



SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH  
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# ***Early Implementation Report: Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies to Improve Academic, Social, and Career Pathways in Persistently Dangerous Schools – Generation I***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2008, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) provided funding to nine schools in the form of the *Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies to Improve Academic, Social, and Career Pathway Outcomes in Persistently Dangerous Schools Grants* (MEES grants). As indicated in the grant title, these nine schools had been designated as “persistently dangerous” under the Unsafe School Choice Option of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).<sup>1</sup> The central goal of the MEES grants is to reduce violence within these schools by combining mentoring, educational, employment, case management, and violence-prevention strategies for positive school change. The schools are using the grant to restructure themselves in ways that expand the levels of services provided to students and enhance coordination of these services within the schools and their communities.

DOL contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate how these nine schools have planned, designed, and implemented programs, interventions, and services under the MEES grants. This *Early Implementation Report of the Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies to Improve Academic, Social, and Career Pathways in Persistently Dangerous Schools – Generation I* presents the evaluation’s findings as of the end of the first year of grant implementation, school year (SY) 2009–2010. The report describes, in depth, the strategies that schools are using to improve school climate and increase academic achievement and summarizes grantees’ accomplishments and challenges. This evaluation is an early implementation study that relies heavily on qualitative data gathered from nearly thirty telephone interviews and four rounds of site visits to each school. The evaluation also draws on quantitative data from management information system (MIS) reports, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), and the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN).

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<sup>1</sup> These schools are Berkshire Junior/Senior High School in New Canaan, NY; W.E.B. Du Bois HS in Baltimore, MD; and the following schools in Philadelphia, PA: John Bartram HS, FitzSimons HS, Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, Overbrook HS, University HS, and West Philadelphia HS.

## Overview of the MEES Grant

A number of key institutional players are involved in designing, supporting, and implementing the grant-funded programs. These key players include school districts (the grant recipients), schools, and contractors.

Three school districts are MEES grant recipients. The School District of Philadelphia (SDP), the largest of the three districts, is made up of 284 schools, seven of which are participating in the MEES initiative. In 2009, SDP received an influx of stimulus funding, and as a result, the overall budget of SDP schools rose independently of the MEES grant in SY 2008–2009 and SY 2009–2010. Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) enrolls more than 80,000 students, but only one of BCPS’s schools—Du Bois HS—is participating in the MEES initiative. Berkshire Unified Free School District (BUFSD) is a small, rural district with only one school. BUFSD serves exclusively male students who are referred to the district by their home school districts, the Department of Social Services, or the courts because they are a threat to themselves or someone else or because of behavioral problems.

Although the district is the grant recipient for each of the nine MEES schools, the level of oversight and leadership each district provides for the grant varies. BCPS has taken a fairly hands-off role with the MEES grant, as the grant is being managed at the school level. SDP plays a much larger role in grant administration and oversight than do the other districts; it is responsible for providing fiscal oversight for the grants, developing the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for community-based organizations (CBOs) that will serve as contractors, hiring staff members, selecting curriculum, and providing technical assistance to the schools.

Seven of the nine schools involved in the MEES grants—Bartram HS, FitzSimons HS, Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, Overbrook HS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS—are part of SDP. The remaining two schools—Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS—are part of BUFSD and BCPS respectively. All the schools were eligible for the grant because they were designated as “persistently dangerous” and all failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB for SY 2009–2010.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of Berkshire JSHS, all are non-selective neighborhood schools. Grant leadership at each school is typically three-tiered, with the principal, Turnaround Assistant Principal/grant administrator (hereby referred to as the TAP), and Turnaround Team all playing roles.

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<sup>2</sup> Each state sets its own standards for AYP based on standardized test scores in reading/language arts and math and graduation rates.

The schools funded by the grant share certain common challenges that influence and provide a context for MEES grant implementation. All of the schools except Du Bois HS have had declining enrollment in recent years. Enrollment at three of the schools—Berkshire JSHS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS—dropped by 30 or more percent between SY 2007–2008 SY and SY 2009–2010. Most of the schools have large numbers of repeating ninth graders—those who did not earn sufficient credits to be promoted to the tenth grade in the previous year. The schools also have high rates of student mobility. Across the grant-funded schools, the student populations are predominantly African American, low-income, and male.

Grantee schools contracted with a number of CBOs to implement interventions under the MEES grant. In total, more than 25 contractors are providing services under the MEES grant, although the depth and intensity of their involvement vary greatly. Each school is working with between one and nine contractors, with some contractors providing services in multiple strategies at one school.

## Grant Implementation

DOL used PY 2007 and PY 2008 funds to provide initial grants of \$6.4 million to the seven larger schools and \$3.7 million to the two smaller schools to cover a planning period and two years of operation. DOL subsequently used PY 2009 funds to provide partial third year funds of \$960,000 to the larger schools and \$546,000 to the smaller schools, with plans to use PY 2010 funds to provide the remaining third-year funds. An analysis of schools' planned budgets shows that schools planned to direct the majority of their funding to personnel and fringe costs (52 percent on average).<sup>3</sup> Contracts make up the next largest category of spending (35 percent of budgets on average) and expenditures for supplies, travel, and other/indirect charges together make up less than one-eighth (12 percent) of the average budget. On average, schools budgeted the bulk of their grants for education reforms and interventions (42 percent of the average budget) and employment/case management services (25 percent).<sup>4</sup> Relatively little funding is going to school climate strategies (8 percent) and mentoring strategies (6 percent). In addition to funding for services, reforms, and interventions, schools budgeted up to one third of the grant for administration, which includes costs for planning and for the salary of the grant administrator.

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<sup>3</sup> The evaluation team only had access to “planned budgets” and therefore could not do an analysis of expenditures to date.

<sup>4</sup> Because the employment and case management budgets are not easily parsed out for the seven Philadelphia schools, we have combined these categories when discussing budget and staffing.

In the first year of grant implementation, the MEES grant increased services and reduced class sizes through an increase in staffing at each of the schools. Schools hired a total of 140 full-time staff members and 62 part-time staff members to manage and implement programs under the MEES grant for year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010). While each school hired, on average, 16 full-time staff members and seven part-time staff members, there was great variation in the total number of staff members hired at each school. New staffing levels vary due to the size of the grant each school received, the approach that each school took to implementing grant reforms (i.e., investing heavily in curriculum or student incentives versus investing in additional staff members), and the success each school had in hiring for grant-funded positions.

In the guidelines for the grant, DOL encouraged the use of a competitive process for selecting sub-grantees or contractors, and grantees have generally taken this approach. SDP did not release its own RFQ for mentoring, education, and career coordination/student employment contractors until September 2009. As a result, while some partners were able to start in the Philadelphia schools in late 2009, most programs at these schools were not fully up and running until well into 2010. Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS, which both worked mainly with CBOs with whom they had strong pre-existing relationships, were able to ramp-up partnerships more quickly, although Du Bois HS did face some initial delays in getting contracts signed.

## **Educational Strategies**

The MEES grant provides an opportunity for grantee schools to develop educational reforms and interventions that address students' educational barriers and strengthen instructional practices. Consistent with DOL's expectations for the MEES grant, schools are implementing educational interventions that involve the whole school, while targeting specific groups of at-risk youth such as entering and repeating ninth graders and youth who are failing classes or struggling to keep up with the demands of high school. In order to achieve the educational goals of the grant, MEES schools are hiring new teachers, increasing teacher effectiveness, remediating poor academic performance, facilitating credit retrieval, reconstituting schools as academies, providing instructional and curricular supports, and offering summer programs.

Schools *hired new teachers* to reduce class sizes and also to fill under-resourced positions in subject areas such as science and foreign language. A total of 74 teachers have been hired as a result of the grant, with some schools planning to hire more teachers in SY 2010–2011. The hiring of new teachers generally resulted in lower student-teacher ratios, which now range from 4:1 to 16:1. Grant resources were also used to *increase teacher effectiveness* by funding professional development activities and salaries for instructional coaches who guide and mentor teachers.

Schools are seeking to *remediate poor academic performance* through remedial classes and through programs that help students succeed at their regular classes. These services are delivered in a variety of ways, as part of the school day and through extended learning time after school. Students can also attend remedial classes after school through designated programs, and they can use the computers at the Student Success Centers (SSCs) to access online curricula that are geared towards academic remediation and tutoring.

Schools used the grant to *facilitate credit retrieval* so that students can get back on track towards graduation. Credit retrieval courses are available through Saturday School, afterschool classes, or Twilight Schools.

Schools leveraged grant resources to support their efforts to *reconstitute themselves as academies*. The Ninth Grade Success Academies and career academies are designed as small, personalized learning communities with specialized curricula that emphasize academic rigor and preparation for college using career-related themes. Six schools implemented the Ninth Grade Academies in SY 2009–2010. Some of the Ninth Grade Academies pre-date the MEES grant, but the MEES grant is contributing to small class sizes in the Ninth Grade Academies and funding instructional coaches who are devoted to assisting ninth grade teachers. The influence of the grant on the career academies is generally small at this time; the grant is providing enrichment activities and support (i.e., field trips, incentives) rather than influencing academies' structures.

Schools are also using the grant to purchase a number of *instructional and curricular supports* to aid the implementation of key reforms. These supports include supplemental curricula, technology and equipment, student incentives and rewards, and enrichment activities. Many of these supports—such as curricula specialized for credit retrieval and the Talent Development program—benefited ninth graders. Others, such as technology for school leaders and teachers and field trips for students in the career academies, benefited the entire school.

Finally, schools offered *summer programs* to 947 students in the summer of 2010, an increase from 681 students in the summer of 2009.<sup>5</sup> The structure of the summer programs in Philadelphia changed in 2010, with the SDP playing a more hands-on role in their design. Students in Philadelphia were required to spend more hours per day on reading and math, and as a result, less time was available for enrichment activities. Students at Du Bois HS were required to spend three hours per day on academics, essentially double the time required in the summer of 2009.

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<sup>5</sup> The 2009 enrollment number does not include students at Berkshire JSHS.

## **Mentoring Strategies**

Eight of the nine MEES schools have developed school-based mentoring programs to improve the educational and social outcomes of individual students as well as the overall climate of the schools. The goal of school-based mentoring is to help students develop positive relationships with adults who can help them stay on track.

All nine grantees held a competitive bid process to identify a CBO partner to operate the mentoring component of the grant. Schools identified providers in fall 2009 and these partners were in the schools by the beginning of 2010, though in some cases the contract was not finalized until May or June of 2010. Although specific roles vary, mentoring providers are responsible for recruiting and training mentors and mentees, organizing events, overseeing mentor/mentee relationships, and generally managing the daily operations of the mentoring program.

Each school has planned to recruit between 50 and 135 students as mentees, targeting primarily students with a range of personal, social, and academic characteristics. At least four schools are targeting ninth grade students identified as being at risk of dropping out of school or students with behavioral or academic challenges. Other schools, however, are extending their recruiting efforts to all ninth graders, with a particular focus on “middle of the road” students who may not be part of specific groups targeted for other interventions. To date, many of the programs have relied on mass recruitment efforts such as school-wide announcements or flyers, which result in students referring themselves to the program. At the time of the third site visit, more than 200 mentees had been recruited to participate in the mentoring programs.

At eight of the nine schools, adult mentors can be teachers, school staff members, or adults from the community. Berkshire JSHS is unique in that it is targeting adults who live in the students’ home communities, so that students will have adult mentors when they transition back home from the Berkshire JSHS residential center. All program staff members are looking to recruit adult mentors who are positive role models, who match students’ demographics, and who meet the eligibility requirements (e.g., pass FBI clearance, do not have a felony charge, are old enough, etc.). Although mentoring staff members have been successful in recruiting school-based mentors such as faculty and staff, community adult mentors have been very difficult to recruit. At the time of the first site visit, schools had recruited 127 adult mentors, most of whom are school staff members. Recruiting adult community mentors has been challenging because (1) the screening process is rigorous and time-intensive, (2) many potential mentors are not interested in mentoring older adolescent youth, (3) and it is difficult finding community adults who can volunteer during school hours (as opposed to weekends or evenings). In addition to

these challenges, most schools are also having difficulty finding enough male mentors to match with their male student mentees.

Although the adult mentoring component is not yet fully implemented, mentoring program staff members have developed a program structure, guidelines, and expectations to manage the relationships, keep both parties safe, and maximize the effectiveness of the relationship within the realistic limits of the program. Adult mentors commit to spending approximately five hours per month (approximately one hour per week) with their mentees. The meetings generally take place at school during or immediately after the school day, for safety and liability reasons. Adult mentors are required to keep a regular log of their interactions with their mentees. In addition, mentoring staff members call mentors and mentees on a regular basis to ensure that the program is meeting their expectations and that they are getting the support they need, and to see if any program elements need improvement.

Most schools have peer mentoring, group mentoring, and service learning aspects to their programs that are designed to supplement the one-on-one mentoring relationship with an adult. The supplemental program elements are designed to provide additional support to students and to give mentees and mentors opportunities to interact in different settings. The most common of these supplemental programs is peer mentoring. Seven schools are recruiting peer mentors, who are students in eleventh or twelfth grade who are in good standing academically and who staff members believe will have a positive influence on the mentees. At the time of the third site visit, schools had recruited 116 peer mentors.

## **School Climate Strategies**

One of the MEES grant's primary goals is to improve school climate, with the specific aim of reducing the number of violent incidents in the schools, especially those that count toward the "Persistently Dangerous School" status. To work toward realizing this goal, MEES schools have adopted a variety of approaches designed to increase attendance, increase students' and teachers' sense of safety, create an environment conducive to learning, and make overall institutional improvements that foster a sense of ownership and school pride.

School climate interventions are varied across the schools. They include hiring dedicated climate staff members, providing professional development for staff members, and instituting specific programs such as peer mediation, incentive programs, in-school suspension, and Rites of Passage programs. To date, hiring climate staff has been the most frequently implemented climate strategy, with five schools having hired climate managers or Behavioral Management Specialists. Peer mediation is the next most common intervention; it is being launched at five SDP schools, though three of the programs had yet to launch as of spring 2010. Three schools

were funding professional development for staff, two had developed incentive programs for students, and two schools were funding Rites of Passage programs.

## **Employment Strategies**

All schools have developed contracts with CBO service providers to provide employment interventions. Du Bois HS contracted with the City of Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED) to operate the Career Connections program and the FUTURES Works program.<sup>6</sup> Berkshire JSHS has fee-for-service contracts with a CBO partner (Berkshire Farms) that provides classroom and hands-on training to students in key internship areas (e.g., culinary arts, carpentry, horticulture, etc.), as well as supervision when students are at their internship placements. The SDP contracted with the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) to manage the Student Success Centers, which are employment and case management centers. PYN, in turn, subcontracted with individual CBO service providers who are responsible for hiring employment and case management staff members and providing employment-related services at each of the seven SDP schools.

The seven SDP schools are implementing school-based employment and case management activities at their SSCs. Three of the schools (Lincoln HS, Germantown HS, and FitzSimons HS) used grant funds to develop entirely new SSCs, while the remaining four schools used the grant to expand already-existing centers. SSCs are located in a dedicated space within each school, are open between 7:30 am and 4:30 pm, and can be accessed by students on their own before school, during lunch periods, and after school. Each SSC is equipped with computer workstations, furniture, whiteboards, and other technology and resources. One school leader described the SSC as a “one-stop shop” where students can receive career readiness and life skills training, college preparation support and academic tutoring, counseling, and community referrals. Each school served at least 50 percent of its school population through the SSC between January 1, 2010 and June 30, 2010, with two schools serving at least 80 percent of their students during this time period.

Across all sites, the goal of employment interventions is to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to obtain employment and/or enter post-secondary education, as well as to create opportunities for them to obtain hands-on training and work experience in occupations of

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<sup>6</sup> FUTURES Works is a dropout prevention program that provides daily comprehensive services to ninth-grade students. This program is housed in a large classroom at Du Bois HS, and is a collaborative effort between Baltimore City Schools, MOED, and Baltimore Rising.

interest. To further these aims, schools are supporting career development, placing students into internships, and promoting college access.

All schools are *supporting career development* in order to make students aware of the educational requirements of various careers and provide students with sufficient job readiness training. To support career development, schools sponsored job shadow days, provided individual career advising (career inventories and assessments, work permit assistance), and organized and facilitated job preparation workshops. Between 15 and 69 percent of all students at SDP schools received career development and exploration services.<sup>7</sup> Schools that reached a high percentage of the school population conducted more large-scale career events than did schools that reached a lower percentage of the school population; these latter schools focused more on providing individual advising.

All nine schools are targeting eleventh and twelfth graders for *internships*. Nearly all schools place a priority on finding internships for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students who are “work ready” and who have a track record of positive behavior and academic performance. Du Bois HS has by far the highest percentage of students who completed an internship in SY 2009–2010 (20 percent). Through the Career Connections program, 88 percent of twelfth graders and 79 percent of eleventh graders at Du Bois completed an internship. Berkshire JSHS enrolled 64 students in on-campus internships in areas such as carpentry, horticulture and farming, maintenance, business, and culinary arts. In the SDP schools, the percentage of students who enrolled in internships varied from one to nine percent of all students. In Philadelphia, PYN draws on its large network of employers to develop a pool of internships for students at the MEES schools and other high schools throughout Philadelphia. The SDP schools that placed the highest percentage of students into internships did not rely exclusively on PYN internships, however, but also developed their own internship placements for students.

Only the seven SDP schools indicate that *promoting college access* is a core grant-funded employment strategy. In order to promote college access, SDP schools provided college exposure activities (college fairs, college visits), college application assistance, and financial aid counseling. These activities generally target eleventh and twelfth graders, in an effort to support their immediate post-secondary plans, but are also made available to ninth and tenth graders. Five of the SDP schools engaged at least 25 percent of their school populations in interventions to promote college access. The most common type of service provided was college application

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<sup>7</sup> Comparable data are not available for Du Bois HS and Berkshire JSHS.

assistance, which includes working one-on-one with students to help them fill out college applications, register for the SAT/ACT, and develop college and scholarship essays.

## **Case Management Strategies**

Case management staff members are responsible for conducting needs assessments of students, developing and implementing service plans, making referrals, and providing behavioral support and crisis management to students. All nine schools are supporting at least three case management positions to provide individualized support to at-risk students. Of the MEES schools, Du Bois HS has invested most heavily in case management; it has hired seven full-time case management staff persons, including a substance abuse counselor, a mental health clinician, and an anger management specialist. Berkshire JSHS has used the grant to hire Behavioral Management Specialist (BMSs), who serve as liaisons between teachers and other mental health staff. All seven SDP schools house three grant-funded case management staff members in the schools' SSCs.

As the core of their case management strategies, the MEES schools are providing group and individual counseling and using a team-based case management approach to address problems with attendance and behavior. The number of students who received one-on-one case management services in SY 2009–2010 varied by school. Berkshire JSHS provided all students with case management, due to the high-risk nature of its population. At Du Bois HS, approximately 13 percent of the school population received case management. At the SDP schools, the number of students receiving one-on-one case management or mental health counseling at any one time generally ranged from 15 to 40 students per school, with the total number of students served not exceeding 100. In general, a much larger group of students participated in group counseling interventions.

## **Evidence of School Change**

There are several key indicators of school change highlighted in the report: average daily attendance (ADA); the number of “serious” incidents that count towards PDS status; the rate of suspension, expulsion and arrest, course completion, and promotion among ninth graders; and standardized test scores.

Increasing ADA is integral to improving academic performance in low-performing schools. Although overall ADA remains very low at the MEES schools, six of the nine schools show marginal increases in ADA. More promising, given the MEES grants' intensive focus on ninth-grade students, is the fact that ADA for ninth graders rose more than for the overall population at five of the six schools for which we have ninth-grade attendance data. Additionally, with the

exception of one school, all SDP schools decreased the percentage of students who were absent 54 days or more.

Another primary goal of the MEES grant is to reduce the level of violence at the schools, including the rate of incidents that lead to suspensions. Five schools reduced the number of serious incidents counting towards PDS status, so much so that three of these schools were removed from the PDS list at the end of the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010). In addition, five schools reduced the suspension rate from SY 2007–2008 to SY 2009–2010, with the most significant declines occurring at Berkshire JSHS, West Philadelphia HS, Germantown HS, and Du Bois HS. School leaders at these schools attribute the positive shifts in climate to the additional educational staff members hired by the MEES grant, saying that there are fewer disciplinary referrals and suspensions because teachers have better control of their classrooms.

The evaluation findings on ninth-grade course completion are decidedly mixed. Although the percentage of ninth graders who failed three or more subjects declined for all but one of the schools for which we have data, the failure rates for English and math show inconsistent results. These results are somewhat surprising given the intensive focus that most of the schools placed on English and math. Changes in the curriculum and the structure of classes, however, likely contributed to the uneven results.

Findings on ninth grade promotion are generally more positive. Promotion data is only available for the seven SDP schools, but at these schools the promotion rate for first-time ninth grade students increased 17 to 30 percentage points per school between the baseline year and the end of the first year of grant implementation. Although promotion rates are considerably lower for students repeating the ninth grade than they are for first-time ninth graders, five of the seven SDP schools increased the percentage of repeating ninth graders promoted to the tenth grade, with a few schools increasing this rate by 20 percentage points or more.

A central goal of the MEES grants is to increase the percentage of students testing at grade level and the percentage of students who are no longer basic-skills deficient at the target schools. Eight of the schools are using the Gates Macginitie Reading Test (GMRT) to assess changes in reading and a Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) to assess ninth-grade math scores, while Berkshire JSHS is using Star Testing. Since these tests are given annually in the fall, the evaluation does not have access to consistent data on the reading and math achievement of ninth graders. The data from standardized test scores, administered to tenth and eleventh grade students to assess the AYP status at the schools, show mixed results. Some schools show small increases, whereas others show declines. Research suggests, however, that academic gains (as measured by standardized tests) typically lag behind shifts in behavior, attendance, and course completion and promotion. Thus, the improvements in climate, ninth-grade attendance, and

ninth-grade promotion are promising signs that many of the schools are moving in the right direction.

Finally, grantees are seeking to make lasting improvements in school culture by investing in professional development for teachers, creating vehicles for collective decision-making (such as the Turnaround Teams), implementing common planning time for teachers, creating small learning communities, and instituting early-warning data systems that identify students at risk of dropping out. During the first full year of grant implementation, all of the schools began using student data to (1) strategically identify and intervene on behalf of at-risk students, and (2) strategize as to how to improve the effectiveness of instruction. All schools, with the exception of Berkshire JSHS, have identified students on the Early Warning Indicator (EWI) list and are using diagnostic tests to monitor student achievement. Schools have also created a number of different vehicles for school-wide collaboration including the TT committee and subcommittees, common planning time for teachers, case management teams, and the SSCs.

## **Conclusion**

It is apparent from the first year of grant implementation that grant-funded interventions need time to develop and integrate into the cultures of the schools. The school districts move at a measured pace to approve contracts, modify budgets, improve facilities, and hire staff. It takes time for new contractors to develop the types of relationships with teachers and other school staff members that are necessary to launch programs. Similarly, some aspects of grant program design, such as recruiting adult community mentors, are slow because they are inherently challenging. During the first year of implementation, the schools really just came to the precipice of full grant implementation, and measures of school change from the end of SY 2010–2011 will likely show more of the influences of grant-funded reforms.

At the close of the first year of grant implementation, there are many signs that schools are on the right track. There is a strong focus at most schools on creating integrated reform (rather than a series of separate programs), enhancing communication and collaboration, improving the quality of the teaching staff, and creating small learning communities and collaborative structures that will outlast the MEES funding stream. In the first year of grant implementation, schools also made great progress towards deepening buy-in for systemic reform among teachers and parents. All of these signs indicate that schools are making steady progress towards achieving the larger goals of the MEES initiative. The second year of implementation is a unique opportunity for schools to focus on improving the quality of services and to build on their successes so that the promises of the MEES grant reforms may come to full fruition.

# I. INTRODUCTION

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In 2008, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) provided funding to nine schools in the form of the *Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies to Improve Academic, Social, and Career Pathway Outcomes in Schools Designated Persistently Dangerous* (MEES grants). As indicated in the grant title, these nine schools had been designated as “persistently dangerous” under the Unsafe School Choice Option of No Child Left Behind.<sup>1</sup> The central goal of the MEES grants is to reduce violence within these schools by combining mentoring, educational, employment, case management, and violence-prevention strategies for positive school change. The schools are using the grant to restructure themselves in ways that expand the levels of services provided to students and enhance coordination of these services within the schools and their communities.

DOL contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate how these nine high schools have planned, designed, and implemented programs, interventions, and services under the MEES grants. This *Early Implementation Report of the Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies to Improve Academic, Social, and Career Pathways in Persistently Dangerous Schools – Generation I* presents the evaluation’s findings as of the end of the first year of grant implementation, school year (SY) 2009–2010. The report describes, in depth, the strategies that schools are using to improve school climate and increase academic achievement and summarizes grantees’ accomplishments and challenges. The evaluation team draws on data from the pre-grant baseline year (SY 2007–2008) and the planning year (SY 2008–2009) as points of comparison. The evaluation is ending mid-way through grant implementation (December 2010) and as a result it is only able to document the first stages of implementation at each of the schools, and can draw only preliminary conclusions about the influence of the grant on school climate and academic outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> These schools are Berkshire Junior/Senior High School in New Canaan, NY; W.E.B. Du Bois High School (HS) in Baltimore, MD; and the following schools in Philadelphia, PA: John Bartram HS, FitzSimons HS, Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, Overbrook HS, University HS, and West Philadelphia HS.

Throughout this report, we use a number of key terms. The most common of these are highlighted in the text box below.

### Common MEES Terms

**Persistently Dangerous School (PDS).** Under the Unsafe Schools Choice Option in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), each state must establish standards for identifying “persistently dangerous schools.” Generally, a school is considered “persistently dangerous” if during a particular year a certain ratio of “dangerous incidents” to enrollment is exceeded. For instance, in Pennsylvania, a school whose enrollment is over 1000 is designated persistently dangerous if it has 20 or more dangerous incidents in a year. A dangerous incident is defined as a weapons possession incident resulting in arrest (guns, knives, or other weapons) or a violent incident resulting in arrest (homicide, kidnapping, robbery, sexual offenses, and assaults).

**Student Success Center (SSC).** The SSC is a school-based employment center that serves as a hub for employment and case management services. The center brings academic and employment services together in one location where students can receive support for college and career development. Seven out of nine grantee schools have SSCs.

**Turnaround Leadership Team (TT).** All grantee schools are required to have a TT. The TT’s role is to guide planning and implementation by establishing subcommittees focused on key aspects of grant implementation. Members of the TT typically include the principal, Turnaround Principal, community members, teachers, students, and parents.

**Turnaround Assistant Principal (TAP).** At the seven schools in the School District of Philadelphia, the MEES administrator is called a TAP. The TAP’s role is to organize TT meetings, supervise subcommittees’ progress, and provide oversight for school-based interventions and grant subcontractors.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we describe the evaluation’s conceptual framework, the research questions used to guide data collection, the data collection methods themselves, and the structure of the report as a whole.

## Conceptual Framework

The evaluation is guided by a conceptual framework that focuses on several key aspects of the grant: the context in which schools and districts implement their interventions, the partners involved, grantees’ implementation experiences, and outputs and outcomes. The conceptual framework is presented in Appendix A. Core elements of the framework include the following:

- **School-level context.** A school’s context includes such factors as the size of the school, the school’s history of reform, the presence of enrichment activities, the degree of parent involvement, and linkages with community organizations. The context also includes partner-level factors which may influence the success of the grant, including the capacity of the partners and the quality of communication between the partners and school staff.
- **District and school leadership capacities.** The role of the school districts in managing the grant and guiding the schools in implementing the grant-funded reforms and interventions is central to the success of the initiative. SPR is assessing the relationship between the grantee school districts and each grantee

school, focusing on the role of each in staffing, scheduling, budget management, and curriculum.

- **Implementation of services and interventions.** The services that youth may access as part of this grant and the changed circumstances they encounter as a result of its reforms and interventions form the core of the MEES efforts. For each type of service, the report describes the characteristics of youth participants in order to frame the types of outcomes that schools can realistically achieve. SPR is also examining schools' recruitment practices; that is, how they identify the most needy students for participation in the initiatives that are supported by the MEES grant.
- **Attributes of effective programs.** The evaluation framework assumes that youth and school-level outcomes depend, to a large degree, on the quality of services that are offered. According to the conceptual model, key attributes of effective programs include high academic standards and a culture of high expectations; engaging, standards-based instruction; applied learning opportunities; opportunities for youth to catch up academically; high-quality teachers; ongoing professional development; low student-teacher ratios; connections between youths and adults; flexible schedules; clean, accessible, and safe facilities; and administrative autonomy and operational flexibility.
- **Indicators of school change.** Grant-funded services are designed to lead to school-wide change. Accordingly, the evaluation is documenting shifts in a number of school-wide measures, including rates of attendance, suspensions and expulsions, ninth-grade course completion, ninth-grade promotion and retention, and academic gains (as measured by standardized test scores). In addition to looking at these quantitative measures of school change, the evaluation is assessing shifts in school practices as well as shifts in the structure and operation of the schools. For instance, the evaluation is documenting changes in how the schools use student data to guide decision-making and changes in the level of communication and collaboration among school officials, parents, and community stakeholders. Since the majority of grant-funded services did not launch until the Spring 2010, these outcomes are preliminary.

The framework described above serves as the basis for the major research questions that are listed below. A full list of questions is included in Appendix B.

- What contextual factors are important for understanding the design, implementation, and outcomes of the grant-funded activities?
- What is the leadership and management structure of the grant? Who are the key staff members? What does each school's budget look like? What methods are used to manage the program and coordinate contracts among partners?
- Who are the key partners in this effort? How were they selected and mobilized? What are their specific roles in the project?
- What are the strategies schools adopt to bring about reform? What are the challenges they encounter in implementing these strategies?

- Which services and reforms target the whole school? Which services and interventions target particular students? What proportion of participants take part in the various education, employment, violence-prevention, mentoring, and case management services and interventions?
- What school-wide outcomes has the school achieved? Have there been any significant, unanticipated outcomes?
- What are the key characteristics of effective approaches for increasing academic achievement and completion in schools that are classified as “persistently dangerous”?

## Data Collection Methods

This evaluation is an implementation study that relies heavily on qualitative data gathered from three rounds of telephone interviews and four rounds of site visits to each school and quantitative data from Management Information System (MIS) reports and other sources. Exhibit I-1 presents a summary of data collection methods and when they occurred.

**Exhibit I-1:  
Summary of Data Collection Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Telephone Interviews	Round 1: Fall 2008 Round 2: Fall 2009 Round 3: Fall 2010
Site Visits	Round 1: Spring 2009 Round 2: Summer 2009 Round 3: Spring 2010 Round 4: Summer 2010
MIS Data	Data submissions from December 2009 to June 2010. Submissions include: 1) New-school-year reports 2) Quarterly reports 3) End-of-year reports
Quantitative Data from School District of Philadelphia (SDP)	Data submitted annually: SY 2008–2009 and SY 2009–2010.
Quantitative Data from Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN)	School-specific data on student participation in employment interventions, SY 2009–2010

## Telephone Interviews

Over the course of the project, SPR staff members conducted a total of 27 telephone interviews with school staff members and teachers, school district staff persons, and technical assistance providers. Nineteen phone interviews were conducted with school staff members to document their progress and track developments at each school in the fall of 2008 and fall of 2009.<sup>2</sup> These interviews focused on the status of key services, staffing and hiring, timeline for implementation, and any roadblocks that schools may have encountered. SPR staff members also conducted four interviews with the Program Manager and the Research Associate from the School District of Philadelphia (SDP)—one interview occurred in 2008, one in 2009, and two in 2010—to document the district’s implementation of the MEES grant, including technical assistance and oversight of grant implementation. Lastly, SPR staff members interviewed four technical assistance providers in 2010 to capture their perspectives on the schools’ progress and challenges with grant implementation.<sup>3</sup>

## Site Visits

The evaluation included four rounds of site visits to document schools’ planning and implementation experiences. There were 34 site visits in all. The goals of the site visits were to document (1) the key contextual variables that shaped the design, planning, and implementation of the grants, (2) the approaches that schools are using to improve academic achievement and reduce violence, (3) the quality of services that grantees are providing, and (4) the barriers and facilitators that schools experienced. A summary of the site visits is included in Exhibit I-2.

**Exhibit I-2:  
Summary of Site Visit Activities**

	<b>Goal of Visit</b>	<b>Number of Days</b>	<b>Schools</b>
Round 1 (Spring 2009)	Document the planning process for MEES grant reforms	One day	Nine schools
Round 2 (Summer 2009)	Document grant-funded summer programs	One day	Eight schools
Round 3 (Spring 2010)	Document schools’ implementation of grant-funded services	Four days	Eight schools
		Five days	One school (Berkshire JSHS)

<sup>2</sup> Two interviews were conducted with Berkshire JSHS staff in 2009, in part because one extended phone interview was in place of a summer site visit.

<sup>3</sup> These providers include American Institutes for Research (AIR), Center for Secondary School Redesign, Philadelphia Youth Network, and the United Way.

	Goal of Visit	Number of Days	Schools
Round 4 (Summer 2010)	Document grant-funded summer programs	One day	Eight schools

Research staff visited eight of the schools for seven days over the course of the evaluation and visited Berkshire Junior Senior High School (JSHS) for six days.<sup>4</sup> During these visits, research staff members interviewed school individuals in the following roles:

- **School leaders.** The principal and Turnaround Assistant Principal (TAP) were interviewed to get updates on the status of grant implementation and capture other relevant school-wide events that may affect the grant.
- **Teachers.** Reading, math, and credit recovery teachers were interviewed to document their priorities for improving students’ core skills, the methods they used to engage students, and their roles in the grant planning process.
- **School staff members.** These individuals generally included the Climate Manager, school counselors, dean of students, student advisors, parent ombudsman, and others. Interviews with these staff members provided data about the school climate, trends in school violence, coordinated efforts to reduce violence, and priorities for change.
- **Partners/providers.** Staff members from a number of school-based partners that were hired to deliver services were interviewed to gather data on the partners’ roles at the school and in implementing the MEES grant, the status of the services they plan to implement, and the process for coordinating service delivery with school staff.
- **Students.** Focus groups were conducted with different groups of youth, including incoming ninth graders, current ninth graders, and upperclass students. These sessions focused on students’ perspectives on their communities, educational experiences, the school climate, the quality of teaching and learning, and opportunities for employment.

In addition to conducting these interviews, research staff members observed a number of interventions as they were being practiced, including reading and math classes, common planning time, mentoring activities, and employment activities. Research staff members also observed student interactions in the hallways during passing time and during lunchtime, and student and teacher interactions in the classrooms and program activities. The observations

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<sup>4</sup> Berkshire JSHS is a year-round school. In lieu of a summer site visit to Berkshire JSHS, research staff conducted an extended telephone interview with summer school staff at this school.

allowed the research team to get a sense for the school climate and to better understand the factors that may contribute to violent incidents at the schools.

## **Quantitative Data**

The major source of quantitative data for the evaluation was the schools' quarterly MIS data submissions. These submissions cover a period of three years: the pre-grant-award baseline year (SY 2007–2008), the planning year (SY 2008–2009), and the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010). Because most grantees did not fund services during the planning year, the quantitative analysis focuses primarily on comparing data from the first year of implementation (SY 2009–2010) to that of the baseline year (SY 2007–2008).

MEES schools submit six MIS reports to DOL each year; these include a new-school-year report, four quarterly reports, and an end-of-year report. The new-school-year reports document enrollment at the beginning of the year and demographic data.<sup>5</sup> The four quarterly reports and the end-of-the-year report document average daily attendance (for all students and for ninth graders), academic performance of ninth graders (including course completion), behavioral incidents, and student participation in grant activities. The end-of-the-year MIS reports also record promotion rates for all students, broken out by grade level.<sup>6</sup>

SPR staff members also analyzed quantitative data provided by the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), quantitative data provided by Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN), and quarterly narrative reports from Du Bois HS. The quantitative data from the SDP included baseline measures from SY 2007–2008 and SY 2008–2009 on attendance, academic performance, and behavioral incidents for seven of the grantee schools. The quantitative data from PYN included data on the number of unduplicated students participating in employment interventions at SDP schools and on the total number of times that schools provided particular employment services (i.e., job shadows, college application assistance, etc). The narrative quarterly reports from Du Bois HS included data on attendance and academic achievement for individual programs as well as comprehensive updates on grant implementation.

The analysis of school-level quarterly MIS reports is limited considerably by the fact that schools only submitted aggregate data due to various privacy and data collection concerns. Without

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<sup>5</sup> Although the new-school-year report is designed to record the results of baseline reading and math assessments of incoming ninth graders, these data were not included in 2009-2010 SY new-school-year MIS reports for Philadelphia schools.

individual-level data, research staff members cannot conduct an outcomes analysis that would allow them to explore the factors—such as demographic attributes and services received—that are related to students’ outcomes. However, the MIS data help the research team understand broad patterns of enrollment, implementation, and school change at each school and to compare patterns among schools. Since the majority of grant-funded programs did not launch until late in the spring of 2010, the changes that are captured in the MIS reports are preliminary.

## **Overview of the Remainder of this Report**

The remainder of this report provides a detailed description of the first year of MEES grant implementation. Chapter II provides an overview of the MEES initiative; it describes the various interventions that schools are implementing and the key players in the initiative (the school districts, schools, and technical assistance providers). Chapter III describes the first year of grant implementation, covering the grant budgets, the staff people who have been hired with the grant, the timelines for implementation, and the contracted partners. Chapters IV, V, and VI provide detailed descriptions of the strategies funded by the grant and the particular interventions and reforms that accompany those strategies. Chapter VII presents evidence of school change, with a focus on shifts in school climate, shifts in academic achievement, and shifts in school culture. The report concludes with a discussion of the core accomplishments and challenges arising from the first year of grant implementation.

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<sup>6</sup> The evaluation team received end-of-the-year reports from only seven of the nine schools. DuBois HS and Berkshire JSHS did not submit these reports in time to be included in the analysis for this report.

## II. OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVE

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This chapter provides an overview of the MEES grant, discussing topics that form the background for understanding the more specific discussions of grant implementation that make up the following chapters. Core topics addressed in this chapter are: grant service design, the key milestones in grant implementation, the key institutional players involved in the grant (districts, schools, contractors, and technical assistance providers), and the characteristics of the MEES schools.

### Service Design

In its Solicitation for Grant Applications, DOL outlined five core strategies that are required components of the MEES grant:

- **Educational Strategies.** Educational strategies include school restructuring efforts and alternative learning strategies.
- **Mentoring Strategies.** Mentoring strategies may include one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring, and service-based mentoring.
- **School Climate Strategies.** School climate interventions may include conflict resolution classes, anti-bullying efforts, student courts, peer mediation, anger management classes, crisis intervention strategies, increased involvement of parents, and training teachers in effective classroom management.
- **Employment Strategies.** Employment interventions focus on providing internships for juniors and seniors in high-growth occupations and industries; they can also include career awareness activities and the promotion of college access.
- **Case Management Strategies.** Case management interventions involve a team of full-time advocates for youth stationed at the school and serving as case managers, who assist school counselors in addressing the behavioral, truancy, and academic problems of youth.

The grant service design at each school has evolved over the course of the project. Schools laid out initial service designs in their grant proposals to DOL, and then refined their implementation plans over the course of the planning year (SY 2008–2009). Exhibit II-1 provides an overview of core grant-funded interventions in each of the five strategies.

**Exhibit II-1:  
Overview of Reform Strategies and Interventions Funded by the MEES Grant**

□ = still in planning stages      ✓ = implementation begun

<b>Strategies and Specific Reforms, Programs, and Interventions</b>	<b>Total # of schools adopting strategy</b>	<b>Bartram HS</b>	<b>Berkshire JSHS</b>	<b>Du Bois HS</b>	<b>FitzSimons HS</b>	<b>Germantown HS</b>	<b>Lincoln HS</b>	<b>Overbrook HS</b>	<b>University City HS</b>	<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>
<b>Educational Strategies</b>										
Hiring new teachers	8	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increasing teacher effectiveness e.g., professional development, common planning time, instructional coaches	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Remediating poor academic achievement e.g., enriched math and English, afterschool remedial programs	6		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Facilitating credit retrieval e.g., Saturday school, Twilight Schools, and extended school day	7	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
Reconstituting schools as academies e.g., Ninth Grade Academies and Career Academies	7	✓		✓		□	✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing instructional and curricular supports e.g., online curriculum, student incentives	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Offering Summer Programs	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Mentoring Strategies</b>										
Adult mentoring	9	✓	✓	□	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peer mentoring	7	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Group mentoring, including service learning	8	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

<b>Strategies and Specific Reforms, Programs, and Interventions</b>	<b>Total # of schools adopting strategy</b>	<b>Bartram HS</b>	<b>Berkshire JSHS</b>	<b>Du Bois HS</b>	<b>FitzSimons HS</b>	<b>Germantown HS</b>	<b>Lincoln HS</b>	<b>Overbrook HS</b>	<b>University City HS</b>	<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>
<b>Strategies to Improve School Climate</b>										
Dedicated climate staff (Climate Manager, Behavioral Management Specialists)	5	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		
Incentive program for positive behavior	3		✓	✓	✓					
Professional development for staff	2			✓	✓					
Peer mediation and/or Rites of Passage Leadership Program	6	✓			✓	✓	□		□	□
In-school suspension program	3	□				✓			✓	
<b>Employment and College Access Strategies</b>										
Student Success Center	7	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internships	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting career development	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promoting college access	7	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Case Management Strategies</b>										
Student Success Center	7	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicated case management staff	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing individual counseling	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing group counseling	8	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Using a team-based approach to address attendance and behavior problems	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

As illustrated in Exhibit II-1, the MEES grant is funding a number of specific programs within each of the five strategies. The following observations can be made about how these specific programs and interventions are distributed among the MEES schools:

- **Education.** All of the schools are using the grant to improve teacher effectiveness, develop and provide additional instructional and curricular supports, and implement summer programs. Most schools are also using the grant to increase the number of teachers, develop and implement credit retrieval programs, and enhance academy structures in the schools. Finally, six out of the nine schools are using the grant to support academic remediation programs.
- **Mentoring.** All of the schools are using the grant to develop and implement adult mentoring programs. Additionally, most schools are also developing and implementing peer mentoring programs and group mentoring programs.
- **School Climate.** While schools are doing less in the category of improving school climate than in mentoring and education, six of the schools are funding peer mediation programs and/or Rites of Passage Leadership Programs. Other uses of the grant in this strategy include funding dedicated climate staff such as climate managers and behavioral management specialists, developing incentive programs for positive behavior, and developing in-school suspension programs. Finally, two schools are using the grant to fund professional development on school climate.
- **Employment.** All of the schools are using the grant to fund internships and career exploration and preparation services. Additionally, seven of the schools are funding college access interventions and on-site employment centers.
- **Case Management.** All of the schools are funding dedicated case management staff members and using one-on-one counseling as part of case management strategies. Most schools are also funding on-site case management centers, group counseling and support groups, and targeted attendance and behavioral support for students.

## Timeline

A timeline of key milestones in grant implementation is included as Exhibit II-2. Key milestones in grant implementation thus far include hiring a grant coordinator or Turnaround Assistant Principal (TAP) to oversee the grant, forming a Turnaround Leadership Team (TT) to oversee grant planning and implementation, hiring key school staff members, selecting contractors, and launching reforms and interventions. As is illustrated in the timeline, Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS were able to quickly ramp-up grant efforts and started implementing many grant programs during the planning year. On the other hand, the SDP schools did not launch many key grant programs until mid-way through year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010).

**Exhibit II-2:  
Timeline of Key Milestones**

		<b>Summer 2008</b>	<b>Planning Year (SY 2008–2009)</b>	<b>Summer 2009</b>	<b>Year One of Implementation (SY 2009–2010)</b>	<b>Summer 2010</b>
<b>Du Bois HS</b>	<b>May 2008</b> – Grant announcement released <b>June 2008</b> – Grant notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant coordinator hired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formed Turnaround Leadership Team</li> <li>Launched Transitional Evening School</li> <li>Launched Futures Works!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hired key school staff and most teachers</li> <li>Implemented Talent Development HS model</li> <li>Launched Career Connect program</li> <li>Selected mentoring contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer program</li> </ul>
<b>Berkshire JSHS</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formed school-based turnaround team</li> <li>Hired key staff</li> <li>Implemented many key grant interventions, including extended school day, case management, and internships</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalized mentoring model and hired mentoring staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer program</li> </ul>	
<b>SDP schools<sup>1</sup></b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hired Turnaround Assistant Principals (TAP) hired</li> <li>Formed Turnaround Leadership Teams</li> <li>SDP provided regular professional development to TAPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer Bridge</li> <li>Released RFP for Student Success Center contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hired key school staff and most teachers</li> <li>Launched educational interventions launched (Fall 2009)</li> <li>SDP released RFQ for mentoring, education, and employment services</li> <li>Selected mentoring, employment and case management contractors</li> <li>Launched contractor interventions (Spring 2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer Bridge</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup> Includes Bartram HS, FitzSimons HS, Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, Overbrook HS University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS

## Key Players

A number of key institutional players are involved in designing, supporting, and implementing the grant-funded programs outlined in the above section. These key players include districts, schools, contractors, and technical assistance providers. The following sections provide a brief overview of each of these players in order to contextualize the strategies and outcomes discussed in the remainder of the report.

## School Districts

Although all of the interventions funded by the MEES grant are occurring at the school level, the school districts are the recipients of the grants and influence grant implementation to varying degrees. School districts can elect to play a hands-on role in oversight and monitoring of grant implementation, as has the School District of Philadelphia (SDP). More significantly, however, school districts set policies governing personnel, instruction, and allocation of resources that influence grant implementation. The school districts have also influenced aspects of MEES grant implementation through their role in defining curriculum standards, providing professional development, and defining guidelines for school schedules, security and discipline policies, and so forth. The following is a discussion of key contextual circumstances in each district that affect grant implementation. (See Exhibit II-3 for an overview of each district.)

### ***School District of Philadelphia***

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) is the largest of the three grant recipient districts. Its annual operating budget is just over \$2 billion, with per-pupil expenditures at just under \$11,500. SDP is made up of 284 schools, seven of which are MEES grant recipients. It enrolls over 163,000 students annually, the majority of whom are low income (70 percent), African American (61 percent) or Hispanic (18 percent). Currently, the district is in the process of implementing a number of reforms, many of which were ushered in by Dr. Arlene Ackerman, who became the district superintendent in June 2008.

Key contextual factors and reform efforts that affect the context for grant implementation include the following:

- **In 2009, SDP adopted a new strategic plan, which shares many goals of the MEES grant.** One aspect of the strategic plan was to focus intensively on student success by lowering the student-to-counselor ratio, creating individual learning plans for all ninth graders, implementing summer school for all students, placing a parent ombudsman in schools, and launching peer mediation, in-school suspension programs, and Student Success Centers. The SDP strategic plan also places a priority on reforming low-performing schools, which it has done by

identifying “Empowerment Schools” in need of additional support and “Renaissance Schools.” SDP was able to use an influx of stimulus funding to implement many of the reforms outlined in the strategic plan.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the overall budget of SDP schools rose independently of the MEES grant in SY 2008–2009 and SY 2009–2010.

- **SDP opened a number of special admittance high schools and charter schools in recent years that pull students away from the MEES-funded neighborhood high schools.**<sup>2</sup> As a result of the abundance of educational options available to students, there is a steady decline in enrollment for large “neighborhood” high schools—such as the ones funded by the MEES grant—that have no admission criteria and do not require an application from students.
- **Several other district initiatives align with grant reforms:** (1) the Single School Culture initiative aims to increase safety in schools through a comprehensive model focused on problem-solving, prevention, intervention, and recovery; (2) the Comprehensive Student Assistance Process (CSAP) offers three-tiered support and assistance to students with academic, behavioral, and/or attendance difficulties; and (3) the Classrooms for the Future grant that increases access to innovative technology in the classrooms.

### ***Baltimore City Public Schools***

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) enrolls more than 80,000 students. It has an annual budget of over \$1 billion, and its per-pupil expenditure is \$9,452. The students at its 198 schools are predominantly African American (88 percent) and low income (84 percent). Only one of BCPS’s schools—Du Bois HS—is a recipient of the MEES grant. Like SDP, BCPSS is currently undergoing a wave of reforms that creates a certain context for the grant:

- **In SY 2007–2008, BCPS implemented a Fair Student Funding model, which increased the control that principals have over their schools’ budgets.** As a result of this model, BCPS has less direct oversight over the MEES grant than SDP does. A district leader explained the larger philosophy behind this model:

*The Central Office’s job is not to dictate or demand that everyone does things in a specific fashion, but that you have great leaders and they have great faculty and they make the determinations as to what’s the best way to serve, from an educational perspective, and from a school climate perspective . . . our kids. They know their kids best and understand what they need. What they need in one school may not meet the needs of the school next door or across the street. This changes the interactions between the school district and the schools.*

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<sup>1</sup> Stimulus funding to SDP includes \$235 million in FY 2009–2010 and \$184 million in FY 2010–2011.

<sup>2</sup> SDP has 17 special admittance high schools, 12 citywide admission high schools, and 29 independent charter high schools.

- **In SY 2000–2001, BCPS implemented a small school policy and separated several large high schools into small academies.** Du Bois HS, the MEES grant recipient in the district, was created as the result of this process. Although Du Bois HS is technically a distinct entity, it shares a building with another small school created as a result of this effort.
- **In recent years, BCPS has opened a number of charter, transformation, and contract schools and simultaneously closed a number of underperforming schools.**<sup>3</sup> According to respondents, many students choose to go to the newly opened schools over the more traditional large neighborhood schools, leading to declining enrollment at Du Bois HS. To counteract this, Du Bois HS must recruit students from the closed schools, many of whom have behavioral and/or academic problems.

### ***Berkshire Unified Free School District***

Berkshire Unified Free School District (BUFSD) is very different from SDP and BCPS. Rather than being a large, urban district, it is a small, rural district with an annual budget of only \$7 million. Berkshire JSHS is the only school in the district, and the superintendent of the district acts as the principal of the school. Thus, there is no real distinction between the district and the school. BUFSD also serves a primarily minority student population, although it has a larger percentage of white students (28 percent) than the other districts. All of its students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Other key contextual factors include the following:

- **BUFSD serves a unique student population.** The district serves exclusively male students who are referred to the district by their home school districts, the Department of Social Services, or the courts because they are a threat to themselves or someone else or because of behavioral problems. Ninety-eight percent of its students have at least three mental health diagnoses, and 80 percent are diagnosed with Conduct Disorder or Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Because BUFSD serves such a high-needs student population, its per pupil expenditures exceed \$45,000.
- **The majority of students in BUFSD live in an adjoining residential facility.** This residential facility is managed by Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth, a non-profit agency that works closely with the district to provide services to the students.
- **In SY 2009–2010, BUFSD lost a New York State Department of Education grant for \$230,000.** As a result, the district will be forced to modify the overall school schedule and staffing levels as well as grant plans.

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<sup>3</sup> In SY 2009-2010, BCPS opened six new Transformation Schools, two new charter schools, and one contract school. It closed or relocated nine schools.

**Exhibit II-3:  
Overview of School Districts in SY 2009–2010**

<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Per Pupil Spending</b>	<b>Three Largest Demographic Groups</b>	<b>Low-income<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Total # of Schools</b>	<b># of MEES Schools</b>
<b>School District of Philadelphia (SDP)</b>						
\$2.2 billion	163,064	\$11,490	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African American (61 percent)</li> <li>• Hispanic (18 percent)</li> <li>• White (13 percent)</li> </ul>	70	284	7
<b>Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS)</b>						
\$1.3 billion	82,866	\$9,452	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African American (88 percent)</li> <li>• White (8 percent)</li> <li>• Hispanic (3 percent)</li> </ul>	84	201	1
<b>Berkshire Union Free School District (BUFSD)</b>						
\$7 million	223	\$45,445	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black or African American (58 percent)</li> <li>• White (28 percent)</li> <li>• Hispanic or Latino (13 percent)</li> </ul>	100	1	1

<sup>1</sup> As measured by the percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Sources: SDP <http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/about/>

BCPSS <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/2167104685314217/site/default.asp>

BUFSD <https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2009/27/AOR-2009-100308020001.pdf>

<http://www.greatschools.org/cgi-bin/ny/district-profile/68>

<http://www.greatschools.org/new-york/canaan/255-Berkshire-Junior-Senior-High-School/>

## Schools

Under the MEES grant, DOL provided funding to nine schools in order to foster and support school reform efforts. Seven of these schools—Bartram HS, FitzSimons HS, Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, Overbrook HS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS—are part of SDP. The remaining two schools—Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS—are part of BUFSD and BCPS respectively. The schools have several key characteristics in common.

- **All the schools were eligible for the grant because they were designated as “persistently dangerous” under the Unsafe School Choice Option of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for SY 2007-2008.** Although all of the schools were designated as PDS when they applied for the MEES grant, seven remained on the

list at the end of the planning year (SY 2009–2010), and only four schools remained on the list as of the beginning of SY 2010–2011. Each state sets its own standards for inclusion on this list, although inclusion is typically based on the rate of serious incidences per student.<sup>4</sup>

- **All of these schools have low rates of academic performance and failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB for SY 2009–2010.**<sup>5</sup> Many of the schools are in “corrective action II,” meaning they have failed to make AYP for at least five years.
- **All but one of the schools is considered a non-selective neighborhood school, and therefore faces a unique set of challenges.** One study that looked specifically at large, neighborhood schools in Philadelphia found that these schools are at a “distinct disadvantage when compared to small, charter and selective high schools,” particularly regarding students’ successful transitions to ninth grade.<sup>6,7</sup> Berkshire JSHS is not a comprehensive neighborhood high school, but is instead a residential high school that serves male students who have been referred by the courts or by the New York Department of Social Services.

Despite these important commonalities, the nine MEES schools differ in many respects. Some of the important characteristics that set them apart from one another and form the basic context of grant implementation at each school are discussed below in the section “Characteristics of the Schools.”

## **Contractors and Technical Assistance Providers**

In addition to the districts and schools, a number of other organizations are involved with the MEES grant.

- **Grantee schools contracted with a number of community-based organizations to implement interventions under the MEES grant.** In total,

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<sup>4</sup> Serious incidences may include weapons possessions, violent incidents, incidents that result in arrest, incidents involving drugs, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Each state sets its own standards for AYP based on standardized test scores in reading/language arts and math and graduation rates.

<sup>6</sup> Research for Action (January 2010), “Context, Conditions, and Consequences: Freshmen Year Transition in Philadelphia.” Retrieved from <http://www.researchforaction.org/publication/details/577>

<sup>7</sup> In particular, stratification caused by the school choice system resulted in Black and Latino ninth graders, ninth grade boys, and students with special needs enrolling in these types of schools at a higher rate than in special admissions high schools. Additionally, neighborhood schools also enroll a large number of ninth graders well into the start of the school year because of geographic mobility or returns from the juvenile justice system or other schools. Finally, ninth-grade teacher turnover is higher at these schools compared to other high schools in the district.

more than 25 contractors are providing services under the MEES grant, although the depth and intensity of their involvement vary greatly. Each school is working with between one and nine contractors, with some contractors providing services in multiple strategies at one school. Additionally, some contractors are working in more than one school under the MEES grant. Chapter III provides more details on the contractor selection and management process as well as the role of contractors in the schools.

- **Throughout the planning year and first year of implementation of the grant, a variety of different technical assistance (TA) providers worked to build the capacity of school leaders and staff to drive change.** Because shifting the culture of the school requires enhancement of the preparation, skills, and capacities of school leaders and school staff members, capacity building and support are essential to the success of the MEES initiative. Accordingly, TA providers were hired by the individual schools, by the school districts, and by DOL. Exhibit II-4 provides an overview of key TA providers for the MEES grant.

**Exhibit II-4:  
Key TA Providers**

Topic	Key TA providers
<b>General grant administration and implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The School District of Philadelphia</b> holds weekly meetings for the Turnaround Assistant Principals (TAP) and other key school and district staff members (e.g., those in the Office of School Climate and Safety) covering a range of issues related to grant administration, school reform, and data tracking.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>John Hopkins Talent Development High School</b> worked with two schools on developing ninth grade academies, teacher teams, and career academies.</li> <li>• <b>The Center for Secondary School Redesign</b> worked with two schools on topics such as ninth grade academy development, common planning time, advisory periods, and leadership.</li> </ul>
<b>Mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Branch and Associates</b> was in contract with DOL to conduct research and evaluation in support of the mentoring programs across schools. It subcontracted with the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, whose role is described below.</li> <li>• <b>The United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (UWSEPA)</b> provided TA to all of the schools on developing and implementing mentoring programs. UWSEPA held five cross-site trainings covering topics such as how to create a vision statement, market programs, recruit mentors, help matches stay connected, capitalize on social networks, and plan events. It also held on-site trainings for many of the Philadelphia schools' mentors and mentees.</li> </ul>
<b>School Climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>American Institutes of Research</b> trained representatives from the Philadelphia schools on CHAMPS, a classroom management and discipline program, and Peers Making Peace, a peer mediation program. It also provided ongoing TA to all of the schools on school climate.</li> </ul>

Topic	Key TA providers
<b>Employment/Case Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Philadelphia Youth Network</b> provided TA to the contractors selected to run the Student Success Centers (SSCs) in the Philadelphia schools through monthly meetings with SSC directors and bi-monthly meetings with SSC staff.</li> <li>• <b>American Institutes of Research</b> provided ongoing assistance to one school on developing its career and internship component.</li> <li>• <b>Philadelphia Academies Inc.</b>, provided assistance to eight of the nine schools on developing internships for students.</li> </ul>

*Note: This table only includes TA providers who worked with more than one school.*

## Characteristics of the Schools

Below, we look at the enrollments, demographics, and transfer rates for the MEES schools in more detail in order to further contextualize grant implementation. (Note that a thorough discussion of the climate and academic performance at each school is included in Chapter VII.)

### Enrollment

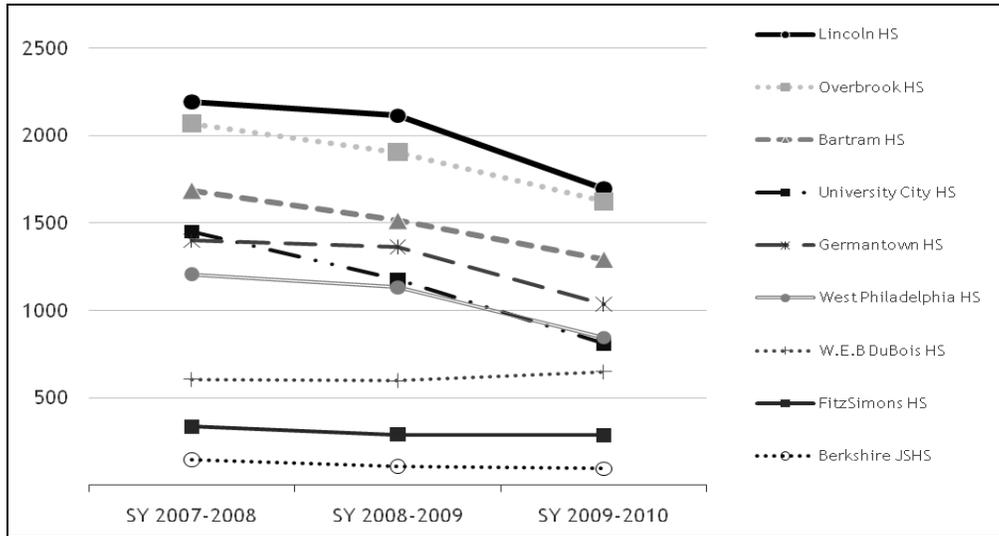
In SY 2009–2010, total enrollment at the MEES schools ranged from more than 1,600 at Lincoln HS and Overbrook HS to fewer than 100 at Berkshire JSHS.<sup>8</sup> All of the schools except Du Bois HS show declining enrollment in recent years. As shown in Exhibit II-5 below, enrollment at three of the schools—Berkshire JSHS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS—dropped by 30 or more percent between SY 2007–2008 SY and SY 2009–2010. Two key contextual factors may help to explain declining enrollment at these schools:

- **At the Philadelphia schools, declining enrollment is at least partially due to an increase in charter, admissions-based, and other types of schools.** The increase in charter and special admissions schools may explain why incoming classes are increasingly smaller at these schools and also may contribute to students transferring out of the MEES schools. Many incoming ninth graders noted that they would have preferred to go to one of these other types of schools but were unable to gain admission.
- **The “Unsafe School Choice Option” under No Child Left Behind mandates that a school labeled as persistently dangerous notify students and families of this designation and provide transfer options to students who wish to relocate to a different school.** This may also contribute to the schools’ declining

<sup>8</sup> Enrollment for the 2009–2010 SY for Berkshire JSHS was 95 according to the new school year report. However, by June 2010, school leaders reported enrollment to be 160 students. Because the school has rolling admission, the total number of students served as of June 2010 was 223.

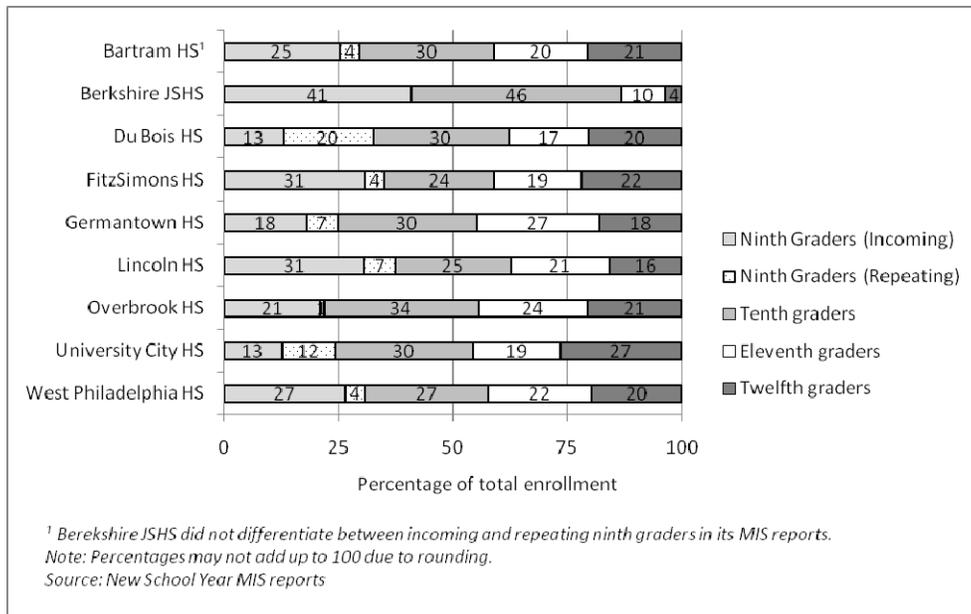
enrollments, although most school stakeholders do not view the PDS label as a major influence on enrollment.

**Exhibit II-5:  
Enrollment Over Time  
(SY 2007–2008 to SY 2009–2010)**



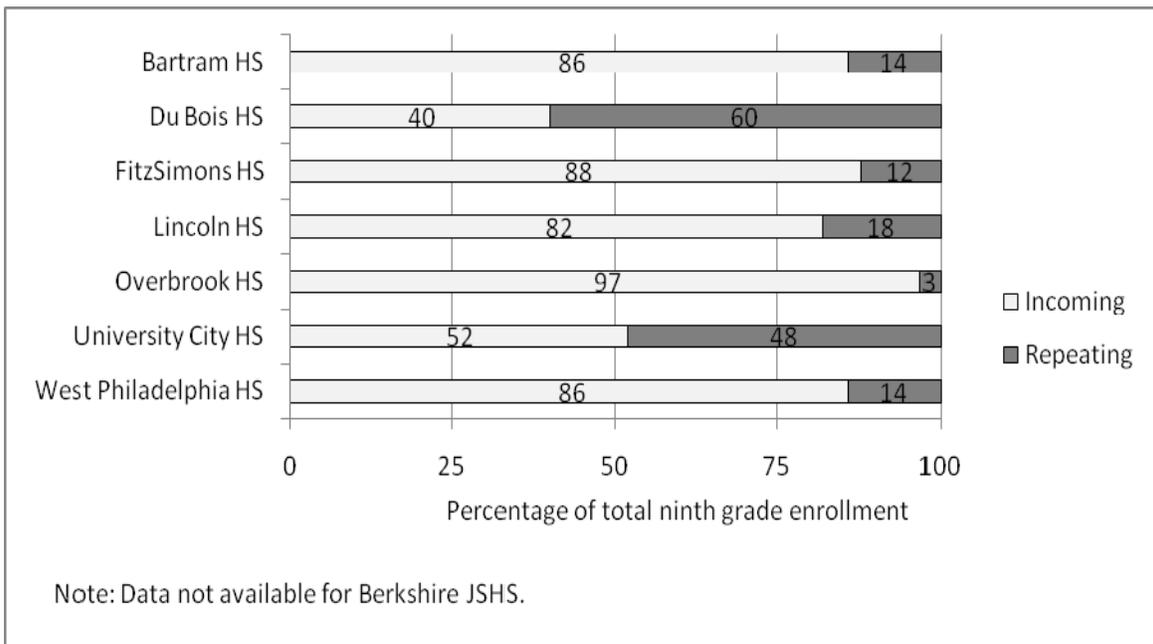
As shown in Exhibit II-6, enrollment at most of the schools is concentrated in the ninth and tenth grades.

**Exhibit II-6:  
Enrollment by Grade  
(SY 2009–2010)**



In all of the schools, ninth and tenth graders make up more than 50 percent of the student population, and in five of the schools, ninth graders alone make up more than 30 percent of students. Berkshire JSHS, Lincoln HS, and FitzSimons HS have the highest percentages of ninth grade students (41 percent, 38 percent, and 35 percent respectively). Additionally, as shown in Exhibit II-7, at each school, repeating ninth graders make up between three percent and 60 percent of the ninth grade class.

**Exhibit II-7:  
Ninth Grade Class by Type of Student**



This exhibit shows that most of the schools have large numbers of repeating ninth graders—those who did not earn sufficient credits to be promoted to the tenth grade in the previous year. Du Bois HS is enrolling the largest percentage of repeating ninth graders (60 percent of the total ninth grade class), followed by University City HS (48 percent of the ninth grade class). As will be discussed further in Chapters IV and VII, the large percentage of repeating ninth graders presents some difficult challenges for these schools because of the intensive support that these students require in order to catch up on their credits and get back on track to graduation. Students who repeat the ninth grade are particularly vulnerable to dropout, and have a disproportionate share of disciplinary referrals.

### A Closer Look at the Ninth Graders

Many of the ninth graders at the target schools struggle with low attendance and poor behavior. In the majority of the schools, the attendance rate for ninth graders is lower than the school's average attendance rate. The ninth grade students also struggle with behavioral challenges, which are contributing to their poor school performance. Teachers note that many students are disruptive and act out in class, resulting in disciplinary action. According to one teacher from West Philadelphia HS, "A lot of kids are smart. They failed because they act crazy, get suspended, and get kicked out. Or they skip class because they don't care about school." Another teacher from the same school said:

*A lot of ninth graders have a lot of issues. They don't have social and coping skills, and some have a false perception of what the ninth grade is supposed to be like... They also don't have the benefit of interacting with older kids, so they just horseplay all day long. With boys, they're always running up halls and jumping on each other's backs.*

The behavioral and academic challenges facing ninth graders may account for why so many of them struggle to adjust to high school and as a result get off-track during freshmen year. One school has many students reading at the third and fourth grade levels, with the average reading level at the fifth to sixth grade level. Teachers and school staff members need to provide extensive support, by referring students to the school social worker and their families to see why they are failing or not attending school.

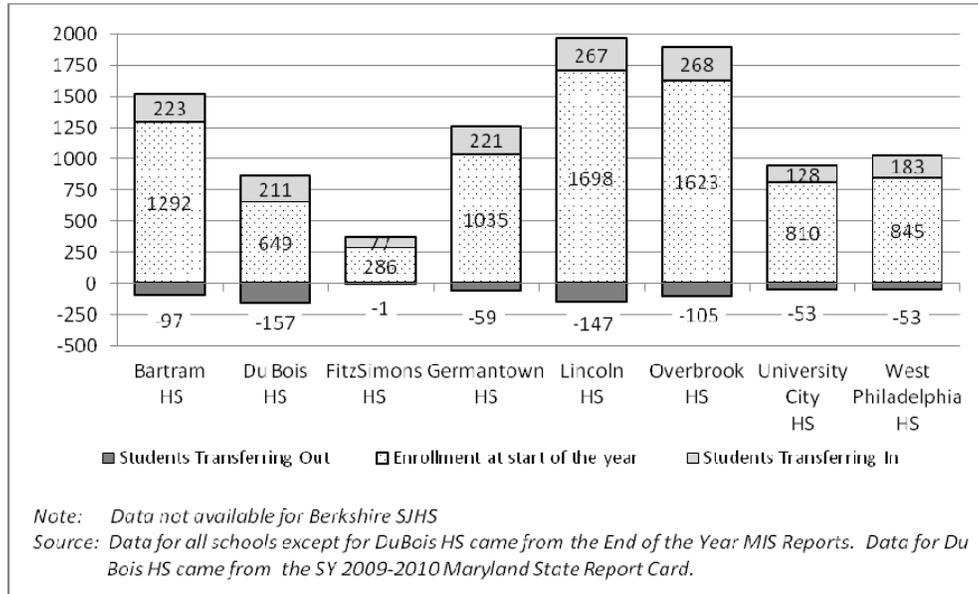
As alluded to earlier, the schools also have high rates of student mobility. Exhibit II-8 shows the number of transfers in and out of the schools for SY 2009–2010. At five of the schools, more than 200 students transferred into the school during SY 2009–2010. Du Bois HS, FitzSimons HS, Germantown HS, and West Philadelphia HS have the highest rates of transfer into the school in relation to their total enrollment. Although exact figures for exiting students are not available for Berkshire JSHS, at least 72 students transferred into the school during SY 2009–2010. Additionally, respondents report that the schools enroll a number of new tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students at the start of each school year.

These high levels of both intra- and inter-year mobility affect the context for grant implementation in at least two key ways:

- **Because students continually transfer into the schools throughout the year, their level of exposure to grant programs varies, and academic outcomes often include results for students who have not received a full dose of the intervention.** However, schools are as responsible for these students' academic performance and behavioral incidences as they are for students who have been continuously enrolled throughout the school year.
- **According to school staff, students who transfer into these schools tend to come in with academic and/or behavioral problems.** According to respondents in SDP and BCPS, the majority of students who transfer during the middle of the

school year have been kicked out of or failed out of other high schools in the district. Additionally, at the start of SY 2009–2010, Du Bois HS received an influx of students from two recently closed schools.

**Exhibit II-8:  
Student Mobility  
(SY 2009–2010)**



## Demographics

The demographics of the MEES schools are also important factors to consider:

- All of the MEES schools serve largely minority populations.** At seven of the nine schools, African American students make up more than 95 percent of the school’s population. Lincoln HS and Berkshire JSHS are more diverse, although African American students are still the largest racial/ethnic group in the schools. These two schools also have sizeable Latino populations (18 percent and 7 percent respectively).
- All of the schools serve predominantly low-income students.** At all of the schools, over half of the student population is eligible for free/reduced lunch. At five of the schools, 80 percent or more of the students are eligible.
- Gender is an important factor at the MEES schools.** Two of the schools—FitzSimons HS and Berkshire JSHS—serve only male students. While the remaining schools are mixed-gender, the majority of the schools have a ninth grade class that is predominantly male (51 to 61 percent). However, at these same schools, less than the half of the students in the twelfth grade class (43 to 48 percent) are male. Looking longitudinally, it is clear that these schools are losing a disproportionate number of male students over time. Male students at these schools, therefore, are potentially a particularly high-needs group. This is one

reason that many schools have black boy initiatives, focusing on engaging and addressing the needs of this particular population.

More detailed information on the demographics of each school can be found in Appendix C.

## **Summary of Findings**

The MEES grant represents a significant effort to “turn around” nine high schools that have low academic performance, declining enrollment, and high rates of student mobility. Eight of the nine schools are comprehensive “neighborhood” high schools that have open admission, while one high school is a residential high school that serves male students referred by the courts or the department of social services. The students at grant-funded schools are disproportionately African American, low income, and male.

With the support of districts, contractors, and TA providers, these schools are implementing reforms and interventions in five core strategies: education, mentoring, school environment and student behavior, employment, and case management. While the timeline of the implementation of various grant programs varies across schools, most grant programs were launched by mid-way through year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010). Finally, the MEES grant is not the only reform effort occurring within these schools. In most cases, district-level reforms, as well as other school-level grants and initiatives, are also happening simultaneously.



### III. GRANT IMPLEMENTATION

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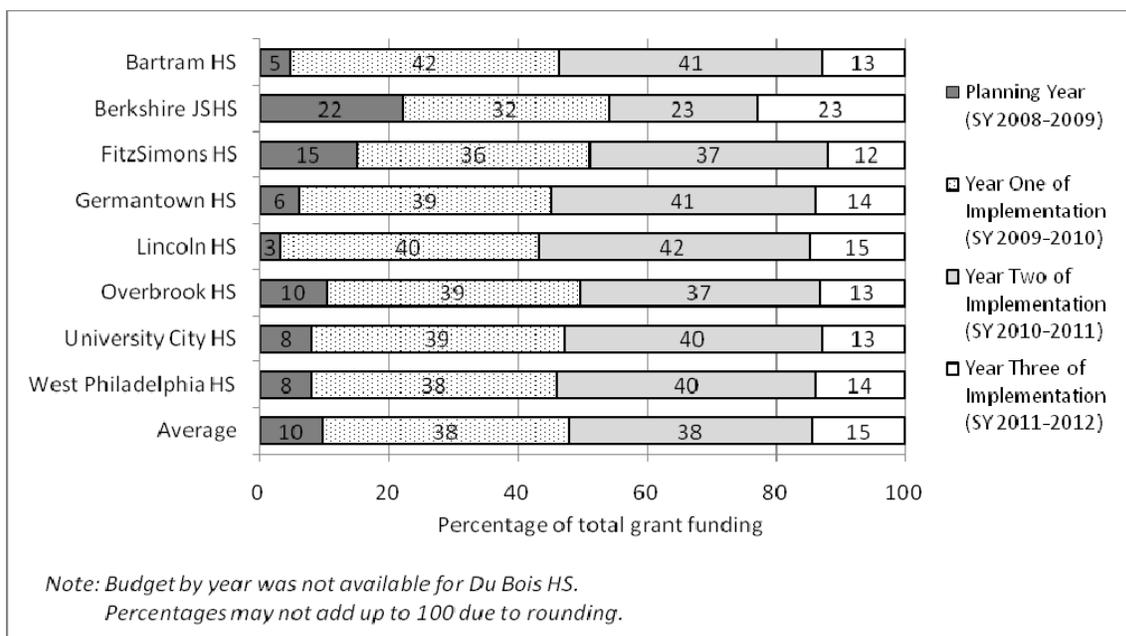
This chapter discusses a variety of topics related to the implementation and administration of the grant. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the grant budgets, focusing on how each school distributed the budget by year, strategy, and expenditure type. Then it discusses, in sequence, staffing for grant programs, grant leadership at the district and school levels, contractor selection and management, and the role of contractors in providing grant services. For each of these topics, the chapter describes the school-wide context for that aspect of grant implementation and outlines challenges and lessons learned from the first year of implementation.

#### **Budget**

DOL used PY 2007 and PY 2008 funds to provide initial grants of \$6.4 million to the seven larger schools and \$3.7 million to the two smaller schools to cover a planning period and two years of operation. DOL subsequently used PY 2009 funds to provide partial third year funds of \$960,000 to the larger schools and \$546,000 to the smaller schools, with plans to use PY 2010 funds to provide the remaining third-year funds.

Exhibit III-1 provides an overview of how each school chose to distribute its grant expenditures over the life of the grant. The figures in the exhibit represent *planned* budgeting only, not actual expenditures. Based on data collected during the site visits, we know that spending sometimes differed from the planned budget. For example, the Philadelphia schools had budget line items in the planning year (SY 2008–2009) for programs that did not start until midway through year one of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010).

**Exhibit III-1:  
Planned Year-by-Year Distribution of Grant Expenditures**

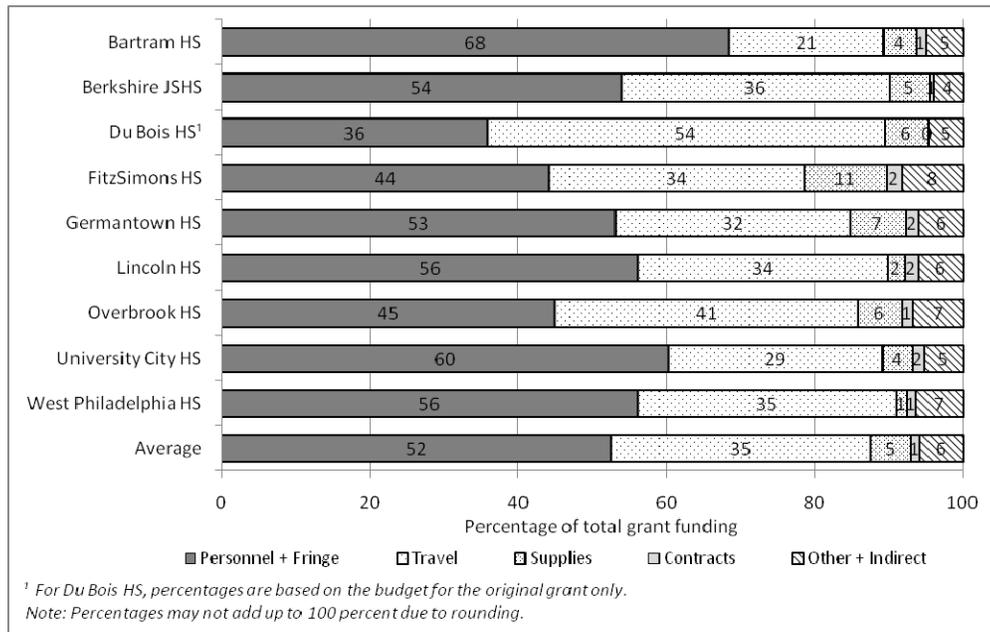


As reflected in the averages shown in the bottom row of the exhibit graph, most schools planned to spend the bulk of their grant monies during years one and two of implementation, and significantly less money during the planning year and year three of implementation. The planned expenditures for year three of implementation are lower than those for years one and two for two reasons: (1) this is an extension year for the grant, added after initial grant plans were made; and (2) schools plan to use this year to taper off the grant, focusing on sustaining and finding alternative funding sources for services that have proved most impactful. The Philadelphia schools serve as prime examples of this strategy.<sup>1</sup> Berkshire JSHS was atypical in spreading expenditures relatively evenly over the four grant years.

In their planned budgets, schools differed in how they used grant monies. Exhibit III-2 provides a breakdown of each school’s grant budget by key category. Again, the figures represent planned budgets, not actual expenditures.

<sup>1</sup> FitzSimons HS budgeted a relatively large percentage of its budget to the planning year because it dedicated a similar dollar amount for the planning year as the other Philadelphia schools but received a smaller grant.

**Exhibit III-2:  
Planned Distribution of Grant Expenditures by Expenditure Type**

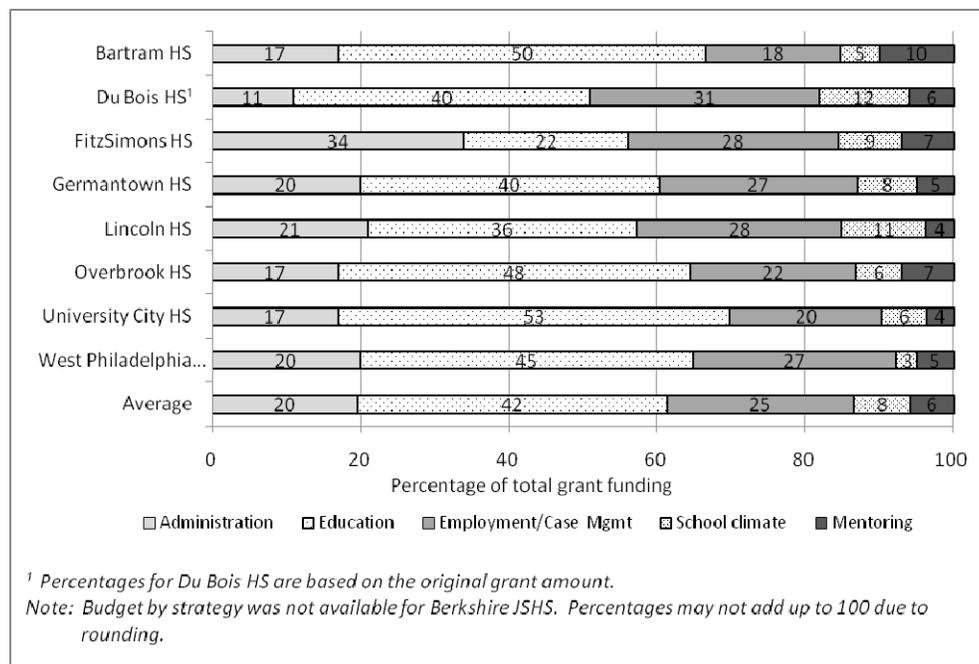


We can make the following generalizations about how schools planned to spend their grants:

- **Schools planned to direct the majority of their funding to personnel and fringe costs (52 percent on average).** Du Bois HS and FitzSimons HS broke from this pattern, budgeting considerably less for personnel and fringe costs than the average (36 percent and 44 percent of their budgets, respectively) because they each planned to hire relatively few staff members with the grant. At the other end of the spectrum, Bartram HS and University City HS planned to dedicate relatively greater proportions of their resources to personnel and fringe costs because they each chose to hire a relatively large number of teachers (10 and 13, respectively) in addition to other school staff members.
- **Contracts make up the next largest category of spending (35 percent of budgets on average).** Each school contracted out the majority of the employment/case management and mentoring services to community-based organizations (CBOs), and some schools chose to contract with additional CBOs for education and school climate services.
- **Expenditures for supplies, travel, and other/indirect charges together make up less than one-eighth (12 percent) of the average budget.** With these budget categories making up 21 percent of its budget, FitzSimons HS is something of an outlier. This is due to the school’s decision to spend a relatively large amount of money on supplies for instructional interventions and student incentives and less money on teacher salaries.

Another useful way of analyzing how the schools are spending their grant funding is to look at how expenditures are distributed among the various intervention strategies being used to achieve the goals of the grant program. Exhibit III-3 shows the percentage of its grant funding that each school is planning to dedicate to each MEES strategy. On average, schools budgeted the bulk of their grants for education services (42 percent) and employment/case management services (25 percent).<sup>2</sup> Relatively little funding is going to school climate services (8 percent) and mentoring services (6 percent). In addition to funding for services, schools budgeted up to one-third of the grant for administration, which includes costs for planning and for the salary of the grant administrator.

**Exhibit III-3:  
Planned Distribution of Grant Expenditures by Intervention Strategy**



While the goals for the grant are fairly consistent across schools, Exhibit III-3 shows that the schools are placing varying amounts of emphasis on each intervention strategy. Looking at the data in Exhibit III-3 in greater detail, it is possible to make a number of general observations:

- **Schools planned to spend between 11 and 34 percent of their grant funding on administrative costs.** In general, the Philadelphia schools planned to spend more in this area because, in addition to school-level administrative costs, each

<sup>2</sup> Case management and employment strategies are combined in our analysis of budget and staffing, because at seven of the nine schools these services are delivered in an integrated fashion from Student Success Centers (SSCs).

school planned to provide, on average, over half a million dollars to support district-level administrative costs. FitzSimons HS planned to spend a similar amount on administration of the grant as the other Philadelphia schools, but because it received a smaller grant, administrative costs account for a larger percentage of its grant. Because much of Du Bois High School's planning was done prior to receiving the grant and it did not have to support district-level costs, this school planned to dedicate a relatively smaller portion of its budget to administration and spend a larger amount on other strategies.

- **There is considerable variation among the schools in the amounts they plan to dedicate to education strategies.** The budget percentage going to education interventions ranges from 22 percent (FitzSimons) to 53 percent (University City). FitzSimons HS dedicated a smaller portion of its grant to education because it did not hire any full-time teachers with grant funds. Bartram HS and University City HS both chose to hire a large number of teachers with the grant (10 and 13 respectively), and therefore dedicated 50 percent or more of their grant funds to education strategies.
- **On average, schools planned to support employment/case management strategies with fairly significant proportions of their grant funding (25 percent on average).** The relatively lower amounts of planned spending in this category for Bartram HS, Overbrook HS, and University City HS (18, 22, and 20 percent, respectively) may actually understate the emphasis these schools are giving to employment/case management strategies, because these schools all had pre-existing Student Success Centers (SSCs), and didn't have to dedicate as much money to facility modifications, furniture, and equipment as the other schools.<sup>3</sup> Du Bois High School's relatively large planned expenditure on employment/case management (31 percent of its budget) clearly represents an emphasis on this strategy, as indicated by the fact that it chose to hire a relatively large number of staff members in support of this strategy.
- **All of the grantee schools budgeted less for the school climate and mentoring strategies than for the other strategies.** At the low end of the spectrum, West Philadelphia HS dedicated only three percent of its planned budget to school climate strategies and is not supporting any full-time school climate staff members with grant funds. Although most of the other schools are planning to spend somewhat more than this on school climate strategies, the average is only 8 percent of total grant expenditures. Because most of the schools took similar approaches to mentoring, the budget percentages they dedicated to this strategy are both fairly consistent and relatively small, with six of the nine schools dedicating between five and seven percent of their budgets to this intervention strategy. For both intervention strategies, however, there were schools that put a greater emphasis on the strategy than most. Lincoln HS budgeted 11 percent of

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<sup>3</sup> West Philadelphia HS also had a pre-existing Student Success Center, but because of other planned expenditures in the employment/case management category, it planned to spend a greater percentage of the grant in this category.

its grant for climate strategies and planned to hire three full-time school climate staff members. Bartram HS planned to dedicate ten percent of its grant funding to mentoring, budgeting more than \$400,000 for extracurricular pay for teacher mentors.

Overall, the level of funding that schools chose to dedicate to each strategy depended on a number of factors not necessarily related to the emphasis placed on that strategy. These factors include the presence or absence of other pre-existing services in this strategy, the number of staff members required to implement grant programs, and the amount of planning that had taken place prior to the grant. (Specific services in each strategy will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.)

## Changes in Overall School Budgets

As discussed in Chapter II, school budgets have changed considerably in recent years independently of the MEES grant. More specifically, the Philadelphia schools' budgets have increased, while those of Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois have decreased. These shifts affect the context for grant implementation in a number of ways:

- **For the Philadelphia schools, school budget increases funded staff members and programs that are aligned with grant plans.** The influx of stimulus funding was used to hire additional teachers and staff members for A/B schedules, to reduce class size, to start in-school suspension programs, and to increase counselor services. Because much of this increased funding went towards services and staffing that are complementary to MEES funding priorities (i.e., reduced class sizes and in-school suspension), MEES grant funds were freed up for other purposes. However, because expenditures to date were not available at the time of report writing, it is not clear how much of grant was freed up or how schools plan to reallocate these resources.
- **Although Du Bois HS's budget has been decreasing in recent years, the MEES grant allowed the school to compensate for some of these losses.** For example, the grant-funded substance abuse counselor has worked at the school for several years, but without the MEES grant, his position would have been eliminated due to budget cuts.
- **Berkshire JSHS's budget has also decreased in recent years, and similarly to Du Bois HS, the MEES grant allowed the school to retain staff members it would have otherwise lost.** However, in the first year of implementation (SY 2009–2010), the school lost a substantial grant from the New York State Department of Education and was forced to reshuffle grant plans to compensate for this loss.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Despite the fact that many of the schools' budgets increased independently of the grant, the MEES grant represents a sizeable contribution to each school's budget, and school stakeholders are appreciative of the opportunities for school improvement that this grant provides. At the same time, the following budgetary challenges have emerged during the planning year and first year of grant implementation:

- **School leaders have varying levels of discretion over how MEES grant monies are allocated.** As will be discussed further in the leadership section, in general, leaders at the Philadelphia schools have less “resource authority” over their grants than leaders at the other schools, because of the strong role assumed by the school district. Therefore, the school leaders' ability to access and redirect grant funds as necessary is limited. Although Philadelphia school leaders reported fewer challenges resulting from their limited resource authority during the implementation year than they did during the planning year, some challenges still remain. School leaders at Du Bois HS and Berkshire JSHS have more discretion over grant resources and therefore faced fewer challenges around accessing grant resources and re-directing funds as necessary.
- **Some staff members were unclear about how grant funds could and could not be used.** For example, one social worker noted the following:

*I wish I had a better understanding of how a social worker can use DOL money for incentives for attendance and behavior. I want to know what's available.*

Some staff members at another school were likewise unaware that grant funds can be used to support field trips for the career academies.

- **Some Philadelphia school leaders were not clear about what the grant actually funds.** This problem was particularly prevalent at schools where the grant is used as part of a blended funding stream. For example, although Overbrook HS and University City HS both have budget line items for the Oasis program<sup>4</sup> and school leaders were under the impression that the MEES grant supports this program, in reality, this was not the case for year one of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010). Rather, district operational dollars and DOL's school-district-based Strategies for Reducing Youth Involvement in Gangs and Violent Crime grant (School District Grant) supported this program.

These challenges suggest that while the budget amount is adequate to support grant programs, schools may still need additional support on budget management issues.

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<sup>4</sup> Oasis is a “school within a school” for overage, under-credit students.

## Staffing

The MEES grant is increasing services and reducing class size through a sizable increase in staffing at each of the schools. As shown in Exhibit III-4, schools hired a total of 140 full-time staff members and 62 part-time staff members to manage and implement programs under the MEES grant for year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010). While, on average, each school hired 16 full-time staff members and seven part-time staff members, there was great variation in the total number of staff members hired at each school. The number of full-time staff members hired at each school ranges from six to 22, while the number of part-time staff members ranges from zero to 29. New staffing levels vary due to (1) the size of the grant each school received, (2) the approach that each school took to grant reforms (i.e., investing heavily in curriculum or student incentives versus investing in additional staff members), (3) the success each school had in hiring for grant-funded positions, and (4) the presence of other, new funding sources that increased staffing levels at the school independently from the MEES grant. At most of the schools, school staff members other than those funded by the grant charge some of their time to the grant for grant activities such as professional development, serving as adult mentors, and participating in the Turnaround Teams.

**Exhibit III-4:  
Grant Staffing in Year One of Implementation  
(SY 2009–2010)**

	Full-Time			Part-Time		
	School	Contractor	Total	School	Contractor	Total
Bartram HS	14	8	22	0	0	0
Berkshire JSHS	13	1	14	9	20	29
Du Bois HS	4	5	9	9	4	13
FitzSimons HS	1	5	6	0	1	1
Germantown HS	12	6	18	0	2	2
Lincoln HS	14	6	20	0	8	8
Overbrook HS	7	11	18	0	4	4
University City HS	16	4	20	0	4	4
West Philadelphia HS	7	6	13	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>62</b>

*Note: In some cases, there were discrepancies between the staffing numbers given on site, the staffing numbers listed in the planned grant budget, and the staffing numbers in the overall school budget. The numbers in this table represent our best estimate of the number of grant-funded staff members at each school.*

*Some of these staff members started at the school midway through year one of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010).*

Schools hired the majority of the grant staff before or during year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010). However, a number of schools have since hired or have plans to hire additional staff members moving forward. Two schools each hired a program coordinator prior to the start of year two of implementation (SY 2010–2011), and all of the Philadelphia schools plan to hire a data specialist for this school year. Additionally, three of the schools have plans to hire other, additional staff members for various programs. In contrast, Berkshire JSHS plans to lay off or reduce the hours of several staff members for year two of grant implementation (SY 2010–2011) because the loss of a New York State Department of Education grant forced the school to reshuffle staffing and schedules.

## Staffing by Strategy

The vast majority of the grant staff are associated with specific intervention strategies, as well as those that work in the area of grant management. Exhibit III-5 provides a breakdown of the staff members hired by strategy and for grant management.

**Exhibit III-5:  
Grant Staffing by Strategy in Year One of Grant Implementation  
(SY 2009–2010)**

	Grant Management		Education		Employment/ Case Mgmt		Mentoring			School Climate		Total	
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	
Bartram HS	1	0	12	0	6	0	2	0	1	0	22	0	
Berkshire JSHS	0	0	4	0	9	6	0	22	1	1	14	29	
Du Bois HS	1	0	3	9	5	4	0	0	0	0	9	13	
FitzSimons HS	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	6	1	
Germantown HS	1	0	9	2	4	0	2	0	2	0	18	2	
Lincoln HS	1	0	12	4	4	0	2	4	1	0	20	8	
Overbrook HS	1	0	5	2	4	2	6	0	2	0	18	4	
University City HS	1	0	13	1	4	1	0	2	2	0	20	4	
West Philadelphia HS	1	0	6	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	13	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>62</b>	

*Note: In some cases, there were discrepancies between the staffing numbers given on site, the staffing numbers listed in the planned grant budget, and the staffing numbers in the overall school budget. The numbers in this table represent our best estimate of the number of grant-funded staff members at each school.*

On the basis of the data shown in Exhibit III-5, it is possible to make several general observations about how the schools chose to staff the various strategies used in the grant:

- **Education is the most heavily staffed strategy.** However, within this strategy, the number of full-time staff members hired by each school varies greatly, from zero to 13. Given that most staff members hired for the education strategy are teachers, the differences between schools represent different levels of emphasis on reducing class size and on educational interventions in general. Other staff positions in this category include academic coordinators and instructional coaches.
- **There is relative consistency across schools in the number of staff members hired for employment/case management.** This consistency is partly due to the fact that for this strategy, one agency handled all the contracts for the Philadelphia schools and structured staffing similarly across schools. Berkshire JSHS has substantially more staff in this category than the others (five staff members for case management and 12 for employment) and so breaks from the common pattern.
- **There is considerable variation between the Philadelphia schools and other schools in the specific types of job positions hired for the employment/case management strategy.** Staff members hired in the employment/case management category at the Philadelphia schools include project coordinators, post-secondary specialists, career development specialists, social workers, and project assistants. Employment/case management staff at Du Bois HS include counselors, career navigators, and student advocates. At Berkshire JSHS, staff members who work within employment/case management include adventure-based counselors, a workforce development coordinator, a vocational instructor, a transportation aide, and several internship supervisors. Within case management, Berkshire's behavior management specialists are unique in that they each have over ten years of experience working with youth and have been trained in therapeutic crisis intervention.
- **The mentoring strategy utilizes fewer staff members than the other strategies.** Du Bois HS did not hire any mentoring staff members, and rather worked with four contractors to coordinate the mentoring program. Each of the Philadelphia schools hired one to two contractor staff members housed at the school to coordinate its mentoring program. Two of the Philadelphia schools also each hired four part-time or full-time school-based mentors. Berkshire JSHS's mentoring program looks somewhat different: the school hired 22 part-time mentoring staff members on a per diem basis to recruit mentors across the state of New York.
- **Schools hired relatively few school climate staff members.** Three schools did not hire any school climate staff members with the MEES grant, and the remaining schools each hired one to two school climate staff members. The majority of climate staff members hired are managers of non-instructional school services or in-school suspension teachers.

In addition to the school-year staff, a number of grant-funded staff work at the Summer Bridge programs, a subset of the education strategy. A total of 129 school staff members, eight full-time contractor staff members, and 58 part-time contractor staff members were hired to work specifically on Summer Bridge programs.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, in many cases, the Summer Bridge programs were supported by year-round staff persons such as the turnaround assistant principals, the employment/case management staff members, and the mentoring staff members.

## Changes in School-Wide Staffing

While the number of school-based staff members supported by this grant is substantial, this additional staffing must be considered in the context of broader school-wide changes. Independently of the MEES grant, staffing at many of the schools has increased in recent years as a result of the budget increases previously discussed. As shown in Exhibit III-6, each of the Philadelphia schools received an influx of staff members between the baseline year (SY 2007–2008) and year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010). Although it is anticipated that staffing numbers will fall for year two of implementation (SY 2010–2011), they will still be higher than the baseline year (SY 2007–2008) numbers in all of the Philadelphia schools except for University City HS.<sup>6</sup> All of the Philadelphia schools are also experiencing simultaneous drops in enrollment, and therefore the declines in the student-to-staff ratios from the baseline year (SY 2007–2008) to year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010) cannot be attributed entirely to the effects of the MEES grant.<sup>7</sup> For example, at FitzSimons HS, the staff-to-student ratio fell from 9.2 to 5.7, but only one additional staff member was grant-funded. Therefore, a key line of analysis in the subsequent chapters will focus on how these schools used the grant-funded staff strategically, given that overall staffing levels were already increasing during this same time.

Du Bois HS's staffing levels have remained flat over the past two years if grant-funded positions are not taken into account. Therefore, the MEES grant was critical in helping the school increase staffing levels. In contrast, staffing levels at Berkshire JSHS have fallen in recent years, but the MEES grant allowed the school to fund staff positions that otherwise would have been lost.

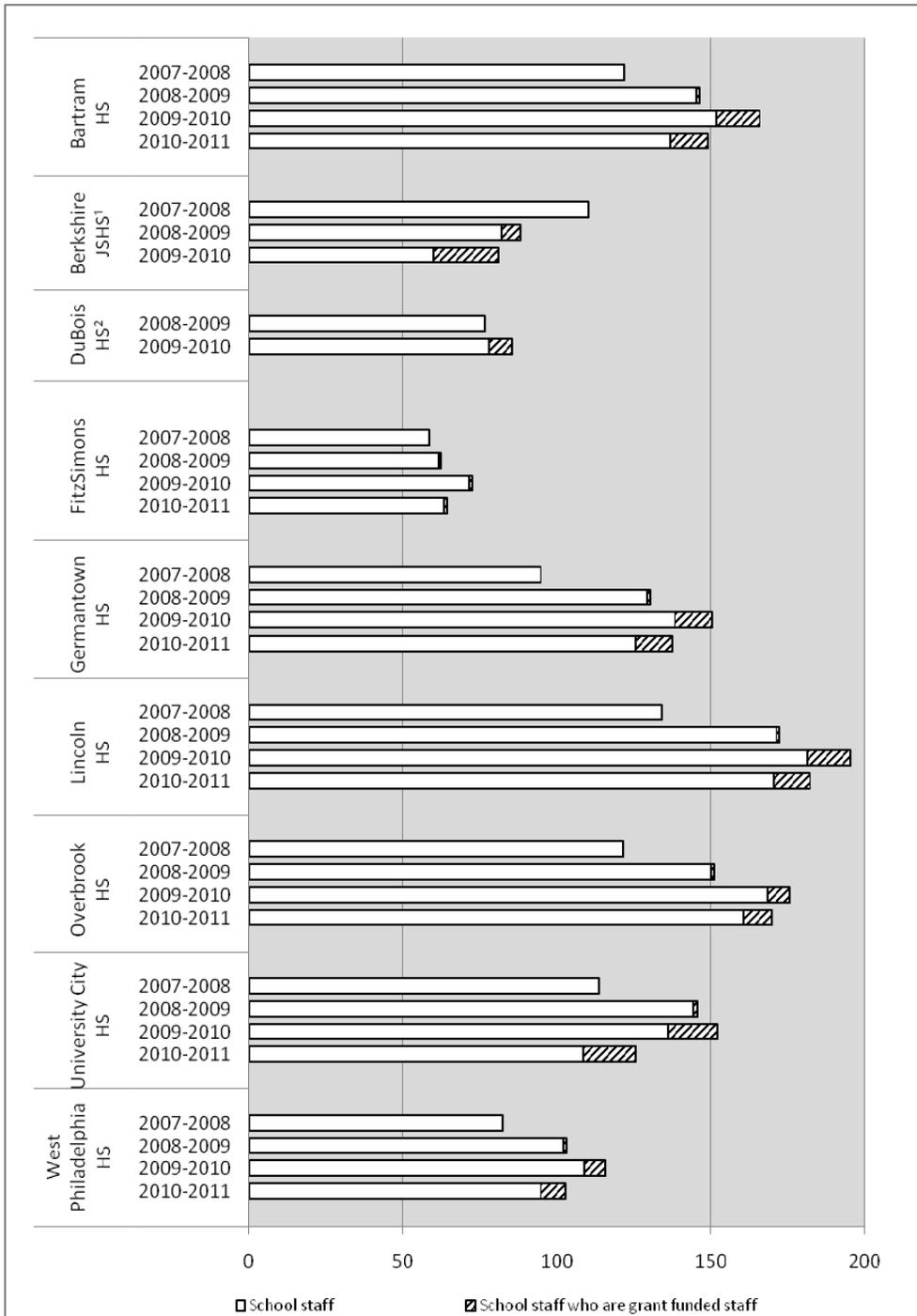
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<sup>5</sup> Staffing in Philadelphia for 2010 Summer Bridge program was somewhat complicated. District funding was provided for school staff for the majority of the Summer Bridge program, and the grant only covered costs for seven days of programming. Therefore, even those school staff members who were full-time throughout the summer were only funded through the grant for part of the program. Because of these complications, we were not able to distinguish between FT and PT school staff members.

<sup>6</sup> University City HS experienced the largest drop in enrollment out of all the Philadelphia schools during this time period, which may explain why staffing levels decreased.

<sup>7</sup> SPR calculated this ratio by dividing the total enrollment for each school year by the total number of school staff, including grant-funded school staff. Contractor staff are not included in this count.

**Exhibit III-6:  
Changes in the Number of School Staff Members Over Time  
(SY 2008–2009 to SY 2010–2011)**



<sup>1</sup> Data not available for 2010-2011. Additionally, for SY 2009-2010, the mentoring staff are not included in this count because they are paid a per diem rather than a salary.

<sup>2</sup> Data not available for 2007-2008 or 2010-2011.

## District and Intermediary Staff Members

Grant funding also supports staff members in the districts and in one intermediary organization. Du Bois HS’s grant administrator is technically a district employee, although she is housed at the school and functions as a school employee. At BUFSD, because the district and school act essentially as the same entity, there is no clear distinction between district and school staff. In Philadelphia, grant funds support staff members in SDP’s Office of Multiple Pathways and in Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN), the CBO that manages the contracts for the SSCs and the student internship wages for all of the Philadelphia schools.<sup>8</sup> Funding for these positions comes out of each of the seven schools’ grant budgets.<sup>9</sup> As shown in Exhibit III-7 below, staff members at SDP and PYN provide general oversight for grant programs, coordinate technical assistance and professional development, oversee reporting and data collection, and convene regular meetings for key staff members in the schools. Although the initiative is being moved to SDP’s Office of School Reform for year two of implementation (SY 2010–2011), district-level staffing will remain the same except for the addition of a math content specialist.

**Exhibit III-7:  
Other Grant Staffing in Philadelphia**

	<b>Staff Members</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>School District of Philadelphia</b> (Office of Multiple Pathways)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Multiple Pathways to Graduation<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Program Managers (2 FTE)</li> <li>• Research Associate (1 FTE)</li> <li>• English Content Specialist (1 FTE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee schools’ hiring process, contracts, insurance-related needs, and grant budgets</li> <li>• Convene weekly TA meetings with the TAPs</li> <li>• Document and evaluate grant programs</li> <li>• Provide data to schools to inform decision-making</li> <li>• Coordinate between MEES programs and other district initiatives</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Technically, the grant administrator at Du Bois HS is a district employee but is housed at the school and acts as a school employee.

<sup>9</sup> PYN staff provide support for all of the SSCs in the district, including the four not funded by the MEES grant. Therefore, these positions are supported through a combination of the MEES grant and other funds.

	Staff Members	Responsibilities
<b>Philadelphia Youth Network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of SSC (1 FTE)</li> <li>• Director of SSC Leadership Academy (.6 FTE)</li> <li>• Director of School/Community Partnerships (.45 FTE)</li> <li>• Vice President of Capacity Building (.1 FTE)</li> <li>• Vice-President of Education Innovations (.05 FTE)</li> <li>• Senior Business Partnership Specialist (1 FTE)</li> <li>• Operations Coordinator (1 FTE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee data collection and manage reporting</li> <li>• Provide fiscal oversight</li> <li>• Provide technical assistance</li> <li>• Convene monthly directors meetings</li> <li>• Coordinate professional development on a bi-monthly basis</li> <li>• Recruit employers, place students in internships, and monitor worksites</li> </ul>
<p><sup>1</sup> Only a small percentage of this person's position is supported through grant funds.</p>		

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Although grantee schools were able to use grant funds to substantially staff up for year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010), the process was not without some challenges.

- **Finding qualified and willing applicants for some positions proved to be difficult.** For example, FitzSimons HS could not find applicants who were a good fit for two instructional specialist positions; SDP had trouble finding qualified applicants for the data specialist positions at each school; and some schools faced difficulties in finding teachers for the in-school suspension (ISS) programs because many teachers consider this position undesirable.
- **Once qualified applicants were found, orienting them to their new schools and/or roles took considerable time.** In many cases, staff members were not able to “hit the ground running” and required considerable ramp-up time to fully understand the nature of their new positions and/or to integrate into the fabric of the school. For example, at one school, considerable effort and time had to be put into creating a protocol that clearly defines and distinguishes the roles that case management staff members, teachers, and teaching assistants play in the classroom. These challenges highlight the imperative of starting the hiring process well in advance of when grant programs are slated to start.
- **In some schools, the increase in staffing raised concerns about the sustainability of MEES programs and reforms after the sunset of the grant.** Even in Philadelphia, where grant efforts are well-aligned with the 2014 strategic plan for SDP and staffing levels are increasing independently from the grant, schools will not likely be able to sustain these reduced class sizes or the wraparound services without the grant. School stakeholders hope, however, that the wave of reforms that MEES is bringing about will lead to a shift in the culture of the schools that can be sustained once the grant has ended. To begin to address this challenge, school leaders are thinking about how grant staffing can be tapered

off in year three of implementation (SY 2011–2012) and how critical reforms can be sustained past this year.

## **Leadership**

School and grant leadership is essential to successful grant implementation. School reform requires strong leadership because it aims to shift the culture of the school, including most prominently the values, aspirations, and behaviors of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. In the following sections, we describe the roles that leaders at the school level play in the implementation of the grant, and then we outline the associated challenges and lessons learned.

### **School-level Leadership**

Leadership at each school is typically three-tiered, with the principal, Turnaround Assistant Principal/grant administrator (hereby referred to as the TAP), and Turnaround Team all playing roles. As mentioned earlier, the level of discretion that school leaders have over the MEES grant varies. In general, the principals and TAPs at the Philadelphia schools have less authority over issues such as curriculum selection, scheduling, and program development than their counterparts at Du Bois HS and Berkshire JSHS. Despite these differences, there are many similarities in how each school structured leadership for the grant. Below, we describe these similarities and point out some differences.

#### ***Principal***

Principals of MEES schools play varying roles in grant administration and oversight. At Berkshire JSHS, the principal—who also served as the grant administrator for the first two years of the grant—plays a very hands-on role in overseeing grant programs. In some other schools, the principal also takes a fairly hands-on approach to the grant but works collaboratively with the TAP. In a few other schools, the principal defers to the TAP when it comes to the specifics of the grant, providing only general oversight on how the grant fits into a broader, school-wide vision.

In six of the MEES schools, there has been no principal turnover since the start of the grant in the planning year (SY 2008–2009). In fact, in four of the schools, the current principal has been at the school for five or more years. This stability allows for consistent leadership and vision, both for the school and for the grant. On the other hand, Germantown HS and University City HS both received new principals for year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010), and West Philadelphia HS received a new principal for year two of implementation (SY 2010–2011). Principal turnover has both positive and negative repercussions for grant implementation. On

one hand, new principals often come in with fresh ideas and energy for reforming the schools. At the same time, however, new principals require considerable ramp-up time to become acquainted with the students, staff members, and reform efforts at the school, and principal turnover often creates a sense of instability for staff members and students. In the case of Germantown HS, for instance, the new principal took some time to become oriented to the requirements of the MEES grant, and this caused some tension at this school in the first year of grant implementation.

### ***Turnaround Assistant Principal/Grant Administrator***

Although the MEES grant does not require it, seven of the nine schools created a TAP position. And while not called a TAP, the grant administrator at Du Bois HS plays a TAP-like role. As mentioned above, the principal at Berkshire JSHS played the role of grant administrator for the first two years of the grant, and the workforce development lead will assume administrator responsibilities moving forward. In all but three schools, there has been no turnover in the TAP position. In two schools, a new TAP was brought in when the previous TAP took over other administrative responsibilities in the school. In a third school, the TAP was let go and the principal—as of the summer 2010 site visit—had taken over some TAP responsibilities and distributed others to “teacher leaders” within the school.

Each TAP has a number of responsibilities within his or her school. As grant administrators, they are responsible for collecting data, reporting, overseeing the budget, and managing the contractors for the grant. In many cases, they also play a broader instructional leadership role by developing and disseminating a broader vision for grant reforms, garnering teacher buy-in, and supporting staff in effectively implementing key reforms. Additionally, in all but three schools, the TAP holds another official administrative position in the school as well. Three TAPs are also the principals of the Ninth Grade Academy, and two TAPs also oversee the Oasis program.<sup>10</sup> As will be discussed in more detail in the challenges section, several TAPs feel that playing these multiple roles diminishes their ability to be effective grant administrators. To alleviate this problem, two schools each recently hired a program coordinator to assist the TAP.

### ***Turnaround Teams***

ETA’s Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) for the MEES grant required that each grant be led by a Turnaround Team (TT). The role of the TT is to guide planning and implementation throughout the term of the grant, often by establishing subcommittees focused on specific aspects

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<sup>10</sup> Oasis is a “school within a school” for overage, under-credit students. Although it was part of these schools’ original grant budgets, for year one of implementation (SY 2009–2010) it was not grant-funded.

of grant implementation. TTs consist of a combination of school leaders, community members, school staff, teachers, students, and/or parents. The TT can be viewed as a change strategy in and of itself, in that it supports collaborative decision-making, promotes buy-in, and contributes to a professional culture of high expectations and group accountability.

Berkshire JSHS is the only school that does not currently have an active TT team. Instead, a management team consisting of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and director of technology and curriculum meet regularly to make most of the decisions about the grant. However, the MEES grant has led to more opportunities for distributed leadership at Berkshire JSHS through the creation of a teacher leadership committee. The three teachers on this committee dedicate all of their time to supporting the school's teachers, by providing professional development, developing sample lesson plans, conducting classroom observations, and reviewing students' academics and test scores.<sup>11</sup>

At the other schools, the TTs all played very active leadership roles during the first year of implementation. Now, at the beginning of year two, some differences in activity levels have developed. At about half of the schools, the TTs continue to meet monthly. At Du Bois HS, the monthly meetings give teachers, school staff, and contractor staff opportunities to provide updates on their programs and discuss the needs of specific students. At University City HS, the TT continues to meet monthly, but membership has been reconstituted; this is because the TAP, aware that much of the staff would be leaving at the end of the 2009–2010 school year because of the school's designation as a Renaissance School, asked inactive members of the TT to step down and invited staff members who were likely to stay at the school to join the committee. In the rest of the schools, subcommittees continue to meet regularly, but the TT in its entirety does not. For example, at Germantown HS, the TT is not regularly meeting as a whole, but the stakeholder, mentoring, summer bridge, and in-school suspension subcommittees each continue to meet on a regular basis.

## **Key Challenges**

Given the multiple layers of district- and school-level leadership for this grant, it is not surprising that challenges arose. Below we discuss these challenges in more detail, including those related to the rolling out of district-level reforms, the nature of the TAP position, and the ability of leaders to develop and disseminate a shared vision for the grant.

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<sup>11</sup> Due to funding cuts, for year two of implementation (SY 2010–2011), these teachers will likely spend half of their time in the classroom.

### ***Challenges Related to District-wide Reforms***

The district-wide reforms that SDP is implementing at the same time as the MEES grant have the potential to complement grant initiatives—and many did. However, in some cases, they forced school leaders to reshuffle grant plans, often at the last minute. For example, Philadelphia school leaders were informed on the first day of the implementation year (SY 2009–2010) about a new corrective reading and math program. As a result, school staff members had to individually test each ninth grade student and then re-roster their classes based on the results. Likewise, school leaders were not informed until May that all field trips for 2010 Summer Bridge had to occur during the last week of the program, after many of the TAPs had already planned field trips for other times. The Renaissance Schools Initiative was arguably one of the largest district-level reforms that occurred during grant implementation. As part of this initiative, West Philadelphia HS and University City HS were slated to be taken over by the district or a charter school organization for second year of implementation (SY 2010–2011).<sup>12</sup> This decreased morale for both staff and students at these two schools, and the expected staffing changes resulting from the takeover created uncertainty about the sustainability of grant reforms. Because of the nature of the other two districts' relationships with the schools (BUFSD being essentially the same entity as Berkshire JSHS and BCPS taking a fairly hands-off approach to grant management), similar challenges have not arisen in these districts.

### ***Challenges Faced by the Turnaround Assistant Principals***

As outlined below, the nature of the TAP positions also presents its own inherent set of challenges.

- Only two TAPs had previous experience working at the target school when they started their positions.<sup>13</sup> The others had to work very hard to build relationships and trust among veteran teachers and ramp up for their new administrative roles. (Although Du Bois HS's TAP was new to the school, she was able to ramp up efforts more quickly because of her experience managing DOL's School District Grant for the district.)
- Due to the fact that the position is grant funded, some TAPs also expressed concern over the prospect of long-term employment, and in the first two years of the grant, two TAPs had left the position for other, presumably more secure administrator jobs.

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<sup>12</sup> The Renaissance process at West Philadelphia HS ended up being delayed for a year due to problems in the selection process. However, by the time this announcement was made, many staff members had already found positions at other schools.

<sup>13</sup> One of these two TAPs has since been laid off. The other started in the middle of SY 2009–2010 to replace the previous TAP, who took another administrator position in the school.

- Further compounding this challenge is the fact that most of the TAPs also play other administrative roles in the building. As a ninth grade teacher at one school explained, this further strains the TAP's limited capacity:

*The TAP is doing two roles, which is challenging for [the TAP] because both are demanding positions... [The TAP is] usually out one day a week [for the MEES grant], so the ninth grade administrator isn't here most of the time.*

One TAP reported that he is behind on his paperwork for a budget modification to the district, and as a result, the grant budget has not yet been approved. Another TAP said she works very long hours to ensure that the paperwork for DOL and the Ninth Grade Academy are completed on time. In addition to the difficulties of handling two jobs adequately, the TAPs in Philadelphia are away from the school campus at least one day a week to attend weekly district meetings. Respondents noted that having a school administrator out of the office so frequently makes it difficult for schools to implement new programs and address the school crises that often arise. The principal/superintendent at Berkshire JSHS faced similar challenges with regard to competing demands for his time, resulting in his hand-off of the grant administrator duties for the second year of implementation (SY 2010–2011). However, at least one TAP felt that being the principal of the Ninth Grade Academy is constructive because it gives her more oversight over the ninth grade teachers and social workers, who are integral to grant implementation.

### **Leadership Challenges**

Various rough spots during the first year of grant implementation reinforce the importance of school leaders in guiding schools through the kinds of comprehensive changes being attempted through the MEES grant. Although grant leadership has been effective overall, some leaders could have done a better job of communicating about and helping to coordinate grant-funded reforms. Given that funding from the MEES grant is dispersed across a number of strategies, a preliminary but critical step in the process of garnering school-wide buy-in is making sure that the school staff is aware that the various grant reforms are happening. At several schools, some aspects of grant reforms were somewhat isolated from one another, simply because not all staff in the building knew they were occurring. For example, at the time of the third site visit to one school, ninth grade teachers did not know that the grant-funded social worker targets ninth grade students and therefore is a potential resource for them. Several schools are addressing similar challenges by widely distributing newsletters summarizing the implementation status of different components of the grant. For example, Du Bois HS distributes a monthly MEES newsletter that contains updates on grant programs written by members of the TT.

## **Contractors**

Schools are working with a number of contractors to provide grant services. For the mentoring and case management components of the grant, ETA's SGA required that all of the schools contract with CBOs with expertise in the given strategy. Some schools also chose to contract with additional CBOs because of their specialized expertise in education and school climate. In a few cases, schools had pre-existing strong relationships with local CBOs they wished to continue.

## **Contractor Selection and Management**

In the guidelines for the grant, DOL encouraged the use of a competitive process for selecting sub-grantees or contractors, and grantees have generally taken this approach. However, in SDP, this process has been slower than anticipated. SDP awarded Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) a contract to oversee and subcontract all the SSCs, but PYN could not release the RFP for subcontractors until August 2009. SDP did not release its own RFQ for mentoring, education, and career coordination/student employment contractors until September 2009. As a result, while some partners were able to start in the Philadelphia schools in late 2009, most programs at these schools were not fully up and running until well into 2010. At the time of the third site visit (spring 2010), a number of contractors still did not have signed contracts with SDP.

Berkshire JSJS and Du Bois HS, which both worked mainly with CBOs with whom they had strong, pre-existing relationships, were able to ramp-up partnerships more quickly, although Du Bois HS did face some initial delays in getting contracts signed. In the case of Du Bois HS, many of the partners previously worked with the district and the TAP on DOL's School District Grant. Berkshire JSJS is somewhat unique in that the school is integrally connected with the only contractor for the grant—the Berkshire Farm Centers for Services and Youth, which runs the residential treatment facility for the school's students.

Schools are taking varying approaches to managing contractors. For most of the CBOs, the TAP is the main point of contact within the school, providing oversight for their work, providing input on program design, serving as an intermediary between CBO staff and school staff, and helping CBO staff secure school resources (e.g., classroom space) as needed. In some cases, lead CBO staff members are also members of the TT or coordinate directly with specific subcommittees of the TT. In the case of several of the mentoring programs in Philadelphia, a designated faculty liaison helps the mentoring contractor staff member navigate in the school.

## Role of Contractors

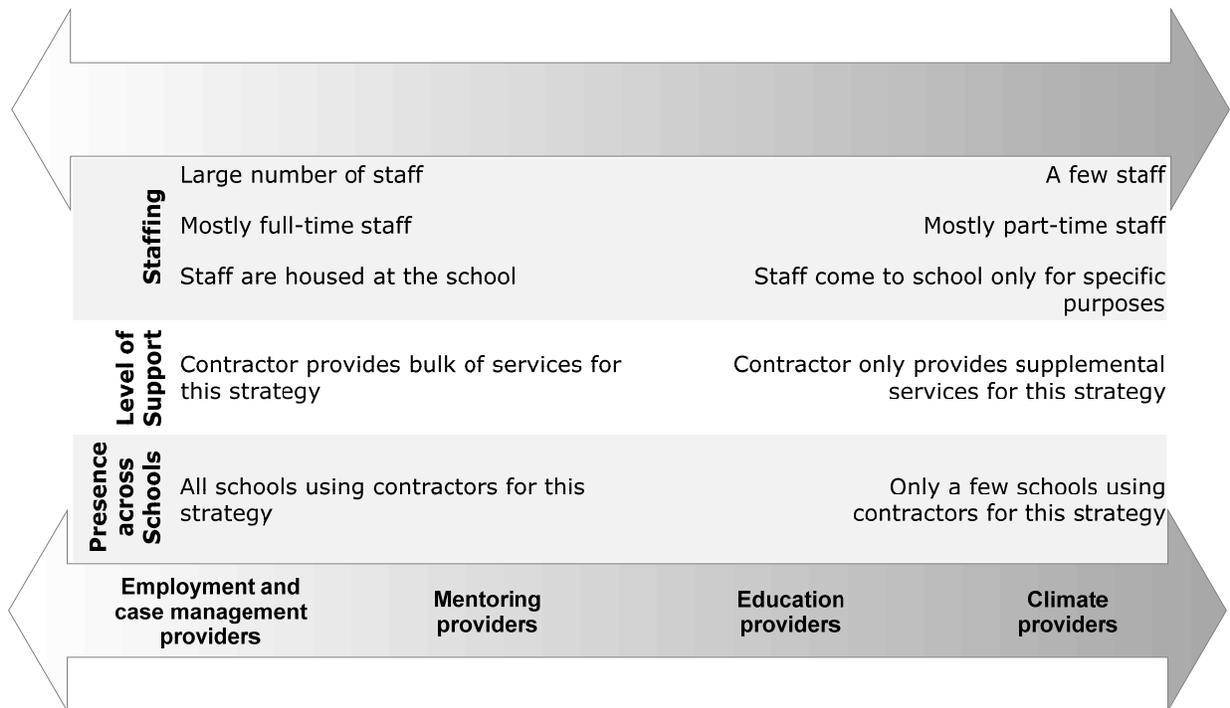
Each school is working with at least one contractor to provide grant-funded services and most work with several. As shown in Exhibit III-8, all the schools work with contractors for employment/case management services and mentoring services. However, only five schools work with contractors in the education strategy, and only three work with contractors for the school climate strategy. In some cases, schools are working with more than one contractor in order to diversify the services in a given strategy.

**Exhibit III-8:  
Presence of Contractors by Strategy in Year One of Implementation (SY 2009–2010)**

	<b>Education</b>	<b>Employment/ Case Management</b>	<b>School Climate</b>	<b>Mentoring</b>
Bartram HS		✓	✓	✓
Berkshire JSHS		✓		✓
Du Bois HS	✓	✓		✓
FitzSimons HS		✓	✓	✓
Germantown HS	✓	✓		✓
Lincoln HS	✓	✓		✓
Overbrook HS	✓	✓	✓	✓
University City HS	✓	✓		✓
West Philadelphia HS		✓		✓
<b>Total # of schools with contractors for this strategy</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>

It is important to note that most of the school-year contractors also provided services during the 2010 summer program, although the depth of services varied. Four schools also brought in additional contractors over the summer to provide enrichment classes such as video production or puppetry. The summer programs, including the role of contractors, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV. Exhibit III-9 and the section below provides a model for understanding the depth of contractors role within the schools during the first year of grant implementation.

**Exhibit III-9:  
Model for Understanding Depth of Contractor Involvement for  
Year One of Implementation (SY 2009–2010)**



The following observations can be made about the roles of contractors in the grant:

- Employment and case management contractors are among the most critical providers for this grant.** Each school is working with one or more CBO contractors in this area, and in most cases, these contractors have several staff members housed full-time at the schools. In the Philadelphia schools, the employment/case management staff runs the SSCs. These staff members provide job readiness workshops, link students with internships, and help students prepare for college. Additionally, through a contract with Social Work Connections, a social worker/re-engagement specialist is housed at each SSC. Du Bois HS’s employment/case management contractors similarly provide job readiness training, link students with internships, provide substance abuse counseling, and run an anger management group. Berkshire JSHS has no case management contractors, but staff from Berkshire Farms help to coordinate and provide student internships.
- Each school is working with one or more contractors to run the mentoring programs.** These providers are responsible for recruiting and enrolling mentors and mentees as well as overseeing the mentoring relationships. The majority of mentoring contractor staff members are housed full time at the school. At Du Bois HS, Overbrook HS, and Lincoln HS more than one organization provides mentoring services. At Du Bois HS, four different contractors help oversee the

community mentoring programs in order to recruit a critical mass of adult mentors. Overbrook HS and Lincoln HS both have six mentoring staff members each: two staff members from one contractor are responsible for the more traditional mentoring program, and four staff members from another contractor serve as hall monitors and informal in-school mentors.<sup>14</sup>

- **Education and school climate contractors are only working in a limited number of schools and are providing fewer of the core services for these strategies.**<sup>15</sup> Five schools are working with education contractors. These providers do not have staff housed full time at the schools and only provide supplemental education services such as SAT preparation or science enrichment opportunities. Du Bois HS is somewhat the exception, as an organizational facilitator from Talent Developmental High School (TDHS) works part time at the school to help implement the TDHS model. Although a number of schools planned to contract with a CBO to provide school climate-related services, the majority of these services were not up and running at the time of the third site visit.

## Key Challenges

Schools faced a number of challenges in selecting and managing contractors:

- **In the Philadelphia schools, there were delays in both contractor selection and the finalization of contracts.** Delays in the release of the RFQ meant that most contractors did not start working in the schools until November or December of 2009. As a result, given the time needed for hiring staff members and general ramp-up, most contracted services did not truly launch until well into 2010. Starting in the middle of the school year contributed to the broader challenges many CBOs faced in integrating into the school. As previously mentioned, although Du Bois HS faced initial delays in getting contracts signed, Du Bois HS and Berkshire JSHS were able to move more quickly with contractors, primarily because of their strong, pre-existing relationships with them.
- **Some contractor staff members housed full time in the schools reported difficulty integrating into the school.** In some cases, it took a good deal of time for contractor staff members to get the facilities needed to be able to adequately do their jobs. For example, one mentoring staff member reported that she worked in the library during her first few weeks at the school because no office space had been prepared for her. Similarly, a lack of computers, phone lines, and private

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<sup>14</sup> Although these staff members are contracted for mentoring services, school leaders considered their work as overlapping with school climate services. In at least one case, the TAP was trying to get this CBO's mentoring contract switched to a school climate contract.

<sup>15</sup> At Overbrook HS and University City HS, contractors were supposed to provide staff members for Oasis, a school-within-a-school for overage, under-credit youth. Despite the fact that it was in the grant budget for SY 2009–2010, grant funds did not support this program. Instead, these programs were supported solely through other district funds.

space to meet with students were re-occurring challenges across many of the SSCs. Several contractor staff members also reported that being an outside CBO working in a school comes with its own inherent set of challenges, including building rapport with school staff and ensuring that there is a clear understanding of and buy-in for their role in the school. Starting in the middle of the school year made it even more difficult for contractor staff to integrate into the school because the school staff and students had already established their rhythms for the year. Having a faculty liaison for contractors was an effective strategy for alleviating some of these challenges.

As a final note, contracted services are typically difficult to sustain after grant funding ends. Because the MEES grant is still relatively early in its implementation, this has not yet presented itself as a challenge. However, moving forward, schools will have to pay special attention to sustainability plans for the employment/case management and mentoring strategies because of their relatively strong reliance on contractors.

## **Summary of Findings**

As demonstrated in this chapter, schools have made considerable progress in grant implementation, having hired the majority of school staff and brought on a number of contractors to help run grant programs. The first two years of the grant have yielded a number of important findings. Firstly, the time needed to implement these types of reforms is considerable. As some schools learned, the process of identifying and contracting with CBOs, hiring staff, and getting new staff oriented to the school can take longer than expected. Due to the delays, one school leader summed up the first year of implementation as a “waiting game.” School leaders and staff members were eager to start the second year of implementation (SY 2010–2011) with the majority of grant programs in place. Additionally, the first two years of the grant reinforced the fact that strong leadership is critical for grant implementation and ensuring cohesion between various stakeholders’ visions for the grant. School leaders are not only responsible for facilitating the creation of and disseminating a shared vision, but also for ensuring that school and contractor staff are clear about their roles and how their work fits into the broader vision for reform. This level of clarity and communication is also critical for district-level leadership. In some cases, Philadelphia schools were forced to change grant plans in order to align with broader, district-wide reform efforts. Finally, because schools’ budgets and staffing increased independently from the MEES grant, examining the added value of the MEES grant requires looking beyond additional funding and staffing, to analyzing the way that the grant shifted the culture and systems within the schools.

## **IV. EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES**

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The MEES grant provides an opportunity for grantee schools to develop educational reforms and interventions that address students' educational barriers and strengthen instructional practices. Consistent with DOL's expectations for the MEES grant, schools are implementing educational interventions that involve the whole school, while targeting specific groups of at-risk youth such as entering and repeating ninth graders and youth who are failing classes or struggling to keep up with the demands of high school. Schools are making significant strides in implementing these efforts, creating systems for supporting teachers, establishing small learning communities, and connecting struggling students with appropriate interventions. This chapter summarizes the educational reforms and interventions that schools are implementing. It describes the specific types of students who are targeted for these reforms and interventions, the educational reforms and interventions themselves, and the key partners that are involved. The chapter concludes with a discussion of challenges and lessons learned.

### **Overview of Educational Strategies**

Together, the educational reforms and interventions described in this chapter have the potential to directly influence the quality of instruction and, ultimately, students' success. It is therefore not surprising that schools are devoting a large portion of their grant resources to educational strategies—an average of about 39 percent or about \$20,378,050. Several schools are spending at least half of their grant dollars just on educational strategies alone. Bartram HS and University City HS, for example, are devoting over 50 percent of their budgets to teacher salaries, contracted services, professional development, facility costs, supplies, equipment, and other costs associated with implementing educational reforms and interventions. Other schools are also spending most of their funding on hiring new teachers in an effort to reduce class size, and to “staff up” the classes that need the most teacher support, such as remedial reading and math.

## **Target Groups**

Most of the educational reforms and interventions that schools have designed are aimed at specific groups of students who are the most at risk of school failure, such as entering and repeating ninth graders and students who face the greatest challenges with behavior, truancy, and poor academic performance. As shown in Exhibit IV-1, the majority of the interventions are targeting ninth graders, who face the most challenges with school transition. It is for this reason that many schools have established the Ninth Grade Success Academy, the summer bridge program, and remedial reading and math geared towards ninth graders.

The educational interventions are also designed for students in other grades who are overage and under-credit. These students may have repeated a grade, and most have low attendance and high absenteeism; as a result, they are behind on their credits and need interventions to get back on track. Schools are providing credit retrieval programs for this subgroup of students, especially repeating ninth graders, through a self-contained school-within-a-school format in which they receive specialized support.

Some of the educational strategies operate directly on teachers and are designed to strengthen instructional practices through ongoing support and collaboration. These efforts, which include instructional coaching, professional development, and common planning time, are focused on improving the quality of teaching so that students stay connected to school and are motivated to succeed. Since these strategies involve schools' entire faculties, their ultimate beneficiaries—whom we would term their target groups—are students generally.

## **The Seven Groups of Educational Strategies**

Schools have used grant funds to support a variety of educational reforms and interventions that can be clustered into seven major categories: (1) hiring new teachers, (2) increasing teacher effectiveness, (3) remediating poor academic performance, (4) facilitating credit retrieval, (5) reconstituting schools as academies, (6) providing instructional and curricular supports, and (7) offering summer programs. As shown in Exhibit IV-1, each strategy is focused on a particular target group. (Note that in this exhibit, “target group” is defined as the group intended to receive the ultimate benefit of the intervention.)

**Exhibit IV-1:  
Educational Strategies and their Target Groups**

	Ninth Grade Students	Overage Under-credit Students	All Students
Hiring new teachers	✓	✓	✓
Increasing teacher effectiveness	✓	✓	✓
Remediating poor academic performance	✓	✓	
Facilitating credit retrieval		✓	
Reconstituting schools as academies	✓	✓	✓
Providing instructional and curricular supports	✓	✓	✓
Offering summer programs	✓	✓	

Many of these strategies have not been newly created as a result of the MEES grant. However, where this is the case, the grant expanded reforms and/or services within these categories and, in some cases, served as a catalyst for the initiation of new reform efforts. For instance, some of the career academies were established prior to the MEES grant but the grant is enabling the schools to transform the academies into cohesive, small learning communities with small class sizes. Further, many schools offered credit retrieval programs prior to the MEES grant, but expanded the scope of these programs, both in terms of increased enrollment and enhanced services. The grant’s ability to complement and expand upon existing efforts is shown in Exhibit IV-2, which summarizes the reforms and interventions that are district-funded, as shown by “D,” and those that are grant-funded, as shown by a check mark (✓). The exhibit shows that the grant is funding portions of district-wide initiatives, such as remedial reading and math and credit recovery programs. For instance, the School District of Philadelphia is mandating that schools offer a “double dose” of reading and math through the corrective reading and math program. Three schools are using grant funds to pay for the salaries of several teachers of this program. Grant funds also allow schools to enhance students’ summer school experiences by paying for field trips and other enrichment activities.

**Exhibit IV-2:  
Distribution and Funding of Educational Strategies**

The legend for this table is as follows:  
✓=grant funded, D=district initiative, \*=Talent Development High School.

	Bartram HS	Berkshire JSHS	Du Bois HS	FitzSimons HS	Germantown HS	Lincoln HS	Overbrook HS	University City HS	West Philadelphia HS
<b>Hiring New Teachers</b>									
— Hiring new teachers	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Increasing Teacher Effectiveness</b>									
— Instructional coaches	✓D	✓	✓	D	D	D	✓D	D	✓D
— Professional development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
— Common planning time	D	✓	✓	D	D	D	D	D	D
<b>Remediating Poor Academic Performance</b>									
— Remedial reading/math	D			D	✓D	✓D	D	✓D	D
— Afterschool remedial program		✓	✓				✓	✓	
<b>Facilitating Credit Retrieval</b>									
— Remedial classes during school		✓							
— Saturday School	✓				✓	✓	✓		
— Twilight school	D		✓	D	D		D		✓
— Extended school day		✓							
— OASIS				D			D	D	
<b>Reconstituting Schools as Academies</b>									
— Ninth Grade Academy	✓		✓*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*
— Career Academies	D				D	D	D	D	D
<b>Providing Instructional and Curricular Supports</b>									
— Online curriculum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
— New technology		✓	✓	✓			✓		
— Student incentives and awards	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓
— Enrichment activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Offering Summer Programs</b>									
— Summer Bridge	✓D			✓D	✓D	✓D	✓D	✓D	✓D
— Summer school	D	✓	✓D	D	D	D	D	D	D

<sup>1</sup> The grant is supporting a portion teachers' time during common planning time at Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS. In Philadelphia, common planning time is now mandated by the district and as a result, this activity is not funded by the grant.

<sup>2</sup> OASIS is a credit retrieval program for overage, under-credit students. It operates as a self-contained school-within-a-school and is managed by a CBO.

<sup>3</sup> The Ninth Grade Success Academy at Germantown HS was not implemented in SY 2009-2010, but there are plans to implement it in SY 2010-2011.

## Hiring New Teachers

All of the grantees except for one (FitzSimons HS), hired additional teachers with the MEES grant.<sup>1</sup> Overall, the schools hired a total of 74 teachers. Some schools are planning to hire more teachers in SY 2010–2011.<sup>2</sup> Sixty teachers have been hired full time, and 14 have been hired part time. Most teachers are hired directly by the school districts (59 full time and six part time), and a few are hired by subcontractors (one full time and eight part time). The decision to hire teachers through subcontracting arrangements or through the district depends partly on the teachers' roles in the grant. Those teachers who are teaching the district-mandated initiatives, such as double doses of reading and math, are hired directly by the district. Teachers who are hired by subcontractors are teaching classes/programs that have been developed through the support of the MEES grant, such as the Ninth Grade Success Academy at Du Bois HS.

Exhibit IV-3 shows that schools have been steadily increasing the number of teachers hired even prior to the MEES grant, especially in SY 2008–2009, thanks to a variety of other grants from the district, such as the Empowerment Schools Initiative.<sup>3</sup>

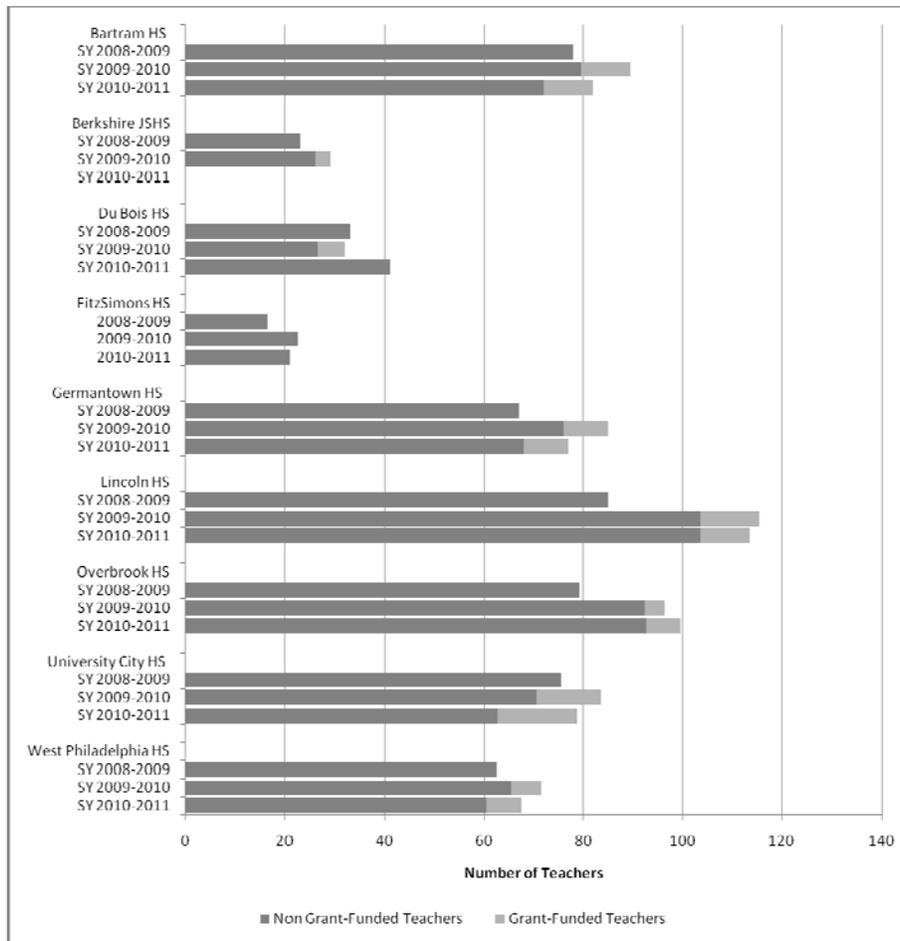
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<sup>1</sup> FitzSimons HS has not hired teachers yet but plans to hire instructional specialists in math and English in SY 2010–2011. The school has been actively looking to fill these positions but has not been able to find the right candidates.

<sup>2</sup> Several schools faced delays in hiring teachers in SY 2009-2010 and hope to fill additional teaching positions in SY 2010–2011.

<sup>3</sup> The Empowerment Schools in Philadelphia are those that have not achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets under the No Child Left Behind guidelines, and are in Corrective Action Level II (CA-II), including those making progress in CA-II for the 2008–9 school year. In 2008, 85 schools in the School District of Philadelphia have been designated as Empowerment Schools, enabling them to receive intensive interventions offered by the district.

### Exhibit IV-3: Number of Teachers



Below are other key findings related to the number of teachers hired:

- **Nearly all of the schools increased their teaching staffs during the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010).** The increase in teachers is most noticeable at the Philadelphia schools, where additional teachers were hired to teach new programs that were introduced by the district, such as corrective reading and math and the A&B Schedule.<sup>4</sup>
- **The number of teachers decreased somewhat in SY 2010–2011 at five schools where we have data, due to declining enrollment.** However, the MEES grant

<sup>4</sup> The A&B schedule breaks core classes of Algebra and English 1 into semesters. If a student does not pass the first semester (English 1A or Algebra 1A), then he or she does not move onto the second semester (English 1B or Algebra 1B). The Philadelphia schools now need to offer English 1A and Algebra 1A again in the spring for students who did not pass it in the fall. This means that the Philadelphia schools needed to hire extra teachers to teach the duplicate courses.

enabled the schools to sustain and/or increase the number of teachers from SY 2008–2009 to SY 2010–2011.

- **The overall increase in teachers is occurring despite declining enrollment between the pre-grant baseline year (2007–2008) and the first year of implementation.**<sup>5</sup> University City saw the largest decrease in enrollment among the grantee schools, yet hired the greatest number of teachers through the grant (14).<sup>6</sup> Lincoln HS also hired a large number of teachers from the grant (12) even though its enrollment declined by about 23 percent in this same period.

Hiring additional teachers is directly intended to meet two specific objectives identified by the schools: (1) reduce class size, especially in the ninth grade, and (2) fill critical staffing needs in core subjects.

### **Objective: Reduce Class Size**

As a result of additional teachers, many of the classes at target schools have been drastically reduced. At Germantown HS, the MEES grant is used to hire three English teachers, two math teachers, a foreign language teacher, and three science teachers in order to reduce class size in the ninth and eleventh grades to about 15–20 students per class.<sup>7</sup> At University City HS, seven teachers have been hired (mostly science and social science teachers) to reduce class size in the ninth and eleventh grades from about 40 students per class to no more than 20 students. At Bartram HS, the hiring of extra teachers through the MEES grant is keeping the ninth grade classes to an average of about 22 students per class. At Du Bois HS, the MEES grant paid for three extra fulltime teachers for the Ninth Grade Academy, which helps to keep class sizes at approximately 13 students per class.

Hiring additional teachers did not always directly reduce class size; however, it is contributing to a decrease in the student-to-teacher ratio, as shown in Exhibit IV-4. Class sizes at Berkshire JSHS have always been somewhat small, with an average of about 12–16 students per class. Rather than further reducing the class size, Berkshire JSHS reduced the student-to-teacher ratio by using some of the grant funds to hire behavioral management specialists, who assist teachers with classroom management. As a result, the student-to-teacher ratio at Berkshire JSHS is about

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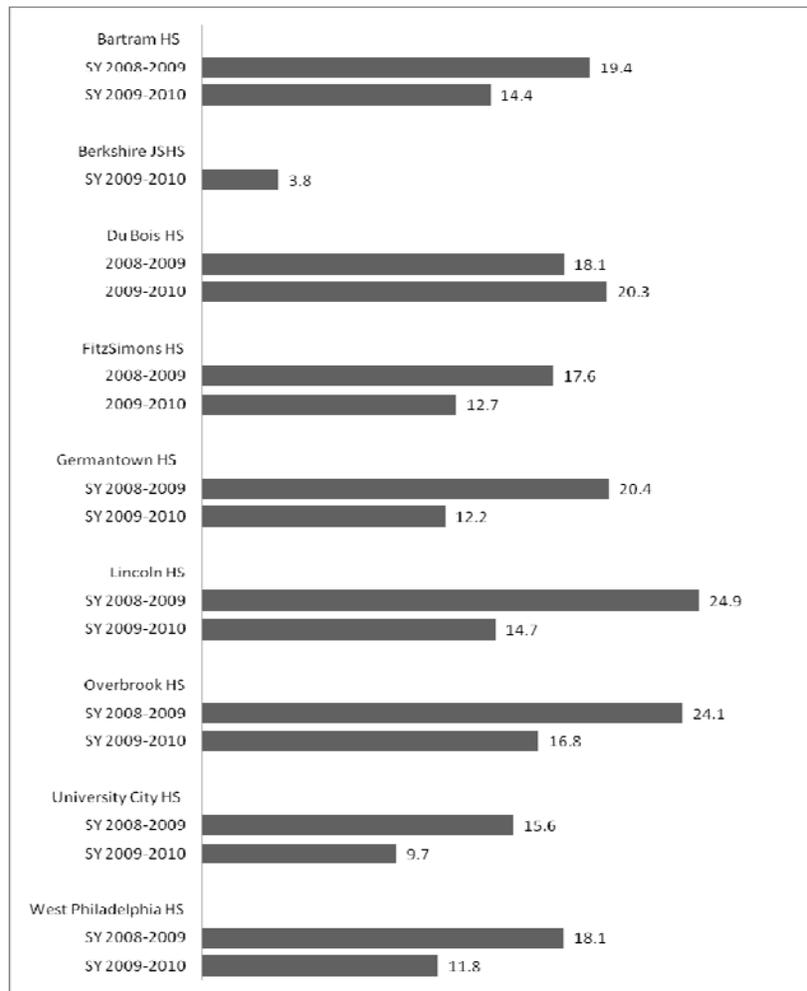
<sup>5</sup> All of the schools experienced declining enrollment from SY 2007-2008 to SY 2009-2010 except for Du Bois HS, which saw a small increase in enrollment in the same period.

<sup>6</sup> At University City HS, 13 teachers were hired by the district and one was hired by a contractor.

<sup>7</sup> One English teacher and one math teacher were originally hired as instructional coaches. They were re-assigned to teach classes when other teaching positions within the school were cut.

12 to 3 (one behavior management specialist, one teacher's assistant, and one teacher for every 12 students.)

**Exhibit IV-4:  
Student-to-Teacher Ratio**



The student-to-teacher ratio at the grantee schools is, on average, lower than the state and national averages. At the Philadelphia schools, the student-to-teacher ratio is similar to the most recent state average for elementary and secondary schools combined, which is 15.2 to 1.<sup>8</sup> Nationally, the student-to-teacher ratio for public schools at the secondary level is about 16.2 to

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<sup>8</sup> See [http://www.statemaster.com/graph/edu\\_ele\\_sec\\_pup\\_rat-elementary-secondary-pupil-teacher-ratio](http://www.statemaster.com/graph/edu_ele_sec_pup_rat-elementary-secondary-pupil-teacher-ratio), downloaded on October 11, 2010. This number is calculated using the total reported students divided by the FTE classroom teachers.

1,<sup>9</sup> which is higher than the ratio at most grantee schools. The exception is Du Bois HS, where the student-to-teacher ratio is higher than both the national average and Maryland's average of 15.8 to 1.

Reducing class size is an appealing strategy for the schools because it sends dollars directly into the classroom and promotes a personalized and supportive environment for learning. Ample research shows that small class size improves the class climate and allows teachers to spend more time on instruction and less on classroom management. One study found that students in smaller classes can receive more individualized attention, while their teachers have more flexibility to use different instructional approaches and assignments.<sup>10</sup> Other studies have shown that small class size allows teachers to better monitor students' progress in reading and be more consistent in managing behavior.<sup>11</sup> There is some debate among researchers about whether reducing class size can make a difference in student achievement, and under what circumstances it does. SPR's evaluation is not measuring the effects of class size reduction on student achievement. However, both students and teachers indicated that smaller class size is having a positive effect on the classroom climate. One ninth grade English teacher at Bartram HS believes that the smaller class size has helped her build positive relationships with the students and their families. This same teacher also indicated that she knows where each child is in the learning process and can provide more individualized instruction.

*With small classes, you can be more successful working with the students, especially when you have better access to them. When you have 40 students in your class like last year, you don't realize that some students were even in your class.*

Although the benefits of smaller class size have been shown in a number of studies, it is not easy for the schools to reduce class size, even with sufficient grant funding, because it is often difficult to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Since teacher turnover at the schools is generally very high, the need to continually recruit new teachers magnifies the challenges that are already facing the schools. At University City HS, for example, many teachers applied for new positions elsewhere upon learning that they will all need to re-apply for their jobs as a result of the

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<sup>9</sup> Center for Education Reform. [http://www.edreform.com/Fast\\_Facts/K12\\_Facts/](http://www.edreform.com/Fast_Facts/K12_Facts/). Downloaded on October 11, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Mosteller, Frederick, Richard J. Light, and Jason A. Sachs. 1996. "Sustained Inquiry in Education: Lessons from Skill Grouping and Class Size." *Harvard Educational Review* 66 (4): 797-842.

<sup>11</sup> Carolyn M. Evertson and John K. Folger, *Small Class, Large Class: What Do Teachers Do Differently?*, paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, March 1989.

district's plan to turn the school into a Renaissance School.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the school will need to hire more teachers than expected. Although SDP policy indicates that 50 percent of newly hired teachers can be "site-selected," which means that principals have the liberty to screen and select teachers at their discretion, the remaining 50 percent of teachers must be selected by the district without the input of the school principals. This policy can be challenging, according to some school principals, because they are unable to assess the teachers' buy-in for the reform strategies that are underway.

### **Objective: Fill Critical Teaching Positions**

The MEES grant is enabling schools to fill a number of teaching positions for new programs/initiatives. In Philadelphia, extra teachers needed to be hired to teach corrective reading and math, a district-mandated program. Lincoln HS, for instance, has hired 12 new teachers and University City HS has hired 13 teachers exclusively to teach corrective reading and math classes. At Germantown HS, the MEES grant is not paying for teachers exclusively to teach corrective reading and math, but is paying for about 11 new teachers to fill many of the core positions that have been vacant for some time in the areas of math, English, and science. Prior to the MEES grant, Germantown HS had difficulty hiring teachers for these subjects, and consequently used a number of long-term substitutes.

The newly hired teachers are teaching a variety of subjects across grade levels, though most of them have been concentrated in the ninth grade. In fact, six schools are specifically assigning new teachers to teach ninth grade English and math.<sup>13</sup> As mentioned previously, several schools in Philadelphia have also made a concerted effort to spread the grant funds to eleventh grade classes, to reduce class size for students who are taking the PSSA tests.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Renaissance Schools will undergo substantial changes, including changes in leadership, teachers, and other staff. This means that all University City HS teachers need to reapply for their jobs and only 50% of them will be rehired. The district will also bring in CBOs to lead the transformation of the schools, or the school can be designated an innovation-run school that will be operated by the district. Schools will also be expected to have longer days, provide a quality curriculum and student enrichment programs during and after school, and make other changes to the academic program and school environment.

<sup>13</sup> These schools include: Berkshire JSHS, Du Bois HS, Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, Overbrook HS, and University City HS.

<sup>14</sup> The annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based assessment used to measure students' attainment of the academic standards. At the secondary school level, the test is administered in the eleventh grade.

Additional teachers have been hired to teach credit recovery classes, either after school or at the Twilight Schools, a specialized program for students who failed or faced difficulty in a normal school setting. Students who attend credit recovery classes are usually under-credit and overage. At Berkshire JSHS, several teachers have also been hired to teach credit recovery after school, during the extended learning time that the grant is funding.

In sum, the additional teaching positions are creating new opportunities for schools to focus on two core objectives of the MEES grant—to create an environment in which every student becomes engaged in learning and allows the teacher to attend to every student and to work towards improving academic achievement by staffing up the classes where students need the most support.

## **Increasing Teacher Effectiveness**

The grant is funding strategies to strengthen teaching and learning by providing instructional coaches and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers. These strategies are designed to help teachers develop new skills and to foster collaboration and communication among members of each school's teaching staff.

Five schools are using grant funding to hire a total of seven full-time instructional coaches and one part-time coach.<sup>15</sup> An instructional coach is someone whose primary responsibility is to offer teachers ongoing support by modeling effective teaching strategies, improving classroom management, and providing substantive and supportive feedback. Research shows that improving teachers' classroom practices has great potential to improve student learning, and coaching is increasingly being used as a strategy to improve instructional practices.<sup>16</sup>

All of the Philadelphia schools have access to instructional coaches who have been hired by the school district as part of a district-wide effort to support low-performing schools. As part of this effort, Empowerment Schools are required to have common planning time, which is often led by instructional coaches. Some grantee schools are increasing the number of coaches with the grant funds.

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<sup>15</sup> These schools and the number of coaches hired through the grant are as follows: Bartram HS, 2 coaches; Berkshire JSHS, 3 coaches; Du Bois HS, 1 coach; Overbrook HS, 1 coach; West Philadelphia HS, 1 coach. All of the coaches work full time except the coach at Du Bois HS who works part time.

<sup>16</sup> Kowal, J. and Steiner, L. (September, 2007). Issue Brief — Instructional Coaching. Washington, DC: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.

Coaching practices vary widely among the schools. Coaches may train teachers to use a particular approach to teach a content area, work to improve general instructional practices, or promote a more reflective, collaborative, and professional culture among the faculty. Specifically, the instructional coaches pull out teachers to do one-on-one intensive coaching on lesson planning and differentiated instruction, as well as to help with curriculum development. The coaches may also co-teach with new and seasoned teachers to model effective practices.

School leaders reported that having instructional coaches is a useful strategy for supporting many teachers who have recently been hired. New teachers confirm this belief, indicating that they especially value the extra training to further develop their skills. Some of the new teachers at one school, for instance, do not feel well prepared to teach and appear to be struggling somewhat in dealing with the discipline issues that surface daily. As a result, the teachers meet with the instructional coach weekly to discuss ways to improve classroom management.

The extent to which instructional coaching is changing teachers' practices is difficult to assess at this time. However, some anecdotal evidence suggests that instructional coaching may be contributing to increased collaboration among teachers. At West Philadelphia HS, for instance, the coach noted that teachers now collaborate on lesson planning and work more closely together during common planning time. The teachers also seem better able to manage their classrooms and some have made changes in lesson plan design and execution, especially in how lessons are organized.

Schools are also using grant resources to provide other professional development activities, including teacher release time to attend trainings on new curricula, classroom management, effective teaching strategies, and using data to inform practice. Below are some examples.

- **Some schools hired external providers to deliver staff training.** For example, two schools—Lincoln HS and University City HS—received training from the Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR) on a variety of reform strategies, such as developing a strong ninth grade planning committee, structuring common planning time, developing a curriculum for the advisory periods, and designing project-based learning activities.
- **Schools offer release time for teachers to attend training at the district and at conferences** on topics such as conflict management and how to use new curricula, including the corrective reading and math curriculum. At Overbrook HS, a leadership team comprised of five teachers is participating in a four-year Distributed Leadership Initiative funded by the Annenberg Foundation, which is a collaboration between the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia School District. Through the initiative, members of the leadership team are receiving over 100 hours of professional development and support to create distributed leadership within the school.

- **Teachers receive professional development from instructional coaches on new district programs and initiatives.** Schools usually devote one to two days per week to additional professional development on specialized topics offered by instructional coaches, such as using and integrating new curricula and assessing student work.

## **Remediating Poor Academic Achievement**

Another important goal of the MEES grant is to strengthen students' basic skills in core subjects such as reading and math, so that they can be successful in high school. The grant is funding teachers and staff to provide academic remediation during the school day and after school. Three schools are using the grant to fund teachers to teach corrective reading and math during the school day (Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, University City HS). Four schools are using the grant to fund portions of afterschool programs focused on academic remediation (Berkshire JSHS, Du Bois HS, Overbrook HS, University City HS). These services are described below.

### **Corrective Reading and Corrective Math**

As mentioned above, 12 teachers have been hired at Lincoln HS and 13 at University City HS to exclusively teach corrective reading and corrective math. At Germantown HS, two teachers who have been hired through the grant are each teaching at least one class of corrective reading and corrective math.

Corrective reading and math was prescribed by the School District of Philadelphia at the beginning of SY 2009–2010 under the assumption that students need to master basic reading and math skills in order to be adequately prepared for high school. Students are tested at the beginning of the school year to identify their reading and math levels and are placed in appropriate classes based on their test scores. Students can “test out” of corrective reading and math if their scores suggest they are proficient. Exhibit IV-5 shows that a large number of students in the Philadelphia schools tested into the corrective reading and math program (enriched reading and math), which means that these students are required to take English and math through the corrective reading and math classes *and* the regular English and Algebra class.

**Exhibit IV-5:  
Students in Enriched Reading and Math Classes  
SY 2009–2010**

	<b>Number in Enriched Reading and Math</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>Percent of Students in Enriched Reading and Math</b>
Bartram HS	154	1292	11.9
Berkshire JSHS	223	223	100.0
Du Bois HS	97	649	14.9
FitzSimons HS	46	286	16.1
Germantown HS	51	1035	4.9
Lincoln HS	951	1698	56.0
Overbrook HS	351	1623	21.6
University City HS	164	810	20.2
West Philadelphia HS	76	845	9.0

<sup>1</sup> The percent of students in enriched reading and math is based on the entire school population. It is likely that the majority of students in Enriched Reading and Math are ninth and tenth graders.

<sup>2</sup> Berkshire JSHS offers Strategic Reading and Strategic Math, which may include double or triple doses of these subjects. The numbers for Strategic Reading and Math are 223 students in each subject, as reported in the MIS.

<sup>3</sup> Data for Du Bois HS is as of June 17, 2010.

Note: DOL defines students enrolled in Enriched Reading and Math as those receiving double or triple doses of English and math.

Other key findings related to Exhibit IV-5 are as follows:

- **All of the students from Berkshire JSHS are enrolled in enriched reading and math.** Many of these students are behind grade level in reading and math, and only about two-thirds of ninth grade students are promoted on time. Because of these challenges, the school is offering enriched reading and math as extra support to all of the students.
- **More than half the total number of students at Lincoln HS (56 percent) are enrolled in enriched reading and math.** This is perhaps why Lincoln HS has hired so many new teachers (12) to specifically teach corrective reading and math.
- **Very few students at Germantown HS tested into corrective reading and math (5 percent).** This is surprising, given that a large number of students at this school are repeating ninth graders who typically have low skills and are behind on their credits.

Some of the schools in Philadelphia faced some difficulties implementing the corrective reading and math program. Teachers reported that the program was launched after students had already been assigned to other classes and, as a result, schools needed to develop new schedules for them. Further, students' placement in corrective reading and math is based on a single, and rather short, placement exam and they are not given a "second" chance to re-take the test if they do not do well the first time. Many students reported that they did not take the test seriously

enough and, as a result, a high percentage of them were placed into these remedial programs, even though their academic records did not show that such remediation was necessary. Lastly, many teachers noted that they do not like that the curriculum is so scripted, and they feel that it “dumbs down” content for students. One math teacher said that she refuses to “snap” at her students as suggested by the curriculum, indicating, “I wouldn’t treat my children that way, so I refuse to treat my students that way.” Moving forward, school leaders in Philadelphia are hopeful that the corrective reading and math program will help students gain the skills needed to be successful in high school.

## Afterschool Programs

Academic remediation is also available through afterschool programs, some portions of which are funded by the grant. The following schools in particular are using a small amount of the grant to pay for some aspects of their afterschool programs that are focused on academic remediation.

- **Berkshire JSHS.** Students participate in a combination of academic remediation and credit retrieval during the extended school day that was made possible by the MEES grant. Classes during the extended school day are formally structured, using a curriculum that is customized to students’ learning needs.
- **Du Bois HS.** This school offers academic remediation and test-prep services through the High School Assessment (HSA) Academies that are held after school. These academies are designed to help students prepare for the state HSA test, which they must pass in order to graduate from high school. In addition, teachers offer individual tutoring and math support after school.
- **Overbrook HS.** The grant pays for an afterschool program called the “homework zone,” which is held in the library after school every day. As many as 30–40 students attend homework zone each day. Students sign in as they come into the library, and spend at least the first 15 minutes on homework. City Year volunteers (AmeriCorps) serve as tutors along with two teachers (who are paid to stay after school by the grant). After spending a minimum amount of time on homework, students engage in recreational activities.
- **University City HS.** The grant pays for APEX, an online credit recovery program that all failing ninth graders are required to attend after school, using computers in the Student Success Center (SSC).

In addition, the SSCs at Philadelphia schools offer afterschool tutoring and homework assistance to students on a drop-in basis. Students often visit the SSC to use the computers to do their homework or use online tutoring programs. These examples suggest that the grant is giving schools the flexibility to design services in a way that is suitable for students—during the day as part of the regular classroom, or during afterschool hours.

## Facilitating Credit Retrieval

Schools are also using grant funds to provide credit retrieval programs for students who need to make up credits to obtain their diplomas. There are several ways in which these programs are delivered—in Twilight School or in a school-within-a-school, during the regular school day, or during extended learning time (e.g., Saturday school, after school). Credit retrieval programs typically have small classes to allow students to work closely with teachers either individually or in small groups to complete the credits required to graduate; some of the classes that we observed had an average of 10 to 15 students. Instruction is offered in a variety of subjects, often with flexible pacing and schedules of instruction, adapting instructional methods and content to students’ skill levels and learning styles.

Exhibit IV-6 shows that schools are reporting students who are enrolled in both credit retrieval and Twilight Schools in SY 2009–2010, even though the MEES grant is not directly funding these programs at *all* schools. Note that students enrolled in credit retrieval are included in the overall enrollment for the school, while those enrolled in Twilight Schools are not.

**Exhibit IV-6:  
Students Enrolled in Credit Retrieval and Twilight Schools  
SY 2009–2010**

	Credit Retrieval		Twilight School
	Number of Students	Percent of Total Enrollment	Number of Students
Bartram HS	125	9.7	329
Berkshire JSHS <sup>1</sup>	119	53.4	0
Du Bois HS <sup>2</sup>	0	0	19
FitzSimons HS <sup>3</sup>	33	11.5	65 <sup>3</sup>
Germantown HS	182	17.6	237
Lincoln HS	260	15.3	n/a
Overbrook HS	174	10.7	311
University City HS	132	16.3	0
West Philadelphia HS	0	0	76

<sup>1</sup> Berkshire JSHS has rolling enrollment. The data for Berkshire JSHS is from the fourth quarter MIS data and includes data through June 23, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Data for Du Bois HS is as of June 17, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> FitzSimons HS does not have a Twilight School, even though the MIS is reporting that students are enrolled in this school.

Note: Students enrolled in twilight school programs are not counted towards the schools’ overall enrollment, while students enrolled in credit retrieval are.

Some of the key findings related to credit retrieval and Exhibit IV-6 are as follows:

- **The schools with the largest proportion of students receiving credit retrieval services are Berkshire JSHS, Germantown HS, University HS, and Lincoln HS.** At Berkshire JSHS, over fifty percent of its students receive credit retrieval services. Of the traditional high schools, the schools with the largest percentage of repeating ninth graders also have the high numbers of students enrolled in credit retrieval. The percentage of repeating ninth grade students at these schools are as follows: Germantown HS (28 percent), Lincoln HS (16 percent), and University City HS (7.3 percent).
- **Du Bois HS reports a low number of students enrolled in the credit retrieval program, Transitional Evening School (TES).** The low enrollment numbers have to do with students transferring in and out of TES school as they complete their credits and return to the regular school.

Below is a summary of the various credit retrieval options that are available to students. These include (1) classes that are offered during the day as part of the OASIS program, (2) classes during Saturday School, (3) classes during an extended school day or after school, and (4) classes at the Twilight Schools.

## **OASIS Program**

The OASIS program is a school-within-a-school credit retrieval program for overage, under-credit students designed to help students make up credits at an accelerated pace. This program is offered during the school day at three grantee schools and is not funded by the grant.<sup>17</sup> Even though this program is not funded by the grant, it represents a significant reform effort at these three schools, both in terms of scale and influence. Over 10 percent of the students at FitzSimons HS, Overbrook HS, and University City HS are enrolled in OASIS, suggesting that there is a high need for the program. The number of staff members hired for the program is also significant. At Overbrook HS, for example, there is a Site Manager, a Site Coordinator, and three part-time teachers (Spanish, Public Speaking, and Media Arts). There are also two full-time teachers from the Center for Literacy who provide reading instruction and math enrichment activities.

The program brings together staffing from a number of organizations such as the Philadelphia Youth Network, Communities in Schools (CIS), Center for Literacy, and Education Works to deliver a variety of services, such as academic remediation and counseling. Coordination across multiple agencies can be challenging at times because staff are not always clear on the roles and

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<sup>17</sup> These schools include FitzSimons HS, Overbrook HS, and University City HS.

responsibilities of all the partners. University City HS, for instance, has five organizations that work together to deliver a variety of services in the program. As the program continues to roll out in SY 2010–2011, the program staff members are meeting regularly to ensure that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

## **Saturday School**

Another strategy that schools are using to offer credit recovery classes is Saturday School. The grant is contributing to portions of Saturday School at four schools—Bartram HS, Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, and Overbrook HS. The primary focus of Saturday School is credit recovery, but schools also offer test-prep services to enhance students’ test-taking abilities on the PSSA, Pennsylvania’s state test. Below we describe a selected sample of Saturday School models.

- **Bartram HS.** Saturday School at Bartram HS offers credit retrieval classes from 9pm to 12pm. The classes were available from December 2009 to April 2010. The grant is paying for the use of the facility for Saturday School, which according to the budget costs about \$22,000 per year.
- **Germantown HS.** Saturday School at Germantown HS occurred from February 2010 to May 2010, and offered academic remediation to struggling ninth graders, PSSA exam support for eleventh graders, and mentorship and enrichment activities. The school contracted with Kaplan for three teachers who taught Saturday School classes from 8:30 to 12:00. The Boys and Girls club, in partnership with Germantown HS teachers, provided mentorship and enrichment activities in the afternoon. As of the spring 2010, up to 117 students attended Saturday School.

In addition to Saturday School, credit retrieval classes are offered after school. For example, all of the students at Berkshire JSHS are enrolled in credit retrieval classes as part of the extended school day that is funded by the grant. Here, students work independently on the computers while the teacher provides guidance as needed.

## **Twilight School**

The Twilight School is an alternative after-hours program that is nested within the regular comprehensive high school as a “school-within-a-school” for students who have severe and persistent behavioral and attendance problems that inhibit their ability to be successful in a typical classroom. Two schools—Du Bois HS and West Philadelphia HS—are using the grant to pay for teachers and staff at their Twilight Schools, called Transitional Evening School (TES) at Du Bois HS and Pathways to Graduation (PTG) at West Philadelphia HS. Classes at Twilight Schools are offered in the specific courses of study that students failed, such as math, English,

health, science, and Spanish. Below are examples of Twilight Schools at Du Bois HS and West Philadelphia HS.

- *Transitional Evening School (TES)* provides students with a small class setting, individualized instruction, one-on-one counseling, and weekly group counseling on a variety of topics. Students who attend TES usually had poor attendance records in the regular school, are often from unstable families, and tend to work better in small groups. Once students catch up on their credits, they can transition to the regular day school. TES is offered during the school year and students have the option of continuing to take classes in the summer. TES is fully funded by the grant, which pays for all of the staffing, including the TES administrator, a counselor, four teachers, and an administrative aide. Site visit data show that 29 students were enrolled as of spring 2010.<sup>18</sup>
- *Pathways to Graduation (PTG)* at West Philadelphia HS is a credit retrieval program available after hours between 3pm and 6pm. It is also referred to as “night school” for students who are overage for their grades, under-credit, or who have dropped out and are returning to school to earn credits towards graduation. Students are diverse in terms of age and grade level, ranging from 16 to 20 years of age and ninth to twelfth grade. Students transition back to the regular day school once they are caught up on their credits. The average student stays about 5 months in PTG. The grant is funding the teachers in the program. There are about three classes per day lasting 47 minutes each.

In sum, schools recognize that the traditional school structure and schedule do not meet the needs of all of their students and have developed credit recovery programs to re-engage them. The students for whom Twilight Schools are designed are those who have poor attendance, need to work during the day, or have dropped out and seek to gain their diplomas. Schools are using a variety of strategies to support these students, through online curricula, differentiated instruction, and flexible scheduling.

## **Reconstituting Schools as Academies**

The majority of schools are being restructured into distinct academies: the Ninth Grade Academy for ninth graders and the career academies for tenth to twelfth graders. The academy structure creates self-contained small schools and learning communities, which are intended to improve the relationships among students and teachers as well as create conditions for more effective teaching and learning.

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<sup>18</sup> The MIS data as of June 17, 2010 show that 19 students enrolled in TES.

Some of the academies pre-date the MEES grant, but the grant expanded the goals and objectives that the academies strive to achieve: using career-related themes to increase the coherence of the high school curriculum; providing internships and other forms of workplace experience to connect classroom learning to the world beyond school; and preparing students for careers that include postsecondary education. While the MEES grant is not directly funding the academies, it is indirectly supporting them by funding some teachers and coaches who work in the academies and by funding field trips and other enrichment activities.

## Ninth Grade Success Academies

Six out of the nine schools are implementing the Ninth Grade Success Academy model (Ninth Grade Academy).<sup>19</sup> A Ninth Grade Academy is a self-contained school-within-a-school, organized around interdisciplinary teacher teams who share the same students and have common daily planning time. The Ninth Grade Academies at the grantee schools serve primarily first-time ninth graders. Repeating ninth graders enroll in other programs such as Twilight School or OASIS. Exhibit IV-7 shows that enrollment in the Ninth Grade Academy varies from about 100 at Du Bois HS to 521 students at Lincoln HS as of the fall 2009.

**Exhibit IV-7:  
Enrollment in Ninth Grade Academy  
Fall 2009**

	<b>Enrollment in Ninth Grade Academy<sup>1</sup></b>
Bartram HS	327
Du Bois HS	84
Germantown HS <sup>2</sup>	0
Lincoln HS	521
Overbrook HS	342
University City HS	102
West Philadelphia HS	224

<sup>1</sup> Germantown HS did not implement the Ninth Grade Academy in SY 2009-2010, but plans to do so in SY 2010-2011.

Note: Data are drawn from the New School Year Report to reflect enrollment at the beginning of the 2009–2010 school year.

<sup>19</sup> The schools implementing the Ninth Grade Success Academies are Bartram HS, Du Bois HS, Lincoln HS, Overbrook HS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS. Germantown HS plans to implement the Ninth Grade Success Academy in SY 2010–2011.

Because the ninth grade is a pivotal year and can determine a student's ultimate success in high school, schools are devoting the bulk of their educational grant resources to the Ninth Grade Success Academies so that students receive early interventions and intensive support. Schools have staffed up the Ninth Grade Academies with extra teachers to reduce class size, and they have hired social workers to work with the most at-risk students.

A Ninth Grade Academy generally has a separate management team to ensure its smooth operation, including a Ninth Grade Academy Principal and/or a Ninth Grade Academy Coordinator. The Academy Principal at the Philadelphia schools also serves as the Turnaround Assistant Principal (TAP), who is responsible for coordinating key activities in the academy, ensuring that the materials are in place, overseeing the teachers and coaches, and coordinating with the school principal and other core staff in the school. Some schools in Philadelphia have both the Academy Principal and an Academy Coordinator (or Dean) who coordinate common planning time and support teachers as needed.

The two schools that are implementing the Talent Development model as part of the Ninth Grade Academy (Du Bois HS and West Philadelphia HS) have additional support from a program implementation team made up of organizational facilitators and additional instructional coaches. These additional staff members support the Academy Principal in implementing the reforms associated with the model, such as teaching in a block schedule, establishing common planning times, and using data to guide instruction.

A core feature of a Ninth Grade Success Academy is that it is a small learning community. To achieve the desired size, schools arrange for ninth graders to be housed on a separate floor or "wing" of the school building, with all of the classes located within this designated area. Lincoln HS has established a separate entrance for ninth graders so that they are always in the same area. Teachers noted that having students together in a smaller space (1) helps create a more "family-like" setting, (2) ensures that the distance students must travel from class to class is short, making it harder for them to "go missing," and (3) fosters strong relationships between students and teachers. To promote a strong identity for the Ninth Grade Academy, several schools require students to wear shirts of the same color so that they can easily be identified. As discussed above, the grant is helping to reduce class size significantly in the ninth grade. Most of the classes in the Ninth Grade Academies have no more than 20–25 students.

Students had mixed reactions about being in classes with the same group of students all day long. One student from West Philadelphia HS said he likes having the same group of students at his school because, as he said, "We all know how to say it. We all know what we're about." However, other students in a focus group did not like the structure of the Ninth Grade Academy,

because they wanted to meet other students. Teachers, on the other hand, like having ninth graders in one place so that they can get to know them and monitor their whereabouts.

The academic program of the Ninth Grade Academy is designed to enhance academic rigor and provide opportunities for students to review basic skills in reading and math. The majority of schools with Ninth Grade Academies are following a somewhat standard curriculum that is available through their respective school districts. However, some novel elements were implemented. For example, two schools that are implementing the Talent Development High School Model—Du Bois HS and West Philadelphia HS—offer double time in mathematics and English for students who have weak skills in these areas and, in the first semester, offer a Freshmen Seminar—a course focused on improving study and time management skills. Du Bois HS is offering Strategic Reading and Strategic Math, which are preparatory, “catch-up” classes that prepare students for ninth grade Algebra and English.

Overall, schools are making progress in implementing the core structures for the Ninth Grade Academy by designating spaces for students and hiring teachers to reduce class size. However, there is still work to be done to strengthen many of the academies. At one school, the Ninth Grade Academy was implemented fairly quickly and, as a result, some gaps remain. At this school, school leaders hope to strengthen common planning time for ninth grade teachers, to isolate the ninth grade academy by creating a ninth-grade-only lunch period, and to create more opportunities for cross-curricular, project-based learning.

## **Career Academies**

Six schools are implementing career academies for students in grades 10 through 12 as part of their school reform process. The career academies are a type of school-within-a-school that provides a college-preparatory curriculum with a career-related theme and work-based learning experiences supported by industry partners. Similar to the Ninth Grade Academies, career academies are designed as small learning communities within large schools so that students feel less alienated, more engaged, and more likely to pass their courses and accumulate credits toward graduation. Students in the academies also share the same teachers, and a group of teachers from academic and technical disciplines are scheduled to have only or mostly academy students in their classes. These teachers also meet with each other during common planning time and share in decision-making related to administrative policies, curriculum content, and instruction. The academies usually have a designated Academy Coordinator who assumes lead responsibility for administrative tasks and usually serves as a liaison to the school principal and employer partners.

Each career academy has a specific career theme, which, as shown in Exhibit IV-8, can be related to health care, business and finance, communications media, technology, or several other fields. In theory, academic courses that meet high school graduation and college entrance requirements are linked with technical courses that focus on the academy’s field of work. Schools with well-developed career academies also include career exploration and employability skill development through career-technical courses or work-based learning opportunities, which are intended to tie classroom activities to internships with local employer partners.

**Exhibit IV-8:  
Themes for Career Academies**

	Bartram HS	Berkshire JSHS	Germantown HS	Lincoln HS	Overbrook HS	University City HS	West Philadelphia HS
Automotive							✓
Business Technology	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Communications			✓				
Engineering						✓	
Health	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Horticulture		✓		✓			
Law						✓	
Performing Arts	✓			✓			
Science						✓	
Urban Leadership (film industry, urban studies, urban education)					✓		✓
Finance					✓		
Carpentry, landscaping, electrical, building maintenance		✓					

*Note: The MIS data shows that FitzSimons HS enrolled students in career academies during the 2009-2010 school year. However, at the time of the fourth site visit (summer 2010), the school did not implement traditional career academies, yet was grouping students by grade levels (i.e., ninth through tenth and through twelfth), which the school classified as career academies. Nevertheless, FitzSimons HS has plans to implement traditional career academies in the 2010-2011 school year, focusing on Construction Technology, Entrepreneurship and Urban Education.*

Several schools have developed partnerships with employers and postsecondary educational institutions as part of their academy structures. The Health Academy at Bartram HS, for example, has partnered with Drexel University, a local university that is providing a host of in-kind services to the academy. For instance, Drexel University is providing access to an onsite

simulation lab for students to perform actual lab tests and practice their lab skills while working with nurses and other health professionals. Drexel University also allows students to attend career and post-secondary education workshops to learn about post-secondary options and careers in the health field. In addition, well-developed career academies, such as the Auto Academy at West Philadelphia HS and the Health Academy at Bartram HS, have advisory groups that include representatives from the local employer community and from local colleges or universities. Advisory group members give advice on curriculum, appear as guest speakers in classes, host field trips, and provide financial or in-kind support.

While some schools appear to be implementing practices with good promise for advancing the goals of the career academies, the overall quality of the career academies varies widely. Several schools in Philadelphia are struggling to embrace the career academy model fully because of scheduling constraints. Because students are required to take heavy doses of basic skills, they do not have time in their schedules to complete elective courses in their respective career academies. For instance, approximately 400 students are enrolled in a health-care-themed career academy at a Philadelphia high school, but nearly 300 of the students will not take a health elective while in the academy in SY 2009–2010 because they do not have room in their schedules.

Although the MEES grant is not directly funding the development of the career academies, some grant funds are being used to pay for field trips focused on career exploration and job shadowing opportunities. At University City HS, the grant is paying for students in the Law Academy to go to City Hall to meet lawyers and watch a trial. Students in the Engineering Academy went to Philly Stadium to watch how a stadium is built. In SY 2010–2011, staff at Overbrook HS plan to take students to go on job shadows or field trips that are associated with their academies. Grant funds are also used towards professional development for academy teachers and some supplies for the academies, such as laptop computers, journals and calculators, though these expenses represent a small contribution to the academies.

The schools are hoping to strengthen the career academies in SY 2010–2011 in several ways. At Germantown HS, there are plans in the grant budget to hire an organization called Teachers in the Workplace, which places academy teachers in relevant work settings in the summer so that they can integrate practical, work-based learning activities into their classrooms. Lincoln HS plans to develop additional internships for the career academies in order to strengthen the connection between work and learning. With the support of the Philadelphia Youth Network and the staff at the SSC, academy teachers plan to connect with employers to solicit their input on creating an applied curriculum.

## Providing Instructional and Curricular Supports

Schools are using grant funds to fund a number of curricular and instructional supports to aid the implementation of key reforms. These supports include the following:

- **Supplemental curricula.** All of the schools are using grant funds to purchase supplemental curricula to enhance student learning. These include online curricula and the Talent Development High School curriculum. Schools invested in these supplemental curricula to augment their core curricula and make it possible to tailor the pacing and content of instruction to students' skill levels. The amount of resources devoted to supplemental curricula ranges from \$100,000 at Bartram HS to about \$300,000 at FitzSimons HS. The curricula include SAT prep materials, Achieve 3000, Apangea for math, Study Island, APEX online curriculum, and others. Achieve 3000 exemplifies many of these curriculum packages; it is a program that tailors content to the individual reading level of the student, thus providing a medium through which students who are at different reading levels can read and discuss similar content.
- **Technology/Equipment.** Additional grant resources are being spent on technology and equipment, though there are some restrictions on the types of expenditures that are allowed under this line item. School leaders noted that the grant does not allow for most equipment expenses, such as new equipment that is needed for the career academies, but other equipment purchases, such as for computers, are allowed. At Germantown HS, for example, the budget is reserving about \$100,000 for student computers and printers. Additionally, the grant was used to purchase multimedia equipment and software to enrich the Digital Portfolio program at Germantown HS.<sup>20</sup>
- **Student incentives/rewards.** Schools feel that providing incentives and rewards is an important way of engaging students in classes and during enrichment activities. Incentives include food for students at school-wide events and student gift cards. Schools are reserving between \$50,000 and about \$100,000 for this line item.
- **Enrichment activities.** Respondents reported that the grant is providing a number of valuable enrichment activities to supplement the learning that is taking place in the classrooms. Some of the enrichment activities that the grant supports include field trips to cultural events, trips for career exploration and job shadowing, and school-wide assemblies. For example, University City HS contracted with the Academy of Natural Sciences to provide after-school, hands-on science enrichment one day a week. As of the spring 2010, the TAP estimates that the school has taken about 40 trips total (with about 50 students per trip). These trips are designed as career exploration activities, so that the students in the career academies can connect their class work to the world of work.

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<sup>20</sup> All students at Germantown HS produce comprehensive digital portfolios of their work over their high school careers.

School leaders noted that the instructional and curricular supports described above are essential for the successful implementation of the reforms. Teachers reported that the supplemental online curricula such as APEX and Achieve 3000 are especially useful for tailoring instruction to students who require extra help. Offering students incentives is also viewed by school staff as a valuable tool for motivating students to succeed.

## **Offering Summer Programs**

Schools offer summer programs—through summer bridge and traditional summer school—to help students make a smooth and successful transition to high school. Summer programs are designed to help students improve academic skills, catch up on academic credits, and participate in enrichment activities.

### **Summer Programs in 2010**

The summer programs changed significantly at the Philadelphia schools between 2009 and 2010. Most notably, the programs lasted longer and there was a stronger emphasis on academic services. In addition, the SDP implemented the Summer Learning and More (SLAM) initiative to provide skills development in core subject areas and enrichment opportunities for all eighth grade students/rising ninth graders attending Empowerment Schools, Renaissance Schools, and non-high-need schools. As a result of the SLAM initiative, there were a number of core changes to the summer bridge program in Philadelphia in 2010, including the following:

- The summer bridge programs were extended to six weeks, an increase from five weeks in 2009.
- The MEES grant paid for seven days of the summer bridge program in Philadelphia, including supplies and field trips, while the district paid for the rest. In 2009, the MEES grant paid for the bulk of the summer bridge program.
- SDP played a larger and more significant role in the design of the summer bridge program. The district mandated that students spend two hours on reading *and* two hours on math per day, that schools use a standardized curriculum for failing eighth graders and rising ninth graders, that field trips can occur only during the last week of the program, and that students attend a life skills class.
- As a result of the increased time spent in academic classes, there was less time available for enrichment activities. Schools still had latitude to structure the content and schedule of these activities, but their duration and scale decreased somewhat in 2010.
- The district imposed an attendance policy for summer bridge, which states that students who miss two days of summer bridge are in danger of failing the program. However, as the summer progressed, the district was lenient about this

policy because of unusual circumstances that affected attendance, such as the heat wave.

The summer program at Du Bois HS was designed for ninth grade students who failed English 1 and Algebra 1 and needed to attend summer school to retrieve credits in order to be promoted to the tenth grade. Most of the elements of the 2009 summer program remained in 2010. However, the summer school lasted six weeks, an increase from four weeks in 2009. The duration of class was also extended (from one and a half hours in 2009 to three hours in 2010). The district mandated the increase in summer school hours in an effort to deter students from “slacking off” during the normal school year. The grant covers the cost of summer school, which is normally \$150 per student. The Transition Evening School (TES) also runs during the summer, not as a “summer school,” but as part of the regular programming.

Berkshire JSHS implemented a 30-day summer program that included a combination of academic and recreational activities. In the morning, students took academic classes such as science, English, math, and social studies, and in the afternoon, students participated in recreational activities at the lake or pool, played intramural sports, and participated in Adventure Based Counseling (ABC). ABC, which is also offered during the school year, uses group-counseling techniques to develop problem-solving skills and promote positive relationships among students.

## **Features of 2010 Summer Programs**

Below we describe some of the key features of the summer programs in 2010, including how students were recruited, what students were enrolled, and what academic programs and enrichment activities were offered.

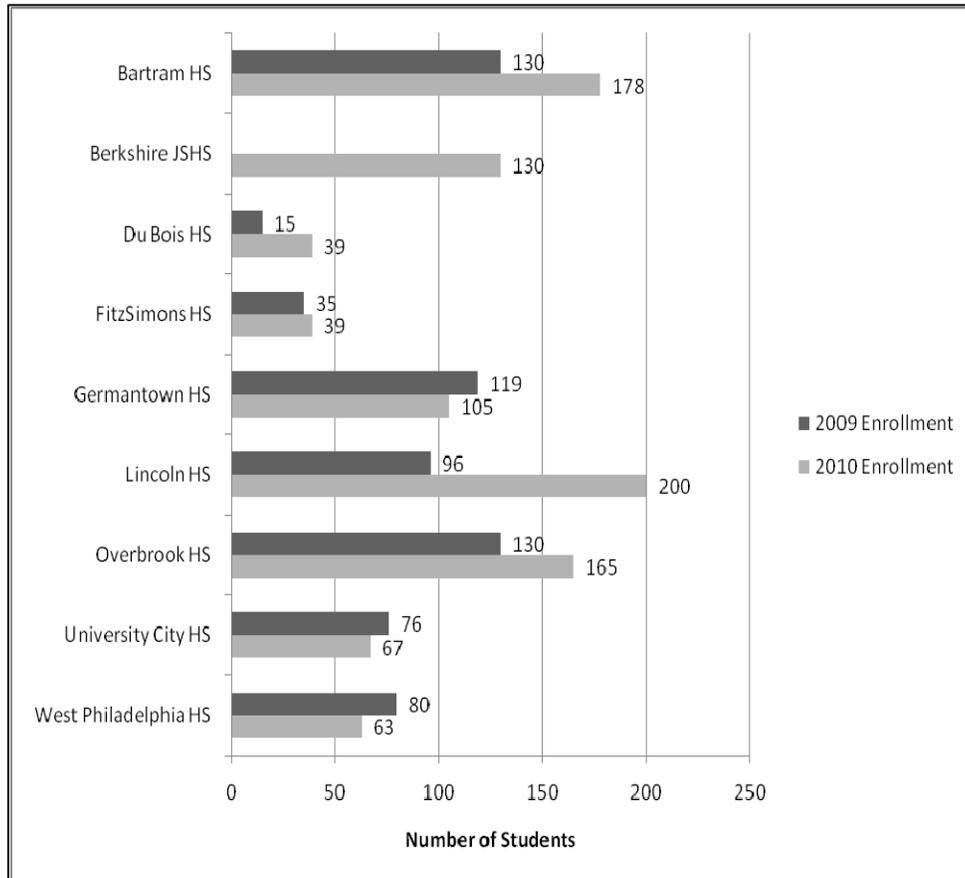
### ***Recruitment and Enrollment***

The schools used a variety of tactics to reach students, including parent outreach, assemblies at feeder middle schools, and targeted recruitment to students who were identified as at risk of failure based on their eighth grade attendance and grades. Since SDP required that failing eighth graders attend summer bridge, one school “force-registered” about 224 failing eighth grade students into summer bridge, but many of them did not show up because they did not know they needed to attend. As a result, many students officially registered for the program late and, in some cases, enrollment occurred well into the second week of the program.

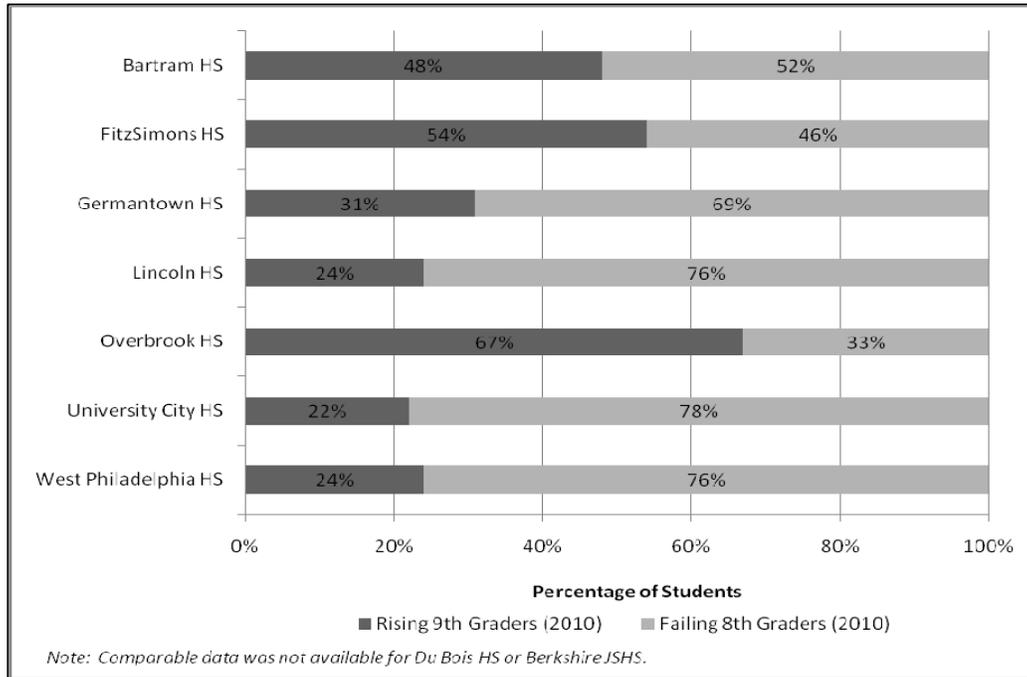
Exhibit IV-9 highlights summer bridge enrollment for 2009 and 2010 (as of July). The types of students who attended summer bridge generally reflected the population that the districts hoped to reach, including failing eighth graders and, in Philadelphia, students who were planning to

attend the designated high-need schools (e.g. Empowerment Schools). This is made clear in Exhibit IV-10, which shows that in the Philadelphia summer programs the number of failing eighth graders is far greater than the number of “rising” ninth graders. In fact, at four schools—Germantown HS, Lincoln HS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS—nearly three-fourths of enrolled students are failing eighth graders.

**Exhibit IV-9:  
Summer Bridge Enrollment  
2009, 2010**



**Exhibit IV-10:  
2010 Summer Bridge Student Characteristics**



**Academic Programs**

In Philadelphia, academic programs differed for the two basic categories of students: failing eighth graders and rising ninth graders. Failing eighth graders worked on basic reading and math, using the mandated Voyager curriculum, a standardized curriculum for credit-deficient students. Rising ninth graders worked on academic enrichment activities using the Step-Up to Reading and Writing curriculum. For math, rising ninth graders took pre-Algebra. As mentioned above, all students were required to spend two hours per day in reading *and* math for a total of four hours of academic classes per day, regardless of their academic skill level. This schedule represents the biggest change to the summer bridge program in Philadelphia. Teachers universally felt that four hours a day in reading and math over the summer was excessive and they did not believe that students would be engaged or excited about attending high school. One teacher said:

*It's a lot to ask of the students to sit through two hours of reading and two hours of math every day. Two hours is half an hour past too long. They start to lose effect by trying to do too much.*

The schools tried to alternate the academic and enrichment activities so that students had a break in their schedules from the academic classes. One school, for example, assigned a two-hour slot for reading in the morning and another two-hour slot for math in the afternoon. In between the

academic classes was an enrichment class such as sports, art, or drama. Several other schools, however, concentrated the academic classes in the morning for four hours straight, and provided some enrichment activities in the afternoon.

### ***Enrichment Activities***

The summer bridge program is designed to include a number of enrichment activities, but enrichment activities at SDP schools were scaled back somewhat in 2010 because SDP increased the amount of time students needed to spend in academic classes. Time spent on enrichment activities declined from two to three hours a day in 2009 to 30 minutes to one hour per day in 2010. Summer school students at Du Bois HS did not generally receive enrichment services 2009 or 2010.

The type of enrichment activities offered were similar to those available in 2009 and included visual arts, performing arts, music, sports, and culinary arts. In addition to these activities, students participated in a number of field trips, though the structure of these trips changed drastically in 2010. The SDP mandated that summer bridge field trips could only occur during the last week of the program. This way, according to district leaders, students could concentrate on their academic classes without the interruptions of field trips. School leaders and teachers voiced some concerns about the change in the field trip schedule because they felt that, when offered weekly, the field trips served as strong incentives for students—something that students could look forward to at the end of the week.

While the field trip schedule was somewhat uniform, the structure of other enrichment activities varied considerably by school. Similar to the structure in 2009, students were able to choose their enrichment activities, and some schools provided a diverse range of activities each week. Schools also differed on when the enrichment activities were offered—some were offered in the morning in between academic classes, while others were offered entirely in the afternoon.

Students and staff felt that the enrichment activities provided opportunities for strong social support, which they believed was essential to helping students transition into a new school environment. As they continue to reflect on the lessons learned from summer bridge programs, schools will need to strike a delicate balance between the need for sufficient time in academic classes and the need for enrichment activities that expose students to experiences outside of the normal classroom environment.

### ***Employment Services***

All the schools offered some form of employment service as part of summer bridge, though these services were fairly “light touch” in nature. At Du Bois HS, students who were part of the

Futures program<sup>21</sup> and enrolled in summer school received career readiness training from a local CBO. At Berkshire JSHS, employment services were available through the vocational academy, which offered student internships and career readiness training—e.g., resume writing, interviewing techniques, job search strategies, etc. The Philadelphia schools emphasized career readiness training during summer bridge. For example, the students were learning how to be on time for a job and how to budget their paychecks. Additionally, students learned about career and industry trends, focusing specifically on “where jobs will be going in the years to come.”

Some schools leveraged the expertise of the SSC to provide employment services. At Germantown HS, SSC staff designed a Career Week, when the job specialist brought in a number of guest speakers to discuss strategies for finding work and selecting career options. One speaker focused on guidelines for effective interviewing, another focused on strategies for professional networking, while still another focused on developing career goals and the connection between education and careers.

Schools also provided workshops on college planning and other postsecondary options through the SSC. These activities included classes focused on how to succeed in high school and how to apply and get into college. Schools relied on role-playing and other group activities to engage students. At one school, for example, students acted as a college admission committee, and were given bios, grades, and test scores from applicants. Committee members were told to choose two applicants out of five and to justify their choices.

### ***Transition Class/Life Skills Training***

Life skills training was offered at the Philadelphia schools for the first time in the summer of 2010, through the district-mandated Transition Class. This class was designed to prepare students for high school and included topics such as “interest exploration” to help students identify their career interests, set career goals, and learn how to get accepted to college. Students also took a vocational skills inventory to identify their career interests. The transition class covered other broad topics related to high school readiness such as developing a learning plan for school, which helped students identify habits that may interfere with their success.

While the curriculum for the Transition Class was the same across the Philadelphia schools, the way in which the class was delivered varied by school. Staff from the SSC played a strong role

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<sup>21</sup> The Futures program is a dropout prevention program available at many high schools in Baltimore. As part of the program, students are paired with an “advocate” who serves as a case manager or counselor, monitoring students’ academic progress and attendance, and coordinating with teacher and parents to make sure students stay on track.

in delivering this class at a number of schools. Other schools relied on both teachers and SSC staff to lead the class. Regardless of the method of delivery, the Transition Class enabled schools to provide a formal class focused on the skills needed to be successful in high school.

### ***Incentives***

Schools used a variety of incentives to keep students' attention and interest over the summer. Incentives included bus tokens and awards for good attendance, such as special lunches or gift cards. Students at Bartram HS received an additional financial incentive, getting paid \$29 per day, or \$7.25 per hour (for four hours a day) to attend summer bridge. This stipend was made possible through a grant from the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition (GPUAC), which is providing funding for 75 service-learning slots. According to teachers, the stipend made a big difference in their enrollment numbers. As one teacher said, "Without that [stipends], students don't want to come to summer school at all."

### **Summer Program Challenges**

Schools faced some difficult challenges implementing the summer programs in 2010:

- **The longer summer programs meant that schools needed to “sell” the summer programs more intentionally than in the past.** Most students do not want to attend a summer program for six weeks, so schools had to devise ways of making the programs sound attractive. Unfortunately, despite their efforts, many schools did not meet their enrollment goals.
- **Many of the Philadelphia schools struggled to recruit teachers who were interested in working for six weeks over the summer.** Some schools resorted to recruiting teachers from other schools to work in summer programs. This was logistically challenging, as some of the teachers did not know about the culture or staffing of the school, or about other procedures related to summer bridge.
- **A number of students in Philadelphia who were attending summer bridge were not planning to enroll at the same school in the fall.** This occurred because the district encouraged students to attend the summer program closest to their homes. As a result, teachers did not have information about students' grades prior to attending summer bridge.
- **SDP notified the schools of the shift in the summer program schedule late in the school year, after the teachers had already planned for the program.** This meant that teachers needed to redesign their activities and schedules to ensure that students were receiving four hours of academic services plus enrichment activities. They also had to shift field trips into the last week of the summer bridge program. Since the field trips were planned well in advance, it was difficult to reschedule some of them.
- **Some schools in Philadelphia did not receive their instructional materials in time for summer bridge.** In Philadelphia, the speed with which the changes

occurred for the summer bridge program meant that schools needed to get the instructional materials in a timely manner. Unfortunately, several schools in Philadelphia did not receive their instructional materials until well into the second week of the program. One teacher expressed some frustration about this:

*The biggest challenges were the materials not being here on time. I didn't feel such a problem with the district imposing structure, but if you are going to impose a structure, you have to come up with the materials.*

- **Some schools in Philadelphia were unable to take full advantage of the ability of the SSC to provide employment services over the summer.** This challenge was due partly to the full schedule that the district already imposed on the students, leaving limited time for additional enrichment activities such as career exploration.

## Successful Strategies

Despite the difficulties that schools faced implementing the summer programs, school leaders identified a number of noteworthy practices. For example, the class size was fairly small, with an average of about 15–20 students in each class. This allowed teachers to work individually with students and for teachers to get to know students before the start of the school year. Perhaps as a result of the small class size, the school climate during summer programs was fairly calm, with few disruptions or student conflicts. Some schools, such as Bartram HS, successfully incorporated project-based learning into their programs, drawing on the specific themes for the summer program, such as healthy lifestyles, alternative energy, and gardening. At the end of the program, students in each group were expected to create projects based on these themes.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

This chapter summarized the range of educational reforms and interventions that have been instituted in the grantee schools, focusing on the core programs funded by the MEES grant. The schools are devoting large portions of their grant funds to educational strategies—on average, about 39 percent of their total budgets. These strategies are aimed at the whole school and at specific target groups of at-risk students, such as repeating ninth graders and students from other grades who are overage and/or credit-deficient. Schools are making significant progress implementing the key reforms that they planned to implement, but they are also facing some challenges:

- **Teachers have not always embraced grant funded activities.** There was some resistance among teachers who felt that there were too many reforms to implement and not sufficient guidance on implementing them. Some teachers at the Philadelphia schools, for example, resisted the common planning time

required by the district because they did not receive clear guidance on how to use this time.

- **The Renaissance Schools initiative changed the context for grant implementation.** University City HS was slated to become a Renaissance School, which would transfer the operation of the school from the district to a community-based organization. This change created a somewhat difficult environment for grant implementation. Because teachers did not know if they would be working at University City HS the next year, it was difficult to recruit them to work in grant-funded programs such as mentoring.
- **Sustaining newly-developed programs and services will be difficult in the face of district-wide budget cuts.** Schools are concerned about their ability to sustain some of the grant-funded activities due to budget cuts at the district level. Berkshire JSHS, for example, will not be able to continue to provide extended learning time, which cost approximately \$208,205 to implement in SY 2009–2010. Other resource-intensive programs such as the Transitional Evening School at Du Bois HS will also be difficult to sustain beyond the life of the grant.

The implementation experience has also taught administrators at the schools and districts a number of lessons, some of which they plan to apply during the remaining years of the grant:

- **Teachers require sufficient training and support on how to implement grant-funded and district-wide reforms.** With so many reform efforts underway, such as corrective reading and math at the Philadelphia schools, co-teaching models at Overbrook HS, and common planning time, teachers require adequate professional development and guidance so that they can participate effectively in the creation of positive change.
- **It is necessary to develop better, more methodical procedures for assigning students to career academies.** Because many schools have not developed procedures for assigning students to specific career academies, some students are enrolled in academies haphazardly because they are not clear about their career paths. School administrators are now quite mindful of the need to develop procedures that help students identify their career goals so that they can be enrolled in the appropriate career academies.

## Summary of Findings

As discussed throughout this chapter, schools made strong headway in implementing the key reforms they planned with support from the MEES grant. While grant funds are supporting specific areas within the broad category of educational reforms and interventions—such as hiring teachers to teach specific classes, purchasing specialized curricula, and paying for student incentives and field trips—there are many ways in which the grant is influencing the schools as wholes and the reform processes that many of them are currently undertaking. By hiring a large number of teachers, the grant is contributing to smaller class sizes and a lower student-to-teacher

ratio which, according to many studies, can improve overall instructional practices and the school climate. The grant is also contributing indirectly to the development of small learning communities through the academy structure. Many schools are devoting a large percentage of grant funds to the Ninth Grade Success Academies, by hiring both a large number of ninth grade teachers and numerous instructional coaches to work specifically with the ninth grade teachers. By working to improve the success of ninth graders, schools are investing in early intervention strategies that can ultimately affect the schools' overall dropout rate. The grant is also affecting the most at-risk students by supporting the creation of Twilight Schools and academic remediation programs for students who have failed core classes and need to get back on track in order to graduate. Moving forward, schools are continuing to refine and reflect on their practices in the hope that they can influence student achievement over time.



## **V. MENTORING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE STRATEGIES**

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Mentoring programs and school climate interventions are core components of the MEES grant's effort to reduce violence in schools and improve the school environment. These programs and interventions aim to improve attendance, behavior, academic achievement, and engagement for the entire student body and particularly for members of specific target groups who may be at-risk, such as entering and repeating ninth graders. Since mentoring programs and school climate interventions are separate strategies, each is discussed in a different core section in this chapter. Each section first provides a broad overview, and then discusses in depth each intervention's key components, including program administration, technical assistance, recruitment and enrollment, program activities, and challenges and lessons learned. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings.

### **Mentoring Programs**

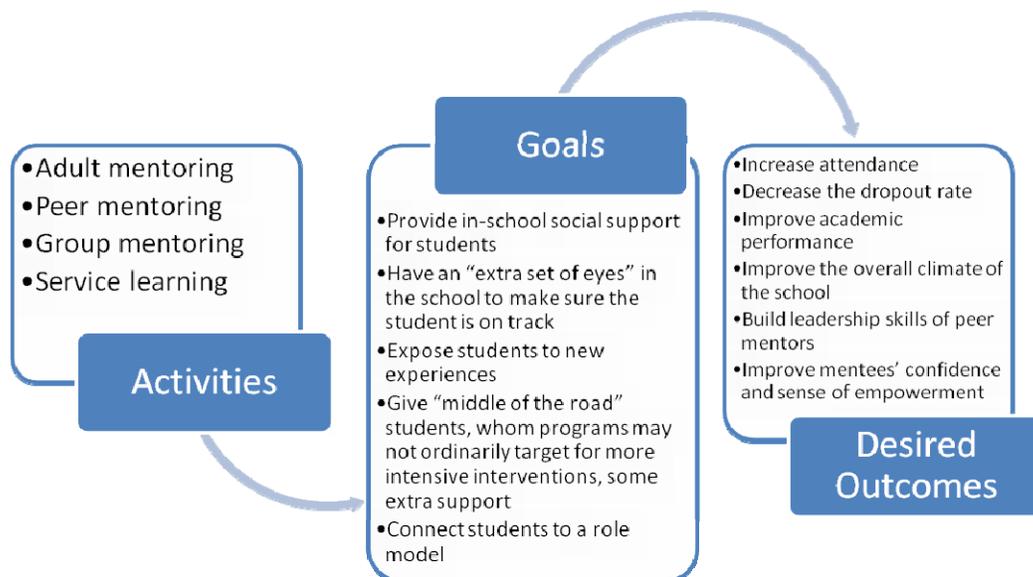
School-based mentoring programs are an increasingly common form of mentoring. The goal of school-based mentoring is to help students develop positive relationships with adults who can help them stay on track. These programs differ from community-based mentoring programs in that they are located on a school campus, identify mentees through school faculty and staff referrals, engage teachers and school staff as mentors, and operate during the school year. These characteristics allow school-based programs to reach both youth and mentors who may not otherwise have the resources, inclination, or time to participate in a community-based mentoring program.

School-based mentoring also appears to have distinct school-related benefits and outcomes for students. These may include improved behavior in school, increased attendance, improved coursework and class engagement, and a more positive perception of the importance of school and grades. On the other hand, school-based programs may also face unique challenges. There may be scheduling issues, particularly related to the extended break from the program during the summer; social barriers may exist, such as those that may crop up if a mentee's peers perceive

the program as “uncool” and treat the mentee accordingly; and various administrative challenges can arise, such as difficulties in integrating an external program into a school.<sup>1</sup>

With these considerations in mind, eight of the nine MEES schools have developed school-based mentoring programs to improve the educational and social outcomes of individual students as well as the overall climate of the schools. Berkshire JSHS, due to its unique residential structure, has developed a community-based mentoring program to support its students when they transition back to their home communities. All programs focus on adult one-on-one mentoring and some have a peer mentoring, group mentoring, or service-learning element. Exhibit V-1 below shows the activities, goals, and outcomes that MEES schools have identified for their mentoring programs.

**Exhibit V-1:  
Mentoring Program Activities, Intermediate Goals, and Long-term Desired Outcomes**



As is illustrated in Exhibit V-1, the core mentoring activities are adult mentoring, peer mentoring, and group mentoring (the latter may include service learning). These activities are directly tied to the program goals, which are providing in-school support to students, having an

<sup>1</sup> Herrera, C. and Karcher, M. (2007). School-Based Mentoring. In *Research in Action* (Issue 6). Retrieved from [http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_387.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_387.pdf)

Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence and The National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Revised September 2007). The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Communities in Schools. Retrieved from <http://gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/merlin-cgi/p/downloadFile/d/20696/n/off/other/1/name/abcspdf/>

extra set of eyes for students to help them stay on track, exposing students to new experiences, giving “middle of the road” students support, and connecting students to a role model. These goals, in turn, map to the desired outcomes for mentoring services, which are to increase attendance, decrease the number of students who drop out, improve academic performance, build leadership skills, and improve mentees’ self-confidence.

To date, all of the schools have at least one component of their mentoring program up and running. School District of Philadelphia (SDP) schools identified mentoring CBOs in the fall of 2009 and most began their start-up work in winter 2010. At six schools, program staff had made at least a few mentor-mentee matches as of the third site visit in spring 2010. Most programs used the 2010 summer break to strategize for the upcoming school year, as well as to recruit mentees and mentors through the schools’ summer programs. Program staff members anticipate having the mentoring programs fully implemented during fall 2010.

## **Program Administration**

All nine grantees held a competitive bid process to identify a CBO partner to operate the mentoring component of the grant. The bid process occurred in the fall of 2009. Schools identified providers in fall 2009 and these partners were in the schools by the beginning of 2010, though in some cases the contract was not finalized until May or June of 2010. Du Bois HS has a structure slightly different from that of the other schools; while it also contracts with CBOs, it has four providers that oversee separate mentoring programs, each with distinct target groups. Berkshire JSHS held a competitive bid process, but was unable to identify a CBO with the necessary expertise in statewide recruitment to run the program. As a result, program staff decided to partner with Berkshire Farms, the nonprofit that operates components of the school.

Although specific roles vary, mentoring providers are responsible for recruiting and training mentors and mentees, organizing events, overseeing mentor/mentee relationships, and generally managing the daily operations of the mentoring program. CBO roles within the schools may vary depending on the type of mentoring program and school structure in place. In general, school staff view CBO providers as being critical for recruiting adult community mentors (i.e., adult mentors from outside the school). CBOs are often able to draw on other programs they operate, either within or outside of the school, to identify eligible and interested adults from the community to mentor the MEES target groups.

In some cases, schools have faced challenges in working with the CBO partners, particularly if partners were inexperienced in working with the MEES target population. For example, one CBO partner that had more experience with younger students discovered that its colorful branding and outreach strategies were not effective for high school students. In addition, one

CBO required home visits during the enrollment process, but learned that this was a major deterrent for high school students. Exhibit V-2 gives an overview of the partners and staffing structure for each mentoring program.

**Exhibit V-2:  
Overview of Grant-funded Mentoring Contractors and Staffing**

School	Contractor	Number of Contract Staff	Number of School Staff
<b>Bartram HS</b>	Education Works	1 mentoring coordinator 1 AmeriCorps assistant	1 faculty liaison
<b>Berkshire JSHS</b>	Berkshire Farms		4 mentoring coordinators 10 mentoring outreach coordinators 8 mentor associates <sup>1</sup>
<b>Du Bois HS</b>	Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Maryland Morgan State University Mentoring Young Minds	0	0
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>	Education Works	1 mentoring coordinator 2 AmeriCorps support staff	1 faculty liaison
<b>Germantown HS</b>	Boys and Girls Club	1 mentoring coordinator 1 assistant mentoring coordinator	1 faculty liaison
<b>Lincoln HS</b>	Education Works	1 mentoring coordinator 1 AmeriCorps assistant	1 faculty liaison
<b>Overbrook HS</b>	Education Works	1 mentoring coordinator 1 AmeriCorps assistant	0
<b>University City HS</b>	Met, Inc.	5 part-time staff 2 consultants	1 <sup>2</sup>
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>	The Netter Center	1 mentoring coordinator	0

<sup>1</sup> Berkshire JSHS hired 18 outreach staff at per diem rates.

<sup>2</sup> University City HS did not fund the faculty liaison through the MEES grant.

As the Exhibit V-2 demonstrates, the staffing structures for the programs were widely divergent, especially between CBOs. In the SDP schools (with the exception of University City HS), the mentoring CBO provides at least one full-time mentoring coordinator, as well as a full-time assistant, which is often an AmeriCorps position. In the case of Bartram HS, FitzSimons HS, Lincoln HS, and Overbrook HS, which have the same CBO partner, there is also a senior

administrator who oversees activities at all four schools, including supervising each site's mentoring coordinator, handling invoices and facilitating biweekly meetings for staff. Berkshire JSHS has a different staffing structure; it has directly hired 22 staff (four mentoring coordinators, 10 mentoring outreach coordinators, and eight mentor associates), most of which are paid on a per diem basis, to implement its program. The eight mentor associates operate the community service component of the grant and may have other duties within the school as well. At Du Bois HS, due to the nature of the contract, there were no dedicated or school-based staff persons. Instead, the contracted partners provided staff as needed. During the summer, the grant funded one teacher part-time to oversee the summer program.

In addition to the CBO staff, four SDP schools had a faculty sponsor or liaison, whose role is to act as the link between the school and the provider and help the CBO access resources within the school (e.g., securing space, access to school assemblies, etc.) in order to integrate the program into the school environment. Faculty liaisons also build relationships with teachers in order to recruit them as mentors and generate referrals of students to be mentees. In several schools, the faculty liaison has been a major asset to the program, during both start-up and implementation, as some faculty liaisons were solely responsible for starting the program before the CBOs came onboard. At the time of the third site visit, at least one school without a faculty liaison still hoped to fill this position.

The amount of funds allocated to mentoring programs varied by school. Schools expended between three and seven percent of their total MEES budgets on their mentoring programs, the vast majority of which went towards contracts with the CBO mentoring provider. Besides the contracts, other line items included the time spent on the program by the faculty liaison or sponsor, professional development for staff, extracurricular pay for teacher mentors, incentives for peer mentors and mentees, and funds to support events (e.g., food and space).

## **Technical Assistance**

All schools received a variety of training and technical assistance services for their mentoring components, in both cross-site and individual settings. The Department of Labor (DOL) contracted with Branch Associates to provide technical assistance and training to schools. Branch Associates conducted the research and evaluation component and subcontracted to the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (UWSEPA) to provide technical assistance and training services.

UWSEPA provided both large-scale training events and small webinars or calls as needed. They held five cross-site trainings for the mentoring partners and school staff in each city (one each in New York and Baltimore, and three in Philadelphia). These trainings provided attendees with

information about how to create a vision statement, market programs, recruit mentors, help matches stay connected, capitalize on social networks, and plan events. In addition, UWSEPA provided on-site volunteer training to the Philadelphia schools, which will be discussed later in the section on mentoring participants and supports. Feedback on the trainings was positive, though some staff reported that better follow-up would have been beneficial. In addition, at least one site felt that UWSEPA was not familiar with the target population and did not tailor the trainings to these students' unique challenges and risk factors.

Berkshire JSHS initially worked closely with the Mentoring Partnership of New York to design a customized mentoring approach that would suit its unique student population. The school had scheduled in-person trainings and monthly phone calls with this training provider. However, by the time of the second visit, DOL requested that Berkshire JSHS rely on the same UWSEPA mentoring assistance as the other MEES schools. Although UWSEPA worked with the Mentoring Partnership of New York to identify next steps for the Berkshire program to ensure that they would not be duplicating services, the transition in technical assistance providers was challenging. School staff felt that the relationship they had developed with the Mentoring Partnership of New York could not be easily replicated. In addition, staff felt that the Mentoring Partnership of New York had a better understanding of the school's unique structure and environment than an out-of-state provider would have.

## Recruitment and Enrollment

In developing their mentoring programs, school and partner staff defined each participant's role and then adapted the recruitment and enrollment processes accordingly. Below are summaries of each mentoring participant's role:

- **Mentees.** Mentees are the students receiving the bulk of the mentoring services from the adult and peer mentors. They may include ninth or tenth graders, depending on the program (though Berkshire JSHS is targeting all grade levels). Staff teams have developed the programs to meet mentees' social, academic, and behavioral support needs through peer, adult, and group mentoring activities.
- **Peer mentors.** Peer mentors are mostly eleventh and twelfth graders who volunteer to serve as mentors. They are unique in their ability to help younger students navigate and understand the environment and culture of each school. Peer mentors may also receive limited mentoring from the adult mentors, if the program employs a cascade or tiered model of mentoring. Programs also focus on developing leadership skills for peer mentors, through training on conflict resolution, communication, and stress management.
- **Adult mentors.** Adult mentors are the teachers, staff or community members who volunteer to provide mentoring to mentees and, in some cases, to peer mentors. Adult mentors fill the following roles: (1) provide social and academic

support as needed; (2) serve as a reliable resource who can connect the student with other services, help them problem-solve their challenges, and advocate or mediate for the student; and (3) spend time with mentees in individual and group activities in order to build a strong and trusting relationship.

Each school has identified a specific target group for mentees, peer mentors and adult mentors. The school staff, in conjunction with the TA providers, developed these target groups in order to maximize the effect that the mentoring program could have, keeping in mind the advantages and challenges unique to school-based mentoring.

Program participants follow a standard enrollment process, which includes recruitment, application and screening, enrollment and training. Methods to recruit may vary depending on the specific target group. Similarly, the application and screening process varies widely in intensity, depending on whether the participant is a mentee or mentor. Below, these processes are outlined for each group.

### ***Mentees***

Schools are primarily targeting ninth graders as mentees, because ninth graders are an especially at-risk group and face considerable challenges while transitioning into high school. However, Berkshire JSJS is targeting its entire student body and West Philadelphia HS is targeting ninth and tenth graders. Each school is targeting between 50 and 135 students to be mentees.

Mentee target groups include students with a range of personal, social, and academic characteristics. At least four schools are targeting students identified to be at risk of dropping out of school, or students with behavioral or academic challenges. For example, Germantown HS is targeting students on the Early Warning Indicator list. This list identifies students who have attended less than 70 percent of the instructional school days, failed English and Math, or failed three or more courses. Some schools are specifically targeting failing ninth graders. For instance, University City HS requires that failing ninth graders attend all mentoring activities.

Other schools, however, are targeting any ninth grader interested in the program, with a particular focus on “middle of the road” students who may not be a specific target group for other interventions. One Lincoln HS mentoring staff member described these students:

*We have some mentees who are doing fine, but they just wanted to have a mentor. I don't think there's anything wrong with that because those students who are in between always get left out. They aren't that bad, but they aren't good so they just get overlooked.*

To date, many of the programs have relied on mass recruitment efforts such as school-wide announcements or flyers, which result in students referring themselves to the program. Other

programs have held “mixers” or “meet-and-greet” events in order to engage potential participants and give them more information about the program. These efforts have been somewhat successful, but they do not necessarily reach the specific students the program hopes to target. In some cases, staff used tactics such as approaching specific students during lunch to tell them about the program or relying on teachers to nominate students.

Moving forward, the CBOs plan to institute more systematic recruitment tactics. For example, if the program is targeting at-risk students, program staff may recruit these students through reinstatement meetings (meetings held when a student returns from suspension), teen court referrals, or counselor or teacher referrals. Exhibit V-3 gives an overview of targeted students, number recruited, and percent recruited as of the end of the 2009–2010 school year.

**Exhibit V-3:  
Mentees Targeted and Recruited as of the End of SY 2009–2010**

School	Targeted Students			Progress	
	Ninth Grade	Tenth Grade	Number	Recruited	Percentage Reached
Bartram HS	✓		100	56	56%
Berkshire JSHS	✓	✓	76 (entire student body)	0	0%
Du Bois HS	✓		110	13	12%
FitzSimons HS	✓		50	14	28%
Germantown HS	✓		100	24	24%
Lincoln HS	✓		100	40	40%
Overbrook HS	✓		135	44	33%
University City HS	✓		102 (whole class)	12	12%
West Philadelphia HS	✓	✓	50	0 <sup>1</sup>	0%

<sup>1</sup> West Philadelphia HS has mentees in the peer mentoring program but none in the adult mentoring program. Peer mentees are not included here.

Note: Data are from the end of year reports grantees submitted to DOL. Target numbers are for the 2009–2010 school year. Numbers are for one-on-one adult mentoring only.

As the exhibit demonstrates, as of the end of the 2009–2010 school year, mentoring programs had met their recruitment goals at rates ranging from zero percent to 56 percent. As can be seen from the examples below, programs have had varying levels of recruitment success, depending on challenges associated with their program structure and staffing.

- **Berkshire JSHS, despite considerable planning and investment, has not yet been able to recruit mentees for its program because it has not identified mentors to pair them with.** In order to provide positive adult relationships for the students after their transitions to their home communities, mentoring staff planned to identify mentors in each community. However, recruiting community mentors in different locations has, so far, posed a major barrier and no mentors have been recruited.
- **Bartram HS has made strong progress in recruiting mentees, having reached over half of its target goal by the end of the year.** Bartram HS mentoring staff reported that the faculty liaison was extremely involved and supportive, helping to recruit mentees and launch the program before Education Works began its work in the school. Bartram HS's success demonstrates that having a strong faculty member in place from the start can greatly facilitate implementation.

Following recruitment, mentees fill out an application containing their contact information and interests and turn in a parental consent form. In some cases, they may fill out a more intensive form that includes their class schedule and/or grades, extracurricular activities, career aspirations, college plans, and family support systems. This process is relatively simple but it can be a challenge to make sure potential mentees turn in their paperwork, particularly the parental consent form.

### ***Peer Mentors***

For schools that are implementing peer mentoring programs, target peer mentors are students who staff members believe will have a positive influence on the mentees. These students are in eleventh or twelfth grade and in good standing academically and behaviorally. Most peer mentoring programs are specifically targeting eleventh graders, so that the mentee-mentor relationship can last for longer than one year. However, five schools have accepted either twelfth or tenth graders, if they show strong interest in the program.

To date, methods for recruiting peer mentors have taken forms similar to those used for mentees, with some more targeted strategies as well. Tactics may be as informal as approaching potential mentors on campus or sending out flyers, but also include actively recruiting students on the honor roll or asking teachers for recommendations or referrals. In addition, several programs are targeting twelfth graders who had been mentors for the previous year's summer bridge programs, given their previous mentoring experience and likelihood of being positive influences. Exhibit V-4 gives an overview of the numbers and grade levels of targeted peer mentors at each Philadelphia school, as well as the progress each school had made as of the third site visit.

A comparison of Exhibit V-3 and Exhibit V-4 reveals that schools have had somewhat more success recruiting peer mentors than they had recruiting mentees. Because peer mentor service numbers are not reported in the MIS data, these numbers are only from the third site visits.

Lincoln HS was visited in early March, which may account for its relatively low number of peer mentors reported compared to the other sites, which were visited in May. Two key findings have arisen from analysis of the data on recruitment of mentees and peer mentors:

- **Peer mentors are easier to recruit than mentees due to lower target numbers, a larger eligible pool, and their location on campus.** Although programs have faced challenges in recruitment generally, peer mentors have so far proven to be the easiest participants to recruit. Programs have targeted fewer peer mentors than either mentees or adult mentors, as they are neither the primary recipients nor the primary providers of mentor support. In addition, having peer mentors on campus and personal relationships with these students has helped facilitate outreach. As a result, at the time of the third site visit, programs were closer to meeting their recruitment goals with peer mentors than they were with other participants.
- **Germantown HS has used creative methods to recruit peer mentors.** Although Germantown HS is only targeting eleventh grade peer mentors, it had reached almost half of its target by the third site visit. One factor in this success may be its Saturday School programming, which ninth and eleventh graders are required to attend. Leveraging this existing program, which targets the same groups of interest for the mentoring program, may have had a positive effect on recruiting peer mentors, who were able to interact with potential ninth grade mentees.

**Exhibit V-4:  
Peer Mentors Targeted and Recruited as the End of SY 2009-2010**

School	Targeted Students			Number	Progress	
	Tenth Grade	Eleventh Grade	Twelfth Grade		Recruited	Percentage Reached
Bartram HS		✓	✓	15	8	53%
FitzSimons HS	✓	✓	✓	45	23	51%
Germantown HS		✓		50	24	48%
Lincoln HS		✓	✓	25	5	20%
Overbrook HS		✓	✓	20	8	40%
University City HS <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	✓		31	
West Philadelphia HS		✓		50	17	34%

<sup>1</sup> We were not able to identify a target number of peer mentors for University City HS.

Note: Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS do not have peer mentoring programs.

Prospective peer mentors complete an application form and a parent consent form and, in some cases, need to submit letters of recommendation from teachers. Peer mentors may also be required to write about why they would like to become a peer mentor, what they would bring to the program, and what they hope to get out of it. In one of the more intensive processes at University City HS, peer mentors have an interview with the adult mentors. This not only gives staff another screening mechanism, but also provides interview experience for the student.

### ***Adult Mentors***

For eight of the nine schools, adult mentors can be teachers, school staff members, or adults from the community. Berkshire JSHS is unique in that it is targeting adults who live in the students' home communities, so that students will have adult mentors when they transition back home from Berkshire JSHS residential center. Program staff members are looking for mentors who are positive role models, who match students' demographics, and who meet the eligibility requirements (e.g., pass FBI clearance, do not have a felony charge, are old enough, etc.). FitzSimons HS, for instance, is hoping to recruit professional African American males to provide positive examples and influences for its mentees.

Mentoring staff members have been successful in recruiting school-based mentors such as faculty and staff. To reach school-based mentors, program staff made presentations during common planning time, left flyers in faculty mailboxes, and put ads in the school newspaper. CBOs that are well-integrated into the school have been able to recruit staff or receive referrals from other programs. For example, at Bartram HS, Education Works operates both the mentoring program and the classroom assistance program and has benefitted from being able to recruit mentors (as well as receive referrals) from their staff members in other programs. Program staff members specifically target and recruit certain staff members who they think would make good role models or mentors for ninth graders. At SDP schools, teacher mentors receive extra-curricular pay for their time, which provides an additional incentive to participate.

Community adult mentors continue to be very difficult to recruit. In the first several months of the program, programs set up information tables at local community centers and businesses, made presentations at local stakeholder meetings, and conducted outreach at churches and faith-based organizations. Programs also received referrals from friends and family members, and reached out to local universities. Yet, four schools had not recruited any community members to be mentors as of the end of SY 2009-2010. Exhibit V-5 highlights progress that schools have made recruiting adult mentors, including both school staff and community members.

**Exhibit V-5:  
Adult Mentors Targeted and Recruited as of the End of SY 2009-2010**

School	Targeted Adults			Progress	
	Teacher/ Staff	Community Members	Total Number	Recruited	Percentage Reached
Bartram HS	✓	✓	50	18	36%
FitzSimons HS	✓	✓	95	14	15%
Germantown HS	✓	✓	100	34	34%
Lincoln HS	✓	✓	50	10	20%
Overbrook HS	✓	✓	40	16	40%
University City HS		✓	75	12	16%
West Philadelphia HS	✓	✓	50	15	30%
Berkshire JSHS		✓	76	0	0%
Du Bois HS		✓	110	8	7%

*Note: Numbers are for one-on-one mentors only.*

As this exhibit demonstrates, adult mentors have been the most challenging participants to recruit, with no sites reaching over 40 percent of their target numbers as of spring 2010, and five sites below 30 percent of their targets. At this time, it is possible to make two observations regarding the recruitment of adult mentors:

- **Schools with the lowest recruitment numbers plan to recruit only community mentors.** The mentoring programs at Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS are recruiting *only* community mentors. As their numbers demonstrate, recruiting community mentors alone has delayed implementation due to the challenges involved with this particular target group. Schools that recruit staff and teachers to be adult mentors, as well as community members, have had more initial success in overall recruitment than those schools targeting only the latter group.
- **Although University HS only recruits community mentors, it has been more successful in its recruitment efforts than the other schools with this single target group.** University City HS's partner Met, Inc. was proactive in conducting outreach and leveraging existing connections to reach potential adult community mentors. These strategies, which included hiring students at nearby universities to do outreach and recruiting Drexel University interns from the 2009 summer bridge program, allowed the school to reach 16 percent of its recruitment target.

Currently, CBOs are leveraging resources and developing new strategies to reach adults outside of the school. Moving forward, programs plan to partner with other organizations in order to recruit mentors, especially for specific target groups. At Germantown HS, for instance, the Boys and Girls Club (BGC) plans to partner with the Center for Male Engagement as well as the Community Partnership for Neighborhood High Schools in the upcoming school year. BGC staff members anticipate that these organizations will be especially effective at recruiting male mentors. As with mentee and mentor recruitment, staff members are also continuing their recruitment of community mentors throughout the summer of 2010 in order to have them on board for the start of school in the fall.

There is an intensive screening process for adult mentors, especially for community mentors. Teacher and community mentors submit an application form with their contact information, experience or training in mentoring, and their reasons for being interested in the program. Community mentors have the added steps of having a background check and securing FBI and child abuse clearances as well. These forms can be very time-consuming to fill out, process, and approve. Barriers to this process will be discussed in greater detail in the section on challenges.

### ***Matching***

At the time of the third-round site visits, six schools had begun to make mentor-mentee matches, with either peer or adult mentors. Schools hope to do one-to-one matching; however, due to recruitment challenges with adult mentors, schools have paired adult mentors with multiple mentees in some cases. Program staff members made these matches with the needs, interests, and risk factors of the mentees in mind. For example, if a mentee is struggling in a particular academic subject, the program might match this student with a teacher mentor who teaches that subject in order to provide the student with extra academic support. In addition, if there is a preexisting relationship between a teacher mentor and mentee, establishing a formal mentoring relationship may be the logical next step. Similarly, if a student has a particular career interest, staff members may try to find a community mentor in that profession. All programs do same-sex matching, although gender imbalances have proven to be a challenge, as will be discussed later.

Mentees may need varying levels of support, depending on their risk factors, and staff members match these students accordingly. If a program does both peer and adult mentoring, a mentee with serious behavioral or disciplinary problems will be matched only with an adult mentor, as such issues may be too much for a peer mentor to address. Peer mentors work most commonly with those “middle of the road” students who could use support but are not targeted for higher intensity interventions. Students with the most serious barriers are referred to counseling or to programs that can provide more intensive support than the mentoring program can provide.

Programs use a variety of methods to get at the interests and needs of mentees, including questionnaires and observation during group events. Germantown HS uses a specific tool called Hemingway, which is a survey that can match mentors and mentees based on their interests and perspectives. In addition to such tools, at least six programs implemented group mentoring or activities prior to or during the matching process, in order to observe how mentors and mentees interact and to determine which pairs appear to have a natural affinity.

## **Mentoring Activities**

Once the participants are enrolled in the program, they undergo training to prepare them for a mentoring relationship. UWSEPA provided this training for the Philadelphia schools (with the exception of West Philadelphia HS), through a leveraged grant from the Department of Education. UWSEPA offered three separate two-and-a-half-hour training modules, one each for adult mentors, peer mentors, and mentees. Although the trainings covered similar topics, the training curricula were tailored to each specific group. For example, the adult mentoring training covered a mentor's role and responsibilities, relationship-building, diversity, and communication. The peer mentoring training had similar content, but focused as well on the small age gap between the peer mentor and the mentee and the specific challenges that this situation may generate. Some schools also provided their own mentor training in addition to that of the UWSEPA program, most often in order to orient adult community mentors to the school. Overall, feedback on these trainings was positive, though some adult mentors felt that, while it provided a strong introduction, it did not necessarily prepare the mentors to start building relationships with their mentees.

Du Bois HS provides mentor training to its adult mentors through the Maryland Mentoring Partnership, a sister organization to UWSEPA. These trainings are 90 minutes long, occur on a quarterly basis, and focus less on relationship-building than on how to make sure a mentee is doing well and staying on track. For example, in addition to topics such as child development, safety, and family considerations, the training covers how to handle certain challenging situations and identify gang activity.

The central component of all the MEES mentoring programs is a one-on-one relationship between an adult mentor and student mentee. Although several programs have peer mentoring, group mentoring, and service learning, these supplemental to the one-on-one relationship with an adult mentor. The supplemental program elements are designed to provide additional support to students and to give mentees and mentors an opportunity to interact in different settings. Each of these specific approaches to mentoring is described in more detail below.

### **One-On-One Adult Mentoring**

Although the adult mentoring component is not yet fully implemented, mentoring program staff members have developed a program structure, guidelines, and expectations to manage the relationships, keep both parties safe, and maximize the effectiveness of the relationship within the realistic limits of the program.

Adult mentors commit to spending approximately five hours per month (approximately one hour per week) with their mentees. The meetings generally take place at school during or immediately after the school day, for safety and liability reasons. These meetings may take place during an allotted time (e.g., all pairs meet on Wednesday afternoons) or it may vary by match, as long as the meeting complies with location and time requirements. However, one program at Du Bois HS *requires* that meetings take place in a public space outside of school, emphasizing the importance of a neutral location. Berkshire JSJS's program will take place entirely off campus, once the program launches and students return to their home communities.

In addition to setting these parameters, program staff members developed systems to ensure that the relationship is productive, safe, and appropriate. Adult mentors are required to keep a regular log of their interactions with their mentees. At University City HS, mentoring staff members then enter this data into a master database of all mentor and mentee interactions. In addition, staff may call mentors and mentees on a regular basis to ensure that the program is meeting their expectations and that they are getting the support they need, and to see if any program elements need improvement.

Adult mentors, especially teacher or staff mentors, feel that the program will strongly benefit some students, especially those in need of a medium level of support. These mentors felt that many students are in a position to succeed, but need slightly more support than they get in a classroom setting and less intensive support than a guidance counselor would offer. One Lincoln HS teacher mentor articulated his reason for participating:

*I really, really like this school a lot and I really wanted to involve myself and give as much of myself as I could to the students here. We have some great students... You can get a student in the classroom, but a lot of times they need something in addition to the classroom setting. So, maybe they need just a little guidance or a little help in their thinking or sorting through some issues that they are going through.*

In addition, teacher mentors feel that developing relationships with students outside of the classroom has improved their understanding of students' backgrounds and family life, and how those factors influence students' behavior in the classroom. This, in turn, helps teachers support

all their students, both academically and socially. A University City HS teacher spoke to this benefit:

*I definitely have gotten closer with one student in particular who I have in my second period class. I thought he was a good student; he works hard, he plays football here. And now that I do have the mentor-mentee relationship with him, I've learned a lot more about his family life and how he really needs a mother figure and a father figure.... It's been an insight to me to understand why he acts certain ways. He's a great kid and I think without the mentor program he would definitely be taking the wrong path.*

Although mentees had mixed feelings about being paired with adult mentors, many were positive about the support they hoped to receive from adults in particular. Mentees felt that adults had more valuable perspectives and would be better able to help them think through their challenges than peer mentors. Mentees also felt that having a staff or teacher mentor would provide them with an informal advocate in the school.

However, some mentees were wary of having a teacher mentor because they did not feel comfortable interacting with teachers and/or felt they could not trust them. In other cases, students who have misbehaved in class or have had conflicts with teachers felt that they could not get along with teachers and were not sure that having them as mentors would be successful.

### **Peer Mentoring**

For programs that include peer mentoring, the relationships take on a triadic or tiered model, in which the adult mentor functions as a mentor for both the peer mentor and the mentee. The three participants meet together as well as individually, though the frequency and structure of these specific meetings varies by program. Program staff members hope that after several meetings, peer mentors will be able to meet with mentees one-on-one. Peer mentors can then act as more immediate contacts for the mentees, especially if the adult mentor is from the community and is unable to be on campus frequently.

A peer mentor's role is to provide a positive role model within a school setting. Program staff members hope that peer mentors will provide mentees with guidance on how to adjust to high school, position themselves to succeed academically, and navigate social challenges. In addition, they hope that being a peer mentor will provide students with leadership and life skills that will help them succeed in the future.

Some mentees were more excited about having a peer mentor than an adult mentor, because they felt they would be better able to connect with someone close in age. Mentees hoped that once their mentoring relationships strengthened, they could consider their peer mentors friends at

school on whom they could rely for help and guidance. In describing hopes for the peer mentoring component, one mentee said,

*If you get to know your mentor and start to trust them, I think you can go to them as a best friend sometimes.*

Peer mentors felt that their most important role was to prevent their mentees from making the same mistakes that they themselves made in ninth grade. Even with only a few years' distance from ninth grade, peer mentors felt that getting off on the right foot in ninth grade was key to being successful later in high school. As one FitzSimons HS peer mentor said,

*In my ninth grade year, I didn't take school so serious. My GPA is not as high as I would want it to be, now I'm struggling to bring it up to get accepted in to some colleges I'm applying to. I just want to tell the upcoming students to take your high school years serious so they won't be struggling like I am.*

In addition to providing support to mentees, one goal of the peer mentoring programs is to equip peer mentors with leadership, conflict resolution, and communication skills that will benefit them in their lives and careers. For example, although West Philadelphia HS had not launched its adult mentoring component at the time of the last site visit,<sup>2</sup> the mentoring staff team developed a peer mentoring program as a class during the school day. The mentoring coordinator and integrated services coordinator facilitate the class, with occasional support from the school's social worker. This model is unique because, rather than providing a one-time training to peer mentors, it provides an intensive curriculum during which peer mentors have an opportunity to develop their own skills, bond with each other, and position themselves to make a difference in their mentees' lives.

### **Group Mentoring Activities**

Mentoring programs have also implemented group mentoring, which encompasses a wide variety of activities and fills several functions for the program. These activities can range from afterschool get-togethers with food and icebreakers to off-site enrichment activities such as sports events and plays. A common event was a "mixer," in which the program invited potential and current mentors and mentees to have refreshments and participate in games. One activity was a "speed networking" activity, in which participants stood in concentric circles, talked to the person across from them for a short period of time, and then rotated to the next person.

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<sup>2</sup> Because West Philadelphia had not matched any mentees with adult mentors and had not employed a triad peer mentoring model, mentees paired with solely peer mentors were not included in the total number of mentees.

To date, programs have used these group events as a way to see how certain mentees and mentors interact prior to making matches. In other cases, these events are purely supplemental to the one-on-one meetings and create a way for mentees to stay involved with afterschool and other enrichment activities, bond with each other, and make connections with others in the school. At the same time, group activities can function as exciting incentives for student participation.

Germantown HS has integrated group mentoring into its Saturday School for ninth and eleventh graders. This program has been especially effective at integrating mentoring into pre-existing school structures and further strengthening relationships between mentors and mentees (see text box below).

### **Germantown HS's Saturday School Mentoring**

Germantown HS developed a creative practice to engage mentors and mentees in a less formal setting. Ninth and eleventh graders are required to attend Saturday School, in which they receive academic instruction and test preparation in the morning, and enrichment and mentoring activities in the afternoon. Because this program includes all target groups (ninth grade mentees, eleventh grade peer mentors, and teacher mentors), Saturday School provides an opportunity for all participants to meet and build relationships outside of a normal school setting. While this program remains supplemental to the core mentoring program for now, mentoring staff hoped to formalize this mentoring component and invite community mentors to participate as well during the upcoming school year.

Two schools, West Philadelphia HS and Berkshire JSHS, have implemented service learning as a supplemental component of the mentoring programs. The goal is to engage mentees and mentors together in a community service activity, so that the program participants can spend more time together while also giving back to the community. West Philadelphia HS mentoring staff members partner with City Year to organize community service events. Twice a semester, one staff member or teacher and four students participate together in a service activity. This builds relationships between students and teachers and gives students an opportunity to fulfill their community service requirement for graduation.

Berkshire JSHS has implemented two types of community service activities for students who have good behavior and academics. One community service setting is a nursing home for the elderly and the other involves grounds work at a community park and museum. Students accompany community service staff members to these sites and spend a few hours per week engaged in community service work. Moving forward, in light of the delayed implementation of community mentoring and the success of the community service activities, Berkshire JSHS mentoring staff members hope to connect students with community service opportunities when they return to their home communities.

## Mentoring Challenges and Lessons Learned

The mentoring programs have faced a series of challenges, some of which have been resolved and others of which continue to be addressed. However, there have also been successes and lessons learned which will help improve the mentoring programs going forward.

### ***Challenges with Recruitment***

Programs have faced varying degrees of difficulty in recruiting adult and peer mentors and mentees. Although some groups are easier to recruit and have more inherent interest in the program, program staff members have had to develop and refine their outreach strategies in order to reach their target groups and numbers. Below are some specific recruitment challenges that have surfaced.

- **Recruiting community mentors has been extremely difficult.** Although programs aimed to have at least half of their adult mentors come from the community, they have not been able to reach this goal. Recruitment of community mentors has been an extremely slow process due to eligibility issues, lack of interest, scheduling conflicts, and challenges with outreach.
  - **It is not easy to get through the screening process.** The rigorous screening process for community mentors has caused delays in getting potential mentors started in the program. In addition, strict eligibility requirements exclude many interested people. One common issue is that community mentors cannot have criminal records; however, people who are interested in mentoring students are frequently those who were involved with the justice system and have since turned their lives around and want to give back to the community.
  - **Some potential mentors would rather mentor younger students.** Some potential mentors are daunted by the prospect of working with teenagers, believing them more difficult to connect with than younger students.
  - **The school schedule makes it difficult for mentors to attend activities.** Because school-based mentoring takes place during the school day, community members with regular jobs are less likely to participate. Even programs occurring after school are often too early for community mentors. Some schools have developed other methods to engage community mentors outside of regular working hours, such as Saturday programming.
  - **Conducting outreach outside of the school is more resource-intensive.** Community mentors are by nature more difficult to reach than individuals already located within the school setting. Conducting outreach in the community therefore requires extra time and

resources. Program staff members are working on refining existing strategies to make them more effective.

- **It has been difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of male mentors.** Although the evaluation does not have data on the specific gender break-down of mentors and mentees, respondents at several schools said that it was difficult to find enough male mentors. Although this is a particularly acute challenge at FitzSimons HS, which is an all-boys school, several of the schools reported the same issue, although at least one school reported having a more difficult time recruiting female mentees, which leads to the same gender imbalance. So far, these situations have meant either that matching is delayed or that each existing male mentor is matched with more than one mentee.
- **Some potential mentees are reluctant to participate because they think there is a stigma attached to having a mentor.** Although some programs reported pride and excitement about the program among mentees, program staff members in some schools reported that students feel that having a mentor carries a social stigma. Students associate having a mentor with having a social worker or case manager, and therefore needing extra help from adults within the school. Staff members at these programs hope that once the program is up and running, students will understand more about what mentoring truly is, making it easier to recruit mentees.

### ***Challenges with Logistics***

Programs faced a variety of logistical and compliance challenges that delayed their implementation plans. Although these were frustrating, mentoring staff members have overcome them and taken them into consideration in planning for the upcoming school year.

- **Starting the program in the middle of the school year made it difficult to implement effectively.** Because, in most cases, the mentoring CBOs did not begin working in the schools until winter 2010, they only had a short planning period before beginning implementation. Programs that aimed to make matches before the end of the school year had to scramble at times in order to meet this short deadline. At some schools, the burden fell on the faculty liaison to begin the startup process before the CBO came on-board. In addition, starting in the middle of the school year made it more difficult to integrate the program into the school, as most other programs and organizations were already in full swing by midyear.
- **Scheduling a program around participants' busy schedules, within the confines of a school setting, has been a challenge.** Because mentoring programs take place during the school day or after school, many participants have conflicting commitments. Teacher mentors may also run other school programs, such as coaching a sports team. For programs that operate peer mentoring, peer mentors—who are generally more engaged in school than the average student—often have other commitments as well. Programs that meet during the school day have the added difficulty of trying to schedule around the students' academic schedules; in some cases, this has been detrimental to participation levels in the program. Safety concerns are also an issue; program staff members are concerned

about sending students home in the dark and thus try to schedule programming earlier in the day.

### **Lessons Learned**

Through the experience of implementing mentoring programs, often under challenging circumstances, school and mentoring program staff members have learned a number of lessons that they hope to apply during the 2010–2011 school year.

- **Having a clear set of guidelines from the outset can help ensure a smooth implementation.** Several program staff members reported that they had to restructure their mentoring program somewhat late in the year due to confusion around grant requirements. Moving forward, maintaining clear expectations and guidelines for the program will create less confusion during the implementation phase and make it easier for the program to gain buy-in and support.
- **Faculty liaisons or sponsors are critical to gaining support for the program within the school.** As described in the challenges section, CBO partners in schools that did not have faculty liaisons had a more difficult time gaining acceptance within the school. A faculty liaison not only helped secure resources such as space for the program, but also advocated for the program with teachers, administrators, and students, which greatly increased participation. A partner at Overbrook HS said:

*I think having a staff liaison [is a best practice]. Having that person on board to help you navigate the culture of the school helps you with some roadblocks. The information is so valuable and saves so much time and frustration.*

- **Structuring a program around participants' schedules can increase involvement in the program.** Program staff found that it was incredibly difficult to recruit community mentors because they could not come to the program events scheduled during or immediately following the school day. One effective strategy is providing programming outside of the normal school day. Germantown HS operates its mentoring program during Saturday School, which ninth and eleventh graders are required to attend. This structure provides a time when most mentors are available to meet with mentees and is also an informal setting for developing mentoring relationships. Moving forward, Germantown HS's provider, the Boys and Girls Club, plans to open the mentoring program to community mentors on Saturdays as well.
- **Coordination among staff members and CBOs in the schools can increase participation in the program.** Two schools contracted with mentoring providers that also operated other programs within the school. For example, at West Philadelphia HS, the Netter Center operates both the SSC and the mentoring program. At Bartram HS, Education Works operates both mentoring and ISS. The organizational ties between programs improve their coordination and allow them to leverage each other's resources. At West Philadelphia HS, the SSC coordinator acts as a liaison between the mentoring staff and the school administration when students need to transfer into the peer mentoring class. In

addition, strong ties between a CBO's programs increase mentor recruitment, as other CBO staff may volunteer as mentors or have additional connections to school-based staff that facilitate recruitment.

Overall, program participants are optimistic about the program and, as of the third site visit, were looking forward to its full implementation in the 2010–2011 school year. Mentoring staff reported that group activities had been successful and frequently ran long because mentors and mentees were so engaged. Program staff members are working on additional strategies for the upcoming school year to promote interaction and relationship-building between participants.

## **School Climate Strategies**

One of the MEES grant's primary goals is to improve school climate, with the specific aim of reducing the number of violent incidents in the schools, especially those that count toward the "Persistently Dangerous School" status. To work toward realizing this goal, MEES schools have adopted a variety of approaches designed to increase attendance, increase students' and teachers' sense of safety, create an environment conducive to learning, and make overall institutional improvements in order to create a sense of ownership and school pride.

Climate has already begun to improve at five MEES schools, as evidenced by a decline in suspensions and serious incidents, as well as removal from the "Persistently Dangerous Schools" list. In some cases, other MEES-funded strategies may be influencing this positive change in school climate. For example, class size reduction—an educational strategy—also helps improve the climate by making it easier for teachers to control classes and for students to learn. Similarly, matching students with mentors and providing them with academic and social support may reduce the poor behavior that would otherwise affect climate negatively.

## **Program Administration**

The climate interventions that schools have implemented are quite varied, so it follows that their budgets and staffing structures are varied as well. For example, some schools hired dedicated climate staff as a primary strategy, while others merely funded partial time from existing staff members to operate climate programs. In addition, because schools began implementing climate interventions relatively late compared to other MEES strategies, at least five schools are still planning to hire staff, contract with CBOs, and launch climate programs.

The amount of the overall MEES budget that schools spent on climate interventions was diverse and corresponded to the intervention's anticipated intensity. In eight schools, between 2.8

percent and 12.9 percent of the overall budget went towards climate interventions.<sup>3</sup> Schools that hired climate staff and contracted with CBO partners to provide climate programs had the largest budgets. Other line items related to school climate included professional development for staff, staff hours devoted to the project, incentives for students, and event expenses (e.g., food and space).

In SY 2009-2010, schools generally did not launch climate intervention programs that require CBO partners. One exception is Overbrook HS, which has contracted with the Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia and Philadelphia Project P.R.I.D.E. to provide conflict resolution and counseling groups a few times a week for students affected by violence and for at-risk students. In addition, Bartram HS has launched an in-school suspension program with Education Works, which also operates its mentoring program. Although the in-school suspension program was not MEES-funded this year, school staff reported that it would be in the 2010–2011 school year.

Moving forward, at least three schools had plans to identify and establish a contract with a CBO to provide climate improvement programs in the school. FitzSimons HS had already identified a CBO partner to provide its Rites of Passage program, but had not yet implemented the program at the time of the third site visit. Other schools planned to partner with the Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia to increase their services or develop new programs in the schools.

As will be described in further detail below, four schools used MEES funds to hire staff dedicated to improving climate. In addition, two schools used MEES funds to hire teachers dedicated to in-school suspension programs. Schools with peer mediation and other programs requiring time from staff members not dedicated to climate interventions used the MEES grant to fund the hours that these staff members devoted to these programs.

## Technical Assistance

American Institute of Research (AIR) provided the majority of the training and technical assistance on climate change for all nine schools. Activities included train-the-trainer sessions and ongoing assistance to schools. A large portion of this work occurred toward the end of the 2009–2010 school year. AIR provided the following specific activities:

- **CHAMPS training.** In May 2010, all seven Philadelphia schools and Du Bois HS attended a training hosted by Safe and Civil Schools for their CHAMPS curriculum. CHAMPS is a positive behavioral intervention program that helps teachers develop skills in classroom management. Specific topics included

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<sup>3</sup> Note that Berkshire JSBS did not provide a breakdown of the budget by strategy.

setting expectations in the classroom, establishing consequences, managing behavior, and creating a strong classroom structure. The training was presented as a “train-the-trainer” training, so that staff who attended the event could then train their colleagues at the schools. Forty-two participants from these eight schools attended the training, which took place in Philadelphia.

- **Peers Making Peace training.** In April and May 2010, AIR funded a training on the Peers Making Peace program, another train-the-trainer program in which school staff members learn how to implement peer mediation programs in their schools. Forty participants from the Philadelphia schools attended this training.
- **Ongoing assistance to schools.** To varying degrees, AIR provided ongoing assistance as needed to the nine schools. Du Bois HS in particular developed a close relationship with its technical assistance consultant. This consultant happened to be located near the school and was able to attend the MEES team’s weekly meetings.

## School Climate Activities

School climate interventions, by definition, target the entire school. However, individual climate strategies can focus their efforts on (that is, target) smaller groups of students whose behavior can negatively affect school climate. Together, both kinds of strategies can contribute to an overall improved environment throughout the school.

Strategies that target specific groups address behaviors that students in these smaller groups display. These students show signs of being “at-risk” and dropping out, in that they have poor attendance, behavior, and academic performance. Interventions may target a specific dimension of this behavior; for example, doing home visits can help students with poor attendance.

In addition to improving the problematic behaviors of certain students, some climate strategies also work from a more asset-based approach in that they strengthen the leadership skills of students already poised to be leaders. Peer mediation programs, for example, identify students with strong leadership skills and provide them with the training to prevent and resolve conflicts among other students and teachers. These students may also lead the way in terms of buying into certain school-wide programs and providing a positive example for the rest of the student body. Similarly, school-wide incentive programs recognize and reinforce positive behavior, creating models for the student body based on the school’s successful students. Exhibit V-6 gives an overview of the school climate activities each school has implemented or plans to implement.

**Exhibit V-6:  
School Climate Interventions Implemented at Each School**

	<u>School-Wide Interventions</u>			<u>Target-Group Interventions</u>		
	Dedicated Staff	Incentive Program	Professional Development for Staff	Peer Mediation	In-School Suspension	Rites of Passage
Bartram HS	✓				*	✓
Berkshire HS	✓	✓				
Du Bois HS	✓	✓	✓			
FitzSimons HS		✓	✓	✓		*
Germantown HS				✓	✓	
Lincoln HS	✓			*		
Overbrook HS	✓					
University City HS				*	✓	
West Philadelphia HS				*		
✓ - implemented    * - planned to be implemented or funded by the MEES grant as of fall 2010						

This exhibit shows that the school climate interventions can be grouped into two broad categories. The first three types of interventions—dedicated staff, incentive programs, and professional development for staff—fall under the category of school-wide interventions. The last three interventions—peer mediation, in-school suspension, and Rites of Passage—fall under the category of target group interventions. To date, hiring climate staff has been the most frequently implemented strategy, with five schools having hired dedicated staff. Peer mediation is the next most common intervention, especially in the SDP schools, but has not yet been fully launched. Following is a further discussion of each of the climate interventions exhibited above.

***School-wide Interventions***

School-wide interventions aim to improve climate by increasing student buy-in, creating a sense of school pride, and increasing students’ overall sense of safety. These interventions include hiring staff members dedicated specifically to climate improvement at the school, instituting programs that incentivize desired behaviors, and providing professional development for staff.

**Dedicated Staffing**

Four schools used MEES funds to hire at least one staff person dedicated to improving climate throughout the school. The goals for having dedicated climate staff in the schools are far-reaching; school administrators hope that having staff who can deal with attendance, discipline,

and general environment issues will improve performance in all areas of the school. More specific goals include the following:

- a calmer school environment, with fewer disruptive incidents and reduced violence;
- increased attendance;
- improved educational outcomes; and
- prevention of and improved response to violent and disruptive incidents.

For those schools that hired climate staff with MEES funds, these staff members serve as the core element of the schools' climate strategy. These staff members are responsible for clearing the halls, monitoring students coming into the building, and generally "putting out fires" throughout the school day. More targeted work involves relationship-building with individual students, as well as activities similar to case management. These case management activities may range in intensity from providing comprehensive mediation and crisis intervention support to helping students with chronic absences improve their attendance. Core responsibilities include the following:

- monitor the hallways and ensure students are in class during class periods;
- be the "front line" for disciplinary issues, before referral to the administration;
- build relationships and act as a liaison between students and administrators;
- mediate between students or between students and teachers;
- moderate reinstatement meetings when students return from suspension;
- monitor students entering the school to ensure proper dress code and to deal with infractions when students bring in prohibited items;
- strategize about how to improve school climate;
- provide professional development and assistance to teachers on classroom and climate management; and
- coordinate with other school staff, community members, and parents to prevent and address climate issues.

The most intensive model is Berkshire JSHS' Behavior Management Specialist (BMS) position (see text box). MEES funds allowed Berkshire JSHS to hire three new BMSs, increasing their total number to five. The BMS position combines school climate and case management responsibilities. While BMSs have cohorts of students whom they oversee and work with individually as a case manager does, their responsibilities also include strategizing about how to improve overall climate and reduce violence. The BMS team has identified unsuccessful practices, such as hallway monitoring and having in-school suspension rooms, and implemented a new model that has been successful in reducing violent incidents in the school. In this model,

each BMS moves his or her cohort around the school in between classes in a structured manner and prevents interactions that could lead to disruption or violence. In the classroom, the BMSs have become an integral part of improving the classroom environment and reducing violence.

The other MEES schools developed less intensive roles for their climate staff members, though these staff members are also integral in maintaining order and improving climate. Du Bois HS developed a Student Support Team, made up of several MEES-funded staff members, which develops plans to improve safety and environment in the school. The other MEES-funded climate staff members were climate managers at Bartram HS and Lincoln HS, four support staff from Kids First at Lincoln HS, and a manager of non-instructional school services at Overbrook HS. In addition to having climate-focused responsibilities, some climate staff members operate other programs and enrichment activities. For example, at Bartram HS, the climate manager co-facilitates Rites of Passage, operates a college information group for seniors, acts as advisor for a music production group, and coaches the junior varsity basketball team. Participating in other programs allows the climate manager to build key relationships and integrate into the school community. Finally, some climate staff took on case management roles; however, their responsibilities focused less on individual students and more on maintaining order in the school.

### **Berkshire JSHS' Behavior Management Specialists in the Classroom**

A BMS's central responsibility is to accompany his or her cohort of students through their day, including being present in the classroom. Within the classroom, there is a three-adult structure that includes the teacher, the BMS, and a teaching assistant, creating a 1:4 staff-to-student ratio in the 12-student classes. Having non-instructional mediation staff in the classroom has allowed teachers to focus their efforts on teaching, rather than on handling conflicts and disciplining students. In addition, having more staff in the classroom means that staff members, especially the BMSs, are able to intervene before a conflict escalates, which is critical to keeping violent incidents to a minimum.

Although adapting to this structure initially caused friction, the administration, teachers, and climate staff have worked together to delineate roles among the classroom staff. The teacher is responsible for delivering instruction and planning lessons, while the teaching assistant works one-on-one with students, provides documentation and grading assistance, motivates students, monitors attendance and reinforces instructional content. In the classroom, the BMS ensures the safety of all present, provides pre-crisis intervention and therapeutic crisis intervention counseling, and removes students from the situation if a conflict arises. For the teams that have embraced this structure and worked together to present a united front to the students, this approach has been very successful in improving instruction, reducing violence, and creating an environment more conducive to learning.

To date, schools have reported that these additional staff members have made a difference by keeping the hallways clear during class time and ensuring that students were in class. Even just making their presence felt has led to major changes in the schools, as students feel that climate staff members are watching them and therefore improve their behavior accordingly.

Moving forward, climate staff members plan to continue building relationships within the school in order to increase support for their work and implement more strategic interventions. These interventions include holding assemblies to reinforce school policies, holding violence prevention workshops, and providing technical assistance to teachers on improving classroom environment and attendance.

### **Incentive Programs**

Three MEES schools (Berkshire JSHS, Du Bois HS, and FitzSimons HS) have implemented school-wide incentive programs. The goal of these programs is to reinforce and promote good behavior, attendance, and academic achievement among students. If students and teachers jointly participate in setting goals and recognizing improvement, then these programs can also help to create school pride and increase students' buy-in. Programs may include school-wide assemblies, fun events as rewards, and general encouragement from the school community to improve behavior and attendance.

Incentive programs combine rewards and recognition for positive and improved behavior among students. They involve a points system, in which teachers and staff members recognize students' positive and negative behaviors, and award or dock points accordingly. Students who meet certain benchmarks receive an award of some kind, such as recognition at an assembly, pizza parties, food, or other items. For example, at Berkshire JSHS, students can save up points to purchase items that range from laundry detergent to iPods, while at FitzSimons HS, students are recognized in front of their peers during weekly assemblies. Recognition, especially in front of others, is a particularly important component, as students may not receive positive reinforcement for their work or behavior elsewhere in their lives. It also encourages other students to live up to their examples. One FitzSimons HS student said:

*I believe that giving out awards motivate students. You let them know you are feeling good about us, and we feeling good about our self. Because some parents don't show that type of affection or love.*

In addition to recognizing students who have displayed good or improved behavior, incentive programs can also provide leadership opportunities for students who are up to the task. At Berkshire JSHS, three students were selected by staff to develop and operate the incentive program. These three students tally points, take orders from other students on how they want their points spent, and maintain an inventory of the supplies or rewards. These students take their work extremely seriously. Not only have they gained experience in operating a store or warehouse business, but they have also gained leadership and ownership skills that set them apart from the rest of the student body.

### **Professional Development for Teachers and Staff**

At the time of the third site visit, at least three schools (Du Bois HS, FitzSimons HS, and West Philadelphia HS) had provided or planned to provide professional development to teachers and staff on how to improve climate, both in the classrooms and school-wide. For instance, Du Bois HS provided a 40-hour session on classroom management for teachers, called Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP). The program focused on classroom management and maintaining an environment conducive to learning. In addition to specific trainings, climate staff members provide other assistance to teachers, such as general assistance on classroom management or more targeted support for teachers whose classes students are more likely to cut. Finally, climate staff may provide assistance to others with roles in maintaining a positive climate. For example, the climate manager at Lincoln HS provides professional development to school police officers.

### ***Target-Group Interventions***

All MEES schools also implemented strategies that targeted specific students who have behavioral or attendance problems. Some programs, like peer mediation, take an asset-based approach by providing leadership opportunities for students within the school that are prepared to take on these roles.

### **Peer Mediation**

Peer mediation programs are a central component of climate strategies at several SDP schools. Although these programs are currently in varying states of implementation, five MEES schools had at least begun planning for a peer mediation program at the time of the third site visit. Even for those that had identified and trained peer mediators, all schools were waiting until fall 2010 to fully launch the program. School staff and students attended the Peers Making Peace train-the-trainer session, funded by AIR, in spring 2010. Staff members who attended this training are now certified to provide training to students as peer mediators.

In peer mediation programs, students trained as mediators help other students and teachers resolve their conflicts through individual mediation sessions. The programs are designed to improve school climate not only by providing a means for resolving conflicts, but also by giving students a voice, a role, and a sense of ownership over how conflict is handled in the school. In order to get this process started, programs selected the highest-performing and most engaged students to train as peer mediators so that other students would buy in to and respect the program. Program staff identified these students through teacher referrals and attempted to select a group of students that was representative of the demographics of the student body. Moving forward, programs may recruit students who are not as engaged or successful academically, but who would benefit from the increased connection to school as peer mediators.

Conflicts are referred to peer mediation in a variety of ways, depending on the school and program, though the most frequent referral methods are the following: (1) staff refers a conflict to peer mediation, (2) students request peer mediation, or (3) students are referred according to another specific process (e.g., students returning from suspension are required to have a mediation). A mediation consists of two peer mentors, the two individuals in conflict, and another adult in the room for security. The angrier party then tells his or her side of the story to one peer mediator, who listens and repeats what that person has said as neutrally as possible. The second party then does the same with the other peer mediator. The parties repeat this process until they have discussed all aspects of the conflict and have come to a resolution. The parties then sign an agreement that they will abide by in the future to prevent more conflicts. The faculty or staff members involved in the program may then follow up in the future to ensure the parties are following the agreement. If they are not, the staff members refer the students for further disciplinary action.

Staff and students were excited about the possibilities that peer mediation offered in terms of solving problems between students and reducing recurring conflict in the school. Students involved in the peer mediation programs articulated that, as teenagers, they are uniquely suited to solve conflicts among their peers, whereas having staff conduct mediations maintains a punitive or disciplinary element. Students may also be in a better position to understand how students feel towards the school and the type of support they need to be successful. One Germantown HS peer mediator said:

*It's teen problems, so it makes sense that it would be a teen that helps to solve it. We're here to listen to you, and that's what people need, because kids here feel neglected, so it will help if they have someone to talk to who will listen to them.*

### **In-School Suspension**

Three MEES schools have implemented an in-school suspension program (ISS) that is either currently grant-funded or will be grant-funded in the upcoming school year. In-school suspension programs aim to give students an intermediate step before out-of-school suspension becomes necessary. Out-of-school suspension not only stays on students' records, it also hurts their academic performance by making them miss class and fall behind. In addition, the prospect of out-of-school suspension may not deter students if they view it as a "free day" or day off from school rather than as a disciplinary measure. In-school suspension provides an alternative by keeping students on campus, preserving their records, and providing them with academic and behavioral support so they do not fall too far behind and are less likely to continue misbehaving.

Bartram HS, Germantown HS, and University City HS implemented in-school suspension programs during the 2009–2010 school year, with University HS implementing ISS as early as

October 2009. Schools have used different names to refer to the program to remove the stigma of “suspension.” Germantown HS’s program is called “Alternative Learning Center,” while University City HS has named its ISS the “In-School Intervention Program.” Germantown HS and University City HS have used MEES grant funding to hire teachers to provide instruction and assistance in the suspension room. Bartram HS plans to put MEES funding towards the contract with Education Works, the CBO that operates its in-school suspension program.

ISS programs are designed for students with Level One infractions, minor level misbehavior, or attendance infractions (e.g., cutting class, dress code violations, having a cell phone in class, disrupting class, etc.). In some cases, ISS serves students with more serious offenses. In order to ensure that the program does not become a default “dumping ground” for difficult students, schools have implemented a process by which teachers refer students to a dean, climate manager, or other administrator. This person then determines, independently or with a team of staff members, whether the student should go to ISS. Often a student will have intermediate disciplinary action prior to ISS, such as detention or a parent conference. Students spend between one and five days in ISS; on average there are 10 students in the room at any given time.

Because the goal of ISS is to both prevent students from falling behind academically and to improve their behavior, the services in ISS are a mix of academic and behavioral interventions. At Bartram HS, students receive preparation for the PSSA in the morning and character building, conflict resolution, and anger management activities in the afternoon. Instead of test preparation, students may also receive schoolwork from their teachers or academy deans, though sending the work to ISS can be a challenge to coordinate. While in ISS, students are not permitted to leave the room; they even receive their lunches in the room and are completely isolated from the rest of the school.

To date, schools reported that few students return to ISS after going there once, so it appears to be a successful deterrent. Staff members speculate that this is because students severely dislike being separated from their peers during the school day and not having the freedom of out-of-school suspension. One Germantown HS student said:

*When you are suspended [and at home], you watch TV, you call your friends. When you are in in-school suspension, you really do your work. [ISS] is better than having the students who break the rules go out and play.*

In addition, staff at Germantown HS reported that most students assigned to ISS are ninth graders, as they are more likely to have poor behavior than older students in the school.

ISS programs are still in the development stage, as schools work out how to use the program most effectively as both a disciplinary and rehabilitative measure. For example, staff at University City HS have yet to decide how many times a student can go to ISS before receiving out-of-school suspension because, to date, no students have gone more than twice. School staff members continue to develop concrete processes for determining who goes to in-school suspension, what type of work they do there, and what the atmosphere of the room should be. For example, at least one program has difficulty creating an environment conducive to learning and instruction, as students often sleep or talk while in the room and, at times, challenge staff with disruptive behavior. In addition, ISS staff members are working with teachers to make sure they understand why students go to ISS and what the program is designed to accomplish so that teachers do not send students to ISS for inappropriate reasons (e.g., to make up a test). School staff members continue to work on gaining teacher, staff, and student buy-in to the goals of in-school suspension, which is critical to making it successful as a disciplinary measure, academic strategy, and behavioral intervention simultaneously.

### **Rites of Passage**

Two MEES schools (Bartram HS and FitzSimons HS) had either implemented or planned to implement a Rites of Passage program at the time of the third site visit. This program targets at-risk male ninth graders and provides a space for them to discuss challenges related to school, relationships with their families and friends, their communities, and other topics they may not feel comfortable talking about with others.

At Bartram HS, the MEES-funded climate manager co-facilitated this program with a school counselor. Students are engaged during this program and share their feelings with each other and with facilitators about their school experiences, challenges, and dreams (see text box). So far, this program has been successful in engaging the most at-risk students in the ninth grade. Although FitzSimons HS plans to implement a Rites of Passage program and had identified a CBO to run it, the program was not up and running by the time of the third site visit.

### Bartram HS's Rites of Passage Program

The MEES-funded climate manager and counselor at Bartram HS co-facilitate a Rites of Passage program for at-risk ninth grade males. The program has been successful in engaging at-risk students and giving them adult role models they can trust. The Rites of Passage staff gathers information from students' teachers, who let them know whether or not the students are on track academically. Staff engages students in dialogue about how they can improve their grades and behavior, what their biggest obstacles are, what changes they could make during the rest of the school year, and what lessons they have learned for the next school year. In SPR's observation of the program, students shared their reflections on their grades and behavior with the group, demonstrating strong trust in each other.

The Rites of Passage staff is a major asset to the program. Engaging at-risk students requires that the students respect and trust the staff, and take their discussions to heart. The staff members, in turn, use this influence with the students to show them how bright their futures can be despite challenges they may be facing in high school. One staff member said:

*[We] can say that we went through the same challenges, we come from the same place you come from, but this is what we've done with our lives. We've gone to school, we've gone to college. We've furthered our education and not stopped just because of our circumstances or our environment. That's a pretty powerful tool because it gets them thinking...All we want to do is turn that light bulb on.*

### School Climate Challenges and Lessons Learned

School staff members faced a range of challenges in implementing the climate strategies. Key challenges include gaining support for the programs, reacting to external factors, and overcoming logistical challenges.

- **Climate staff and programs operate in an environment where rules are enforced inconsistently.** Overall, a key element to improving climate in a school is that staff must enforce rules consistently across the board. This is often difficult for teachers, who then have to deal with students' reactions to discipline, which can be disruptive. One teacher articulated this perspective:

*Technically cell phones and iPods are not allowed, but I don't have the wherewithal to enforce this, because by asking a kid to give up his iPod, you lose 5 minutes of instructional time, and they hate you the rest of the class. I ask kids to put them away and they usually do. I don't go toe and toe with [students about] that...*

While this approach makes it more difficult for others to enforce rules, it is also important for teachers to receive support in making rules and regulations consistent (see Lessons Learned).

- **Outside factors that have a negative effect on climate can be difficult for schools to address.** At least one school noted that closures of nearby schools created an influx of students to the school, many of whom have serious behavioral

issues. In addition, students transferring to a new school may feel the need to “make a name for themselves” and, as a result act out. Similarly, students transferring in from other neighborhood schools may create or revive gang or neighborhood rivalries, which then lead to more incidents. These students may slow or negate progress that schools have made in improving their environment.

Schools have also learned a number of lessons about implementing effective school climate interventions.

- **Improving climate requires a team approach and coordination between members of the school community.** Climate staff members reported that when teachers and other adults in the building work together, incidents and conflicts diminish. This type of coordination works both ways; for example, climate staff can help teachers understand the types of issues students face and how best to respond to disruptive behavior. Conversely, teachers can help climate staff by implementing procedures to monitor and identify disruptive behavior. For instance, at Lincoln HS, the climate manager has instituted a system in which teachers fill out “alerts” on students who may have violated the dress code or come into class with a prohibited item. Rather than confront the student in class, which disrupts instruction and may upset the student, a teacher can “alert” the climate manager to the issue and that staff person can address it in a more private and productive manner outside of class. This approach allows teachers and staff to enforce rules consistently and present a united front to students around discipline.
- **Investing time and resources in relationship-building with students helps prevent and resolve conflict in the school.** MEES-funded climate staff reported that the strong relationships they had built with students helped address climate issues as they arose. For example, the climate manager at Bartram HS has developed strong relationships with many students and has even had students alert him to conflicts brewing among other students. This allows him to reach out and stop these conflicts before they escalate. In addition, staff with strong relationships throughout the school can tell when students are more likely to be disruptive. One Bartram HS climate staff member said:  
*It all goes back to the relationship-building piece. We know what kind of day a kid is going to have in the morning.*
- **Creating opportunities for student leadership and ownership in climate interventions is a best practice.** Schools implementing incentive and peer mediation programs have found that recognizing students and including them in developing school policy creates stronger buy-in to the programs. This is especially true for those students identified as potential leaders, such as peer mediators. These opportunities may also encourage other students to aspire to these positions, or give all students a sense of ownership in the school by seeing their peers in positions of leadership.

Moving forward, school staff will continue to implement climate strategies, with the hope that as the programs become more integrated into the fabric of the school, climate will continue to improve. As this continues, other key MEES strategies, such as educational and employment strategies, will in turn benefit from the improved environment.

## **Summary of Findings**

Although the MEES schools still had components of their climate and mentoring programs to implement at the time of the third site visits, they had made promising starts in launching these programs. As described above, eight of the nine schools had already recruited mentees, peer mentors, and adult mentors and five schools had made mentor-mentee matches. Seven schools had held group mentoring or enrichment activities, and participants were looking forward to full implementation during the fall of 2010. Although barriers to recruitment and other logistical challenges had delayed implementation for all the schools, school and partner staff members continue to refine their programs to overcome these barriers.

Overall, climate programs have been on a slower implementation schedule than other MEES strategies. As a result, schools still plan to implement programs, contract with partners, and recruit participants for climate programs in the 2010–2011 school year. To date, schools have begun to implement programs that encompass the entire school and target specific groups. These include hiring dedicated climate staff, developing ISS programs, recruiting and training peer mediators, and implementing school-wide incentive programs. As will be discussed in Chapter VII, five schools have started to see improvements in climate and reductions in violent incidents and suspensions. School staff members continue to develop climate programs and gain buy-in from students, teachers and administrators, as wide support for climate interventions is crucial to making them successful.



## **VI. EMPLOYMENT AND CASE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

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All the MEES schools are implementing employment and case management strategies as part of the grant. Although these are two distinct strategies, they are closely linked in theory and practice. In particular, they share the goals of increasing students' engagement in school and preventing dropouts. Employment interventions attempt to realize these goals by making academic learning relevant—by providing students with hands-on training, career exposure, and career planning they help students recognize that school is a path to success in later life. Case management interventions prevent dropouts and increase students' engagement in school by providing personalized support to students who are vulnerable to dropout or who require wraparound services in order to be successful. Reflecting the close ties between these strategies, the seven SDP schools deliver employment and case management services in an integrated fashion from on-site employment and case management centers called Student Success Centers (SSCs).

In this chapter, we describe the employment and case management interventions implemented in SY 2009–2010. Because the budgets for the case management and employment strategies overlap significantly at seven schools, the chapter begins with a discussion of the budget for both strategies combined. A detailed discussion of employment strategies follows, covering staffing, the level and types of services provided, and the challenges encountered during implementation. The latter part of the chapter is a parallel discussion of the case management strategy. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings related to the two strategies.

### **Budget**

As noted in Chapter III, the budgets for employment and case management strategies overlap at the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) schools due to the integrated service design of the SSCs. Most schools are dedicating roughly one quarter of their grant funds to these two strategies together. Schools have generally contracted with Community-Based-Organizations (CBOs) to provide employment and case management services, and CBO partners have used the vast majority of these funds to hire staff. Schools and CBO partners are also using MEES grant

funds for student wages, supplies, furniture, technology equipment, and facility modifications for SSCs.

There are some variations in spending across schools. Bartram HS and Overbrook HS dedicated a smaller than average percentage of grant funds to employment and case management services (18 percent and 20 percent, respectively); however, this was because these two schools had pre-existing SSCs and therefore did not have to dedicate as much funds to facility modifications, furniture, and technology equipment. Du Bois HS dedicated the largest percentage of its grant funds to employment, college access, and case management services (31 percent) because this school chose to hire a relatively large number of case management staff to provide individualized support and counseling to students.

## Overview of Employment Strategies

Employment interventions seek to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to obtain employment and/or enter post-secondary education, as well as to create opportunities for them to obtain hands-on training and work experience in occupations of interest. In this section, we provide an overview of the staffing and management of employment interventions, and then go into a detailed discussion of the SSC structure, because employment services for seven of the nine schools are provided from the SSCs.

## Staffing and Management

All schools have developed contracts with CBO service providers to provide employment and college access services. Exhibit VI-1 highlights core CBO partners and staffing for each school.

**Exhibit VI-1:  
Grant-funded Contractors and Staffing for Employment Strategies**

School	Contractor	Contractor Staff	School Staff
<b>Bartram HS</b>	Education Works	1 Project Coordinator 1 Post-secondary Specialist 1 Job specialist 1 Project assistant	
<b>Berkshire JSHS</b>	Berkshire Farms	9 Internship coordinators in fields such a horticulture, construction, etc.	1 Workforce Coordinator 1 Vocational Instructor 1 Driver for internships
<b>Du Bois HS</b>	Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED) Futures Works	2 Career Navigators 1 Field Specialist 3 Futures Advocates	

School	Contractor	Contractor Staff	School Staff
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>	Nu Sigma Youth Services, Inc.	1 Project Coordinator 1 Post-secondary Specialist 1 Job specialist 1 Project assistant	
<b>Germantown HS</b>	Communities In Schools	1 Project Coordinator 1 Post-secondary Specialist 1 Job specialist	
<b>Lincoln HS</b>	Philadelphia Academies, Inc.	1 Project Coordinator 1 Post-secondary Specialist 1 Job specialist 1 Project assistant	
<b>Overbrook HS</b>	Communities In Schools	1 Project Coordinator 1 Post-secondary Specialist 1 Job specialist 1 Project assistant	
<b>University City HS</b>	UPENN - Netter Center for Community Partnerships	1 Project Coordinator 1 Post-secondary Specialist 1 Job specialist 1 Project assistant	
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>	UPENN - Netter Center for Community Partnerships	1 Project Coordinator 1 Post-secondary Specialist 1 Job specialist 1 Project assistant	

As shown in the exhibit, Du Bois HS contracted with the City of Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED) to operate the Career Connections program and the FUTURES Works program.<sup>1</sup> The Career Connections program offers internship opportunities to eleventh- and twelfth-grade students and provides two career navigators who are co-located at the school. The career navigators provide job preparation workshops, one-on-one support, and content-driven internships to eleventh and twelfth graders. A field monitor is responsible for recruiting employers and monitoring student progress and employer quality. The MEES grant also supports three FUTURES advocates at Du Bois HS, who provide ninth-grade students with career development and exploration activities, as well as incentives to increase attendance and academic performance.

Berkshire JSBS uses grant funds to support a full-time workforce development coordinator who manages all employment services, a full-time instructor for the Vocational Academy who teaches a class that focuses on exposing students to various occupations, and a full-time driver

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<sup>1</sup> FUTURES Works is a dropout prevention program that provides daily comprehensive services to ninth-grade students. This program is housed in a large classroom at Du Bois HS, and is a collaborative effort between Baltimore City Schools, MOED, and Baltimore Rising.

who helps to transport students to and from internships and externships.<sup>2</sup> To support the internship component, Berkshire JSHS has fee-for-service contracts with nine staff from a CBO partner (Berkshire Farms) who provide classroom and hands-on training to students in key internship areas (e.g., culinary arts, carpentry, horticulture, etc.), as well as supervision when students are at their internship placements.

The SDP contracted with the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) to manage the SSCs. PYN, in turn, subcontracted with individual CBO service providers who are responsible for hiring employment and case management staff and providing services at each of the seven SDP schools. PYN acts as an intermediary between SDP and the CBO partners, providing contract management and oversight, technical assistance, capacity building, assistance with identifying and matching students for internships, and oversight for the SSC Leadership Academy.<sup>3</sup> The CBO sub-contracted partners serve as the managing operators of the SSCs, coordinate with school staff and other partners in the school, hire SSC staff, and deliver core SSC services. The SSC has multiple staff members who provide employment interventions; their roles are defined further below.

- **Project coordinators** manage SSC operations. They supervise staff and student interns, coordinate SSC programs, oversee data collection and management, build partnerships with community organizations, and establish relationships with school leaders, teachers, support staff, students, and parents.
- **Career development specialists** coordinate school-wide employment-related programs for students, integrate work readiness skills training into classrooms (e.g., resume development, interviewing skills, etc.), and connect students to summer and year-round employment and internship opportunities.
- **Post-secondary specialists** work with school staff and university partners to manage college preparation activities, such as goal mapping, college tours, and college entrance assistance.
- **Project assistants** help the SSC team by helping to organize SSC activities and performing data collection and data entry. Project assistant positions, in most cases, are part-time.

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<sup>2</sup> In SY 2010–2011, due to budget cuts at Berkshire JSHS, the vocational instructor position will no longer exist, and the workforce development coordinator will teach all Vocational Academy classes.

<sup>3</sup> The SSC Leadership Academy brings together three to five selected student leaders from each school to participate in a year-round citywide leadership program. These students are responsible for supporting and involving students at their schools in the daily activities of the SSC, participating in peer mediation, and organizing at least two annual service-learning initiatives. PYN oversees this component.

In addition to these staff members, a few schools house additional grant-funded and non-grant-funded staff members within the SSC. All SDP schools have grant-funded social workers who work from the SSC as case managers. Both Germantown HS and West Philadelphia HS house their mentor coordinators within the SSC, while Germantown, Lincoln, Overbrook, and West Philadelphia High Schools house other non-grant funded staff (i.e., University of Pennsylvania college counselor, Gear-up Counselor) at their SSCs.

## **Student Success Centers**

*The SSC has become the hub in the building... It is a center for study activity.*

- School Leader, Overbrook HS

The seven SDP schools are implementing school-based employment and case management centers called Student Success Centers (SSCs). Although the SSCs are integral to both of the strategies discussed in this chapter, they are most important in carrying out the employment strategy and so are discussed in greatest detail here. Three of the schools (Lincoln HS, Germantown HS, and FitzSimons HS) used grant funds to develop entirely new SSCs, while the remaining four schools used the grant to expand already-existing centers.

SSCs are located in a dedicated space within each school and are generally open between 7:30 am and 4:30 pm. Students can visit the centers on their own before school, during lunch periods, and after school. To prevent students from visiting SSCs during class periods without permission, SSCs require students to present a pass from their teacher or a school leader. For instance, at Bartram HS, SSC staff developed green hall passes that they distribute to school staff, who then distribute them to students who need to use the SSC during class time to attend an event or activity (e.g., a college workshop or speaker).

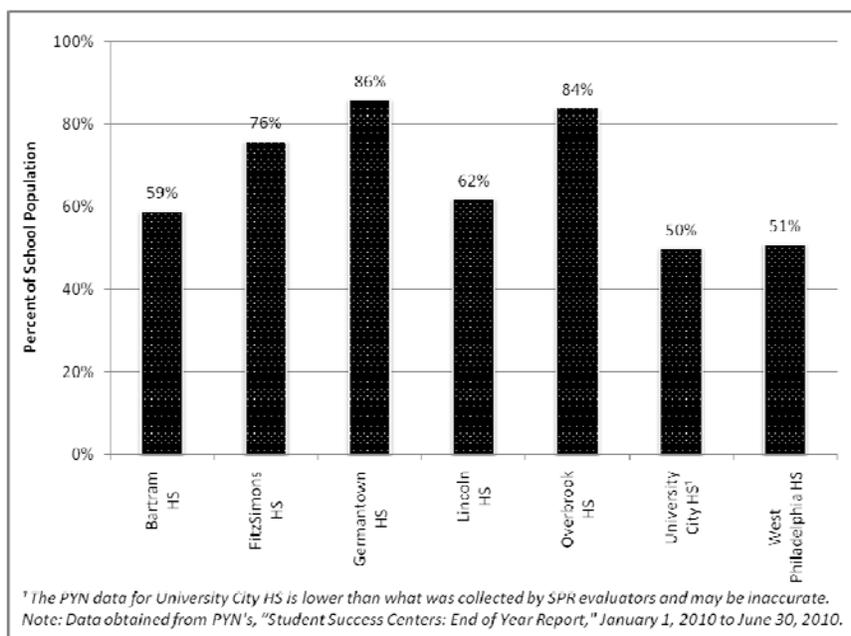
Each SSC is equipped with computer workstations, furniture, whiteboards, and other high-end technology and resources. One school leader described the SSC as a “one-stop shop where students can receive career readiness and life skills training, college preparation support and academic tutoring, counseling, and community referrals.” Key goals and principles of the SSC model include: keeping students on-track for graduation and college; building connections with post-secondary institutions; connecting academics, college, and career success through contextual learning opportunities; and conveying “college knowledge.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Philadelphia Youth Network on behalf of the School District of Philadelphia, “Request for Proposals: Student Success Centers.”

SSC staff members aim to provide general information and support to the entire school, while also working more intensively with a subset of students. As displayed in Exhibit VI-2, each school served at least 50 percent of its school population through the SSC between January 1, 2010 and June 30, 2010. Two schools, Germantown HS and Overbrook HS, served at least 80 percent of their students during this time period. This is a notable accomplishment given that most SSCs only operated for half a year.

**Exhibit VI-2:  
Percent of School Population Receiving SSC Services  
January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010**



Overbrook HS has been successful in reaching a large percentage of their its population in part because its SSC existed prior to the grant. Students at Overbrook HS were already aware of and bought into the SSC model, and school leaders already knew how to effectively draw on SSC services. In addition, the SSC provider, Communities in Schools (CIS), was already co-located and providing services to students prior to the grant, which allowed them to build off existing relationships with school leaders and teachers. The SSC project coordinator stated:

*Overbrook already had an existing SSC so there wasn't a lot for us to do. It already had buy-in from the principal and assistant principal.... The previous SSC paved the way for us working in the school.... [The principal] knows what she wants out of the SSC, and we help with that.*

While Germantown HS was not operating an SSC prior to the grant, it also has been successful in reaching a large percentage of its school population through the SSC. The SSC at

Germantown HS is new but because it is also operated by CIS, staff were able to hit the ground running and leverage learning from other schools such as Overbrook HS. According to SSC staff members at Germantown HS, they also made a special effort to reach out to the whole school. Key SSC staff, including the post-secondary specialist, career development specialist, and social worker, formed relationships with existing staff immediately and also did extensive outreach to students by presenting in all the core English classes.

University City HS and West Philadelphia HS served the lowest percentages of students through their SSCs. The SSCs at these schools are both operated by the Netter Center at the University of Pennsylvania, and this contractor focused less on broad outreach to students and more on providing intensive support for particular students. For instance, at West Philadelphia HS, the post-secondary specialist targets twelfth graders for intensive case management services. Similarly, most of University City HS's SSC activities have focused on working with eleventh and twelfth graders to provide them with counseling and to get them into school-year internships.

Overall, students spoke very positively of the SSCs at their schools. For instance, students at Bartram HS—who rarely used their school's SSC prior to the 2009–2010 school year because the “environment wasn't welcoming”—said that this school year, students have begun to access services and support from the SSC because they feel that there are more ways to be engaged in activities, as opposed to “just coming and sitting at the computer.” Two eleventh-grade students from Bartram HS and West Philadelphia HS commented about how their SSCs had changed:

*[Last year, the SSC] was under different people. Every year, there have been different people at the SSC. This year was the best.*

*It's [the SSC] grown over the years. Before it was just small. Over the years, it got bigger. They expanded it, and there are more things to do.*

### **Three Employment Strategies**

The MEES schools have implemented three core employment strategies: supporting career development, placing students into internships, and promoting college access. Exhibit VI-3 indicates the target groups for each of these three strategies.

**Exhibit VI-3:  
Target Grade Levels for Employment Interventions**

	Supporting Career Development				Placing Students into Internships				Promoting College Access			
	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12
Bartram HS	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X
Berkshire JSHS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Du Bois HS			X	X			X	X				
FitzSimons HS	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Germantown HS	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	
Lincoln HS	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X
Overbrook HS	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X
University City HS	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X
West Philadelphia HS	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X

An examination of Exhibit VI-3 reveals that in every school except Du Bois HS, students in every grade are targeted for at least one of the employment strategies. The general pattern, however, is for all students to be targeted for career development activities, while eleventh- and twelfth-grade students alone are targeted for internships and college access activities. This pattern is based on the rationale that students in the latter grades are more in need of the activities focused on what occurs immediately after high school graduation.

Internships are generally reserved for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students who are of legal working age, who are making satisfactory academic progress, and who have flexible schedules that allow them to work during the school day. Berkshire JSHS is an exception in this case, however, because all students at Berkshire JSHS have the opportunity to participate in high quality, on-campus internships.

College access interventions are primarily designed for eleventh and twelfth graders, but several schools targeted younger students in order to get them thinking ahead about college. For instance, in the first year of grant implementation, FitzSimons HS and West Philadelphia HS staff explicitly targeted ninth-grade students for college access services, as a way to excite them about potential post-secondary options, which they hope will encourage student retention and post-secondary goal development.

To recruit students for employment interventions, school and CBO staff members post flyers throughout school buildings, conduct classroom presentations, and announce events and

programs over the schools' public address systems. They also hold school-wide and grade-specific assemblies where they provide students with an overview of the services available and communicate information that is essential to students in specific grades. At Berkshire JSHS, the workforce development coordinator invites local employers to the school to provide students with information about available externship opportunities. Schools are also using technology, including social networking sites, to recruit students. For instance, a SSC staff member at Bartram HS sends emails to students and has set up a Facebook page to provide students information about upcoming events and activities.

Word-of-mouth has also been an effective recruitment strategy for several schools. For instance, Overbrook HS has organized a "Street Team" of SSC student interns. These students recruit their peers for specific programs and events by passing out flyers during passing and lunch periods. CBO staff also mentioned the importance of strategically reaching out to teachers, by approaching teachers to offer support, attending common planning time, and encouraging teachers to refer students for services. Overall, staff members report that recruiting students for employment interventions has not been a challenge. According to a number of school and community-based staff, students generally seek out interventions on their own because they are interested in gaining employment and/or entering post-secondary education.

## **Supporting Career Development**

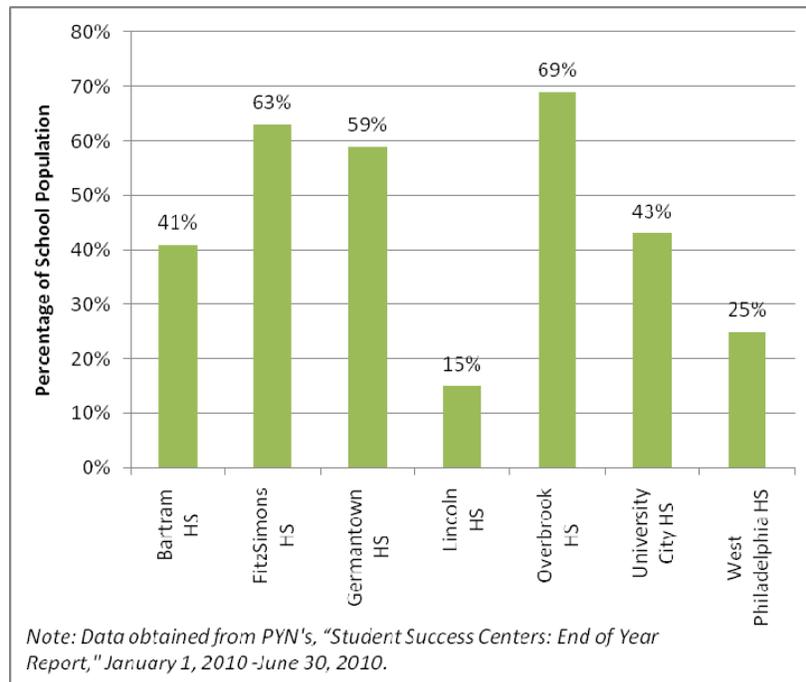
All schools are supporting career development in order to make students aware of the educational requirements of various careers and provide students with sufficient job readiness training. To support career development, schools sponsored job shadow days, provided individual career advising, and organized and facilitated job preparation workshops.

Exhibit VI-4 highlights the percent of all students receiving any type of career development service at SDP schools, as reported by PYN.<sup>5</sup> As illustrated in the exhibit, over 60 percent of students at FitzSimons HS (63 percent) and Overbrook HS (69 percent) received career development and exploration services, while fewer than 30 percent of students at Lincoln HS (15 percent) and West Philadelphia HS (25 percent) received these services.

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<sup>5</sup> These data were not available for Du Bois HS or Berkshire JSHS.

**Exhibit VI-4:  
Percent of School Population Receiving Career Development Services  
January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010**



Differences in the percentages of students reached by schools correspond to differences in emphasis and scale. Schools that reached a high percentage of the school population, like Overbrook HS, FitzSimons HS, and Germantown HS, conducted more large-scale career events than did schools like Lincoln HS and West Philadelphia HS, which focused more on providing individual advising and smaller job preparation workshops. In schools that reached a higher percentage of students, SSC staff members tended to have stronger and more trusting relationships with teachers and school staff, which provided an opportunity for SSC staff members to reach out to students and engage them in SSC activities.

***Career Days and Job Shadowing Activities***

Each of the seven SDP schools sponsors a combination of career and job shadow days in order to raise students' understanding of different types of careers.

Career days are school-wide events where professionals in various career paths visit the school to speak to students. Four SDP schools sponsored large career fairs, where professionals rotated among classrooms conducting concurrent workshops and presentations. At Overbrook HS, for instance, all students spent an entire day rotating between different career-focused workshops. To recruit professionals for the event, school and CBO staff members relied heavily on their personal networks, contacted businesses directly, and reached out to alumni of their school.

While most schools were able to secure 10 to 30 professionals from a range of fields (e.g., construction, law, business, information technology) for their career days, Overbrook HS, which has implemented this event for the past seven years, was able to secure 111 professionals.

Job shadowing activities provide students with an opportunity to spend time with and observe a seasoned career professional in his or her work setting. Four SDP schools selected a group of ninth graders to participate in a citywide job shadow day sponsored by the SDP and PYN. Before participating in this activity, students went through an orientation process that covered resume writing, interviewing techniques, training in twenty-first century skills, and workplace etiquette. Students then spent a full day at one of three sites selected by PYN (Environmental Protection Agency, Fire Department, and Naval Inventory Control Point), shadowing professionals in their work environments. Students navigated public transportation to get to the worksites, participated in question-and-answer sessions with professionals, and then returned to their schools, where they engaged in group discussions with their peers about what they did and did not like about each career.

Overall, students, professionals, and school and CBO staff from these schools spoke positively of career day and job shadowing activities. Students appreciated the opportunity to learn about various careers, while professionals felt good about giving back to their community. School and CBO staff said that they planned to use the feedback they receive from students and professionals to improve the events each year.

### ***Individual Advising***

All of the MEES schools provide individual one-on-one career advising, which consists of offering career interest and skills assessments and helping students develop individual career plans. The services offered at Bartram HS are a particularly good example of the types of individual advising services offered by the schools. At Bartram HS, the career development specialist conducts career inventory and career interest assessments during the first meeting with a student. If the student already knows what career he or she is interested in pursuing, the career development specialist conducts a career inventory assessment to determine where the student is in terms of career readiness. However, if the student does not know what career he or she wants to pursue, the career development specialist will use Career Voyages<sup>6</sup> to help the student explore different careers. Following the career assessment, Bartram HS's career development specialist

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<sup>6</sup> Career Voyages, an online system designed by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education, provides information on high growth, in-demand occupations, along with the skills and education needed to attain those jobs.

works with each student to develop a “Student Success Plan.” These plans include the student’s goals and identify key career activities he or she must complete throughout high school. These activities include developing a resume, completing a job shadow, registering for career and technical education (CTE) courses or electives, volunteering at an organization, and obtaining a summer job or internship.

Overall, employment staff members at each school have found working with students one-on-one to be very valuable. Some staff members use career development plans to ensure that students are developing the appropriate career readiness skills and to monitor each student’s career development progress from year to year. In addition, many of these staff members feel that by working with students individually, they are able to better engage them and ensure that they understand the information provided.

### ***Job Preparation Workshops***

All nine MEES schools offered job preparation workshops in the first year of grant implementation. Key staff members, such as career development specialists in Philadelphia, career navigators at Du Bois HS, and the workforce development coordinator at Berkshire JSHS, organize and facilitate job preparation workshops. The aim of job preparation workshops is to build students’ work-ready skills, with the goal of training students in the skills they need to complete job applications and conduct job searches; develop a resume and practice interview skills; learn how to dress properly for an interview; communicate effectively with job supervisors and understand workplace etiquette; and develop and manage personal budgets, including how to open a bank account.

The workshops are generally facilitated on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, or as needed, given the skills, abilities, and interests of the students. In some cases, staff members facilitate these workshops during lunch periods, and before and after school. In other cases the classes occur during students’ advisory periods as one-time classroom presentations. For example, at West Philadelphia HS, the career development specialist holds resume and interview skills workshops for tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students three days a week. Other workshop topics at West Philadelphia HS include networking, career exploration, and dress for success.

In most cases, students are required to complete a job preparation workshop prior to participating in an internship. For instance, at University City HS, students interested in obtaining an internship must first participate in an 8- to 12-hour work readiness training program. This training includes interview skills training, accountability and time management workshops, resume development, and job application assistance. Students said that the job preparation workshops were very helpful in preparing them for employment. One student intern at

University City HS said that the job preparation workshops, particularly the mock interviews and interview skills training, reduced her nervousness as she prepared for a job interview. She stated:

*I was someone who really needed those techniques because I get nervous around a lot of people...to me, the workshops helped me be more open. During the interview...that pressure got me nervous again, but I went over the steps that we learned and I took a couple of breaths and that got me comfortable again.*

### **Berkshire JSHS's Vocational Academy**

At Berkshire JSHS, students interested in having an internship or externship are required to first participate in the classroom-based Vocational Academy. This Academy includes a workforce development course and a life-skills course that introduces students to various occupations and develops their job preparedness skills. The courses combined are 10 weeks long. Grant-funded workforce staff members (i.e., workforce development lead and vocational instructor) teach these courses.

The workforce development course introduces students to various occupations and trades, including horticulture, culinary arts, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and automotive repair. The class is a combination of didactic teaching and hands-on activities. For instance, at the time of the spring 2010 site visit, students were learning about landscaping and gardening. The instructor used PowerPoint to present key concepts and show the types of careers individuals can have within landscaping and gardening. Afterward, at the school's farm and construction shop, the teacher modeled how landscapers draw garden designs with draft paper and pencils, and then students had a chance to do it themselves.

The second course, life skills, focuses on employment readiness skills related to resume development, interviewing, and workplace etiquette. Students participate in discussions on decision-making, and learn essential life skills such as opening and maintaining a bank account. Because all students at Berkshire JSHS have some sort of criminal history, the life skills instructor also teaches them how to frame their criminal convictions during a job interview.

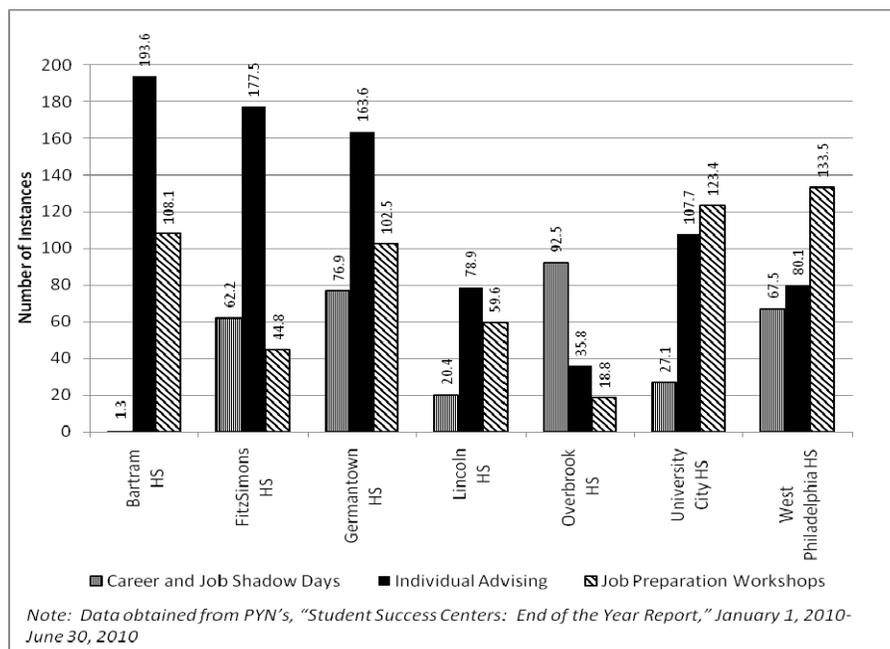
In SY 2008–2009, 28 percent of Berkshire JSHS students received “workforce development skills” services and 29 percent participated in the pre-internship program.

### ***Intensity of Career Development Interventions***

For SDP schools, the evaluation examined the relative intensity of the career development interventions provided by schools by analyzing SSC participation data provided by PYN. Exhibit IV-5 shows the intensity of different types of services provided by each school by graphing the number of times a service was provided per 100 students served by the SSC at that

school.<sup>7</sup> The graph tells us, for instance, that Bartram HS provided 193.6 instances of individual advising for every 100 students served by the SSC. Thus, on average, every student served by the SSC received almost two instances of individual career advising. It is important to note that this provides only a very rough estimate of intensity. In the case of Bartram, for instance, it is likely that a smaller group of students actually received individual career advising services, though this is not something that we can determine from the data available. (For example, 50 students may have received an average of four instances of individual advising each.)

**Exhibit VI-5:  
Instances of Career Development Interventions Per 100 Students Served by SSC**



The following are findings related to the intensity of career development interventions:

- **Four of the seven schools provided more instances of individual advising per 100 students than they did career/job shadows and job preparation workshops.** Bartram HS, FitzSimons HS, and Germantown HS provided the most instances of individual advising per 100 students, while Overbrook HS provided the least. The high number of instances per 100 students served

<sup>7</sup> We focus on "instances" of participation rather than the total number of students served for a particular service because the numbers provided on PYN's End of Year Report are duplicative. That is, schools report the total number of times a service is delivered for every month from January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010, even if the same student receives that service multiple times. Because an individual student can receive multiple services, the instances of a given service may exceed the total number of unduplicated participants served. The "per-100 participant instances of service" is calculated by summing the total instances of service, dividing it by the "unduplicated number of youth served," and multiplying it by 100.

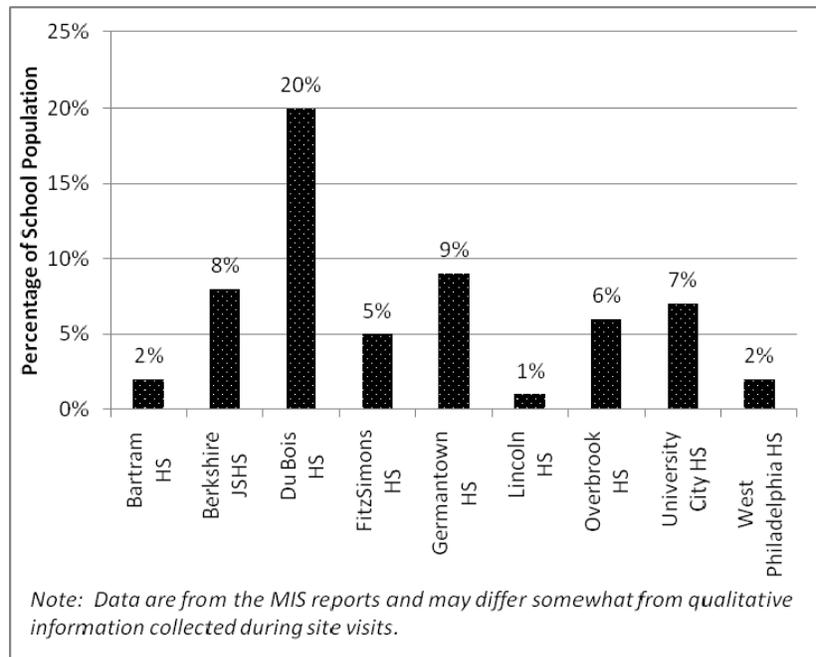
indicates that some students received multiple instances of individual advising at these schools and that these schools prioritized individual advising over other types of services. As described in the description of individual advising, the job specialist at Bartram HS worked intensively with individual students over time to do a career inventory assessment and develop a student success plan.

- **Schools that had relatively high instances of career and job shadow days each sponsored large career days.** Four schools, FitzSimons HS, Germantown HS, Overbrook HS, and West Philadelphia HS, had at least 60 instances of career and job shadow day services per 100 students served. These four schools sponsored large career days, which reach a high percentage of the student population.
- **Overbrook HS focused more on breadth and reach of services than on intensity of services.** Overbrook HS was able to reach a very large proportion of its student body through its large career day, but most of its students experienced a lower intensity of service than students at schools like Bartram HS or FitzSimons HS, which focused on individual advising.
- **Those schools that provided the most instances of job preparation workshops often went into classrooms in order to deliver these workshops at different grade levels.** Bartram HS, Germantown HS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS provided the most instances of job preparation workshops per 100 students served—in some cases, more than double that of the other schools. Staff members at these schools had strong relationships with teachers and, because of this were able to deliver job preparation workshops during students’ advisory periods or during English classes as a one-time events. Lincoln High school had the lowest levels of job preparation workshops, and to some degree this was due to challenges that SSC staff had in collaborating with teachers and accessing classrooms.

## Placing Students in Internships

In keeping with the guidelines set forth in the MEES grant solicitation, all nine schools are targeting eleventh and twelfth graders for internships. Nearly all schools have developed criteria to identify appropriate students for internship opportunities, with a priority on finding internships for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students who are “work ready” and who have a track record of positive behavior and academic performance. Berkshire JSHS is the only school where internships are available for any student who expresses interest. Exhibit VI-6 shows the percent of all students at each school who were placed into an internship in SY 2009–2010.

**Exhibit VI-6:  
Percent of School Population Participating in an Internship  
(SY 2009–2010)**



As illustrated in Exhibit VI-6, Du Bois HS has by far the highest percentage of students who completed an internship in SY 2009–2010 (20 percent). One reason that Du Bois HS has been so successful at placing students into internships is that it has a strong workforce partner in the Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED), which operated the Career Connections program. The Career Connections program aimed to provide internships to almost all eleventh graders and twelfth graders who were on track for graduation. Grant-funded career navigators and a field monitor identified more than 52 employers or “internship site partners” to provide content-driven internships that reinforce classroom learning. Teachers actively referred students to the program, and staff from the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)<sup>8</sup> program allowed career navigators to conduct presentations for students during class time. The Career Connections program enrolled 76 twelfth graders and 80 eleventh graders in SY 2009–2010, and of these enrolled students, 88 percent of twelfth graders and 79 percent of eleventh graders completed an internship. Internship sites include schools, newspapers, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations.

<sup>8</sup> The AVID program is ideally a four-year program for students who have the potential to succeed in college prep courses. Upon acceptance into AVID, students must enroll in college prep courses, which will result in fulfilling entry requirements for most state colleges and universities. AVID is an elective class that meets during the regular school day.

Berkshire JSHS enrolled its students in internships in areas such as carpentry, horticulture and farming, maintenance, business, and culinary arts. When students go through their original intake process Berkshire JSHS, they learn about the available internships and, if they desire, can use their “flex period” to participate. In this sense, participation in the internship program is very student-driven. Students must complete the work development class and a life skills class before working at an internship. Because these internships are on campus, the workforce development coordinator works closely with the internship staff to place students in internship positions, and all positions are related to the functioning of the school or the residential campus. Carpentry interns work on building residential cottages and units at the school, and through that process learn basic construction skills. Maintenance interns clean windows and make repairs around the school, while horticulture and farming interns maintain the plants and care for animals at the school farm. Students’ work ranges from five to 20 hours per week, and internship placements last from six to 24 weeks. For the 2009–2010 school year, 64 students participated in on-campus internships.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to on-campus internships, Berkshire JSHS aims to provide students who have completed these internships with off-campus work experience opportunities called externships. Students who are placed into externships work one to two times a week at restaurants and retail clothing stores, getting paid minimum wage. At the time of the third visit, 17 students had participated in this program.

SDP schools varied in the percentage of students who enrolled in internships, from a high of nine percent at Germantown HS to a low of one percent at Lincoln HS. In Philadelphia, PYN draws on its large network of employers to develop a pool of internships for students at the MEES schools and other high schools throughout Philadelphia. Job specialists from the SSC work with career academy principals to identify youth who meet certain criteria (e.g., involving grades, behavior, and attendance) to participate in paid internships. Students then apply for the internship through an online application with PYN. PYN arranges interviews between the employers and students, completes student background checks, and collects employment information (e.g., W-4 forms, selective service registry verification, etc.) from students. Interns work for approximately six weeks, at around ten hours a week, in locations such as hospitals, law offices, the office of veteran’s affairs, etc.

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<sup>9</sup> Note: This number was obtained during the third round site visit and is higher than that reported in Berkshire JSHS’s June 2010 MIS quarterly report. Sixty-four students is more than eight percent of Berkshire JSHS’s population, and it may be that Berkshire JSHS was reporting only “externships” as internships in their MIS report.

SSC programs that were more successful at placing students into internships did not rely exclusively on PYN to identify internships but also developed their own relationships with employers. Germantown HS, for example, had a pre-existing relationship with two local hospitals, which placed some students from the schools' health academy into internships. The SSC program at Lincoln HS, which placed the lowest percentage of students into internships, lacked strong relationships with local employers and also could not access most of the PYN internships. Lincoln HS is located on the far end of northeast Philadelphia and students did not have good transportation options to get to the PYN internship locations, most of which are in downtown Philadelphia.

Student interns are generally paid an average of \$7.25 an hour, which is the minimum wage. In most cases, this wage is subsidized with grant funds. At Du Bois HS, eleventh-grade student-interns receive credit towards graduation instead of an hourly wage, while twelfth-grade students are paid minimum wage. At Berkshire JSHS, the wages students earn are deposited into accounts kept for each student, and students have access to these funds only after they are discharged.

Overall, students look forward to internships, because it is an opportunity for them to gain work experience and make money. During interviews, students said that participating in an internship or "real job" makes them more responsible and mature. The following are illustrative quotes from student interns at Bartram HS and University City HS, respectively.

*[My internship] makes me mature because now I know the feeling of working on my own and getting my own money. I am not dependent on my mom's handouts all the time.*

*The best part [about my internship] is how they treat me like a businesswoman, like I'm really working for this company. I like how I have my space, my own desk, my own computer.... It's a grown-up experience. I feel older, more mature.*

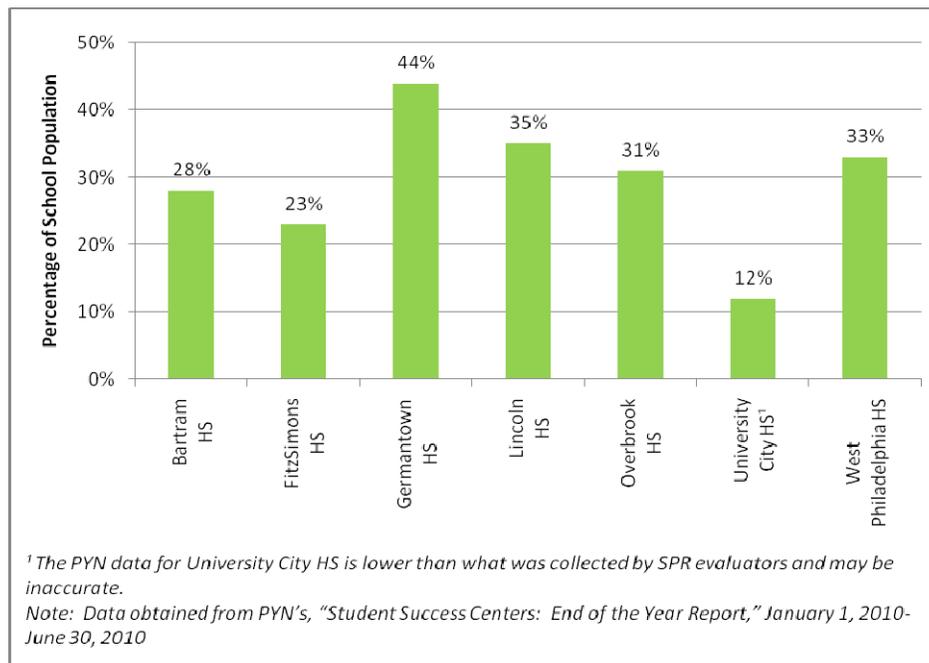
## **Promoting College Access**

*I was always thinking about getting a degree. A college education is important, but when [I moved to the United States], I was confused because I didn't know where the money [to pay for college] would come from, but the Student Success Center helped me. They said you can get financial aid and get money to help you go to school, and they actually help you find different colleges that are good for you. So they helped push me to want to go to college.*

- Twelfth Grade Student, West Philadelphia HS

Only the seven SDP schools indicate that promoting college access is a core grant-funded employment strategy. In order to promote college access, SDP schools provided college exposure activities, college application assistance, and financial aid counseling. In most cases, the post-secondary specialist provides these services. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these activities generally target eleventh and twelfth graders, in an effort to support their immediate post-secondary plans, but are also made available to ninth and tenth graders.

**Exhibit VI-7:  
Percent of School Population Receiving College Access Services  
January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010**



As illustrated in Exhibit VI-7, five of the SDP schools are engaging at least 25 percent of their school populations in interventions to promote college access. Germantown HS reached the highest proportion of its student body with college access services, in part because school staff members conducted workshops in student classrooms. University City HS's status as a Renaissance school may have reduced the percentage of students that SSC staff members were able to reach in the first year of the grant. The following are details on each type of college access intervention funded by the grant.

- College Exposure.** College exposure activities include holding college fairs, organizing college visits, and hosting speakers from different colleges. During a college fair, panels of representatives and students from various colleges and universities present to students about the academic and social characteristics of the school, as well as details related to entrance requirements and tuition. The college fair hosted by Lincoln HS in SY 2009–2010 (its first) was attended by

over 500 students, and included representatives from over 40 colleges, universities, and technical schools. All seven schools organized college visits, where students toured local colleges and universities.

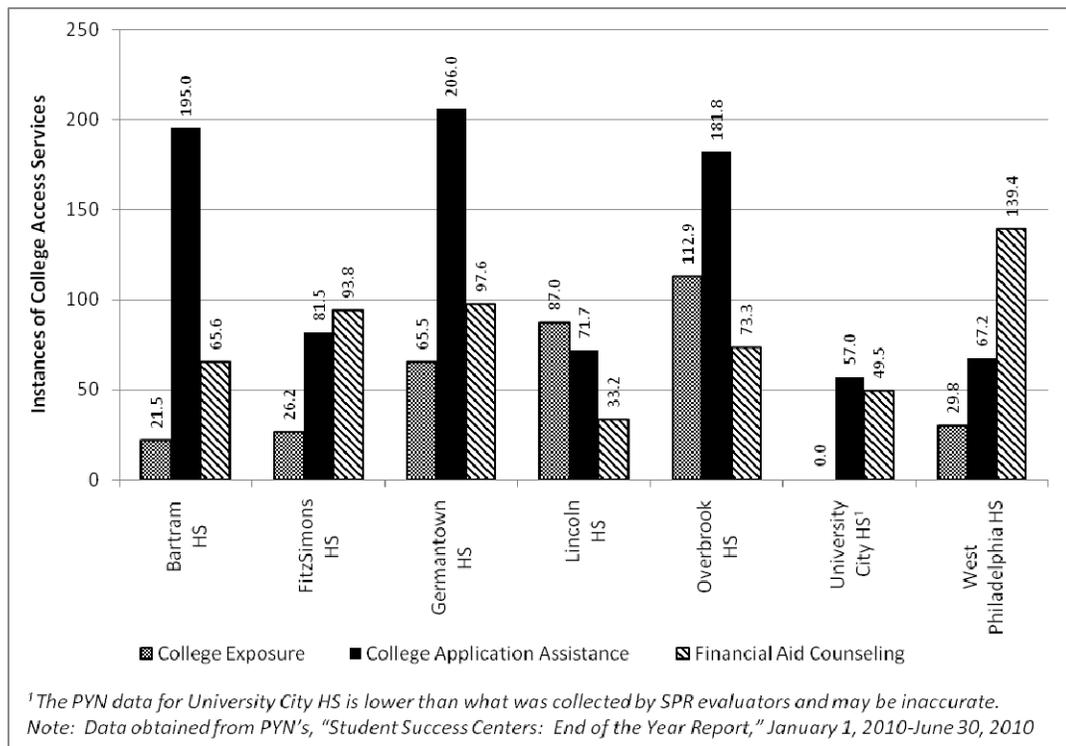
- **College Application Assistance.** College application assistance includes working one-on-one with students to help them fill out college applications, register for the SAT/ACT, and develop college and scholarship essays. In addition, SSC staff assist with college applications by organizing workshops that help prepare students for the SAT and ACT and write personal statements. At Bartram HS, for instance, the post-secondary specialist's goal has been to "get students to think about what's going to happen after they graduate" and every eleventh-grade student is required to decide on a post-secondary major or vocational interest and identify related post-secondary institutions or vocational schools. Twelfth-grade students are required to participate in SAT/ACT preparation and register for the SAT/ACT test.
- **Financial Aid Counseling.** Financial aid counseling includes directly assisting students with completing the Federal Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA), registering for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) for general financial assistance, and applying for scholarships. Almost all of the schools conduct workshops on topics such as "paying for college" and "filling out the FAFSA," but the post-secondary education specialist at West Philadelphia HS argued that the one-on-one assistance is more valuable for students than are the workshops. This staff person said, "I think it's really helpful to touch base with individual students to tell them, 'this is what you need to do, and why you need to do it.' You get better responses from them when you meet with them individually." Students who received financial aid counseling were appreciative of the support they received from the SSC. For example, one student from West Philadelphia HS expressed the following:

*To be honest, when I had to do my financial aid, I was a bit confused, and the [post-secondary specialist] helped me complete my financial aid. Most of us have no idea how to go about doing financial aid, and they helped us get money. If this [center] were not here, most of us would be going to [college] without knowing where the money [to pay for it] would come from.*

For SDP schools, the evaluation was able to analyze participation data to arrive at a measure of the relative intensity of the college access interventions provided by each school. Exhibit IV-8 illustrates the relative intensity of different types of services provided by each school by graphing the number of times a service was provided per 100 students served by the SSC at that

school.<sup>10</sup> The graph tells us, for instance, that Germantown HS provided 206 instances of college application assistance for every 100 students served by the SSC, an average of over two instances per student served. It is important to note that this provides only a very rough estimate of the intensity of services that the “average student” received. It is likely that a small group of Germantown HS students received a fairly intensive level of service (i.e. meeting with the postsecondary specialist numerous times to prepare college application), whereas other students received a much lighter level of service (i.e., coming to the SSC to register for the SAT/ACT).

**Exhibit VI-8:  
Instances of College Access Services Provided Per 100 Students Served by SSC**



Key findings related to the intensity of college access interventions include the following:

- **Three schools provided numerous instances of college application assistance to students, at rate almost double that of other schools.** Germantown HS, Bartram HS, and Overbrook HS provided a high number of instances of college application assistance. These schools were successful because they used a

<sup>10</sup> As described in the career development section, the numbers provided on PYN's End of Year Report are duplicative. That is, schools report the total number of times a service is delivered for every month from January 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010, even if the same student receives that service multiple times. Because an individual student can receive multiple services, the instances of a given service may exceed the total number of unduplicated participants served. The “per-100 participant instances of service” is calculated by summing the total instances of service, dividing it by the “unduplicated number of youth served,” and multiplying it by 100.

combination of one-on-one counseling and workshops and group activities. For instance, Germantown HS held a series of college entrance workshops for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students on topics such as “college applications” and “college writing 101.”

- **West Philadelphia HS placed a strong emphasis on financial aid counseling, providing twice as many instances per student served as most of the other schools.** The post-secondary specialist at West Philadelphia HS made a concerted effort to work intensively with high school junior and seniors, identifying 200 students who met with her numerous times over the course of the spring 2010 semester. This staff member mentioned that while the approach of meeting with so many students one-on-one has been slow and tedious, it has been beneficial for the students.
- **With the exception of Overbrook HS, schools provided relatively low levels of college exposure activities.** Overbrook HS provided an average of almost 113 instances of college exposure per student served because it placed a very large emphasis on college tours and hosted weekly presentations from speakers from colleges and universities. At the time of the spring 2010 site visit, Overbrook HS had hosted five college tours, with 40 students on average attending each tour. Lincoln had the second largest number of instances per student served, largely due to a very successful college fair that the SSC hosted in the spring of 2010. Schools such as Bartram HS, University City HS, and West Philadelphia HS did not have the strong of ties with post-secondary institutions needed to plan this many such activities in SY 2009–2010, but plan to provide more such opportunities next year.

## Challenges in Implementing Employment Strategies

Overall, MEES schools have been very successful at launching employment strategies, and are making progress towards their goals of supporting career development, placing students into internships, and promoting college access. The SSCs in the Philadelphia schools are described by students and school staff members as “safe spaces” within the schools that help students feel more positive about the opportunities and supports available at their schools. However, schools did face some challenges in the first year of grant implementation:

- **The delivery of SSC equipment, furniture, and technology was delayed, which slowed implementation.** According to a number of SSC staff members, there were long delays in getting computers and infrastructure, such as phone lines and furniture. Although SSC equipment and furniture was ordered as early as January 2010, some schools did not receive items until as late as May 2010. To ensure students received services, some CBO providers used their organizations’ equipment or borrowed from the school or other partners until their ordered equipment arrived.
- **Some SDP schools have faced challenges fully integrating SSC staff members into the schools.** One barrier to integrating SSC staff members has been that

some school leaders and teachers are not aware of or have not bought into the SSC model. For instance, some SSC staff members feel that teachers view the SSC as a place where students can hang out when they cut class. Even though school leaders implemented policies dictating when students can be in the SSC, the negative perception of the SSC remains a challenge at a few schools.

- **For seven of the nine schools, internships have been in limited supply.** In Philadelphia, PYN is tasked with finding work opportunities for all eligible students. However, according to SSC staff members, PYN did not have enough internship slots to provide all students with internships. In addition, many of the available internships were located downtown, far from many students' homes. SSC staff members therefore worked to foster connections with local businesses and organizations to place the remaining students. Berkshire JSHS also faced challenges in placing students into off-campus externships. Students' irregular schedules have resulted in irregular work hours, and some employers are not happy with this.

## Overview of Case Management Strategies

*It is hard for students to experience success if they do not deal with their emotional side.*

- SSC Project Coordinator, Bartram HS

Across the nine schools, many students face emotional, behavioral, and social struggles that hinder their ability to succeed. In order to address individual students' specific needs, improve social service linkages, and centralize school-based supportive services, MEES schools have instituted case management services. In this section, we provide an overview of the staff that MEES schools have hired to provide case management as well as the target populations for case management interventions.

## Staffing and Management

Case management staff members are responsible for conducting needs assessments of students, developing and implementing service plans, making referrals, and providing behavioral support and crisis management to students. In most cases, case management staff persons have professional degrees and/or specialized certificates or credentials that enable them to provide intensive interventions. Exhibit VI-9 shows the various case management positions that each school hired with grant funds.

**Exhibit VI-9:  
Case Management Positions**

<b>Case Management Positions</b>	
SDP Schools <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Worker</li> <li>• Post-Secondary Specialist</li> <li>• Career Development Specialist</li> </ul>
Berkshire JSHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior Management Specialist<sup>2</sup> (3)</li> <li>• Adventure-Based Counselor (2)</li> </ul>
Du Bois HS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FUTURES Advocate (3)</li> <li>• Transition Evening School Guidance Counselor</li> <li>• Substance Abuse Counselor</li> <li>• Mental Health Clinician</li> <li>• Anger Management Counselor</li> </ul>
<p><sup>1</sup> West Philadelphia HS is also supporting a Social Work Intern with grant funds, and Germantown HS plans to hire a drug and alcohol counselor with grant funds.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> Berkshire JSHS has five Behavior Management Specialists, but only three positions are supported with grant funds.</p>	

As displayed Exhibit VI-9, all nine schools are supporting at least three case management positions to provide individualized support to at-risk students. Of the MEES schools, Du Bois HS has invested most heavily in case management; it has hired seven full-time case management staff persons. At Du Bois HS, key case management and support services are provided to ninth-grade students through FUTURES Works. Serving as “mediators” between students and their families and schools, FUTURES advocates monitor students’ attendance, provide tutoring, implement life skills training and workshops, meet with parents, and connect students to school and community-based programs and services. The Transitional Evening School (TES) guidance counselor provides individualized academic support and weekly one-on-one and group counseling to students in the TES program.<sup>11</sup> In addition to these program-specific staff, Du Bois has hired a substance abuse counselor, a mental health clinician, and an anger management specialist to provide one-on-one and group counseling to students using a combination of Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> TES is an overage, under-credit program for students 16 or over who are repeat ninth graders.

<sup>12</sup> MET seeks to evoke from clients their own motivation for change and to consolidate a personal decision and plan for change. The approach is largely client-centered, although planned and directed. CBT is a psychotherapeutic approach that aims to solve problems concerning dysfunctional emotions, behaviors, and cognitions through a goal-oriented, systematic procedure.

Berkshire JSHS is providing a wraparound of behavioral and mental health services through a clinical team of staff that includes a psychiatrist, a psychologist, social workers, Behavior Management Specialists (BMSs), and a mental health clinician from the community.<sup>13</sup> The goal of this approach is to bridge the line of communication between mental health clinicians and school staff members, so that behavioral and mental health interventions can be included in all aspects of a student’s program. Currently, Berkshire JSHS has five BMS positions, three of which are supported with grant funds. BMSs serve as liaisons between teachers and other mental health staff, communicating key information to staff regarding the possible reasons behind a student’s behavior (e.g., family death, not taking medications, etc.). In addition, Berkshire JSHS is supporting two Adventure-Based Counselor (ABC) positions with grant funds; these individuals are responsible for engaging groups of students in experiential learning activities and discussions.

All seven SDP schools house grant-funded case management staff members in the school’s Student Success Center (SCC). (As discussed above, the SCCs also play central roles in the employment strategies at all the Philadelphia schools; for a more detailed discussion of the SCCs, see “Student Success Centers” above.) The primary staff person responsible for case management at SDP schools is the social worker, who sometimes has the title “re-engagement specialist.” The social worker is responsible for coordinating key social support services for target students, reviewing students’ educational histories (credits attained, courses passed, and schools attended), providing group and individual counseling, and connecting students and their families to community resources. Social workers also work closely with non-grant funded school counselors and other support staff, such as student advisors and parent ombudsmen, to address students’ needs. Although post-secondary and career development specialists are primarily responsible for providing career and post-secondary exploration activities with students, they also support and work collaboratively with the social workers to provide one-on-one case management to students on an as-needed basis.

## **Target Groups**

The students most in need are generally those targeted for case management interventions. Nearly all schools are targeting specific groups of at-risk students (i.e., students on the school’s

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<sup>13</sup> The psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, and mental health clinician positions are not supported with grant funds.

Early Warning Indicator List,<sup>14</sup> or who have low attendance or behavior problems) for these services. Exhibit VI-10 highlights core target groups for case management interventions.

**Exhibit VI-10:  
Target Groups for Case Management Interventions**

	Ninth-Grade Students	Students at Any Grade Level	At-risk Students <sup>1</sup>
<b>Bartram HS</b>	✓		✓
<b>Berkshire JSHS</b>		✓	
<b>Du Bois HS</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>		✓	✓
<b>Germantown HS</b>	✓		✓
<b>Lincoln HS</b>		✓	✓
<b>Overbrook HS</b>		✓	✓
<b>University City HS</b>	✓		
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>	✓		✓

<sup>1</sup> At-risk students include students on school's EWI list or who have low attendance, high truancy, or behavior problems.

A number of key observations can be derived from the data in Exhibit VI-10:

- **Five of the nine schools are specifically targeting ninth grade students for case management services.** Three schools (Bartram HS, West Philadelphia HS, and Germantown HS) are targeting primarily “at-risk” ninth grade students, while University City HS and Du Bois HS are targeting all ninth-grade students. All ninth-grade students at Du Bois HS receive case management from the FUTURES program advocates, while at-risk ninth-grade students also participate in more intensive case management interventions (i.e., one-on-one counseling, anger management, etc). Ninth-grade students are targeted for services because, as a group, they are more likely to fall behind and drop out than any other group of students.
- **Berkshire is the only school that targets all its students for case management.** The very high-risk nature of Berkshire JSHS’s population requires that all students receive case management and counseling support. Berkshire JSHS also mandates that all students participate in counseling services and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

<sup>14</sup> The EWI list, a collaboration among the Philadelphia Education Fund, John Hopkins University, City Year Greater Philadelphia and CIS, tracks individual student data (i.e., poor attendance, repeated behavior problems, failing English and math) to identify students at key transition points (grades six and nine) who are at risk of dropping out.

- **Four other schools target students at any grade level who have behavioral or attendance problems.** These schools include Overbrook HS, Fitzsimmons HS, Lincoln HS, and Du Bois HS. As will be discussed later in this chapter, students receive a combination of one-on-one counseling, group counseling, and attendance and behavioral support, as needed.

In most cases, teachers and school leaders refer students for case management services if they are concerned about the student's academic performance or behavior or learn of confidential information during a one-on-one meeting with the student or parent/guardian. Students can meet with the case manager once or twice, but then must get parental consent in order to receive regular individual counseling. Because getting parental permission for counseling is sometimes difficult, many of the schools provide numerous group counseling options. The school can require that students participate in group counseling.

The number of students who received case management services in SY 2009–2010 varies by school. Berkshire JSHS provides all students with case management. At Du Bois HS, approximately 13 percent of the school population received case management through the FUTURES Works program. With the exception of Berkshire JSHS, the number of students receiving one-on-one case management or mental health counseling at any one time generally ranged from 15 to 40 students per school, with the total number of students served not exceeding 100.<sup>15</sup> Although the evaluation does not have access to exact numbers of students participating in group counseling, it is safe to presume that many more students were served using this approach.

### **Three Case Management Strategies**

The MEES schools are implementing three core case management strategies: providing group counseling, providing individual counseling, and using a team-based case management approach to address problems with attendance and behavior. The goal of all three interventions is to remove barriers to student success.

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<sup>15</sup> The evaluation is not reporting MIS data on case management because the numbers that schools reported in the MIS appear to not be an accurate representation of case management services funded by the MEES grant across the schools. Some schools reported very high case management numbers in the MIS, likely because they are counting any student visiting the SSC as receiving case management. Other schools reported much lower case management numbers, more in keeping with the caseloads of social workers or counselors.

## Providing Group Counseling

Case management staff members provide group counseling on a range of issues, including anger management, conflict resolution, goal setting, peer pressure, family issues, gang involvement, and other topics. Group counseling involves a small group of students (usually eight to 15) who meet together with a group facilitator, at least bi-weekly, to discuss their struggles and problems. These groups take a variety of forms, some focusing on a specific topic or problem and others addressing different school and family concerns.

For instance, the anger management counselor at Du Bois HS is implementing two anger management groups, one for girls and one for boys. This facilitator uses a CBT approach to assist students in dealing with environmental stressors. The approach begins with increasing awareness of anger, wherein the focus is to help students notice when they are getting angry, what triggers their anger, how frequently they experience the triggers, and what occurs as a consequence of acting in anger. The anger management counselor then works with students to acknowledge and work through their anger, while also teaching coping skills.

At Berkshire JSHS, ABC case management staff members use an experiential learning model to enhance students' skills in communication, decision-making, trust and empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution, giving and receiving feedback, and personal and social responsibilities. To do this, students are engaged in ropes course activities that require them to work as teams to accomplish their goals. The ABC model begins with a "check-in" or icebreaker activity that allows the group to establish a level of trust and cooperation. ABC counselors then present the objective of the course, allowing the students in the group to work together to complete their task. Each ropes course session ends with a group discussion. Over time, the courses become increasingly difficult. The ABC group occurs once a week and 136 students participated during the 2009–2010 school year.

Groups that focus on gender-related issues were common among the nine schools. For instance, the SSC social worker at FitzSimons HS facilitates and advises the "Gay-Straight Alliance" group. This group meets twice a week, providing social support, advocacy, and a safe environment for students who identify as gay, bi-sexual, and transgender. Students also plan activities, such as film reviews, to educate and provide information to other students and staff regarding LGBTQ issues. The social worker also facilitates a support group for students in all grades called "Man 2 Man." This group follows a curriculum focused on positive decision-making and healthy sexual choices for males. At the time of the spring site visit, this social worker had facilitated 12 sessions with this group, and roughly 15 students participated in each group. Other schools are also implementing gender-specific groups that focus on healthy sexual choices and positive decision-making, such as the "Girls Empowerment Group" at West

Philadelphia HS, and “Pillow Talk” for girls and the “Gentlemen’s Club” for young boys at Du Bois HS.

Case management staff members also led a variety of different topical groups that were active for short periods of time. For instance, case management staff members at Lincoln HS and West Philadelphia HS offer grief and loss groups for students dealing with a variety of emotional issues. The social worker at Overbrook HS leads an anti-gang affiliation group for students involved with gang-related issues at the school and four-week-long “attendance groups” for students with eight or more unexcused absences.

### **Providing Individual Counseling**

Because some students need intensive individualized support, case management staff members also provide individual counseling. Individual counseling, like group counseling, focuses on a range of issues, including anger management, conflict resolution, goal setting, peer pressure, and family issues. However, for individual counseling, case management staff members work with students one-on-one to explore the student’s feelings and behaviors, relationships with others, choices and decisions, as well as the student’s current situation in detail. In addition, these staff members develop treatment plans with students, meet with parents, and sometimes conduct home visits.

For instance, at the time of the spring 2010 site visit, the social worker at Bartram HS was providing one-on-one counseling and therapy on a weekly basis to roughly 16 students during their lunch periods. This staff member said:

*I really focus on cognitive behavioral therapy, which gets [students] to focus on what’s going on around them and trying to think more positively about things and set goals.*

Similarly, the social worker at Overbrook HS was meeting with roughly 25 students on an individual basis, about issues ranging from teenage pregnancy to grief and loss and various family problems. Case managers do all they can to provide intensive, individualized support to students, often conducting home visits and working collaboratively with school staff members to address students’ needs.

### **Using a Team-Based Approach to Address Attendance and Behavior Problems**

In addition to providing individualized and personalized support to at-risk students, Du Bois HS and all of the SDP schools are using team-based approaches for identifying and intervening on behalf of students who have problems with attendance and behavior. Grant-funded case

management staff members participate in these case management teams. Du Bois HS has a Social Support Team (SST) and the SDP schools use the Comprehensive Student Assistance Program (CSAP).

The SST at Du Bois HS is an interdisciplinary team of professionals, including two grant-funded staff members, that provides support and referrals to students with behavior and attendance issues. The SST consists of a teacher, special education teacher, mental health clinician, school nurse, school psychologist, drug counselor, school social worker, school administrator, guidance counselor, and parent outreach program representative. Each student assigned to the SST has an individual intervention plan, and all of the teachers and support staff members working with the student are made aware of the plan and play a role in helping to monitor the student's progress. The SST also develops school-wide policies designed to help improve safety and foster an environment that encourages positive behavior. For example, the SST established hall-monitoring protocols to reduce instances of "student roaming." One policy, for example, is for teachers not to give students hall passes 15 minutes after class starts and 15 minutes before it ends. This is intended to discourage students from trying to extend their break periods while also minimizing classroom disruptions.

The CSAP process at the SDP schools is a school-wide process that involves most school staff members. The grant-funded social worker participates in a CSAP team that develops and implements an intervention plan for students who have attendance or behavioral challenges. The role of the social worker on the team is to help identify barriers that prevent a student from learning, and to connect students and families to school and community-based resources that can help to address those barriers.

In addition to the formal case management programs described above, case management staff members team more informally with teachers and school counselors and leaders to streamline academic services and support within and outside of the classroom.

## **Case Management Challenges**

MEES schools are providing personalized and group support services to students. Case management staff members are focused on developing close relationships with students, and are viewed as vital by school leaders because they allow schools to provide more personalized supports for students. Across the nine schools, case management staff members have begun to address students' needs and remove their barriers to academic success. A few challenges, however, impeded the work of case managers in the first year of grant implementation:

- **Some case managers were confused about their roles and responsibilities within their schools.** One cause of this confusion was the overlapping of roles

between school staff members and CBO staff members. Some case management staff members were also troubled by getting different directives from the school principal and his or her contracting agency. A social worker from an SDP school stated:

*I struggled early on because I was getting marching orders from a lot of different places and I was trying to appease everybody. I had people defining what my role is based on what their idea of what a social worker is. I had to have an assurance of what I'm here to do, and contracted to do, and I had to communicate that clearly to all the different parties... At one point, I printed out my job description so that people would know...*

In the next year of grant implementation, stakeholders hope to reach greater consensus about the roles and target groups of case managers.

- **Obtaining parent/guardian approval for students in need of individual counseling has been difficult.** Some social workers had a very difficult time getting parental permission for individual counseling from parents/guardians. Parents are sometimes reluctant to give consent for these services because they are wary about getting involved with “social services” and sometimes they distrust case management staff members because they are employed by contractors rather than the school. Without the consent of parent/guardians, case management staff members cannot provide individual counseling, which staff members feel is pivotal for many students.

## Summary of Findings

This chapter provided an overview of the various employment and case management strategies that MEES schools are implementing. Nearly all schools have begun to engage a large percentage of the school’s population in school-wide and targeted activities. For instance, all of the SSCs at the SDP schools served over 50 percent of the school population in SY 2009–2010. Between 15 and 69 percent of students at SDP schools have received career preparation services, which included activities like job shadows, career fairs, individual career counseling, and job preparation workshops. Between 12 and 44 percent of students at SDP schools have received college access services, which included college exposure, assistance with college applications, and financial aid counseling. Further, the implementation and expansion of the SSC model itself was defined by most stakeholders in Philadelphia as a key success. The centers are magnets for students, many of whom say that they feel a sense of belonging and care at the SSCs that they do not find elsewhere in their schools.

All schools made some progress placing students into internships, with between 1 and 20 percent of students participating in internships in SY 2009–2010. Du Bois HS was particularly effective at placing students into internships, in part because it partnered with MOED to run the Career Connections and the FUTURES Works program. Because MOED is a strong workforce partner,

Du Bois HS was able to identify a range of high-quality internships for over 70 percent of eleventh- and twelfth-grade students.

Across all nine schools, key case management staff members have been hired, and case management staff members have worked diligently to develop relationships with students and their parents and teachers to address students' behavioral, academic, and social needs. Moving forward, school and CBO staff members plan to continue to collaborate to provide personalized and intensive post-secondary exposure and wraparound supports to students.

## VII. EVIDENCE OF SCHOOL CHANGE

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This chapter provides a summary of school-wide changes occurring at the MEES schools, as captured by the schools' management information system (MIS) reports and by evaluation site visits. Because the evaluation team only has access to school-wide data, it is not possible to tease out the influence of the grant on specific students within the school, or to isolate the effects of grant-funded programs from that of other (positive or negative) influences at the schools. This chapter, therefore, avoids discussing grant outcomes *per se*, focusing instead on evidence of school-wide changes on key measures of school climate, academic performance, and school culture, with the understanding that the MEES grant is one of multiple factors that may be contributing to change at each of the schools. The chapter begins with a brief description of data sources and a model of school change that lays out core outcomes of interest for the evaluation. It then presents school-wide data on attendance, student behavior, ninth-grade course completion and promotion, and academic performance. The chapter concludes with a discussion of challenges and lessons learned and a summary of findings.

### Data

This chapter draws heavily on the MIS data that MEES schools have submitted to DOL, which are described in Chapter I of this report. In addition to the MIS data, this chapter draws on quantitative data provided by the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) for the baseline year (SY 2007–2008) and planning year (SY 2008–2009), narrative quarterly reports submitted to DOL by the schools, and data collected by SPR staff members during evaluation site visits. The quantitative data in this chapter are aggregate school-wide data that cover a period of three years: the pre-grant-award baseline year (SY 2007–2008), the planning year (SY 2008–2009), and the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010). Because most grantees did not fund services during the planning year, the analysis focuses primarily on comparing data from the first year of implementation (SY 2009–2010) to that of the baseline year (SY 2007–2008).

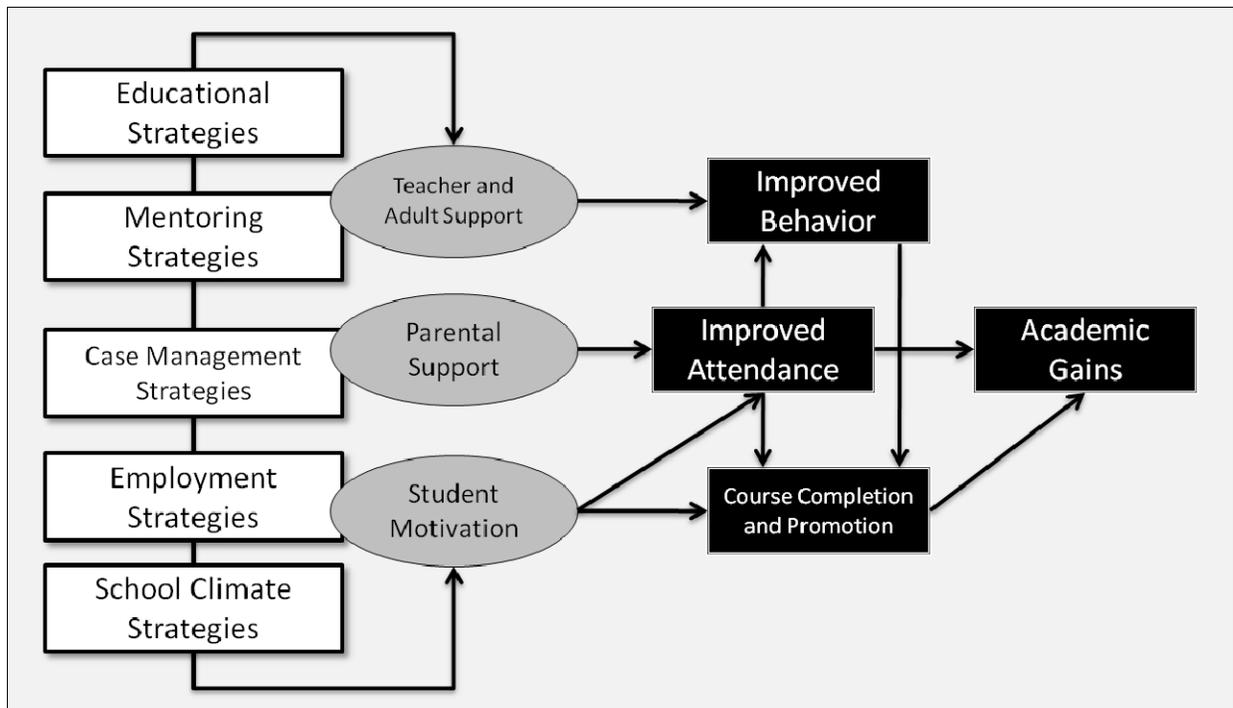
The data presented in this chapter document the progress to date on the part of schools and, as such, they can serve as benchmarks that can be monitored as schools transition into full grant implementation. Since the majority of grant-funded programs did not launch until late in the

spring of 2010, the changes documented in this chapter are necessarily preliminary in nature. The changes described this chapter may reflect typical year-to-year fluctuations in behavioral and academic outcomes at the schools, rather than trends that have been influenced by the grant. Although the evaluation is ending in December 2010, data from the second full year of grant implementation (SY 2010–2011) will be a much more accurate measure of the success of the initiative.

## Overview of School Change

In Exhibit VII-1 we present a Model for School Change, which is adapted from a dropout prevention framework developed by Robert Balfanz at John’s Hopkins University.<sup>1</sup> The Model for School Change provides an overview of the core measures of school change discussed in this chapter and outlines the relationships between these measures.

**Exhibit VII-1:  
Model of School Change**



<sup>1</sup> The framework is adapted from Robert Balfanz’s Structural Equation Model of the Environmental Context of Student Learning and Achievement. See: [http://www.every1graduates.org/PDFs/Three\\_Steps.pdf](http://www.every1graduates.org/PDFs/Three_Steps.pdf)

For the MEES grants, the core inputs are the services and interventions that are funded by the grant. If the services and interventions are of high quality, they provide students with support from teachers and adults, engage parents, and increase student’s intrinsic motivation by providing real-world applications for what they are learning in the classroom. The Model assumes that increased adult support and student motivation will yield positive changes in (1) attendance, (2) behavior, (3) course completion and grade promotion, and (4) academic performance (as measured by standardized tests). As can be deduced from the diagram, the Model for School Change makes the following assumptions about the relationships between core outcomes:

- Teacher and adult support contribute primarily to changes in student behavior and motivation. Changes in behavior and motivation, in turn, help to set the stage for increased levels of course completion and subsequent academic gains. *The model assumes, therefore, that changes in student behavior often precede changes in academic performance.*
- Parental support and students’ intrinsic motivation are the key determinants of attendance. Attendance, in turn, is central to all aspects of school performance, including behavior, course completion, and academic gains.

As large and complicated systems, schools are notoriously difficult to change. The Model of School Change is useful for understanding what measures, such as attendance and behavior, serve as “early indicators” of school turnaround success. Within this chapter, attendance and behavior are addressed in the section on changes in school climate. Course completion, promotion, and academic gains are addressed in the section on changes in academic performance.

## **Changes in School Climate**

One overarching goal of the MEES grants is to improve the climate at each of the schools by increasing attendance, reducing violence, and reducing suspensions and other behavioral disruptions in the classroom. Research indicates that a positive school climate has a particularly powerful effect on student achievement for students who attend high-poverty schools like the MEES schools.<sup>2</sup> As illustrated by the Model of School Change, improvements in school climate

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Kannapel, P. J., and Clements, S. K., with Taylor, D., and Hibpshman, T. (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools*. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. Retrieved August 25, 2010 from [www.prichardcommittee.org/Ford%Study/FordReportJE.pdf](http://www.prichardcommittee.org/Ford%Study/FordReportJE.pdf)

are an important precursor to improving student achievement, because learning gains are unlikely to occur in an environment that is chaotic, unsafe, or where students routinely do not attend school.

Schools are trying to achieve the following core performance goals with the grant:

- increase Average Daily Attendance (ADA);
- decrease the percentage of students who miss 54 or more days;
- decrease the rate of all incidents involving suspension, expulsion, or arrest;
- decrease the number of severe incidents that count towards persistently dangerous school status; and
- decrease the number of students who become involved in the juvenile justice system.

This section of the chapter focuses on those aspects of school climate highlighted above that are being tracked through the MIS system. Other essential dimensions of school climate, such as teacher collaboration, are discussed further in the Changes to School Culture section of this chapter.

## **Attendance**

Increasing Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is integral to improving academic performance in low-performing schools. Students who have consistently low attendance receive fewer hours of classroom instruction, have a lower GPA, perform poorly on standardized tests, and are likely to face academic risks, such as non-promotion and dropping out.<sup>3</sup> Research also indicates that the consequences of low attendance are particularly profound for low-income urban youth because low attendance exacerbates differences in academic preparation over time.<sup>4</sup>

Exhibit VII-2 highlights changes in ADA, comparing ADA from the pre-grant baseline year (SY 2007–2008) to that of the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010).

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<sup>3</sup> Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog (2007). An Early Warning System. *Educational Leadership*. 65 (2). Pg. 28-33.

<sup>4</sup> Gottfried, Michael (2010). Evaluating the Relationship between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. *American Educational Research Journal* June 2010, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 434-465.

**Exhibit VII-2:  
Changes in Average Daily Attendance**

<b>School</b>	<b>Average Daily Attendance (ADA)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Ninth Grade ADA<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Percentage of Students missing 54 days or more</b>
<b>Bartram HS</b>			
Baseline Year (2007–2008)	80.4	78.0	23.2
Year 1 (2009–2010)	80.5	80.6	18.5
Net Change	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2.6</b>	<b>-4.7</b>
<b>Du Bois HS<sup>3</sup></b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	81.6	Not available	13.1
Year 1 (2009–2010)	76.4	64.5	20.1
Net Change	-5.2	Not available	+7
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>			
Baseline Year (2007–2008)	75.2	76.0	23.5
Year 1 (2009–2010)	75.6	79.1	20.6
Net Change	<b>+4</b>	<b>+3.1</b>	<b>-2.9</b>
<b>Germantown HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	77.9	76.0	23.2
Year 1 (2009–2010)	74.6	70.5	29.9
Net Change	- 3.3	-5.5	+6.7
<b>Lincoln HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	80.1	78.0	15.8
Year 1 (2009–2010)	81.5	79.5	15.0
Net Change	<b>+1.4</b>	<b>+1.5</b>	<b>-.8</b>
<b>Overbrook HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	76.7	72.0	21.8
Year 1 (2009–2010)	78.5	80.6	21.2
Net Change	<b>+1.8</b>	<b>+8.6</b>	<b>-.6</b>
<b>University City HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	76.6	72.0	23.6
Year 1 (2009–2010)	77.0	72.8	22.6
Net Change	<b>+4</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>-1.0</b>

School	Average Daily Attendance (ADA) <sup>1</sup>	Ninth Grade ADA <sup>2</sup>	Percentage of Students missing 54 days or more
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	77.5	Not available	20.9
Year 1 (2009–2010)	79.4	76.4	20.2
Net Change	<b>+1.9</b>	Not available	<b>-.7</b>
<b>Average for Empowerment Schools in Philadelphia<sup>4</sup></b>			
Year 1 (2009–2010)	80.6	77.6	15.7
<p><sup>1</sup> Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is calculated by taking the total number of days of student attendance and dividing it by the total number of days of school for all students on the schools' registrar during the same period.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> Ninth grade attendance data for SY 2009–2010 are from the year-end MIS reports, while data for SY 2007–2008 are from data reports provided by SDP.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> Ninth grade ADA for Du Bois HS is a calculated average based on quarterly reports.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Empowerment Schools in Philadelphia are schools that are in Corrective Action II status under NCLB, meaning they have missed performance targets for five or more years. All of the MEES schools in SDP are also Empowerment Schools, and Empowerment Schools serve a similar population to the MEES schools.</p> <p>Note: The table does not include data on Berkshire JSHS because it is a residential school and does not report ADA as do the other schools. At Berkshire JSHS in SY 2009–2010, zero students refused to attend class.</p>			

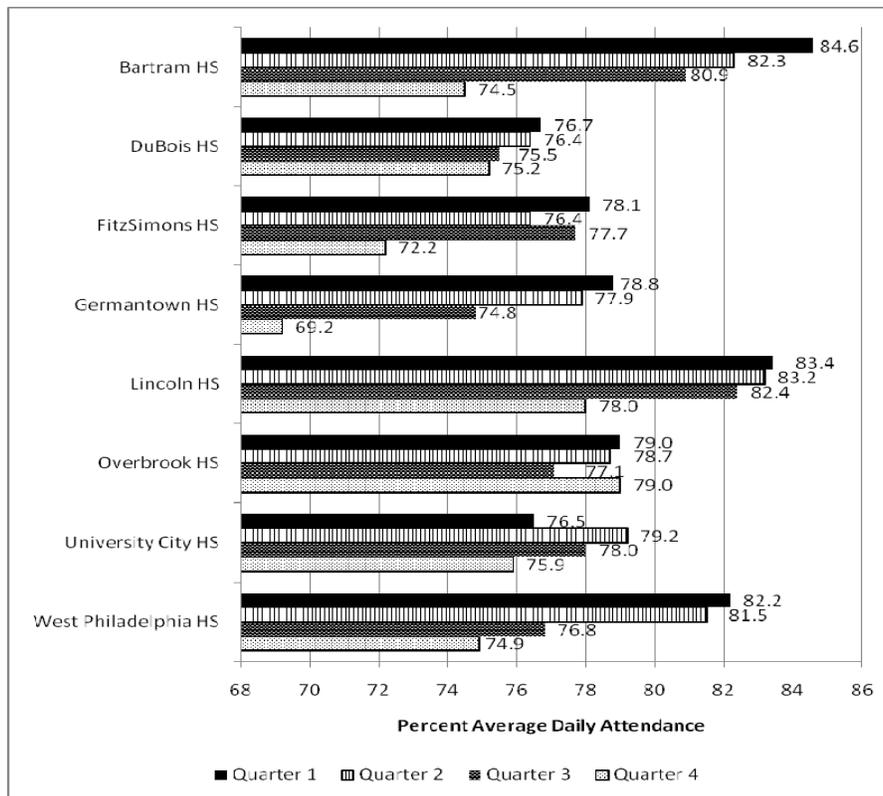
The following are key findings on attendance, based on the data available.

- Overall, ADA remains very low at the MEES schools.** ADA for the first year of implementation ranged from a low of 76.4 percent at Germantown HS to a high of 81.5 percentage points at Lincoln HS. With the exception of Lincoln HS, all schools are below the ADA average of 80.6 percent for Empowerment Schools in the SDP.
- Changes in school-wide ADA are small, with six schools showing marginal increases and two showing decreases.** No schools met the target DOL performance goal of raising ADA by five percentage points. West Philadelphia HS showed the greatest gain in ADA, with an increase of 1.9 percentage points. Lincoln HS and Overbrook HS also showed increases in ADA of over one percentage point. In contrast, two schools, Du Bois HS and Germantown HS, experienced rather dramatic declines in ADA (5.2 and 3.3 percentage points, respectively). Staff members at these schools attribute declining attendance to the a higher proportion of repeat ninth graders, who historically have low attendance.
- In five of the six schools for which we have ninth-grade attendance data, ADA for ninth graders rose more than for the overall population.** For the baseline year, most schools had a lower ADA for ninth graders than for the overall student population. At the end of the first year of implementation, however, several schools had made progress with ninth-grade attendance, so much so that ADA for ninth graders exceeded that of the overall student population. Overbrook HS had an increase in ninth-grade attendance of 8.6 percent, well over two times that of other schools. One reason for this is that Overbrook HS staff members took special steps to examine data on attendance, held attendance support groups, and conducted home visits to all ninth-grade

students who had been chronically truant. Schools with strong, well-developed ninth grade academies, such as Bartram HS and Overbrook HS, had higher levels of ninth grade attendance than those with no ninth grade academy.

- **With the exception of Germantown HS and DuBois HS, all SDP schools decreased the percentage of students who were absent 54 days or more.** Bartram HS decreased the number of students who missed 54 days or more by nearly five percentage points (4.7 percent), while other schools had decreases that ranged from .6 to 2.9 percentage points.
- **A quarter-by-quarter analysis of ADA shows that, for most schools, attendance dropped significantly from quarter one to quarter four.** As illustrated in Exhibit VII-3, ADA for most schools was at least five percentage points higher in the first quarter of the school year than it was in the last quarter. School staff indicated that a slow but steady decline in ADA is typical. Two schools, however, defied this pattern. Overbrook HS was the only school that increased ADA in the last quarter of the school year. One reason for this is that Overbrook HS staff members took very intensive steps to increase attendance, as is described in detail above. University City HS also defied the larger pattern, as attendance increased from quarter one to quarter two. This increase also is due in part to outreach to parents, as school staff arranged meetings with the parents of every student on the Early Warning Indicator (EWI) list.

**Exhibit VII-3:  
Quarterly ADA for SY 2009–2010**



At most schools, the evaluation did not have access to attendance data for individual grant-funded programs. In the case of Du Bois HS, however, the school reported ADA for students enrolled in specific grant-funded programs, such as the Futures Program and the Transitional Evening School (TES), indicating that attendance was significantly higher for participants of these programs than for the general school population. For instance, although ADA for *all* ninth graders at Du Bois HS in SY 2009–2010 was the lowest of the schools (64.5 percent), this was mostly due to the high number of repeat ninth graders at this school. Sixty percent of all ninth graders at Du Bois HS are repeating the ninth grade, a percentage that is much higher than that of other schools. ADA for the 84 *incoming* ninth graders, all of whom attended the ninth grade academy, was 83 percent, significantly higher than that of the average for all ninth graders or the general school population. Similarly, Du Bois HS reported that ADA for the 19 students attending the Transitional Evening School increased from 36 percent to 65 percent as a group and that ADA for students in the Futures Works Program was five to ten percentage points higher than for all students at the school.<sup>5</sup>

Although some schools have made small increases in attendance in the first year of grant implementation, particularly for ninth graders, this remains an area for improvement. The schools continue to take steps to improve attendance, with a particular focus on ninth graders. For instance, the SDP is taking district-wide measures to raise attendance by requiring that all schools with an ADA below 90 percent hire attendance and truancy coordinators to monitor student attendance, provide oversight for attendance interventions, and make referrals to truancy court.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Transitional Evening School is a grant-funded credit retrieval program offered at Du Bois HS after school hours. The Futures Works program, which is also grant-funded, is a case management program for ninth-grade students.

<sup>6</sup> Imagine 2014: Project Safe Schools. <http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/announcements/project-safe-schools-9-22-10.pdf> Retrieved September 25, 2010.

## Student Behavior

One of the primary goals of the MEES grant is to reduce the level of violence at the schools, including the rate of incidents that lead to suspensions,<sup>7</sup> expulsion,<sup>8</sup> or arrest.<sup>9</sup> Schools report MIS behavioral data in quarterly reports and in end-of-the-year reports. Exhibit VII-4 presents changes between the pre-grant baseline year (SY 2007–2008) and the first year of grant implementation (SY 2008–2009) in the following areas: (1) the number of serious incidents of violence that count towards PDS status, (2) the suspension rate per 100 students, (3) the expulsion rate per 100 students, and (4) the arrest rate per 100 students.<sup>10</sup>

**Exhibit VII-4:  
Changes in the Number of Serious Incidents and  
Rate of Suspensions, Expulsions, and Arrests per 100 Students**

School Year	Number of Serious Incidents	Suspension Rate	Expulsion Rate	Arrest Rate
<b>Bartram HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	15	23.0	2.9	1.9
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	18	12.6	2.3	1.4
Net Change	+3	<b>-10.4</b>	<b>-.6</b>	<b>-.50</b>
<b>Berkshire JSHS<sup>1, 2</sup></b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	210	106.0	4.9	Not applicable
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	170	14.8	1.3	Not applicable
Net Change	<b>-40</b>	<b>-91.2</b>	-3.6	Not applicable

<sup>7</sup> Suspensions tracked through the MIS include only out-of-school suspensions, where a student is excluded from school for up to 10 days.

<sup>8</sup> Expulsion is the exclusion of a student from the School District for a period exceeding 10 school days. Expulsions may be permanent or may be for a specified period of time. In order for a student to be expelled, he or she must go through an expulsion hearing. Expulsion rates also include “disciplinary transfers.”

<sup>9</sup> Arrest numbers include all students arrested on school grounds and students who are arrested off of school grounds, if school staff is notified by police of the arrest. Students who are released without being referred to Juvenile Court are not included in arrest numbers.

<sup>10</sup> In most cases, rates were calculated using enrollment numbers provided by schools in the “new school year” MIS reports. For FitzSimons HS (a combined middle school-high school), behavioral data is for the whole school, so rates were calculated using the whole school enrollment of 453, rather than the enrollment provided in the new school year report, which is for grades nine–twelve only. In the case of Berkshire JSHS, rates are calculated using the cumulative number of students enrolled over the school year, which was taken from the fourth quarter MIS report.

School Year	Number of Serious Incidents	Suspension Rate	Expulsion Rate	Arrest Rate
<b>Du Bois HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	23	55.5	2.5	Not available
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	4	26.0	0	1.0
Net Change	<b>-19</b>	<b>-29.5</b>	<b>-2.5</b>	Not available
<b>FitzSimons HS<sup>1</sup></b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	7	73.0	3.2	8.4
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	22	116.0	8.5	9.6
Net Change	+15	+43.0	+5.3	+1.2
<b>Germantown HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	23	91.5	7.8	6.6
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	18	52.0	4.0	5.9
Net Change	<b>-5</b>	<b>-39.5</b>	<b>-3.8</b>	<b>-.70</b>
<b>Lincoln HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	28	39.5	1.6	5.2
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	37	49.0	1.4	6.2
Net Change	+9	+9.5	<b>-.20</b>	+1.0
<b>Overbrook HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	20	29.8	3.2	9.7
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	22	19.3	4.6	2.6
Net Change	+2	<b>-10.5</b>	+1.4	<b>-7.1</b>
<b>University City HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	18	52.8	1.7	4.3
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	9	70.4	4.4	2.0
Net Change	<b>-9</b>	+17.8	+2.7	<b>-2.3</b>
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	19	66.4	6.2	4.1
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	8	20.4	6.5	1.4
Net Change	<b>-8</b>	<b>-46.0</b>	+3.0	<b>-2.7</b>

<sup>1</sup> Behavioral data for FitzSimons HS and Berkshire JSHS are for the whole school, including students in the seventh and eighth grade. The rates of behavioral incidents, therefore, were calculated using whole school enrollment for these schools, rather than enrollment for grades nine–twelve only.

<sup>2</sup> Data for Berkshire JSHS is distinct from that of other schools. The incident rate is based on Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) score for New York State, rather than the total number of incidents, because our baseline data is a VADIR score. Berkshire JSHS had seven serious incidents in SY 2009–2010. The expulsion rate includes students who are referred to a more restrictive environment. Also, the large reduction in the rate of suspensions reflects Berkshire JSHS's use of classroom Behavioral Management Specialists (BMS) instead of suspension.

The following are key findings on violent incidences, suspensions, expulsions and arrests.

- **Five schools reduced the number of serious incidents counting towards PDS status.** Du Bois HS showed the greatest decline in serious incidents, reducing the number of serious incidents from 23 in SY 2007–2008 to four in SY 2009–2010. Berkshire JSHS also had a dramatic decline in serious incidents, something staff attributes to grant-funded case management staff and strategies for helping to monitor students during passing periods. University City HS and West Philadelphia HS also reduced the number of serious incidents by 50 percent or more from the baseline year.
- **Three schools were removed from the PDS list at the end of the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010).** The removal of West Philadelphia HS, Germantown HS, and University HS from the PDS list at the end of the 2009–2010 school year reduced the total number of MEES schools on the list to four (of nine schools). Although University City HS has been on and off the PDS list over the last couple of years, this year is the first time that Germantown HS and West Philadelphia HS have been removed from the PDS list since the 2002–2003 school year, when the NCLB legislation first required that “persistently dangerous” schools be identified. Du Bois HS and Bartram HS were removed from the PDS list at the end of the planning year (SY 2008–2009). The rest of the schools remain on the PDS list.
- **In SY 2009–2010, FitzSimons HS experienced increases in suspensions, the arrest rate, and in the number of “serious incidents” that count towards PDS status.** The number of serious incidents at FitzSimons HS in the first year of implementation was three times what it was in the baseline year, rising from seven to 22. FitzSimons HS had a dramatic, across-the-board increase in behavioral incidents. FitzSimons is a combined middle school and high school and although the grant serves students in grades nine through twelve, behavioral data is inclusive of all students who attend the school. Although the behavioral data is not broken out by grade-level, school staff members report that most of the behavioral incidents are by students in grades seven and eight. Staff members at FitzSimons HS attribute the SY 2009–2010 increase in serious incidents and suspensions to a lack of climate staffing. The two staff members who are responsible for climate interventions at FitzSimons HS were in a leadership program to become school principals in SY 2009–2010 and this training program kept them away from the school for a great deal of the school year. According to school staff members, this contributed to the increase in violence and suspensions at the school.
- **Schools differed significantly in the rate of suspensions that students received, from a low of 12.6 suspensions per 100 students at Bartram HS to a high of 116 suspensions per 100 students at FitzSimons HS (SY 2009–2010).** Five schools have a relatively low rate of suspension, with less than 30 suspensions per 100 students, while three schools have approximately 50–70 suspensions per 100 students. FitzSimons HS, an all-boys school, has a rate of suspensions that exceeds that of the other schools by a significant margin. Differences in the suspension rate map clearly to the rate of serious incidents at

the schools; that is, schools with a higher number of serious incidents also have a higher rate of suspensions. Research suggests that the suspension rate is influenced by a range of school-level factors, such as the school administrator's philosophy about discipline and the physical condition of the school.<sup>11</sup> Research also indicates that boys experience a much higher rate of suspension than girls, which may partially explain why FitzSimons HS has a higher rate of suspension.

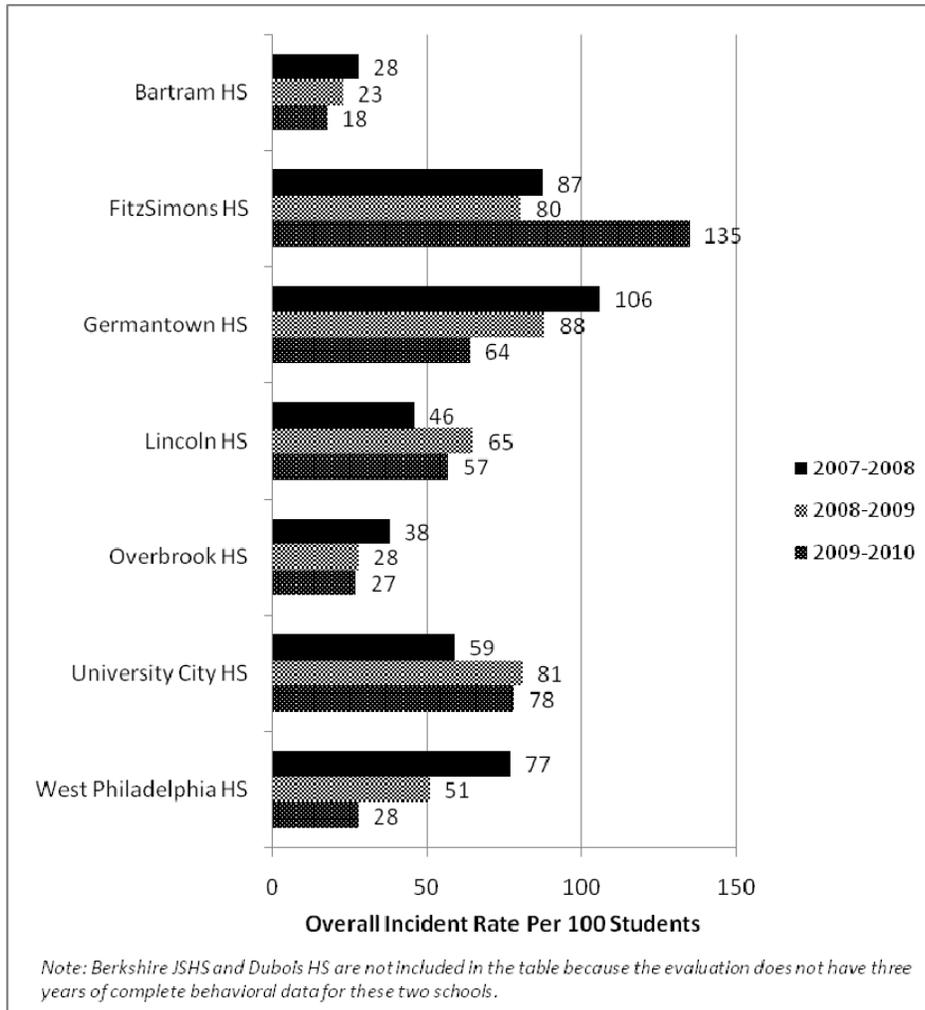
- **Five schools reduced the suspension rate from SY 2007–2008 to SY 2009–2010, with the most significant declines occurring at Berkshire JSHS, West Philadelphia HS, Germantown HS, and Du Bois HS.** Schools that had a dramatic reduction in suspensions also reduced the number of serious incidents that occurred at the school. Each of these schools placed a high emphasis on improving the school climate, instituting programs like youth court, peacemaking circles, and intensive case management in order to reduce the number of suspensions. In some cases, these reductions may be due to specific grant-funded programs. For instance, Berkshire JSHS no longer “suspends” students, but uses Behavioral Management Specialists to manage students’ behavior within the classroom setting. Germantown HS used grant funds to create an in-school suspension program (the Alternative Learning Center) that may have contributed to reductions in out-of-school suspensions. However, not all schools that created in-school suspension programs had a reduction in suspensions.
- **In the first year of implementation, the expulsion rate ranged from a low of zero at Du Bois HS to a high of 8.5 per 100 students at FitzSimons HS.** The expulsion rate increased at four schools for which we have baseline data, and declined at three of the schools. The expulsion rate increased the most at FitzSimons HS and University City HS, while declining the most at Germantown HS. In general, the expulsion rate closely parallels other behavioral trends at each of the schools. Du Bois HS’s low rate of expulsion may be due in part to the work of its Student Support Team case management model, where a team of counselors and teachers target services to at-risk students in order to improve behavior and reduce expulsions.

Exhibit VII-5 graphs the overall incident rate per 100 students for three years. The overall incident rate is the total number of serious incidents, suspensions, expulsions, and arrests per 100 students.

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<sup>11</sup> McLoughlon, C & Noltemeyer, A. (2010). *Research into Factors Contributing to Discipline Use and Disproportionality in Major Urban Schools.*

**Exhibit VII-5:  
Changes in the Overall Incident Rate Per 100 Students,  
SY 2007–2008, SY 2008–2009, SY 2009–2010**



As illustrated in the exhibit, four of the seven schools for which we have data have experienced a continuous decline in the overall incident rate over the last three years. West Philadelphia HS and Germantown HS have shown a consistent reduction in the overall incident rate since the award of the grant. The overall incident rate for Lincoln HS and University City HS increased for the planning year of the grant (SY 2008–2009), but then declined somewhat during the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010). Many school leaders attribute the positive shifts in climate to the additional educational staff members hired by the MEES grant, saying that teachers have better control of their classrooms and, as a result, there are fewer disciplinary referrals and suspensions. At Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS, school leaders viewed grant-

funded case management and counseling staff members as playing key roles in reducing the number of serious incidents and the rate of suspensions.

In contrast to the trend at most other schools, FitzSimons HS's overall incident rate fell during the planning year of the grant, only to spike up in the first year of grant implementation. In SY 2009–2010, the overall incident rate at FitzSimons HS was 134 per 100 students, almost twice that of any other school. Several different data sources, including interviews with staff members and students, suggest that climate protocols were not consistently enforced in SY 2009–2010. For instance, a student said that, despite having metal detectors at school, he does not feel safe because, "I know of certain kids that get in the school without even coming through the metal detectors, who have friends on the inside that they'll call or text and say, 'come open the door for me.'" As discussed previously, FitzSimons staff members attribute the elevated incident rate to the lack of sufficient climate staffing at the school, and have hired new staff members to focus on climate in SY 2010–2011.

Many of the students who were interviewed during the round-three site visits reported that the schools they attended were either not as bad as they expected them to be, or that the school had improved as a result of new leadership or new programs. The following student quotes are representative.

*It's not as bad as I expected it to be. Before hand, I was like, 'don't make me go here!' I pictured all this graffiti all over the walls. The way [this school] is described, you expect that it is all about survival of the fittest. But it's not like that. The teachers are good. You can learn here.*

- Student, Germantown HS

*It changed a lot. When I started here, there were basically fires every day. The new principal, she really changed it. We have more programs than before.*

- Student, West Philadelphia HS

Although a few schools, such as FitzSimons HS, appear to be facing significant challenges to improving their climate, the majority of schools are making incremental improvements. School staff members generally attribute the improvement in climate to increased staffing, reduced class sizes, and increased supportive services, such as those offered through the Student Success Centers. The improvements in school climate discussed in this section are promising, particularly given that many of the grant-funded interventions for climate were scheduled to launch in fall of 2010.

## Changes in Academic Performance

The overarching goal of the MEES grants is to increase students' academic performance, including their rate of high school completion, in order to improve their readiness for the workforce and postsecondary training. The following are the academic performance goals that schools are trying to achieve with the grant:

- decrease rate of first-time ninth graders failing;
- decrease rate of repeating ninth-grade students failing for a second year;
- increase percentage of students testing at grade level;
- increase percentage of students who are no longer basic-skills deficient; and
- increase graduation rate.

The evaluation team did not have access to three categories of data in time for this report: the percentage of students who are testing at grade level, the percentage of students who are no longer basic skills deficient, and the graduation rate. This chapter, therefore, looks primarily at ninth-grade academic performance and standardized test scores in order to gauge shifts in academic performance at the schools.

## Ninth-Grade Course Completion and Promotion Rates

The MEES grant prioritizes interventions targeted at ninth graders, because more students fail the ninth grade than any other grade level. Students who repeat the ninth grade are more than 25 percentage points more likely than other students to drop out of school, and approximately 30 percent of high school dropouts never progress beyond the ninth grade.<sup>12</sup> This section includes data on ninth-grade course completion and ninth-grade promotion as one measure of school change.

Ninth-grade course completion and promotion data is valuable for understanding academic performance and for predicting graduation outcomes. Robert Balfanz, of John Hopkins, argues that course completion is a better predictor of graduation than test scores.<sup>13</sup> It is difficult, however, to interpret course completion and promotion data because variations in the quality and standards of the teaching staff, or shifts in curriculum, may account for differences in course completion from year to year and from school to school. A decrease in the percentage of students who fail a course may mean that teachers are more effective at teaching core content or,

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<sup>12</sup> Neild, Ruth. "Falling off Track during the Transition to High School: What we Know and What Can be Done." [http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/19\\_01\\_04.pdf](http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/19_01_04.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.every1graduates.org/PDFs/Three\\_Steps.pdf](http://www.every1graduates.org/PDFs/Three_Steps.pdf)

alternatively, it may mean that students are being held to lower standards. Even with a standardized curriculum, teachers have different expectations of the threshold that students must meet in order to pass a course. One teacher we spoke with, for instance, said that he passed students who showed consistent attendance and effort, even if they did not master all of the course material. Although course completion and promotion data are an imperfect measure of school change, they are an absolutely pivotal part of the puzzle, because students who stagnate in the same classes and at the same grade level are at a very high risk of dropping out.

In order for ninth-grade students to move onto the tenth grade in the SDP or BCPS, they must earn seven units, including passing one unit each of English 1 and Algebra 1. As described in Chapter IV, most first-time ninth graders take English 1 and Algebra 1 along with a second period of math or English (i.e. enriched math or English). Failing English 1 or Algebra 1 during the school year does not necessarily mean that students fail to progress to the tenth grade, however, because students also have opportunities to re-take failed courses during summer school and to earn credits in after-school credit recovery classes. Ninth graders can fail to be promoted to the tenth grade if they fail three or more courses and do not make up the units for these courses in credit retrieval or summer school. Exhibit VII-6 summarizes changes in ninth-grade completion between the baseline year (SY 2007–2008) and the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010).

**Exhibit VII-6:  
Changes in Ninth-Grade Course Completion**

**Percent of Ninth-Grade Students Who Fail to Pass:**

School Year	English	Math	Three or More Subjects
<b>Bartram HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	25.5	30.0	23.9
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	14.7	24.9	18.1
Net Change	<b>-10.8</b>	<b>-5.1</b>	<b>-5.8</b>
<b>Berkshire JSHS<sup>2</sup></b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	35.6	32.7	Not available
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	19.0	22.4	Not available
Net Change	<b>-16.6</b>	<b>-10.3</b>	Not available
<b>Du Bois HS<sup>1</sup></b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	21.9	Not available	62.3
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	11.5	33.7	43.1
Net Change	<b>-10.4</b>	Not available	<b>-20.2</b>

**Percent of Ninth-Grade Students Who Fail to Pass:**

School Year	English	Math	Three or More Subjects
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	21.3	31.5	29.6
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	38.0	29.6	14.8
Net Change	+16.7	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-14.8</b>
<b>Germantown HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	20.9	34.0	32.8
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	31.9	43.2	25.3
Net Change	+11.0	+9.2	<b>-7.5</b>
<b>Lincoln HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	30.0	29.2	34.5
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	24.0	30.1	25.0
Net Change	<b>-6.0</b>	+9	<b>-9.5</b>
<b>Overbrook HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	23.8	17.7	21.8
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	26.9	18.7	9.9
Net Change	+3.1	+1.0	<b>-11.9</b>
<b>University City HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	25.6	29.8	32.2
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	25.4	35.0	39.6
Net Change	<b>-20</b>	+5.2	+7.4
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>			
Baseline (2007–2008)	26.3	26.3	31.5
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	14.2	25.4	17.7
Net Change	<b>-12.1</b>	<b>-90</b>	<b>-13.8</b>
<sup>1</sup> In the MIS reports, Du Bois HS reported course completion data for first-time ninth graders only. We include numbers here for all ninth graders to make it comparable with other schools.			
<sup>2</sup> Because Berkshire JSHS used a credit-retrieval approach, this school reported the number of students who took ninth-grade English and ninth-grade math, and the corresponding number of students who passed these courses.			

The following are key findings on ninth-grade course completion.

- The percentage of ninth graders who failed three or more subjects declined for all but one of the schools for which we have data.** The percentage of students who failed three or more subjects in SY 2009–2010 ranged from a low of 9.9 percentage points at Overbrook HS to a high of 39.6 percentage points at University City HS. With the exception of University City HS, all schools

reduced the percentage of ninth graders who failed three or more subjects from the baseline year.

- **The failure rate of ninth graders in English declined somewhat at five schools, while increasing at three of the schools.** During the implementation year, the percentage of students who failed English ranged from a low of 14 percentage points at West Philadelphia HS and Bartram HS to a high of over 30 percentage points at FitzSimons HS, Du Bois HS, and Germantown HS. The high transfer rate at Du Bois HS and Germantown HS may have contributed to the higher rate of course failure at these schools, because students who transfer in during the middle of a semester are more likely to fail their courses.
- **The failure rate of ninth graders in math declined at four schools and increased at the other four schools.** During the implementation year, the percentage of students who failed math ranged from a low of 18.7 percentage points at Overbrook HS to a high of 43.2 percentage points at Germantown HS.
- **The failure rate for Algebra is consistently higher than it is for English.** In general, there is a shortage of math teachers at the target schools and this may contribute to the higher failure rate in Algebra.
- **Two schools showed a decline in all measures of the course failure rate.** Bartram HS and West Philadelphia HS showed a decline in the course failure rate for English and Math, as well as in the percentage of students failing three or more courses.

The course failure data shows mixed results for the schools. The results are somewhat surprising given the intensive focus that most of the schools placed on English and math. As described in Chapter IV, most schools provided two periods of math and English to each ninth grader. Many ninth-grade students attended English 1, Algebra 1, remedial English, and remedial math, with the hope that remedial support would help students pass their core English 1 and Algebra 1 courses. Without individual-level data, it is not possible to know whether students placed into enriched English and math classes fared better as a group than students who were not in these classes. Changes in the curriculum and the structure of classes, however, likely contributed to the uneven results. For instance, SDP mandated that schools use an English 1A/1B and Algebra 1A/1B structure for the first time in SY 2009–2010. The 1A/1B format, which requires that students pass the first semester of English or Algebra before moving to the second semester, may have contributed to the mixed results for SDP schools.

Exhibit VII-7 provides an overview of changes in the promotion rate for first-time ninth graders in SDP schools over a three-year period. It shows that, despite the mixed results for course completion, most SDP schools are seeing an increase in ninth-grade promotion. This suggests that students are taking advantage of enhanced opportunities to make up credits in math and English through summer school or in credit retrieval classes offered after school.

As illustrated in the exhibit, six of the seven SDP schools significantly increased the percentage of first-time ninth graders promoted to the tenth grade between the baseline year and the first year of grant implementation. In SY 2007–2008 the promotion of first-time ninth graders ranged from a low of 51.7 percentage points at University HS to a high of 69.7 percentage points at Overbrook HS. At the end of the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010), the promotion rate for six of the seven schools ranged from 74.1 percentage points to 89.1 percentage points, an increase of 17 to 31 percentage points per school. The exception to this trend is University HS and Du Bois HS, which both stayed more or less the same with a one to four percentage point decrease in the percentage of first-time ninth graders promoted in 2010, when compared to the baseline year. The promotion rates are likely influenced by the full range of grant-funded services at the schools, particularly those focusing on providing intensive support to ninth grade students and avenues for students to make-up credits for failed classes.

**Exhibit VII-7:  
Percentage of First-Time Ninth-Grade Students  
Promoted to the Tenth Grade at SDP Schools**

School Year	Percent Promoted
<b>Bartram HS</b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	60.0
Planning Year (2008-2009)	77.7
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	77.6
Net change from baseline to Y1	<b>+17.6</b>
<b>Du Bois HS<sup>1</sup></b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	57.4
Planning Year (2008-2009)	Not available
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	53.6
Net change from baseline to Y1	-3.8
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	54.7
Planning Year (2008-2009)	71.4
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	85.7
Net change from baseline to Y1	<b>+31.0</b>
<b>Germantown HS</b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	58.9
Planning Year (2008-2009)	73.2
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	76.7
Net change from baseline to Y1	<b>+17.8</b>

School Year	Percent Promoted
<b>Lincoln HS</b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	54.2
Planning Year (2008-2009)	57.0
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	74.1
Net change from baseline to Y1	<b>+19.9</b>
<b>Overbrook HS</b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	69.7
Planning Year (2008-2009)	87.2
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	87.5
Net change from baseline to Y1	<b>+17.8</b>
<b>University City HS</b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	51.7
Planning Year (2008-2009)	60.6
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	50.4
Net change from baseline to Y1	-1.3
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>	
Baseline (2007–2008)	57.8
Planning Year (2008-2009)	68.9
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	89.1
Net change from baseline to Y1	<b>+31.3</b>
<i>Note: Comparable data not available for Berkshire JSHS.</i>	

Although the evaluation team does not have three years of grade promotion data for Du Bois HS, the school did report SY 2009–2010 promotion data for all incoming ninth graders and ninth graders who participated in the FUTURES Works program. Although the overall promotion rate for first-time ninth-grade students at Du Bois HS is relatively low (58.8 percent), the promotion rate was much higher for students who participated in the grant-funded FUTURES Works program (70.6 percent). The nearly 12 percentage-point difference in promotion rate for FUTURES participants speaks to the value-added of grant-funded case management and support services.

Almost all of first-time ninth graders who are “not promoted” are retained at the same school or at another school in the district as “repeating ninth graders.” A certain percentage of these students, however, do not re-enroll for the following year at any SDP school. For SY 2009–2010, the percentage of failing first-time ninth grade students who did not enroll in SDP ranged from 3.2 percentage points at Germantown HS to 11.8 percentage points at University City HS.

Students who do not re-enroll at a SDP school either transfer to schools in other districts (i.e. charter schools) or drop out of school altogether.

Exhibit VII-8 shows promotion data for students at SDP schools who are repeating the ninth grade (i.e. students that are in their second year of ninth grade). As illustrated in the exhibit, the number of repeat ninth graders decreased at all of the schools in SY 2009–2010 when compared to the baseline year. The reduction in the number repeating ninth graders was particularly pronounced in schools that implemented on-site alternative programs such as OASIS and Twilight Schools.

Although promotion rates are considerably lower for students repeating the ninth grade than they are for first-time ninth graders, a number of schools made significant progress with this population. Five of the seven SDP schools increased the percentage of repeating ninth graders promoted to the tenth grade, with a few schools increasing this rate by 20 percentage points or more. Only at Germantown HS was there a decline in the percentage of repeating ninth-grade students promoted to the tenth grade. Perhaps more significantly, almost all SDP schools reduced the percentage of repeat ninth-grade students who did not re-enroll, decreasing potential dropouts by 4–28 percentage points, depending on the school. This finding, of course, is tempered by the fact that most schools had diverted a high number of repeating ninth-grade students to alternative programs.

**Exhibit VII-8:  
Changes in the Percentage of Repeat Ninth-Grade Students  
Promoted to the Tenth Grade at SDP schools**

School	Number of Repeating Ninth-Grade Students	Percentage of Repeat Ninth-Grade Students:		
		Promoted	Retained	Who Do Not Re-Enroll
<b>Bartram HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	239	37.2	13.4	49.4
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	45	48.9	8.9	42.2
Net Change	-194	<b>+11.7</b>	-4.5	<b>-7.2</b>
<b>Du Bois HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	91	20.9	79.1	Not available
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	127	33.9	53.5	12.6
Net Change	+36	<b>+13.0</b>	-25.6	Not available

School	Number of Repeating Ninth-Grade Students	Percentage of Repeat Ninth-Grade Students:		
		Promoted	Retained	Who Do Not Re-Enroll
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	22	22.7	18.2	59.1
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	13	69.2	0	30.8
Net Change	-9	<b>+46.5</b>	-18.2	<b>-28.3</b>
<b>Germantown HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	145	36.1	7.5	56.4
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	126	33.1	14.3	52.4
Net Change	-19	-3.0	+6.8	<b>-4.0</b>
<b>Lincoln HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	307	29.7	23.8	46.5
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	122	42.3	25.4	31.9
Net Change	-185	<b>+12.6</b>	+1.6	<b>-14.6</b>
<b>Overbrook HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	221	25.8	29.4	44.8
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	11	45.5	27.3	27.3
Net Change	-210	<b>+19.7</b>	-2.1	<b>-17.5</b>
<b>University City HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	125	28.8	23.2	48.0
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	59	28.8	18.6	66.1
Net Change	-66	0	-4.6	+18.1
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>				
Baseline (2007–2008)	166	25.3	27.7	47.0
Y1 implementation (2009–2010)	28	50.0	7.1	42.8
Net Change	-138	<b>+24.7</b>	-20.6	<b>-4.2</b>

University City HS is unusual in that it experienced an increase of 18 percentage points in the number of repeating ninth-grade students who did not re-enroll. As discussed previously, University City HS also had a low promotion rate among first-time ninth-grade students. The low promotion and retention percentages may be due to the uncertainty created by the transition of University City HS into a “promise academy.” As described in Chapter II and Chapter IV, teachers and students at University City HS knew as of spring 2010 that, as part of the restructuring process at the school, at least 50 percent of teachers would lose their jobs at the end of the school year. The uncertainty created by this transition contributed to low morale among teachers and students at the school, and may be partially responsible for higher failure rates among students. Students with low morale may have decided to change school districts or to drop out of school rather than to return to University City HS.

## **Academic Gains**

A central goal of the MEES grants is to increase the percentage of students testing at grade level and the percentage of students who are no longer basic-skills deficient at the target schools. Eight of the schools are using the Gates Macginitie Reading Test (GMRT) to assess changes in reading and a Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) to assess ninth-grade math scores, while Berkshire JSHS is using Star Testing. In Philadelphia, incoming ninth-grade students took a pre-test in October of 2009 and the post-test a year later, in October 2010. Initially, SDP schools tested students in May of 2010, but SDP district staff said that the tests had a very high non-completion rate, making them difficult to score. An SDP staff member attributes the non-completion rate to testing burnout among students, who take multiple diagnostic tests throughout the school year. After consulting with DOL, SDP staff members decided that pre- and post-tests should be administered once a year in October in order to minimize the testing burden on schools and students. Although the new testing schedule minimizes the burden on students, it introduces the challenge of “summer learning loss” and also increases the chance that students will have left school prior to completing a post-test.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the new testing schedule, the evaluation does not have access to consistent data on the reading and math achievement of ninth graders for seven of the nine schools. We have some achievement data for Du Bois HS and Berkshire JSHS, but these are incomplete because neither

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<sup>14</sup> Research indicates students lose, on average, three months of math learning and two months of reading achievement during the summer. Low-SES students lose more learning than high-SES students. See, for example: Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). “The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review.” *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227–268.

of these schools has submitted formal achievement scores through the MIS system. The data that we do have are highlighted below.

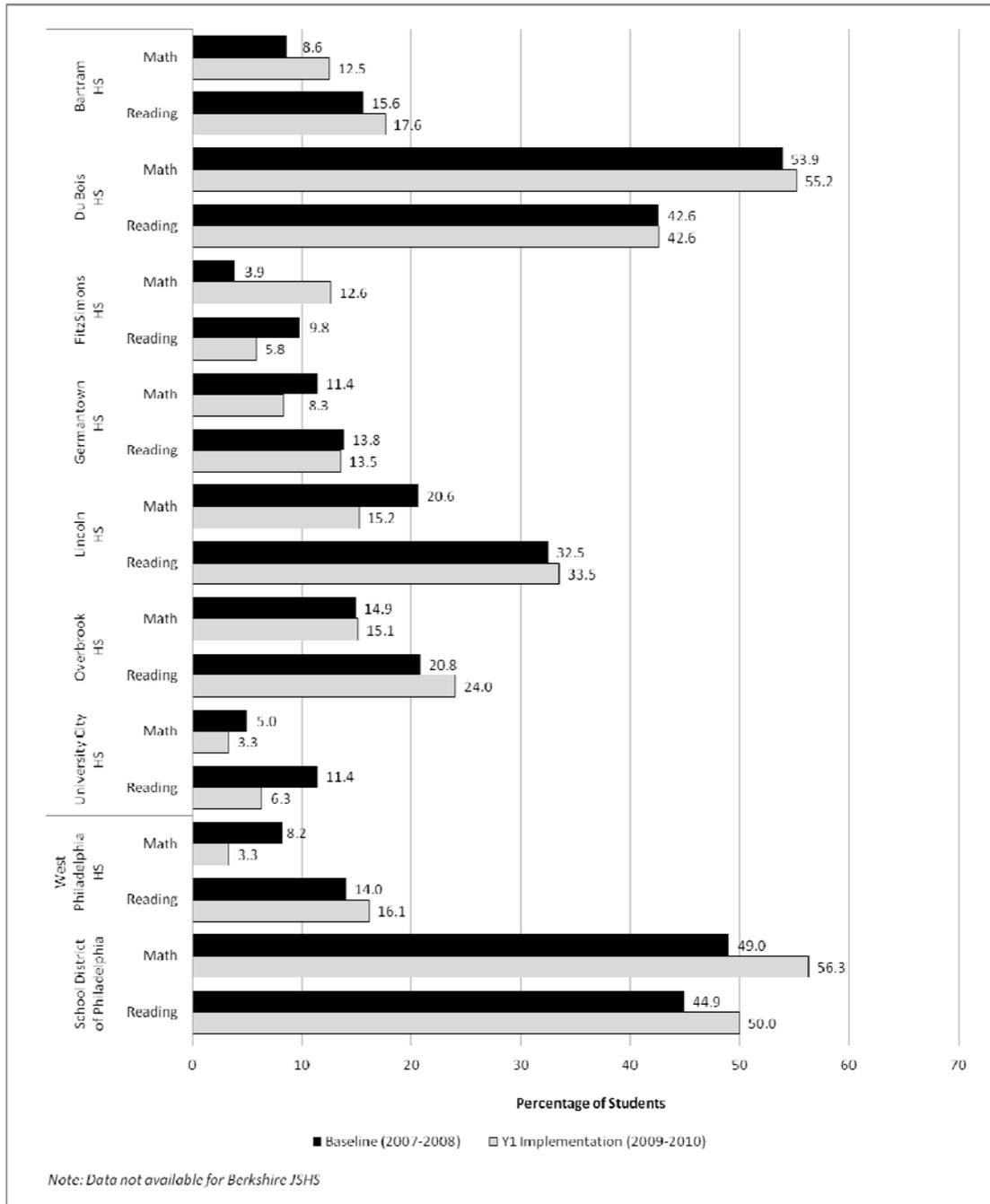
- **Berkshire JSHS met its goals for math and English.** The performance goal for Berkshire JSHS is that 50 percent of accountable students<sup>15</sup> make Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) gains on the STAR Test. Of 121 accountable students, 64 percent achieved NCE gains in reading and 73 percent achieved NCE gains in math. A secondary performance goal for Berkshire JSHS is that 50 percent of students make appropriate progress, which is defined by a two-percentage-point gain on the STAR test for every 20 days of attendance at the school. Berkshire JSHS met this goal, with 56 percent of accountable students making appropriate progress in English and 68 percent making appropriate progress in Math.
- **Du Bois HS shows academic gains among incoming ninth graders in reading and math.** The results of the GMRT English test of incoming ninth graders were mixed, with 30.2 percent of students posting gains of at least a grade level and 44.2 percent showing gains of at least half a grade level. The scores on the CTBS math test were more positive. A full 80.5 percent of students showed gains on the CTBS test, with 53.7 percent gaining at least one grade level and 36.6 percent gaining at least a grade level and a half.

A final source of academic performance data is the standardized test scores that states use to track adequate yearly progress. In SDP, eleventh graders take Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests to track academic progress. In BCPS, students take Maryland Student Assessment (MSA) in English 2 and Algebra. The results of tests from the SDP schools and Du Bois HS are not comparable because the tests are completely different. Exhibit VII-9 highlights two years of standardized test data for schools, from the pre-grant baseline year (SY 2007–2008) and the first year of implementation (SY 2009–2010). The exhibit only includes data on students who tested “advanced or proficient.” All other students within the school tested at the remedial levels of “basic or below basic.” Data for all SDP schools are included in the chart as a source of comparison.

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<sup>15</sup> Berkshire JSHS is not accountable for students who (1) have been attending Berkshire JSHS for less than 60 days or (2) are discharged from court or placement agency without prior notice.

**Exhibit VII-9:  
Percent of Students Proficient or Advanced in Math and Reading,  
Baseline Year (SY 2007–2008) and Year One of Implementation (SY 2009–2010)**



It is important to note that the PSSA and MSA tests are administered to eleventh-grade students at the SDP schools and tenth-grade students at Du Bois HS. In each case, the students taking the tests in SY 2009–2010 are not in the primary target populations for grant services, though all schools used the grant to fund some “test-prep” services for these students. The tests provide

insight into general achievement trends at each of the schools, but are not a useful tool at this point for assessing the influence of grant services. Key observations from the exhibit are as follows:

- **Academic performance at the SDP grant-funded schools remains very low.** Of the Philadelphia schools, Lincoln HS has the highest PSSA scores. This may be due, in part, to the more socioeconomically diverse student body at Lincoln HS. The two schools facing the most academic challenges are West Philadelphia HS and University City HS, both of which were identified for restructuring under SDP’s Renaissance Schools program—primarily due to their low standardized test scores.
- **Du Bois HS is approaching the BCPS average in math but remains farther behind this average in English.** Du Bois HS is less than ten percentage points below the BCPS average of 64.9 percent proficiency in math, but is still more than thirty percentage points below the BCPS average of 73.2 proficiency in English.
- **Overall, the standardized test data are mixed, with some schools showing small improvements and other schools showing declines.** Both Bartram HS and Overbrook HS show some test score improvement in SY 2009–2010. Germantown HS had a slight decrease in scores, while most other schools had mixed results (e.g., increase in math proficiency, but a corresponding decrease in English).

The data on academic performance illustrate the challenges that schools are facing. While there is some evidence that individual programs are working, school-wide gains in academic performance are slow to materialize. However, as discussed in the model of school change at the beginning of this chapter, academic gains (as measured by standardized tests) typically lag behind shifts in behavior, attendance, and course completion and promotion. Thus, the improvements in climate, ninth grade attendance, and ninth grade promotion discussed in this chapter are promising signs that many of the schools are moving in the right direction.

## Changes in School Culture

*This school is working better as a comprehensive high school. There is an overall feeling of a team, and there is a strong leadership team that is supportive...the climate is under control. There is a focus on getting better and improving instruction, and teachers are interested in improving their craft.*

- School staff member, West Philadelphia HS

Grantees are seeking to make lasting improvements in school culture by investing in professional development for teachers, creating vehicles for collective decision-making (such as the Turnaround Team), creating common planning time and small learning communities, and

instituting early warning data systems to identify students at risk of dropping out. The desired end goal is a culture where administrators, teachers, and non-teaching school staff members communicate regularly about student achievement, use data to pinpoint students' needs, and work collaboratively to improve the quality of teaching and raise academic achievement. In this section, we discuss signs that schools are adopting two key practices characteristic of high-performing high-poverty schools: use of student data and school-wide collaboration.

## Use of Student Data

Research on effective school turnaround and the practices of effective high-poverty-area schools consistently point to the key role that analysis of student data plays in identifying and addressing students' academic and behavioral needs.<sup>16</sup> During the first full year of grant implementation, all of the schools began using student data to (1) strategically identify and intervene on behalf of at-risk students and (2) strategize as to how to improve the effectiveness of instruction. All schools, with the exception of Berkshire JSHS, have identified students on the Early Warning Indicator (EWI) list and are using diagnostic tests to monitor student achievement. The following are examples of how schools are using student data.

- **Du Bois HS and West Philadelphia HS are working closely with Talent Development High School (TDHS) staff in order to guide teachers through the use of data.** At Du Bois HS, for instance, TDHS professional development staff members hold meetings with teachers where they (1) use test scores to identify students who need more support and create action plans for those students and (2) revisit students' exam grades to ensure that they accurately reflect student success.
- **University City HS expanded the capacity of teachers and staff to access student data and to reach out to students on the EWI list.** School leaders are using Google Docs to post and share student data in a private online environment, so that teachers and administrators can access data on students from anywhere. This last year, University City staff members arranged meetings with parents of every student on the EWI list in order to problem-solve with parents about how to increase these students' attendance and academic engagement.
- **Teachers in the ninth grade academy at Bartram HS closely examined data on incoming ninth-grade students in order to identify students in need of special support.** Teachers examined PSSA test scores, academics, and attendance data for incoming students, and then updated the information on

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<sup>16</sup> See for example: Christman, J. (2009). *Effective Organizational Practices for Middle and High School Grades: A Qualitative Study of what is helping Philadelphia Students Succeed in Grades Six through Twelve*. Prepared by Research in Action for the Accountability Review Council. Retrieved on September 17, from: [http://pdf.researchforaction.org/rfapdf/publication/pdf\\_file/555/Christman\\_J\\_Effective\\_Organizational\\_Practices\\_for\\_Middle\\_and\\_High\\_School\\_Grades.pdf](http://pdf.researchforaction.org/rfapdf/publication/pdf_file/555/Christman_J_Effective_Organizational_Practices_for_Middle_and_High_School_Grades.pdf)

students on a quarterly basis. Teachers used the data to track student progress and make sure that students having a difficult time adjusting to high school received the support that they needed.

Although all the school leaders have made progress in using data strategically, several indicated that they felt pulled in multiple directions, and often lacked the capacity to give the data its proper attention. It is one thing to gather and post data on EWI status and achievement and another to understand what implications the data have for (1) allocation of resources within the school and (2) instruction. SDP schools are addressing this lack of capacity by hiring data specialists in SY 2010–2011, whose responsibility it will be to help guide the schools in their analysis and use of data.

## School-wide Collaboration

Research on effective high-poverty-area schools consistently finds that collaboration and shared responsibility for achievement are essential to their success.<sup>17</sup> Effective schools spread leadership across multiple actors, create vehicles for teacher input, and ensure that teachers have opportunities to share information on individual students and on best practices. As described below, schools have created a number of different vehicles for school-wide collaboration.

- **The TT committee and subcommittees are key vehicles for collective leadership and decision-making, as is the Teacher Leadership Team at Berkshire JSHS.** DuBois HS is an example of a school with a very active TT; it includes teachers, school staff members, and all of the grant partners. The TT at Du Bois HS meets monthly and at each meeting, partners present on the status of their programs and problem-solve about implementation challenges. Although the TT at many schools does not meet as regularly it does at Du Bois HS, the TT subcommittees at other schools have been responsible for shaping the design of core grant-funded programs, such as the mentoring and summer bridge programs. At Berkshire JSHS a Teacher Leadership Team plays a key role in helping to support new teachers and adapt core programs.
- **Common Planning Time (CPT) is providing opportunities for teachers to collaborate on lesson plans, discuss individual students, and observe one another's practices.** With the exception of Berkshire JSHS, all of the schools have created CPT for teachers. Overbrook HS is an example of a school where CPT is used very effectively. At Overbrook HS, instructional coaches help to structure CPT, making sure that there is a clear agenda and schedule that helps teachers to make effective use of the time. Across schools, teachers report that CPT is helping them to think strategically about the needs of students who are

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

having difficulties, and use the appropriate supportive services to help the students, whether it be connecting the student to a case worker or a mentor.

- **Case management strategies, such as the Student Support Team (SST) at Du Bois HS, are helping to create wraparound services for students and a collective sense of responsibility for monitoring student behavior.** The SST is an interdisciplinary team at Dubois HS that provides support and referrals to students with behavior and attendance issues. The SDP schools have a Comprehensive Student Assistance Process (CSAP) that engages teachers in teams to identify students with academic or behavioral difficulties and to develop plans to address those students' needs. Although this process occurred prior to the grant, the CPT time has provided a regularly weekly time when all teachers can engage in the CSAP process.
- **The Student Success Centers (SSCs) at SDP schools are creating place-based “hubs” where students can access a range of support services within the school.** In many ways, the SSCs are acting as “one-stop” centers, where students can access a range of community-based services and supports at the school. Although not all teachers and school staff are knowledgeable about SSC services, SSC staff members continue to work on making connections with school staff and on creating “cohesive” centers that are well integrated into the fabric of the schools.

School-wide collaboration is important, not only because it helps to create a more cohesive support structure for students, but also because it helps to build a professional community of teachers. Overall, teachers said that the interventions described above helped them to feel more supported, validated, and less isolated with the challenges that they face in the classroom. This is particularly true at schools like Overbrook HS and Du Bois HS, where the school principal is clearly invested in the collaborative process and respectful of teachers' time and input.

## Summary of Findings

This chapter summarizes preliminary evidence of school change at the MEES schools. Schools are at the very beginning stages of grant implementation, and thus the changes recorded in this chapter are very preliminary and may reflect typical fluctuations in behavior, attendance, and achievement rather than contributions of the MEES grant. With this said, the majority of schools show small to moderate improvements in key parameters, such as ninth-grade attendance, ninth-grade promotion, and school climate. Exhibit VII-10 provides an overview of the evidence of school change discussed in this chapter.

**Exhibit VII-10:  
Summary of Evidence of School Change  
Between Baseline Year (SY 2007–2008) and Year One of Implementation (SY 2009–2010)**

	Bartram HS	Berkshire JSHS	Du Bois HS	FitzSimons HS	Germantown HS	Lincoln HS	Overbrook HS	University City HS	West Philadelphia HS	Number of Schools that Show Positive Change
<b>Changes in School Climate</b>										
Increased Average Daily Attendance (ADA)	✓	**		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	6
Increased ADA for ninth-grade students	✓	**	**	✓		✓	✓	✓	**	5
Decreased percentage of students who miss 54 or more days	✓	**		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	6
Decreased the rate of all incidents involving suspension, expulsion, or arrest (incident rate)	✓	**	✓ <sup>1</sup>		✓		✓	✓	✓	6
Decreased number of severe incidents that count towards PDS status		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	5
Decreased number of students involved in the juvenile justice system (i.e. arrests)	✓	**	**		✓		✓	✓	✓	5
<b>Changes in Academic Performance</b>										
Decreased number of students failing three or more subjects	✓	**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	7
Decreased failure rate for English	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	6
Decreased failure rate for math	✓	✓	**	✓					✓	4
Decreased rate of first-time ninth graders failing (i.e. increase promotion rate)	✓	**		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
Decreased rate of repeating ninth-grade students failing for another year (i.e. increase promotion rate)	✓	**	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	6
<b>Changes in School Culture</b>										
Increased use of student data for decision-making	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	5
Increased school wide-collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Proportion of available data fields where school shows positive change	.92	.80	.70	.62	.46	.62	.77	.62	1.0	

<sup>1</sup> Baseline arrest data was not available for Du Bois HS, but they reported decreases in suspensions and expulsions.

✓ Checkmark indicates school has shown positive change in this field, even if very small.

\*\* Data not available for analysis at time report was written.

The Model for School Change presented at the beginning of this chapter indicates that shifts in attendance and behavior commonly precede improvements in academic test scores. Although the shifts in overall ADA are very small, several schools had relatively large increases in ninth-grade attendance. For instance, Overbrook HS showed an increase of 8.6 percentage points in ninth-grade ADA. Seven schools were able to bring down the overall incident rate, which is a combined rate that includes the rate of suspension, expulsion, and arrest. Among the schools, Berkshire JSHS, Du Bois HS, West Philadelphia HS, and Germantown HS experienced the most marked improvements in climate. Since the grant was awarded in June 2008, these four schools, along with University City HS, have been removed from the persistently dangerous list. Although schools have work yet to do on improving attendance, the reduction in violent incidents and suspensions described in this chapter are signs that the schools are becoming more conducive to both attendance and learning.

In addition to shifts in climate and behavior, over half of the schools made progress in increasing rates of course completion and ninth-grade promotion. The promotion rate for first-time ninth graders increased at six of the seven SDP schools, with an increase of 17 to 30 percentage points per school. Similarly, five of the seven SDP schools increased the percentage of repeating ninth graders promoted to the tenth grade. These changes represent a sizable increase in the number of ninth graders promoted to the tenth grade, an important measure of school performance.

## Challenges Documenting and Achieving Outcomes

The data captured in this chapter show evidence of positive school change on indicators such as ninth-grade attendance, school climate, and ninth-grade promotion. School change with regard to academic indicators, however, is more mixed and helps to illustrate the challenges facing school stakeholders as they work to improve student test scores.

- **Administering tests that are an accurate measure of students' ability is difficult in a "test heavy" environment.** Across the schools, staff members spoke of the effects of "testing burnout," which resulted in high numbers of tests that are incomplete or are an inaccurate measure of students' ability. Students are tested so much that they often do not take the tests seriously. For instance, in SDP, some school administrators described that almost every student tested into the remedial corrective reading and math program, even ninth-grade students who they anticipated would go into advanced classes, such as Geometry.
- **Due to the high mobility of the population, schools are often testing students who are new to the school and who have not received a full range of services.** As described in Chapter II, the MEES schools are generally characterized by a high transfer rate. Many students who have failed to succeed in other settings transfer into the target schools mid-way through a semester. The success or failure of these students factors into the schools' key outcome measures.

- **Students who are chronically absent, yet remain on the enrollment rolls, negatively influence the schools' outcomes.** For instance, staff at Du Bois HS reports that the school's declining ADA is due in large part to students who are "missing," meaning that school staff do not know how to contact them or where they are. As a staff member said, "They may be in Florida, but we still have them on our rolls."
- **Many students at MEES schools lack basic skills and face challenges that impede their learning.** In addition to coming into high school with weak academic preparation, many students at the MEES schools have worries and responsibilities that interfere with their ability to focus in school, including caring for younger siblings, helping to support their families, exposure to violence, or drug and alcohol addiction. One teacher described the challenges faced by students:

*A lot of our kids have serious deficits. They just don't have basic skills. The corrective program is here because they don't know how to add or subtract or use negative numbers... They have a poor ability to remember what you teach them. A week goes by and they ask the same questions. A lot of them have traumatic lives that get in the way of them remembering things.*

Interviews with school staff members indicate that the most important lesson learned so far is that it is essential that reforms have an opportunity to take hold as schools move into the second year of grant implementation. Teachers and staff members stated that it is frustrating to work in an environment where there are multiple changes each year, because "when you see wholesale changes every year, it is difficult to see growth." There are many new programs at each of the schools, and key stakeholders agree that one priority for SY 2010–2011 should be to focus on execution and follow-through of existing reforms, rather than on the creation of new programs. We discuss this theme further in the chapter that follows, as it summarizes key accomplishments, challenges, and the implications of findings for schools and school districts.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

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This *Early Implementation Report* presents findings from the first year of MEES grant implementation (SY 2009-2010). It outlines grant budgets and staffing, describes the characteristics of the core interventions that grantees are adopting, and analyzes changes in school climate, academic performance, and school culture at each of the grant-funded schools. In this final chapter, we summarize the core accomplishments of the schools in the first year of grant implementation and note the common challenges that slowed the pace of implementation. We conclude by highlighting the implications of the core findings of this report for the MEES schools and the grant-funded school districts.

### Key Accomplishments

MEES schools have made significant progress in the first year of grant implementation. During this period, schools have mobilized core stakeholders within the schools and in their communities, formed TT committees, and designed multiple programs and educational strategies that are new to their schools. Below we summarize key accomplishments related to grant implementation, educational strategies, mentoring and school climate strategies, employment and case management strategies, and school change. Note that all these accomplishments were discussed in detail in previous chapters.

### Grant Implementation

- **As of May 2010, schools had contracted with a variety of providers to provide grant services.** All schools had contracted with employment and case management providers, whose role is to operate employment centers at the schools, identify and match students for internships, provide college access services, and also provide counseling and support services. All schools also identified mentoring providers, whose role is to identify and match mentees and peer mentors and also help to screen and monitor adult mentors. Further, five of the nine schools contracted with educational providers to provide supplemental educational services, such as tutoring or SAT preparation. Although three schools planned to develop contracts with providers of school climate interventions, these services had not yet launched at the end of SY 2009–2010.

- **All schools are engaged in extensive capacity building.** Throughout the first year of grant implementation, schools contracted with a variety of different technical assistance providers. Many schools received guidance from the United Way in preparing and planning their mentoring programs, and most received training from American Institutes for Research (AIR) on climate-related interventions. Two schools worked closely with Talent Development High Schools to support the development of Ninth Grade Academies and to raise academic standards. In Philadelphia, grant-funded staff received extensive TA in grant administration and in program planning from the School District of Philadelphia (SDP). Teachers at each of the schools also received extensive professional development as part of the grant.
- **The schools hired a total of 140 full-time staff members and 62 part-time staff members to manage and implement programs under the MEES grant.** These staff members worked to push forward grant-funded interventions that map to each of the MEES strategies.
  - More staff members were hired for education strategies than for any other strategy. The vast majority of the educational staff persons hired are teachers; they were hired primarily to reduce class sizes and provide additional remedial support to students.
  - Case management and employment strategies are the second most heavily staffed strategy. Most of these staff members work out of the Student Success Centers in the SDP and/or provide counseling and support services.
  - Compared to other strategies, the schools hired fewer staff members to implement mentoring and school climate strategies, though all schools have hired staff members who are providing these services.

## Educational Strategies

- **Seven schools dramatically reduced the student-to-teacher ratio.** In the first year of grant implementation, the student-to-teacher ratio fell to well below 20 to 1 at all the SDP schools. The reduction in the student-to-teacher ratio at SDP schools is due to the additional staff members hired by the MEES grant and to an influx of additional SDP funding for teachers. School staff members report that the increased staffing has contributed to an improved climate at many schools. In contrast to SDP schools, Du Bois HS experienced other funding cuts that led to increases in the student-to-teacher ratio and reductions in the budget. The MEES funding allowed Berkshire's student-to-teacher ratio to remain low.
- **All schools launched a variety of grant-funded educational interventions, with a focus on providing remedial support and credit retrieval.** Six of the schools are using grant funds to provide remedial support to ninth grade students and seven are providing credit retrieval services to students who have fallen behind academically. All of the schools have purchased instructional supports, such as online curricula, in order to increase academic achievement.

- **Six out of the nine schools have developed Ninth Grade Academies.** A Ninth Grade Academy is a self-contained school-within-a-school, organized around interdisciplinary teacher teams that share the same students and have common daily planning time. The Ninth Grade Academies generally include only incoming ninth graders, and enrollment varies from a low of 84 at Du Bois HS to a high of 521 at Lincoln HS. Ninth Grade Academies are designed to provide personalized learning communities with small classes and specialized curricular supports and transitional courses. Although the cohesiveness of the Ninth Grade Academies vary by school, all six schools are making progress in creating smaller environments for incoming ninth-grade students.
- **All schools operated summer programs, including both summer bridge programs and summer school.** All of the Philadelphia-based schools created programs to serve incoming ninth graders and eighth graders who needed to earn additional credits in order to progress to the ninth grade. The Du Bois HS program served returning ninth graders and credit-deficient students in a traditional summer school format.

### **Mentoring and School Climate Strategies**

- **All schools have launched mentoring programs.** Although mentoring programs were slow to start, many schools made significant progress towards launching the program in the spring of 2010. All schools have hired mentoring contractors and hired mentoring staff. At the time of the third site visit, only Berkshire JSHS and West Philadelphia HS had *not* recruited mentees to their programs. Across the other seven schools, over 200 mentees had been recruited. With the exception of Berkshire JSHS, schools had made progress with the adult mentoring piece of the program, having recruited 127 adult mentors, most of whom are school staff members. The seven SDP schools had also recruited 116 peer mentors.<sup>1</sup> School staff members anticipate that the mentoring programs will flourish and grow in the 2010–2011 school year.
- **Five schools hired dedicated climate staff members and most have launched at least one school climate intervention.** School climate interventions include incentive programs for positive behavior, professional development for staff, peer mediation programs, in-school suspension programs, and a leadership program called Rites of Passage.

### **Employment and Case Management Strategies**

- **Seven schools launched or expanded Student Success Centers (SSCs).** SSCs are employment and case management centers that bring together a variety of student services. In the first year of grant implementation, schools selected providers for the SSCs and the providers hired key staff persons to operate the

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Du Bois HS and Berkshire JSHS have not recruited peer mentors because these two schools' mentoring programs do not have peer mentoring dimensions.

centers. The schools played a key role in developing the facilities for the SSCs, by identifying and furnishing the space and overseeing facilities improvements related to installation of phone lines and computer hook-ups. SSC services reached from 50 to 86 percent of the entire student population at target schools. Students and staff members at the schools view the centers very positively, as “safe” places that are the “hubs” of the schools.

- **All schools provided a range of grant-funded career development and exploration services.** Career development and exploration activities include career and job shadow days, individual career advising, and job preparation workshops on issues such as resume development and interviewing skills. At SDP schools these services are provided through the SSC, and the proportion of all students at the school reached through these efforts ranged from 15 percent at University City HS to 69 percent at Overbrook HS. At Du Bois HS and Berkshire JSHS these services are offered through the Career Connections program and the Vocational Academy, respectively.
- **Seven schools used grant funds to provide college access services.** College access services include college exposure activities (i.e. college visits), college application assistance, and financial aid counseling. The proportion of the entire student population at these schools that received college access services ranged from 12 percent at University City HS to 44 percent at Germantown HS. Across all schools, the most common type of assistance that students received was assistance in preparing college applications, which included one-on-one assistance with filling out the application, registering for the SAT/ACT, writing and editing college essays, and developing a post-secondary plan.
- **All schools launched case management services.** Case management, provided by an individual or a team of professionals, offers students therapeutic, behavioral, and crisis intervention support. Through their case management programs, schools offered individual counseling, group counseling, and attendance and behavioral interventions. The proportion of students who received case management ranged from six percent at Germantown HS to 100 percent at Berkshire JSHS. According to school staff members and students, case management staff members play key roles in reaching students at risk of dropout and helping to personalize the school environment.

## Evidence of School Change

- **The majority of schools show improvements in student behavior and climate, with reduced numbers of serious incidents and suspensions.** Five schools reduced the number of serious incidents and six schools reduced the suspension rate. Three of the MEES schools were removed from the PDS list at the end of the first year of grant implementation, lowering the total number of schools on the list to four. School staff members attribute the improvements in behavior and climate to the reduced student-to-teacher ratio and to the increased services at the schools.

- **The majority of schools show improvements in ninth-grade attendance and ninth-grade promotion.** Five schools showed gains in attendance, and although gains in overall attendance were very small, gains in ninth-grade attendance were generally higher. Overbrook HS, for instance, increased ninth-grade attendance by more than eight percent. Six of the seven SDP schools significantly increased the percentage of first-time ninth graders promoted to the tenth grade, increasing the promotion rate for these students from 17 to 30 percentage points per school. School staff members attribute improvements to ninth grade interventions, such as the ninth grade academy and the additional instructional supports.
- **Most schools increased their strategic use of student data and created vehicles for school-wide collaboration.** All of the schools have worked to develop early indicators of students who are at risk. At least five schools are using this data strategically to shape the services they are providing to students and to inform teacher professional development. Additionally, all schools have created vehicles, such as common planning time, case management teams, and leadership teams, for increasing the level of coordination and collaboration of school staff members. Issues related to a lack of teacher and staff buy-in for the initiative—common in the planning year—became less of an issue in the first year of implementation as the benefits of the grant became more apparent.

The accomplishments summarized above show the considerable strides that schools have made in the first year of grant implementation. Schools have launched most of the major grant-funded interventions, and they have done so with some early evidence of success. Almost all of the remaining interventions, which include those designed to enhance school climate and strengthen career academies, will be launched in the early part of the 2010–2011 school year.

## Key Challenges

Although schools accomplished a great deal in the first year of grant implementation, they also faced a number of implementation challenges. In this section, we highlight overarching challenges faced by the schools as they sought to implement the full range of grant reforms. Note that these challenges are also presented in more detail throughout this report.

- **Services were slow to launch at SDP schools due to delays in the contract approval process.** As a result of delays in the contract approval process, most contractors were not able to get started in the schools until midway through the first year of grant implementation (SY 2009–2010). In the case of mentoring and school climate providers, contracts were not approved until late May 2010.
- **The Renaissance Schools initiative changed the context for grant implementation at two schools.** In spring 2010, SDP selected West Philadelphia HS and University City HS to be “Renaissance Schools,” which means they would be restructured and would experience changes in leadership and teaching staff. This announcement complicated grant implementation at these sites. Most stakeholders at these schools felt demoralized by the announcement, particularly

in light of what they perceived to be improvements. In addition, because teachers did not know if they would be working at these schools in the 2010–2011 school year, it was difficult to recruit them to work in grant-funded programs such as mentoring. Both of these schools experienced a very large turnover in the teaching staff at the end of SY 2009–2011, even though SDP eventually postponed the restructuring process at West Philadelphia HS to SY 2011–2012.

- **Two schools experienced shifts in funding that affected implementation of some MEES-related activities.** Berkshire JSHS and Du Bois HS each had decreases in their overall budgets in SY 2009–2010. Although the budget cuts were counteracted to some degree by the infusion of MEES grant funds, they nevertheless affected grant implementation. Berkshire JSHS lost a major funding stream from New York State Department of Education in SY 2009–2010 that resulted in staff having to consolidate and streamline grant-funded programs; the school folded its work skills class into the vocational academy and required members of its teacher leadership committee to start teaching classes again.
- **At some schools, contracted service providers had difficulty integrating smoothly into the school community.** Most contracted staff members were relatively new to the schools, and thus had work to do in order to build relationships and market their programs to the rest of the school community. In many cases, this process went smoothly and staff reported a high level of coordination and communication. In a few cases, however, contractors indicated that there were turf issues between the grant-funded programs and the work of either school staff members or other contractors within the building.
- **The presence of many different providers within the schools (e.g., for mentoring, climate, employment, and case management) makes it challenging for everyone to develop a sense of common purpose.** Many individuals and organizations enter the school with their own agendas; even though these multiple agendas may not be at cross-purposes, they are not necessarily well aligned. One school leader said, “When you have contracts and subcontractors, they come with their own managers. There are separate directives.” To address this challenge, several schools are creating regular meetings where contractors, subcontractors, and school leaders can come together and reach a common understanding of grant goals, target population, and intervention strategies.
- **Providers experienced difficulty designing and launching the mentoring program.** The mentoring program was new to all of the grantee schools, and has been the most difficult of the programs to design and launch.
  - Because of the unique residential nature of the school, Berkshire JSHS spent over a year working with TA providers to develop a mentoring program that could provide support to students while they are on the school campus *and* when they return to their home communities. The school hired 22 staff members, most on a per-diem basis, to recruit adult mentors in the home communities of students.

As of yet, however, not a single adult mentor has been recruited and no students have been matched.

- Du Bois HS, which had difficulty identifying appropriate contractors for its mentoring program and has four different CBOs delivering these services, has so far identified only a small number of mentees.
- The SDP schools made progress in recruiting mentees, peer mentors, and school-based adult mentors. SDP schools, however, made little progress recruiting adult mentors from the community because (1) the screening process for community mentors is time-consuming; (2) many community members do not want to work with adolescents and are dissuaded by the “persistently dangerous” label carried by the schools; and (3) it is difficult to schedule times for working members of the community to meet with students during school hours.

## Implications of Findings

Despite the challenges of the first year of grant implementation, school leaders, teachers, and staff members universally expressed excitement and optimism about the contributions of the grant. The effects of the MEES grants are evident at all the schools—in smaller class sizes, shared planning time for teachers, busy Student Success Centers, increased programs for credit-deficient students, and increased supportive services for students. Stakeholders generally credit the grant with causing positive school-wide changes, such as reduced violence and increased ninth-grade promotion. Universally, stakeholders are excited about moving into the second full year of grant implementation, because they believe that they are laying the groundwork for real change.

It is apparent from the first year of grant implementation, however, that grant-funded interventions need time to develop and integrate into the cultures of the schools. The school districts move at a measured pace to approve contracts, make budget modifications, make facility improvements, and hire staff. It takes time for new contractors to develop the types of relationships with teachers and other school staff members that are necessary to launch programs. Similarly, some aspects of the grant program design, such as recruiting adult community mentors, are slow because they are inherently challenging. During the first year of implementation, the schools really just came to the precipice of full grant implementation, and measures of school change from the end of SY 2010–2011 will likely show more of the influences of grant-funded reforms.

At this stage in reform process, the MEES schools also remain vulnerable to setbacks, particularly amidst shifts in leadership and staffing. For example, since SY 2007–2008, West Philadelphia HS has shown steady signs of improvement: increased student attendance,

improved student behavior, reduced violence, and increased rates of ninth-grade course completion and student promotion. In June 2010, however, the principal who had helped to nurture these positive changes was replaced, primarily due to low standardized test scores. Although it is unclear what ultimate impact the shift in leadership will have for West Philadelphia HS, news reports from early SY 2010–2011 indicate that the school has seen an increase in violence and arrests, particularly among ninth-grade students. Thus, it is not improbable that the path towards improved outcomes for many schools will not be linear, but will have some twists and turns along the way.

The central implication of this report, therefore, is that it would be beneficial if schools were permitted in the second year of grant implementation to really invest in and develop the current MEES-funded reforms without the introduction of numerous additional directives for change. Given the current recession, all of the schools operate in a climate of uncertain resources, and have to adapt their services accordingly. SDP schools, however, also operate in an intense climate of reform, where there is something of a conveyor belt of good ideas coming from the district. Although most SDP ideas complement the goals of the grant, it is difficult for stakeholders to execute them well or follow through on plans in an environment where priorities frequently change. The second year of implementation really is a unique opportunity for schools to focus on improving the quality of services, and that focus would be diluted by attempts to launch new programs or learn new curricula.

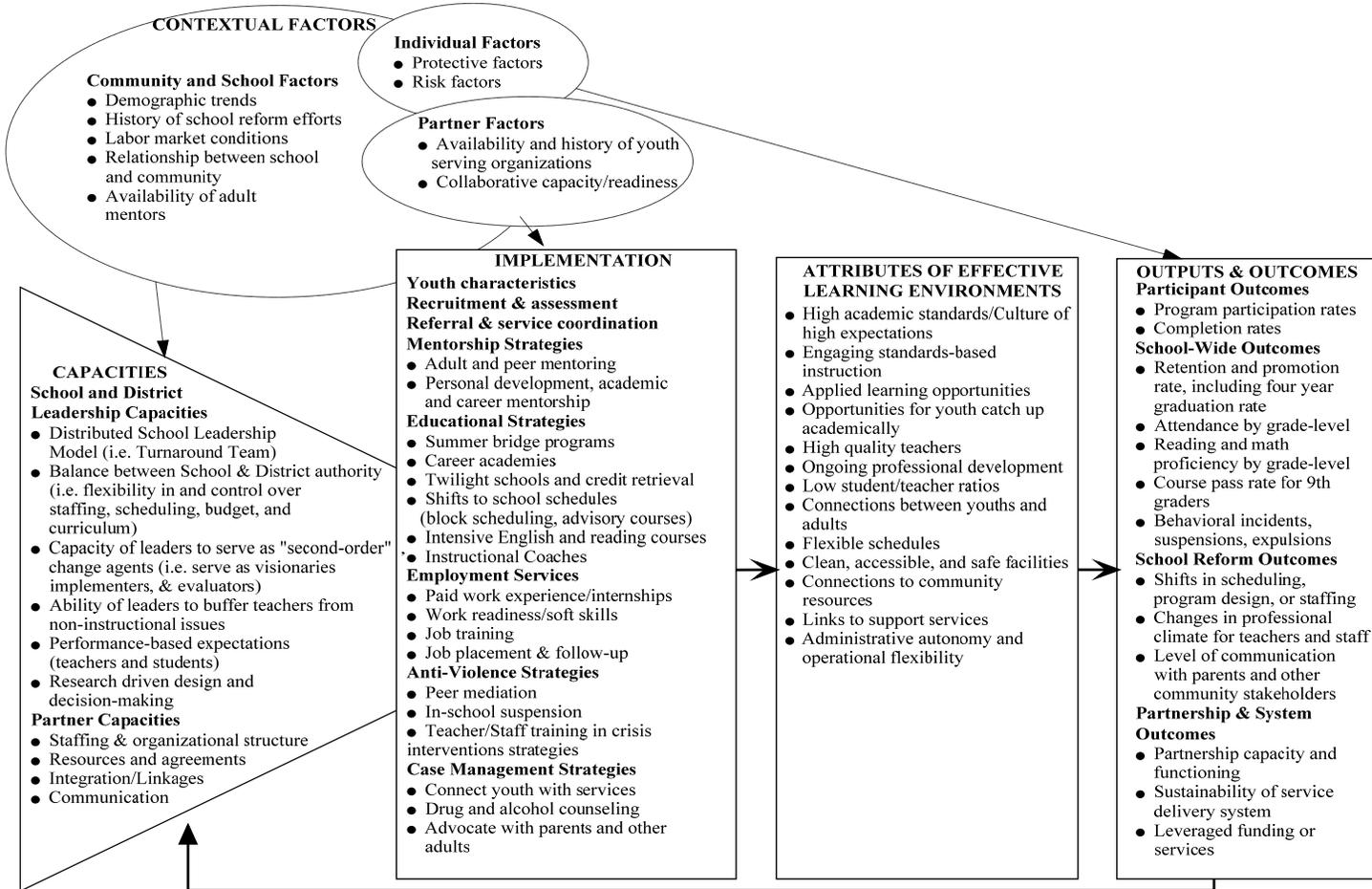
It is important to provide schools with this opportunity to focus on quality, because there are definitely signs that the schools are on the right track. There is a strong focus at most schools on creating integrated reform (rather than a series of separate programs), enhancing communication and collaboration, improving the quality of the teaching staff, and creating small learning communities and collaborative structures that will outlast the MEES funding stream. Some schools have developed early-warning systems that help them identify and intervene with students who are vulnerable to dropout, and some schools are using student data to inform professional development for teachers. In the first year of grant implementation, schools also made great progress towards deepening buy-in for systemic reform among teachers and parents. All of these signs indicate that schools are making steady progress towards achieving the larger goals of the MEES initiative.

**Appendix A:  
Conceptual Framework**



## Appendix A: Conceptual Framework

### Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies





**Appendix B:  
Research Questions**



## **Appendix B: Research Questions**

### **Context**

- What contextual factors have been important for understanding the design, implementation and outcomes of the program?
  - What are the relevant community factors, such as the seriousness of youth gangs and youth violent crime in the neighborhood surrounding the high school, the dropout rate, labor market conditions, general law enforcement climate?
  - What are the relevant school factors, such as the history of the school and its relationship to parents and surrounding community? Existing academic reform, mentorship, case management, employment, violence prevention, or other dropout prevention strategies?
  - What are the relevant individual factors, such as supportive families, peer groups and/or gang associations of participants?
  - What are the relevant partner factors, such as the availability of mentoring programs, the history of faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) and other service providers in the school and surrounding community?

### **School Leadership**

- What is the leadership structure of the school?
  - What is the composition of the Turnaround Leadership Team at the school? What is its role in making decisions at the school and in implementing this grant?
  - What is the role of the Turnaround Principal and how does this individual fit into the broader decision-making structure for the school?
  - What is the role of the school district relative to school leaders in making key decisions about the school, such as hiring principals and teachers, deciding on core providers of services, allocating resources, developing curriculum, and scheduling classes?
- To what extent did the schools change leadership in their restructuring efforts?
- What are the specific “second-order” change skills that schools’ leaders need to effectively turnaround these low performing and persistently dangerous schools?
  - To what extent do school leaders inspire and lead the school community to shift existing practices? What is the role of school leaders in motivating the school community to take on reform?

- To what extent are school leaders directly involved in the design and implementation of the reforms?
- To what extent are school leaders involved in monitoring the effectiveness of reforms and their impact on student learning? How effective are school leaders at providing feedback and adapting approaches to achieve the desired aims?
- What kind of support do school leaders have from the district office and community to effectively implement this grant?
  - What factors influenced leaders' ability to gain support and buy-in?
  - To what extent is there an incentive structure for school leaders to successfully turn their schools around?
- How do school leaders mobilize partners, including workforce development, youth development programs, and teachers' unions to buy-in to this initiative?

## Design

- What was the grantee planning and design process?
- What is the scope of the project (key partners, structural shifts to the school day)?
- What is the nature of the project design and why were particular strategies chosen?
  - What specific groups are targeted?
  - What is the strategy/model for providing mentoring and case management?
  - What is the strategy/model for enhancing educational achievement and reducing the dropout rate and violence, overall and for targeted groups?
  - What is the strategy/model for improving the school environment and student behavior, overall and for targeted groups?
  - What is the strategy/model for providing employment services and internships to students?
  - What is the strategy/model for providing professional development and capacity building support to teachers and other school staff?
- What indicators of success were developed for the project during the planning/design phase (e.g., for increasing participants' math and reading scores, decreasing number of ninth grade dropouts, reducing school suspensions)?
- What initial plans for sustainability (after federal funds end) were developed during the design phase?
- How were appropriate partners or providers selected for participation in the program, including during the planning/design phase?

- What is the leadership or management structure of the grant, including key staff and budget? What methods are used to manage the program and coordinate contracts among partners?
- What strategies do school leaders use to gathering input and buy-in on design elements from teachers, parents, and other school stakeholders?
- What were the challenges and effective strategies of the planning and design process?

## **Partnerships**

- Who are the key partners in this effort? How were they selected and mobilized? What are their specific roles in this project?
- What partnership arrangements have been established and how are resources being leveraged to achieve the grant's objectives?
  - What is the grantee's relationship with partners, such as the local workforce system (One-Stop system), employers and corporations, and faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) providing various direct services (e.g., mentoring, case management, employment services, etc.)?
  - To what extent are federal and non-federal leveraged resources being contributed to the program?
- What is the nature of the grantee's referral system with partners to ensure that participants' various needs are met?
- How well have these partnerships worked overall and how have they evolved over time?
- To what extent are these partnerships formalized (e.g., memoranda of understanding, letters of commitment, cost-sharing agreements, information sharing agreements, referral systems, etc.)?
- What have been the barriers and best practices for inter-partner communication and coordination (different philosophies toward youth, MIS issues, etc.)?

## **Service Delivery/Implementation**

- What is the quality of school and program leadership?
- What are the characteristics of students enrolled overall and in the targeted interventions?
- How are youth recruited and/or identified for targeted services (e.g., using indicators such as chronic truancy, discipline problems, special education placement, low reading and math scores)?
- How effective are outreach and recruitment services?

- What types of basic intake services, such as assessments of needs and interests, are provided and how do they vary by participant-type?
- How is mentoring provided to participants, and by which specific provider(s)?
- How is case management provided to participants, and by which specific provider(s)?
- What is the full range of education, employment, anti-violence, mentorship, case management, and supportive services available to youth, how do they vary by status (e.g., youth who have been retained vs. those who have not, at-risk vs. adjudicated), and who delivers each service?
- Which services target the whole school?
- Which services target particular students? What intensive services are targeted for individual youth who present the greatest challenges?
- Which services are available to participants through the local One-Stop Career Center system? What One-Stop services are accessed? How many youth access them?
- To what extent do partners effectively coordinate education services with employment and workforce services?
- How well do the services meet the needs of different participant-types (e.g., younger vs. older youth, adjudicated vs. at-risk)?
- What are the primary challenges in working in these schools? What are the facilitators? What practices are particularly effective?
- What strategies does the school use to promote high expectations of students and program participants?
- What strategies does the program use to ensure that staff are appropriately equipped to work with program participants (e.g., professional development, collaborative and or team teaching models)?
- What data collection and reporting procedures have been implemented by the grantee? What challenges have they faced in implementing the management information system (including reporting on those fields required by the DOL template)?
- What have been the most significant implementation issues that grantees and partners have faced? What strategies were used to overcome these challenges, and with what success?

## **Outputs and Outcomes**

- What proportion of participants take part in the various education, employment, violence prevention, mentoring, case management, and other services? What proportion complete particular services?
- What outcomes has the school achieved? Examples of outcomes to be examined include the rate of grade promotion and retention, school attendance, reading and

math gains, standardized test scores, and behavioral incidents such as suspensions and expulsions.

- How do outcomes vary by different types of participants (e.g., younger youth vs. older youth)?
- Have there been any significant, unanticipated outcomes?
- To what extent are grantees able to effectively capture, track, and report outcomes, including those required by the DOL template? Major challenges?
- What have been the school-level outcomes of the grant project?
  - Structural shifts in scheduling, program design, or staffing structure that facilitates enhanced outcomes?
  - Professional climate for teachers and other school staff? Clear performance-based expectations of teachers?
  - Formal mechanisms of communication with parents and other community stakeholders?
- What have been the partnership- and system-level outcomes of the grant project?
  - New or strengthened partnerships and service delivery system?
  - Leveraged funding?
  - Changes in system-level policies or practices to facilitate effective coordination and enhanced outcomes?
  - Concrete plans for sustainability of partnerships and service delivery system? For replicability district-wide?
- How much variation is there in overall grantee performance after controlling for differences in local context and participant characteristics?
- How do grantees that are successful differ from those that are not (e.g., in design, implementation, contextual factors)?



**Appendix C:  
Demographic Data**



**Appendix C:  
Demographic Data**

School Year	Grade level					Gender	Race/Ethnicity					Free/ Reduced Lunch Eligible
	Total	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth	Male	African American	Latino	Asian	White	Other	
<b>School District of Philadelphia</b>												
2009-2010	163,064	13,946	13,160	11,272	10,700	51%	61.2%	17.6%	6.2%	13.3%	1.6%	79.7%
<b>John Bartram HS</b>												
2007-2008	1,687	566	425	215	288	51%	93%	1%	3%	2%	1%	85%
2008-2009	1,514	464	381	281	195	50%	92%	1%	4%	2%	1%	85%
2009-2010	1,388	351	369	254	269	50%	93%	1%	4%	1%	0%	85%
<b>FitzSimons HS</b>												
2007-2008	336	104	98	60	51	100%	99%	1%	0%	0%	0%	91%
2008-2009	290	76	54	58	46	100%	99%	1%	0%	1%	0%	90%
2009-2010	304	100	60	52	56	100%	99%	0%	0%	1%	0%	90%
<b>Germantown HS</b>												
2007-2008	1,399	375	398	226	188	52%	97%	1%	0%	1%	1%	84%
2008-2009	1,364	416	319	218	198	53%	98%	1%	0%	1%	0%	84%
2009-2010	1,251	254	307	228	217	52%	98%	2%	0%	0%	0%	84%
<b>Lincoln HS</b>												
2007-2008	2,194	688	469	379	253	53%	42%	16%	6%	35%	1%	55%
2008-2009	2,114	644	469	381	236	54%	44%	18%	6%	32%	1%	53%
2009-2010	1,921	628	432	361	272	54%	41%	18%	6%	34%	1%	61%
<b>Overbrook HS</b>												
2007-2008	2,070	503	536	363	352	52%	98%	1%	0%	0%	0%	83%

School Year	Total	Grade level				Gender	Race/Ethnicity					Free/Reduced Lunch Eligible
		Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth	Male	African American	Latino	Asian	White	Other	
2008-2009	1,905	464	476	325	344	51%	98%	1%	0%	0%	0%	83%
2009-2010	1,745	346	525	363	331	50%	98%	1%	0%	1%	0%	83%
<b>University City HS</b>												
2007-2008	1,450	432	405	297	245	52%	96%	2%	1%	0%	0%	89%
2008-2009	1,176	323	297	235	230	53%	96%	2%	1%	1%	0%	89%
2009-2010	872	163	233	166	210	53%	96%	1%	1%	1%	1%	89%
<b>West Philadelphia HS</b>												
2007-2008	1,207	403	272	205	88	56%	98%	1%	0%	0%	0%	88%
2008-2009	1,132	268	275	218	130	52%	98%	1%	0%	0%	0%	88%
2009-2010	969	249	215	181	184	53%	97%	1%	1%	1%	1%	88%
<b>Baltimore City Public Schools</b>												
2009-2010	82,866	7729 <sup>1</sup>	6642	5596	4926	51%	87.8%	3.1%	0.9%	7.8%	0.3%	83.6%
<b>W.E.B. Du Bois</b>												
2007-2008	606	228	155	113	110	57%	96%	2%	0%	2%	0%	49.5%
2008-2009	598	210	155	106	126	56%	96%	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	2%	58.3%
2009-2010	611	218	166	109	118	55%	95%	4%	0%	4%	0%	73.0%
<b>Berkshire JSHS<sup>2</sup></b>												
2007-2008	147	61	41	15	3	100%	58%	13%	1%	28%	0%	100%
2008-2009	87	34	28	17	0	100%	59%	7%	0%	33%	1%	100%
2009-2010	223	73	55	11	2	100%	48.9%	39.9%	n/a	10.3%	0.3%	100%

<sup>1</sup> Note: Enrollment for BCPS as of October 2010

<sup>2</sup> Note: Berkshire JSJS is the only school in the Berkshire Union Free School District (BUFSD)

Sources:

SDP:

Total enrollment, demographics: School District of Philadelphia <http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/about/>

Enrollment by grade, gender: Pennsylvania State Department of Education Enrollment Reports <http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/enrollment/7407>

BCPSS:

Total enrollment, demographics: <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/2167104685314217/site/default.asp>

Enrollment by grade: [http://www.bcps.k12.md.us/216710112162656613/lib/216710112162656613/2010\\_11\\_PDFs/2009\\_10\\_State\\_of\\_Our\\_High\\_Schools.pdf](http://www.bcps.k12.md.us/216710112162656613/lib/216710112162656613/2010_11_PDFs/2009_10_State_of_Our_High_Schools.pdf)

DuBois HS: <http://www.mdreportcard.org/>

Berkshire JSJS/BUFSD: Quarter Four MIS Reports (2010), NY Start (2008, 2009)

<https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb/School.do?county=COLUMBIA&district=100308020000&school=100308020001&year=2009>



**Appendix D:  
Table of Technical Assistance Providers**



**Appendix D:  
Technical Assistance Providers**

	Bartram HS	Berkshire JSHS	DuBois HS	FitzSimons HS	Germantown HS	Lincoln HS	Overbrook HS	University City HS	West Philadelphia HS
<b>Access 411</b>									
Mentoring and school safety			✓						
<b>American Institutes for Research</b>									
CHAMPS (classroom management and discipline)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peers Making Peace (peer mediation program)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Career and internship programs		✓							
Ongoing site specific TA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Branch and Associates</b>									
Mentoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Center for Secondary School Redesign</b>									
Ninth grade academy								✓	
Leadership development						✓			
<b>John Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence</b>									
School climate			✓						
<b>John Hopkins Talent Development High Schools (Center for Social Organization of Schools)</b>									
Ninth grade academies, teacher teams, and career academies	✓		✓						
<b>Maryland Mentoring Partnership</b>									
Mentoring			✓						
<b>New York Mentor</b>									
Mentoring		✓							
<b>Philadelphia Academies, Inc.</b>									
Internships	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Bartram HS	Berkshire JSHS	DuBois HS	FitzSimons HS	Germantown HS	Lincoln HS	Overbrook HS	University City HS	West Philadelphia HS
<b>Philadelphia Youth Network</b>									
Student Success Centers	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>School District of Philadelphia</b>									
Overall grant administration and management (see textbox)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania</b>									
Mentoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓