



Fall 2011 SLCP Project Director Meeting

**KANE COUNTY SCHOOLS
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE
2008 COHORT**

The four schools involved in this grant are located in Humbolt in the center of Kane County. The schools mirror the demographics of the district—approximately 35% Hispanic, 25% African American, and 40% White. Although the schools have achieved success in many areas in the past year, collectively they did not meet several target goals. All schools experienced challenges with budget clarifications, programming, SLC and school leadership, and prioritizing initiatives.

All of the schools reported challenges with their SLC budget, from understanding what SLC funds can be used for to not having sufficient SLC funds for SLC activities, common planning, and programming by the 1st quarter. For many of the schools, this situation impeded their ability to offer—and continue offering—academic programs, interventions, and common planning time for teachers.

As it stands, for the majority of our schools, common planning time takes place after school, and it is required that teachers be compensated for the additional time (in many cases not knowing if compensation is going to happen stifled teachers' participation). Without full attendance by all teachers, "planning" fails achieve full implementation of plans within classrooms. In addition, while many of our teachers have taken advantage of professional development offered during common planning time, many have not, which has created a split in the faculty between teachers who are actively engaged in learning with others and thinking differently about teaching and those who are failing to demonstrate any change in practice. The current teacher contract does not require or support common planning time in the daily schedule.

This past year, district-level budget issues (overall at 1.7% cut) and policies stifled programming across all our schools. The school day is highly defined by district policy, starting at 8:10 and finishing by 2:27 for secondary schools. Students must be out of the school building by 3:30. Even so, there has been great progress made with programming school by school. For example, School A reviewed their course offerings, deleted those that did not get students ready for college, and—with a slight increase in class size—scheduled teachers within a single SLC for their entire teaching responsibilities. On the other hand, School B moved to block scheduling and built in a percentage of teacher common planning time during the day. As a result of these 90-minute periods, School B has seen a dramatic reduction in passing period incident and infractions.

Many of our schools struggled with the school-based administrative leadership direction, support, and input as it related to SLC implementation. In many of the schools, administrators were either hands off or overly involved—yet not supportive of SLCs. For many, this impacted teacher buy-in, self-efficacy, and fidelity to many activities, and further expanded the idea that SLC was another responsibility competing with other school-based initiatives. Furthermore, teacher surveys at our schools (78% response rate) indicate that the teachers feel disconnected from most decisions made at either the district or school level. Only two of our four schools have teacher leadership teams that meet more than once a quarter.

All four schools have continued to implement advisory groups, albeit under different names and in different formats. In one school, for example, advisors meet with their advisees once a week for 45 minutes, while in another the meetings are daily for 16 minutes. In two schools, advisors stay with their students for all four years; in one school advisors change every year; and in the final school, advisors stay with students for two years. School C—where advisories meet daily and remain constant for four years—had the highest percentage of students surveyed (82%) who responded that they had an adult they could turn to at their school.

Over the past year, the Kane County school board started a series of community forums to educate the public about the work occurring in our high schools. These conversations have not focused on the SLC work, but we do see some alignment between these conversations and the SLC efforts. The board has indicated that these conversations could lead to a review of district policies.

At the end of the school year, the superintendent pulled together the principals from all four schools, key teacher leaders, and some district leaders to review how the district can organizationally best support the SLC efforts of the four schools. This is ongoing work and no specific decisions have yet been made.

Imagine that you just received this report. With this information:

- 1. What would you identify as the priority actions that would best promote and achieve the goals of the grant?**
- 2. What would you identify as the priority actions that would best encourage and realize increased staff commitment and buy-in?**
- 3. How do these overlap? (Please make note the overlaps.)**
- 4. What district or school policies need to be refined, and how must the grantee revise financial spending patterns?**