Systemic Transformation for College and Career Readiness And Enhanced Social Return on Investment

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Systemic Transformation for College and Career Readiness

And Enhanced Social Return on Investment

David F. Lewis

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Abstract

The transition in motion in the nation and in Florida has the potential to have a short-term adverse impact on high school graduation rates. The transition to more rigorous Florida Standards and their accompanying assessments are expected to promote improved college and career readiness and graduation rates for students in the long term. The disruptive consequences of the transition presents a scenario of short term losses sparking a sense of urgency among educators, parents, students, and the community at-large. This sense of urgency serves as the catalyst for the transformational change initiatives outlined in this document. This Change Leadership Project builds upon the statistically reliable baseline Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratio derived from my previous work, “Applying Social Return on Investment to a Large Central Florida County Public School District” (Lewis, 2014). This establishes a foundation for the methodology incorporated into this inquiry into the application of the theory of change.
The complete Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis methodology follows seven stages. The second of these stages is the development of a theory of change based on both qualitative and quantitative data elements. I saw that this second stage in the methodology inherently lends itself to the Change Leadership Project. This then became the focus of this section of the dissertation.

This study gave me the opportunity to get firsthand experience in gathering and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data in the spring of 2012. My hope was that it would provide important financial information in terms of the costs and benefits of my former district’s instructional efforts. I furthermore wanted it to provide baseline information to drive its future program planning efforts. It was a beneficial lesson in learning various public’ expectations of what educational goals were important to them. It also gave me insights into how such financial analyses might help enhance public understanding and faith in what schools are doing and achieving – and the degree of success realized. Through my survey findings of recent graduates, educators, parents, and community members, I assembled a greater understanding of their perceptions and beliefs concerning the district’s curricular and instructional programs and the effectiveness of the district. I learned the importance of public engagement in these very important schooling and financing issues, and the determination of how helpful such involvement can be to school district improvement. In essence, it gave me critical insights into how complicated and important critical data-driven decision-making is.

Finally, I feel it is important to note that I left my position with the district under consideration in this inquiry to assume my current role as Superintendent of Education in Columbus, Georgia during this change leadership portion of my doctoral program.
Therefore, the following endeavor details what I did, what the district’s conditions were at the time, and what I had hoped to achieve while I was there. As a result, this section is based on what was, and what might be, as if I was still employed in the district under inquiry. Regardless, my study has important implications for me, as I address similar challenges in my current school district, and to the current challenges faced by similar district school organizations across the nation.
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

As evidenced in the previous section of this study, Social Return on Investment (SROI) has the potential to reveal values that can be difficult to track. Economists might suggest that values have no monetary value. Yet, social organizations such as school districts do indeed have values associated with them. These values should be taken seriously as influential forces within the social organization. Examining organizational values provides insight into social investments at work in the organization. An understanding of organizational values provides district leaders with a basis from which to make decisions and analyze outcomes. Awareness of social values provides leaders with additional insight in order to make decisions that are more informed. Tracking social outcomes provides taxpayers with additional indicators for determining the return on their investment of tax dollars. Attention to social inputs and returns provides a greater depth of understanding from which policy makers may approach policy decisions and adjustments in accordance with societal or organizational values with an eye on social returns or desired results. SROI is a vehicle by which to develop credible monetization relevant to the school district and to the community it serves.

However, it should be noted that monetization as part of this methodology is an integral but not a fully exclusive facet of SROI. Thus, the SROI ratio should be viewed in a broader context. For example, there are some benefits that cannot be monetized despite their importance to stakeholders, such as personal pride, self-efficacy, and improved relationships. In other words, SROI can be utilized to analyze both tangible and intangible objectives of the organization and whether they are being realized and how they can be enhanced through a formalized change process.
The change process that serves as the focus of this study is predicated upon analyses of both qualitative and quantitative data elements collected during the evaluation component of this comprehensive project begun in the spring of 2012. Qualitative information obtained from group-specific (e.g. recent graduate, educator, parent, county schools Vision member) surveys (see Appendices D through H) indicates generally mixed perceptions with respect to the effectiveness of public education in the school district of interest to this study and the beliefs regarding the causal relationship that exists between certain curricular/instructional programming.

Quantitatively, the previously conducted SROI analysis based on identified inputs, outputs, and outcomes associated with the county school district's schools yielded a ratio of 2.5. In other words, the district garnered approximately two and a half more times social benefit for every dollar contributed to the district via local and state taxes, as well as grant funding. However, as noted in the previous evaluation project, there are two important caveats related to this ratio. The first is that even when a ratio is positive, such as is the case for the district of importance to this study; it is possible that there are more beneficial uses of the funds invested. The second caveat is the district could improve its SROI by producing more students who enter and complete college.

A three-year longitudinal analysis of High School Federal Graduation Rates from the 2009-2010 through 2011-2012 school years reveals that while there has been consistent improvement by all student sub-groups, the district's rates lag behind state rates with the exception of Black students in the 2011-2012 school year. Likewise, there have been no appreciable reductions in the performance gap between the district's sub-groups during this time period. Moreover, the district’s results on the Post-Secondary Education Readiness Test (PERT)
also fall below state averages. Given these lagging student performance indicators of college and career readiness, there is a clear need for a significant systemic response; one that addresses what Ronald Heifetz terms as both technical problems and adaptive challenges (Heifetz, 2009, p.19).

**Rationale**

The overall Social Return on Investment analysis methodology is based on seven stages. Two of these prescribed stages are the development of a theory of change and the identification of outputs. Outputs are translated into outcomes, which are the objectives or social value achieved by the organization. With respect to public school districts, it is reasonable that graduation from high school with the requisite skills and knowledge base to be successful in post-secondary education or technical careers for the twenty-first century are critical to the economic base of a community and thus a primary indicator of public education’s viability. Therefore, for the purpose of this project, outcomes are defined in terms of the Federal Graduation Rate and college and career readiness as measured by the Post-Secondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) that, as the name implies, assesses readiness in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics to meet the challenges of continuing education and work.

By completing the Social Return on Investment analysis with fidelity, inclusive of the change theory process, and leading to pertinent policy advocacy, I am working to systemically address Wagner’s 4 C’s – competency, conditions, culture, and context (Wagner, 2006, pp. 98-106) toward improved perception and performance. This will ultimately yield an enhanced SROI ratio for our district based on the identified outcomes of Federal Graduation Rates and college and career readiness. As a parent, taxpayer, and the associate superintendent for learning in the school district at the beginning of this study, I felt it was incumbent upon me to lead a meaningful change effort. Toward this end, I leveraged the implementation of the new, more
rigorous Florida Standards and correlated state assessments as a catalyzing call to action for educators within the district as well as the community at-large. I want to point out that I left the district to become Superintendent of Schools in Columbus, Georgia during the early part of my doctoral program. Therefore, I will be explaining what I did, what the district was facing, and what I hoped might be while I was still there. The district may or may not still be the same now. For that reason, I cannot speak on the current status of the district. Therefore, I am writing this paper based on what was, and not what is or what might be; this is in contrast to what might be addressed were I still in the district (what must be or what I might do). That being said, my study does have important implications for my current school district that I will address in my policy development document.

Realizing the district’s reality at that time in respect to graduation rates and college and career readiness, as well as the significantly higher and different expectations associated with the Florida Standards and correlated assessments; I developed an emerging district-wide Master Plan. This plan was designed to re-shape the vision of teaching and learning, re-align resources, and build upon the islands of excellence that existed then within the district. Finally, while it was not part of the first year change plan process, I collected additional data throughout the duration of my study to further examine the initial impact of the Master Plan’s implementation as well as pending legislation that could affect the identified outputs. These data I cumulatively collected and analyzed then serve as the basis for the policy advocacy stage of my project.

**Goals**

Florida’s adoption of and transition to the Florida Standards and correlated assessments, when completed, will require significant changes in student expectations and teacher
instructional practice. Students will be required to develop and demonstrate higher order, critical thinking skills. These new, higher expectations are predicated upon students’ ability to interact with denser, more complex text in order to defend and support their answers with textual or implied evidence. In addition to the explicit knowledge base expectations, students also will be held accountable for implied skills. Examples include appropriate interaction with technology, setting and monitoring personal goals, and demonstrating social skills and their ability to function in, and contribute to, a collaborative group. Likewise, teacher practice and instructional delivery must be modified to accommodate these higher student expectations. For example, instruction and its delivery must move from the traditional, behaviorist approach of being teacher-led and directed to a constructivist, student-centric one in which the teacher serves as a facilitator of student learning. Teachers must undergo intensive professional learning in order to embrace this new approach as well as the attendant increase in the demands for incorporating appropriate levels of text complexity and writing across all disciplines. Therefore, the first aspect of the Master Plan pertains to building community support and systemic change necessary for success. This entails the development of a clear, concise and consistent message for various stakeholder groups. With the need for this message in mind, James Vollmer’s book, “Schools Cannot Do It Alone” (2010), helped me frame this essential dialogue with the public.

I was planning to address the ensuing technical problems in the next phase of the plan through a structural reorganization of the district. However, I have moved from the district and have no opportunity proceed with this next phase. The Master Plan, nevertheless, divides the geographically large district into smaller community clusters or regions primarily subdivided by high school feeder patterns. These community clusters would be supervised by a senior director
and served by a designated team of instructional coaches and professional development specialists assigned specifically to each cluster by the district to work with all schools within the cluster. This would enable a relationship to be forged between team members and the schools they serve while addressing what is referred to as “the knowing-doing gap” (Pfeiffer and Sutton, 2000). Team members would be deployed to schools to assist individual teachers, departments, grade levels or school-wide development needs as requested by schools or determined from data analysis. Because I believe in job-embedded training, the plan was for team members to not only provide the training, but also remain at the school site until the teacher, school administrator, and trainer are comfortable that the training could be implemented with a high degree of fidelity, including the administrator’s ability to monitor the implemented training through a gradual release process.

Adaptive challenges related to the actual changes in student expectations and instructional delivery described above strike at the very heart of the district’s beliefs and core values at that time in that they would require all teachers to hold high expectations for all students. As pointed out by Heifetz, “Our education problem is much more one of obsolescence, in need of 'reinvention' rather than failure in need of 'reform.'” (Heifetz, 2009, p. 9). I addressed the genesis of this reinvention in the third aspect of the plan beginning with the use of appropriately complex text across all disciplines in grades 4 through 12. In addition to ensuring that teachers possess a reasonably solid content knowledge base, the plan demanded that all teachers clearly understand the expectations associated with informational text density and complexity. With this in mind, the district would have to develop the internal capacity to train all secondary science, reading, social studies, language arts, and world language teachers in reading across the content areas known as Comprehension Instructional Sequence Module
(CISM). Established feedback loops would provide opportunities for practitioners to give trainers feedback to modify and improve this training.

I thought the final and perhaps most daunting adaptive challenge would be the move from the behaviorist instructional delivery methodology to that of constructivist. All secondary adoptions had been or would be based on a constructivist construct. Realizing the significant change this represents for most teachers, I thought it would be imperative to take enough time to think through carefully the implementation process and ensure ongoing communication via teacher/administrator feedback loops. As a result, the major tenets of my approach to this implementation include the following: planning; framing a compelling “why”; high quality job-embedded professional development in a safe environment; establishing standard operating procedures; ongoing practice and support; monitoring for fidelity of implementation; and turning “quick wins” into lasting change. I reasoned that the need for distributive leadership and building of content-specific capacity via internal and external resources and supports would be paramount in order for the initiatives described above to be successful in implementing the Common Core State Standards on behalf of the students and stakeholders the district serves.

Demographics

The county school district of concern to this study is a very large and diverse county located in central Florida between Tampa and Orlando spanning almost 2,000 square miles. Within its boundaries are seventeen unique and distinct municipalities ranging from urban to suburban and rural. It has experienced significant shifts in its demographics over the past ten years resulting in eighty-seven different languages spoken in its homes. In addition, there is a high mobility rate and the poverty rate ranks in the top ten of large school districts in the country.
The county school district operates 163 school sites and centers including 66 elementary, 4 elementary/middle, 7 elementary/middle/high, 18 middle, 3 middle/high, 18 high, 2 technical career centers, 2 adult centers, 11 alternative education centers, 24 charter schools, 5 Department of Juvenile Justice sites, and 3 off-campus Head Start sites. The district’s 13,000 employees serve over 97,000 students of which 43,950 (45%) are White, 28,062 (29%) are Hispanic, and 20,726 (21%) are Black. Of these, 68,029 (69%) receive free or reduced meals, 9,905 (10%) are designated as students with disabilities, and 10,757 (11%) are English Language Learners.

Providing instructional services for such a diverse population consisting of 66% minority and 69% free or reduced lunch qualifying students indicating poverty or low income, as well as other special needs students, informs district practices. These combined factors play a significant role in the way in which education is delivered in our district.
Conclusion

Completing the entire Social Return On Investment methodology with fidelity requires strong organizational commitment. While the process results in a ratio of social value to investment inputs, SROI can also be touted as a framework that should allow an organization to quantify its impact. The second phase of the formalized process included the development of a theory of change that, as the name implies, provides a structure for strategic thinking and planning that leads to organizational improvement. The qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted during the evaluation phase of this project clearly demonstrated needs to address in order to improve factors identified as crucial outcome indicators; specifically, the Federal Graduation Rate and college and career readiness as measured by the Post-Secondary Education Readiness Test.

Therefore, a change plan process has been developed that leverages the newly adopted and implemented Florida Standards and correlated assessments as the impetus for change. This change plan centers on a district-wide Master Plan I mentioned earlier that focuses on a clear and consistent message: the alignment of resources, and effective teaching for learning to build upon the islands of excellence that currently exist in the district. By addressing both the technical problems and adaptive challenges associated with this change plan, I believe the district can enhance instructional practices and outcomes for our students and the community at-large.
SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 C’S (AS IS)

Utilizing Wagner’s 4 arenas of change – context, culture, conditions, and competencies – I will frame systemically the current reality of the district as illustrated in the “As Is” diagram (Appendix A), moving toward the improved performance and perception captured in the “To Be” depiction (Appendix B). Resulting improvement on the identified outcomes of Federal Graduation Rate and college and career readiness ultimately did yield an enhanced Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratio for the district.

Context

Context pertains to those internal and external, formal and informal, factors that affect the district, particularly the skills needed by all students in order to succeed as well as the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the community served by the district (Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell & Rasmussen, 2006). These factors are typically social, historical or economic in nature. Therefore, context has a significant influence on the SROI process in terms of how the district’s efforts directly benefit stakeholders and the SROI ratio or indirectly as a matter of opinion or perception.

Poverty and its many aspects is a well-documented impediment to student learning as well as overall school and district performance. Poverty is rapidly spreading in America’s suburbs and according to a new national study conducted by the Brookings Institute, the district has one of the nation’s highest suburban poverty rates. The study, “Confronting Suburban Poverty in America” (Kneebone & Berube, 2013) is based on 2010 Census data and cites that 17.7 percent of the suburban population in the central Florida metro area were living in poverty, the seventh-highest rate among the nation’s one hundred largest metro areas. This reflects a ninety percent increase in slightly more than a decade.
It is rightfully purported that graduation from high school with the requisite skills and knowledge base to be successful in post-secondary education or technical careers for the twenty-first century are critical to the economic base of our county, state, and country and thus a primary indicator of public education’s viability. As previously noted, a three-year longitudinal analysis of Federal Graduation Rates from the 2009-2010 through the 2011-2012 school years reveals that there has been consistent progress by all student sub-groups, the school district's rates generally lag behind those of the state. In addition, the district’s results on the Post Secondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) also fall below state averages.

Florida’s adoption of the Common Core state Standards in July 2010 and the subsequent evolution to the Florida Standards signaled the state’s commitment to higher, different, and clearer kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum standards in language arts/literacy and math. They are informed by the highest quality standards available nationally and internationally. The new standards clearly define and articulate to teachers, students, and parents the knowledge and skills students should be expected to demonstrate within their K-12 experience in order for them to graduate high school adequately prepared for entry-level college courses and the workplace.

Likewise, Florida’s customized common placement test, known as P.E.R.T, is aligned with Postsecondary Readiness Competencies identified by Florida faculty as necessary for entry-level college courses. The PERT includes placement and diagnostic tests in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The PERT is administered to students in public high schools to determine readiness and as necessary, placed into developmental education. As a result, the cost associated with this remedial preparatory program adversely affects the perceived effectiveness of the school and district as well as its SROI ratio.
Educators and parents need to know if and how well their students are learning at expected levels relative to the Florida Standards or if there is need for extra help. Schools and districts also need to determine whether instructional programming and practices are working as anticipated, critical aspect of a Social Return on Investment analysis. Toward this end, Florida originally had joined an alliance with twenty-one other states known as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to develop high-quality assessments that correlate with the CCSS. These next-generation, computer-based assessments are designed to replace the currently administered Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) during the 2014-15 school year.

Given the significant increases in expectations and required technology associated with these assessments, it can be expected that the alignment and allocation of available resources will be of paramount importance. In October 2010, district leadership introduced the CCSS to its teachers and administration. Subsequently, a three-year Implementation Action Plan was developed detailing activities, actions, and resources necessary to facilitate the successful transition to the new standards. District curriculum maps for kindergarten through grade 5 were revised to reflect the Florida Standards and standards “unpacking” activities have been conducted with secondary teachers and administrators during the 2012-13 school year. In addition, group-specific informational digital video discs for educators, parents, and the community at-large produced in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole were scheduled to be released in July 2013.

**Culture**

Wagner et al. (2006) defines culture as the shared values, beliefs, and the “Quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (p. 102). Culture is the lens through which we view
the world, and it most certainly influences our interactions with others and, particularly, those with students. Because of changing dynamics (family, political, economic and social) homes, schools, teachers and students are not what they used to be. The school district has experienced dramatic demographic shifts that have resulted in increasingly large numbers of economically diverse students. At the same time legislation and school accountability efforts have highlighted the performance gaps that exist between various sub-groups of children such those of color, poverty and English Language Learners and their advantaged peers. As a result and for a variety of reasons, our district, like many others throughout the state and nation is experiencing difficulties in addressing the growing needs of our students and expectations of our communities.

In my past position in the district, I had the responsibility and opportunity to visit schools throughout it. While I was pleased to see the progress being made in many areas, my overriding concern remained a culture of low expectations. It is not that the students cannot or are not reaching the district’s expectations but rather that they are reaching them. The expectations were simply too low. Clearly, students came to school unequally prepared, but high performing schools somehow find ways to succeed with virtually all students and it begins with a culture of purpose and efficacy. This is aptly conveyed in the excerpt from the book, “Leading for Equity” (2009):

We acknowledge that our entire system currently has institutional barriers that (a) sort children away from our most rigorous courses and (b) thereby reinforce widely held but inaccurate assumptions about the ability of all children to master rigorous content if given the right support. (p. 158)

As Wagner (2008) points out, the “problem” simply stated, is that we must educate future generations in ways very different from how many of us were schooled.”
Doing so will require addressing both systemic technical fixes and adaptive challenges as highlighted by Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky (2009). This transformational change process has and will undoubtedly continue to encounter resistance from some educators, students, and parents alike as they experience the loss associated with change.

Not unlike other large school districts, the county school district of this study struggles to maintain a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship between its departments and divisions. Department and division leaders are all high achievers in their respective areas of expertise but are sometimes self-promoting resulting in resentment and the creation of silos within the district. These silos and competing agendas are further exacerbated by an organizational structure that at times promotes competition rather than collaboration.

Although cultural challenges exist and the district’s superintendency was in a state of flux when I started this study, there was a core group of committed district leaders who share and personify a common mission, vision, and set of shared core values. Likewise, they were dedicated to a concept of Servant Leadership on behalf of the district, its schools and the students they serve.

Conditions

Conditions are “the external structures surrounding student learning, the arrangement of times, space and resources” (Wagner, Kegan, Laskow, Lahey, Lemons, Grainier, Helsing & Vander Ark, 2006). Realizing the district’s reality then with respect to graduation rates, college and career readiness, as well as the significantly higher and different expectations associated with the Florida Standards and associated exams, I developed an emerging district-wide Master Plan that
proposed to re-shape the vision of teaching and learning, re-align resources, and build upon the islands of excellence that currently exist within the district.

When I started this study as associate superintendent, the organizational structure of the district leadership was in a state of flux. The unforeseen retirement of the previous superintendent led to the hiring of an interim superintendent who had held the position for six months. However, a new superintendent was appointed and has provided stability and direction going forward. Senior directors who supervised schools were doing so by levels (elementary, middle or high school). Given the geographic size of the district, I did not think that structure was an efficient nor effective utilization of resources in that they spent a great deal of time travelling to schools that are great distances apart.

Like many districts throughout Florida, budgetary constraints became increasingly problematic for the county district schools. Our district was facing an $18 million shortfall that had the potential to impact personnel thereby affecting programming as well. Additionally, fiscal allocations and resources to schools within the district were made using a formulaic approach, typically based on student enrollment. For example, Federal Title 1 (dedicated to schools with at least 75 percent of students on reduced price meals) and Title 2 (earmarked for professional development) funding was based on a student enrollment formula and may still be. Regrettably, this did not adequately address the actual academic needs of the district’s most disadvantaged students and struggling schools. Dr. Joseph Murphy (2010) contends that if predictable performance variance is the problem, then differentiated resource allocation is the answer.

As noted above, an emerging Master Plan was being developed and moving forward. Specifically, the plan called for the creation of four “community clusters” or regions that are generally aligned by high school feeder patterns. Senior directors who currently supervise
schools of all levels (elementary, middle, or high school) would be assigned to supervise all levels within one of their regional clusters. This plan also called for professional learning staff to be assigned to a designated regional cluster to provide training in general topics. One of these general topics is EATS, which is an acronym for lessons developed upon identified essential questions (E), activating strategy (A), teaching strategy (T), and summarization (S) lessons (EATS). Another general topic for training includes the Lesson Study methodology, an embedded peer-to-peer professional learning strategy in which teachers and other educators work collaboratively to strengthen a lesson using field-testing, data findings, and revisions to perfect lessons. Likewise, Academic Intervention Facilitators under the plan would be re-purposed to serve as instructional coaches assigned to designated regional clusters to provide strategic, targeted, content-specific training to teachers, departments and grade level groups.

Utilizing funding provided by an Advanced Placement Incentive Planning grant, the Department of Academic Rigor was formed and staffed to provide professional development, to produce policies and procedures, and to design an AP pipeline with the purpose of increasing and enhancing student AP course opportunities, enrollment and success. This resulted in district recognition in the form of the College Board’s large district AP Equity and Access Award for increasing both participation and performance in AP courses, especially that of underrepresented populations. Likewise, a similar initiative was underway to expand both dual enrollment early college and virtual education offerings through our district’s virtual school franchise.

On the pre-K-primary end of the continuum, new emphasis was being placed on pre-K readiness for Kindergarten. I had directed all elementary schools to begin focusing on 2nd grade literacy proficiency with a directive to initiate looping or structure articulation between grades 2 and grade 3 teachers. Recent Florida Department of Education data indicated that the district’s
pre-K efforts were paying dividends for our pre-K students as 92 percent met state kindergarten readiness standards compared to 59 percent of pre-K students statewide.

A third initiative pertains to differentiated allocation of resources. I would reallocate funding and other resources to those schools demonstrating the greatest need based on student achievement data. Since the vast majority of struggling schools in the district met Title 1 requirements, I had planned with our Title 1 director to allocate more funding to struggling schools and less to those that achieved better performance over time.
Competencies

Wagner et al. (2006) defines competencies as “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (p. 99). As previously noted, the district serves a very large and diverse county spanning almost 2,000 square miles, which encompasses seventeen unique and distinct municipalities ranging from urban to suburban and rural, which have all experienced significant shifts in their demographic composition. In addition, there is a high mobility rate and a poverty rate ranks in the top ten of large school districts in the country. These factors, along with the ensuing aforementioned implementation of new, more rigorous assessments, hold significant implications in the way in which education must be transformed, adapted, and delivered. This strikes at the very heart of classroom practice: what is taught, how it is taught or facilitated, to what depth and to what level of expected mastery. Once identified and defined, these best practice factors must be embedded appropriately in the daily instructional practice throughout the district. From a systemic standpoint, this would entail advanced curriculum alignment, the embracement of alternative delivery models such as virtual education, and perhaps the greatest of implications, the development of human capital. In my view, extensive, high quality professional development must become a non-negotiable requirement for facilitating a successful, adaptive, and transformational change of this scope and magnitude.

While there are many effective, high-quality teachers who serve as “islands of excellence” within the district, there were also many who demonstrated a need to build capacity in content knowledge base and/or instructional pedagogy, particularly in light of the expectations associated with the new standards, assessments, and initiatives mentioned above. With this need in mind, an obvious hallmark of a professional educator is mastery of a body of knowledge. Regrettably, this is not always the case. For example, in my past position, which oversaw and
directed learning initiatives for our district, I often made informal and formal visits to classrooms and had personally experienced elementary and middle level teachers grappling with misconceptions and uncertainties, particularly in the areas of math and science. As a result, most of these teachers relied heavily on textbooks and ancillary materials to guide them through the lesson. If students failed to grasp initially the concept being taught, these teachers struggled to find an alternate approach due to their own insecurities relative to the subject matter.

Conversely, due to the shortage of appropriately certified math and science teachers at the high middle and high school levels, the district had become increasingly more reliant upon professionals with a strong knowledge base in these areas but lacked instructional background and pedagogy in instructional teaching theory and practice. Understandably, both of these scenarios are problematic for obvious reasons. Furthermore, it can be expected that this situation would only be exacerbated with the move toward the Florida Standards, since they will redefine academic rigor, requiring a foundational shift away from the more traditional behaviorist approach to teaching to a constructivist approach. The constructivist curriculum and instructional practices entail a radical shift in that the teacher serves as a facilitator and guide to student learning that occurs in a cooperative setting. Given the significant paradigm change involved, I thought this endeavor would be a work in progress for the foreseeable future.

Another key aspect of the Florida Standards and the related assessments pertains to literacy across all subject areas. They acknowledge that students read and write in different ways for different subject areas based on varying content-specific informational texts, which appropriately increase in density and complexity by grade. In addition to ensuring that teachers possess a reasonably solid content knowledge base, all teachers must clearly understand the expectations associated with informational text density and complexity. Toward this end, the
school district was working to develop the internal capacity to train all secondary science, reading, social studies, language arts and world language teachers in reading across the content areas known as the Comprehension Instructional Sequence Model (CISM). CISM Training for grades four and five was scheduled for completion by the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year with a tentative plan to expand to third grade in the fall of 2013. Established feedback loops were to provide opportunities for practitioners to give trainers feedback to modify and improve this training.

**Conclusion**

Given the then reality of the school district with respect to its graduation rates and college and career readiness, I concluded that there was a clear need to develop a comprehensive instructional delivery implementation plan immediately in anticipation of the move to the Florida Standards and related exams scheduled to be administered during the 2014-2015 school year. This process would require nothing less than a systemic transformational change – a radical change informed by powerful questions (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005). These questions challenge virtually every aspect of current practice and quite possibly, the district’s core beliefs. To that end, I thought this radical change effort must encompass a communication plan to inform and prepare adequately all stakeholders, extensive professional learning for internal stakeholders as described above, and a transformational shift in delivery from a behaviorist to a constructivist approach resulting in higher expectations for educators and students. Specifically, it must transition the system from a teacher-led curriculum delivery model with a focus on teaching, to a student-centric approach in which the teacher facilitates authentic activities with an emphasis on learning what Wagner (2008) terms the “new world of work.”
Obviously, this transformational change process represents a radical departure from the status quo requiring both technical and adaptive elements. Through ongoing powerful questioning, strategic planning, focused professional learning, the reallocation of dwindling resources, time, and the institutional will to bring it to fruition, the district could and would improve both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of its Social Return on Investment analysis.
SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

The SROI Process

Conducting a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis allows organizations to assess their efficiency, effectiveness, and overall productivity while providing its stakeholders a reflection of how well its programming and strategic planning are contributing toward the improvement of its social impact. Toward this end, the seven-stage SROI methodology served as the basis of this inquiry:

1. Identification of scope and selection of key stakeholders
2. Developing a theory of change
3. Identifying inputs
4. Identifying results
5. Valuation (valuing inputs and results)
6. Calculation of the SROI ratio
7. Verification of results (pp.96-98).

Only the first two steps of the SROI analysis were the focus of this change leadership project. However, completing all seven stages of the process will yield a statistically reliable assessment of the instructional programming relative to its efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance. This baseline SROI then can be used to compare the district in these areas with other districts as well as facilitate comparisons between schools within the district, guide future systemic improvement, and ultimately enhance the perception and satisfaction among all stakeholders.
Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders. The SROI Network (2012) defines stakeholders as “people or organizations that experience change, whether positive or negative, as a result of the activity being analyzed” (p. 20). Stakeholders include employees, students, parents, donors and taxpayers. I involved stakeholders in the process by gathering data about how an organization’s programming affects them. Therefore, the scope for this study included those elements specified within each step of the analysis described below.

Developing a theory of change. Based on the information derived from an analysis of quantitative and qualitative results, the organization can establish a theory of change. Keystone (2008) portrays the theory of change as a road map for helping to plan the trip (i.e. strategies) leading from the current reality to the one that is desired. It is in this spirit of continuous improvement that the aforementioned theory of change was implemented, which represents the second step of the SROI methodology. As such, it served as the focus of the next phase of this comprehensive study by further enhancing the SROI calculation through curricular, programmatic, and organizational adjustments. Thus, it is necessary to disseminate the results of the process, particularly in justifying the data collection process and calculation methodologies in terms that are clear, concise, and easily understood by all stakeholders. Once the initial baseline SROI is established using data from the 2011-2012 school year, it is anticipated that subsequent SROI analyses could be conducted at three-year intervals. This would allow a reasonable time period for intervening improvement activities enacted as a result of the theory of change process to be implemented prior to the next SROI analysis.
Participants

As noted above, The SROI process benefits greatly from involving stakeholders by asking directly how the organization’s programming affects them. Thus, internal and external stakeholder involvement was dependent upon their ability to influence the process, or benefit from its results. The internal stakeholders I included are teachers, administrators, and parents. External stakeholders consisted of recent graduates of the district's schools (within four years) and representative members from the district Vision committee, which, as the name implies, is a broad-based countywide visionary organization that holds education as a vital aspect of economic development and quality of life.

Data Gathering Techniques

I designed group-specific (e.g. recent graduate, educator, district Vision member) surveys (see Appendices D through H), and representative stakeholders completed them so I could determine their relationship with the school district, their respective current perception of public education in the county, and their beliefs regarding the causal relationships between certain curricular/ instructional programming and the perceived benefit, if any. Based on the coded results obtained from the stakeholders I described above, as well as the SROI ratio derived through the completion of the analysis, I developed a theory of change. The frameworks for executing the change process are based on the work of Wagner (2006) and of Kotter and Cohen (2002).

Data Analysis Techniques

The process of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data to complete the SROI analysis through to its validation proved to be challenging. As Patton (2002, p. 431) notes, “Analysis finally makes clear what would have been most important to study, if only we had
known beforehand.” I depicted the Impact Maps visualizing the identification and valuation of inputs during the previous evaluation project in Figure 1. For the purposes of this project, I derived and provided inputs from sources provided to the school district during the 2011-2012 school year based on a combination of local (Required Local Effort and discretionary property taxes) and state funding resources as expressed through the annual appropriations based on per student full-time equivalent (FTE) and weighted full-time equivalent (WFTE). I used other resources for this purpose. They were categorical funds, including instructional materials and capital outlay, as well as federal entitlement allocations and grant awards.

I coded and analyzed holistically by stakeholder group the qualitative results obtained from the stakeholder survey results addressed above to determine themes (Patton, 2008). I then analyzed the qualitative and quantitative input data outlined above, current output data as defined by Federal Graduation Rates and related data elements, as well as the impending implications and ramifications associated with the implementation of the Florida Standards and associated assessments. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative information served to inform the basis for the theory of change as specified in the second step of the SROI methodology toward a planned enhancement of the SROI ratio for the county school district.

Conclusion

Completing the entire SROI methodology is a committed process for any organization. It requires significant investment in understanding the impact an organization’s specific programs and activities are having on all of its stakeholders – both in the short and long term. Although the process should result in a ratio of social value to investment inputs, SROI can be touted as a framework that will allow an organization to quantify its impact. Moreover, it can also provide a structure for strategic thinking and planning that leads to organizational improvement.
Ethical Considerations

This study did comply with and adhere to all ethical standards in accordance with those designated by the American Educational Research Association, 6B-1.006 Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession and National-Louis University. In the interest of full transparency and consistent with SROI methodology, data collections, reports and statistical calculations were derived from reliable sources and independently verified prior to the publication of this study. All participant surveys were conducted anonymously and treated with complete confidentiality. In addition, I will provide each participant with a copy of the study upon its conclusion and written request. Likewise, the study could become a public document and available to all internal and external stakeholders via the public school district's website. For the purposes of this change leadership study, I limited the scope to those professional educators working within the district at the time of the study.
SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

Given the critical role public schools and school districts play in preparing students for a globally competitive environment as described by Wagner (2008), it is imperative for and incumbent upon them to provide investors (taxpayers) with the most effective, efficient, and relevant educational delivery system possible. In terms of accountability, Patton (2008) advocates for much more comprehensive accountability systems known as “smart accountability” that address learning as well as fiscal accountability; and systems that encourage responsibility and promote better performance. As noted previously, this change leadership plan, based on SROI methodology, takes a mixed method approach. Its foundation is forged in the identification, collection, and analysis of stakeholder input and historical empirical data elements to assess quantitatively and qualitatively the efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness of a school district. Therefore, this change process is responsive to the Social Behaviorist curriculum tradition as described in Schubert’s article, “Perspectives on Four Curriculum Traditions” (1996). The basic values of this curriculum tradition address usefulness, efficiency, and productivity in terms of students learning higher standards and being able to add real value to the communities in which they reside. By completing the entire SROI process with fidelity, it would seem to meet the requirements of a “smart accountability” system (Patton, 2008) that addresses both aspects of accountability and learning what matters.

In its publication, “Social Return on Investment – An Introduction” (2009), The Cabinet Office of the United Kingdom presents SROI as “a framework for understanding, measuring, and managing the outcomes of an organization’s activities. SROI can encompass all types of outcomes – determining which outcomes are relevant” (p. 5). While social value has intrinsic
merit, it can be difficult to agree upon or quantify. Emerson, Wachowicz and Chun (2001) cite that, “Social value is created when resources, inputs, processes or policies are combined to generate improvements in the lives of individuals or society as a whole. It is in that one has the most difficulty measuring the true value created.”

However, SROI should also be a “story of change” with both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Based on the information obtained from selected stakeholders, a theory of change can be developed that tells a story of how they believe their lives might be changed or be enhanced. Keystone (2008) defined theory of change as:

A specific and measurable description of a social change initiative that forms the basis for strategic planning, ongoing decision-making and evaluation. It can be seen as a tool to explain (make explicit) the logic of your (development) strategy. It represents the belief about causal relationships between certain actions and desired outcomes (p. 23).

With this concept in mind, I utilized the previously noted output of the Federal Graduation Rate to determine the baseline social value or impact achieved. However, the adoption of the Florida Standards and the subsequent administration of the related assessments scheduled during the 2014-2015 school year, are intended to ensure college and career readiness for high school graduates and serve as the cornerstone of this change project. This change project relies on the following commonly accepted definitions and terms.
Definition of Terms

**Federal Graduation Rate.** Beginning in School Year (SY) 2010–11, states are required to report a uniform, comparable, and accurate graduation rate known as a “four-year adjusted cohort rate,” which measures the percent of students in a ninth grade cohort that graduate with a regular diploma in four years or less (National Governors Association, 2008).

**College and Career Readiness.** The definition of readiness is presented by the Florida Department of Education as the following:

“Students are considered college and career ready when they have the knowledge, skills, and academic preparation needed to enroll and succeed in introductory college credit-bearing courses within an associate or baccalaureate degree program without the need for remediation. These same attributes and levels of achievement are needed for entry into and success in postsecondary workforce education or directly into a job that offers employment and career advancement.

(Florida Department of Education, p. 1)

**Succeed.** A student may be considered to have succeeded when the following is accomplished:

[The student completes] the entry-level courses or core certificate courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that makes it possible for the student to consider taking the next course in the sequence or the next level of course in the subject area or of completing the certificate. (Conley, p. 4)

**Behaviorism.** Behaviorism is a philosophy based on the proposition that “all things which organisms can do and should be regarded as behaviors. In education, behaviorist approaches emphasize changing behavior through rewarding correct performance” (Bandura, 1986, p. 63).
Constructivism. Constructivism is an educational philosophy that theorizes about and investigates how human beings create systems for meaningfully understanding their worlds and experiences. In education, constructivist approaches emphasize active engagement of learners with the conceptual content through strategies such as talking (not just listening), writing (not just reading), interaction, problem-solving and other “active” approaches (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 67).

Increasing Graduation Accountability Measures

In Florida, like most states, high school graduation requirements associated with the Florida Standards “will represent a marked increase in demands compared to current standards” (Griffith & Sensenig, April 2013). Associated high-stakes accountability policies also will increase student performance requirements. The State of Florida is collaborating to develop common assessments that are aligned with the new standards. It most recently came to my attention that Florida has adopted Florida Standards that incorporate all of Common Core and some additions, including Calculus and cursive writing.

Currently, students in most states are required to pass a high school exit exam or series of exams in order to graduate. However, many of these exams fail to measure the skills and knowledge students need to be successful in college (Achieve, Inc., 2012). A study conducted by Achieve, Inc. found that graduation exams in many states are limited to eighth, ninth, and tenth grade content (2004). Achieve, Inc. concludes that “Such tests provide little value to teachers, students, parents and postsecondary leaders as they fail to deliver honest, timely results” (2012).

Although many proponents of the Florida Standards and college and career readiness standards praise associated increases in curricular rigor and accountability measures designed to ensure outcomes, some educators have expressed concerns about the potential impact on high
school graduation rates. An article in the American Journal of Education Forum (Griffith & Sensenig, April 2013) argues that increased standards do not “inherently lead to higher drop-out rates,” and that the impact likely will depend on state and district initiatives to improve the quality of education and student support.

With respect to graduation rates, it is important to note that until recently state departments of education have not used a common metric for establishing high school graduation rates. A result of a new federal requirement, 2010-11 was the first academic year for which all states used an adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate which is expected to promote “greater uniformity and transparency in reporting high school graduation data” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) and more coordinated state accountability systems. This ultimately will prove to be beneficial in conducting and completing an SROI analysis as a basis of comparison between districts and states.

**Learning Theories and Instructional Methodology**

Learning theories provide a belief system upon which instructional practices are based: “Learning theories are the conceptual frameworks that describe how information is absorbed, processed, and retained during the learning” (Ormrod, 2012). Behaviorism and Constructivism have become two of the preeminent educational learning theories. They serve as the basis from which most commonly implemented instructional practices are derived.

**Foundations of behaviorism in education.** The major tenets of B.F. Skinner’s Behaviorism theories relative to education are reinforcement, verbal behavior theories, and social development theories. Of these, reinforcement theory has had the greatest impact in the field of education, which remains true to this day. Skinner (1958) believed that “behavior is shown to be shaped and maintained by its ‘reinforcing’ consequences rather than elicited as conditioned or
unconditioned response to stimuli” (p. 972). This idea has been molded into many educational practices, and the idea of reinforcement has had many implications for instructional practice in schools. The behaviorist theory of learning stresses individualized work. The goals and objectives for the lesson remain the same for each student. Teachers provide their students with teacher-directed lectures and activities to disseminate and retrieve information and skills. The behaviorist theory uses traditional teacher-directed methods and materials. Traditional assessment methods are also used in behaviorist learning technique. Examples of traditional assessments include multiple choice and short answer questions. All students must meet the required education standards to be considered educated. All students must have the same set of skills.

In contrast, Constructivism is rooted in the work of Jean Piaget who subscribed to four theories of childhood development. These theories are grounded in the belief that “the child, at first directly assimilating the external environment to his own activity, later, in order to extend this assimilation, forms an increasing number of schemata which are both more mobile and better able to intercoordinate” (Piaget, 1955). Therefore, Constructivist educators tend to believe more in experiential learning by doing. According to Driscoll (2000),

Constructivists provide for complex learning environments, social negotiation as an integral part of learning, multiple perspectives of instructional context, access to multiple modes of representation, develop metacognitive skills (reflexivity), and emphasize student-centered instruction. (p. 268)

In terms of instructional practice, the constructivist theory of learning stresses group work. This theory emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving. Students are responsible for their own learning and the knowledge they attain through real-world life experiences. Student
learning occurs through problem-oriented activities that may be conducted in groups of students. Learning through exploration is very important in the constructivist theory. Nontraditional assessment methods are also an integral aspect used in this theory. Group projects, technology manipulation, and multimedia projects are a few examples of these assessments. All students are expected to think critically, work collaboratively as a team as well as create authentic learning activities related to their own lives in order to succeed. The educational approach differs from that of the Behaviorist in that Behaviorists focus more on student response to positive and negative reinforcement. Constructivists, on the other hand, would rather present their students with some form of stimuli and learn by doing on their own.

A review of the new Florida Standards and corresponding assessments clearly indicates an alignment of expectations with constructivist theory. Likewise, this transition from a behaviorist instructional approach to a constructivist approach marks an essential, yet radical shift in instructional delivery methodology and related assessments as well. Therefore, the implementation of the Florida Standards and correlated assessments will redefine what it means to be an effective teacher in the Twenty-First Century. Specifically, the Florida Standards, strongly aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), highlight five instructional shifts that should be incorporated in all classrooms. “They are: high-level, text-based discussions; a focus on process, not just content; creating real assignments for real audiences and with real purpose; teaching argument, not persuasion; and increased text complexity” (Davis, 2012, p.2.). Of these, increased text complexity may be the most critical as it is a key aspect of the CCSS. According to Coleman and Pimentel (2011):

Research makes clear that the complexity levels of the texts students are presently required to read are significantly below what is required
to achieve college and career readiness. The Common Core State Standards hinge on students encountering appropriately complex texts at each grade level to develop the mature language skills and the conceptual knowledge they need for success in school and life. (p. 3)

**Adult professional learning.** As delineated above, the transformational shift in instructional methodology required by the implementation of these standards and assessments have significant implications for teachers in terms of their respective content knowledge base and/or pedagogy. In light of these adaptive challenges, supporting adult growth in schools is important both for its own sake as well as for improving student achievement (Guskey, 1999). When considering these benefits, coaching as a means of supporting adult growth should be considered.

Coaching has grown from a “last-chance” effort to help poor performing teachers into an effective standard practice for enhancing skills in many areas. It can be considered just in time, job-embedded learning that can be put to immediate use in contrast to learning that takes place in a workshop, conference, or lecture, which many teachers see as too theoretical or impractical. Effective coaches incorporate adult learning theory into their practice (Sadder & Nidus, 2009) by applying concepts known to be effective in helping adults learn, for example, the concept that adults learn best by doing. As a result, schools are recognizing the value of coaching. Support from coaching mentors was the “most powerful and cost-effective intervention in inductive studies,” according to a review of studies of school reform (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Additional studies by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (2002) indicate that only five percent of teachers actually apply what they learn in professional learning activities to their daily instructional practice. In contrast, the level of application increases to ninety percent when
teachers receive coaching in concert with professional development activities. Drago-Serverson (2009) posits that adults have different ways of knowing that affects their sense of reality as well as how they learn. These ways of knowing include instrumental, socializing, self-authoring and self-transforming. Furthermore, in addition to building organizational and instructional capacity to improve schools, there is a third kind of capacity needed to meet adaptive challenges. This capacity is “developmental capacity, which centers on the need for educators to be supported in their learning and development” (p. 275).

**Transformational systemic change.** Undertaking systemic change is a “heroic journey that is the destiny of all individuals and groups working today to transform schools into authentic learning organizations” (Brown & Moffett, 1999, p.1). District and school leaders must reframe the problem because our educational system is one that was designed for a different era (Wagner et al., 2006). Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) suggest that change, the type of change needed for transforming schools, is an adaptive challenge requiring a new paradigm, new knowledge, and new practices. This type of change requires a leader who is resonant and can move people in the direction needed to transform the organization toward achieving the desired goals and objectives of their stakeholders (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

Wagner et al. (2006) suggests that change encompasses four areas, culture, competencies, context and conditions. To transform an organization, such as a school or district, from current practice to transformed practice, leaders must diagnose the system using those four areas: context, culture, conditions, and competencies. They must then envision the desired state of their organization using the same framework. Keeping those ideas in mind, leaders develop strategies and actions that would move the organization toward this new vision.
This process ultimately serves as the framework of this theory of change. The key is the vision the leader develops and the steps necessary to achieve that vision. As previously stated, an organizational change of the magnitude outlined above is considered an adaptive challenge, which “can only be addressed through changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties” (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2006, p. 19). Kotter (2002) echoes this belief in stating, “The core problem without question is behavior – what people do, and the need for significant shifts in what people do.” This type of change requires tools that are not yet in the toolkit of those involved (Heifetz et al., 2006). Likewise, the changes needed to implement and sustain this transformational systemic change will only be realized with a resonant leader who moves people—“powerfully, passionately and purposefully” (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 2) and is able to “inspire through clarity of vision, optimism, and a profound belief in their – and their people’s – ability to turn dreams into reality” (p.4).

**Conclusion**

While there may be broad societal awareness and general perceptions regarding the value of public education, there have been few studies that attempt to quantify and compare costs and benefits for its investors (taxpayers) and beneficiaries (society). Completing the SROI process with fidelity can fulfill this purpose. Furthermore, completion of the second phase of the methodology, otherwise known as the Theory of Change, can serve as the impetus for systemic change. Through the employment of strategic, transformational planning efforts such as those described above, as well as the garnering of support and necessary resources, these adaptive challenges will be met leading to enhanced student outcomes and ultimately, societal improvement.
SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The following is an analysis of stakeholders’ impressions of the district's social return on investment, as gauged through a survey of current educators, parents of students, recent alumni, and members of the board of Vision. Respondents evaluated the district overall, and offered targeted feedback regarding district priorities, academic programs, social services, and communication methods. Respondents provided feedback on a wide range of topics and offered valuable comments in open-ended responses. To facilitate the analysis, open-ended responses have been coded and organized by theme. While multiple data elements were collected as part of the survey process and may be considered as part of the holistic SROI analysis process, the scope of this study was limited to those elements over which I had direct responsibility and established line authority while serving in the district. Specifically, these elements pertain to district priorities relative to instructional practices, academic programming, and graduate outcomes.

Academics and Curriculum

All respondent groups indicated that core academic skills should be prioritized higher than supplemental courses. Educators, parents, alumni, and the Vision group members largely agreed that reading, writing and grammar, critical thinking, and problem solving should be among the district’s top priorities. In contrast, few respondents indicated that foreign languages and performing arts should be a high priority.

Respondents emphasized the importance of AP and IB courses in preparing students for college. One third of graduates tested out of college coursework because of AP or IB courses, and 50 percent indicated AP courses helped them stay in school and graduate. Educators and parents were less likely than alumni and Vision members to believe that AP and IB courses need to be expanded.
Educators, parents, alumni, and Vision members all agreed that Career Academies are effective in preparing students for college and employment. Nearly 90 percent of educators indicated that Career Academies are effective, and several parents, alumni, and Vision members cited Career Academies as the most effective program for preparing students for life after high school.

**Non-academic Services**

Respondents expressed concern with the district’s services for at-risk students, particularly the dropout prevention program. A strong majority of all respondents indicated that dropout prevention should be a high priority. However, the district’s dropout prevention methods, social services, and mental health services were among the programs with which educators, alumni, and Vision members were most likely to be dissatisfied.

Many respondents believe that the district prioritizes athletics programs too highly. Nearly half of parents, 63 percent of alumni, and 40 percent of educators believe the district places too much emphasis on sports.

**Communication**

Educators, parents, and Vision members frequently cited email and the district website as effective methods for communicating information to stakeholders. Survey data suggest digital forms of communication are more effective than paper mailings.
Section 1: Educators

This section examines survey responses from the school district's educators. The section begins by presenting respondents’ basic characteristics, and then examines educators’ overall impressions of the district as well as their opinions on district priorities and graduate outcomes.

![Figure 1. Respondent characteristics.](image-url)
Overall Evaluation

The district’s educators perceive the district mostly favorably, with the majority of respondents awarding the district a “B” overall. All respondents graded the district as a “B” or “C,” with 70 percent awarding a “B” and the remainder awarding a “C.” Similarly, most educators believe the district is getting a strong return on its investments. Over 90 percent of respondents rated the district’s return on investment as at least 4 out of 6. A small portion of respondents, 9 percent, rated the return a 3 out of 6 (Figure 2).

When asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements, educators demonstrated largely positive attitudes toward the district. Over 90 percent of respondents agreed to some extent that (Figure 3):

- PCPS has improved over the last five years
- Taxpayers receive good educational value
- The quality of schooling in PCPS is satisfactory
**District Priorities**

Educators believe that the district should prioritize effective academic standards over all other qualities, programs, and services. When asked to rate the priority of a series of qualities, programs, and services in high schools, 100 percent of educators indicated that “academic standards that reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers” should be a high priority (Figure 4). Respondents prioritized core academic skills over extracurricular activities and elective skills. Over 90 percent of educators indicated that reading, listening, communication, problem solving, and critical thinking should be a high priority (Figure 6). For many of these skills, a majority of respondents indicated that PCPS’s current emphasis on them is too little (Figure 7). Educators echoed these priorities in their open-ended responses, where many mentioned increased academic rigor as a school improvement strategy. When asked what could be done to improve their school, one educator said, “Keep classroom expectations high and academics first in all areas.”

Many educators expressed dissatisfaction to some extent with services for at-risk students, including social services (31 percent), dropout prevention (35 percent), and mental health services (35 percent) (Figure 5). A majority of respondents suggested services for ELLs (65 percent) and dropout prevention (58 percent) should be a high priority (Figure 4). Furthermore, many educators cited improved programs for at-risk students as school improvement strategies in their open-ended response. For instance, one educator suggested “a restructure of dropout prevention and at-risk education.”
Figure 4. Essential qualities, programs, and services in high schools (n=49-53).
Figure 5. Satisfaction with certain qualities, programs, and services (50-53).
Figure 6. Educator priority of certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=52-53).
Figure 7. The district’s current emphasis on certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=49-53).
Graduate Outcomes

A majority of educator respondents believe that their school and the district are “somewhat” developing students’ 21st century learning skills and preparing students for college and career readiness. Educators rated their school and the district similarly, but appear slightly more confident in their individual school compared to the district as a whole (Figure 9).

Interestingly, 60 percent of educators indicated that they are not sure if the district is effective in graduating enough students each year. For the rest, 29 percent of educators believe the district graduates an appropriate number of students, while 8 percent believe it does not (Figure 8).

Classes for high-achieving students were the highest-rated programs for preparing students, with over 51 percent of respondents rating AP classes as very effective, and 46 percent rating IB classes as very effective. Contrarily, a quarter of educators believe that dropout prevention programs are ineffective to some extent (Figure 10).

Figure 8. Does the district graduate enough students? (n=52).
Figure 9. School’s and district’s ability to prepare students.
Figure 10. Effectiveness of programs in ensuring students graduate and preparing students for higher education or employment (n=50-52).

Section 2: Parents

This section examines survey responses from parents of the district’s students. The section begins with a brief overview of respondents’ characteristics (Figure 11), and then discusses parents’ overall impressions (Figure 12). The section then examines parents’ detailed opinions on district and school priorities, graduate outcomes, and preferred methods of communication.
Overall Evaluations

Parents’ report card ratings were similar to those of educators, in that a majority awarded the district a “B.” Smaller portions of respondents awarded the district an “A” (7 percent) or a “C” (21 percent), but no parent awarded a grade lower than “C.” Evaluations of the district’s return on investment were mostly positive, with 93 percent rating the return as at least 4 out of 6 (Figure 12). All parents agreed to some extent that the district’s academic standards are robust, and 93 percent of parents agreed to some extent that standards are relevant to the real world.
District and School Priorities

Parents indicated that academic standards should be the highest priority in high schools, with over 90 percent indicating that relevant and career-oriented academic standards should be a high priority (Figure 13). Parents believe that core knowledge and skills should be prioritized over elective courses and extracurricular activities, and all parents (100 percent) indicated that reading, speaking, listening, and problem-solving should be of high priority (Figure 15). All respondents (100 percent) indicated they are satisfied with PCPS’s academic standards, but substantial minorities believe the district places too little emphasis on speaking (40 percent), creativity and innovation (43 percent), ethics/social responsibility (46 percent), and training for jobs and careers (38 percent) (Figure 16).

Parents largely indicated that services for at-risk students should be a high priority, but expressed uncertainty about the district’s programs for these students. All parents (100 percent) indicated that dropout prevention and services for ELLs should be at least medium priorities for
high schools (Figure 13). However, a number of parents indicated they are unsure about social
services (27 percent) and mental health services (57 percent), suggesting more effective
communication regarding these services may be beneficial. (Figure 14). In fact, many parents
cited increased parental involvement as a school improvement strategy in their open-ended
responses.
Figure 13: Essential qualities, programs, and services in high schools (n=10-17).
Figure 14. Satisfaction with certain qualities, programs, and services (n=14-15).
Figure 15. Parent priority of certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=15).
Figure 16. District's current emphasis on certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=13-15).
Graduate Outcomes

A majority of parents believe the school district graduates an appropriate number of students each year (Figure 17), and all four parents that have had a child graduate from district schools indicated they were at least somewhat prepared for college or career (Figure 18). Similarly, a majority of parents believe that district schools are definitely preparing their child with the necessary 21st century skills and college and career readiness skills (Figure 19). When asked which program best prepares their child for success in college and career, many parents cited advanced coursework and Career Academies. AP, IB, and dual enrollment classes were frequently cited as the most effective courses in preparing students. Additionally, parents expressed positive views toward Career Academies. One parent explained that Academies are important because “not every student goes to college,” so the district should “put more emphasis on [career] readiness.

![Figure 17: Is the district effective in graduating enough students each year? (n=14)](image-url)
**Figure 18.** Parents' graduates' experience and preparedness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAVE YOU HAD A CHILD GRADUATE FROM A DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL?</th>
<th>WAS YOUR CHILD ADEQUATELY PREPARED BY THEIR HIGH SCHOOL TO SUCCEED IN THIS ENDEAVOR? (N=4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Diagram showing a pie chart with options: Yes, No]</td>
<td>[Bar chart showing options: Yes, very well prepared, Yes, somewhat prepared, No, somewhat underprepared, No, very underprepared]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 19.** Is your child's school preparing students with the necessary skills?: (n=14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT DID YOUR CHILD DO AFTER GRADUATION?</th>
<th>WAS YOUR CHILD ADEQUATELY PREPARED BY THEIR HIGH SCHOOL TO SUCCEED IN THIS ENDEAVOR? (N=4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Went to a four-year college or university</td>
<td>[Bar chart showing options: Yes, very well prepared, Yes, somewhat prepared, No, somewhat underprepared, No, very underprepared]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked part-time</td>
<td>[Bar chart showing options: Yes, very well prepared, Yes, somewhat prepared, No, somewhat underprepared, No, very underprepared]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to trade or technical school</td>
<td>[Bar chart showing options: Yes, very well prepared, Yes, somewhat prepared, No, somewhat underprepared, No, very underprepared]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to a community college</td>
<td>[Bar chart showing options: Yes, very well prepared, Yes, somewhat prepared, No, somewhat underprepared, No, very underprepared]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked full-time</td>
<td>[Bar chart showing options: Yes, very well prepared, Yes, somewhat prepared, No, somewhat underprepared, No, very underprepared]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Yes, definitely, 21st Century Learning Skills, 64%*

*Yes, definitely, College and Career Readiness Skill, 64%*
Section 3: Alumni

This section examines survey responses from the district’s alumni. The section begins by presenting respondents’ characteristics, and follows with their overall evaluations. Next, it examines alumni’s detailed opinions on district priorities and programs, and lastly, it assesses alumni’s experiences after they graduated.

**Figure 20.** Respondent characteristics.

**Figure 21:** Participation in school programs.
Overall Evaluations

Alumni report card ratings were mostly positive, with a majority awarding PCPS an “A” (18 percent) or a “B” (41 percent). Compared to educators and parents, however, a greater portion of alumni rated the district a “C” or lower. Specifically, 35 percent of alumni awarded a “C” and 6 percent awarded a “D” (Figure 22). Nearly all respondents agreed to some extent that they are proud to have graduated from a district school. Compared to educators and parents, alumni expressed substantially less confidence in district’s academic standards. As many as a quarter of alumni respondents somewhat disagreed that (Figure 23):

The academic standards in my school were relevant to the real world.

The academic standards in my school were robust.

The academic standards in my school reflected the knowledge base needed for success in college and careers.

Alumni respondents expressed relatively positive views toward classes for high-achieving students, however. A large majority agreed to some extent that the district should offer more Advanced Placement classes (88 percent), International Baccalaureate classes (76 percent), and pre-AP/pre-IB classes (76 percent).

Figure 22. Report card (n=17).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The majority of my high school courses still have value to me.</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic standards in my school reflected the knowledge base needed for success.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic standards in my school were tough when it comes to standards and grades.</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>0%</td>
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</table>
**District and School Priorities**

Alumni indicated that strong academic standards and core skills and courses should be a high priority. All alumni (100 percent) believe that the district should place a strong emphasis on reading, as well as writing and grammar (Figure 26), and a majority of respondents believe that the school district currently places the right amount of emphasis on these areas (Figure 27). Relatively lower portions of alumni indicated that performing fine arts (56 percent), foreign languages (50 percent), and athletics (44 percent) should be a high priority (Figure 26). Strikingly, 63 percent of respondents indicated that PCPS places too much emphasis on athletics (Figure 27).

Alumni respondents suggested that the district should prioritize career readiness, with 88 percent believing training for jobs and careers should be a high priority (Figure 26). Additionally, 81 percent indicated that career academies should be a high priority (Figure 24). A majority of alumni (56 percent) believe the district places too little emphasis on training for jobs and careers (Figure 27). Respondents echoed this in their open-ended responses, expressing their desire for greater course options. One respondent wrote that “classes should apply more to the real world, and more career academies] should be available.”

Similar to other groups, alumni expressed concern with the district’s services for at-risk students. All alumni indicated that dropout prevention should be a medium or high priority, and 75 percent said it should be a high priority (Figure 24), but most respondents (56 percent) indicated that they are dissatisfied to some extent with the district’s dropout prevention program. A number of alumni also indicated that they are not satisfied to any extent with mental health services, services for ELLs, and social services for students (Figure 25).
Figure 24. Essential Qualities, Programs, and Services in High Schools (n=15-16).

- High Priority, Academic standards that reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, 94%
- Medium Priority, Preparation for standardized tests, 94%
- Low Priority, Preparation for standardized tests, 94%
- Not a priority, Pre-AP/Pre-IB programs, 6%
- High Priority, Athletics, 38%
- Medium Priority, Athletics, 38%
- Low Priority, Athletics, 25%
- High Priority, Diversity of students, 73%
- Medium Priority, Diversity of students, 20%
- Low Priority, Diversity of students, 7%
- High Priority, AP classes and programs, 40%
- Medium Priority, AP classes and programs, 60%
- Low Priority, AP classes and programs, 6%
- High Priority, Performing fine arts, 38%
- Medium Priority, Performing fine arts, 63%
- Low Priority, Performing fine arts, 6%
- High Priority, International Baccalaureate classes and programs, 38%
- Medium Priority, International Baccalaureate classes and programs, 56%
- Low Priority, International Baccalaureate classes and programs, 6%
- High Priority, Pre-AP/Pre-IB programs, 38%
- Medium Priority, Pre-AP/Pre-IB programs, 44%
- Low Priority, Pre-AP/Pre-IB programs, 19%
Figure 25. Satisfaction with certain qualities, programs, and services (n=15-17).
Figure 26. Priority of certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=16).
Figure 27. District's current emphasis on certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=15-17).
Graduate Outcomes

Alumni mostly believe that the district’s current graduation requirements are “about right,” but a number (20 percent) believe they are “too easy” (Figure 28). Graduates who pursued careers mostly believe they were prepared for their first job (85 percent), but some (29 percent) indicated they did not have the necessary skills and knowledge to be a competitive applicant (Figure 29). Only a small portion (7 percent) of graduates that pursued higher education indicated they were not at all prepared, and a number were able to test out of college coursework because they had completed AP and IB coursework. In addition, several earned dual enrollment credit that was applied toward their college requirements (Figure 30).

In fact, many alumni indicated that AP and dual enrollment courses and Career Academies were highly influential programs in keeping them in school (Figure 32). Alumni who participated in Career Academies believe the experience definitely prepared them for their first job (Figure 33). Career-oriented programs or courses were the most cited for best preparing students for life after college. One respondent explained that the Business Academy was beneficial because they gained experience “with presenting, thinking creatively, and using real life skills.”

Figure 28. How would you rate the current graduation requirements in your high school? (n=15).
Figure 29. Graduates pursuing careers.
Figure 30. Graduates pursuing higher education.
Figure 31. Importance of skills and knowledge for graduating students (n=16-17).
Figure 32. How influential were the following programs, courses, or services in helping you stay in school and graduate? (n=11-16)
Figure 33. If you participated in a Career Academy, do you believe that your experience in the Career Academy prepared you for your responsibilities at your first job? (n=10).

Section 4: District Vision Members

This section examines survey responses from members of the board of Vision. The section begins with a brief overview of respondents’ characteristics, and then discusses their overall evaluation of the school district. The section then discusses Vision members’ detailed opinions on district and school priorities, graduate outcomes, and preferred methods of communication.

Figure 34. Respondent characteristics.
Overall Evaluations

Similar to all other groups, a majority of Vision board members awarded the school district a “B” on the overall report card. Vision members were relatively more critical, though, with no respondents awarding an “A,” 38 percent awarding a “C,” and 8 percent awarding a “D.” Similarly, Vision members were more critical of the district’s return on investment, with over 40 percent rating the district’s return no higher than a 3 out of 6 (Figure 35). When asked to rate their agreement level with select statements, Vision members expressed largely positive views. Over 90 percent of Vision members agreed to some extent that district schools have improved in the past five years and that schools adequately prepare students. A majority of respondents also agreed to some extent that the district county schools’ academic standards are relevant (85 percent) and robust (77 percent) (Figure 36)

Figure 35. Overall impressions.
Figure 36. Level of agreement with select statements (n=13).
District and School Priorities

Similar to other groups, the school district's Vision members suggested core academics and skills should be the district’s top priority. However, Vision members emphasized higher order thinking more than other groups. All Vision members (100 percent) indicated that critical thinking, problem solving, writing and grammar, and reading should be high priorities (Figure 37). A large majority of respondents believe that the district places too little emphasis on leadership (75 percent), problem solving (85 percent), and critical thinking (92 percent) (Figure 40).

All Vision members (100 percent) indicated AP classes, IB classes, and pre-AP/pre-IB programs should be at least a medium priority. In addition, 86 percent believe that Career Academies should be a high priority (Figure 37), and 100 percent expressed some degree of satisfaction with this program. Relatively few Vision members demonstrated satisfaction with services for at-risk students, including social services for students (50 percent), dropout prevention (50 percent), and mental health services (23 percent) (Figure 38).
Figure 37. Essential qualities, programs, and services in high schools (n=13-18).
Figure 38. Satisfaction with certain qualities, programs, and services (n=13-14).
Figure 39. Priority of certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=13-14).
Figure 40. District’s current emphasis on certain skills, knowledge, and qualities (n=11-13).
Graduate Outcomes

Vision members expressed concern with the district’s graduation rates. In contrast to other groups, a majority of Vision members believe that the district does not graduate enough students (Figure 41). Furthermore, Vision members were less confident that the school district is definitely preparing students with the necessary 21st century skills (14 percent) and college and career readiness skills (21 percent) (Figure 42). Similar to other groups, however, Vision members demonstrated confidence in Career Academies. When asked which course or program best prepares students for college and career, seven out of nine respondents cited Career Academies.

Figure 41: Is the district effective in graduating enough students each year? (n=13)

Figure 42: In your opinion, is the district preparing students with the necessary: (n=14)
**Figure 43. Importance of skills and knowledge for graduating students (n=12-13).**

**SECTION FIVE: JUDGMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important, Effective problem solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important, Critical thinking, understanding, and applying school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Important, Environmental literacy</td>
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<td>Very Important, Global awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Important, Civic literacy</td>
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<td>Very Important, Health literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Important, Intellectual curiosity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Important, Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Important, Reading, analyzing, interpreting, and drawing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Important, Ability to take direction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Important, Conduct independent research assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat Important, Conduct independent research assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Important, A broad understanding of other cultures and historical periods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Important, Ability to reason abstractly and evaluate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Very Important, Environmental literacy</td>
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<td>Not Very Important, Global awareness</td>
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</table>

**Figure 43. Importance of skills and knowledge for graduating students (n=12-13).**

**SECTION FIVE: JUDGMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Judgment

Social Return on Investment (SROI) utilizes both quantitative and qualitative measures in a mixed method approach to render an organization’s value and societal impact. One of the initial stages of the process involves gathering qualitative data from various key stakeholders on which to formulate a theory of change. Perceptually, as indicated by the survey results above, a majority of all respondents gave the county school district a “B” on the overall assessment of effectiveness. Educators’ and parents’ ratings (both at 70 percent “B” or higher) were relatively more favorable than alumni and Vision members’ ratings (between 50 and 60 percent “B” or higher). Educators and parents particularly approve of the district’s rigorous and relevant academic standards, while alumni and Vision members disagreed that the district invests its money wisely.

Educators and parents hold largely favorable views of the district’s return on investment, but Vision members are relatively more critical of district spending. Over 90 percent of educators and parents rated the district’s return on investment a four (out of six) or higher, whereas over 40 percent of Vision members rated the return a three or lower. A majority of educators and Vision members believe the school district is ineffective to some extent at communicating budget information, suggesting that more effort is required in this area in order to promote confidence, trust, and transparency.

While my study is complete, I decided to add an additional element in the future. I want to expand the quantitative aspect of the SROI analysis by asking a certified economist to review and validate my study, and I have some contributing team members who are in the process of collecting their data. Once finalized, I will publish an initial baseline SROI ratio.

Recommendations
As noted previously, I collected multiple data elements as part of the survey process and they are included in the holistic SROI analysis. However, the scope of this study going forward may be limited since I am no longer with the district where I began this study. At this point it will be up to that district to determine how it will use the study and its results. I had planned to focus on the district priorities relative to instructional practices, core academic programming, and graduate outcomes. Regardless, it is recommended that further study and consideration be given to services for at-risk students, particularly the dropout prevention program.

Based on the survey results above, there is clearly a need to articulate budget information to stakeholders, particularly educators and the community at-large. This is imperative in order to instill trust, confidence, and transparency on behalf of the district. The culmination and dissemination of this SROI analysis should assist in the latter area as well.

The results also clearly indicate the benefit of investing in career-oriented learning initiatives, particularly career academies. Similarly, there is a need to maintain or increase the district’s commitment to academically challenging programs and coursework such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual enrollment. In addition, it supports the district continuing to emphasize core academic skills and higher order thinking and problem solving across the curriculum.

With this in mind, Florida’s adoption of and transition to the Florida Standards and associated assessments will require significant changes in student expectations and teacher instructional practice. Students will be required to develop and demonstrate a deeper degree of understanding of content and show evidence of their ability to utilize higher order critical thinking skills. Likewise, teacher practice and instructional delivery must be modified to prepare for and accommodate these higher student expectations. Conclusion
The quantitative and qualitative results of this program evaluation project provide a unique opportunity to merge the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders with the current reality of empirical data outcomes, the result of which will yield a meaningful and statically reliable baseline SROI. The stakeholder survey results point to curricular and programmatic areas that must be continued, expanded, or improved upon. And while the results are generally positive, the SROI analysis that considers student outcomes will further inform the district and its constituents of the district’s efficiency and effectiveness. Lagging behind those of the state, the district’s current graduation rates and college and career readiness scores are of great concern. In combination with the significantly higher and different expectations associated with the new CCSS and PARCC assessments, there is a resulting evidence need for a district-wide plan to re-shape the vision of teaching and learning, to re-align resources, and build upon the generally positive perception found in these stakeholder survey results.

SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

Upon review of the current reality described in Section Two of this document in conjunction with the qualitative results documented in the previous section, I will once again utilize Wagner’s 4 arenas of change - context, culture, conditions, and competencies - in this section to frame systemically the desired state for the future of the district. The improved student performance and perception is depicted in the “To Be” diagram of Appendix B. This resultant improvement on the identified outcomes of Federal Graduation Rate and college and career
readiness ultimately will yield an enhanced Social Return on Investment (SROI) ratio for the district.

**Context**

The push toward higher standards in American public K-12 education largely stems from concerns related to America’s long-term international competitiveness. As noted previously in this document, recent studies have suggested that the quality of public K-12 education in the United States lags behind that of other industrial countries. Furthermore, while more American students are attending colleges and universities, many are not prepared, as evidenced by the rates at which first-year students are enrolling in remedial courses. In addition, there is a perceived failure of K-12 public education to instill in students the necessary skills to compete in a modern knowledge-based economy. There is specific concern that American high school graduates will soon be unable to compete in growing fields requiring mathematics, science, engineering, and technology. To ensure that students are prepared adequately for postsecondary education, as well as employment in an increasingly knowledge-based economy, it is imperative that the district’s curriculum standards are not only improved, but also that the curriculum include academic, technical, and soft skill elements in course offerings. The Common Core State Standards, as with other college and career-readiness standards from which the Florida Standards evolved, are rooted in the understanding that college and career-readiness is a process, as well as a state of development. They specify the skills students must master by each grade level to be considered college- and career-ready. Thus, such standards can be considered comprehensive lists of college and career-readiness skills.

Implementing college and career-readiness standards involves changes in curricula, its delivery, and assessment practices. Regarding curricular changes, in brief, the implementation of
college and career-readiness standards involves blending the content of college-preparatory and career-technical courses with so-called “soft skills” and raising the bar on all students, regardless of future aspirations. Delivery of the curriculum will shift from a behaviorist tradition in which the teacher acts as the primary disseminator of information to a constructivist approach where the teacher serves as a facilitator and guides the students in their learning.

Student assessment techniques also have come under the purview of the college and career-readiness movement. The Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association offer several suggestions for how state assessments should evaluate college and career-readiness skills. More testing is not the answer; smarter testing is. Therefore, it is imperative that state assessments evaluate the skills and knowledge students must possess to be successful in college or in the workforce. Student assessments at all grade levels must measure students’ progress toward college and career-readiness.

Assessment reform also should look at the instruments used to evaluate student progress. Achieve and The Education Trust (2008) claim “performance measures” can capture a broader range of student skills than can traditional summative tests. These assessments would include laboratory experiments, research papers, team projects, essays, portfolios, demonstrations, presentation, and exhibitions. Using performance measures in student assessments will have positive effects on instruction too, as it “decreases the temptation to teach only the subset of skills and knowledge that is included in the summative tests,” since a broader range of student skills are evaluated.

However, the increasing focus of the accountability movement often creates disincentives for increasing standards for fear of failure. For example, if expectations and assessment requirements are raised, a short-term decrease in graduation rates may
reflect poorly on the school district. Therefore, the rigorous standards and assessments associated with these increasing expectations serve as a catalyst for the proactive implementation of the systemic, transformational theory of change described herein. In doing so, the anticipated decrease in results can be mitigated and enhanced performance relative to graduation rates and college and career readiness that surpasses state averages ultimately will yield a greatly improved SROI ratio for the district.

As noted earlier, poverty is and continues to be one of the greatest contextual factors adversely impacting student and district performance, and subsequently the graduation rates and college and career readiness of its students. Likewise, poverty, as evidenced in my previous program evaluation project, is correlated with such risk factors as lower income levels over a lifetime, poor health, and higher public crime rates, all of which result in a reduced SROI for the district. Fortunately, a 2008 study conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that school environment could have a more pronounced impact on academic achievement than family resources. The APA (2008) highlights the following factors as key foundational aspects for improving the school environment for students in poverty:

- A focus on improving teaching and learning
- Creation of an information rich environment
- Building of a learning community
- Continuous professional development
- Involvement of parents
- Increased funding and strategic deployment of resources

In its ideal state, the district leadership will realize these tenets in its efforts to offset the
impediments of poverty.

**Culture**

With Wagner’s 4 C exercise for the school district completed, it is clear that transformational change will not just happen, and it cannot be assumed that all internal and external stakeholders share a common understanding of the district’s mission, vision, and core belief system. Experience proves that people must feel a sense of ownership in the development and implementation of these essential organizational elements or they will not fulfill their purpose or potential. In establishing values and standards for guiding professional practice and behavior, school districts fall short of the mark because either they attempt a piecemeal approach, or they are not as explicit as they should be. For this reason, I think it would be important for the district to engage in the process of revising and developing a clear and concise mission, vision, and shared core value statements that align with the desired “To Be” state derived herein. While mission and vision statements answer the questions “what” and “why” of an organization, its core values address “how” its members will act and behave in support of the mission and vision. If the new school leaders choose to respond to my study, I would recommend it use a collaborative one with the community by conducting a community-wide perception survey and utilizing the results to clarify the district’s shared values. In addition to identifying the district’s values, this step would again serve as a signal to persons in the community that the district acknowledges and values their thoughts and opinions as part of “The Great Conversation” (Vollmer, 2010). Once adopted, the district would need to disseminate and publicize the shared core values throughout the district and its communities. Moreover, the Education Code of Ethics should be a companion document that is incorporated into the process as well.
Perhaps there is no greater factor inhibiting student achievement than a culture of low expectations. Expectations of student achievement in the classroom and the subsequent effects of such expectations has been a topic of much debate over the years. Many factors play a role in shaping how teachers form expectations of students and how students form expectations of themselves and their potential. Further, research has examined how such expectations should be framed and communicated in order to maximize achievement and drive in each student, no matter the caliber of his or her starting point, to achieve beyond where he or she began.

In a 2001 report from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Ross Miller cites the findings of a 1999 study by Karl and Karen Schilling, which found that expectations of students’ abilities to success were vital to their education:

The literature on motivation and school performance in younger school children suggests that expectations shape the learning experience very powerfully. For example, classic studies in the psychology literature have found that merely stating an expectation results in enhanced performance, that higher expectations result in higher performance, and that persons with high expectations perform at a higher level than those with low expectations, even though their measured abilities are equal.

A 2011 report by the National Alternate Assessment Center entitled “What Does ‘College and Career Ready’ Mean for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities,” addresses the implications of college and career readiness for students with significant cognitive disabilities, defined as students who take state alternative assessments. The authors acknowledge that commonly accepted college and career-readiness indicators may seem out of reach for some students with cognitive disabilities, but note that the skill sets associated with these
indicators are nonetheless important for *all* students. The authors assert, “By lowering the ‘standard,’ the risk increases that students will lose access to important knowledge and skills.”

High expectations also can be powerful in closing achievement gaps, as indicated by surveys of students and teachers. Students believe that standards should be consistently high for all students, including those who were perceived as being disadvantaged. For example, 84 percent of students say, “Schools should set the same standards for students from inner-city areas as they do for middle class students” (Johnson and Farkas, 1997). In addition to the inherent importance of establishing high expectations in terms of academics achievement, evidence suggests that students also develop the side benefit of an enhanced sense of self-efficacy. Therefore, in its ideal state, it is expected that teachers and students will institute and maintain high expectations commensurate with their respective roles and in the case of students with disabilities, their maximum cognitive capacity.

**Conditions**

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) contend that all social systems function the way they do because the people in them want them to operate that way.

In that sense, on the whole, on balance, the system is working fine, even though it may appear to be “dysfunctional” in some respects to some members and outside observers, and even though it faces danger just over the horizon (p.17). Heifetz et al. proceed to quote a colleague, Jeff Lawrence, who succinctly states on this topic that, “There is no such thing as a dysfunctional organization, because every organization is perfectly aligned to achieve the results it currently gets” (p. 17).

With this in mind and in order to facilitate effectively the organizational restructuring of the district to achieve its optimum state, it is important to first define the purpose and goals of a
school district as a whole. According to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2010), the purpose of a school district is six-fold, revolving around issues of equity and cooperation. The Institute states that districts function is to primarily:

- Ensure that good schools exist for all children;
- Make sure that all students learn what they need to fulfill individual, family, and community aspirations, spur economic growth, and advance democracy;
- Allocate public funds and other resources equitably;
- Protect children and communities against “bad” schools;
- Ensure a “common” education if not a common school; and
- Ensure that some schools at least work together to support a Pre-K-16 educational pathway.

In addition to this core purpose of school districts, the Annenberg report cites that effective districts have three concrete responsibilities. The report asserts that effective districts must:

- Provide schools, students, and teachers, with needed supports and timely interventions;
- Ensure that schools have the power and the resources to make good decisions; and
- Make decisions and hold people throughout the system accountable by using indicators of school and district performance and practices.

The suggestions above point to the importance of school district central offices in supporting school and student success. One 2010 study from the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (CTP) at the University of Washington asserts that:

"Districts generally do not see district-wide improvements in teaching and learning without substantial engagement by their central offices in helping all schools build their capacity for improvement. Central offices and the people who work in them are not"
simply part of the background noise in school improvement. Rather, school district central office administrators exercise essential leadership, in partnership with school leaders, to build capacity throughout public educational systems for teaching and learning improvements. (p. iii)

Multiple recent studies, such as a 2010 report from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), conclude that in order to fulfill this active, positive role in school improvement, the key function of district central offices should be to provide schools with resources to make good decisions rather than closely managing schools and their principals. This idea is echoed by comments make by current U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan while he was serving as the CEO of Chicago Public Schools. Duncan explained, “The job of the central office is to support the schools, not manage them.”

Some studies, including the previously referenced 2010 CTP publication, claim that in order to be successful in this supportive approach, districts must shift the focus of the central office toward teaching and learning in every facet of the organization. The CTP study argues in favor of developing a central office that “focuses centrally and meaningfully on teaching and learning improvement” (p. iii). Similarly, the 2010 SREB report concludes that “the key organizational action districts can take to support school improvement is to define the mission of the central office as supporting principals to create the educational conditions that promote the climate, organization, instruction and practices that lead to students’ success” (p. 21).

Aside from establishing a clear district mission based on creating a learning-focused environment that provides ample support to schools and their principals, districts can also design the structural organization of their central office to facilitate effective leadership. Organizational improvement, however, is not limited to the arrangement of the district’s organizational chart.
According to the SREB report, “job titles, hierarchy, and district organization” are less important to the effectiveness of central offices in providing support to schools than “changing the mindsets and job descriptions of central-office staff to focus more on curriculum, instruction, and school support.” Before I left the district, I had envisioned that the district’s staff would be reorganized into “regional clusters” with administrative and ancillary staff committed to spending significant amounts of time within the respective regions’ schools conducting job-embedded coaching and support for instructional improvement.

Another important consideration toward the “To Be” status for the district is the vetting and procurement of instructional material. The new standards require shifts in instruction and pedagogy associated with moving from a behaviorist approach to a more constructivist one described herein that will demand an alignment of resources that support these shifts. I foresaw, in addition to textbooks, that the district would utilize many open educational resources that are aligned with the new standards, which are available free to schools and districts (Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2012).

**Competencies**

Competencies in the context of this section of the document refer to the knowledge base and skill sets associated with students demonstrating college and career readiness as well as those of educators in preparing students to do so. With respect to Wagner’s 4 Cs (2008), the arena of competencies is the one over which I, as a leader in the district, had the greatest responsibility and influence. Therefore, in order to lead the work of transforming the school district from its “As Is” status to the desired “To Be” state, I thought when I was there it would be incumbent upon me to assess continually my own competencies and build my capacity not only be a transformational leader, but as resonant one as well. Boyatzis and McKee (2005) write:
To counter the inevitable challenges of leadership roles, we need to engage in a conscious process of renewal both on a daily basis and over time. To do so, most of us need to intentionally transform our approach to managing ourselves, and we need to learn new behaviors – practices that enable us to maintain internal resonance and attunement with those we lead. We need to cultivate mindfulness and learn to engage the experiences of hope and compassion. (p. 9)

As a resonant leader committed to developing my mind, body, heart, and spirit, I committed myself to channel my resonance to those I lead.

In terms of competencies for students, the Common Core State Standards and Florida’s iteration of them known as the Florida Standards are aligned to expectations for the knowledge and skills students should possess in the core academic areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics by grade level from kindergarten through twelfth grade. As noted earlier in this document, the development of these standards was a bi-partisan effort overseen by the Council of State School Officers and the National Governors Association. The standards were a result of a collaborative endeavor incorporating teacher, parents, administrators, educational researchers, and content experts charged with establishing a consistent set of high quality, evidence-based standards that would reflect the knowledge and skills required for college and career readiness throughout the United States. To this end, designers drew from the best practices of the highest performing states and countries. According to Student Achievement Partners (2012), the new standards also possess three advantages over previous state standards in that they are fewer, clearer, and higher.

The ELA standards are divided into four primary anchors: Reading; Writing; Speaking and Listening; and Language. Additionally, grades 6-12 include standards for reading and
writing literacy in History/Social Studies and Science and Technical Subjects. As depicted in Figure 44 each of these anchors is comprised of standards, which are divided into skills groups.

Figure 44. English Language Arts (ELA) anchors. Source: Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Furthermore, the CCSSI (2010) outlines below the characteristics that a college and career ready student should be able to demonstrate in the area of English language arts. Therefore, in its ideal “To Be” state, graduates will:

- become self-directed learners, effectively seeking out and using resources.
- establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter.
- adapt their communication and language use appropriately and understand the importance of nuance and connotation.
- work diligently to understand precisely what an author or speaker is saying, but they also question an author’s or speaker’s assumptions and premises and assess the veracity of claims and soundness of reasoning.
- cite evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text and constructively evaluate others’ use of evidence.
- are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals.
- appreciate that the twenty-first century classroom and workplace are settings in which
people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences perspectives must learn and work together.

The CCSSI (2012) also cites that the mathematics standards are organized around eight guiding principles for mathematical practice that focus on “processes and proficiencies” found in Table 1. These standards represent an amalgamation of process standards from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and strands of proficiency identified in a National Research Council report titled Adding It Up (2001).

Table 1

*Eight Guiding Standards for Common Core Mathematics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mathematics Guiding Standards</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them</td>
<td>Use appropriate tools strategically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason abstractly and quantitatively</td>
<td>Attend to precision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others</td>
<td>Look for and make use of structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model with mathematics</td>
<td>Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Common Core State Standard Initiative

As with ELA, the broader mathematics standards are complemented by grade level and subject-specific standards. After Grade 8, standards no longer correspond with a grade level, and are instead subject-based. High school standards are focused on number and quantity; algebra; functions; modeling; geometry; and statistics and probability (CCSSI, 2010).

As documented in earlier survey results, Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings are perceived to be promising programs in improving high school graduation rates and
promoting college and career readiness. Modern CTE programs have evolved from limited vocational courses targeting students who do not plan on entering college after graduation to a broad range of diverse courses open to all students and responsive to trends in the marketplace. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (2007) indicates that new CTE curricula are being developed in response to concerns over the lack of necessary workplace skills among high school and college graduates. Educators and state officials have initiated nationwide CTE reforms to address this skill gap and challenge the perception of CTE as an easier and non-academic course of study. As defined by the Association for Career and Technical Education, modern CTE programs contain the following elements:

- Academic subject matter taught with relevance to the real world
- Employability skills from job-related skills to workplace ethics
- Career pathways that link secondary and postsecondary education
- Second-chance education and training; and
- Education for additional training and degrees, especially related to workplace training, skills upgrades and career advancement. (p. 6).

Given the new and promising direction of CTE programming, which is steeped in college and career readiness, it is expected that these changes will demand revisions to the competencies of CTE students and instructors alike. When I was with the district, I saw these new competencies becoming the norm for the CTE students and instructors. While academic preparation is the central factor in college readiness, scholars widely note that non-academic, “socio-emotional” factors are also significant in impacting students’ potential for postsecondary and career success. A 2007 report by the ACT noted that relevant non-academic factors can be classified into three separate groups:

- Individual psychosocial factors: Motivational factors such as self-discipline and personal
commitment to schoolwork, as well as self-regulation, including a student’s emotional control and confidence level.

- **Family factors**: Parents’ and family members’ attitudes toward education and their involvement in a student’s school and related activities.
- **Career planning**: An appropriate match between a student’s interests and potential paths for postsecondary education.

Clearly, non-academic factors are not substitutes for academic performance, though it is worth noting that they play important roles in many students’ preparedness for postsecondary education and careers.

Further perspective on socio-emotional college readiness is provided by the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC), which has focused heavily on the issues of school standards and college readiness, and released a publication in 2007 entitled “Redefining College Readiness.” In this publication, David Conley identifies four key facets of college readiness (pp. 12-17):

- **Key content knowledge** – the dimension most similar to traditional notions of college preparedness. It includes knowledge of key terms/terminology and factual information, as well as proficiency in linking ideas and organizing concepts.
- **Key cognitive strategies** – the systematic approaches to achieve key learning goals and the ability to choose among alternative learning approaches to solve a problem or complete a complex task. Key cognitive strategies and key content knowledge are co-equal and interdependent, as students develop cognitive strategies when dealing with challenging content.
- **Key learning skills and techniques** – focuses on the personal, self-management skills that students must develop to successfully manage study and work habits in their postsecondary careers. Key skills in this area include time management,
study skills, goal setting, persistence, and student ownership of learning.

- Key transition knowledge and skills – the need for practical knowledge about the transition from secondary school to college. Illustrative examples include knowing about different postsecondary options, application and enrollment procedures, options of paying for college, familiarity and comfort with the behavioral norms of postsecondary education, and the ability to effectively advocate for oneself within the framework of postsecondary education.

As noted previously, the National Alternate Assessment Center issued a report entitled “What Does ‘College and Career Ready’ Mean for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities” (2011) which addresses the implications of college and career readiness for students with significant cognitive disabilities. While the authors of the report state that the college and career-readiness standards may tax some students with disabilities beyond their capabilities, they maintain that specific goals are recommended for special needs populations in moving toward college and career readiness:

- Recognizing and developing communicative competence should be addressed for students with significant cognitive disabilities by kindergarten.

- Fluency in reading, writing, and math are necessary for the pursuit of information whether used for lifelong learning, leisure, or vocational purposes.

- Age appropriate social skills and the ability to work effectively in small groups are essential for future educational as well as vocational pursuits.

- Independent work behaviors, as well as assistance seeking behaviors, are critical for lifelong learning pursuits, including vocational success.

- Skills in assessing support systems are essential for long-term success.

As demonstrated above, the district must provide a variety of opportunities in the academic, social-emotional, and special needs content areas. As such, they represent the
competencies that the district's high school graduates in the “To Be” state will demonstrate to be
deemed college and career ready. This success, however, is further determined primarily by the
ability of the district’s professionals to implement the transformational change in practice.

As noted previously, the new standards are fewer, higher, and different than previous
state standards but they do not dictate curricula. The move to the new standards leaves
curriculum decisions to states, school districts, schools, and teachers. Aligning the curricula and
instructional practice to these new standards requires three instructional shifts or changes of
emphasis in both English language arts and mathematics instruction as outlined in Table 2.
Table 2

*Required Instructional Shifts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Language Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction</strong></td>
<td>Focus: Focus strongly where the standards focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational</strong></td>
<td>Coherence: Think across grades, and link to major topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regular practice with complex text and its academic language</strong></td>
<td>Rigor: In major topics, pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skill and understanding, and application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Student Achievement Partners.

The Student Achievement Partners (2012) cites that the ELA shifts involve adjustments of both content and instructional technique. The increased emphasis on nonfiction reading means that K-5 students will read about half nonfiction and half fiction texts. By grades 9-12 the balance will be about 70 percent nonfiction and 30 percent fiction. Regardless of the type of text, the standards focus on discussion and assessment grounded in evidence from the text. Accordingly, teachers will need to move away from activities and questions that are only tangentially related to the text to focus on text-dependent activities and questions. Finally, the emphasis is on textual complexity and linguistic sophistication will require instructors to provide students with adequate support for difficult texts, including multiple readings, reading aloud, and reading texts in small chunks.

In mathematics, Student Achievement Partners (2012) explains that the first shift aims to narrow the range of material covered and to intensify the focus on that material. In order to address this shift, educators should spend the greatest amount of time and attention on the key focus areas for each grade level. The second shift, which emphasizes coherence, requires teachers to connect learning at the current grade level with concepts acquired in previous years.
In turn, teachers will be able to depend on solid understanding of content from past years.

Finally, the third shift, rigor, incorporates three elements. First, conceptual understanding focuses comprehension of mathematical concepts beyond the mere mastery of formulas or techniques. For example, students will understand not only how to find equivalent fractions, but also the significance of writing fractions in equivalent forms. Second, fluency demands procedural speed and accuracy. This, in turn requires instruction and homework to include repeated practice of a single procedure. Lastly, application requires students to use mathematical concepts in new, appropriate contexts without prompting. Accordingly, teachers will provide opportunities for students to apply mathematical concepts in a variety of “real world” situations appropriate to each grade level.
SECTION EIGHT: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

Like other school districts throughout the State of Florida, the district of importance to this study is facing increasing scrutiny from stakeholders in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness. Bridging the chasm between the current “As Is” reality of the school district as defined in the SROI analysis and its desired “To Be” state as reflected through the context, culture, conditions, and competencies (Wagner, 2008, p. 98) described in the previous section will require the district to enact a sustained, systemic transformational change process. In doing so, there are number of distinct strategies that must be employed to address both the technical problems and adaptive challenges (Heifetz et al. 2009, p.19) associated with the process. This section will present these strategies in detail toward improving student college and career readiness and thereby an increased SROI ratio. These strategies will be framed within the context of the eight stages of successful large-scale change suggested by John Kotter and Dan Cohen (2002). A synopsis of these strategies is provided in Appendix C. However, it is worth noting the admonishment below.

Respective of the change process, Heifetz et al. (2009) cautions that too often leaders feel pressure to solve problems and do not take the time necessary to first assess and diagnose the system, including its culture, prior to initiating change: “The single most important skill and most undervalued capacity for exercising adaptive leadership is diagnosis” (p. 7). This typically involves distinguishing between technical problems that have known solutions and adaptive challenges that require “changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties” (p. 19). The authors maintain that every organization possesses its own unique “cultural DNA” and recommend that a leader must work with others in the organization to determine what aspects of the organization’s DNA should be preserved as well as that which should be discarded in order
to invent “new ways that build from the best of the past” (p. 69). In that vain, the initial strategy is to continue to build upon the programs and practices perceived to be effective by the various stakeholder groups as documented by the survey results in section five of this document. Specifically, continue to expand dual-enrollment opportunities, the development of an Advanced Placement pipeline, and the addition of career academies. Building upon these foundational practices, I now turn to the eight stages of successful large-scale change as outlined by Kotter and Cohen (2002). However, I need to preface this once again by noting that, since I am no longer a district leader in the school district which is the focus of this inquiry, my plan is written as if I were still occupying the same position at the district, and as such, the plan constitutes what I would recommend to the superintendent. The eight-step plan, supported by research, and responsive to the context and needs of the district, follows.

**Step 1 - Increase Urgency**

Kotter and Cohen (2002) admonish, “Without enough urgency, large-scale change can become an exercise in pushing a gigantic boulder up a very tall mountain” (p. 15). Through the completion and dissemination of an SROI analysis, internal and external stakeholders will gain a perspective of the school district’s efficiency and effectiveness as defined by the resultant SROI ratio. The transition to the new Florida Standards and corresponding assessments will engender urgency for change due to the increased academic rigor associated with them. The expected short-term decrease in student performance will likely result in subsequent adverse influences on graduation rates; thereby, affecting the district’s SROI ratio. The theory of change based on stakeholder survey results will most certainly reflect a sense of urgency by both internal and external stakeholders of the district.

**Step 2 – Building the Team**
Integral to any systemic transformational change process is the value and importance of effective leadership. In their book “Resonant Leadership,” Boyatzis and McKee (2006) maintain that exceptional leaders, the type that can lead and sustain such an effort, are resonant leaders. Therefore, an important strategy in this process would be for a district leader to lead the other district’s leaders through a study and discussion of the book. The purpose of which would be to ensure a common understanding of the principles on which it is based, to build capacity relative to resonance within the district’s leadership team, and to establish a sense of urgency, commitment, and accountability to one another and our various stakeholders.

**Step 3 – Get the Vision Right**

“Great leaders face the uncertainty of today’s world with hope: they inspire through clarity of vision, optimism, and profound belief in their- and their people’s –ability to turn dreams into reality” (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005, p. 3). Presenting the “As Is” – “To Be” (Wagner et al., 2008) exercise as well as the results of the SROI analysis should set the stage for revisiting the mission, vision, and values of the district which represents another key strategy in the process. As noted below, additional stakeholder insight and feedback for this purpose should be provided through various formal and informal means.
**Step 4 – Communicate for Buy-In**

A subsequent strategy the district should employ would be the initiation of “the Great Conversation” as outlined in Jamie Vollmer’s book “Schools Cannot Do It Alone” (2010). The district should hold community forums for various stakeholder groups to hear Mr. Vollmer’s message in order to build support for public education as well as to convey the district’s current reality, the tenets of the envisioned transformational change process, and to build a sense of urgency. The district leader also should utilize this process as a vehicle to gain insight and feedback relative to reviewing and revising our district’s mission, vision, and belief statements as warranted. This process should include both formal and informal messaging and entail mapping the community to ensure full coverage throughout the community.

**Step 5 – Empower Action**

As noted in the previous section, current research indicates that central offices are most effective when they function in a support role for schools instead of management systems that scrutinize their operations. Aside from establishing a clear district mission based on creating a learning-focused environment that provides ample support to schools, another strategy the district should implement is the restructuring of the central office to facilitate effective instruction and leadership. Organizational improvement, however, should not be limited to the arrangement of the district’s organizational chart. Job titles and hierarchical arrangements are less important to school district efficacy than job descriptions and the cultivation of a mindset that emphasizes the importance of supporting teaching and learning.

As an extension of this strategy, the district should assign instructional coaches to schools within each region of the district to improve student academic achievement by providing teachers with direct, differentiated instructional support based on demonstrated individual,
departmental, grade level, or school needs. Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison (2006), two of the most cited scholars of instructional coaching, define the role as “part teacher, part leader, part change agent, and part facilitator, instructional coaches work directly with teachers in their schools and classrooms to assist with the application of new knowledge and skills necessary to improve the academic performance of all students.” To facilitate the time necessary for teachers to plan and collaborate, the district should institutionalize common planning at the elementary, middle and high school levels. In terms of facilitating the shift to the Florida Standards, the district should utilize a number of general strategies. Teachers initially should be trained in unpacking the new Florida standards and the key instructional shifts associated with them. Likewise, all educators should undergo basic assessment literacy training in order to understand the distinctions between formative, interim, and summative assessments. Moreover, many teachers do not possess the technology skills necessary to work with computer-adaptive and computer-based assessments. In addition, all teachers and administrators should be trained in a close reading approach in content areas known as the Comprehension Instructional Sequence Module (CISM). CISM is specifically grounded in student interaction with text of the appropriate density and complexity at the appropriate grade level.

The new standards call for a move toward a constructivist instructional delivery model. Teachers should learn to become facilitators of learning and incorporate collaborative group structures in which students will produce project-based products. Likewise, the school district has adopted a co-teaching model as another vehicle for student collaboration that further supports the needs of all learners. Furthermore, ongoing professional development pertaining to differentiated instruction is a critical strategy for scaffolding instruction for increased student
expectations. This is particularly important for English Language Learners and children of poverty.

The final strategy pertains to the often-ignored area of college and career readiness of social-emotional content. As the district aims to prepare students for postsecondary education or work, it should offer a variety of opportunities focused on both academic and socio-emotional readiness. This should include fairs and presentations focused on the practical aspects of postsecondary education (e.g., application and financial aid guidance), as well as discussions focused on what our students can expect from their postsecondary experience.

**Step 6 – Create Short-Term Wins**

Quick wins are essential to the change process—“victories that nourish faith in the change effort, emotionally reward the hard workers, keep the critics at bay, and build momentum” (Kotter and Cohen, 2002, p. 125). Early in the transition process, it is important to identify and support those teachers who are the first to try to implement new strategies and practices. They can ultimately become models and exemplars of professional practice for other teachers who may be reticent or resistant to change. Acknowledging the value and importance of quick wins as a strategy, the district should recognize those teachers who are the early adopters by holding them and their practices up as positive examples to their colleagues through district recognition programs and district-produced best practice videos.

**Step 7- Don’t Let Up**

Heifetz et al. contends, “At times, turning up the heat is essential for leading adaptive change.” The authors continue, “Adjust the heat in your group or organization and test how far you can push people to stimulate the changes you believe are necessary for progress” (p. 284). Once core values have been adopted, professional learning has been completed with current
employees and embedded in the induction process for future employees, the curriculum offerings have been reviewed and revised to meet all learner needs, the final strategy is to establish a system to continually monitor, enforce, reinforce, and evaluate principles and expectations accordingly. If the district is truly committed to ensuring college and career readiness for all students, it simply cannot tolerate non-compliance or mediocrity. It is important for the district to acknowledge and celebrate the desired professional practices, behaviors, and results. Everyone in the system must continually press for ethical and professional excellence, growth, and improvement on behalf of all students.

**Step 8 – Make Change Stick**

The district should instill and nurture the desired professional practice and behavior on a continuous basis or they will deteriorate over time. Therefore, it is imperative that it develop strategy, its culture, and organizational capacity. Toward this end, professional learning should be conducted for all current employees of the district and included in the induction process of new employees to the district.

In her book, “Leading Adult Learning: Supporting Adult Development in Our Schools” (2009), Drago-Severson details her new model of adult learning known as “learning-oriented leadership” which is comprised of four pillar practices for growth of which one is teaming. She explains that teaming “provides a context in which adults can examine and question their assumptions and beliefs about the ways they implement a school’s core values—through curriculum and elsewhere, reflect on their teaching and leadership practices and challenges, examine their school’s mission in light of new accountability demands, and make decisions collaboratively.” (p. 25)
Given the inextricable link between adult professional behavior and the teaching/learning process, the concept of teaming would seem to be a high-yield vehicle for delivering district-wide professional learning with the book “Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders” (Randall, Robins, and Terrell, 2009) as a primary resource. Employees could team together to reflect on their professional and ethical practices and their respective impact on student learning. Likewise, the district could direct staff to develop a library of teaching stories that further demonstrate effective professional practice and behavior relative to the needs of all students, regardless of background or socio-economic status. I envision these being short video clips that depict both examples and non-examples as well that affected students and their learning in both positive and negative ways. Furthermore, the district should collaborate with local colleges and universities to ensure alignment between their teacher preparation programs and the district’s need for highly qualified professional teachers equipped to prepare our students for life in the knowledge based economy of the 21st century.
REFERENCES


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Retrieved from


APPENDIX A

The 4-C’s (As-Is Analysis) Chart

“As Is” 4 C’s Analysis for Improving Student Learning for College and Career Readiness

Context
- Catalyzing event
- Window of opportunity
- Poverty
- Grad rate below state average
- Poor PERT scores
- PARCC assessments (2014-15)

Culture
- Vision
- Servant leadership
- Committed leaders
- Resistance to change
- Low expectations
- Competing agendas

Conditions
- Emerging Master Plan
- Realignment of resources
- Leadership in state of flux
- Different levels of understanding
- Need for additional building level support

Competencies
- Islands of excellence
- Limited use of effective strategies
- Lack of knowledge base
- Minimal use of literacy strategies
- Predominantly behaviorist approach

Inadequate student preparation for college
APPENDIX B

The To-Be (Vision of Success) Chart

Vision TO BE 4 C’s Analysis for Improving Student Learning for College and Career

Context
- Catalyzing event
- Window of opportunity
- Poverty
- Grad Rate above state average
- PERT scores above state average
- Improved SROI

Culture
- Vision
- Servant Leadership
- Committed leaders
- Welcoming change
- High expectations
- Aligned agendas and purpose

Competencies
- All teachers utilize effective strategies
- Strong knowledge base
- Pervasive use of literacy strategies (CISM)
- Predominantly constructivist approach
- Increased rigor and CTE expansion

Conditions
- Institutional will to improve
- Fully implemented Master Plan
- Realigned resources
- Strong, visionary leadership
- Job embedded coaching/support

Students are well prepared for college and careers
# APPENDIX C

## Strategies and Actions Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify District’s “DNA” to be Preserved.</td>
<td>Build upon effective programs and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expand dual-enrollment offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop Advanced Placement pipeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Add career academies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Urgency</td>
<td>Disseminate relevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SROI analysis results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Difference in new, rigorous standards and assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Predicted decrease in student performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete theory of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a Team</td>
<td>Lead district leaders through a study of Resonant Leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build resonance capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Establish sense of urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reinforce commitment and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Vision Right</td>
<td>Revisit and revise District’s mission, vision, and core values based on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “As Is” – “To Be” exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SROI theory of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate for Buy-In</td>
<td>Hold forums for internal and external stakeholders to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Convey the District’s current reality and SROI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Initiate ‘The Great Conversation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Seek input, feedback, and support for transformational change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower Action</td>
<td>Restructure central office to facilitate effective instruction and leadership through the creation of regions and the implementation of instructional coaches and professional learning to include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unpacking the new standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Integrating new expectations and instructional shifts into the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High expectations for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comprehension Instruction Sequence Module (CISM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Basic literacy assessment training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Technology skills needed to the work with computer-based testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Selection, adoption, and training of inquiry-based resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Common planning for vertical and horizontal articulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Socio-emotional readiness activities such as fairs and presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Short-Term Wins</td>
<td>Identify and support early adopters who serve as models to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Let Up</td>
<td>Establish a system to continually monitor, enforce, reinforce, and evaluate principles and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Change Stick</td>
<td>Relevant professional learning, including cultural proficiency will be incorporated into both employee induction and local teacher preparation programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

Preliminary Questions for All Respondents

1. Which of the following best describes your relationship to the district schools?
   _____ I recently graduated from a district school
   _____ My child(ren) attend(s) a district school
   _____ I work for the district schools
   _____ I am a member of the district Vision Board
   _____ I live in the community but do not have any children currently attending a district school

2. Which race or ethnic group do you identify yourself as?
   _____ African American or Black
   _____ American Indian
   _____ Asian or Pacific Islander
   _____ Caucasian
   _____ Hispanic or Latino
   _____ Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________

3. Students are given grades A, B, C, D, and F to show how well they are doing in school. Suppose you could grade the district the same way. All things considered, what grade would you give this district?
   _____ A
   _____ D
   _____ B
   _____ F
   _____ C
4. In your opinion, how essential are the following qualities, programs, and services to a high school? Please rate the priority level of each item below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>High Priority</th>
<th>Medium Priority</th>
<th>Low Priority</th>
<th>Not a Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic standards that are robust and relevant to the real world</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic standards that reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout prevention</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for standardized tests</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher order thinking skills</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes and programs</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-AP/Pre-IB programs</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Academies</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of students</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and programs for English Language Learners</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual enrollment courses</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How satisfied are you with the following qualities, programs, and services within the district? Please rate your level of satisfaction with each item below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely Satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Completely Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic standards that are robust and relevant to the real world</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic standards that reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout prevention</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for standardized tests</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Satisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher order thinking skills</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes and programs</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-AP/Pre-IB programs</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career academies</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of students</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and programs for English Language Learners</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health services</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Survey of Recent Alumni

1. What year did you graduate from a district high school?
   _____ 2012
   _____ 2011
   _____ 2010
   _____ 2009
   _____ 2008
   _____ Did not graduate

High School Activities

2. Did you participate in any of the following programs during high school? Check all that apply.
   _____ Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes and programs
   _____ Pre-AP/Pre-IB classes and programs
   _____ Career Academies
   _____ Programs/services for English Language Learners
   _____ Dropout prevention program
   _____ Dual enrollment courses
   _____ Center for Substance Abusers
   _____ Mental health services

   If you participated in a Career Academy, please note which one:

   ____________________________________________________________
3. If you participated in AP/IB courses or dual enrollment courses, why did you do so? Check all that apply.
   _____ To challenge myself
   _____ To learn more about a particular subject
   _____ To earn college credits
   _____ My teachers encouraged me to
   _____ My parents expected me to
   _____ Other (please specify): ________________________________________

4. If you did not take AP or IB courses, why did you decide not to enroll in these classes?
   _____ The course content was too challenging
   _____ They were too much of a time commitment
   _____ I didn’t know about these options
   _____ My grades weren’t good enough
   _____ I didn’t want to put in the effort

5. In a normal week, how much time did you spend on school work outside of school hours?
   _____ Less than one hour
   _____ 1-3 hours
   _____ 4-6 hours
   _____ 7-10 hours
   _____ More than 10 hours

6. Do you think you put a normal amount of effort into your school work?
   _____ I put in less effort than I should have
   _____ I put in the appropriate amount of effort
   _____ I put in more effort than was required

7. In your opinion, how much emphasis should the district place on each of the following skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Strong Emphasis</th>
<th>Medium Emphasis</th>
<th>Little Emphasis</th>
<th>No Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>Strong Emphasis</td>
<td>Medium Emphasis</td>
<td>Little Emphasis</td>
<td>No Emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and grammar</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign languages</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for jobs and careers</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork and collaboration</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working independently and self-direction</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using computers and other instructional technology</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics/ social responsibility</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. In your opinion, was your school’s emphasis on each of these skills too much, not enough, or just right?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Too Much</th>
<th>Just Right</th>
<th>Not Enough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign languages</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training for jobs and careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork and collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working independently and self-direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using computers and other instructional technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Ethics/ social responsibility</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### College and Career Readiness Standards

9. Do you think it is important for high schools to prepare students with the following areas of skills and knowledge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication skills</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking and analytical skills</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual curiosity</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>A commitment to learning</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>Develop a strong vocabulary</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Connecting and applying school lessons to everyday life</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to take direction</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10. How influential were the following programs or courses in helping you stay in school and graduate? If you did not participate in a program, mark your answer as “N/A.” If you did not graduate, please skip this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Very Influential</th>
<th>Somewhat Influential</th>
<th>Not Influential</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP courses</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>IB courses</td>
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<td>Career Academy</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutoring sessions with teachers</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutoring sessions with school counselors</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dropout prevention program</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dual enrollment courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Substance Abusers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health services</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you said “Other,” please specify: __________________________________________

11. Some high schools are changing the number and types of courses required for graduation. How would you rate the current graduation requirements in your high school?

   _____ Too difficult
   _____ Too easy
   _____ About right
12. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classes in my school should be tougher when it comes to standards and grades.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More programs and services should be available to help students who are having trouble learning.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More programs and services should be available to help English Language Learners.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district should offer more Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district should offer more pre-AP/pre-IB classes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school made me feel equipped to handle the future.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic standards in my school were robust and relevant to the real world.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic standards in my school reflected the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school worked hard to prevent students from dropping out.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The majority of my high school courses still have value to me after graduation.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to have graduated from a district school.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life After High School

12. After graduation, which of the following options did you pursue?
   _____ Work full time
   _____ Work part time
   _____ Attend a trade or technical school
   _____ Attend a community college
   _____ Attend a four-year college or university
   _____ Join the military
   _____ I did not graduate
   _____ Other (please specify): ________________________________________

13. If you are attending a community college or four-year college or university, did you feel you were prepared for the academic environment at your college?
   _____ Very well prepared
   _____ Mostly prepared
   _____ Somewhat prepared
   _____ Not at all prepared

14. Did you have to complete any remedial coursework? Check all that apply.
   _____ Yes, in mathematics
   _____ Yes, in reading
   _____ Yes, in writing
   _____ No

15. Were you able to place out of any introductory college courses due to AP or IB credits? (e.g., were you exempt from any courses because of your scores on AP tests or your work in the IB program?)
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

If yes, how many/which courses?___________________________________________
16. If you chose to pursue full-time employment after high school graduation, did you find that you had the skills and knowledge necessary to be a competitive job applicant in your desired industry?

_____ Yes, very much so

_____ Yes, somewhat

_____ My skills and knowledge were average

_____ No

17. If you chose to pursue full-time employment after high school graduation, did you find that you were prepared for the responsibilities of your first position?

_____ Yes, very well prepared

_____ Yes, somewhat prepared

_____ Not very prepared

_____ Not at all prepared

18. Do you believe that your experience in a Career Academy prepared you for your responsibilities at your first job?

_____ Yes, definitely

_____ Yes, maybe

_____ No, I don’t think so

_____ I didn’t participate in a Career Academy

19. In your opinion, which course or program you took within the district has best prepared you for what you are doing after high school?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

20. What did you like most about your school and/or district?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

21. If you could do one thing to improve your school and/or district, what would you do?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Appendix F
Survey of Parents/Community Members

1. Do you have a child who currently attends or did attend a district school?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

   [If yes] What grade are they currently enrolled in?
   Dropdown list of grades
   _____ Already graduated

   [If yes] Does/did your child participate in any of the following programs? Mark all that apply.
   _____ Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes and programs
   _____ Pre-AP/Pre-IB classes and programs
   _____ Career Academies
   _____ Programs/services for English Language Learners
   _____ Dual enrollment courses
   _____ Dropout prevention programs
   _____ Center for Substance Abusers
   _____ Mental health services

2. Which of the following have you contributed to the school district? Check all that apply.
   _____ Time
   _____ Money
   _____ Skills/knowledge/training that you have acquired from past education or work experiences
   _____ Other (please specify):________________________________________

College and Career Readiness Standards

3. In your opinion, how much of a priority should each of the following skills be in developing individual student skills and knowledge?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>High Priority</th>
<th>Medium Priority</th>
<th>Low Priority</th>
<th>Not A Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign languages</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for jobs and careers</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork and collaboration</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working independently and self-direction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using computers and other instructional technology</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Ethics/ social responsibility</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. In your opinion, is the district’s overall emphasis on each of these skills too much, not enough, or just right?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Too Much</th>
<th>Just Right</th>
<th>Not Enough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
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5. In your opinion, is your child’s school preparing students with the necessary college and career readiness skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area

6. In your opinion, is the district preparing students with the necessary college and career readiness skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area

7. In your opinion, is your child’s school preparing students with the necessary 21st century learning skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
Yes, somewhat

Unsure

No, the district could improve in this area

8. In your opinion, is the district preparing students with the necessary 21st century learning skills?
   Yes, definitely
   Yes, somewhat
   Unsure
   No, the district could improve in this area
9. Which areas of skills and knowledge do you think are important for students to be prepared with by their high school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to take direction</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Have you had a child graduate from a district high school?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

[If yes] What did your child do after graduation?
   _____ Went to a trade or technical school
   _____ Went to a community college
   _____ Went to a four-year college or university
   _____ Worked part-time
   _____ Worked full-time
   _____ Joined the military
   _____ Other (please specify): ________________________________

[If yes] Was your child adequately prepared by their high school to succeed in this endeavor?
   _____ Yes, very well prepared
   _____ Yes, somewhat prepared
   _____ No, somewhat underprepared
   _____ No, very underprepared
11. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The schools in the district should be tougher when it comes to standards and grades.</td>
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<tr>
<td>More programs and services should be available to help students who are having trouble learning.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district should offer more Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district should offer more pre-AP/pre-IB classes.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the schools in the district are adequately preparing students for the future.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic standards in district schools are robust and relevant to the real world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The academic standards in district schools reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>District schools have improved in the past five years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The district works hard to prevent students from dropping out of school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most of the information I receive from the school and/or district is clear and easy to understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school district invests its money wisely (i.e., taxpayers)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
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<td>receive a good educational program for their tax dollars)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the quality of schooling in the county.</td>
<td>□ □ □ □ □</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12. In your opinion, is the district effective in graduating enough students each year?
   _____ Yes, the district graduates more than the average percentage of students
   _____ Yes, the district graduates an appropriate percentage of students
   _____ No, not enough students graduate
   _____ Not sure

13. Is your child’s school effective in communicating student achievement results, budget information, and other essential data?
   _____ Yes, communication strategies are very effective
   _____ Yes, communication strategies are somewhat effective
   _____ No, communication strategies are somewhat ineffective
   _____ No, communication strategies are very ineffective

14. Is the district effective in communicating student achievement results, budget information, and other essential data?
   _____ Yes, communication strategies are very effective
   _____ Yes, communication strategies are somewhat effective
   _____ No, communication strategies are somewhat ineffective
   _____ No, communication strategies are very ineffective
15. How could the district improve communication to external stakeholders? Check all that apply.
   _____ Increased updates via emails
   _____ Increased updates via paper mailings
   _____ More information and updates on district website
   _____ Personal communication from district administrators to board members
   _____ Increased information on Facebook
   _____ Increased communication via Twitter

16. In your opinion, does the school district produce student achievement results that are acceptable given the amount of funding the district receives (the return on investment)? Please rate your response of a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing “the district produces very weak return on investment” and 10 representing “the district produces very strong return on investment.”

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

17. In your opinion, which course or program offered at your child’s school best prepares students for success in college and career?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

18. Suppose that the school district had to cut programs and services in order to balance the budget. If you were on the School Board, what types of programs or services would you cut to reduce expenses?

______________________________________________________________________________

19. What do you like most about this district?

______________________________________________________________________________

20. If you could do one thing to improve your child’s school, what would you do?

______________________________________________________________________________

21. If you could do one thing to improve the district, what would you do?

______________________________________________________________________________

Appendix G
Survey of Teachers/Administrators

1. What is your job responsibility area?
   _____ Teacher
   _____ School administrator
   _____ District administrator
   _____ Other (please specify): _______________________________________

2. If you are a teacher or school administrator, in which school do you work?
   Dropdown menu of schools

3. How long have you been employed with the school district?
   _____ Less than one year
   _____ 1-4 years
   _____ 5-9 years
   _____ 10-14 years
   _____ 15-20 years
   _____ 21-25 years
   _____ More than 25 years

College and Career Readiness Standards

4. In your opinion, how much of a priority should each of the following skills be in developing individual student skills and knowledge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>High Priority</th>
<th>Medium Priority</th>
<th>Low Priority</th>
<th>Not A Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing and grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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<td>Speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training for jobs and careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>High Priority</td>
<td>Medium Priority</td>
<td>Low Priority</td>
<td>Not A Priority</td>
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<tr>
<td>collaboration</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working independently and self-direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using computers and other instructional technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics/ social responsibility</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. In your opinion, is the district’s overall emphasis on each of these skills too much, not enough, or just right?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Too Much</th>
<th>Just Right</th>
<th>Not Enough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Writing and grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign languages</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training for jobs and careers</td>
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<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics/ social responsibility</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
6. In your opinion, is your school preparing students with the necessary college and career readiness skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area

7. In your opinion, is the district preparing students with the necessary college and career readiness skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area

8. In your opinion, is your school preparing students with the necessary 21st century learning skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area

9. In your opinion, is the district preparing students with the necessary 21st century learning skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area
10. Which areas of skills and knowledge do you think are important for students to be prepared with by their high school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking and analytical skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good time management skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual curiosity</td>
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<tr>
<td>A commitment to learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong writing skills for a variety of genres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyze and evaluate information across texts or sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a strong vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global awareness - A broad understanding of other cultures and historical periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop listening skills for lectures, discussions, and other settings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct independent research assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective problem solving and logical reasoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to reason abstractly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading, analyze, interpret, and draw conclusions from data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecting and applying school lessons to everyday life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to take direction</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
11. Do you teach high school seniors?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

   [If yes] Do the majority of your students graduate from high school?
   _____ Yes, most students graduate
   _____ Yes, some students graduate
   _____ No, most students do not graduate

   [If yes] What do the majority of your students do after graduation? Check all that apply.
   _____ Trade or technical school
   _____ Community college
   _____ Four-year college or university
   _____ Work part-time
   _____ Work full-time
   _____ Join the military
   _____ Other (please specify): ________________________________________

12. On average, could you estimate what percentage of seniors at your school graduate?
   _____ 91-100%
   _____ 81-90%
   _____ 71-80%
   _____ 61-70%
   _____ 51-60%
   _____ 50% of less

13. Do you believe that students at your school are prepared to succeed in higher education or their chosen occupational field?
   _____ Yes, very well prepared
14. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The schools in the district should be tougher when it comes to standards and grades.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More programs and services should be available to help students who are having trouble learning.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More programs and services should be available to help English Language Learners.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The district should offer more Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>The district should offer more pre-AP/pre-IB classes.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the schools in the district are adequately preparing students for the future.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic standards in the district schools are robust and relevant to the real world.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>The academic standards in district schools reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>District schools have improved in the past five years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The district works hard to prevent students from dropping out of school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school district invests its money wisely (i.e., taxpayers receive a good educational program for their tax dollars).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the quality of the schools in the county.</td>
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15. In your opinion, is the district effective in graduating enough students each year?
   _____ Yes, the district graduates more than the average percentage of students
   _____ Yes, the district graduates an appropriate percentage of students
   _____ No, not enough students graduate
   _____ Not sure

16. Is the district effective in communicating student achievement results, budget information, and other essential data?
   _____ Yes, district communication strategies are very effective
   _____ Yes, district communication strategies are somewhat effective
   _____ No, district communication strategies are somewhat ineffective
   _____ No, district communication strategies are very ineffective

17. How could the district improve communication to internal and external stakeholders? Check all that apply.
   _____ Increased updates via emails
   _____ Increased updates via paper mailings
   _____ More information and updates on district website
   _____ More communication from teachers and administrators to parents
18. In your opinion, does the school district produce student achievement results that are acceptable given the amount of funding the district receives (the return on investment)? Please rate your response of a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing “the district produces very weak return on investment” and 10 representing “the district produces very strong return on investment.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. What is your opinion of the effectiveness of the following programs in ensuring students graduate and preparing students for higher education or employment upon graduation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Very Effective</th>
<th>Somewhat Effective</th>
<th>Neither Effective nor Ineffective</th>
<th>Somewhat Ineffective</th>
<th>Very Ineffective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP courses</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>IB courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Academies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dual enrollment courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dropout prevention programs</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-AP courses</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-IB courses</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. In your opinion, which course or program offered at your school best prepares students for success in college and career?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

21. Suppose that the school district had to cut programs and services in order to balance the budget. If you were on the School Board, what types of programs or services would you cut to reduce expenses?
22. What do you like most about this district?

__________________________________________________________________________

23. If you could do one thing to improve your school, what would you do?

__________________________________________________________________________

24. If you could do one thing to improve the district, what would you do?

__________________________________________________________________________
Appendix H

Survey of Vision Board Members

1. How long have you served on the Vision team?
   ________________________________________________________________

2. Have you ever been involved with the district schools?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

3. [If yes] Which of the following have you contributed to the school district in that time? Check all that apply.
   _____ Time
   _____ Money
   _____ Skills/knowledge/training that you have acquired from past education or work experiences
   _____ Other (please specify): ________________________________________________________________

College and Career Readiness Standards

4. In your opinion, how much of a priority should each of the following skills be in developing individual student skills and knowledge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>High Priority</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Using computers and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>High Priority</td>
<td>Medium Priority</td>
<td>Low Priority</td>
<td>Not A Priority</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>other instructional technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics/ social responsibility</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. In your opinion, is the district’s overall emphasis on each of these skills too much, not enough, or just right?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Too Much</th>
<th>Just Right</th>
<th>Not Enough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing and grammar</td>
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<td>Foreign languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training for jobs and careers</td>
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<td>Teamwork and collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working independently and self-direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using computers and other instructional technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity and innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics/ social responsibility</td>
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</table>

6. In your opinion, is the district preparing students with the necessary college and career readiness skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area
7. In your opinion, is the district preparing students with the necessary 21st century learning skills?
   _____ Yes, definitely
   _____ Yes, somewhat
   _____ Unsure
   _____ No, the district could improve in this area

8. Which areas of skills and knowledge do you think are important for students to be prepared with by their high school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking and analytical skills</td>
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<td>Good time management skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual curiosity</td>
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<td>A commitment to learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong writing skills for a variety of genres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyze and evaluate information across texts or sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a strong vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global awareness - A broad understanding of other cultures and historical periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop listening skills for lectures, discussions, and other settings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct independent research assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective problem solving and logical reasoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to reason abstractly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading, analyze, interpret, and draw conclusions from data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecting and applying school lessons to everyday life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy</td>
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<td>Civic literacy</td>
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<td>Health literacy</td>
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<td>Environmental literacy</td>
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<td>Ability to take direction</td>
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</table>
9. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The schools in the district should be tougher when it comes to standards and grades.</td>
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<td>More programs and services should be available to help students who are having trouble learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>More programs and services should be available to help English Language Learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The district should offer more Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The district should offer more pre-AP/pre-IB classes.</td>
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<td>I believe that the schools in the district schools are adequately preparing students for the future.</td>
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<td>The academic standards in district schools are robust and relevant to the real world.</td>
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<td>The academic standards in district schools reflect the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers.</td>
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<td>District schools have improved in the past five years.</td>
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<td>The district works hard to prevent students from dropping out of school.</td>
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<td>Most of the information I receive from the school and/or district is clear and easy to understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school district invests its money wisely (i.e., taxpayers receive a good educational program for their tax dollars).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the quality of schooling in the county.</td>
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</table>

9. In your opinion, is the district effective in graduating enough students each year?
   _____ Yes, the district graduates more than the average percentage of students
   _____ Yes, the district graduates an appropriate percentage of students
   _____ No, not enough students graduate

10. Is the district effective in communicating student achievement results, budget information, and other essential data?
    _____ Yes, district communication strategies are very effective
    _____ Yes, district communication strategies are somewhat effective
    _____ No, district communication strategies are somewhat ineffective
    _____ No, district communication strategies are very ineffective

11. How could the district improve communication to external stakeholders? Check all that apply.
    _____ Increased updates via emails
    _____ Increased updates via paper mailings
    _____ More information and updates on district website
    _____ Personal communication from district administrators to board members
    _____ Increased information on Facebook
    _____ Increased communication via Twitter

12. In your opinion, does the county school district produce student achievement results that are acceptable given the amount of funding the district receives (the return on investment)? Please rate your response of a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing “the district produces very weak
13. Do you have any interaction with recent graduates of the district high schools? If so, please explain.

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

[If yes] Have these recent graduates impacted your opinions of the district? Please explain.

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

14. In your opinion, which course or program offered in district schools best prepares students for success in college and career?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

15. Suppose that the school district had to cut programs and services in order to balance the budget. If you were on the School Board, what types of programs or services would you cut to reduce expenses?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

16. What do you like most about this district?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

17. If you could do one thing to improve the district, what would you do?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix I

District Consent Letter

Informed Consent – District

On behalf of the Polk County Public School District, Polk County, Florida, I consent to participate in a research study conducted by David F. Lewis, a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida.

The study is entitled Applying Social Return on Investment to Public Educational Programming and will be conducted during the 2012-2013 school year. Given the critical role public schools and school districts play in preparing students for a globally competitive environment, it is imperative for and incumbent upon them to provide investors (taxpayers) with the most effective, efficient and relevant educational delivery system possible. The methodology used for this process is known as Social Return on Investment (SROI), a type of social accounting that is becoming widely applied to non-profit organizations. The purpose of this study is to complete all seven steps of the SROI analysis in order to render a statistically reliable assessment to determine the efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance of the educational programming relative to Polk County Public Schools located in Polk County, Florida. This baseline SROI may then be used as the basis for comparisons with other districts as well as between schools within the district, guide future systemic improvement, and ultimately enhance the perception and satisfaction among all stakeholders.

Internal and external stakeholder involvement will be dependent upon the extent to which they could influence the process of the project, or benefit from its results. The internal stakeholders I will include are teachers, administrators, and parents. External stakeholders will consist of recent graduates of the Polk County Public Schools (within four years) and representative members from Polk Vision, which, as the name implies, is a broad-based countywide visionary organization.

I understand that randomly selected internal stakeholders comprised of adult participants from the district (teachers, school-based administrators, and district level administrators) will voluntarily complete a survey consisting of twenty questions requiring approximately twenty minutes to complete. Its general purpose is to determine the stakeholder’s relationship with Polk County Public Schools, their respective current perception of public education in Polk County, and their beliefs regarding the causal relationships between certain curricular/ instructional programming adjustments and desired outcomes.

I understand that data collected will be for the sole purpose of completing the seven steps of the baseline SROI analysis. For the purposes of this project, inputs will be derived from sources provided to the Polk County Public Schools during the 2011-2012 school year based on a combination of local (Required Local Effort and discretionary property taxes) and state funding.
resources as expressed through the annual appropriations based on per student full-time equivalent (FTE) and weighted full-time equivalent (WFTE). Other resources used are categorical funds, including instructional materials and capital outlay, as well as federal entitlement allocations and grant awards.

Outputs will be translated into outcomes, which are the objectives or the social value impacts achieved. Therefore, for the purposes of this project, outputs will be defined in terms of the Federal Graduation Rate and college and career readiness as measured by the Post-Secondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) that, as the name implies, assesses readiness in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics to meet the challenges of continuing education and work.

I understand that participation involved in the research project presents minimal risks, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Although there is no direct benefit from participating in this research study, composite stakeholder results will be utilized in conjunction with the Theory of Change toward affecting change and improving the district’s future as well as that of its stakeholders. In addition, each participant will be provided with a copy of the study upon its conclusion. Likewise, the study will become a public document and available to all internal and external stakeholders via the Polk County Public Schools website.

I understand that the identities of all participants will be kept confidential by the researcher and that all research data collected will be kept in a secure file with sole access by the researcher.

I understand that the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported as deemed appropriate by National Louis University but participant identities will in no way be revealed.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information, I may contact the researcher:

David F. Lewis  
410 Edgewood Drive  
Fort Meade, Florida 33841 USA  
(863) 285-9101  
Email address: dlewis24@my.nl.edu

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation, you may also contact the Primary Advisor Dissertation Chair:

Dr. James L. Schott, Assistant Professor and Chair  
EDL Florida Program – Department of Educational Leadership  
National Louis University – Florida Regional Campus  
4950 West Kennedy Blvd. Suite 300  
Tampa, Florida 33609 USA  
(813) 491-6114
Email Address: JimUA@aol.com

I understand the above provisions and agree to participate in the Applying Social Return on Investment to Public Educational Programming research study.

Participant Signature ______________________________ Date ________________

Researcher Signature ______________________________ Date ________________

Appendix J

Participant Consent Letter

Informed Consent – Participant
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by David F. Lewis, a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement including your rights as a participant.

The study is entitled Applying Social Return on Investment to Public Educational Programming and will be conducted during the 2012-2013 school year. Given the critical role public schools and school districts play in preparing students for a globally competitive environment, it is imperative for and incumbent upon them to provide investors (taxpayers) with the most effective, efficient and relevant educational delivery system possible. The methodology used for this process is known as Social Return on Investment (SROI), a type of social accounting that is becoming widely applied to non-profit organizations. The purpose of this study is to complete all seven steps of the SROI analysis in order to render a statistically reliable assessment to determine the efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance of the educational programming relative to Polk County Public Schools located in Polk County, Florida. This baseline SROI may then be used as the basis for comparisons with other districts as well as between schools within the district, guide future systemic improvement, and ultimately enhance the perception and satisfaction among all stakeholders.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and will involve the completion of a survey consisting of twenty questions requiring approximately twenty minutes to complete. Its general purpose is to determine the stakeholder’s relationship with Polk County Public Schools, their respective current perception of public education in Polk County, and their beliefs regarding the causal relationships between certain curricular/ instructional programming adjustments and desired outcomes.

I understand that my participation involved in the research project presents minimal risks, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Although there is no direct benefit from participating in this research study, composite stakeholder results will be utilized in conjunction with the Theory of Change toward affecting change and improving the district’s future as well as that of its stakeholders. In addition, each participant will be provided with a copy of the study upon its conclusion. Likewise, the study will become a public document and available to all internal and external stakeholders via the Polk County Public Schools website.

I understand that my identity as a participant will be kept confidential by the researcher and that all research data collected that pertains to me, will be kept in a secure file with sole access by the researcher.

I understand that the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported as deemed appropriate by National Louis University but participant identities will in no way be revealed.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information, I may contact the researcher:
If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation, you may also contact the Primary Advisor Dissertation Chair:

Dr. James L. Schott, Assistant Professor and Chair
EDL Florida Program – Department of Educational Leadership
National Louis University – Florida Regional Campus
4950 West Kennedy Blvd. Suite 300
Tampa, Florida 33609 USA
(813) 491-6114
Email Address: JimUA@aol.com

I understand the above provisions and agree to participate in the Applying Social Return on Investment to Public Educational Programming research study.

Participant Signature__________________________________ Date ________________

Researcher Signature _________________________________ Date ________________