ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School
Morehead State University
March 13, 2014
IMPLEMENTATION OF A STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH: IMPACTING SCHOOL CULTURE AND COLLEGE/CAREER READINESS

Abstract of capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education At Morehead State University

By
Lewis M. Willian
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Committee Chair: Dr. Carol Christian, Assistant Professor
Morehead, Kentucky
March 13, 2014

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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

IMPLEMENTATION OF A STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH:
IMPACTING SCHOOL CULTURE AND COLLEGE/CAREER READINESS

The purpose of this capstone project is to document one rural high school’s systematic process used to increase student ownership of their learning – specifically with regards to College and Career Readiness (CCR). By examining the research fields of effective schools, student ownership of learning and sustainability, the author identifies five strands common to the research base that were embedded in a school initiative that helped the persistently-low achieving study school in this case study move to the top ten percent in the state in CCR. This study provides strategies used to create and implement a Student Ownership Initiative that impacted student achievement and the professional school culture. This study provides educators with a professional development module that includes college and career readiness strategies with a focus on student ownership of learning.

KEYWORDS: college and career readiness, ownership, student achievement, benchmarks, turnaround

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH: IMPACTING SCHOOL CULTURE AND COLLEGE/CAREER READINESS

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Maxie E. and Delma L. Willian who helped me find my path early in life and instilled in me a desire to serve others. My mother taught more than forty years within public schools and changed the lives of countless young people. My father (though not a certified teacher) never ceased to teach me life lesson after life lesson that made me who I am today. This work is dedicated my mom’s honor and my dad’s memory. Thank you for the love and the wisdom you shared with me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This capstone project is the culmination of three of the most professionally significant years of my career. Serving as Educational Recovery Leader for the Kentucky Department of Education at Lee County High School (Beattyville, KY) has been a crowning achievement in my professional career, and this capstone is a direct result of the magnificent work that teachers and students are accomplishing there daily.

Thank you to Superintendent Jim Evans and his district staff for the freedom to experiment and to Principals Mark Murray, Craig Herald and the administrative team, teachers and staff at LCHS for the support to implement these capstone ideas.

A special thanks to my fellow ER staff members Teresa Miller and Michael Hughes. You were my think tank and my support group, and I am proud of the work we did here together.

To the students at Lee County High School, thanks for being open to new ideas. To my Morehead State University Educational Leadership Cohort II EdD. colleagues, I am so glad we travelled this road together. Dr. Christian, you were simply the best. Thanks for your guidance and for helping me visualize the path to this destination.

Finally, to my family, thank you for your support of this dream. Carol, Matt, Ashley, Julie and little Elijah, your support meant more to me than I can ever express.
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What is the core of the capstone?

One question facing today’s high schools is “how do we help graduates become college and career ready?” Federal legislation in 2010 held schools across the nation accountable for preparing students’ college and career readiness (CCR). CCR demands that schools produce students with higher ACT scores and provide a rich curriculum for students guided by a common core of academic standards. The charge saddled schools with the task of better preparing students with the skills needed to effectively enter the workforce or enter college without the need for remediation. The ultimate goal of CCR was to prepare students living in the United States to be competitive in a changing and global economy.

Tests score “benchmarks” have become a measure of accountability for all students graduating from high schools (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). To be considered college-ready a student must meet or surpass minimum benchmark scores on the American College Test (ACT). In Kentucky, the benchmark required for English is 18, math 19 and reading 20. Students who do not meet these minimum scores must enroll in remedial university courses before beginning credit-bearing classes. The negative effects of remediation on students include an increase in student work load, a delay in four year college completion timelines and increased college tuition costs.

Career-readiness is determined if a student has 1) met minimum academic benchmarks as measured by the ACT or other equivalent academic tests and 2)
demonstrated proficiency in a vocational or technical career area. This career proficiency can occur by passing a written examination of career/technical content or by obtaining an approved industry certification. These certifications allow the career-ready students to show potential employers they possess a skill set that will likely lead to successful employment in a specific area.

Kentucky is one of eleven states requiring every high school student to take the ACT exam as a measure of school effectiveness. The percentage of graduating seniors who have met the minimum ACT benchmarks is an accountability measure for the school. Kentucky’s state-wide goal is for 100% of the students to become college ready, career ready, or both. Kentucky’s college/career ready (CCR) accountability measure is calculated by the percent of students who achieve one of these preparation levels. Schools that produce students who are both college-and career-ready by these definitions receive bonus accountability points.

ACT’s 2012 *Condition of College and Career Readiness* report states that while the number of students meeting the minimum college benchmarks has increased slightly over the past few years, there are still a great many students graduating who are not prepared for the academic rigors of higher education or a career. High poverty population schools on the average report a greater number of students ill prepared to meet ACT benchmarks. In such high schools, only 27% of students meet the ACT college readiness benchmark in reading, while just over one in ten students of poverty (11%) meet the college benchmark in math (ACT, 2012). Data indicate early intervention is extremely important for struggling students. Only
10% of the total number of students who are off-track in eighth grade will improve enough to meet their ACT benchmarks by the time they reach the twelfth grade (Dougherty, Fleming and ACT, 2012.)

Other definitions of college and career readiness include the 21st century workplace skills of cooperation, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. These skills prepare students to work within a group and as an effective team member but are often overlooked within our high schools’ curriculum. Mason (2012) suggests that career and technical education centers focus on developing leadership, social interaction and public speaking skills just as fervently as academic and vocational lessons. High school graduates in the 21st century must possess both academic skills and interpersonal “soft skills” necessary for success. According to Ken Kay (2011), schools must focus on seven distinct steps to create fully prepared graduates in today’s world: the traditional three “R’s” of reading, writing and arithmetic and the new four “C’s” of cooperation, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

Regardless of the CCR definition, schools must prepare all of their students for the next step beyond high school and ensure that those students have the knowledge and skills required for transition – whether that is to the workplace, the military or continued studies. Kentucky students graduate high school with a diploma in hand – but what does that really mean? What can they do with that? What did they learn? Students must be provided the opportunity to leave K-12 settings ready and able to apply what has been taught upon transition to an immediate career setting or to the next phase of their education.
There are many ways to increase student success. Strategies such as raising content standards, creating better lesson plans, replacing the school principal, hiring different teachers, involving the community or communicating better with the parents are commonly implemented. Each of these strategies has merit and can improve the academic performance and learning culture within a school. However, one critically important stakeholder missing from the solutions listed above is the student. How are students involved in the processes that increase student achievement?

Many schools across the nation have systems in place to audit school and district effectiveness. Massive amounts of quantitative data are collected and analyzed each year in search of the answers to what works in improving CCR data. In addition, qualitative data from teacher and parent surveys gather information that reveal the emotional impact of what is happening in schools. However, few schools survey the most important stakeholder - the student. Educators say they value student voice, but rarely do schools intentionally involve them in the feedback loop or planning processes.

The core of this capstone focused on the research base of effective schools, student ownership of the learning and sustainable change school change in an effort to impact college and career readiness scores. Using what the research shares with regard to what effective schools do, the focuses of this capstone became 1) how to help students be accountable to their learning and 2) how to sustain change by changing the culture of the professionals in the school.
Statement of Problem

Too many students are graduating from high school underprepared for the academic rigors of higher education or a career (Carnoy, 2005). Strategies are implemented one after another with little impact on long-term sustainable change. Schools seek answers to the problem through professional learning communities of teachers but most ignore the most valuable stakeholders in improving student outcomes; the student. This study hypothesizes that schools are less than effective that do not sustain successful change efforts or create a system of high expectations where students own their learning. Changing student outcomes in many instances is temporary and immediate. However, in order to sustain change, the culture must change and systems must be designed and implemented that embed these changes into the normal routine of teaching and learning within the school.

Purpose

It is the focus of this capstone project to raise the level of college and career readiness for all high school graduates by developing a professional development training module that trains educators how to involve students in the improvement process. This capstone is designed to help students own their college and career readiness and take the needed steps to improve student readiness for life after graduation. In addition, this project is designed to impact the professional school culture in order to sustain change with a focus on one of the critical correlates of effective schools; high expectations. It is a goal of this capstone to make meeting benchmarks on college and career ready exams the norm for all students instead of
the exception. The companion piece to this capstone is the creation of a professional development module designed to 1) help develop a culture where students own their learning and 2) where the school culture of the faculty understands and accepts their ownership in CCR and elects to continue the processes to sustain school improvement changes engulfed in high expectation levels for all.

**Research Question:**

The two research questions of this capstone project are:

1). What impact has a student ownership approach had on improving students’ success?

2). What impact has a student ownership approach had on the culture of the professional educators in sustaining change?

**Review of Literature:**

This capstone is grounded in three bodies of research; effective schools, student ownership of learning and sustaining school improvement. These three areas of research provide the foundation for the development of the *Student Ownership Initiative (SOI)* professional development module. A goal of this capstone is to empower students to own their learning that results in a change in school culture and long-term sustainability to improve student achievement.
Common Critical Elements for CCR Success from the Research:
1. Student VISION for their future
2. Student OWNERSHIP of their own goals
3. Students MONITORING of their own progress and needs
4. Student INTERVENTIONS to meet identified need
5. Student CELEBRATIONS of successes for the individual and the school

The Student Ownership Initiative (SOI)
Professional Development Module

Expected Outcomes:
1. Increased Percentage of Students College/Career Ready
2. Improved Student Ownership
3. Improved School Culture of Professionals (for Long Term Sustainability of Change)
Effective Schools Research

In What Effective Schools Do: Re-Envisioning the Correlates (2010), Lezotte and Snyder outline the seven correlates of an effective school. This research proved to be seminal in the area of school improvement. Lezotte’s seven correlates have been referenced by educators as markers of a healthy school: 1) high expectations for success; 2) strong instructional leadership; 3) a clear and focused mission; 4) opportunity to learn/time on task; 5) frequent monitoring of student progress; 6) safe and orderly environment, and 7) positive home-school relations. Edmonds (1979) published the first and earlier research on effective schools examining effective poor urban schools. In 1982, Edmonds ascertained from extensive research, the original five correlates of an effective school: 1) principal leadership focused on quality, 2) pervasive instructional focus, 3) orderly, safe climate for teaching and learning, 4) high expectations for all and 5) measure student achievement to evaluate programs. Edmonds described an effective school as one that “brings equal percentages of all students to a minimum level of mastery of content” (Edmonds, 1983, p. 4).

This capstone is closely related to four of the seven Lezotte correlates and three of the five Edmonds characteristics; high expectations, focused vision and mission, frequent monitoring and strong instructional leadership. Students need high expectations for success, a clear and focused mission and frequent monitoring to take ownership of their own progress toward CCR. Adults within these schools need to be strong instructional leaders who have a relentless focus on student success. Students who focus on goals with high expectation of reaching those goals are far more likely
to be successful than students who attend schools that do not share a unified vision, do not have strong leadership and exclude the expectation of student goal setting (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, and Dixon, 2010). This is a compelling argument in support of the need for students to take ownership of their own learning.

Early work into school effectiveness revealed the best schools focus on student outcomes defined by standardized test scores (Harnisch, 1987). This research began the shift from the teacher-centered classroom to the student-centered classroom with a laser-like focus on collecting and monitoring data and outcomes. Earlier research by Lezotte (1985) had already concluded that 1) student outcomes should be used to determine the effectiveness of any school and 2) the manner and fervency with which local school districts assess specific student outcomes was the clearest representation of the educational outcomes the school or district cared about. By 1992, Lezotte (in Learn from Effective Schools) was encouraging schools to move away from the custodial functions that involved caring for and raising students toward an unrelenting focus on student outcomes and communicating these outcomes clearly with a focus on success for all. Lezotte’s research called on all school leaders to communicate a vision of learning in a way that causes others to share this vision and commitment (1992a). Part of that communication should be directed toward students to help students understand why these outcomes should become an important personal goal for future success.

More recent effective schools research by Westover (2012) found that students are more likely to be successful if they have established curricular pathways
that lead to specific academic outcomes/goals and personalized graduation plans. This clarified the work of Murray (2012) when studying successful California high school graduates that valued communication with and input from students by explaining to the students the reasons for and purposes behind the battery of assessments taken in schools. Students were empowered as insiders in the assessment process and therefore equipped with the knowledge of what each assessment measured and why good performance mattered. Students not only valued the assessment process, but owned it (Davis, 2008). Effective schools help students understand the desired outcomes for graduation and help students find a path to achieve those outcomes (Davis, 2008). Recent work by DuFour, Dufour, Eaker and Many (2006) established protocols for students to reflect on their own work and their own learning. This important work helps students become more aware of their own learning and enables students to remedy their own mistakes.

Within this area of effective schools research is the correlate of high expectations. All standardized tests typically have benchmarks or minimal levels of expected outcomes to be attained. College and career readiness measures include a number of standardized tests. In Kentucky, these include the ACT, COMPASS, KYOTE, KOSSA, ASVAB and WorkKeys tests. Table 1 describes these college and career readiness measures in greater detail:
Table 1

*Kentucky Accountability Measures That Impact College and Career Readiness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>American College Test</td>
<td>Determine if college readiness benchmarks are met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>COMPASS</td>
<td>Alternate benchmark assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KYOTE</td>
<td>Kentucky Online Test</td>
<td>Alternate benchmark Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOSSA</td>
<td>Kentucky Occupational Skills</td>
<td>Career readiness measure in a specific technical field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standard Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASVAB</td>
<td>Armed Services Vocational</td>
<td>Can be used to meet the academic requirement for career readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aptitude Battery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WorkKeys</td>
<td>WorkKeys</td>
<td>Can be used to meet the academic requirement for career readiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When combined, the results of this battery of assessments determine whether or not a student is college and/or career ready. However, Stone (2012) writes that there is more to college readiness than test scores, and that “career ready” should not be confused with “job ready.” True college or career readiness involves the ability to apply knowledge in new situations and problem-solve based on prior learning and experiences (Stone, 2012). In addition to good test scores, Radcliffe’s (2013) seven-year study focused on building CCR found that students must also build positive personal achievement goals as well as a student’s perception of college and strong perseverance skills in order to truly be successful. This development of a success-minded college-going identity is referred to as “college knowledge” by Hooker and Brand (2010) and Conley (2012a).
What then is the teacher’s role in helping students develop and own their own “college-going identity”? How do teachers become facilitators of the twelfth grade students’ work? Educators must set levels of expectation and consistently communicate a high level of performance for all students regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status or ability. Cooper (1983) found that teacher expectations tend to become self-fulfilling prophesies within the classrooms. If a teacher expects a specific student to do well, teachers tend to provide more feedback and more engagement to that specific student and the student tends to perform better in class. Teachers must provide high expectations for all. Hyslop (2006) studied a school in North Carolina with attained high levels of CCR success and concluded that the staff’s communicated expectations included a refusal to let students fail. Teachers held students accountable and provided interventions so all students achieved CCR success. After interviewing principals of effective schools, Cross (2008) determined principals feel the most successful teachers 1) explicitly communicate success expectations, 2) spend equal amounts of time with high and low performing students, and 3) teach the relationship between effort and success to their students.

Teachers who create an atmosphere of failure generally do not communicate high expectations to their students (Tkatchov and Pollnow, 2008). No one is surprised when few students within those low-expectation classes become college or career ready. Menzer (2009) interviewed students in a low-performing school. His work reported the most common student request of teachers was that their teacher would “listen to them” more. He concluded that many students who drop out of
school before becoming college or career ready simply do not have a vision for their future. Newell (2013) communicates the importance of strong advising and coaching programs to help students understand how to take the next step. Each of these findings points out the importance of helping students visualize their future and the importance of educators taking the needed steps to help students make that future a reality.

**Student Ownership of the Learning**

Another important research piece related to this capstone involves understanding the impact and importance of student ownership of learning. Students need to know why the learning is important to them. Gone are the days when a teacher could expect students to complete tasks and give their maximum effort out of mere compliance. The majority of studies related to ownership of learning have occurred within the last decade. Student ownership of learning is a relatively new field of study. Early work in ownership of learning according to Au (1991) concentrated on how to involve minority students who might be overlooked in the large group learning process and how to help them to take ownership of their learning to avoid being left out of the flow of the large group lesson. Similarly, Voltz and Damiano-Lantz (1993) suggested similar ownership of learning as a tool to ensure children with mild to moderate disabilities were not overlooked and marginalized. Involving these students by empowering them to make decisions about their learning was found to be a step toward improving their academic success.
Within the last decade, student ownership of learning has become an important research topic for all student populations. Kim Wells, a noted author and professor at Howard University, listed *create your own definition of success* as the second most important power move for all 12th grade students (2005). Harford (2008) suggested students reflect on how they learn and list strategies used to address their weaknesses. In the process, students discover their own learning style. Decken (2012) discussed turning college and career readiness into a way students “turn dreams into reality”. Marchiando (2013) added to this body of research when concluding that all students need opportunities to exercise ownership over their learning regardless of age, ability or background. Her work with student ownership of literacy circles within her class had broader meaning when applied to all students within a school.

With a focus on college and career readiness, the case study subjects in this capstone are predominantly 12th grade seniors in high school. As with many schools across the country, this group initially demonstrated a lack of interest and dedication toward schoolwork (often referred to as “senioritis.”) Many of these students had already applied and been accepted to a university, or turned down with no hope of attending college. The senior year had become a series of classes and activities to endure in order to receive the high school diploma instead of being a rigorous academic year concluding the secondary education experience (Sizer, 2003). For this capstone project, in order to engage students in the learning process students needed to understand the importance and impact of college and career readiness levels.
Seniors had to become owners of the outcome and the communicators of high expectations for themselves and their classmates.

Much of the research for this capstone involves students taking ownership of their outcomes. Puente (2012) demonstrated success in motivating seniors by hosting “senior summits” whereby seniors talk about and find solutions for issues affecting their lives. Conley (2001) encouraged principals to develop programs to help seniors rethink their senior year to facilitate a successful transition to work or college. Dreis (2006) noted successes in programs where seniors serve as mentors to underclassmen and teach some classes for freshmen and sophomores with appropriate supervision. The senior “capstone” project has become a common means of engaging 12th grade students by involving them in leadership activities involving civic responsibility. Henriksen (2008) found that 12% of the seniors he studied were involved in some form of senior-led project. Ninety percent of these seniors found these projects beneficial and allowed them to grow beyond the classroom as leaders. All of these studies agreed that student ownership of the learning during the senior year helps to limit senior apathy and increase student engagement in the learning process.

Principals, counselors, teachers and even parents can help motivate students to do their best in all academic pursuits, but it is ultimately up to the students themselves to perform. The student has the ultimate ability to change the outcome for themselves (Nauss, 2010). According to Brecke and Jensen (2007), traditional grades do very little to motivate students to higher levels of performance. These extrinsic rewards
are not nearly as effective as the intrinsic motivation of owning their own learning that impacts their future (Brecke and Jensen, 2007).

Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, and Dixon, (2010) found that students with a strong belief in their ability to reach their goals were more likely to design steps to help themselves be more successful. Newman (2012) echoed this finding by stating that schools must demystify the work of student success and extend the invitation to own a piece of the responsibility. Schneider (2010) suggests a democratic arrangement of the classroom as a radical pedagogy where the students make many of the decisions related to their own learning. This study further suggests that greater learning occurs when students are involved in the learning process.

But what is the role of the teacher in helping seniors take ownership of their level of college and career readiness? Dreis (2008) believes it is important to help seniors develop leadership skills, self-advocacy skills, independence and self-knowledge as an important part of their 12th grade curriculum. When discussing the impact of teachers providing feedback to students, Handley, Price and Millar (2011) suggest student engagement with feedback is far more important than feedback itself. In other words, the student must take ownership of the work and use the teacher as a guide for their own learning, but not the master of the learning. This capstone is designed to help students take that role for themselves.

The impact of a student’s attitude toward and ownership of their own learning is not an American-only concern. A larger review of the literature indicates that several international studies also inform this research question. In South Africa, a
recent study by Goodman, Keresztesi, Mamdani, Mokgatle, Pires and Schlecter (2011) found a strong connection between the level of intrinsic value/effort exhibited by high school students and the student’s level of success. This study analyzed differing levels of expectations for students of European and African descent. The overall secondary finding was that all students performed better when they focused on performance goals and valued their education.

In China, Qizhen and Xiaojuan (2009) studied two motivational concepts for high school students to determine which had stronger impact – a positive motivator to pursue success versus a negative motivator to avoid failure. Through their study, they found the positive intrinsic motivation to succeed was more impactful than the fear of failure. A Canadian study by Scott (2009) found that student ownership was the key factor in success in a teaching method involving experiencing civics first-hand.

The teacher’s role in establishing student ownership has also been extensively studied internationally. German researchers Zeinz and Scheunpflug (2010) found that when teachers explicitly talk about the change and growth process with their students, competencies and individual skills increase for these specific students. Rubie-Davies (2007) found great differences in student performance between classrooms where teachers talk about higher performance and deliver a success expectation in New Zealand. In the same country, researchers Meyer, McClure, Walkey, Weir, and McKenzie, (2009) found key variables in high school student success to be student’s use of teacher feedback and recognition of successes. These two factors were associated with a higher level of and increased student’s desire for continued success.
Finally, an Australian study by Fleming and Panizzon (2010) concluded the best way to raise student success is to raise their levels of self-confidence, self-regulation and self-motivation.

**Sustainability of a Student Ownership Culture**

The third foundational component of research that informs this study is the area of sustainability of the improvement process. Kotter (1996) outlines an eight-stage process of change within any organization. His final stage of anchoring new approaches in the culture only occurs when the “new becomes grafted into the old” (Kotter, 1996, p.151). But how is this accomplished within a learning organization? What is in place to keep teachers from reverting to their older, more comfortable approaches that did not work? What keeps that from happening?

Adelman and Taylor (2003) report that the likelihood of sustaining any new approach within the educational process is greater if it becomes integrated within existing school improvement initiatives. In other words, strategies that are attempted for a season then forgotten will be far less likely to become the new norm for the school, even if they were marginally effective. Some mechanism to review and adjust the use of strategies is needed to embed the new within the old. According to Giles (2008), there is a great deal of research into how to make rapid gains and turn failing schools around in the short-term. The so-called band-aid approaches can be found within the literature, but far fewer studies examine how to sustain that improvement momentum over time. Similarly, Century (2009, p. 23) in her article...
The Vanishing Innovation says the real question we should ask ourselves is not “How do we make improvements?” but should be “How do we make improvements last?”

Researchers vary in their opinions as to the key players in sustaining any change within a school. The principal is the key player according to Thoonen, Sleegers, Oort and Peetsma (2012). In their study, they found long-term sustained improvement correlated with strong leadership within the school. Similarly, Qing and Johansson (2013) found that strong leadership transforms a school with their influence over time. However, Williams (2009) suggests that reliance on the principal alone is not an effective way to sustain school improvement over time. Day (2007) agrees when he states that the principal’s role is to articulate a set of values on which the teachers will base their teaching strategies as part of establishing an overall vision.

Day (2007) goes on to discuss the need for increased organizational capacity at the “individual, collective and community levels” (p. 39.) Distributed leadership through collaboration and collegiality has been shown to play an important role in sustaining school improvement (Harris and Muijs, 2003). This dual leadership of the principal and the teachers was found to be effective in ensuring sustained school improvement by Hunter (2012). Her study of the Parallel Leadership Pathway showed how teachers and administrators worked together to ensure sustained school improvement and student success over time (Hunter, 2012). Teachers lead their classrooms, and to an increasing extent, establish themselves as content leaders within their teaching teams. Buffenbarger (2012) states the teacher is in the best
position to change the climate of the school through analysis and modification of teaching practices. Changing the culture within teacher is the best way to sustain school success over time.

Regardless of whether leadership capacity is built within the teaching staff or the administrators, Akhavan (2002) suggests that the best way to sustain any educational improvement initiative is to keep a relentless focus on improvement. Observations at the case study school indicated that continuous teacher talk about the goals and improvement initiatives helped students maintain their improved ownership focus over the course of the study. Change momentum must be continuous in order for the change to become permanent (Akhavan 2002). Permanent change may sound like an oxymoron, but strong leadership programs that sustain improvements develop and strengthen new teaching strategies continuously. Administrators and teachers are always involved in analysis and adjustment of their practices to make themselves better (Chrisman, 2005). Williams suggests (2009) that effective leaders build adaptable and self-renewing organizations. Century (2009) calls for organizations that can last and change, not just stay the same. The Baldridge Performance Excellence system designed around the components of: Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) is an example of a continuous improvement process that leads to sustained improvement (Schumacher, 2011). This PDSA improvement model was used successfully in the school that served as the focus of this study. Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles include the planning and implementation of improvement initiatives, followed by a reflective study of effectiveness and modification of actions if necessary by the
teachers in the school. As stated by Johnston, Bickel and Wallace (1990), organizations that sustain change anticipate future needs and are receptive to change.

Conley and the Educational Policy Improvement Center (2012b) advise caution against the use of a student’s assessment scores as the only determinant of his or her college and career readiness. They list key cognitive strategies, key learning skills and key transition knowledge as equally important to key content knowledge. Similarly, Spence (2007) found that teachers in high accountability states strongly limit their teaching to just those standards covered on the assessment, else their students perform poorly. This focus on just a few standards may help a student pass a test, but does it really mean that student is college-ready? Carnoy (2005) takes this argument farther when he suggests this focus on standards may be having the effect of not raising but lowering graduation rates because these tests may simply be yet one more barrier in the way for some students to meet graduation requirements.

However, at some schools, the vast majority of students are meeting standards and graduating both college and career ready. How are those successful schools different? An analysis of characteristics that lead to a high percentage of college and career readiness by Lombardi, Seburn and Conley (2011) found four reliable factors related to student CCR success: 1) goal-driven behaviors; 2) persistence; 3) study skills and 4) self-monitoring.

Each of these four characteristics is directly connected to student ownership of their own learning.
Summary

From the review of research regarding effective schools, student ownership and sustainability, five common themes arise:

Table 2

*Common Characteristics for Student Ownership from Review of Literature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Areas from Review Of Literature</th>
<th>Effective Schools Research</th>
<th>Student Ownership Research</th>
<th>Sustainability Research</th>
<th>5 Common Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>High Expectations for Self</td>
<td>Goal-Driven Behaviors</td>
<td>VISION for Improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowered Learning &amp; Self-Responsibility</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Individual OWNERSHIP of the Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of Progress</td>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Review and Monitor for Impact &amp; Individual Self-Monitoring of Goals</td>
<td>Continuous MONITORING of Progress Toward Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time on Learning Tasks</td>
<td>Reflect on How Individual Students Learn</td>
<td>Individual Student Capacity</td>
<td>INTERVENTION to Help Students Meet Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Mission</td>
<td>Celebrate Personal and Group Successes</td>
<td>Relentless Focus on Success</td>
<td>CELEBRATION of Student Success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Leadership</td>
<td>Avoid Student Marginalization</td>
<td>New Processes “Grafted” into Existing Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive School/ Home Relations</td>
<td>Mentor and Empower Others</td>
<td>Agreed-Upon Set of Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and Orderly Environment</td>
<td>Individual Leadership</td>
<td>Dynamic. Self-Renewing Organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Leadership to Sustain Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five identified common themes from the research were embedded in the development of a professional development training module (the *Student Ownership*
Initiative) that evolved from this capstone project and case study. This process included five components; 1) helping students see the vision for their futures; 2) empowering ownership of student learning; 3) helping students monitor their own progress; 4) intervening to meet individual student needs; and 5) celebrating individual and school results. The capstone addresses both research questions of the study by including steps for students as well as steps for teachers in order to build and sustain an organizational culture where student ownership of the learning is the norm instead of the exception.

Clearly, it is not sufficient to teach students content standards that have little meaning to students and tell them “go pass a test.” Students need to know why these tests matter and how increased performance on these academic measures will help with academic and career success over a lifetime. Students need to own their success, and become true partners with educators to meet the goals. Adams (2012) discussed the concept of helping students find their calling in life and to help them find the path to help them fulfill that calling. When they do, their motivation is internal and intrinsic. Students will be successful because it matters to them. Students will more likely be successful because they own their own learning processes and outcomes.

It is clear from the research that a student’s ownership of their learning increases their likelihood of becoming college and career ready by any definition. This capstone project outlines the steps necessary to change a school’s culture so that a higher percentage of graduates become college and career ready. This project will outline the steps necessary for the sustainability of successful change efforts in a
school in order that student ownership continues long after the first successful seniors have transitioned to the next step in their lives.

**Who is the capstone meant to impact?**

The *Student Ownership Initiative* capstone was designed to produce three outcomes: 1) increase the percentage of college and/or career ready graduates in high schools; 2) increase the level of student ownership of their learning and 3) produce a high-performing, sustainable and professional learning culture within the school.

While this project was implemented in a small rural high school, it contains strategies and actions that with the right systems, holds promise for applicability to a much larger school with more diverse group of students.

The school involved in this case study is Lee County High School located in the small rural community of Beattyville located in a remote area of Eastern Kentucky. Beattyville is an economically depressed city. Seventy-seven percent of the student population is enrolled in the school’s free and reduced lunch program.

The district student population has declined by approximately 300 students (from 1,400 to 1,100) over the past decade due to the closing or relocation of local businesses. The result of these job losses led to substantial attrition of students as families moved to seek jobs elsewhere. As a result, the number of teachers at LCHS has fallen proportionally. The loss of students resulted in a loss of five high school teaching positions during the last ten years. LCHS currently has 17 full-time teachers and a student-teacher ratio of approximately 15.7:1.
Lee County High School has approximately 80 to 90 students in a typical graduating class of seniors. The 2013 graduating class (who was the focus of this study) graduated a total of 83 students. Table III presents demographic information describing Lee County Schools in 2011 at the onset of this research project.

Table 3

Demographics of Lee County Schools (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Data Category</th>
<th>Lee County Data (2011)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Population (District)</td>
<td>1,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Population (LCHS)</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>77% of students participate in federal free/reduced lunch program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs Population</td>
<td>165 students district-wide (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>98% Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1% Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Rate</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduation Rate</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Seniors College Ready</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Seniors Career Ready</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academically, Lee County High School was in a decade-long pattern of declining assessment performance on Kentucky’s accountability measures, including the percentage of proficient students in English and math, student graduation rate,
performance of student groups traditionally experiencing achievement gaps, academic growth over time and the percent of students graduating college and career ready. By the fall of 2011, the school’s combined accountability measures indicated a state ranking of 207 out of 231 schools in the commonwealth. This ranking caused the school to become classified by the Kentucky Department of Education as “Persistently-Low Achieving” (PLA) school. This ranking is reserved for the lowest-achieving schools in the state. This status automatically caused the local superintendent of schools and board of education to take sweeping and dramatic steps to reform the school within a limited time period. The inability to reform a persistently low performing school can result in the local board of education being stripped of its authority to oversee the school and the district.

The designation as a PLA school triggers the implementation of one of four turnaround models as outlined in Kentucky Revised Statute 160.345. Options include 1) closing the school; 2) management by an outside agency of education professionals; 3) firing and re-hiring 50% new staff; or 4) removal of the principal and school-based decision making council in conjunction with acceptance of an offer of state assistance. The fourth model was implemented by the Lee County Board of Education. The state assistance team included three professionals chosen by KDE to help the school build internal capacity for long-term improvement. The team included an Educational Recovery Leader to work with school-and district-leadership as well as two Educational Recovery Specialists, one for English/language arts and another for Math. Together, this ER team, in partnership with the new school principal,
assistant principal and advisory council endeavored to lead this school to a higher level of performance.

The ER team established improvement systems to increase the capacity and efficacy of the staff. Root causes for the existing problems were examined. Systems were developed for teaching, learning, assessing and communicating results. School and district leadership met weekly as a formal administrative team and systems of communication and monitoring were developed to chart progress. A renewed sense of urgency was found within the school and district.

The Student Ownership Initiative (SOI) professional development module was developed and implemented within Lee County High School. This implementation led to dramatic improvement in the percentage of college and career ready Lee County High School graduates.

The focus of this capstone is to analyze the set of strategies and actions that led to substantial growth in college and career readiness accountability measures during a two year case study and implementation of the Student Ownership Initiative (SOI). An additional goal of this capstone project training module is to change the overall culture of the school so that both staff and students understand and strive to meet college and career readiness benchmarks. Students must become self-directed learners and internally motivated to guide their career and college path. This project was built on the premise that student ownership of their own benchmarking processes would lead to a substantial rise in the percentage of students meeting the desired CCR outcomes.
In addition, another desired impact of this work was to build capacity within the teaching and administrative faculty to sustain the successful student ownership strategies by embedding these processes into the culture of the school - making student ownership the norm instead of the exception. Collectively, the overall purpose of this work was to impact college and career readiness levels for current and future graduates and develop a school culture where all graduates are ready for the next step of their careers in the workforce or higher education institutions.

**How was the capstone project implemented?**

In the fall of 2011, Lee County High School was identified as a Persistently-Low Achieving school by the Kentucky Department of Education as outlined in KRS 158.6455. Beginning with the next school year (2012-13) an Educational Recovery Team was assigned. As a part of the school turnaround process, the ER team initiated research and implemented strategies to impact student ownership of their learning within the school. While some of these strategies directly impacted students in the case study school, other strategies focused on changing the professional culture of teachers and administrators. The impact of each of these student ownership strategies was examined over time. This collection of strategies, and activities led to the development of the *Student Ownership Initiative (SOI)* professional development model that accompanies this executive summary.

The *Student Ownership Initiative (SOI)* set of strategies and activities were designed to have an impact on both student ownership of their learning and the professional learning culture within the school. *SOI* contains 16 strategies and...
activities to help students accept ownership of their learning and 13 strategies and activities designed to develop a sustainable professional culture among the school’s staff. Table 4 outlines the components of the SOI module in more detail:

Table 4

Outline of Activities Contained Within the Student Ownership Initiative (SOI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Student Activities</th>
<th>Teacher Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>• Opening Assembly: Establishing a Vision</td>
<td>• Teacher Meeting: To Initiate, Communicate and Establish a Vision for CCR initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom Meetings: Full Understanding of College and Career Readiness</td>
<td>• Training Seminar: Full Understanding of College and Career Readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Getting their Attention: Assignment to Transition Classes</td>
<td>• The Box: Things that are Important to Adults Mental Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• College Role Models: Teachers Sharing Their Own Academic History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>• Goal Setting: Develop a Plan – Early in Senior Year</td>
<td>• Data Analysis: Let The Data Speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Control of their Own Schedule: (If Benchmarks Are Met)</td>
<td>• Specific Relationships: One-on-One with Targeted Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student - Led Conferences: My Strengths and Weaknesses</td>
<td>• Constant Pressure: Displays, Reminders, Changing the Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>• Student Data Notebook: Tracking My Progress</td>
<td>• Professional Learning Communities: Understanding What Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-Monitoring: Where am I right now? What am I missing?</td>
<td>• Demystifying Testing: Removing Student Fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Extra Benchmarking Opportunities: Once is Not Enough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Intervention

- Transition Classes: Large Group
- Intervention Software: TCA, WinLearn, ALEKS
- Extended Learning Opportunities: Remediation and Acceleration

### Persistence to Graduation

- Using the Report to Support At-Risk Students
- RTI: Tiers of Intervention in the Case Study School

### Celebration

- Celebration Assembly: After Each Testing Season (PLAN, ASVAB, WORKKEYS, ACT, KOSSA, Industry Certificates)
- CCR Progress Thermometer: Daily Reminder of Importance
- Medals for CCR: Gold, Silver and Bronze for 1, 2, or 3 Benchmarks
- Graduation Honor Cords: For Achieving Both College and Career Readiness

### Teacher Celebrations for Each Gain

- Large and Small Victories
- Ownership of PD Choices: Growth Planning Based on Student Results

### Methods

This study used mixed methodology with descriptive statistics. Four sources of data were collected for this capstone. Two instruments collected quantitative data; the Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card and the AdvancED student surveys that included a Likert scale rating. Qualitative data were collected from students using the Lee County Senior Exit Interview that included open ended questions. In addition, teachers were interviewed with open ended questions.
providing qualitative data related to changes in the professional culture within the school.

The School Report Card data quantified the gains made in the percentage of 2012-13 graduates that were college or career ready compared to previous year’s senior classes at Lee County High School. Seniors in the 2012-13 graduating class at Lee County High School attained a 81.3 college/career readiness score compared to a score of 62.5 in 2011-12 and a score of 29.0 in 2010-11. This data strongly points to the continued and growing impact of student ownership of the college and career readiness processes at the case study school.

The AdvancED survey data was harvested from anonymous surveys administered to PLA schools by the state diagnostic auditors. The responses of our students on AdvancED questionnaires related to school culture were compared to the responses from seniors at other PLA schools across the state. This questionnaire data indicates differences in student perceptions and school culture for Lee County seniors when compared to seniors in other PLA schools. The findings were clearly reflective of an improvement in school culture at Lee County High School as it relates to student ownership of the learning. This data is presented in greater detail within the results section of this study.

The qualitative data sources that gathered information for this project were collected from individual interviews with two groups of stakeholders within the school, teachers and students. Twenty percent of 2013 graduates provided data regarding their thoughts about college and career readiness and the impact of the
student ownership processes and seventy-five percent of the teachers who were on staff throughout implementation of the Student Ownership Initiative were interviewed regarding any changes in professional culture. Results of these interviews are presented later in this study. These interviews provided very important data to the researcher when creating the professional development module and deciding what strategies had maximum impact on student ownership of the learning.

Students and teachers were open and honest about those strategies and steps that helped them understand the importance of college and/or career readiness and the development of student ownership of the learning. By interviewing a large sample of the graduates and teachers, patterns, trends and themes emerged. This information was used to choose the strategies contained in the development of the Student Ownership Initiative (SOI) professional development module.

Throughout the time frame of this study, the goal of the Student Ownership Initiative has always been to equip and facilitate the students’ and teachers’ 1) vision, 2) ownership, 3) monitoring, 4) intervention and 5) celebration of academic success as measured by their level of college and/or career readiness. These five strands were identified by the review of literature in the targeted research areas of 1) effective schools, 2) student ownership of the learning, and 3) sustainability of change over time. Over the two years of this study, a variety of strategies were planned, executed, and modified based on results of effectiveness.

A feedback and reflection system was implemented for all activities that led to an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of each activity. The school implemented a
plus-delta reflection system (where pluses are positive, impactful practices and deltas are practices that need modification). Results of individual respondent’s plus-deltas were aggregated into useful feedback for all activities. In the second year of the study, many activities were adjusted from their original format utilizing feedback from students and teachers. Activities in the professional development module reflect these modifications based on improvement feedback.

**Why were this capstone and related strategies selected?**

Initial observations by the Educational Recovery Team at the case study school indicated that neither the staff nor students fully understood the importance of college or career readiness and its impact the accountability and more importantly career and college success. In order to increase student ownership of the learning, five specific sets of strategies were implemented at the school:

**Establish a Vision**

In order for students to take responsibility for their own learning, a unified vision was needed that included 1) an explanation and operational definition of CCR for students and staff as a concept and 2) the reasons that CCR is important to both the students individually and the school collectively. Activities promoted understanding of why college and career readiness is important for both teachers and students. This vision of college and career success, when implemented, substantially impacted the graduating senior class and the staff as indicated by the data described in this executive summary.
Ownership of Learning

A second strand of strategies for students and staff included "student ownership of the learning" that included student control of their schedule, student data conferences and development of individual growth plans. Students grew reflective regarding their strengths and weaknesses and took goal-driven improvement steps to meet college benchmarks and pass industry certification tests. Teachers were presented all data related to prior and current student performance and asked to reflect on successes and failures. The SOI strategies were implemented and the impact was measured upon student performance and school culture improvement.

Embed Monitoring

The next improvement strand indicated by research was full monitoring of student progress toward the attainment of benchmarks. Assessments used were monitored frequently and included additional student-initiated ACT, COMPASS and KYOTE assessments to meet benchmarks and become college ready. Students tracked their progress in personal student data notebooks and decided (in consultation with their teacher) when they were ready to attempt benchmark tests. The ownership level of the students regarding college and career readiness grew substantially as indicated by the data related to CCR performance contained in this summary. Teachers and administrators monitored the student’s use of their data notebooks and their progress toward accomplishment of their individual goals. Student data notebooks were maintained within math and language arts classes. The teachers of those courses served to facilitate students’ use of their own data. Student
performance data was shared with individual seniors as it became available and reflective analysis was completed related to student’s own strengths and weaknesses. Specific weaknesses were targeted by the students themselves for intervention and additional support.

**Enact Interventions**

Another important strand of student ownership critical to the research was intervention at the point of identified need. As discussed in the SOI, intervention occurred through use of a variety of support structures from dispersed to individually focused support. Interventions leveraged included additional content courses in content areas for students who had not yet met their college readiness benchmarks. Additional interventions also included computer-driven instruction specific to areas of identified skill deficit. In some cases, intervention allowed for students to receive credit for courses previously failed (credit recovery). This allowed students to graduate on time, college and career ready. Specific response to intervention (RTI) strategies were used based on the student’s unique learning needs. Transition courses or strategies were provided for seniors who had not yet met benchmarks in reading or math. Reading and math labs were added to the schedules of underclassmen if their data indicated specific skill deficits in these areas. A reading specialist provided intensive one-on-one support for those students needing the most help. Individual interventions were applied to support students depending on their needs indicated by their personal performance data.
Systems of Celebration

The fifth and final strand was the motivational piece of celebrating results early, frequently and publicly. Student ownership increased dramatically when students were recognized for success and individual progress was celebrated in a variety of ways. Celebrations included assemblies, visual displays, awards, recognition within and outside the school and special honors during their graduation exercises. Additional celebration activities rewarded teachers for their role in helping students be successful and accept ownership of learning.

The five specific sets of strategies outlined above flowed out of an examination of three main bodies of research. The first was the effective schools research that frames that set of characteristics common to high performing schools. As a PLA school (which is defined as having a performance level in the bottom five percent of all schools in the state) the case study school needed to study those effective schools and incorporate their high performance characteristics. Second, initial observations indicated that teachers and students were far more likely to make excuses for poor performance instead of seek active solutions. The research body related to student ownership of their learning was important information to view. Methods of engaging students and teachers as the owners of the processes became a critical component of the strategies.

In conclusion, it is a goal of this capstone that the student and professional cultural changes that led to a much higher CCR level for the Lee County can be transferable to all schools and all student populations. The author of this capstone
invites schools to examine and implement strategies used in the *Student Ownership Initiative* and replicate these strategies making any needed adjustments to fit the population of the students they serve.

**When was the capstone implemented?**

The *Student Ownership Initiative* was implemented at Lee County High School during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years. School leadership and the Educational Recovery team collectively built systems and processes that increased student ownership of the learning. A combined district/school leadership team (including the superintendent, curriculum specialist, special education coordinator and director of pupils from the district office and the administrators and counselor of the school) began weekly meetings to organize and drive the school turnaround. This work included student ownership initiatives such as the student data notebooks, the establishment of a new student-selected vision and mission, and develops a system of monitoring all intervention tasks designed to improve student performance.

At the same time, the teachers began communicating higher academic expectations to all students – including a vision for every student graduating from Lee County High School to be college or career ready (or both). This expectation was communicated and celebrated as individual students made progress toward these goals. Multiple opportunities to meet benchmarks were scheduled throughout the year at ACT test centers, on our campus or at area university campuses via success on the college-placement COMPASS tests. Benchmarking opportunities were available throughout the year. Students were allowed to attempt benchmark exams for college
readiness just as soon as their practice assessments indicated that their interventions had helped prepare them to a point of success.

School-level accountability data was collected at the end of the school year and communicated each fall as a Kentucky Department of Education accountability measure for high schools. Schools were awarded one point for each college ready student (having met the ACT benchmarks in English, Math and Reading) or one point for each career ready student (holding academic and technical certifications). Any student meeting both the college and career readiness measures was awarded one and a half points (a fifty percent bonus score) that raises the overall school accountability score.

The following table summarized the school’s college and career readiness measures throughout the duration of the study and the implementation of the Student Ownership Initiative:

Table 5

**College/Career Readiness Growth at Lee County High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>College-Ready Graduates</th>
<th>Career-Ready Graduates</th>
<th>Non-Duplicated College and/or Career Ready Students</th>
<th>KDE CCR Accountability Score With Bonuses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>5/50 (10.0%)</td>
<td>10/50 (20.0%)</td>
<td>12/50 (24.0%)</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>27/79 (34.2%)</td>
<td>26/79 (32.9%)</td>
<td>39/79 (49.3%)</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>37/82 (45.1%)</td>
<td>45/82 (54.9%)</td>
<td>52/82 (63.4%)</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data indicate the percentage of both college-ready and career-ready students at Lee County High School increased dramatically since the implementation of the Student Ownership Initiative during the 2012-13 school year. The data reveal strong improvement in each of the college and/or career ready accountability measures used by the state of Kentucky Department of Education. This growth (along with dramatic graduation rate improvements during the same time frame) led to a re-labeling of the schools accountability status by KDE from “Persistently Low Achieving” to “Proficient” and “Progressing” at the end of the 2012-13 school year. As of November, 2013, preliminary data on college-readiness of students for the 2013-14 school year indicates ACT benchmark results are approximately ten percent above 2012-13 ACT benchmark pace. In November, 2012: 25.6% of seniors had met benchmarks vs. 35.4% in November, 2013 of seniors meeting benchmarks.

Impact of the Capstone

Preliminary data indicated that the Student Ownership Initiative helped to create a sustained school culture at Lee County High School where students and teachers intentionally focus on college and career readiness as a goal for all students. One quantifiable measure of this growth was the upward trend in college and career readiness as described in the data presented above since the inception of the SOI strategies. A second quantifiable measure of this change in student ownership and school culture can be found in the results of student survey questions administered by AdvancED as part of the Persistently Low Achieving school Diagnostic Review
process. Data from that student survey was used by permission to indicate student perceptions regarding their school in a wide variety of areas.

The AdvancEd survey is administered online to students, teachers and parents during the KDE Diagnostic Review cycles for PLA schools every two years. The student survey of 32 questions covers the five areas of vision, leadership, teaching and learning, resources and continuous improvement. Of the 32 questions, three questions are clear indicators of the impact of student ownership and school culture change as it relates to this capstone project. Responses from seniors at Lee County High School are compared with combined responses from ten other Kentucky PLA high schools in the data presented below. All ten of these schools are also Persistently Low Achieving schools that are involved in a turnaround process with the assistance of an Educational Recovery Team from KDE. This group ranges from urban to rural. The survey was administered online and the results were tabulated by staff at the Kentucky AdvancED office.

Many of the 32 questions address other areas of school health and effectiveness. Three questions specifically address student ownership concepts researched within this capstone. Respondents were allowed to select strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree or not applicable as Likert Scale answer choices. The data below presents a percentage of those students who answered strongly agree or agree. At the time of the survey, these Lee County High School seniors had been engaged in increased student ownership activities for approximately one school year.
Table 6

*AdvanceED Survey Responses from High School Seniors in PLA Schools – Three Selected Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Lee County High School Seniors 2013 (n=83)</th>
<th>Other State PLA High School Seniors 2013 (n=1067)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In my school, programs and services are available to help me succeed.</td>
<td>84.31%</td>
<td>73.01%</td>
<td>+11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. In my school, the principal and teachers have high expectations of me.</td>
<td>78.43%</td>
<td>70.50%</td>
<td>+7.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. My school prepares me for success in the next school year.</td>
<td>62.00%</td>
<td>59.10%</td>
<td>+2.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1 data suggest that Lee County High School students took ownership of the learning: the higher rate of response to the question using the language “…to help me succeed” indicates that students were responsible for their learning.

Question 8 addresses the vision, ownership and monitoring aspects of the *Student Ownership Initiative*. Finally, Question 32 indicates students who are college and career ready feel more prepared for life beyond high school. Each of these is an expected outgrowth of increased student ownership of their learning. These data (when combined with the student and teacher interview responses detailed below) strongly suggest that the processes and strategies contained in the *Student Ownership*
Initiative are having a positive impact on student ownership and overall school culture.

In addition to these data, twenty percent of the graduating class of 83 students (n=17) were interviewed about their senior year experiences regarding college and career readiness. Open-ended interview questions were developed by the researcher and in-person or phone interviews were conducted with the sample set of graduates. The students were randomly chosen from two groups: those who met their college benchmarks and those who did not. Responses were scripted and used to determine those activities and processes that had produced strong impact on student ownership of the learning throughout their senior year.

**Summary of student responses to interview questions:**

This initial open-ended question was designed to initiate the interview and begin conversation. The students were allowed to talk about any aspect of their senior year. The letter S indicates student and the number, the number assigned to identify the student.

**Question 1:** Tell me about your senior year. What went well? What were you disappointed with?

Thirteen of the seventeen graduates interviewed talked about college and career readiness without prompting. Two of the interviewees mentioned their biggest disappointment was the fact that they did not reach their senior benchmarks.
S1: Our grades and our ACT scores went way up. I was a little disappointed with my math.

S5: I was behind at the start of the year. I tried to catch up, but I did not get all the way there. I passed my industry test, but I didn’t get all my benchmarks.

S6: We were not doing well as a school. It was so bad that the state came in. They helped us learn what was important.

S14: I never got to fill in the CCR thermometer. I did not get my benchmarks.

S16: The best moment of my senior year was passing my math COMPASS test. I never thought I would get that last benchmark.

S17: I really wanted to meet my last benchmark. I got the other two.

Question 2: How did your senior class do academically? How did they compare to past graduating classes?

Eleven of the seventeen interviewees mentioned that their graduating class was far more college-ready than previous graduating classes. Six of the eleven mentioned the “thermometer” visual in the hallway and how proud they were that they had surpassed previous classes in this measure.

S3: The CCR thermometer showed that we did better than last year by quite a bit.
S8: In the past, people just tried to do the minimum work that they could. We tried harder than that.

S10: We were way ahead of the group of seniors that got us into state trouble. I’m proud of that.

**Question 3:** *What was important to you and your classmates during your senior year?*

Seven of the seventeen mentioned becoming college ready as an important part of their senior year. It was interesting that only two of those seven mentioned financial concerns as reasons why college readiness was important (e.g., scholarships, avoidance of extra remedial college coursework.) The other five students focused on completion of goals and attainment of honors within their high school senior class.

S1: We wanted to get off the state “watch list”. That was embarrassing to our teachers.

S5: Benchmarks. We talked about them a lot.

S6: Lots of rewards and encouragement. Every time someone met a benchmark they got to color in the thermometer in the front foyer. We liked that a lot. It became a big deal.

S12: We really wanted to meet our benchmarks. We even did extra work at home and took extra tests on our own.
STUDENT OWNERSHIP OF COLLEGE/CAREER READINESS

S15: Benchmarks mattered. Other classes had never worried about them before (my older brother and sister’s graduating classes did not even know what they were.)

**Question 4: Your class moved into the top 10% in the state in college and career readiness. Why do you think that happened?**

Student responses indicated students concentrated more on CCR because teachers kept the focus on attaining that goal. This continuous focus on meeting the goal of college and career readiness for every student was an important part of the school’s strong college and career readiness percentage gains.

S1: We learned that we save money and get out of college sooner if we’re college and career ready.

S2: Because teachers never stopped talking about it

S4: We got help with the things we were not very good at.

S7: The real trigger for me was when a teacher I had for three years started talking about meeting benchmarks and passing industry tests. He had never talked about that before.

S8: We got a lot of encouragement and help we had never gotten before.

S10: Our teachers hammered college and career readiness into our heads. They made it important.
S14: We knew what we were trying to do. Our notebooks helped us know where we were after every test.

S15: Teacher talk changed and they made CCR important.

**Question 5: How did your senior class define success?**

Fourteen of seventeen students mentioned college and/or career readiness as an indicator of success within the school. Four of those fourteen specifically mentioned the silver honor cords that were distributed at graduation for those students who were both college and career ready. It is obvious from this response that the celebration strand of the *Student Ownership Initiative* had profound impact in making CCR important and desirable to all students in the school.

S3: We talked about CCR a lot.

S6: Seniors wanted to be CCR, we knew it was important. It helped us save money in college.

S10: Honor cords at graduation for being both college and career ready were pretty cool. Lots of us took extra tests to try to get those.

S12: My entire nurses aid class became career ready. Our teacher was really proud of us.
S17: My career area had an agreement with the community college. Once I got there I was allowed to skip some classes because I had met all the prerequisites. That saved me several classes. Some of my friends did that, too.

**Question 6: What are some things that helped make college and career readiness important at our school?**

Students mentioned the visual displays (medal boards, progress thermometers) and the celebrations (assemblies, recognition) most often as things that made a big difference in reaching a higher level of college and career readiness. Additional instruction or academic interventions available were noted. The students interviewed stressed the impact of the rewards and honor aspect of college and career readiness of SOI.

S1: That opening assembly that the staff did at the beginning of the year really made me think about how much college costs and how I can help with that if I meet my benchmarks.

S2: Prizes, awards, and awareness.

S3: If we became CCR, we were allowed to get out of remedial classes.

S8: Everyone who got better got recognized and rewarded. It was not just the “top” kids getting awards.

S10: I liked being more aware of my test scores. They were easier to understand this year. S12: Teachers helped us see why CCR scores were important.
**Question 7:** *Why was college and career readiness important to you?*

On this final question, students did begin to discuss their future and their finances as reasons that college and career readiness is important. One graduate mentioned their current college remedial math course (student did not meet the ACT math benchmark while at Lee County High School) and expressed a wish that he had “worked harder on that while at LCHS.” Students talked about how expensive college was and how meeting the benchmarks was important to them now that they are in college – some, because they are saving money and others because they are spending it for remediation coursework.

S2: I saved money by avoiding extra college classes.

S3: I wanted to get out of the transition English and back into my elective course.

S7: Because it was important to my teachers.

S10: I wanted to save money next year to help my parents.

S13: Everyone in my Nurses Aid class can get a job now.

S16: So I can get a job that pays well.

The student responses within these interviews indicate a clear and focused understanding of college and career readiness as well as an understanding of why CCR matters to them.

The final qualitative data set was generated during interviews with the teachers involved with the implementation of the *Student Ownership Initiative*. Of
the 17 full-time teachers at Lee County High School, 12 teachers have been on staff throughout the implementation of SOI. Because they can compare the pre-SOI school culture with the post-SOI, these teachers were interviewed to determine changes in the school professional culture as a result of the SOI process. Nine of these teachers work with seniors and juniors where SOI was implemented, and all nine were interviewed for this study using six open ended questions. The other three teachers on staff worked exclusively with ninth grade students and were not involved with SOI implementation during the 2012-2013 school year. These three teachers were not interviewed because they were not actively involved with the targeted grade levels.

**Summary of teacher responses to interview questions:**

**Question 1:** What has had the most positive impact on college and career readiness over the past two years?

Teacher responses to this question trended to two topics: 1) increased student awareness of CCR and 2) increased student ownership of learning. Teachers talked about the increased accountability and responsibility shown by students. These two outcomes are closely tied to specific strategies and activities contained in the *Student Ownership Initiative*. The letter T indicates teacher and the number identifies individual teacher responses.

T1: We have had a change of attitude from “we have to do this because the state says so” to “we want to own this because it helps us in the long run”. CCR now matters to us.
T3: The transition courses have made students more accountable.

T4: Students understanding why they take certain tests and how the results impact them made a difference.

T5: Significant rise in communication level from the past – now, more than just teachers understand why CCR is important.

T7: Teacher and student awareness of the importance of meeting benchmarks.

T9: Kids bought in and they now understand that they stand to gain something by trying. They have ownership of the processes.

**Question 2:** *What specific strategies do you think have had the most impact?*

Responses varied from teacher to teacher regarding specific strategies that had the most impact. Specific strategies may have been more appropriate and impactful for specific content areas and student groups. This fact may explain why teachers varied greatly in the content of their responses.

T1: Intervention and practice for the ACT – consistent focus on CCR.

T2: Meeting with students one on one and discussing their individual progress using student data notebooks was important.

T3: Transition courses got the students attention with the loss of an elective.

T4: Communicating to students how meeting benchmarks helps them as individuals financially now and in the future.

T5: Consistent focus on the goal of meeting CCR in faculty meetings and all staff discussions.
T6: Shift to diagnosing specific problems then targeting specific needs (intervention) along with celebrating successes.

T7: Students and teachers realized the importance of CCR – all of the discussions led to the mindset change to the importance of CCR assessment success.

T8: Students had access to all their data through the student data notebooks and celebrated visually (e.g., thermometer, honor cords at graduation).

T9: Implementing pride by celebrating successes for every child. It leveled playing field where all students can be successful.

**Question 3:** Why do you think that particular strategy (from Question 2 above) worked well?

Interestingly, while teacher responses varied on Question 2 regarding which strategy worked well, there was strong agreement regarding why the strategy worked. The majority of responses below indicated that instruction had become student-centered and based on student needs. This indicates a change in the professional culture within the school during the implementation of SOI.

T1: **SOI Strategy: Intervention/Practice.** Students can improve at their own pace. Intervention was pin-pointed to the student’s area of greatest need.
T2: **SOI Strategy: One-on-One Instruction.** Students knew that the only person who could improve their scores was them. Student data notebooks helped them own their progress.

T5: **SOI Strategy: Staff Consistent Focus.** Students not allowed to fail.

T6: **SOI Strategy: Celebrating Successes.** Understanding the state’s accountability system explained to students allowed them to take pride. Set goals and celebrate as they moved up.

T7: **SOI Strategy: Raise Expectations.** Once they knew expectations, everyone (both teachers and students) enjoyed celebrating!

T8: **SOI Strategy: Celebration Thermometer.** Students developed a sense of ownership and accomplishment.

T9: **SOI Strategy: Intervention.** Every student had the chance and the support necessary to be successful.

**Question 4: Are there any strategies you would add or delete for the future? Why?**

While additional strategies were proposed, zero of nine teachers indicated that any *SOI* strategies should be removed or discontinued. This suggests that teachers were in support of continuing with these strategies that implies sustained growth on the professional culture.

T1: I am probably going to implement additional small group instruction to meet more student needs.
T2: I can’t think of anything to change. I hope we keep going and sustain this success.

T4: Just continue those strategies that help them take responsibility.

T5: Add more dual credit courses so students have more opportunity to receive college credit.

T6: Move a similar success system into the 9th and 10th grade where it is not quite embedded yet.

T7: Have content area teachers help administer the career/vocational tests for greater student accountability.

T8: We always need to add more interventions - additional and greater variety to meet more student needs.

T9: Nothing to add at this time. I would not delete a thing.

**Question 5:** How is the school different now after implementation of these student ownership strategies and activities?

This question was designed to encourage teachers to reflect and report changes that have occurred in the professional culture among the teachers in the school. While some teachers responded in terms of how students are different now (compared to two years ago), several teachers talked about changes within the professional culture.

T1: Teachers always took assessment seriously, but now the students do as well.
T2: Teachers and students are more aware of what needs to be done.

T3: We have an intentional focus and an emphasis on the right things.

T4: We’re proud of the gains we have made, and students are, too.

T5: We always had hard data on a sheet but teachers did not really know how to use it. Students never saw or used this data, but they do now.

T6: Data is now important, and students now understand real consequences of failure to meet benchmarks financially.

T7: We see the importance of things we used to do out of compliance.

**Question 6:** *Is this change permanent? Can it be continued without (Kentucky Department of Education Educational Recovery Staff) ER support?*

Due to the school’s state designation as a Persistently-Low Achieving (PLA) school, the state assigned Educational Recovery staff members to support the school’s improvement efforts. This question addresses the sustainability of the improved professional culture once these support staff members are reassigned. Unanimously, teacher responses indicated the school culture is now different and strategies that lead to improvements will be maintained and with added suggestions for refinement.

T1: Yes. We teachers and students take pride in this success.

T2: I think so. We now we know what to work on.

T3: Yes, as long as the level of staffing allows for this level of individual support and one-on-one connections.
T4: Yes, but we will need a “point person” responsible for each of the initiatives we have begun to keep pushing forward.

T5: Yes, as long as we’re all responsible to continue.

T6: Yes – unless the state removes this as an accountability measure. If they do, we would probably focus on whatever the students are held accountable for under the new system.

T7: Yes. This initiative good for students and good for our school accountability scores.

T9: Yes – success leads to more success. We plan to keep everyone on track.

As for future impacts, collection of long-term performance data is underway. The percentage of college and career readiness for Lee County High School students is expected to rise again this year as evidenced by current trend data. The teachers are learning to help students engage as owners of their own learning – and this is slowly changing the culture of the school toward focusing on individual student outcomes instead of pass or fail rates in their courses. Implementation of the SOI module has helped change the culture to one where students and teachers own the learning instead of making excuses for low scores.

Limitations of the study

Although the findings of this research will have transferability to other high schools in other settings, some limitations exist. The following limitations must be considered when determining the degree to which this study can be replicated in another setting:
1. This case study was limited to one small, rural, high poverty high school in Eastern Kentucky.

2. Individual, personalized attention was afforded to the small population of seniors within the case study school that allowed for increased individual attention for all students. Applicability of this initiative in a larger school setting may or may not have transferability.

3. The student population of Lee County High School is predominately Caucasian. This school has less than three percent minority students enrolled in classes. Applicability of this initiative in a more diverse school setting may or may not have transferability.

4. While current data in the case study school indicates that the strategies and activities of the SOI have positively impacted the Lee County Schools in a year and a half of implementation, longitudinal data is needed to predict sustainable long-term results.

**Reflections**

The implications of this research and impact of the *Student Ownership Initiative* upon all students in Lee County can be examined by analyzing student college and career performance before and after implementation. According to this data, the SOI strategies and activities were effective in raising the level of college and career readiness scores.

As reported in Table 7, college and career readiness data for graduating seniors at Lee County High School was averaged for the three academic years just
before the implementation of the *Student Ownership Initiative*. Student results from
the first full year of implementation (2012-2013) reflected that the percentage of
LCHS graduates who were college and/or career ready nearly doubled from a three-
year average of 32.4% CCR before implementation of SOI to 63.4% of graduates
CCR after the first year of use. More importantly, these gains were dramatic among
student groups who are typically underperforming students. Males more than
doubled their previous three-year average of CCR performance (from 30.5% to 70%)
as did students of poverty (free and reduced-lunch students improved from 26.3% to
56.1% CCR.) In addition, LCHS had special needs students become college and/or
career ready for the first time. This data suggests that the strategies and activities
contained within the module and implemented by teachers had strong positive impact
on Lee County High School. These gains were indicative that the SOI had impact
across all student demographics regardless of any pre-existing barriers to learning.
Table 7

Lee County High School College and Career Readiness Trend Data (Percentage Includes Students Who Were College Ready, Career Ready or Both.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>2010 CCR</th>
<th>2011 CCR</th>
<th>2012 CCR</th>
<th>3-Yr CCR Avg.</th>
<th>2013 CCR</th>
<th>Change from previous 3-year average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>+31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>+24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>+39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>+36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>+29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Special Education</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>+32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>+14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ron Edmonds (1982) research notes that effective schools “must bring an equal percentage of its highest and lowest social classes to minimum mastery (p.4)”. This performance data indicates that the Student Ownership Initiative positively impacted the level of college and career readiness success at Lee County High School and was effective across all demographic groups. Student ownership of the learning grew among males and females, rich and poor and special needs students.
interviews with these graduating seniors indicated that college and career readiness became something they cared about and therefore tried hard to achieve.

Over the course of their senior year, the 2012-13 graduates of Lee County High school nearly quadrupled their college and career readiness score (from 22.9 on August 9, 2012 to 81.3 on May 9, 2013). Many students met their ACT benchmarks and passed industry certifications. The impact of this level of proficiency results in freshman-level college-bound students avoiding the cost of remedial courses. On the career side, many students holding industry certifications such as certified nurse aid, ASE certified auto-motive mechanics, IC3 certified business office managers and NCCER certified carpenters and electricians now enter directly into the work-force. Students begin immediately earning a living wage due to these high school career certifications. Students truly leave Lee County High School, college or career ready.

As a result of the Student Ownership Initiative, Lee County High School moved from a designation of a “priority” (low-performing) to a “proficient and progressing” school (higher performing). The professional culture among teachers began to shift. The largest shift came with the newfound understanding of how to help students truly be successful, and how to put sustainable systems in place to continue increasing student performance for all students.

As an outgrowth of this study, it is hoped that the companion Student Ownership Initiative professional development module will have impact on the level of success for all students in Kentucky. This set of strategies, when implemented, has already shown dramatic impact in this case study school. One size does not fit all
users. The SOI module will need to be personalized and tailored to specific school’s needs. The templates processes provided in the module are adaptable for multiple groups of students and a wide variety of faculty strengths.

Professional development training based on the Student Ownership Initiative will be available to a wide audience as an outgrowth of this work. Additional long-term data studies will help determine which activities are particularly impactful across a larger body of students. Pre-and post-testing of teacher and student perceptions of ownership and culture prior to the initiative and after implementation will help to pinpoint those particular strands of the SOI that are the most effective.

As stated earlier in this study, the essential questions to be answered by this work were:

1). *What impact has a student ownership approach had on improving students’ success?*

2). *What impact has a student ownership approach had on the culture of the professional educators in sustaining change?*

Evidence suggests that the answers to these two questions are the same: the Student Ownership Initiative produced strong positive impact in both areas; student ownership that resulted in increased CCR data and an improved professional culture that led to sustained change. Teachers and administrators worked together to implement initiatives that helped students take responsibility for their own success. In addition, teachers and administrators worked together to build a sustainable system of strategies and activities that led to an improved professional culture within LCHS.
It is a goal of this study that these activities and strategies continue to have dramatic turnaround impact within Lee County High School – leading all students to a higher level of college and career readiness success and a brighter, more successful future. When students and staff work together to establish a vision, enable ownership, monitoring progress, enact necessary interventions and empower celebrations of success, then the goal of success for all students reaching CCR can become a reality. Through the *Student Ownership Initiative*, students and staff can work together to own their own learning and develop a professional school culture that sustains positive change efforts.
Student Ownership Initiative

Five Strands to Success for College/Career Readiness for ALL Students

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Morehead State University

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Student Ownership Initiative

INTRODUCTION

Many states are now using the percentage of college and career ready graduates from a high school as a measure of school effectiveness. In order to increase the level of CCR, the schools often have tried drastic steps such as retraining the teachers, replacing the principal, retooling the curriculum, reorganizing the school day and requesting additional help from parents. All of these are useful steps in improving student achievement. However, none of these steps specifically address the one individual who can have the most impact on a student’s level of college and career readiness: the student themself.

Often, high school seniors take course after course and test after test without ever knowing why. Questions like: “Why does this test matter to me?” or “Will this test help me reach any goal in any way?” are on the minds of students. Interestingly, these same questions are often on the minds of the student’s teachers as well.

This professional development module is the result of two years of research and work within a rural high school in southeastern Kentucky. The strategies and activities contained within this work are an outgrowth of original research based on three fields of study: characteristics of Effective Schools, impact of Student Ownership of their learning and process that lead to Sustained Improvement over time. When these three areas were reviewed in the literature, five common themes that would drive a school culture improvement toward student ownership of college and career readiness were found:
Table I: Common Characteristics for Student Ownership from Review of Literature

<table>
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<th>Focus Areas from Review Of Literature</th>
<th>5 Common Themes (SOI Strands)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Effective Schools Research</td>
<td>High Expectations for Self</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Goal-Driven Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Ownership Research</td>
<td>VISION for Improvement</td>
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<td>Sustainability Research</td>
<td>Empowered Learning &amp; Self-Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual OWNERSHIP of the Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of Progress</td>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review and Monitor for Impact &amp; Individual Self-Monitoring of Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous MONITORING of Progress Toward Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time on Learning Tasks</td>
<td>Reflect on How Individual Students Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Student Capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INTERVENTION to Help Students Meet Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Mission</td>
<td>Celebrate Personal and Group Successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relentless Focus on Success</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>CELEBRATION of Student Success</td>
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</table>


These five themes became the focus of this *Student Ownership Initiative (SOI)*. When implemented in the case study school, this set of strategies and activities had strong impact on 1) the percentage of students who graduated college and / or career ready and 2) the teaching and learning culture within the school itself. The case study school (after implementing the Student Ownership Initiative) nearly tripled its CCR score of 29 to a score of 81 in two years. These strategies have proven to be effective. Most importantly, students graduated from the case study school more productive and prepared for the next stage of their lives.
This module is designed within each of these five strands with both pieces to be completed with students and other pieces to be completed with teachers and administrators. The end results of SOI implementation are:

1. Increased Percentage of Students College/Career Ready

2. Improved Student Ownership

3. Improved School Culture of Professionals (for Long Term Sustainability of Change)

Within this module, a variety of strategies and activities are presented to help schools change to a culture of ownership for the students (and teachers). Each school will find something within this module to help students and adults focus on the goals of college and career readiness for all. When students own their learning, the focus falls onto success instead of failure. These steps and strands were proven to produce success in the case study school, and they will help you help your students as well.
Student Ownership Initiative

Strand One: VISION

Student Pieces

- VS1 - Opening Meeting: Establishing a Vision (Explanation and PowerPoint included)
- VS2 - Full Understanding of College and Career Readiness (Explanation and training handout included)
- VS3 - Assignment to Transition Classes (Explanation included)

Teacher Pieces

- VT1 – Initial Meeting with Teachers to Establish a Vision (Reflective article included)
- VT2 - Full Understanding of College and Career Readiness (Training handout included)
- VT3 - The Box: Things that are Important to Adults Mental Model (Explanation included)
- VT4 – Teachers as College Role Models (Explanation and samples included)
VS1 – Initial College and Career Readiness Meeting
Explanation

One of the first steps in producing student ownership of learning within a high school is the initial kick-off assembly where the vision is originally communicated. The focus of this meeting is “how can you be more successful in life?” and “how can we (the adults) help you reach your goals?”

It is in this meeting that expectations for success are delivered and importance of meeting the college and career ready benchmarks discussed. The focus should be on WHY students want to meet the benchmarks to help their future earnings potential.

Topics covered in the attached PowerPoint template include:

- Definition of College Ready
- Definition of Career Ready
- Benchmarks and Why They Matter
  - Selection of senior course electives
  - Avoidance of extra remedial college courses for non-benchmark meeting students
  - Graduating with honors
- Future Income with:
  - A minimum wage job vs.
  - A college or technical career salary
- Lifetime Earnings Potential
  - Specifically, how a college or technical degree increases a student’s lifetime earnings potential
- Why This Is Important to YOU (students)
  - Why this is important to your bank account NOW
  - Why this important to your bank account in the future (loans)
  - Why this is important to you as an adult (salary vs. minimum wage)
- Example of adult spending
  - Salary vs. minimum wage

The information in this PowerPoint template surprised many students in the case study school. Student interviews conducted one year later indicated that the initial assembly was an important moment in the initial formation of student ownership of their learning.
Lee County High School

College and Career Readiness 2012-13

Kentucky’s Goal for All Students
College and/or Career Readiness
2 Questions:

What is “College and Career Readiness?”

and more importantly...

“Why is that important to me?”

In the Future...

Virtually all jobs will require advanced training beyond high school.

70% of the jobs you will work have not been invented yet!!!
**COLLEGE READY**

To begin college classes for your degree, you must meet the college benchmarks on the ACT

---

**College Readiness**

First Way to be COLLEGE READY:

MEET BENCHMARKS ON ACT

- English 18
- Math 19
- Reading 20
Extra Opportunities...

- After more instruction your Senior Year, you can take the ACT, Compass or KYOTE tests to meet the benchmarks.
- You only need to pass the benchmark ONE TIME to be college-ready.

CAREER READINESS

Two Parts:
ACADEMIC Requirement: ACT
  Benchmarks, ASVAB, WorkKeys Tests
TECHNICAL Requirement: Pass the KOSSA test or earn Industry Certification (after 3 classes in a vocational or technical field)
Both College and Career Readiness INCREASE YOUR INCOME throughout your life!

YOUR FUTURE:

CHOICE 1 – Minimum Wage:
$7.25 per hour × 40 hrs/week × 52 weeks per year × 30 years =

$452,000 over a 30 year career
YOUR FUTURE:

CHOICE 2 – College/Technical Degree:
$51,700 \times 30 \text{ year degree}

$1,551,000 \text{ over a 30 year career}

So, let’s compare...

$452,000 \quad $1,551,000
### So, let’s compare...

<table>
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Our goal is to move you to the right side of those last few slides.

We are here to help ALL of you to become COLLEGE and/or CAREER READY!!!
Students are required to take numerous assessments throughout their high school career — achievement, skills, aptitude, career or interest assessments are administered at scattered times throughout their school year. Often, students will take an assessment without knowing the value or importance to their future success. Some students take these assessments “because the teacher said I have to do so.”

This artifact is used in conjunction with the Student Data Notebooks to help students understand all of the requirements to be college and/or career ready - and the tests that help meet the CCR requirements. Auditory learners will be more likely to understand CCR from the initial assembly/explanation of why CCR is important (see VS1). This piece is likely to help the visual learners “see” the path to college and career readiness.

It is designed to be an insert into the Student Data Notebook as a quick-reference sheet to guide their progress toward college and career readiness. It should help to de-mystify the process and help students see what they must do to be successful.

This artifact is also used with teachers. An explanation of that process is included with VT2.
GOAL: College/Career Readiness For ALL students upon graduation

**COLLEGE READY**

**ACT**
- English 18
- Math 19
- Reading 20

**Compass**
- English 74
- Math 36
- Reading 85

**KYOTE**
- Math 22
- Reading 20

**CAREER READY**

**KOSSA MC: 70 Scenario: 75**

**PLUS**

**ACT Work Keys**

**OR**

**Industry Certification**

**OR**

**ASVAB (55)**

**Bonus for both College and Career Readiness!**

1 point for College Ready
ACT or COMPASS or KYOTE

1 Point for Career Ready
KOSSA or Industry Certification + ACT Work Keys or ASVAB

1.5 points if Both
VS3 – Student Assignment to Transition Courses

Explanation

One of the most important pieces in establishing student ownership of the learning is the assignment of seniors who have not met the ACT college benchmarks to transition courses during their senior year. Seniors who have not met either the English or reading benchmark are assigned to a second language arts course (Reading for College Success) in addition to their mandatory English IV course. Students who have not met the math benchmark are assigned to an Algebra III course which can serve as their mandatory fourth math credit.

The assignment to this extra language arts class often dramatically impacts their senior schedule – meaning that the student must give up a desired elective course in order to take the remedial/transition course. While not popular with seniors, this placement does have several desired effects:

- It increases the passion to pass the benchmarks (because the student can leave the transition course and return to their elective once the benchmark is met.)
- It increases the desire to work through interventions (one-on-one and online) to grow in skill level.
- It increases the desire to re-take the ACT or Compass exams and to try harder than before.
- It increases the student’s desire to take college visits and attempt to pass placement exams while there.

All of these are important pieces of students taking ownership of their own learning.

It is important that students understand very early that their enrollment in the transition course can be temporary. If the student meets the missing benchmark(s), then they will immediately be able to leave the transition course and move directly to their desired elective. Students have shown (in the case study school) an increased desire to meet the benchmark and revise their schedule early in the school year – and this has led to a marked increase in student focus and academic success.

It is also important to communicate this information related to senior transition courses for non-bench markers to the junior class whenever possible – especially before the ACT is taken by students in March of their junior year. Students try much harder if they believe that this assessment will impact their senior schedule and potentially cause them not to be able to take desired courses. According to adult ACT assessment proctors, this communication in the case study school caused the tested students to focus and give more effort on the assessment than in previous years. Data
from the case study school suggests that the percentage of students meeting ACT benchmarks more than doubled (from 19% to 44%) in the first two years after transition courses were implemented. This was a strong incentive for students to focus on benchmarks and make the academic and assessment efforts necessary to meet these goals.
VT1 – Initial Meeting with Teachers to Establish Vision

Explanation

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”
Proverbs 29:18

The case study school that inspired this professional development module was at a very low point in its history when this Student Ownership Initiative began. The school had been classified by the State Department of Education as “Persistently Low Achieving” – a label applied to the lowest performing schools in the state. Administrators had been removed. A three-member state external assistance Educational Recovery Team had been assigned to work within the school every day. Student morale was low, and teacher morale was even lower.

The initial work involved developing a shared vision for student ownership of their learning. At first, staff just needed to talk about what they were seeing and what they were feeling. The PLA designation was a “kick in the teeth” to this school – and they were not happy with the state, the local board, the students or themselves. Blame was pointed and plentiful. The problems facing the school were all the fault of “these kids.”

Early meetings involved talking about 1) where they wanted to go as a school and 2) how they would define success for students. Quickly, teachers began to make comments such as “these kids do not care” or “our kids are different than other places due to our poverty.” The insinuation was that all of the school issues and problems were the student’s fault.

After processing what teachers said, school leadership developed and shared three new non-negotiable ideas that they wanted the teachers to embrace:

1. “The students are not broken.”

This district does enroll students who have external barriers to their learning (such as poverty, lack of parental involvement or other issues). However, the students in my case study school were not that dissimilar from students in other rural schools – and many of these schools were producing far stronger student achievement results. If the students in schools with similar demographics and needs were successful, why must our students fail?
2. “Regardless of what they may say, all students want to be successful.”

Students who do not understand the definition of success may act out in other ways so that the teacher’s focus is shifted from the fact that they are unsuccessful. Many behavior problems are lessened when the student understands the expectations, is engaged in the class and experiences some level of success academically.

3. “Early success leads to later success.”

As soon as a student receives positive feedback for a job well done, he is far more likely to repeat the actions that produced this success in the first place. Belligerent, uncooperative students are often an outgrowth of a frustrating sequence of failures within the class – leading them to a conclusion that there is no point in trying – because they know that they are going to fail.

In the case study school, the attached article reprint from the *Lexington Herald-Leader* newspaper was used in this initial meeting to describe the impact of small early successes on long-term early success. This desire for success is an important part of developing lasting student ownership of their own learning and their eventual level of success.

This article was distributed, read and discussed for implications on student success during the teacher’s meeting on the opening day for teachers to start the school year. Teachers were given time to reflect on the article and then share within peer groups a response or a reflection of their thoughts. After these rich peer discussions, individuals shared any new thoughts generated by this article, and school-wide steps to generate early success for students were developed.
Success, failure in first two weeks shape the school year
By Thomas R. Guskey (Georgetown College)
Article excerpt from the *Lexington Herald Leader* newspaper on August 3, 2008

We soon will experience the most important time in the entire school year for children: the first two weeks. What happens during this critical period pretty much determines how the rest of the year will go.

When children return to school after the summer break, their perceptions about school and themselves as learners are mostly uncertain. It's a new year with new teachers, new books, new classes, new schedules and new friends. All of these new things come with the hope that this year could be different and better than all previous years.

That uncertainty in students' perceptions continues only until teachers administer the first quizzes and tests near the end of the second week of school. When teachers assign grades to those first quizzes, the grades put students into categories. And getting out of a category is really difficult.

Students who receive a C on that first math quiz, for example, begin to see themselves as C students. Their uncertainty suddenly becomes fixed, and they accept the idea that they are likely to earn Cs in math for the rest of the school year.

When the second quiz or test occurs, they expect to receive another C. When they do, it reinforces their perception. Similarly, if they receive a failing grade on that first quiz, they think all following grades will be the same.

But if they succeed on that first quiz and receive a high grade that, too, is their perception of all that might follow.

*This means that teachers must do everything they can to ensure students' success in the first two weeks.* And not fake success, but success in something challenging. The key to motivating students rests with that success. *Students persist in activities at which they experience success, and they avoid activities at which they are not successful or believe they cannot be successful.*

This is the reason that truancy and attendance problems rarely occur during the first two weeks of the school year. They begin to occur after the first graded quizzes and tests. In students' minds, the grades they receive on these first quizzes establish their likelihood of future success. And why come to school if there is so little chance of doing well?
Parents, too, must be genuinely involved in their children's education during the first two weeks. Routines established at home in this critical period profoundly affect the likelihood of success.

Daily conversations about school activities help children recognize that their parents value success in school. Providing a quiet place for children to work on school assignments and limiting the time they spend watching TV or playing on computers further increase chances for success. Checking with teachers to make sure children are well prepared and ready to succeed also can help.

Successful experiences during the first two weeks of school do not guarantee success for the entire year. But they are a powerful and perhaps essential step in that direction. Teachers and parents need to take advantage of this critical time and use it well. It can make all the difference.
VT2 – Single Page College/Career Readiness Flowchart

Explanation

This artifact (same artifact used with students VS2) is extremely important for use with staff early in the vision-setting process. Unless the school has intentionally trained the teachers about how a student becomes college and/or career ready, then teachers will not advise students accurately as they help them take ownership of their learning.

The variety of assessments and certifications that can lead to college and career readiness for students can be confusing if not intentionally clarified.

College Readiness

The simplest explanation is that COLLEGE readiness is most easily met by achieving the minimum American College Test benchmark scores in English (18), Math (19) and Reading (20). These benchmark scores do not have to be reached during a single ACT administration, but can reflect the best scores students achieve across multiple administrations of the test.

Students who do not reach these benchmarks on the ACT may meet equivalent scores on the ACT COMPASS or the KYOTE (Kentucky Online Testing) assessments administered at the school or at a college/university. Once the student meets all three of these benchmarks, they are “college-ready” and do not require remedial non-credit bearing courses (MAT 090 or ENG 095, for example) upon entering college.

Career Readiness

In order to graduate CAREER ready, students must demonstrate 1) an academic proficiency, and 2) a certified/tested proficiency in a technical area of study. The academic proficiency is best met by meeting the college benchmarks outlined above – that is, if a student is college ready he is also half-way to being career ready. In addition to those academic assessments listed above, a student can meet the academic portion of career-readiness by massing ACT’s WorkKeys assessment or the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test. All of our seniors who have not already met benchmarks take each of these assessments. This “multiple measures” approach ensures that students have every opportunity for success.

The technical proficiency required for career readiness can be met by passing a technical proficiency test or by attaining an industry certification. After students
complete a three-course pathway in a technical area, they are administered a Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment (KOSSA) test in their area. At the case study school, three-course pathways leading to a technical proficiency can be attained in Horticulture (agriculture courses), Pre-Engineering (industrial arts courses), Transportation (automotive courses), Health Services (nurse aid and medical courses), Construction (carpentry or electricity courses), or Administrative Support (business courses.) Passing any KOSSA test at the end of a three-course pathway meets the technical requirement of career readiness.

The other way to meet the technical portion of career readiness is to attain an industry certification in your specialty technical area – often involving performance tasks as well as written tests over technical content. Case study school students can attain automotive ASE certificates, construction NCCER certificates, business IC3 certificates and health services Nurse Aid certification. Any of these certifications, when combined with the academic component makes the student career ready as well.

The enclosed handout shows these requirements for CCR as a flowchart to help clarify how each test or measure fits into the overall CCR system. Students must understand how each of these tests is important if they are to take ownership of their future. In order to facilitate this understanding by students, teachers must also understand why each of these multiple measures is important – so they can fully explain their significance to their students.

Artifact for this activity located with VS2.
At first glance, this strategy may seem insignificant. Teachers have a multitude of responsibilities and tasks to fulfill and accomplish during the school day that require their constant attention. The addition of one more “mental model” to their work may seem small, but it actually is a very important piece of student ownership of their learning.

In the initial meeting with teachers at the beginning of the year, teachers were asked to visualize a “box” contained within the brains of all of their students. On the outside of the box, there was a prominent label. It read:

“Things That Are Important To Adults”

Teachers must embrace this mental model and intentionally say and do things that make college and career readiness seem important. In this mental model, students (who want to grow up to be adults) are using their life and school experiences to constantly put things into and take things from this “box” – storing away information related to things that adults REALLY care about and focus their strength to achieve.

In order to transfer ownership of the learning to the students it is essential that adult conversations and actions send a message that CCR is important to adults. If it is a consistent topic of conversation and a focus of classroom learning, then students will come to the realization that CCR matters to adults. When students realize that adults view CCR as worthy and valuable and important, then they begin to place it in their brain “box” and value it themselves.
The case study school nearly tripled its CCR score (from a score of 29 to 81) in a two year period. During the development of this PD module, graduates of the case study school were interviewed. One graduate that was enrolled during this increase in CCR was asked “What was the reason CCR became important?” and “What happened to make students care?” His response, while smiling, was: “Because the teachers never shut up about it!”

While humorous, this really is an insightful response and insight into the student’s mind. They heard the teachers continuously talk about the importance of CCR. The students began to understand this was important, and took steps toward their adulthood because they believed it was important to adults.

This mental model is referenced in emails and in faculty meetings among the adults in the building. They are familiar with it and understand the important role it has played in changing the school culture toward ownership of the learning by the students in the case study school.
VT4 – Teachers as College Role Models
Explanation

Each teacher in the building should overtly display their college credentials (including diplomas, awards, honors or any other indicators of post-secondary study.) Students must realize that each of their teachers successfully completed a college experience.

The enclosed examples are used in the case study school by every teacher. These posters hang beside the door at student eye level of every classroom so that each student must pass by these signs seven periods per day. They often initiate conversations between the teachers and the students about specific colleges attended and the pros and cons of each institution for that particular student.

This is a very easy, low-cost way to continuously promote a college-going culture within the building for all students. It is another way to promote a future story for students and a vision for their success.

Two samples are included.
Lewis Willian

Eastern Kentucky University
1985 BA Biology Education
1991 MA Biology Education
1993 Rank I Principal Certification
2003 Supervisor of Instruction
Morehead State University
2014 Doctorate of Education Leadership

My Family:
Wife Carol, Son Matt, Daughter-in-Law Ashley, Daughter Julie
Jeremy S. Miller

1998 – Eastern Kentucky University
Bachelor of Sciences
Mathematic & Statistics

2002 – Eastern Kentucky University Master of Arts
Educational Leadership

2007 – Eastern Kentucky University
Rank 1
Director of Pupil Personnel &
Instructional Supervisor

Currently attending EKU for
Masters in Mathematics to
teach College Algebra
Student Ownership Initiative

Strand Two: OWNERSHIP

Student Pieces

- **OS1 - Develop a Plan – Early in Senior Year** *(Conference materials included)*
- **OS2 - Student Control of their Own Schedule** *(Transition Course explanation included)*
- **OS3 - Student-Led Conferences** *(Protocol included)*

Teacher Pieces

- **OT1 - Let The Data Speak** *(Data analysis protocols included)*
- **OT2 - Specific Relationships with Targeted Students** *(Process description included)*
- **OT3 - Constant Pressure - displays, reminders, changing the conversation** *(Examples included)*
Within the first month of the senior year, it is important for each graduating student to have a specific conversation with a mentoring adult within the school about the student’s plan for the first year after high school – what they plan for their “next step” in life. For some, it will be enrollment in college, others will go straight to the workforce, and some will enlist in the military. Each student needs to have a specific “Future Story” (Payne, 1998) that helps them focus on completion of high school and leads them to this next step successfully.

In our “Future Story” mentor-student conferences, we discuss each student’s current status regarding their graduation status, college and career readiness, and battery of senior assessments. The mentor must come to each conference with the following data available: student transcripts prior to senior year, senior schedule, and status on ACT benchmarks in English, math and reading. Prior to the conferences, the mentor should study each student’s attainment of benchmarks and completion of three-course vocational pathways during their high school career to determine the areas in which a student can become career-ready by taking a career assessment (KOSSA) or by attaining an industry certificate.

The desired outcome for these mentor-senior conferences is increased student ownership of the processes that will make the student college or career ready.

The questions asked by the mentor should be:

- “What do you plan to do immediately after high school?” Answers will help lead to the focus questions below for increased ownership of their future.

- “How are you doing on your ACT benchmarks? Which ones have you met? When are you planning to meet the other one(s)?” This makes the student think about their plan to meet their benchmarks. This is important for both college-ready and career-ready students (because meeting the college benchmarks automatically meets the academic half of career-ready as well.)

- “Once you meet the other benchmarks and become college-ready, have you thought about which elective class you want to choose?” This helps them
frame a goal of getting out of the transition senior English-language arts
course and into a preferred elective – helps them focus on why ELA success is
important to them.

- “Which three-course pathway(s) will you be able to test for career-ready in?
  Do you have more than one set of three technical courses in one area?”
  These questions help students realize they are a specialist in something – and
  that they will be tested in that/those area(s) at the end of the year to show
career proficiency – which also increases ownership in their pathway. If they
will be exiting a transition course during the year once they meet their
benchmarks, discuss which elective will help them finish a three-course career
pathway so that they are eligible for an initial or additional career readiness
assessment.

- “What are you working on right now to help become college and career
  ready?” Remind students that all students who become both receive special
  honor cords to wear during graduation – this goal is very motivational for
  students!

- “What can we do to help you reach your goals?” This language puts the
  responsibility for student success on the students. It is an important piece of
  transferring ownership for success from the faculty to the individual student.

Each of these questions is designed to increase a student’s ownership of their senior
year success. These discussions help to “demystify” the CCR process and give
importance to the assessments the seniors take during their final year in school.
When the students begin to use language that states “I need to…..” instead of “That
teacher wants me to…..”, then the students are beginning to own their learning and
reach for the goals they established during these conferences.
Throughout high school, students look forward to their senior year. However, students who do not meet ACT benchmarks are required by the state department of education to enroll in an additional “transition” English/reading course and/or enroll in a math course with extra intervention embedded during their senior year. These courses in reading and math are state-required interventions to help students become college (and career) ready.

At most schools, the reading transition course is a stand-alone full-year course – a “second English class” that all students who have not met their reading or English ACT benchmark must take during their senior year. This additional course often causes students to choose which elective course they will give up in order to take this required intervention course. In the case study school, this was not popular among the students. Students who have completed three years of study often look forward to flexibility and availability of open class periods during their senior year to take desired electives (now that their required core courses are completed.) However, this required benchmark class takes the place of such a desired elective. (Math transitions may be delivered during regular math instruction and do not require a separate course during the day)

From a career-ready standpoint, this loss of an elective is also damaging to the students three-course technical pathway completion. As stated before, in order to be career-ready a student must complete an approved course of study in a technical area with a minimum of three courses. This completion is negatively impacted if the number of elective courses is reduced by the need for additional intervention courses in order to meet benchmarks. Students need the flexibility within their schedule to successfully navigate three technical courses in order to be eligible for career readiness.

So, what is the impact of this knowledge on student ownership of their learning? Students must be fully aware of the long-term consequences of failing to meet benchmarks by the end of their FRESHMAN YEAR in high school so that they can take early steps to avoid transition courses.

First of all, students need to begin attempting the ACT exam early in their junior (or even sophomore) year. All students in the case study school are administered a state-sponsored full ACT exam in March of their junior year. If a student meets all three
benchmarks on this assessment, then they avoid transition courses during their senior year. However, if they miss a benchmark, they need to take advantage of the opportunity to meet the mark on any other regular Saturday administration of the ACT (which is given six times a year.) Remember, they do not have to meet all three benchmarks during ONE test administration – they just need to meet the mark in each area at some point during their ACT career.)

The impact of missing the benchmarks UPON THE STUDENT must be fully explained to all juniors (and sophomores) multiple times during the school year. The school (teachers, administrators, counselors) should intentionally communicate these potential negative impacts to all students:

- The need for transitional courses – thus taking away senior electives they desire
- The cost of remedial courses in college that are required for non-benchmark students that require tuition but bear no credit – often delaying and dramatically increasing the cost of college graduation
- The impact on completion of a technical career-ready pathway because a three-course pathway cannot be fully completed.

This should be approached in a positive spirit (flexible schedule, cost savings in college) in order for students to continue trying to meet the mark. Students should “own” this process and voice why benchmark-meeting matters to them.

However, if a student does not meet the benchmark by their senior year and must take an English/reading intervention transition course, there are still ways to motivate the student to continue attempting to meet the standard. In the case study school, teachers continuously remind the transition-enrolled students that they can exit the course once the meet the benchmark. Often, students will attempt the very next ACT administration (at the beginning of the year – usually September) in an effort to move from the transition course. If they are successful the counselor changes their schedule and moves them to the desired elective.

This is a powerful incentive to try. Students often take college days to visit local universities and attempt to meet the benchmarks while on campus by taking ACT’s COMPASS computerized assessment. If the student passes, they return to school with a printout that indicates the benchmark was met. The student’s schedule would then be changed. Although a senior is only allowed two college days by school policy, the case study school permitted additional college days if a student wanted to visit a campus for the purpose of COMPASS testing. Several students took advantage of this opportunity to meet their benchmarks in this university setting.
Another important piece of student ownership is the implementation of the Student-Led Conference. Within this structure, students and parents engage each other in a guided discussion about the student’s strengths and opportunities for improvement. The student is provided ample support to prepare for and lead a discussion of their progress based on data from their Student Data Notebook.

This work is divided into four parts (Please see artifact OS3 for conference template.)

Part A: Student-Led Pre-conference Goal Setting
Before the conference with their parents, the student reflects on their strengths, weaknesses and goals. Suggestions for growth areas for inclusion in possible goals are included.

Part B: Student-Led Conference Form
This is the worksheet the student creates with their personal “talking points” to use in the conference with their parents. It includes refined goals and a statement of their identified growth needs.

Part C: Student-Led Conference Agenda
This agenda includes the tasks to be completed during the meeting and includes several “General Discussion Topic” samples the student can use to generate conversation about their progress and their needs.

Part D: Parent Comment Form
This template is designed for the parent to reflect on the student-led conference. It is to be left behind with the school in order to facilitate the student’s continuing growth process. It also gives the parent the opportunity to reflect on and ask further questions that may have been raised from the student-led conference discussions.
## OS3 – Student – Led Conferences

### Part A: Student-Led Preconference Goal Setting

<table>
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<th>Student Characteristics</th>
<th>Class: ____________________________________________________</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My strengths in this class:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I need to work on in this class:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My goals for this class:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Goal Setting: Think about these topics and create at least two goals for this class in the space above that address some of these topics listed below:

- Respect
- Determination
- Conquering your fears
- Responsibility
- Setting priorities
- Minimizing excuses
- Educational ownership
- Making better decisions
- Taking action on your dreams
- Developing a positive attitude
Part B: Student-Led Conference Form

Name: _________________________    Course: ________________

A. Two goals I have developed for myself in this class are:

1. 

2. 

B. My strengths in this class are…

C. Something that I still need to work on is…
Part C: Student-Led Conference Agenda

Name________________________________________________________

A. Talk with your parents about school in general. You may use the General Discussion Topics provided below:

B. Review the Student-Led Conference Form and your work from class (which should be in your Student Data Notebooks.)

C. Close the conference.
   • Have your parent complete the Parent Comment Form.
   • Turn in the Parent Comment Form before you leave.

General Discussion Topics

School Behavior
   • Do I pay attention and stay on task?
   • Do I respect the adults at school?
   • Do I always keep necessary materials and supplies with me?

School Citizenship
   • How well do I get along with others?
   • How do I treat school property?
   • Do I follow school rules?
   • Can people count on me to do my share of group work?

Study Skills
   • Do I use my time wisely at school?
   • Do I use my time wisely at home?
   • Do I keep my agenda up-to-date and accurate?
   • Is my daily work prepared on time and according to directions?

One way my parents could help me with school is:
Part D: Parent Comment Form

Name ___________________________ Student’s Name ___________________________

1. What did you learn during this student-led conference?

2. What made you feel proud?

3. I would like to have my child work on…

4. I am glad to see my child is working on…

5. Any other comments?

Thank you for your participation and support of your child! Please turn this form in as you leave so we can continue to help your child succeed!
So far, this module has focused primarily on ways to get the students involved with ownership of their learning results. It is also extremely important to develop processes whereby teachers take ownership of their students and their learning results as well.

In the case study school, teachers initially offered a myriad of excuses to explain their students’ (as well as their own) failures. Comments like “No one could teach these kids” and “I’m teaching it – they’re just not trying” were commonly heard within the building. Expectations were low for students and they were consistently meeting those low expectations.

A key phase in the case study school’s turnaround began once the school staff began to examine student performance data on a consistent basis throughout the school year. Traditionally, teachers looked at test scores once a year during a single-day “data review” and then made the disparaging comments listed above. The next year, when data review day arrived again, nothing had changed except for a rise in the teacher’s dissatisfaction and frustration levels.

Anthony Muhammad discusses in *Transforming School Culture* (2009) a key step in the school improvement process. It occurs the moment when teachers begin to focus on student outcomes instead of the intention of the teachers.

In the case study school, true turnaround began when school performance data was examined as it was collected - throughout the year – by teachers, administrators and students. Progress related to the benchmarking process on the ACT was measured six times per year as the data was returned to the school after each test administration. ThinkLink formative data was examined after each of the three test windows – each twelve weeks apart. Student progress (as measured by grades) was examined at each midterm and at the end of each nine weeks grading period. Attendance data was examined monthly. Behavioral referrals were tabulated by infraction type and discussed four times per year. Data became an ongoing measure of effectiveness instead of a dreaded review once per year.

The attached artifact was presented to the staff at every meeting to keep a consistent and constant focus on student performance and success. These particular data points were selected because they are all combined to produce an accountability score in the case study school state. These numbers indicate the health and wellness of the school – these are our “vital signs” of health.
Another important impact of this continuous loop of data is that these numbers become “demystified” over time. When data review was a once-per-year event, a great deal of time was spent on re-teaching the meaning and usefulness of each assessment and test score. However, with continuous use, the data becomes relevant and understandable for all teachers and students.
**STUDENT OWNERSHIP OF COLLEGE/CAREER READINESS**

---

### 1) END OF COURSE ASSESSMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>11/12 MC Avg</th>
<th>11/12 P/D %</th>
<th>12/13 MC Avg</th>
<th>12/13 P/D %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG I</td>
<td>153.3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>152.7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG II</td>
<td>152.5</td>
<td>47.20%</td>
<td>152.6</td>
<td>43.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALG I</td>
<td>143.9</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>142.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEOM</td>
<td>143.2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>143.7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALG II</td>
<td>145.1</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>145.1</td>
<td>24.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO</td>
<td>148.4</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>149.7</td>
<td>29.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US HIST</td>
<td>146.1</td>
<td>38.20%</td>
<td>146.4</td>
<td>54.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates current data (5/13/2013)*

### 2) COLLEGE BENCHMARKS (ACT/Compass/KYOTE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmarks</th>
<th>11/12 % Met All 3</th>
<th>12/13 % Met All 3</th>
<th>11/12 %</th>
<th>12/13 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27/76</td>
<td>35.50%</td>
<td>38/83*</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3) WORKKEYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11/12 % Passed</th>
<th>11/12 % Passed After Retakes</th>
<th>12/13 % Passed</th>
<th>12/13 % Passed After Retakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39 of 75 (51.3%)</td>
<td>43 of 75 (55.5%)</td>
<td>52 of 83 (62.7%)</td>
<td>65 of 83 (78.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4) KOSSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11/12 KOSSA Pass</th>
<th>11/12 %</th>
<th>12/13 KOSSA PASS</th>
<th>12/13 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 of 77</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>36 of 83</td>
<td>43.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5) INDUSTRY CERTIFICATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>29*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6) COLLEGE and/or CAREER READINESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Ready</th>
<th>Career Ready</th>
<th>Non-Duplicated</th>
<th>Score (w/ Bonus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>5 of 47 (10.6%)</td>
<td>10 of 47 (21.3%)</td>
<td>12 of 47 (25.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>27 of 75 (35.5%)</td>
<td>26 of 76 (34.2%)</td>
<td>39 of 76 (51.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>37 of 83 (44.6%)</td>
<td>45 of 83 (50.6%)*</td>
<td>52 of 83 (62.7%)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7) OVERALL ACCOUNTABILITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCR</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL       | 55.4    | 61.1    |

---
OT2 – 1:1 Mentoring Relationships with Students

Explanation

Many commercial advisory programs are available to help develop a culture within the school where the adults mentor and advise the students. Many produce artificial group structures where “activities” are completed to “build rapport” with the students. In some cases, this process works and a student becomes close to their advising teacher. However, this is not always the case.

The question that should be asked here is: Why are we trying to force a relationship between an adult and a student who may not have common interests? Why not build upon authentic connections that already exist?

Think about it: the basketball coach is connected to their players, as is the band director or the FBLA teacher. The FCA sponsor has relationships with their club members, and the beloved social studies teacher always has students hanging around after his class to talk for a few extra minutes.

Why not exploit those natural, organic relationships instead of trying to force artificial new ones?

At an early-in-the-year faculty meeting at the case study school, each teacher receives a list of every student enrolled in the school. Each teacher is instructed to initial beside the name of every student that they see on the list that they have a pre-existing relationship with: former student, current coach, fellow church member, child of adult friends. The teachers are instructed to initial beside students who would come to them if they needed to talk to someone about their parents, or their grades, or which type of car they want to buy – an authentic mentor.

After the lists are collected, a staff member works through all of the teacher’s responses and produces a matrix of which student is connected to which teacher. Some teachers are connected to multiple students – some to only a few. Each teacher is given a list of their authentically-connected students to mentor. In the case study school, approximately 90% of all students were identified as having an authentic connection to a teacher during this initial survey.

What about the other ten percent? The important finding during this process is the list of students who were not connected to any teacher. These are those students prone to “slip through the cracks” and struggle in silence. These students will need a forced mentoring relationship in order to connect them to someone within the school.
This narrowed list of unconnected students is brought to the next faculty meeting session and a similar process is followed. This time, the teachers are looking for students they can force a connection with – students now in their classes, or whose lockers are near their classrooms, or who they see during lunch. Each teacher is tasked with finding ways to talk with this student and develop a relationship where none existed before. This takes work, but it is fruitful work. A connected student is far more likely to have a favorable outlook on learning.

Once connections are set, teachers regularly talk with their students – especially if they are struggling academically. Grade reports are printed out at each midterm and end of quarter (eight times per year) and distributed to the connected teachers of struggling students. Assistance is offered or the student is guided to the right tutor to help them succeed.

This method of identifying and exploiting authentic relationships seems to work better than artificial advisor/advisee programs. It is very intentional and very individualized. It leads to trust-filled student-teacher one-on-one relationships that promote student achievement. Students naturally gravitate toward specific adults that they trust and like. These relationships should be the basis for teacher-student mentoring work within the school.
Another important piece of the teacher’s facilitation of student ownership of the learning is for the conversation to consistently focus on college and career readiness. If we adhere to the mental model detailed earlier in this module that suggests that students judge the importance of a concept by the weight given to that concept by adults, then it is essential that the adults talk about college and career readiness day by day and week by week. Students will take their cues regarding the importance of a topic based on what they hear (or overhear) adults discussing.

In order to facilitate this year-round focus on college and career readiness success, the following suggested discussion topic calendar might be useful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Discussion Topics to Keep the Focus on CCR / Student Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Did you meet your benchmarks over the summer? Are you in a transition course? Did that change your schedule/impact your choices of electives? Are you travelling to a college campus to try to meet the benchmark(s) early so you can move to an elective you prefer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Have you registered for the October ACT yet? Do you need to in order to meet your benchmarks? Do you need transportation or a fee waiver (for approved students of poverty)? How is your career pathway going? Are you sure you are completing a course of three technical area classes that will lead you to a chance at becoming career ready later in the year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Are you ready for the ACT? Are you doing anything to prepare? Study materials / online prep? How is your career pathway going? Are you having any trouble? Are you looking over the career pathways standards so that your will be successful on your career assessments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>When will you take your industry certification assessments? How do you get ready for those? Will any of your courses be ending at mid-year? Do you need to adjust your schedule for next semester to finish a tech pathway? Are you taking the ACT again in December?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Is your schedule set for January? Do you need to get any course or study materials ready over the break? Are you ready to try to college benchmark using the COMPASS or any other approved benchmarking test? Are you using any online tutorials (such as WinLearn, TCA or Aleks) to help improve your skills? What can you do over the winter break to help you be more successful next semester? Have you applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td><em>Are you taking the February ACT? Have you registered? What specific issues are you having that cause you to miss meeting the benchmark(s)? Have you looked at the ACT skills list for each content area and made sure you are familiar with everything listed there? How can we help you with that?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td><em>You’re starting to approach the date(s) for your career readiness assessments and industry tests. How is your pathway going? How can we help? Are you continuing your online prep work? Are you working on sample questions from these assessments in class? What are you having trouble with? Are you using college visits to take benchmark COMPASS tests while on campus? Are all of your college admission requirements/paperwork forms completed and submitted?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td><em>Are you ready for all of your assessments? Do you need any last-minute tutoring on anything that confuses you? How can we help you be a better test-taker? What do you need to be successful? Are you taking full advantage of all of the available assessments that meet some or all of the requirements for college and/or career readiness (e.g., ASVAB, COMPASS, KYOTE, WorkKeys, KOSSA, etc.)?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td><em>How are all of your academic tests/career assessments going? How can we celebrate your successes with you? Did anything confuse you on your last test – can we fix any misunderstandings and then offer you a re-take? What other steps can you take to become college and career ready?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td><em>How can we celebrate your senior year with you? If needed, can we help you connect with the local post-graduate adult education center for more help? Even though you’re graduating, in what areas do you still need to develop your skills to have a successful college or work experience? How can we help?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This set of questions is not meant to be an exhaustive list but merely samples of the type of conversation starters that can consistently be used to turn the student focus back to their learning and their level of college and career readiness throughout the year.
Student Ownership Initiative

Strand Three: MONITORING

Student Pieces

- MS1 - Student Data Notebook (*Insert to track their data included*)
- MS2 - Where am I right now? What am I missing? (*ACT explanation of each scoring level – included*)
- MS3 - Extra Benchmarking Opportunities (*explanation included*)

Teacher Pieces

- MT1 - Understanding where students are (*PLC work included*)
- MT2 - Demystifying Testing – tips and strategies (*included*)
In order to create effective practices related to our students’ ownership of their learning, the student must first take ownership of their scholastic performance data. This piece is designed to facilitate the creation of a Student Data Notebook that will be used by the student throughout their high school career. This notebook continuously houses the latest evidence (data and reflections) related to the student’s level of performance.

In the case study school, students keep two data notebooks – one in their English/language arts course and another in their math course. While our notebooks are housed in two-pocket folders, some schools have more expensive three-ring binder systems. By the time the freshmen in the case study school reach their senior year, the volume of data may be so great that they may need to transition from folders to larger binders at that point.

These notebooks are designed to promote ownership of the learning by the students themselves. Students receive a copy of printouts from all of their battery of assessments – formative, interim and summative. This data includes the EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT test results, their ThinkLink Discovery Ed results and classroom assessment results from a variety of measures. As these data are added, explanations are delivered as to the meaning and significance of each new piece of data and what it tells them about their learning.

To enhance ownership, the Classroom Assessment to Student Learning questions paraphrased from the work of Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis and Chappuis (2006) are used. Students are asked to respond to these three questions:

- Where am I going?
- Where am I now?
- How can I close this gap?

Students reflect on their progress in relation to the questions stated above. In addition, students are taught to use a PDSA cycle (Plan, Do, Study, Act) to improve their performance and reflect on their progress and continuing learning needs.

The purpose of the Student Data Notebook is to produce students who take responsibility for their own progress. This notebook is also very useful in Student-Led Conferences (see OS3) as a tool for students to use when explaining their progress and goals to their parents.
Midterm Report Reflection & Goals

Directions: Use the data provided on your Midterm Report to reflect on your progress thus far. Select and complete one item below that best represents your progress, thoughts, and goals.

1) My Midterm Grade for the 1st Nine weeks is ______. (Select one item below and complete)

_____ I am pleased with my current overall grade because: (Circle those that apply below.)

_____ I am not pleased with my current overall grade. I intend to improve my overall grade for this term by taking the following actions: (Circle those that apply below.)

I earned my grade because:
(Circle those that apply)

- I complete all assignments.
- I met all due dates and deadlines.
- I came to class prepared to learn.
- I was prepared for class with all materials: paper, pen, book, etc.
- I participated actively and cooperatively during class activities.
- I used active study strategies to prepare for tests/quizzes.
- I kept my notebook organized.
- I was absent no more than 2 days for the marking period.
- I did not complete all assignments.
- I handed in work late or past the due date or deadline date.
- I was absent more than 5 times this marking period.
- I was frequently unprepared with my assignments.
- I did not contribute in a positive way to class activities.
- I did not use active strategies to prepare for tests and quizzes.
- I did not come with pens, pencils, or paper every day.
- I did not take responsibility for my own learning.
- Other: ________________________________________.

I, ______________________, plan to earn a grade of _____ in ________________ by the end of the 1st Nine Weeks.
The **actions I plan to take** in order to obtain my goals are:

- □
- □
- □
- □
- □
- □
- □
- □

Remember, only I can make a difference in my grade. With hard work, determination, and commitment, I can meet my goal and be highly successful.

Student signature:  
____________________________________________________

**“Actions” Ideas:** Attend class every day; complete all homework every day; have all materials ready to begin class on time; complete all class work on time; pay attention and actively listen; ask questions in class to seek clarification; actively engage in the lesson; follow written and oral directions; copy all information and show all work as directed; seek answer accuracy on all assignments; seek help from peers, parents, friends; maintain an organized binder with all materials, assignments, resources, notes, etc.; accurately copy all assignments and check assignment book each night; make-up all work on time; utilize every opportunity to retake English/Reading assessments, ACT, COMPASS, or KYOTE.
**QUARTERLY REFLECTION**

**STUDY/ACT:** Examine your data in your data folder.
Are you making progress toward your goals? 

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>+</strong></td>
<td><strong>Δ</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you doing that works?</td>
<td>What do you need to change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PLAN:**
1. What are your goals for next quarter?

2. How will you check and report your progress? How often?

**DO:**
1. What will you do to make sure you reach your goals? Think about what strategies from your “worked” (+) column above that you will keep. Think about things from the “change” (Δ) column above that you will do differently.

2. What do you need your teacher to do to help you reach your goals?

**STUDY and ACT to be ongoing in your data folder.**
In order for students to take ownership of their personal benchmarking process, the ACT Standards Tables are important tools. There are four tables that outline a continuum of skills necessary for success on the ACT in English, math, reading and science. These four tables clearly show the sets of skills necessary for a student to score within a certain ACT range (i.e. 13-15, 16-19, 20-23, etc…) in each tested area.

Since the college-ready benchmarks are an 18 in English, a 19 in math and a 20 in reading, students focus on that band of skill development that should help a student score in the “20-23” range. Students receive these sheets and keep them in their student data notebooks (specific content sheets in each ELA or math notebook.) As students develop their skills, they monitor their progress toward successfully entering the “20-23” band. Once they are there and their confidence level regarding those skills is high, then they are ready to attempt the COMPASS or KYOTE assessments in that content area (or take the ACT when given on a regular Saturday national test date.)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Readiness Standards — Mathematics</th>
<th>Probability, Statistics, &amp; Data Analysis (PDS)</th>
<th>Number (NCP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Operations &amp; Applications (SOA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 13-15 - 251. Perform one-operation computation with whole numbers and decimals  
202. Solve problems in one or two steps using whole numbers  
203. Perform common conversions (e.g., inches to feet or hours to minutes) | 201. Calculate the average of a list of positive whole numbers  
202. Perform a single computation using information from a table or chart | 201. Ratios, fractions |
| 16-19 - 301. Solve routine one-step arithmetic problems using whole numbers, fractions, and decimals such as single-step percent  
302. Solve some routine two-step arithmetic problems | 301. Calculate the average of a list of numbers  
302. Calculate the average, given the number of data values and the sum of the data values  
303. Read tables and graphs  
304. Perform computations on data from tables and graphs  
305. Use the relationship between the probability of an event and the probability of its complement | 301. Ratio, number,  
302. Idler |
| 20-23 - 401. Solve routine two-step or three-step arithmetic problems involving concepts such as rate and proportion, tax added, percentage off, and computing with a given average | 401. Calculate the missing data value, given the average and all data values but one  
402. Translate from one representation of data to another (e.g., a bar graph to a circle graph)  
403. Determine the probability of a simple event  
404. Exhibit knowledge of simple counting techniques | 401. Ext. number,  
the order of operations,  
identities and operations |
| 24-27 - 501. Solve multistep arithmetic problems that involve estimation or | 501. Calculate the average, given the standard deviation of the data values  
502. Find missing data values | 501. Find missing data values |
The simplest way for a student to meet the ACT benchmarks required to be college-ready is to successfully surpass them during a regularly scheduled national administration of the exam – usually proctored on a Saturday up to six times a year at an approved ACT test site. Students become college-ready when they meet the benchmark minimums once. They do not have to meet all three of the benchmarks in one setting during one test administration to be college-ready. They just need to meet once in each area before graduation to be fully college-ready.

In addition, the students can take the COMPASS test at the school in each unmet benchmark area twice per year. They can also take the KYOTE assessment periodically after intervention periods to meet these benchmarks. In the case study school, senior students were more successful at meeting the benchmarks with the COMPASS than the KYOTE. (57 benchmarks were met by seniors using the COMPASS compared to 1 student passing the KYOTE.)

One *extra* benchmarking opportunity that case study school students took advantage of was the opportunity to COMPASS test on campus while taking a college visit. This additional COMPASS test does not count against the limit of two per student per year at the high school. Instead, a student tells the university that they want to take a placement test to determine which courses they should enroll in during their freshman year of college. The college gladly administers the test because of the potential for that student to enroll in university classes the next semester. When the student finishes, the campus testing administrator gives them a printout detailing their performance and whether or not they passed successfully.

Students bring these printed score sheets back to the high school and turn them in to the school counselor. If they successfully met the benchmark, then they are one-third closer to college readiness goals before graduation.
This Student Ownership Initiative has focused primarily on ways to help the students take responsibility for their learning. Students examine their own data to find their growth areas. Students practice the types of questions that they usually fail until they succeed. Many strategies have been presented to help the students monitor and reflect on their learning. However, what should the teachers be doing to help this student ownership process be successful? How should teachers be reflecting?

Within professional learning community groups, teachers should continuously examine their practices and their students’ results in order to promote lasting improvements in classroom instruction. Each classroom set of students is unique in their experiences, abilities and skill levels. Why should we assume that a single teaching style (that often has not been changed very much in a decade or more) will be effective with all learners? Does that really make sense?

In the case study school, content-area professional learning community groups continuously examine their student’s formative, interim and summative assessment performance data and ask themselves four critical questions posed by DuFour, Dufour, Eaker and Many (2006) in *Learning by Doing* (p. 91):

- What do we want our students to learn? (Curriculum / Instruction)
- How will we know if each student learned it? (Assessment)
- How do we respond when some students do not learn it? (Re-teaching / Intervention)
- How do we respond when students have learned it? (Enrichment/ Extension)

It is only through this examination of practice and results that teachers can truly create responsive classrooms that meet the needs of their current group of students. This ownership initiative requires that students become reflective learners. The adults that facilitate this learning need to become reflective teachers as well in order to be truly effective.
Another important aspect of student ownership of their learning is to help students come to the understanding that testing success can be helpful to them. Testing success can lead to scholarships. Testing success can lead to credit for classes without actually taking them. Testing success can lead to higher pay because of a stronger transcript and more impressive resume. Testing success (in Kentucky) leads to more KEES money upon graduation and enrollment in college.

For too long, some teachers have used tests as negative, threatening events designed to “keep students in line” and “show them what they still have to learn.” These tests (and the grades that result) have been used punitively for poor performance. Success research (see the Guskey article in VT1) indicates that students are far more likely to respond with increased effort if they experience success instead of failure. Tests should be viewed by students as opportunities to show their knowledge. If a student is fully prepared for the assessment (because they have mastered the standards and KNOW that they are prepared fully) then the assessment should not be a dreaded event.

Several steps are important in demystifying testing:

1) Students should understand the value of the test: Why does this test matter? How will it help me? Does it help me meet a benchmark? How?

2) Students should understand the content of the test. If the test matches the mastered standards and the questions are fair and open, then the student who has content knowledge should have assessment success.

3) Students should understand the format of the test: Are the selective response questions clear? Can I eliminate responses before answering to narrow down my choices? Are the extended written response questions clearly related to knowing or applying content I have learned? Are rubrics provided so that I understand the assessment expectations?

Tests should not create anxiety in fully prepared students. In the case study school’s vocational courses (which produced the second-highest percentage of career-ready students in the state among 231 high schools) the automotive repair course seniors take an industry certificate test near the end of the year. The national pass rate for this exam is approximately 50%. The case study school students pass this test at a 98% rate. Why is this the case? What is this automotive repair teacher doing differently?
In the case study school automotive classes, students are taught the basics of automotive repair, then issued repair orders as if they worked in a functioning garage. Under the watchful eye of the instructor, they research then begin work on fixing the problem in an actual automobile. The instructor only works to facilitate their work. He lets them make mistakes. When they call him in to consult, he does not give them the answers – he only asks probing questions to lead them to discovering the answers themselves.

After a year of this work, plus practice assessments that mirror the automotive repair industry certificate exam, the students are anxious to take and pass the exam. This test matters to them, because it is a validation of their hard work throughout the year and a payoff for their efforts. The students understand the value, the content and the format of the test. There is very little mystery as to whether or not they will pass.
Student Ownership Initiative

Strand Four: INTERVENTION

Student Pieces

- IS1 - Transition Classes – large group *(Description of program included)*
- IS2 - Intervention Software: TCA, WinLearn, ALEKS *(Explanation included)*
- IS3 – Extended Learning Opportunities *(Opportunity brochures and explanation included)*

Teacher Pieces

- IT1 – Using the “Persistence to Graduation” Report with At-Risk Students *(explanation included)*
- IT2 - Tier I – RTI Tiers of Intervention in the Case Study School *(explanation included)*
IS1 – Transition Course Interventions
Explanation

Earlier in this module in the explanation of student’s Assignment to Transition Courses (VS3), the motivational reasons why students were assigned were explained. In this description, the intervention processes are addressed.

All seniors in the case study school are enrolled in English IV (advanced seniors are enrolled in college-level ENG 101/102 for dual credit from the participating university.) This senior-level English/Language Arts course is a graduation requirement for all seniors. If students have met the ACT benchmarks in reading (20) and English (18), then this course is all that is required.

However, if a student has not met one of these benchmarks, then a second Transitional ELA course is required to help them reach the ACT college-ready goals. Students are assigned to a transitional course within their seven-period day. This causes the loss of a free period when they would normally take one of their elective courses. It is hoped that this loss of elective is temporary and that the student can return to the elective once the benchmark is met.

Within the transition course, the focus is on diagnosis and treatment of the specific issues that prevent the student from meeting the ACT goal. Students take practice assessments (both pencil/paper and online) and use the results to determine their growth needs. Emphasis is placed on reflective use of the results by the students themselves – in order for them to own this growth area and take responsibility for their own future academically. Yes, the ability to leave this transition course once the benchmark(s) are met is motivational, but the emphasis is on meeting the goal for their future literacy and future life success whether it be in post-secondary education or in the workforce.

In the case study school, a student has multiple opportunities to meet the benchmark once practice assessment data proves the student is ready to be successful:

- **ACT:** The senior can register and take the ACT exam during any of the six national test dates throughout the school year. The school serves as a Saturday-morning testing center, so transportation to a distant test site is not a barrier. Because we are a high poverty school (nearly 80% of our students qualify for the federal free/reduced lunch program), ACT fee waivers are available for most students up to twice per year. This makes the ~$40 cost of the assessment to students a non-issue as well. If a student meets the
benchmarks on this test, they may move from the transition course back to a desired elective.

- **COMPASS (at school):** If the student does not pass/take the ACT, the COMPASS test is an option. It is structured quite differently than the ACT exam. Whereas the ACT is a timed paper-and-pencil test, the COMPASS is an untimed online test. Students are allowed unlimited time to read and be successful on the COMPASS exam. The school is allowed to administer the COMPASS twice per year to all students who have not yet met benchmarks. Usually, it is administered near midyear, then again at the end of the year. The midyear administration allows for students who meet the mark to make a schedule change and return to a desired elective at the semester break.

Students who are not successful on the ACT are often successful on the COMPASS due to the different format and lack of time limitations. It should be noted that student interviews suggest that since the format is somewhat different, the students felt far more confident to pass the COMPASS assessment the second time they attempt it – once they have a full understanding of the test format and structure.

- **COMPASS (on college campuses):** Another COMPASS opportunity that does not count against the limit of two assessments per student per school is the opportunity to take the same assessment on a college campus during a college visit. Colleges gladly will administer the COMPASS assessment while a student is visiting on campus. This is viewed by the college as a potential step for that student to enroll and attend that institution. After the student completes the assessment, they receive a printout of their scores that they bring to the school and place on file with the transition teacher and school counselor. If the benchmark is met, the student can commence the schedule change process to exit the transition course.

- **KYOTE:** One additional benchmarking opportunity for students in the case study school state is to pass the KYOTE (Kentucky Online Testing) assessment. This computer-driven assessment also will fulfill the benchmark requirement. It is available at any point of the year. KYOTE regulations require that a 12-week course of study be completed between administrations of the assessment – unless a student missed the passing mark by just a point or two. In that case, an immediate re-test is permissible.

Of course the specific tests, benchmarks and processes used to indicate college readiness for a student vary state-by-state. Each school should examine its own state regulations to find every opportunity for a student to be successful.
Regardless of the process, it is very important to provide every opportunity for students to be successful. The key point is to talk in terms of how they can meet their benchmarks (ownership language.) The adults should not use language focused on themselves: “This will make me happy” or “I’ll be so proud of you.” Instead, the focus must be placed on how these assessments will help the student be successful in the future (e.g., additional scholarships, eliminate cost of remedial courses, more career choices.)
IS2 – Intervention Software
Explanation

In order to meet the diverse needs of the transition course, a variety of differentiated teaching methods and supports are used. In some cases, educational software programs are useful to provide for the variety of needs within the transitional classroom. (While the case study school is not an affluent school with a large tax base, creative use of district and federal funding combined with grant funds allowed for this variety of software to be utilized.)

Software used: ThinkLink Assessment Software
http://www.discoveryeducation.com/administrators/assessment/
Purpose: Used as an universal screener, this software assessment system provides information related to specific skill deficits that can be addressed using appropriate intervention strategies.

Software used: TCA: Triumph College Admissions
http://www.tcaprep.com/sg/studyguide.php
Purpose: Students take a practice ACT exam and then work on specific skill deficits indicated by results.

Software used: ALEKS Math  http://www.aleks.com/
Purpose: Transitional Math coursework used within senior math lab. Self-adjusts to the needs of the individual student based on progress through online course. Many pre-and post-tests to check for progress.

Software used: WinLearn  http://www.winlearning.com/
Purpose: Self-guided course work for college and career readiness success. Students “level up” as they progress through 7 levels of learning in areas such as Reading for Information, Applied Math, and Locating Information (the three tested areas of the WorkKeys assessment.) Additional academic and workplace principles modules are helpful with the attainment of career readiness.

Some of these online resources were funded by grant funds. Others were a part of the district Title I allocation. However, none of these are successful unless the student understands how the specific resource is going to benefit them as they move through the program. If the students understand that the program is designed to discover the specific skill deficits that they must work on to pass benchmarks, and then a few initial students meet the benchmark goals and transition out of the course, then the student’s desire to work through and practice specific skills increases because they see the positive impact of this intervention work.
IS3 – Extended Learning Opportunities (Summer)

Explanation

Additional intervention is available in the case study school to remediate/accelerate students for the next school year. Traditionally, students lose academic momentum in the summer and the ensuing school year must begin with a period of remediating old content before exploring new learning. However, this program is designed to sustain spring academic momentum through the summer and into the next school year.

An initiative to help remedy that with many of the case study school’s struggling students is the use of Summer Learning Opportunities (see artifact IS3). Students are encouraged to enroll in a variety of remedial or accelerated summer courses in order to help them be successful the next year.

The key here is that the students themselves must understand why this time is valuable to them – so that they want to attend and participate. The initial invitations were verbal and targeted to specific students that would benefit from these programs. The case study school convinced the students that if they chose to commit to any of these programs, they would greatly benefit from it over their high school career. An example of ownership language used with students is noted below:

Program: **Second Chance**
Description: For students just below the failing grade for the year – one week of remediation to meet passing grade requirements.

Invitation Language: “You’re so close. *If you just finish these assignments you will not be required to take the entire course over again! You will be able to take that elective you want instead of repeating that course!*”

Program: **Credit Recovery**
Description: For students who failed an entire course and are in danger of not graduating with their peer group. Delivered as coursework via Edgenuity or Novel Star software.

Invitation Language: “*You learned a lot of content in that course – but you did not pass the tests or the projects. Let’s give you the opportunity to pass a different format of that course so that you can still graduate with your friends.*”
Program: **Benchmark Bootcamp**  
Description: For graduates who still need to meet benchmarks before enrolling in college in the fall. Diagnosis/interventions (“bootcamp”) provided through local Adult Education Center

Invitation Language: “Let’s save you some money on college courses – if you’ll spend some time in the Adult Ed Center and then take another COMPASS test, you’ll be able to start your college career on classes that count toward your major and skip the remedial course (time and expense).”

Program: **EarlyStart (for incoming 9th Grade Students)**  
Description: For exiting 8th grade students that test data indicate a possible struggle with high school academics – summer enrollment in a half-credit Workplace Principles course. Students meet and work with high school staff, they transition to a new building and become comfortable with their new setting before fall classes begin in a success-driven program. If future academic problems develop, these students already have a half-credit head-start on graduation and do not fall out of their peer group.

Invitation Language: “You were chosen for this course so that you can get a head-start on high school. You’ll know where everything is and meet all of your teachers, and get a half-credit for doing it!”

As you can see, great care is taken to convince students that these extended learning opportunities benefit them, and that they are making a wise decision by choosing to participate. This is an important part of helping these struggling students take ownership of their learning!
### IS3 - Lee County High School Summer 2013 Learning Opportunities
**(designed to remediate or extend the learning to increase 2013-2014 success)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Second Chance** | Additional instruction at LCHS for students who ended the year with 50%–64% in a class – 15 hours additional instruction/remediation and the possibility of earning the credit instead of failing the course. | May 20, 21, 22 (15 hours)  
8:30-3:00 M, T  
8:30-11:30 W |
| **Credit Recovery** | Internet coursework to help a student make up a credit that they have failed. Student uses Novel Star software to learn content and pass assessments. Must pass online assessments to receive credit for the course. Facilitated at the ATC.       | May 27 – June 14  
8:30-11:30 daily |
| **Benchmark Bootcamp** | For recently graduated seniors – additional instruction through the Lee Adult Education Center to help graduates meet college benchmarks before June 30. For graduates who still need to meet one or two ACT college benchmarks before the fall. | Immediately after graduation.  
Meeting May 20th (C. Herald) |
| **LCHS EarlyStart** | For 30 eighth grade students entering LCHS in the fall – 9 day course using LCHS and ATC staff in *Workplace Principles* – students earn ½ of a LCHS credit. Several benefits:  
- Course will count in ALL career pathways  
- Effective transition to LCHS from LCMS  
- Familiarity with LCHS, ATC teachers  
- Funded by Gear-UP  
- Food, Transportation provided | May 28 – June 7  
8:30-3:00 daily |
IT1 – Using the “Persistence to Graduation” Report
For At-Risk Students
Explanation

One of the tools that the case study school used to identify at-risk students for mentoring and intervention was the Infinite Campus student information system report entitled “Persistence to Graduation.” This early-dropout warning report can be generated at any time during the school year. The program pulls relevant student data from the database and generates a list of students most like to drop out of school based on historical data trends.

When the Persistence to Graduation report is run, each student in the school is ranked on a 0-13 scale based on the likelihood that the student would not finish high school. The criteria used within the program to rank the potential dropout students are:

- Gender
- Absences
- Courses Completed
- Courses Failed
- Behavioral Referrals
- Suspensions
- Current Grades

Using a pre-determined formula, students are rated from 0 (small chance of dropping out) to 13 (great possibility of dropping out.)

In the case study school, this report is produced every four weeks. Current grade sheets are printed for the students at the top of the report and distributed to 1) the principal, 2) the counselor and 3) the teacher(s) who have established authentic mentoring relationships with these students as described earlier in artifact OT2. These individuals begin an intensive mentoring session with that student and search for root causes and solutions to help that student be successful.
For the seniors involved in this case study, the desired outcome was attainment of the college benchmarks (ACT English 18, Math 19 and Reading 20.) The school’s Response to Intervention Plan for seniors was focused on attainment of these goals because meeting these benchmarks indicated college readiness, as well as the academic component of career readiness. Student ownership of the learning in these classes is quite high because the students desire to move from these transition/RTI Tier II classes back to a desired elective course.

Case Study School: Senior RtI plan for English/Language Arts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Description of Tier</th>
<th>Lee County CCR Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Tier I | Foundational: Standards-Driven Instruction for All Students (Benchmark)             | • All senior students receive standards-based instruction within their English IV or dual-credit English 101/102 senior core English Courses  
• All seniors enroll in one of these two course options regardless of whether they have met the English and Reading ACT benchmarks or not |
| Tier II| Supplemental: Interventions for Some At-Risk Students (Strategic)                    | • Seniors who have not met the English and/or Reading Benchmarks are enrolled in a second Senior ELA course (a transitional course called Reading for College Success.)  
• This course diagnoses and remediates specific issues (in large groups, small groups or individually.)  
• Diagnostic and re-teaching software TCA and WinLearn are used in addition to classroom tiered instruction.  
• Once the benchmark is met by either ACT, COMPASS or KYOTE assessment success, the student transfers back to Tier I and out of the transition course. This allows the student to return to a desired elective. |
## Tier III

**Supplemental: Interventions for High Risk Students (Intensive)**

- Students received intensive one-on-one instruction from a reading specialist during their transition course period. Specific diagnostic records were kept to ensure that the student was making sufficient progress.

---

### Case Study School: Senior RtI plan for Math:

**Tiers of Intervention re: College and Career Readiness for Seniors (Math)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Description of Tier</th>
<th>Lee County CCR Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier I</strong></td>
<td>Foundational: Standards-Driven Instruction for All Students (Benchmark)</td>
<td>All senior students receive standards-based math instruction within their math courses. All seniors have two math classes. Seniors that have met benchmarks have Pre-Calculus, Calculus or dual credit College Algebra MAT 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier II</strong></td>
<td>Supplemental: Interventions for Some At-Risk Students (Strategic)</td>
<td>All seniors who have not met benchmarks have Algebra III and/or Math for Business and Industry. Both of these courses have interventions embedded. This course diagnoses and remediates specific issues (in large groups, small groups or individually.) Diagnostic and re-teaching software Aleks, TCA and WinLearn are used in addition to classroom tiered instruction. Students meet the benchmark on the ACT assessment, COMPASS or KYOTE exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier III</strong></td>
<td>Supplemental: Interventions for High Risk Students (Intensive)</td>
<td>Students received intensive one-on-one instruction from a math teacher during their transition course period. Specific diagnostic records were kept to ensure that the student was making sufficient progress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Ownership Initiative

Strand Five: CELEBRATION

Student Pieces

- CS1 - Celebration after each testing season – PLAN, ASVAB, WORKKEYS, ACT, KOSSA, Industry Certificates (samples and artifacts included)
- CS2 - Thermometer (process description included)
- CS3 - Medals for CCR (process description included)
- CS4 - Graduation Honor Cords (process description included)

Teacher Pieces

- CT1 - Celebrations for each gain – (including ways to celebrate without a lot of money)
- CT2 - Ownership of PD – based on results (teacher ownership of processes)
The attached PowerPoint (CS1) marks an important milestone in the student ownership process each year. It serves to “pass the baton” from the graduated and departed seniors to this year’s group of current (and future) 12th graders.

Many of the accountability measures for our students are administered at the very end of the school year – right up and through the season of final examinations. Sharing these data with the student body is not possible until early fall when these scores are returned to the school as a part of our state accountability measures. In order to communicate with the students a report focused on how the school (and they as individuals) performed; the data is communicated with the entire student body in a celebration assembly. Upbeat music, bright lights and smiles greet the students as they file into the auditorium. This is a celebration of their hard work.

The twenty-slide PowerPoint is a sample of what this type of assembly might look like in another school. It can be used as a template by inserting data for another school. It is intentionally crafted (along with the presentation by a school administrator) to communicate the following concepts:

1. Testing matters, and it matters to students individually.
2. People examine how students perform.
3. Test scores follow you throughout your career.
4. College expenses can be reduced if you meet benchmarks and attain better scholarships.
5. The only people who can change these data are the students.

In the case study school state, three important measures of effectiveness are 1) percentile rank among all schools, 2) the number of students that are college and/or career ready, and 3) the school’s graduation rate. Each of these measures is detailed in this report. Celebrations of success were loud and sustained. Improvement needs were also intensely communicated as the student’s “next steps” in meeting a vision for continuous improvement.

The timing of this celebration was also painstaking planned for maximum impact on multiple student groups:

1) This celebration was held the day before approximately one-fourth of the student body took a regular October Saturday administration of the ACT. The
importance of doing well on this test was clearly communicated in this assembly.

2) This celebration was held the on a Friday. On the following Monday, non-benchmarked seniors were taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery exam that can help meet the academic requirements of career-ready. The types of questions, content areas assessed and time of each section was communicated with all of these students so that the test format and expectations would be familiar the following school day. This serves to help the student understand what to do, and more importantly, why they need to be successful of that exam to help themselves.

3) The hour before this assembly, the principal took 18 of his most challenging male students and had a one-hour seminar with them - communicating expectations for a change in academic behavior. He made these 18 students sit with him during the assembly – then took them back to a conference room and had them reflect on what they had heard. The end result of this reflection and sharing was an increased focus for these sophomore boys on why they should take ownership of their learning. It was a successful intervention wrapped around a successful celebration assembly.

Each school will celebrate successes differently. Celebration in the case study school occurred in a variety of ways – including this assembly.

PowerPoint template is included.
Lee County High School

2012-2013 Student Results Report

Three Measures of Success

- Percentile Ranking in KY
- College and Career Readiness
- Graduation Rate

How did we do on these three measures?
Our Comparison Group

LCHS vs. 15 Surrounding School Systems

Measure #1: KY Academic Ranking

- Measured by: End-Of-Course Assessments, PLAN, ACT and 10th/11th Grade On-Demand Writing

- How does our performance this year compare with our group?
GREAT GAINS, LCHS!

○ How do we get better?

○ END OF COURSE ASSESSMENTS – Learn the content and try hard on every test!!!!
Measure #2: College/Career Readiness

- Measured by:
  - College: ACT Benchmarks (or COMPASS or KYOTE)
  - Career: Academic Performance AND Technical Certificate

- 2010-2011: LCHS had a 29 CCR Score
- 2011-2012: LCHS had a 62.5 CCR Score
- 2012-13: LCHS had a 81.3 CCR Score
- We ranked 26th in the state of 231 Schools!

- How does that compare with our group?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/Career Readiness Comparison to Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2011 - 2012 CCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Jackson Ind</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Lee County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Montgomery Co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Wolfe Co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Berea Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Clark</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Madison</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Powell Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Knott Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Estill Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Clay Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Owsley Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Jackson Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Breathitt Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Magoffin Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Perry Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Jackson Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Montgomery County</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Wolfe County</td>
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<td>5. Estill County</td>
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<td>10. Berea Independent</td>
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<td>12. Magoffin County</td>
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<td>13. Owsley County</td>
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<td>13. Clay County</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Madison County</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Knott County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C/CR Status update (for 2013-14 Seniors):
0 As of this point, This year’s Seniors are meeting ACT Benchmarks at a faster pace than last year’s seniors!

- 2012-13 Seniors on October 15, 2012: 25.6% Metall 3 Benchmarks
- 2013-14 Seniors on October 15, 2013: 33.3% Metall 3 Benchmarks

College Readiness

0 How do we get better?

0 ACT, COMPASS and KYOTE
   0 Use ACT Prep, WinLearn and Transition Courses to improve!
   0 Take multiple chances to be successful!!!
Career Readiness
(Currently #2 in the State)

- How do we get better?
- Two Parts:
  - Academic:
    - Benchmarks
    - (ACT, COMPASS, KYOTE)
    - or
    - ASVAB (TUESDAY!)
    - or
    - WorkKeys
  - Technical:
    - KOSSA
    - or
    - Industry Certifications
    - (ASE, NCCER, IC3, Nurse Aid)

College/Career Readiness
(Currently #26 in the State)

- We get 1 point for College Ready
- We get 1 point for Career Ready
- We get 1.5 points for BOTH
Measure #3: Graduation Rate

- Measured by: The percentage of your group that become high school graduates in FOUR years.

- How does our performance this year compare with our group?

### Graduation Rate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010-11 Graduation Rate</th>
<th>2011-12 Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wolfe Co.</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jackson Ind.</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Berea Ind.</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Owsley Co.</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Madison Co.</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Perry Co.</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Powell Co.</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Knott Co.</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
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<td>9. Montgomery Co.</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Magoffin Co.</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Jackson Co.</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Clark Co.</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Estill Co.</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Clay Co.</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Lee Co.</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Breathitt Co.</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Montgomery County</td>
<td>97.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Berea Independent</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Estill County</td>
<td>95.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Jackson Independent</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Owsley County</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Powell County</td>
<td>93.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Magoffin County</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Madison County</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Wolfe Co.</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Clark County</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Lee County</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Knott County</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Jackson County</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Breathitt County</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Clay County</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Perry County</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graduation Rate

- How do we get better?
- Don’t get behind – each core course failed requires a re-take or a credit recovery the next year – which pulls you out of an elective!
- Attendance: Employers look at your high school attendance to see if they want to hire you!

Fact: We are currently at the 80th percentile state-wide

Goal for 2013-14: 90th Percentile Statewide

Clawing to the Top!
Without a doubt, the celebration visual in the case study school that made the most impact on encouraging students to meet ACT benchmarks and industry certifications was created on a single sheet of poster board with red and black markers. This visual helped to change the topic of conversation within the senior class to meeting college and career readiness goals.

The concept was simple: create a ‘thermometer” of success that students would color in red as they met their college or career readiness goals. The case study school graduated 83 seniors last year, therefore, each senior was approximately 1.2% of the entire senior class. Individual accomplishment becomes much more important when just a few students can move your success or failure rates dramatically. Each student, therefore, was ultimately responsible for a significant, visible section of the thermometer. If the thermometer was to rise – it would be up to each individual.

As students met benchmarks and reach career readiness, they were brought to the school foyer to color in their 1.2% “stripe” on the thermometer. Their picture was taken and displayed on the school electronic billboard (i.e. flat-screen TV in the school entrance hall.) They were excited to reach this milestone and receive this recognition.

Students also like to look at how their class compares to past senior classes. A note is kept on the thermometer regarding how this year’s class compares to previous graduating classes. At the time of this writing in the case study school (October), the current group of seniors is 8% ahead of the benchmark pace that last year’s senior class had met at this date in the calendar. They are quite proud of that and talking about how they can stay ahead of the pace. This ownership translates into increased focus and effort both on the ACT and within the classroom.

Interestingly, when a school official met with the junior class last spring five days before the state-wide administration of the ACT, the student response was unexpected. As the official talked about scholarships and the need to avoid remedial freshman college courses, one student in the class raised a hand and asked the one real question all juniors wanted answered:
“When do we get our CCR thermometer?”

The focus and effort this visual created was impactful and lasting. This is a fantastic return for the investment of one sheet of poster board and red and black poster markers.

CS2 – College and Career Readiness Thermometer
Examples
Another visual celebration of student success is the placing of “medals” on a bulletin board in the hallway as each student meets their benchmarks. The medals are on colored paper printed with the student’s name: Gold for all three benchmarks, Silver for two and Bronze for meeting one of the benchmarks.

The board is initiated at the start of the senior year – students who have met 1, 2, or all 3 benchmarks are allowed to post the appropriate medal on the board. As a student meets additional benchmarks throughout the year – they are allowed to replace the old medal with the appropriate new one as a celebration. If the change in medals is delayed for any reason, students who meet their benchmarks often seek out the adult in charge so that the board accurately reflects their performance.

This visual was created during the 2012 Olympics as a timely and fun celebration of success. However, this year’s seniors (in 2014) wanted it to be continued another year so that they could be recognized as well. This is a very inexpensive visual that every student walks past each day within the halls of the school – it is prominently displayed near the front foyer entry door students enter and exit. It serves as a constant reminder of what we value academically and helps encourage students to reach for benchmark goals for themselves.
During commencement at the case study school, graduates wear honor cords of different colors signifying outstanding achievement in specific areas – grade point average, student organization officers and specific club activities. Last year, the school added a new honor cord color (silver) to recognize those students who were both college and career ready. This cord signified that the student had met all ACT benchmarks and had achieved a career ready status through a technical certification.

The adults in the school made this honor important. It was a topic of discussion in all courses with a preponderance of seniors enrolled. For those students who had already achieved both college and career readiness, it was validation. For other students who were close, it became a goal that they feverishly wanted. School officials were forced to make extra trips to the out-of-town graduation supply house to purchase additional sets of silver cords because students continued taking benchmark assessments on local college campuses up to the last day before graduation.

Why did a braided piece of silver string become so important to the seniors at the case study school?

Student interviews revealed that the cords became a symbol of senior-year success. The school’s change in culture led to a different definition of success by the end of the senior year. College and career readiness became important – so therefore, the symbol of success by that CCR definition became desired by students.

So passionate were the seniors to earn these cords that a group of students received permission to miss commencement practice two days before graduation in order to visit a local university for one more COMPASS test to meet their last unmet benchmark. All members of the group were successful. All of them marched two days later with silver honor cords around their neck.

In all, 37% of the seniors in that graduating class met both college benchmarks and career readiness thresholds. This group of students in this state-designated PLA (Persistently Low Achieving) school scored at the 90th percentile in college and career readiness and ranked #2 of 231 state high schools specifically in the career readiness measure.
As previously stated in this module, the teachers in the case study school were demoralized when the institution was designated by the state department of education as a PLA (Persistently Low Achieving) school based on school accountability measures. In order to change to a student-centered success culture, the staff needed to own the student successes as well.

No public school has the resources to raise teacher pay in the current economy. However, the case study school began to celebrate small successes in other ways with the staff and the staff began to respond positively. Small victory celebrations included cakes, pizza, certificates and recognition – both with the school and in front of the school board/community. Local newspapers were fed pre-written stories for publication celebrating teachers and their work with students. Every small victory in student data was communicated and celebrated appropriately. When administrators praised the students in assemblies, they also praised the teachers who helped those students succeed.

As with students, a small “taste” of success can make a teacher crave more. Consider the case of the teacher who focused on state career technical standards for the first time last year. This list of standards was the focus of instruction – and lessons were designed around mastery of this set of standards. At the end of the year, student success rates on career measures in that technical teacher’s content are rose from a previous 4% success rate to 39% - almost a ten-fold increase in success rate. This year, very few lessons in that teacher’s plans do not intentionally address a specific standard in some measurable way. Success leads to more success – if recognized and celebrated appropriately – just like it does with our students.
Another way that student successes are celebrated and teacher professionalism is respected is the gradual release of professional development (PD) choices to the teacher themselves. In the case study school, teacher PD has often been structured as a whole-group, one-size-fits-all approach whereby every high school teacher receives the same training regardless of content taught, years of experience or skill level. This group PD is much easier to plan, and usually costs less to the school because one “presenter” is cheaper than multiple sessions. However, this approach offers little to no opportunity for specialization and differentiation of the adult learning.

In the case study school – student performance drives the teacher’s professional development plans. If a teacher’s students show proficiency in an area, then that teacher is allowed to train in other areas of greater need. Often, a role model teacher with a specific skill set is paired with a teacher who needs to grow in that skill area for peer observation and reflection – leading to improved performance for both teachers.

Another way success was celebrated in the case study school was by the teacher expert program. The administrators purchased a variety engaging education books covering a wide variety of school improvement ideas and initiatives (e.g., standards-based learning, working with difficult students, parents as partners in the learning.) Based on the teacher’s personal growth plan and classroom data trends, each teacher received a specific book to read and reflect upon. The teachers were allowed to count this reading and reflection as six hours of paid professional development and could accomplish this task on their own schedule.

Each teacher created a short summary of key points from their reading to share with the rest of the staff. This development led to reflective growth in many different areas by the staff. The administrators developed and published list of “experts” in each area that other staff could ask for advice.

This increase in flexibility of PD for staff was viewed as a reward for improved student achievement and a validation of their professional success. The level of professional conversation continues to rise in the case study school, and teachers continue to develop their skill levels with the goal of increasing student achievement.
The research and development of the strategies and processes contained within this professional development module occurred over an extended period of time. Some of them will work well in other settings. Others may only work in our unique rural high school. Only through implementation and modification will you find those pieces that are useful for your particular faculty and your particular students.

In order for these strategies to be effective, the teachers must convince the students (and themselves) that college and career readiness is important for all students – that CCR is a reachable goal for all regardless of perceived skill level or any other academic barrier. The strategies and activities contained within this module help students own their learning and help teachers establish a sustainable culture of college and career readiness excellence for all students.

Establish a VISION

Enable OWNERSHIP

Embed MONITORING

Enact INTERVENTION

Empower CELEBRATION
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References

Capstone Project


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