketing strategies, and media plan for each event. The plan should include input from the School Improvement Officer, principals who have successfully marketed their schools, faculty, and the HISD Media Relations Department.

See Appendix - Section Five: Community Perception Document: A for supporting documents.

Follow the link for the Washington Reading Corps: A Guide to Community and Partnerships with the Media (Tools 6, 7, and 11-14).

2. Implement a system to support students who enroll late or transfer into Cullen mid-year.

Rumberger (2003) suggests creating a student welcoming committee and offering flexible hours for tutorials and parent conferences for students who experience mobility.

3. Establish a coalition of city and district officials, businesses, and professional nonprofit organizations to promote Cullen.

This coalition will provide support for school events and initiatives to address community issues. A list of city, government, and district officials' contact information is provided.

See Appendix - Section Five: Community Perception Document: B. A compiled list of businesses and professional nonprofit organizations. *See Appendix - Section Five: Community Perception Document: C* for supporting documents.

Conclusion

For this case study, the University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project, Houston Cohort 2011 focused on five areas of growth for Cullen Middle School: student achievement, teacher effectiveness, engaging internal and external stakeholders, and improving community perceptions. To learn more about these emerging themes, we conducted interviews with the faculty, staff, and community. We learned about Cullen's successes and areas for growth, and we researched the Cullen community by reading articles, the community history, and current school documents. We learned that the work of building and implementing effective systems is complex, and that meeting the needs and desires of different constituents requires engagement and investment of stakeholders.

Creating schools of excellence is a challenging endeavor that involves much more than commitment from just the people inside the building. It takes a relentless effort from all stakeholders, internal and external. In order to build sustainable models of excellence, school-wide and even community-wide systems need to be implemented. Students must always be at the forefront of planning as we adjust our efforts to meet their dynamic needs. Cullen, like any neighborhood school, must hold high expectations, continuously improve, and employ best practices to become an HISD school of choice. The UT CULP Houston Cohort 2011 will always follow the success of Cullen Middle School with great interest.

Appendix

The Cullen Middle School Case Study final report, Power Point presentation, appendix, related research studies, and additional resources are available on line at: www.uthouston.weebly.com under the CMS option.

Document A



Implementing Academic Vocabulary

- School-wide Academic Vocabulary System - general academic vocabulary and domain specific vocabulary should be introduced and reinforced within all classrooms

Choosing an Academic Vocabulary List:

Curriculum specialists and teachers create a general academic vocabulary word list by:

- Selecting from pre-made lists such as Coxhead's "A New Academic Word List."
- Selecting high-frequency words from released TAKS tests.

Teachers create domain specific academic word list by:

- Selecting from pre-existing content areas word lists such as Marzano and Pickering's *Building Academic Vocabulary: Teacher's Manual* (2005).
- Using the content text and selecting vocabulary words to introduce to students. A pre-test over the vocabulary words selected may prevent loss of instructional time on words already understood by students.
- Allowing students to identify unfamiliar words from the text thus producing the vocabulary list.

This option instills a sense of ownership not only towards the words but also in the classroom curriculum.

Academic Vocabulary Implementation:

Although there is no “one size fits all” academic vocabulary model, Flynt and Brozo (2008) provide several guidelines for reference:

- Be highly selective about which words to teach
- Provide multiple encounters with targeted words
- Provide direct instruction on how to infer word meaning
- Promote in-depth word knowledge
- Provide opportunities to extend word knowledge (p. 501).

Other resources to establish a school-wide academic vocabulary system:

- *Building Academic Vocabulary: Teacher’s Manual* by Robert J. Marzano and Debra Pickering
- *Teaching Basic and Advanced Vocabulary* by Robert J. Marzano
- *Inside Words: Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary Grades 4-12* by Janet Allen
- *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classrooms* by Jeff Zwiers

Document B



Getting Started Today using the Frayer Model

The Frayer Model is a graphic organizer divided into five parts, which guides students in understanding vocabulary by word and context analysis.

1. Word – students write the word in the center of the page
2. Definition – based on the context in which the word is found and using their own words students define the word
3. Characteristics – students list the characteristics of the word and/or they can draw a picture of the essential characteristics
4. Examples – students provide examples of the word in the model.
5. Non-examples – students provide explanation of what the word is not

Modeling the completion of the Frayer Model is strongly suggested the first time it is introduced to students. When students are familiar with the process, the Frayer Model may be used for independent or cooperative learning groups.

- Extra Tip – The Frayer Model can be adapted and used as an academic vocabulary review. Exclude the word in the middle, but provide students with a definition, the characteristics, examples and non-examples. Using the information provided, students identify the vocabulary word which fits the information.

Name _____ Date _____ Class Period _____

Fray Model

DEFINITION – use your own words	CHARACTERISTICS – list essential characteristics

Section One: Improving Student Achievement

Document C



Examples based on Classroom Instruction that Works, Marzano (2001)

Example	Subject	Goal	Pattern	Members	Time	Roles
1. Students present a region: geography, weather, economy, and culture.	Social Studies	Create a presentation	Formal	Three	Several days	Leader or organizer, recorder, materials manager
2. Students are placed in groups based on the type of pets they like.	Science	Shared a common experience with animals	Base	Three to four	Semester or year	Leader or organizer, recorder, materials manager, presenter
3. Students answer specific questions	Reading	Formulate a response and discuss it	Informal	Two or three	A few minutes	Recorder and presenter
4. Students respond to a prompt	Writing	Create a summary			Class period	Recorder
5. Students are in six-member groups for constitution projects	Media	Rearrange to use effective group patterns	Formal	Three	Several days	Leader, recorder, presenter
6. Students create a product during a trade lesson	Social Studies	Decide on a product, design it, and create a marketing display	Formal	Three to four	Several days	Recorder, summarizer, technical adviser, and researcher
7. Students greet each other, plan activities, form field day groups	Homeroom and advocacy	Know each other	Base	Three to four	Semester or year	Leader, recorder

Document D



Classroom Instruction that Works, Marzano(2001)

Informal groups (e.g., pair-share, turn-to-your-neighbor) are ad hoc groups that last from a few minutes to a class period. They can be used to clarify expectations for tasks, focus students' attention, allow students time to more deeply process information, or to provide time for closure (p. 89).

Formal groups are designed to ensure that the students have enough time to thoroughly complete an academic assignment; therefore, they may last for several days or even weeks. When using formal groups, the teachers designs tasks to include the basic cooperative learning components (p.90).

Base groups are long-term groups (e.g., for the semester or year) created to provide students with support throughout a semester or an academic year (p.90).

Section One: Improving Student Achievement

Document E



How to Structure Cooperative Learning Activities, Wong & Wong (1998)

1. Specify the group name.
2. Specify the size of the group.
3. State the purpose, materials, and steps of the activity.
4. Teach the procedures.
5. Specify and teach the cooperative skills needed.
6. Hold the individual accountable for the work of the group.
7. Teach ways for the students to evaluate how successfully they have worked together.

Sample Activity

In this activity you will be working in _____ groups of _____. The reason you work in _____ groups is because when you _____.

Background:

- Problem:

Support Group Jobs:

- Equipment manager, facilitator, reporter, recorder, and others.

Support Group Procedures:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Support Group Responsibilities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Document F



Implementation of Collaborative Learning

Consider the following guidelines when implementing and planning for collaborative learning:

- Use collaborative learning examples to generate and modify ideas for each particular content area
- Determine how many students can work together on activities by selecting the appropriate group structure to maximize instruction and distribute student responsibility and roles.
- State the purpose, materials, and steps of the activity and teach the procedures while indicating the skills needed. Assists in structuring cooperative learning and provides a sample activity.
- Additional suggestions are available in an excerpt from Cangelosi's (2000), *Top Points About Cooperative Learning Sessions*.

For further study, read *Cooperative Learning Is a Brain Turn-On* by Judy Willis and *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* by Robert J. Marzano, Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock.

Document G



Ten Points about Cooperative Learning Sessions

(Cangelosi pp. 263-264)

1. Expect the sort of off-task behaviors, ... unless you clearly define not only tasks for each cooperative task group but also the individual responsibilities of each group member.
2. All group members should be jointly accountable for completing the shared task, with each member responsible for fulfilling an individual role.
3. Efficient routine procedures for making transitions into and out of small group activities, ... avoid the time-wasting chaos that follows a direction such as “Let’s move our desks so that we have four groups of five or six each.”
4. Task sheets and advanced organizers direct students’ focus and provide them with an overall picture of what they are expected to accomplish in their groups.
5. To avoid interrupting cooperative group work to clarify directions the whole class should hear, specify the task and directions for everyone before attentions are turned to individual group activities.

6. Monitor groups' activities, providing guidance as needed without usurping individual students' responsibilities for designated tasks. ... from one group to another, cuing students on task without actually becoming a member of any one group.

7. Model active listening techniques. Students do not automatically know how to listen to one another without your showing them. From classes they have taken with other teachers, they may have acquired the misperception that anything of academic importance (that is, anything that will be on the test) is said by teachers, not peers. Thus, you should demonstrate that you intently listen to them and make use of what they say.

8. Use formative feedback to regulate activities. Engaged behaviors during cooperative task-group sessions are observable because students should be involved in discussions and working on a specified task. Thus, formative feedback for regulating the activities is relatively easy to obtain.

9. Closure points are needed for lengthy sessions. As with other types of sessions, students need to experience climactic moments to reinforce engagement positively. Having a sequence of subtasks rather than one overall task facilitates this need if you provide students with feedback as they complete the subtasks.

10. Individual group work should be followed up and used during subsequent learning activities.

Cangelosi, J. S. (2000). *Classroom Management Strategies: Gaining and Maintaining Students' Cooperation*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Section Two: Developing Highly Effective Teachers

Document A



CMS Student Information Sheet

Date: _____ Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Favorites

Subject: _____

Food: _____

Television Show(s): _____

Movie: _____

Music: _____

Book: _____

Sport: _____

Future Goals:

One Year: _____

Three Years: _____

Five Years: _____

Summarize any special skills and/or interests you would like to develop or pursue this school?

What are some of your strengths and weaknesses at school?

Section Two: Developing Highly Effective Teachers

Document B



Home of the "Mighty" Bobcats

Cullen University

Eighth Grade Cluster Meeting Friday, September 23, 2009

AGENDA

The 8th Grade UT Cluster

- I. Introduction
- II. Great Job, **Green** Team!
- III. How is everything going?
 - Positive Happenings
 - Student Concerns
 - No Students in the Hallways
- IV. *"Let's Get Them Together, Longhorn Cluster"*
 - Eighth Grade Assembly
 - Cluster Conference/Parent Contact /Conference
 - Contract & No Activities!!!
 - After School Detention
- V. Student Cluster Awards
- VI. Collaboration/Cross-Curricular/Best Practices
- VII. Literacy Strategies/Cluster Word Wall/Technology- Ms. Davis
- VIII. Goal Setting Activity with Video Link
- IX. Wednesday Fellowship (September 30, 2009)
- X. **Closure**

Cluster Member

Davis	Adams
Graham	Guillory
Bivens	Bernhardt
K. Johnson	Washington
Samuel	B.Young
Thomas	Fortune
Cerf	Falu
Allen	Perez

NOTES

"Every Child, Every Way, Every Minute, Every Day"

Section Two: Developing Highly Effective Teachers

Document C



Campus Data Dialogue Protocol 1

[http://uthouston.weebly.com/uploads/8/3/0/2/8302794/
campus_data_dialogue_protocol_1.doc](http://uthouston.weebly.com/uploads/8/3/0/2/8302794/campus_data_dialogue_protocol_1.doc)

Campus Data Dialogue Protocol 2

[http://uthouston.weebly.com/uploads/8/3/0/2/8302794/
campus_data_dialogue_protocol_2.doc](http://uthouston.weebly.com/uploads/8/3/0/2/8302794/campus_data_dialogue_protocol_2.doc)

Section Three: Engaging Internal Stakeholders

Document A



Resources for After School Programs

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Documents created by Dr. Ross:

Active Supervision PowerPoint: This document outlines what active supervision looks like in a campus.

School-wide guidelines for success, expectations and procedures: an example of what another middle school in Austin used. This document outlines students and adults expectations and procedures.

Classroom Management: This is a sample of a management plan for a middle school classroom that includes students' expectations, rewards, and corrective actions, as well as response protocols.

Classroom Expectations posters: These posters are an example of what is used in the classroom to highlight expectations and procedures.

Each of these documents can be found in the following website:

<http://uthouston.weebly.com/cullenms.html>

Document A



CMS Home and School Liaison Specialist

Job Description

The Cullen Home and School Liaison Specialist (CHSLS) is tasked with performing child-centered work that builds a positive partnership between Cullen Middle School (CMS) and families in order to support the development and academic success of all students. The job of the CHSLS includes the following functions:

	Tasks	Examples of Activities
1	Help CMS to develop a family-friendly school climate. This should be done in cooperation with the principal, teachers, parent organization, and other staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coordinate an annual open-house in the third week of the Fall Semester to provide parents an opportunity to explore the campus, feel assured that CMS welcomes families and treats them with respect, receive parent feedback, and meet teachers and administrators. b. Organize and promote the growth of a Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). c. Work to ensure that the existing parent-resource room is a comfortable place where families can meet, get to know each other, discuss their interests and concerns, and access an adequate supply of learning materials. d. Develop, in consultation with the principal, parents and teachers, a CMS family involvement policy that satisfies the requirements of NCLB Title 1 policy on parent involvement. e. Perform such duties as the principal may assign.
2	Develop programs and activities designed to engage families in improving student achievement. Plan these in collaboration with families, teachers, the PTSA, business-community partners, and the principal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Design two family involvement programs for the Fall Semester and one program for the Spring Semester, to help families interact with faculty and staff, and participate more effectively in improving their children's learning. Programs may include information sessions on choosing an appropriate high school and college for given career paths, a Christmas pageant, Strategies for supporting school based learning, STAAR Information session, etc. b. Help families understand school report cards, standardized test scores, rubrics, disciplinary notices, etc. c. Collaborate with teachers to track changes in the achievement of students whose parents are actively engaged with the school. d. Collaborate with CMS staff, community members including churches, the district office, and families to develop programs and activities to reach families who are underrepresented because of economic, racial, social or language barriers. e. Facilitate and organize workshops to train parents how to advocate for their children and the school. This may include training in how to conduct PTSA meetings, call their elected officials, address the school board, communicate with teachers, conduct fundraising activities, etc.

3	Help teachers and families to develop strong partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Organize tours of the community for CMS staff to get to know families and the neighborhood better and better understand the array of forces that shape the lives of students and parents. b. Encourage and support CMS staff to reach out to families by creating ways for teachers and families to meet face to face and to know each other. This may include class meetings, breakfast with the principal and teacher presentations at PTSA meetings. c. Maintain six-week family contact logs, with the updated telephone numbers of families, to enable teachers to contact families at least once each grading cycle. d. Be a liaison between families and CMS when problems arise, when parents or CMS need more information from each other, or cultural differences are a barrier. e. Arrange for translation and interpretation services for meetings, notes to be sent home, telephone calls, etc. f. Provide the principal with a weekly written report about parents' ideas, suggestions and concerns. g. Develop information linkages with the community so that the school can be aware of significant developments in the community.
4	Develop and implement effective family involvement strategies to empower students and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Invite parents to participate in CMS committees, including the SDMC and the PTSA and to support the participation of other parents in these committees. b. Document parent/community activities through visual portfolios, sign-in sheets, flyers, pictures, etc. c. Ask parents to evaluate parent meetings, workshops and other programs or activities. d. Conduct surveys to assess the effectiveness of parent-school-community partnerships.
5	Participate in and support district programs for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaborate with the HISD Department of Parent Engagement to promote activities that support the district's core value: "Parents are Partners". b. Publicize and promote district programs for families such as HIPPIY, Even Start, and the Parent Prep Academy. c. Prepare and file reports on family involvement at the end of each grading cycle.
6	Help recruit partners to become part of the CMS family involvement program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reach out to local businesses, non-profits and community groups to learn how they may support family involvement in your school. b. Facilitate programs or activities that allow parents to use CMS facilities such as the swimming pool, auditorium, etc. c. Work with community partners and families to identify resources for families in the community and make that information accessible in a format that teachers and counselors can readily offer to families. d. Attend community meetings that will help to connect the school and community.
7	Participate in opportunities for professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attend all CMS staff meetings, and district level meetings and trainings for parent engagement specialists. b. Keep the CMS staff informed of all district family involvement activities. c. Maintain a portfolio of all professional development activities attended.

CMS Home and School Liaison Specialist Qualifications

- 1.High school diploma/GED required. Some college preferred.
- 2.Thinks and acts in ways that respect ethnic, cultural and language diversity.
- 3.Communicate successfully with teachers, families, district administrators, including bilingual if needed.
- 4.Is computer literate and able to operate basic office equipment such as copiers and fax machines.
- 5.Has experience organizing training programs for adults.
- 6.Possesses good interpersonal and organizational skills.
- 7.Is capable of advocating for children and parents.
- 8.Ability to interpret student attendance data.
- 9.Ability to make frequent home visits using own transportation.
- 10.Ability to work evening hours when necessary.
- 11.Knowledge of local social service agencies.

Document B



CMS Home and School Liaison Specialist Goals

Short Term Goals (Fall Semester)

- Coordinate an annual open-house in the Fall Semester
- Increase the parent participation rate of underrepresented families in school programs and activities
- Organize staff tour for a community observation

Long Term Goals (Beyond Fall Semester)

- Grow enrollment in PTSA and attract support from business partners
- Identify and participate in professional development
- Facilitate parent led PTSA meetings
- Set additional goals for the CHSLS position based on results

Document C



CMS Home and School Liaison Specialist Job Performance Metric

In the principal’s evaluation of this new position, we recommend considering whether the CHSLS achieves the following objectives. The following checklist may be used, or the principal may want to use other criteria for evaluation.

The CHSLS...	Rating
Recruited, organized and documented a committee of parent volunteers (PTSA).	
Through appointment or elections, identified a recording secretary, treasurer, and sergeant-at-arms.	
Documented parent and business interactions and kept detailed records, including dates, number of hours, names, phone numbers, email addresses, nature of contact, and physical addresses of meetings. Records were kept digitally in a program like Excel that allows them to be easily searched and analyzed.	
Generated sign-in process for all scheduled meetings with parents/business partners indicating participants’ names, email addresses and contact numbers.	
Conducted parent meetings, whether in Cullen’s parent room or an offsite facility (church, apartment complex, etc.)	
Kept detailed minutes of all hosted parent and business partner meetings. Minutes were entered in the computer file for archiving and distribution, and were forwarded to the principal for inspection.	
Demonstrated progress in continually increasing attendance and participation rates at PTSA meetings and activities. Set realistic goals and provided evidence that strategies for meeting future attendance goals were likely to be successful. (Example: if on the first meeting there were 10 participants that attended the PTSA meeting then for the second meeting strive to have 15 participants in attendance).	

Section Five: Improving Community Perception

Document A



Tools for Developing a Marketing Plan for CMS

Name	Contact Information	Services / Website
HISD Media Relations Contact Information	<p>E-mail: news@houstonisd.org</p> <p>Phone: (713) 556-6393</p> <p>Fax: (713) 556-6396</p> <p>Campus Mail: HISD Media Relations Department, Route 10 Senior Media Relations Specialist: Norman Uhl, nuhl@houstonisd.org</p>	<p>http://www.houstonisd.org/portal/site/CommunicationServices/menuitem.6b1cc47cd779bdb86342df73e041f76a/?vgnextoid=f20b57cbf04ef010VgnVCM10000028147fa6RCRD&vgnextfmt=default</p>
Washington Reading Corps: A Guide to Community and Partnerships with the Media		<p>http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/125/Toolkit%20Module%203%20-%20Community%20Partnerships.pdf</p>

Document B



Resources for Establishing a Coalition: City and District Officials

In a case study of Mumford Academy, an inner-city school with similar conditions as CMS, in a “community inundated with crime, drugs, absentee landlords of rental property, violence, single-parent households and very poor,” Mumford’s Principal Dr. Hubbard took the initiative to diminish the negative impact of drug trafficking on the school’s premises” (Brooks, 2009, p.64). Principal Hubbard organized a meeting to form a coalition with parents, members of the community, law enforcement, city council and media. Few parents attended the meeting; however, Police authorities, council members and media did show up. Although parents did not show up for the meeting, Principal Hubbard sent flyers home asking parents to call city and board officials to complaint about the lack of safety and drug trafficking in the area. In a week, teachers and parents made over 5,000 phone calls. Media contributed to the process by televising the playground conditions. Through these actions, Principal Hubbard facilitated the creation of a partnership between community members and the police department that led to the creation of the first Block Watch in the city of Bivens and in few months, drug activity decreased dramatically on the school surroundings.

For a complete version of the Mumford’s Case Study follow this link:

<http://www.adi.org/journal/fw09/BrooksFall2009.pdf>

Name	Contact Information	Services / Website
HPD Palm Center Storefront Office	5330 Griggs, Phone: (713)845-2488 10:00 AM-2:00 PM Mon-Thursday	http://www.houstontx.gov/police/contact/substations.htm
HISD Police	Houston ISD Police Department Jimmy L. Dotson, Chief of Police 3500 Tampa Houston, Texas 77021-1244 District Mail Route 2 Phone: (713)842-3715 Fax: (713)842-3752	HISD Police offers faculty and staff training on how to handle and report criminal activity http://www.houstonisd.org/portal/site/Police/menuitem.32752d7da4933a371a9c5010e041f76a/?vgnextoid=d0c1f81fa10e0110VgnVCM10000028147fa6RCRD&vgnextchannel=4e0b210fa27ee010VgnVCM10000028147fa6RCRD
City Council District D Wanda Adams		Council Adams a communication to request a meeting highlighting the importance attention to CMS http://www.houstontx.gov/council/d/request.html
18th District Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee		http://jacksonlee.house.gov/Contact/

Another way to confront drug consumption and trafficking among CMS students is to present to them real testimonies of the negative consequences that these practices may bring to their lives. There are several outreach programs offered by governmental and non-profit organizations that specialized

in educating youth about the negative consequences of drug trafficking and drug consumption. The following list provides contact information from several organizations that can help subside drugs activity in and around CMS.

Name	Contact Information	Services / Website
FBI Outreach Program	1 Justice Park Drive Houston, TX 77092 Phone: (713) 693-5000 Fax: (713) 936-8900 E-mail: Houston.Texas@ic.fbi.gov	The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has an outreach program called Adopt a School. FBI Houston Division employees participate in a collaborative community outreach initiative with I Have A Dream® - Houston. Volunteer FBI employees participate in various after-school mentoring activities with an assigned "Dream Partner," serve as chaperones on field trips, and give presentations on topics such as anger management, Internet safety, and career choices http://www.fbi.gov/houston/contact
Houston Crackdown is a division of Mayor Annise D. Parker's Office for Public Safety and Drug Policy	Phone: (713) 247-8888	Coordinates and supports volunteer projects in the areas of substance abuse prevention, treatment and law enforcement. Houston Crackdown division can participate in community meetings and can provide educational materials and collaborative funding opportunities http://www.houstontx.gov/publicsafety/crackdown/
The City of Houston Patricia Harrington	Director P.O. Box 1562 Houston, TX 77251 Phone: (832)393-0931 Fax: (713)247-1340	Educates youth on the dangers and consequences of gang membership before they become involved. Educating parents, teachers, and service professionals on how to recognize and address gang involvement. Educating community residents on how to identify and report gang activity in their neighborhoods. http://www.houstontx.gov/publicsafety/antigang/index.html

Document C



Resources for Establishing a Coalition: Businesses and Professional Nonprofit Organizations

Name	Contact Information	Services / Website
McDonald's	3820 Old Spanish Trail, Houston, TX 77021 Phone: (713) 748-1375	Requests for local donations should be directed to the neighborhood franchise. http://www.aboutmcdonalds.com/mcd/
H-E-B Grocery Store	6102 Scott St, Houston, TX 77021 Phone: (713) 747-7383	HEB favors activities, projects, and causes that make a visible and positive difference. Contributions may contribute either product or cash, depending on the need. Send correspondence to: Cyndy Garza-Roberts, Director, Public Affairs 4301 Windfern, Houston, TX 77041 Phone: (713) 329-3920 http://www.heb.com/sectionpage/about-us/community/investment-program/
Fiesta	5600 Mykawa, Houston, TX 77033 Phone: (713) 644-1611	To start raising money for your favorite sports team, call the Sports Club Hot Line today at (713) 284-1042. http://www.fiestamart.com/html/community/
SONIC Drive-In	3626 Old Spanish Trail, Houston, TX, 77021 Phone: (713) 747-0324	Contact Your Local SONIC Drive-In Please feel free to contact the manager of your local SONIC Drive-In to find out what programs he or she is supporting.

The Houston Aeros	Requests must be received through our online request form.	Hockey Player Appearance Upon submission of the online request form, you will see a confirmation on the webpage. We will review your request and notify you by email or telephone as soon as possible.
The Houston Dynamo	Email Freddy Tuggle at ftuggle@houstondynamo.com	Score at School, presented by Statoil, is an in-class incentive program designed to help motivate students to achieve educational success. It's a simple and rewarding experience and best of all, it's <i>FREE</i> !
The Houston Astros MLB Urban Youth Baseball	2801 S. Victory Drive Houston, Texas 77088 Phone: (281) 260-9166 Or Daryl Wade at dwade@astros.com	Diversified programs for students that will not only concentrate on baseball and softball, but educational opportunities as well.
Houston Texans	http:// www.houstontexans.com/community/ appearance- request.html	Cheerleader Appearances
Houston Texans	playerappearance@houstontexans.com	As part of the Houston Texans' community outreach efforts, players will make non-gratuitous appearances for non-profit organizations, schools and civic functions based on their availability.
Houston Rockets	Dominic Davila Phone: (713) 758-7357 dominiced@rocketball.com	Mascot Appearances deliver the message of "EDUCATION IS #1!" and inspiring them to a better future, whether preparing for the STARS, staying away from drugs & alcohol, or simply picking up a book more than the remote.

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo	Suzanne Brack Phone: (832) 667-1065 brack@rodeohouston. com	Speakers - Celebrating Agriculture, Education, Entertainment & Western Heritage
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Region II District of Prince George's County Public Schools Research Report. Maryland
Institute of Minority Achievement and Urban Education (MIMAUE), College of Education,
University of Maryland, College Park.

The Dream Team



The **University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project (UT-CULP)** enables experienced educators to get a master's degree in education from UT through its Principalship Program, and also to earn principalship certification.

First row: Dr. Glenn Nolly, Lubbert Babb, Rubén Pineda, Yady Blessinger, Natachia Olivo-Ortiz, Faith Fugit, Tiffany Washington, Celeste Garcia, Yamel Melchor, Patricia Ortiz, Tabitha Dudley and, Dr. Barbara Gideon.

Back row: Joyce Ballard, Erin Chávez, Claudia Peinado, Mark Samuel, Kate Devaney, Carmen Rowan, Rebecca Wells, Bryan Bordelon, and Brittany Jennings.