

Dear Hillsdale Study Visit Participant,

This case study of Hillsdale is a part of our Windows on Conversions Product, which will be an integral part of our work on Day One of the Study Visit. We hope you have time to read it prior to attending. It highlights many important aspects of Hillsdale's redesign efforts.

To facilitate your reading of this case and direct you to those features that will be highlighted in the Study Visit, we wanted to offer you this guide to reading the case.

- ◆ Pgs. 1-3 provide a brief overview of Hillsdale and its SLC design.
- ◆ Pgs. 15-24 provide information on the implementation process including how staff and students were divided into SLCs to ensure equitable outcomes.
- ◆ Pgs. 24-25, 27-28 focus on how a system of shared governance was put in place including providing time for grade level team planning.
- ◆ Pgs. 29-31 describe how Hillsdale increased personalization through SLCs and advisories.
- ◆ Pgs. 34-35 describe how Hillsdale worked to increase rigor for all students through detracking.

We hope this helps guide your reading as we will be focusing on the areas of equity, rigor, personalization and shared decision making in the Study Visit. We look forward to exploring these themes more deeply with you in person.



**Hillsdale High School**  
San Mateo, California

# Acknowledgments

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*The School Redesign Network's (SRN) mission is to help create, support and sustain equitable schools that are intellectually rigorous, high performing and provide ALL students access to college and the skills needed to meet the workforce demands of the 21st century. To advance this mission, SRN serves as a research-driven resource for schools, districts, charter developers, and other support providers attempting to transform instructional, administrative, and organizational systems and cultures. SRN combines scholarly investigation with on-the-ground knowledge that comes from working directly with educators, schools, and districts. This intersection between research and practice allows SRN to produce new knowledge about school and district redesign that is informed by practice and focused on improved instruction and student outcomes.*

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Hillsdale High School wants to thank the students, parents and staff of our school who have all been instrumental in Hillsdale's journey so far. Very special thanks go to those original members of the Book Club, who sat on old fraying couches in the faculty lunch room at 7 a.m., discussed a little book by Deborah Meier and then rolled up their sleeves and worked innumerable days and nights to move this typical American high school closer and closer to the ideal we found in those pages. More specifically, thanks to: Sue Bedford and Greg Jouriles for planting the seeds and cultivating them; Christine DelGaudio for challenging us to keep learning; Linda Deighan for being a model of dedication and professionalism up to the day of her retirement; Jeff Gilbert for coming back; Shirely Gibson for adapting to anything; Marty Kongsle for giving so much of herself to her students and to this school; Don Leydig for his vision and for always saying "yes," even when we asked him to stay one more year; Yvonne Shiu for her much needed left brain and her heartfelt commitment to this school; Chris Crockett for deciding she was interested in school reform after all; Brian Schlaak for breathing new life into the game in the third quarter; Deb Stucke for opening the way for math and science; Yvette Sarnowski for believing in us and giving us a kick in the pants whenever we needed it; Cheryl Lawton for making numbers less scary; the 16 remarkable teachers in the first year of SLCs and all the new young turks in the years following — you will determine the next stages of Hillsdale's journey. Thanks also to Linda Darling-Hammond and the faculty and staff at SRN and Stanford Teacher Education Program for their support of Hillsdale's work.



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*Our high school system is dangerously out of step with our values and our needs as a society. Our country promises our children they can go as far as their commitment to their education takes them — regardless of the color of their skin, regardless of their family's resources. Yet, our rhetoric doesn't reflect reality. Instead of helping children defy the limitations they face at birth, our high schools usually perpetuate those limitations. And that's a sad fact of the U.S. education system.*

*That's in part because our large comprehensive high schools were built for the Industrial Age, not the Information Age. Fifty years ago, we mistakenly thought that only select students could do serious academic work. So young people were separated like machine parts on different tracks. Some learned to work with their heads; others with their hands. National reports touting the benefits of these large sprawling schools led to policies mandating them. It made some sense then. But it makes absolutely no sense now.*

— Melinda French Gates  
Co-chair, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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# FOREWORD

During the past decade implementing content standards and high stakes accountability measures has dominated the educational policy arena at the national, state and district levels. While these policies have ignited a great debate about what standards should be taught and which measurable outcomes are most useful, there is growing understanding that high schools are grossly deficient in preparing all students for knowledge work – getting them ready for challenging jobs in today’s information economy. Simply raising the bar for results without changing the nature and structure of schooling will not be effective in achieving our goal of meeting the learning demands of the 21st century for all students. As School Redesign Network (SRN) Co-Executive Director Linda Darling-Hammond observes, “Every organization is perfectly structured to get the results it gets.” In other words, just working harder will not dramatically alter outcomes.

The factory model for high schools was designed to cream off a small number of students for advanced courses that offer rigorous content and require higher-level thinking. All other students are batch processed and taught rote skills. This model mirrored the needs of the Industrial Era’s workforce. Today’s schools, however, must prepare virtually all students to acquire and manage complex information and to problem solve. And they must do this for a much more diverse population than has ever been served in American schools. The new imperative for our nation’s schools is to succeed with all students rather than perpetuating a system in which language, culture and economic backgrounds become predictors of academic success.

There is a growing consensus that business as usual won’t produce the results we need. Schools must change in fundamental ways. Federal and state policies are just beginning to be formulated to support the rethinking of America’s high schools. Fortunately, pioneering educators have not waited for public policy to change but have begun retooling large, comprehensive high schools into smaller learning communities (SLCs) and small schools that are personal, collaborative, equitable and academically rigorous. To sustain these pioneering efforts, philanthropic organizations have made a significant investment during the past decade to support and grow new images and designs for high schools. Emerging from these “breaking the mold” schools are a range of school designs that span a wide spectrum from charter schools to independent small schools to conversions of large, comprehensive high schools into multiple SLCs. While these various approaches to redesign are all difficult and complex in their own right, the process of redesigning an existing school with existing staff is particularly daunting.

Because most high schools do not have the resources to develop charters and “start up,” they need practical and economically sound models to show them how other schools have re-invented themselves to meet current educational demands. One of the purposes of our work at SRN is to find, document and film schools that are engaged in the conversion process and have demonstrated success (proof positives). Of the more than 150 schools across the nation that were identified and considered for inclusion in this project, four emerged:

- (1) Hillsdale High School in San Mateo, California;
- (2) The School of the Arts at South Shore in Chicago, Illinois;
- (3) Noble High School in North Berwick, Maine; and
- (4) Clover Park High School in Lakewood, Washington.

We selected these schools both because they had converted into SLCs and because they represent critical design features of good small schools. In addition, they have taken approaches that fit the different contexts in which they work – urban, suburban and rural. While all of these schools are still in the process of implementing their reforms, collectively they represent many aspects of what leading researchers consider critical organizational and instructional changes to help all students succeed at high levels. Among these common features are:

- *Small learning communities that serve about 300 to 400 students each;*
- *Smaller class sizes and reduced pupil loads for teachers, which are achieved by rethinking staffing and redesigning schedules;*
- *Teaching teams that plan together, share students and sometimes stay with the same pupils for more than one year;*
- *Advisory systems that assign a small number of students to adults who serve as their primary advocates;*
- *A core academic curriculum offering college preparatory courses for all students;*
- *Project-based learning that actively engages students and connects what they are learning to other subjects and to the real world and*
- *Performance-based assessment that challenges students to apply their knowledge in tasks that resemble what they will need to do outside of school.*

This case features Hillsdale High School. Hillsdale’s conversion from a single, comprehensive high school serving approximately 1,200 students to three relatively autonomous, SLCs serving 400 students each is notable for its staff commitment to

shared leadership, democratic decision-making and collaboration. Hillsdale has made significant changes to the school's structure and allocation of resources in order to deliver on its vision of a more personalized, equitable and rigorous education for all students. After eliminating low-track science courses, Hillsdale now enrolls all students in 9th-grade biology and 10th-grade chemistry. Even with a much more inclusive enrollment policy, Hillsdale's performance on the District Common Assessments (DCAs) for biology and chemistry is nearly equal to other schools that enroll only high-track students.

Taken together, the stories of the four high schools show how a set of common principles for redesign unfold in different contexts. These schools took different paths and adapted their designs and change processes to the needs of their local communities. Although each of the schools is a work in progress, all of them have already seen improvements in attendance, school climate, student achievement and graduation rates. We hope the stories of these schools, both in the written cases and through the films, provide a window for glimpsing how schools can change in ways that powerfully benefit teachers and students.

Fundamentally changing secondary education requires tremendous commitment and perseverance. As we move forward let us be guided by Martin Luther King Jr.'s words as he urged Americans to strive for a more just and inclusive nation: "No social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raymond L. Pecheone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raymond L. Pecheone  
Co-Executive Director, School Redesign Network at Stanford University



## Hillsdale High School

### Location:

Suburban community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

### District Size:

Eight high schools

**School Size:** 1,245 students

### Student Demographics:

49% White

28% Latino

14% Asian

4% African American

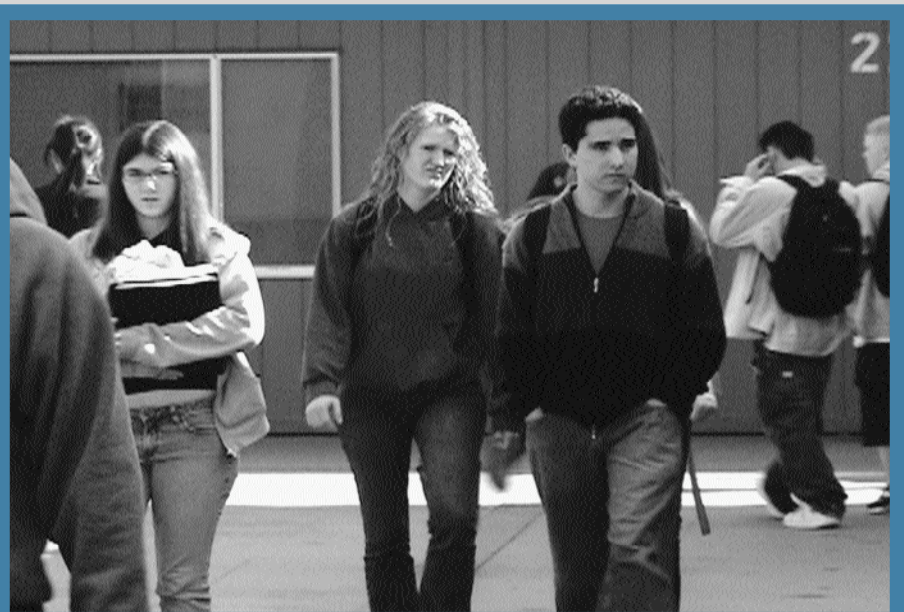
3% Filipino

2% Pacific Islander

8% Free and Reduced Lunch

18% English Language Learners

9% Special Education



# Introduction

Hillsdale High School, located 20 miles south of San Francisco in San Mateo, California, stands within a vast tract of urban and suburban communities. Though majestic redwoods and scenic coastlines are less than an hour away, Hillsdale's sprawling campus is situated within a suburban neighborhood just a few blocks from El Camino Real, the 60-mile stretch of road that serves as the commercial backbone of the San Francisco Peninsula. Housing costs across the region are famously high, but neighborhood variations in home values generally correlate with the reputations of local schools and the diversity of their populations. Hillsdale serves students from a variety of neighborhoods: "flatland" apartments located near the horseracing track and interstate freeway, middle-class homes west of the train tracks, and middle- and upper-class homes in the hills above the school.

Hillsdale's student population is more ethnically and economically diverse than the neighborhood in which it is situated: 51 percent of students are people of color and 42 percent speak a language other than English at home, most often Spanish. Hillsdale is also the neighborhood school for residents of several group homes serving adolescents who have been removed from their families or placed in the foster care system, adding to the diversity of the school's student population. Because of the long-held views about Hillsdale's student population and the school's lower-than-average test scores, wealthy families often take advantage of the district's open enrollment policy to send their children to other high schools in the San Mateo Union High School District (SMUHSD).

Though Hillsdale is now known for innovation, its reputation in the 1980s and early '90s was that of a traditional high school. It was the only school in the district to have a closed campus and, since the dean was a former marine sergeant, some viewed it as a good place to send "tough to handle" children. There has always been a significant working-class base to the school's population. Approximately half of Hillsdale's students do not have a parent with a college education, and Hillsdale teachers often struggle to motivate students to pursue additional education after high school.

In this extraordinarily diverse context, Hillsdale has begun to transform itself into a school whose aim is to motivate and educate all of its students to high levels of achievement and to ensure that the choice of attending a four-year college is available to all graduates. Hillsdale's redesign is notable for its commitment to shared leadership, democratic decisionmaking and collaboration. There has also been a growing awareness

of how school structures can be changed to meet instructional needs rather than acting as an impermeable barrier to reform. Throughout the 1990s Hillsdale's innovations were those of a large school attempting to act small. The limitations and frustrations of this approach were the impetus for the school's current redesign into smaller learning communities (SLCs).

### Design overview

In summer 2005, Hillsdale entered the final year of a three-year process of converting from a single, comprehensive high school serving approximately 1,200 students to three relatively autonomous, vertically aligned SLCs serving 400 students each. Each SLC – Florence, Kyoto and Marrakech, named after Medieval centers of learning consistent with Hillsdale's knight mascot — has a Junior Institute for the 9th and 10th grades, and a Senior Institute for 11th and 12th grades.

Hillsdale has been phasing in one grade level per year, beginning with the freshman class in 2003-04. All freshman and sophomore students in the Junior Institute (except for beginning English speakers and special day class students) are currently taking their four academic core classes (English, social studies, math and science) from a team of teachers who share a collaboration period in addition to each teacher's individual preparation period. Special education and English language development teachers also serve their students within the house system, except for those teaching beginning English speakers

## School Design

**Configuration:** Three 9th-12th grade heterogeneously grouped small learning communities (SLCs).

**Size:** Each small learning community serves 400 students.

**Implementation Strategy:** Starting in 2003, each SLC simultaneously phased in one grade at a time: 9th grade and then 10th grade into their Junior Institutes, and then 11th and 12th grade phased in together in 2005 to create the Senior Institutes.



and special needs students in special day classes. All teachers in the three houses also have an advisory of 25 students. Math, English and social studies teachers loop with students in their classes and advisory for two years. Hillsdale has reduced class size, added the collaboration period and hired additional teachers through a reallocation of staffing, additional district support and temporary funding through a federal SLC grant.

In the Senior Institute, which is being implemented during the 2005-06 school year, all juniors take their core classes (math, physics, social science and English) with teams of four teachers who have a shared common collaboration period in addition to their individual preparation periods. In each house, the four core teachers also serve as advisors to the junior cohort, and teach an advisory period focused on portfolio work and college preparation. Advisors, English and social studies teachers and, to the degree possible and appropriate, math and science teachers will loop with students into their senior year. Though electives, physical education and health teachers are outside of the house structure, they are attached to or affiliated with houses to help them connect and plan with core teachers. Hillsdale is implementing a seven-period day in 2005-06, though students generally will still take six periods of classes, in order to better facilitate access to electives. It is hoped that this schedule will ultimately give the four core academic teachers autonomy over their time within a daily four-hour block.

Hillsdale has used its structural changes to foster teacher collaboration across subject areas, chip away at student tracking and use performance-based assessments to help all students achieve at high levels. While the process of reform has been relatively long-term, Hillsdale has made significant changes to the school's structure and allocation of resources in order to deliver on its vision of a more personalized, equitable and rigorous education for all its students. These changes have yielded positive and powerful outcomes. The school has eliminated low track science classes and now enrolls all students in 9th grade biology and 10th grade chemistry. As a result, 100 percent of African American and Latino 9th grade students were enrolled in biology during 2003-04 compared to only 18 percent in 2002-03. Overall, Hillsdale enrolls a far greater percentage of African American and Latino students in biology and chemistry classes than do other schools in the district. In addition, its performance on District Common Assessments (DCAs) is nearly equal to that of schools that enroll only high-track students in these courses.



*“It was really those early efforts and seeing the limitations of those that brought our staff to really push hard for a more complete change.”*

— PRINCIPAL DON LEYDIG



# Hillsdale's Journey to Smaller Learning Communities

A decade ago, a student at Hillsdale High School would have had a fairly traditional American comprehensive high school experience, very similar to the one her parents or grandparents might have had. She and her 1,200 classmates would have shuffled off to 53-minute-long classes ended by a bell that directed them to pick up their books and move on to yet another class. Her teachers would have been unlikely to know what she had been working on in the previous hour or how well she was doing academically in any class but their own. Her teachers would have had little or no communication with the teachers who would teach her the following year. Nor would her teachers have had any clearly shared and articulated vision of what she and other Hillsdale graduates should know and be able to do. The school's vision would have been limited to broad topics to be covered, a few specific essay styles to be taught, and a minimum number of courses and units to be completed.

While the actual words “smaller learning communities” probably did not appear in Hillsdale's collective vocabulary until 2002, the seeds of this work were first sown in the late 1980s and early 1990s by veteran teachers Greg Jouriles (social studies) and Sue Bedford (English). After becoming interested in and learning about the Coalition of Essential Schools — a high school reform model focused on personalization, equity and intellectual inquiry — Jouriles and Bedford developed an integrated and performance-based humanities curriculum for ninth grade honors students in 1989. This pilot program's success in creating a sense of community and its exciting use of authentic instruction, accompanied by a concern for delivering a more equitable curriculum, led social science teacher Christine Del Gaudio and English teacher Marty Kongsle to create in 1992 a parallel program for the college-prep track of ninth grade students (a third general track had been eliminated across the district in 1991).

The new humanities curriculum programmed all 9th-grade students into back-to-back social studies and English classes so that teachers could work with them for extended periods of time and create the class groupings they felt would best facilitate learning. The 9th-grade English teachers, who had pupil ratios of 20:1 because of a California class-size reduction initiative, each took five to 10 more students in order to reduce enrollment in their partners' world history classes. They also created their own internal block period, so that the team of three teachers for the college-prep track could teach a more in-depth three-part lesson for several days as classes of students rotated



through. Because students were only in the program for two of six periods, teachers' ability to address the needs of struggling students was severely limited. Still, these early steps, taken *in spite of* the surrounding structure and schedule of the larger school, were the beginning of an important journey toward designing a school that would better serve the needs of all students.

In 1993 Hillsdale unsuccessfully attempted to implement an advisory period called home base throughout the school. Although many of Hillsdale's faculty and administration strongly supported home base, the contract waiver needed to implement it was voted down by a narrow margin. "There just weren't enough people who were willing to take risks or who saw themselves in that kind of role," recalls Hillsdale Principal Donald Leydig. Many were wounded by the experience, and there was a brief retreat into classrooms and away from broader discussions about school-wide reform. An Adopt-a-Freshman program promoted by freshman teachers and the classified staff never received widespread buy-in. The ninth grade humanities teachers continued to try to create a more personal learning community, but for several more years there was little or no discussion of involving other subjects or grade levels.

### Sowing the seeds of change: Acting small while being large

In the mid-1990s the professional climate at Hillsdale became invigorated as new teachers and committed veterans began to learn together about the ideas discussed within the Coalition of Essential Schools and a few small schools in New York. A recent graduate of the Stanford Teacher Education Program started a book club focused on education and school reform. The administration allowed teachers to count the club's discussion hours (usually before school, over muffins and coffee) toward a third buy-back professional development day allowed by the state. The group, known as the Reform Forum, consisted of about 10 teachers, primarily from the social studies and English departments, and all three site administrators. Their reading list included



TheodoreSizer's *Horace's School* and *Horace's Hope*, Deborah Meier's *The Power of Their Ideas*, George Wood's *A Time to Learn* and Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia*. Although one member suggested that the small schools they read about seemed "like an idealistic and far off dream," book club members

gradually became influential voices for change at Hillsdale.

In 1996, in part as a result of Reform Forum discussions and an extended conversation between Jeff Gilbert, Greg Lance and Sam Matthews during a summer camping trip, five English and social studies teachers proposed a senior exhibition. The exhibition would require all students to pose an essential question, formulate a thesis statement and write a 15-page research paper based on library research and interviews with community members. In order to pass 12th grade English, government and economics, students would have to defend their work before a panel consisting of a teacher, a student and an adult mentor from the community. They would have to demonstrate a minimum level of competency. The exhibition would create a *de facto* graduation requirement for the school.

*It was the beginning of a culture of high expectations for all students.*

With the backing of the principal, these teachers announced that grades lower than C- would not be acceptable on this assignment, although students would be given multiple opportunities to improve the quality of their work until it met that standard. The announcement was met with considerable resistance from students and parents. Principal Leydig remembers a phone call from one parent questioning the fairness of eliminating a D grade. "Can a teacher do that?!" Leydig recalls the parent asking incredulously. The student grumbling and parental phone calls led Hillsdale to hold a parent meeting.

While Back to School Nights and Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) meetings typically drew relatively small turnouts, Hillsdale teachers were taken aback by the size of the crowd that packed the staff development room that evening. Parents of seniors were concerned that large numbers of students would fail this new requirement. In response, teachers presented a list of skills that students would be asked to develop and demonstrate in order to complete the senior exhibition satisfactorily. They also presented a year-long calendar, showing how the assignment would be scaffolded and how opportunities for revision were built into the schedule.

Rather than backing down at the first sign of student and parent resistance, teachers and administrators kept pushing for the structures and programs that would serve students better. This marked the beginning of a growing comfort with taking new ideas to the parent community and seeking support beyond the usual PTSO crowd. Hillsdale faculty learned the value of going to the community early and often, and this practice reached new levels with the implementation of SLCs. It was the beginning of a culture of high expectations for all students measured through performance-based assessments and

upheld by an understanding of the structures needed to support this kind of work.

Like the earlier efforts to establish a 9th grade humanities program, Hillsdale's adoption of senior exhibitions in 1997 is an example of acting small without adequately establishing the structures needed to support the school's new approaches to instruction and assessment. During this time, 12th grade social science and English teachers started using a common rubric (developed as part of their accreditation self-study) to discuss the characteristics of writing and research that were good enough to meet the standard. Teachers of grades 9, 10 and 11 began using the rubric in their classes, and some social science and English teachers began to adapt and develop integrated assignments aimed at preparing students for the senior exhibition. Even advanced algebra teachers, whose classes were largely made up of juniors and seniors, instituted projects that helped students apply algebraic knowledge to exhibition-oriented assignments.

Although the collaboration between English and social studies teachers generally resulted in caseloads of about 50 students instead of an isolated teacher's 175, the students' 15-page research papers required multiple drafts and substantial amounts of one-on-one assistance. While students' writing and critical thinking abilities greatly improved, especially among those who traditionally had been low performing, teachers described grading these multiple drafts as "a monster task." (As of 2004-05 all teachers at Hillsdale have a three-student caseload for student exhibitions, creating a more sensible distribution and fostering school-wide discussions about standards for exhibition quality).

In 1999, two years after senior exhibitions were implemented, staff interest in personalizing instruction led to the development of a twice-weekly block schedule that included a tutorial period. Though this was supposed to be a trial effort, Hillsdale continues to use the block schedule to this day. Originally, the tutorial period included a 20-minute school-wide sustained-silent-reading break. Teachers who managed their classes well saw noticeable gains in their students' reading ability. However, school board members' concern that students were "just reading magazines" and that some classrooms were not being well managed during tutorial resulted in the elimination of the silent reading break in 2002.

Senior exhibitions and school-wide efforts to personalize instruction led ninth grade English, social studies and, for the first time, math teachers to create



the Reflective, Eager, Aspiring, Learning Masters (REALM) program, which integrated courses around content skills, themes and Arthur Costa's 16 "habits of mind." In order to better integrate the curriculum, streamline communication and, most importantly, raise expectations for students, pre-algebra was eliminated and all freshmen were placed in algebra or more advanced math classes. A week-long Algebra Institute during the previous summer and an algebra support class were required for students who were under-prepared. Collaboration among teachers made possible greater efforts to communicate with and involve parents.

While the REALM program helped create a sense of belonging and consistency for ninth graders, the logistics of making the program work within the larger school structure were overwhelming – another example of the school acting small while being large. The larger school's master schedule did not make it possible to have all the students share the same three teachers. As a result, teachers had to work as one large and unwieldy team or attend multiple team meetings without a shared preparation period, let alone a collaboration period. REALM teachers Deborah Stucke, Marty Kongsle, Betsy Muir and Hillary Wiessinger often worked after school to collaborate on curriculum and discuss student progress. Students in REALM were also sometimes taking both a reading support class and an algebra support class, meaning that many had three core academic classes and two add-ons to support that core. Additionally, any positive results of the relationships formed between students and their teachers in this community were promptly lost as the students were handed off to new teachers in 10th grade. REALM teachers felt that they were really on to something, but were frustrated that the structure of the school did not support their efforts.

In 2000, social studies teacher Jeff Gilbert and English teacher Greg Lance created a two-year Social Action Academy that attempted to link and, at times, integrate the two curriculums around themes of community service and social justice. The combined junior and senior course had students looping with the two teachers. While the two feel that they succeeded in creating a sense of community in the class, their ability to impact students through just two classes out of the required six was limited. They cited this as yet another reason for Hillsdale to move toward more autonomous SLCs.

In summer 2001 a Hillsdale team attended a workshop run by Jacqueline Ancess of Columbia University's Teacher's College; Ce Ce Cunningham, formerly of La Guardia Middle College and staff from the School Redesign Network at Stanford University. Hillsdale used the knowledge gained at this workshop, along with many of the readings and activities, at its professional development days during the following year to explore what a redesigned Hillsdale might look like. Although Hillsdale's team attended the workshop on an exploratory basis, members of this team would later lead the redesign of

Hillsdale High School into SLCs.

When Jeff Gilbert left Hillsdale in 2001 to join the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP), he introduced Stanford faculty to the redesign efforts that Hillsdale had been undertaking largely on its own. Gilbert, who had successfully led Hillsdale's accreditation self-study in 1999-2000, was knowledgeable and well positioned to connect the high school to the university. Based on this connection, Stanford faculty invited Hillsdale to enter into a Professional Development School (PDS) relationship with Stanford's School of Education in fall 2001. The PDS relationship brought with it an invaluable outside perspective and an infusion of information about possible solutions for many of the issues Hillsdale had been struggling with in isolation for many years.

In January 2002, as part of a professional development day, Stanford University Professor of Education Linda Darling-Hammond spoke to Hillsdale's faculty about the possibilities of SLCs. Teachers watched a video about small schools in New York and did a jigsaw activity with the "10 Features of Effective Schools" outlined in Darling-Hammond's *Redesigning Schools: What Matters and Works*.<sup>1</sup> During subsequent professional development days, Hillsdale staff learned about other small and redesigned schools while also using data to understand student performance, structural barriers to improvement and academic priorities for the school. The staff saw the striking achievement gap (in grades, test scores and enrollment in the most rigorous courses) between Latino and white/Asian students as simply unacceptable. They recognized the school's pattern of adding fixes onto its academic core rather than reforming the core itself. And they found among students an endemic sense of anonymity and a questioning of the relevance of much of their schooling. By spring 2002 the Hillsdale staff had realized that more significant and broader change was necessary if they were to have the desired impact on student achievement.

### **SLCs take root through shared leadership and democratic decisionmaking**

In spring 2002, Hillsdale English teacher and PDS Liaison Greg Lance wrote and received a Federal Smaller Learning Community planning grant. That following fall teachers were encouraged to draft proposals for the design of Hillsdale's SLCs. A proposal for four entirely distinct schools drew considerable interest, but in the end the faculty and the community decided that they just weren't there yet. Hillsdale convened a series of faculty and



<sup>1</sup> The video and print resources, along with a video of Darling-Hammond's presentation that day, are available in the School Redesign Network's *Study Kit, Part I*.



committee meetings designed to move toward merging the various proposals into a single one that would be acceptable to the 15 or so faculty on the planning committee. Only a limited number of parents and students were involved at this stage, because the committee believed that broader parent input would be more valuable when it was time to vet and revise relatively complete drafts of the school's redesign plan.

A major turning point came in November 2002 when approximately 40 stakeholders, including teachers from all subject areas, administrators, classified staff, students and the district superintendent attended a two-day discussion and planning session at an off-site location called Coyote Point. In keeping with the pattern of shared leadership, a variety of teachers and administrators on the newly formed SLC steering committee planned the retreat, now affectionately remembered as "Coyote Point Day." The steering committee included new and veteran teachers with considerable knowledge of school redesign, Hillsdale's principal and assistant principal, the district's union president (social studies teacher Greg Jouriles) and the STEP associate director. The district superintendent also joined the committee whenever possible. The assistant principal's left-brain sensibilities and flair for rebuilding the master schedule were the perfect complement to the principal's more right-brain big-picture approach. Having the union president both on the faculty and on the steering committee at a time when contract issues would be frequently discussed kept open important lines of communication. Finally, the partnership with Stanford and the practical experience and outside perspective that the STEP associate director brought to the table were invaluable and integral to Hillsdale's steadily growing momentum.

The final SLC proposal was drafted at this two-day retreat. On the first day, Hillsdale used grant money to bring Jacqueline Ancess to speak, moderate and help field the questions that had accumulated during the previous few months. At one point the group seemed to be floundering in a messy democratic discussion. Perhaps for the first time in the process, the principal stepped in, made clear which aspects of the plan he saw as critical and then called for a vote on the draft plan. While the principal had been tremendously supportive and a key player in all the work done so far, he had not put himself out in front at a critical decisionmaking juncture since the faculty had voted down advisories in 1993. Many viewed this as a transformational moment in both the plan's development and Don Leydig's leadership. By acting as an advocate and democratic leader at that moment, he helped create the plan that was ultimately approved. Though countless planned and impromptu meetings between various departments, committees, teacher leaders and administrators had made it possible for the group to arrive at that day's final proposal, Coyote Point Day is viewed by many on the staff as a seminal event in the development of Hillsdale's SLCs.



Out of the Coyote Point meetings came an SLC proposal containing several key components:

- Four houses would be created, each with a math, social science, English and science teacher. Including science was a major accomplishment, because it had been the department least involved in previous reform efforts. Including science also ensured student eligibility for University of California/California State University enrollment. It was part of the district's strategic plan to ensure that all students obtain that eligibility. (In summer 2004 Hillsdale folded the fourth house into the remaining three in order to maintain the financial viability of the SLC redesign.)
- Each house would have no more than 80 pupils, with class student-to-teacher ratios of no more than 20:1.
- Teachers within the house would have a common collaboration period in addition to their preparation period.
- Students and teachers would loop together from the freshman into the sophomore year. Science teachers eventually backed away from this arrangement because of credentialing issues and the level of content knowledge needed to teach both biology and chemistry. Other teachers continued to loop with their students.
- Each house teacher would have an advisory group of 20 students for two years. This group would meet during the tutorial time on block days (twice a week). For this advisory, teachers would be expected to prepare curriculum and activities, something that had not been required for the old tutorials.
- Cornerstones (Hillsdale's existing professional development and program goals) would be maintained in order to provide a set of common goals for SLCs and to reassure parents that the redesign would not compromise the school's academic integrity. These cornerstones included:
  - ~ Hillsdale's Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs) from their 2000 Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accreditation Report
  - ~ State standards

- ~ Authentic learning (e.g., project-based learning, exhibitions and portfolios)
  - ~ Equity
  - ~ Community/parent connections
  - ~ Collaborative time
  - ~ Advisory
  - ~ Autonomy
  - ~ Personalization (e.g., looping)
  - ~ Professional development
  - ~ Differentiated learning
- All English-language learner (ELL) students enrolled in English Language Development 3-4 (ELD) would be included in two of the houses with an ELD teacher attached to those two teams. All Resource Specialist Program (RSP) students would be included in the other two houses with two RSP teachers attached to those teams. Students would take either ELD or RSP outside their house as an elective. In the second year of the implementation Hillsdale moved to a push-in model for RSP, embedding an RSP teacher in each house and leaving it up to the house to decide on the classrooms and periods in which the RSP teacher might be most useful. RSP teachers have reported tremendous satisfaction in getting to see their students perform in classes and in being able to share methods of instruction that benefit both RSP and non-RSP students. Having two teachers in the classroom also further reduces student-to-teacher ratios.
  - The structure of the junior and senior year was left unfinished, although some type of thematic or career academies were suggested as students moved into the upper division. Hillsdale's reasons for handling the third and fourth year in this way include: a reluctance to redesign the entire school in one fell swoop, the conviction that the experience of the 9th and 10th grades could be used to inform the redesign of the 11th and 12th and an acknowledgment that teacher advocates for redesign were concentrated in the 9th and 10th grades. (In 2004, Hillsdale staff decided to adopt three vertically aligned houses with no particular themes or career foci to avoid creating structures that might inadvertently track students).

*“It was all shockingly democratic. I have never seen a faculty so willing to work together in a collegial way.”*

– HILLSDALE ADMINISTRATOR  
BRIAN SCHLAAK



# Implementing Hillsdale's SLC Plan

Several key steps had to be taken before Hillsdale's smaller learning community (SLC) plan could be implemented. First, in keeping with its democratic decisionmaking style, Hillsdale would need to get approval from its full faculty and from the teacher union's District Legislative Council, clearly laying out any potential violations to the contract. Second, it would need to take its proposal to the parent community and the school board in order to get their feedback and support. Third, it would need to begin reallocating the resources necessary to support the plan. Finally, it would need to distribute teachers and students into the houses and begin to develop curriculum.

Because many of these tasks needed to be done simultaneously, metaphors about changing tires on moving busses and repairing planes in mid-flight proliferated to the point of becoming clichés. "I went in to talk to some teachers one day about some of the work that needed to be done by their committees," then-SLC coordinator Brian Schlaak recalls. "When I started in with 'someone needs to do this and someone needs to do that,' one of the teachers burst into tears and cried, 'I can't handle anymore.'" At times like these, Schlaak notes, the steering committee's role became even more critical. The work this committee did was always submitted back to the faculty or SLC Council for approval. In the year prior to SLC implementation (2002-03) and in its first year (2003-04), the steering committee had to strike a delicate balance between not stretching the faculty too thin and still maintaining faculty ownership of and investment in the plan.

## Engaging the community creates a buzz for SLCs

Beyond devoted athletics and arts boosters, parent involvement at Hillsdale has been limited to a relatively small group of stalwarts representing limited segments of the student population. Memories of the 1996 senior exhibition parent night lingered among the faculty, making them hesitant about presenting the redesign plan to parents. It is not surprising, then, that the initial push to hold public meetings to cultivate community support for redesign came from the STEP associate director on the steering committee. "She told us we just had to do it," one Hillsdale teacher recalls, "and once we did, we knew we were committed."

Seven community meetings were held at Hillsdale and two of its feeder middle schools. The proposed detracking of English and social science raised considerable concern among parents, but the rest of the proposal drew genuine interest and even generated a buzz that helped bolster the plan despite state budget cuts. Steering

committee members presented the plan at these meetings, and the district's superintendent spoke in favor of it at nearly every event. A parent who had been at several of the planning meetings that fall also advocated for the program. The mood at

*“Seeing you teachers talk about this work with such enthusiasm has convinced me I want to send my kid to Hillsdale.”*

—PROSPECTIVE HILLSDALE PARENT

these presentations gradually shifted from skepticism to eagerness and enthusiasm. With each meeting questions shifted away from, “How will the plan work?” and, “Why aren't other schools doing this?” to, “How can I help?” After parents began making public statements like, “Seeing you teachers talk about this work with such enthusiasm has convinced me I want to send my kid to Hillsdale,” the meetings began to mobilize the community and energize Hillsdale's faculty in the midst

of a very taxing year. The buzz began to reach teachers who had remained skeptical about the merits of redesign.

The steering committee also presented its proposal and supporting data to the district school board, which had neither blocked nor championed Hillsdale's efforts. District administrators supported Hillsdale's redesign and helped make the case to school board members. Hillsdale staff also made the case directly; when more than 40 members of Hillsdale's staff attended a board meeting in support of the teachers and administrators presenting the SLC proposal, one board member commented that this was the first time he had seen “an entire faculty attend a board meeting to support teaching and learning.” On the other hand, one of the more skeptical members of the board wondered out loud “if Hillsdale [had] sold its soul to Stanford for \$500,000” (an apparent reference to Hillsdale's federal SLC grant and its PDS relationship with the university). Hillsdale has continued to keep the school board informed about its efforts and progress and strong parent support for redesign will likely sustain school board support.

### **Teacher union support facilitates redesign**

The fact that Hillsdale's effort has been largely teacher driven and managed by a principal who takes a democratic approach to leadership has led to broad faculty support and cooperation with the teacher's union. Greg Jouriles, the president of the district's teachers union during the years leading up to the conversion and the first year of implementation, was a Hillsdale social studies teacher who was one of the early proponents of collaboration and an integrated curriculum. Jouriles sat on Hillsdale's SLC steering committee both as the union president and one of the school's leading thinkers on reform. In order to avoid any impropriety, Jouriles was particularly attentive to any



potential contract violations the new structure and staffing might present. He also carried out contract waiver votes before each year of the phase-in process. This process involved a preliminary vote in 2001-02 to devote professional development time to learning about SLCs; annual straw votes prior to each year of implementation, taken in order to report to the teachers union legislative council on the degree of support among the Hillsdale faculty; annual legislative council votes on whether or not to grant Hillsdale a contract waiver vote and the annual actual contract waiver vote itself.

The waiver votes in the first two years of the implementation dealt with staffing ratios, hours of employment, and transfer and assignment provisions. Required contract waivers included:

- Having teachers in the same subject area with different class loads,
- Possible expansion of the work day,
- Changes in department chair duties and reallocation of stipends,
- Not counting advisory class and collaboration periods against teachers' contractual load,
- Allowing an advisory class that technically exceeded teachers' major, minor or recent experience and
- A possible increase in employer-initiated transfers.

In spring 2002, Hillsdale's proposal to devote professional time in 2002-03 to learning about SLCs was approved by 92 percent of the faculty. Eighty-nine percent of the faculty also approved implementing the first year of the SLC proposal for 9th graders. That spring, when a California state budget crisis threatened to undermine Hillsdale's efforts and many younger teachers were threatened with pink slips, 92 percent of the faculty voted to continue the SLC work. Some staff members said that they would rather have the state "sink the program [through budget cuts] than for us to sink it ourselves." "It was all shockingly democratic," recalls Brian Schlaak. "I had never seen a faculty so willing to work together in a collegial way." While English teacher Greg Lance took the lead in writing the implementation grant, it was owned by the many staff members who helped draft the proposed new structure of the school and edited the final document. Ultimately, the budget crisis was resolved, and Hillsdale only had to figure out how to staff and fund its plan within the original parameters.

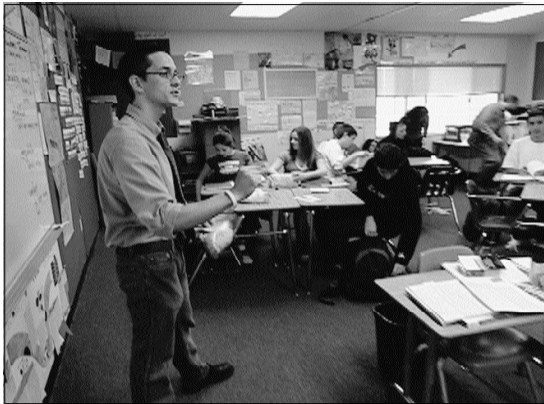
Faculty support for redesign has remained strong even as additional teachers have been impacted by the SLC phase-in. In 2003-04, 75 percent of the faculty approved the 10th grade phase-in. In the 2004-05 waiver vote, 71 percent of the faculty approved the phase-in of the junior and senior classes. Dissenters have primarily been concerned



about the proposed changes in the duties for which teachers will be responsible (advisory, campus discipline, attendance), changes in the way special education is conducted (push-in instead of pull-out), the impact on the availability of elective courses, the perceived impact on AP classes and who will teach them and some non-SLC-related personal conflicts. Some members of the faculty sometimes have attributed any school weakness, ranging from violations of the school dress code to poor performance by school athletic programs, to SLCs. However, these concerns have been limited and have not derailed Hillsdale's redesign process.

### **District support scaffolds redesign**

Hillsdale's ability to move its redesign forward reflects the support of the San Mateo Union High School District administrators, particularly former Superintendent Thomas Mohr and his successor, Samuel Johnson Jr. While other districts have seen entire school



redesign efforts collapse under a change of district leadership, Johnson has carried forward the former superintendent's agenda with an intensified focus on issues of equity and student success.

The district's strategic plan, drafted prior to Hillsdale's redesign proposal, calls for "mobilizing district resources to evaluate, modify, and create programs that ensure academic success for all students at every level." This plan also identifies a need to close a wide achievement gap between

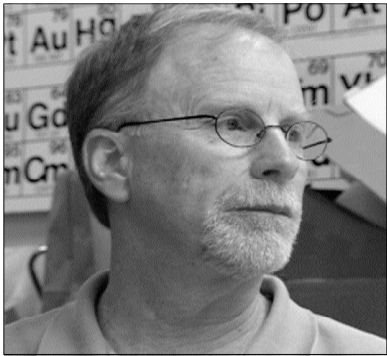
white and Asian students and Latino, African American and Pacific Islander students throughout the district. Former Superintendent Mohr often has said that the American comprehensive high school has been stretched to its limits. Hillsdale was beginning to suggest an alternative to schools that have traditionally sifted and sorted children. Hillsdale instituted and experienced success with a policy of enrolling all entering freshman in algebra or above just as the district began to promote this policy at its other high schools. Hillsdale's exhibition and benchmark assignments are improving student performance on the district's mandated common assessments. The district now requires all schools to enroll students in an academic core, similar to that of Hillsdale's SLCs. While other schools are struggling to remake the old structure (and sometimes blaming Hillsdale for the required change), Hillsdale has benefited from having started this work through a teacher-led design rather than a top-down mandate.

Recognizing the need to help Hillsdale deliver a more equitable and rigorous

education for all students, the district agreed to provide funding for two additional full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the first year of the redesign and three FTEs in the second and third years. Other schools have resented this, as have some members of the teachers union legislative council, who sometimes view district funding as a zero-sum game in which one school's gain is another's loss. The district, however, has made similar resource commitments to other schools engaged in redesign. As other schools in the district struggle to implement the academic core with class sizes of 35 and teacher loads of 175, Hillsdale's creative reallocation of resources could be instructive.

### Reassigning staff to support the academic core

Hillsdale's staff reassignment strategy involved shifting the ratio of teaching staff to non-teaching staff by significantly increasing the number of core teachers while reducing the number of support staff and administrators. Hillsdale's strategy for increasing the number of teachers in the academic core, known in their parlance as "the 60:40 shift," was based on reading Linda Darling-Hammond's book, *The Right to Learn*, which states



that only 43 percent of educational employees in the United States are directly involved with classroom instruction. Hillsdale found that dividing the total number of students in the school by the number of adult employees resulted in an 11:1 ratio of students to adults. With class sizes of up to 35 and loads of up to 175 students per teacher, the school concluded that it would be more effective if it shifted more of its resources into the classroom.

Hillsdale's state and local context made the 60:40 shift more difficult than was first anticipated. Per-pupil spending rates in California do not make for a particularly flush pot of resources to redistribute. In addition, Hillsdale's special education programs, which serve severely emotionally disturbed, autistic and mentally retarded students as well as others who need resource classes, are subject to legal requirements on class size and teacher assignment. Still, Hillsdale was able to find ways to shift staffing to make smaller class sizes and collaboration periods possible.



Rather than buttressing an academic core that did not result in sufficient student success, the Hillsdale staff decided that the academic core itself needed to be made more effective. "We're reversing this pattern of just continually adding on more. If we aren't

*“We’re reversing this pattern of just continually adding on more. If we aren’t meeting kids needs in the academic core, then it’s the academic core that needs greater attention and greater resources.”*

– PRINCIPAL DON LEYDIG

meeting kids needs in the academic core, then it’s the academic core that needs greater attention and greater resources,” explains Principal Leydig.

Hillsdale reallocated approximately one FTE toward the core by eliminating the algebra, reading and AVID support classes added in recent years. In addition, Hillsdale’s one-person business department was cut through a voluntary intra-district transfer. Resources were also shifted toward the core by choosing not to refill the position of a retiring staff secretary. The principal’s administrative assistant now manages the front desk alone or with student aides, and there is one less campus

security aide. Further shifts in the classified and counseling staff that would result in new job descriptions and perhaps some transfers to other schools in the district have been discussed. After determining that an additional four FTEs would be required to staff the SLCs in year one, Hillsdale paid for half of the remaining FTEs with grant money and the other half through additional district office funding.

Not surprisingly, some resistance and hard feelings surfaced as Hillsdale’s staffing plan evolved, especially among non-certificated staff. In a break from democratic decisionmaking, the administration decided that only certificated staff would vote on the plan. “I’m sure this was a difficult decision when so much focus was being put on doing all this democratically,” one teacher says. “But it’s kind of like campaign finance reform — how are we going to change anything when it’s in the personal interest of the majority to change nothing?” However, counselors and career and college advisors whose jobs would eventually change, as well as some classified staff, did support the plan. One counselor whose job would change or might even be eliminated said at a faculty meeting, “We have to realize this is a school and not an employment service — it’s about educating the kids, not about guaranteeing jobs.” Principal Leydig often told parents at community meetings, “Come back in three or four years and you might find principals in the classroom part of the day.”

In the first year of Hillsdale’s three-year SLC phase-in, no staff member lost a job. Though staff feared there might be more severe changes in year two when both the 9th and 10th grades would be part of the SLCs, well-timed retirements and intra-district transfers were used instead. Staff members also upgraded their skills to stay at Hillsdale. For example, the campus security aide completed his credentialing and came back as a physical education instructor and coach. Positions were also consolidated or trimmed back. Principal Leydig, who was nearing retirement, cut his time and salary by 10

percent by taking more three-day weekends and late-start or early-leave days. SLC coordinator Brian Schlaak was named assistant principal, a move that consolidated two positions into one and shifted some responsibilities to other staff.

Pruning positions outside the core eventually made it possible to reduce class sizes in four 9th- and 10th-grade academic classes and to provide a collaboration period to all core academic teachers in grades 9-12. At the end of year two the school decided to close one of Hillsdale's four original houses to allow the SLCs to remain financially viable. The decision was made easier by the departure of two of the four teachers in Constantinople House. With only the English teacher looping with the first cohort of students (because of credentialing issues around teaching both biology and chemistry, the science teachers did not loop) and enough new hires to staff three houses, Hillsdale decided to assign students and the English teacher to the remaining three houses. While some tough choices have been made, Brian Schlaak notes that "real change doesn't come without pain."

*"We have to realize this is a school and not an employment service — it's about educating the kids, not about guaranteeing jobs."*

– HILLSDALE COUNSELOR

### **"Elders" assist teacher assignment to SLCs**

In year one (2003-04) Hillsdale used a democratic and inclusive process to determine how teachers would be distributed amongst the four houses. Teachers with many years of collaborative experience describe such efforts as a kind of marriage, requiring good communication and a fair amount of compromise. "Love marriages," initiated by the teachers themselves, have proven to be most effective, but "arranged marriages" entered into with the agreement of both parties have also been fairly successful at Hillsdale. The primary dilemmas in team selection for the first year of SLCs were how to distribute 16 teachers among four teaching teams without having anyone feel like the last one picked for the team and how to make the four teams equally strong.

Several ways of forming the four ninth grade teams were explored at two open and well-attended after-school meetings. The steering committee examined the open door method used at Enumclaw High School (WA) and the closed-door method suggested by Jacqueline Ancess. Ultimately, the committee devised a hybrid version, where teachers would fill out a Request for Information form and submit it to a committee referred to, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, as the "village elders." These elders included Hillsdale's principal, a universally respected and soon-to-retire English teacher, the school's union

representative (who was also the union president), a guidance counselor and a community member who was a professional facilitator from the county office of education.

People spent a lot of time discussing whether teachers should name with whom they did or did not want to work. Finally, the faculty decided that the elders should make the placement decisions. This was acceptable to the staff, because many of the village elders already had a realistic view of who would and would not work well together. Teachers also had the right to appeal the decisions of the village elders or decline to participate if not satisfied with the team to which they were assigned. If it would become necessary to accept applications from outside the school, the three members of the team selected by the elders would be the primary decisionmakers in hiring their fourth team member.

All those who “wanted to play” came to a meeting with the elders, and 15 open-ended questions were generated for the Request for Information. (The RFI was reduced to five questions in year two). Teachers were given a week to complete the form before the village elders met to make the selections. The elders met during three two-hour closed sessions and formed four complete teams, one for each SLC. Ultimately, no teacher appealed his or her placement and no parents requested that their children be transferred to a different house.

For the second year of the SLC phase-in (2003-04), a reconvening of the village elders was considered but then dropped in favor of having the houses themselves make the necessary choices. An abridged RFI form was created for applicants from within and outside the school. Department members from 9th through 12th grades and house representatives from the 9th grade SLCs held several rounds of interviews of outside applicants. The principal, assistant principals and the school’s PDS liaison all weighed in at these meetings, however, the ultimate decision was made by the representatives of each house. Though discussing and negotiating around the strengths and weaknesses of their colleagues was more challenging and awkward than teachers had anticipated, they ultimately created the four new teams.



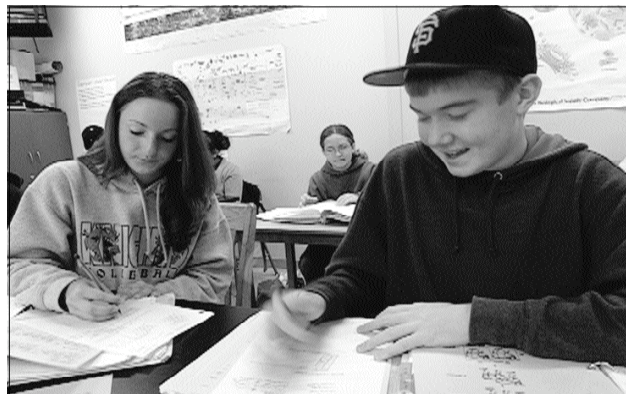


Throughout year two, groups of 11th and 12th grade teachers met to discuss and draft plans for the upper division or Senior Institute to be implemented in 2005-06. While Hillsdale's plan originally had allowed for thematic academies in the 11th and 12th grades, this plan was rejected because it contained the possibility of student segregation by academy and lacked any connection to the 9th and 10th grade houses. Ultimately, a plan simply to extend the three remaining houses into four-year vertically aligned programs was voted on and passed by the faculty. There would be some passporting out to a few AP classes and some electives, but most students would spend four years with a total of 9 or 10 core academic teachers — nearly half the number they would have had in the less personalized traditional structure. For year three (2005-06), Hillsdale upper-division teachers submitted an RFI and were assigned to houses by another group of elders, including one representative from each house.

### Equitable student assignment to SLCs

Because the staff wanted to create equitable SLCs, it tried to avoid thematic or explicit academic differentiation between SLCs. Consequently, representatives from each house — counselors and the assistant principal — sorted students to ensure a balance in gender, ethnicity and academic ability (as determined by reading scores and GPA). The assistant principal also used information about behavior and other issues from her annual meeting with the primary feeder school's principal to assign students to the four SLCs: Kyoto, Constantinople, Marrakech and Florence (as mentioned earlier, Constantinople house was closed after year one to maintain the redesign's financial viability).

Hillsdale's attempt to create autonomous microcosms of the larger school faced two steep challenges. The first was posed by a group of approximately 20 students who were ready to take second-year algebra in their freshman year. Because there were so few students, the course could not be offered in all four houses. But passporting these students to other houses diminished house autonomy and played havoc with the master schedule. The staff finally decided to offer this course in Marrakech House in the first year. In subsequent years any freshman needing the course would be able to take it with sophomores. In the first year, the second-year algebra students were largely isolated from the rest of their cohort, since this





math class affected the rest of their schedule. They traveled as a pack and complained about not meeting other students. To avoid isolating them throughout the day, Marrakech diversified and expanded its honors course offerings by having all teachers teach both honors and college preparatory sections.

The second challenge came with regard to special education and English language development. The staff thought that having two houses work with special education freshmen and two work with the English language development (ELD) freshmen would allow teacher teams and lines of communication to be more streamlined. However, as the year progressed the presumed advantages of this plan did not materialize. Having ELD students concentrated in two houses resulted in a lack of student diversity. With the exception of those ELD students still in the first-year course, the rest are now evenly distributed throughout the SLCs. This distribution provides them with greater interaction with native English speakers and increases diversity throughout the school.

A similar course was charted for special-education teachers. In the second year these teachers were assigned to SLCs to serve as a resource for students in all four core-subject areas. This shift resulted in an equitable distribution of special education students across houses and a more effective use of teacher resources. An additional benefit of having special education teachers accompany students in their core courses is that it allows the teacher-to-student ratio to dip as low as 2:20, depending on the class size.

### Shifting toward shared governance

Redesign has resulted in shared governance between the SLC steering committee and an SLC council. In years one and two, the SLC council met every other week for two hours after school. A representative from each house, a counselor, a special education teacher and building administrators attended these meetings. Each meeting began with a sharing of news and issues from each house. Sometimes other representatives would



offer suggestions based on their house's experiences or report similar problems. This part of the meeting seemed to serve both a psychological and an informational purpose. Budgetary issues, timelines, parent meetings, field trips, communication between the SLC teachers and the rest of the school, discipline, student performance in SLC classes and electives, professional development needs, scheduling and many other areas of concern

were on each meeting's agenda. Representatives took questions and drafts of new policies back to their teams for review before decisions were made at the next SLC Council meeting. For a time all 16 SLC teachers met monthly on a late-start morning, though this came to conflict with broader school meetings as the year progressed.

Responsibility for student discipline has been shifted to the houses. Within each house advisors generally handle discipline for their students during the freshman and sophomore years. If a problem arises in one of the SLC classes, the teacher notifies the student's advisor or sends the student to the advisor. If the problem arises outside the SLCs, the dean or teacher contacts the advisor. One elective teacher comments that "it's almost as if these kids have two sets of parents and you have to contact both whenever anything happens." Most of the houses have something similar to Kyoto House's Situation Reflection form, which allows students to explain and reflect on what happened and then discuss the situation with their advisors. Teachers estimate that approximately 20 percent of disciplinary infractions require intervention by a house or school administrator. Observes one SLC teacher:

*I think a lot of teachers not yet in the SLCs are afraid of this new role, but there's nothing so hugely scary about it. In fact, this way we're more in the loop, more in charge of our own destiny. In the old paradigm, I'd fill out a referral form and be left wondering what really happened when the form came back saying "student counseled — she won't do it again." Now, I was there for the counseling.*

Hillsdale also began giving more responsibility for personnel and evaluation issues to the SLC teachers in the second year of the phase-in. Although Hillsdale teachers have long been involved in the interview and hiring process, their responsibilities have increased as the format of the evaluations has changed. As the number of faculty members increased as a result of the SLCs, the three house administrators felt that they could not possibly do an adequate job of evaluating the teaching (and fairly extensive portfolio) of each teacher. In fact, they are the first to point out that they often were not able to do so under the old system. Under the new system adopted in year two, pairs of teachers — one veteran and one less experienced — observe and discuss each other's practice, and administrators serve as facilitators.

Budget autonomy for the houses was also very much a work in progress during the first two years of the redesign. Each house was given some federal grant money to spend on professional development and instructional enrichment, but there was confusion about what was allowed and how much was spent. Some staff members suggest that

having a house administrative secretary is necessary for the houses to responsibly manage their portion of the school's budget.

### Teaching in the new context

Using the funds remaining from the SLC planning grant, Hillsdale held a week-long summer institute for teachers who would be in houses during year one. “The energy and creativity at these meetings was electric,” recalls Brian Schlaak. Teachers were free to imagine the possibilities that cross-curricular collaboration might create. The dedicated team of teachers — all of whom had applied to be a part of this effort and placed in houses with group dynamics in mind — generated a burst of creative planning. But concerns about equity between the houses began to weigh on the teams, and they ended up setting aside most of that work in favor of a unit on democracy that all four houses taught. “That unit bombed. No one liked it, not the teachers, not the kids,” remembers one Kyoto teacher. After numerous discussions about the relative merits of synergy and autonomy during the first six weeks of school, the SLC teachers and the administration decided it would be best for teachers to plan curricula within houses instead of all together.

*By developing rubrics for writing and oral presentation that are used across all houses, teachers have struck a balance between benefiting from the wealth of ideas on the larger campus and being nimble enough to make choices based on their team's and students' needs and interests.*

Looking back, Hillsdale staff members acknowledge the irony of trying to move in lock step as a large group when they finally had succeeded in creating SLCs. However, at the time their concern that one house might be perceived as more of an honors house than the others, especially because the two former honors teachers had been placed on the same team, weighed heavily on their minds. While teachers within departments continued to meet to share ideas and occasionally to plan units or assessments together, each SLC was given the autonomy to choose its own themes or projects.

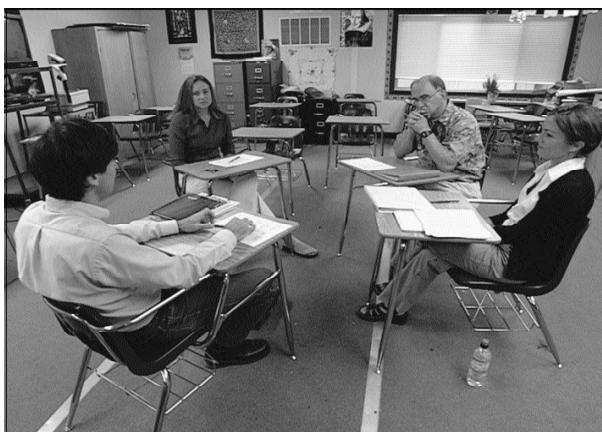
SLC autonomy was balanced by a growing concern that all houses adequately address state standards and assessments and meet the school's Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). Autonomy coupled with pressure to meet common challenges fostered healthy competition between teams and a shared commitment to spreading good ideas throughout the school. By developing rubrics for writing and oral presentation that are used across all houses, teachers have struck a balance between benefiting from the wealth of ideas on the larger campus and

being nimble enough to make choices based on their team's and students' needs and interests. Schoolwide content benchmarks in history and family reading nights are examples of interhouse curricular planning, while Florence's advisory portfolio project is an example of one house's development of a project based on its own unique vision. Much of the work in the following sections has evolved between 2003-2005, Hillsdale's first two years of implementing SLCs.

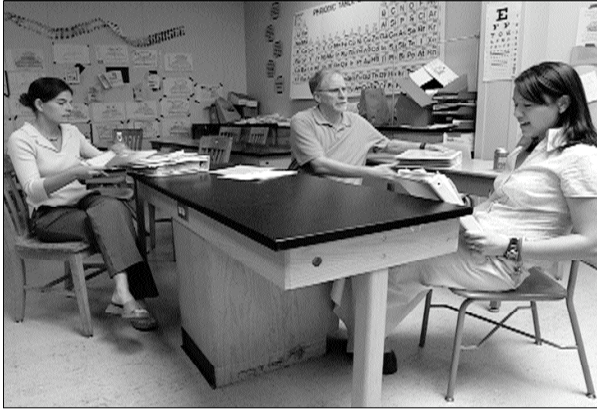
### Increased planning time and collaboration with colleagues

In the old Hillsdale teachers tried to collaborate without the structural changes needed to support this important work. In the new Hillsdale a shared collaboration period in addition to teachers' individual preparation periods is one of the most welcome redesign features. The collaboration time is used in many different ways. Teachers plan integrated units and performance assessments that involve from two to all four of the core academic classes; create advisory curriculum; discuss individual students' needs and progress; plan community service activities, field trips and family potlucks and schedule and debrief observations of each others' teaching. The tasks that get the greatest focus seem to depend on the personalities of the individual teams. Some set and stick to clear agendas while others discuss particular students' needs. Both are important. When teams spend a lot of time talking about individual students, they may lament how easily they slip into "just putting out fires." But those fires were not put out before. Most teams acknowledge that their most creative and extensive curriculum planning takes place when they take an entire day, usually twice a semester, to plan a major unit and culminating performance assessment.

Collaboration time facilitates the development of integrated curricula and performance assessments. In year one, houses began to benchmark certain tasks and assessments, requiring all students to revise their work until a certain standard is met.



Kyoto house teachers created the Research Endangered Animals and Country's History (REACH) project that involved each of the freshman core subjects (English, world history, biology and math). Students in REACH learned research and writing skills, oral presentation skills and content knowledge about their animal and country. All four teachers were involved in assessing the students' oral and written work. Shared



collaborative time also allowed Kyoto's ninth-grade team to create an integrated assessment in which students studied world religions alongside the J. D. Salinger novel *Catcher in the Rye*. In one assignment students had to write a persuasive paper recommending a particular religion to Holden Caulfield to help him deal with his problems.

In Marrakech house, freshman and sophomore teams often plan together and frequently mix 9th and 10th grade advisories as a result of shared planning. When a majority of students recently failed the “significant figures” benchmark in chemistry, the team used collaborative time to develop a group test for students to be administered prior to the individual assessment. This concept was new to many teachers on the team but proved highly effective in helping more students succeed. As these examples illustrate, collaboration time is frequently a form of professional development at Hillsdale and is an example of how a structural change can be leveraged for instructional improvement and higher achievement for all students.

### **Flexible scheduling remains elusive**

Lack of autonomy with regard to schedule may be the greatest challenge with which Hillsdale's SLCs are struggling. In the first two years of the SLC phase-in, freshman and sophomore teachers had limited flexibility in altering schedules to allow for more effective teaching. While working within the parameters of the master schedule, teachers in one house instituted “Flip Flop Fridays” and “Turn-around Tuesdays” — reversing the order in which their classes met — when they realized that groups of students who generally behaved and concentrated well in the morning were more rambunctious in the afternoon. English, social studies and, sometimes, math classes have been scheduled back to back to allow for more frequent blocking than the two days allotted in the master schedule. All math, English and social studies team members also use classrooms connected by the same hallways to provide more geographic autonomy. This allows students working on interrelated teams for integrated projects to sometimes move back and forth between two or three classes during a period to consult with other students and teachers.

While scheduling common preparation and collaboration periods for teachers and electives for students remains a challenge, Hillsdale benefits from “master board guru”



Assistant Principal Yvonne Shiu. Whereas previous assistant principals and counselors declared that the master board could not accommodate special scheduling requests, Shiu finds ways to support creative and flexible scheduling. With district approval, Hillsdale became the first school in the district to move freshman athletics outside the six-period day, thus freeing up another period to work with a large number of students. Although SLCs' integrated courses occasionally have blocked access to electives (a problem that occurred in the old structure as well), SLCs have increased the overall number of electives available to freshmen and sophomores by eliminating support classes external to the core. Finally, the existence of two tracks in the English and social studies classes (honors and college prep) further restricts the schedule's flexibility. Although 9th-grade biology and 10th-grade chemistry are not formally tracked, tracking by English enrollment causes most students to travel together throughout the day, resulting in a shadow track.

### Strengthening relationships with parents and students

At the urging of the administration, a meeting was called early in the first year of implementing SLCs to take the temperature of the parents and guardians of ninth grade students. Though there was considerable anxiety over parents' reactions, these fears turned out to be entirely unjustified. A



family climate seemed to have developed between parents and teachers during the first few months of SLC implementation. Like members of many families, the teachers were more sensitive about public discussion of bad news than good. At this meeting, however, parents generally raved about the program. In fact, when one parent voiced a commonly heard concern about students only interacting with a fourth of the freshman class,

*“Our understanding of our kids was so fragmented before SLCs. But now, with four other teachers helping out, the pieces really come together.”*

—TEACHER CHRIS CROCKETT

several parents responded that their chief interest was in the success of the children in school, not the size of their social circle. The quote of the evening may have come from the parent of a freshman at Hillsdale and a sophomore at a private school, who announced that “the one at Hillsdale is getting a better education.”

Attendance at the fall back-to-school nights and the spring open houses has increased markedly for parents of students in the SLCs, particularly after the

houses adopted student-led parent/teacher conferences. With each advisor serving as the point of contact between his or her 20-25 advisees and their parents, an unprecedented rate of teacher-parent contact seems to have been established. One Kyoto teacher recalls a day when a parent showed up at her door to drop off an essay for his ill child. The teacher observes:

*Not only was it remarkable that this particular kid had done the assignment — it was — but what was also remarkable was that I knew who this man walking into my classroom was. We had met several times and talked about his child on the phone more times than I can remember. He knew I would know him and the smile on his face showed that he knew I would be pleasantly surprised that his son had done the essay. We had a relationship.*

This relationship probably played a significant part in the student's completion of his assignment.

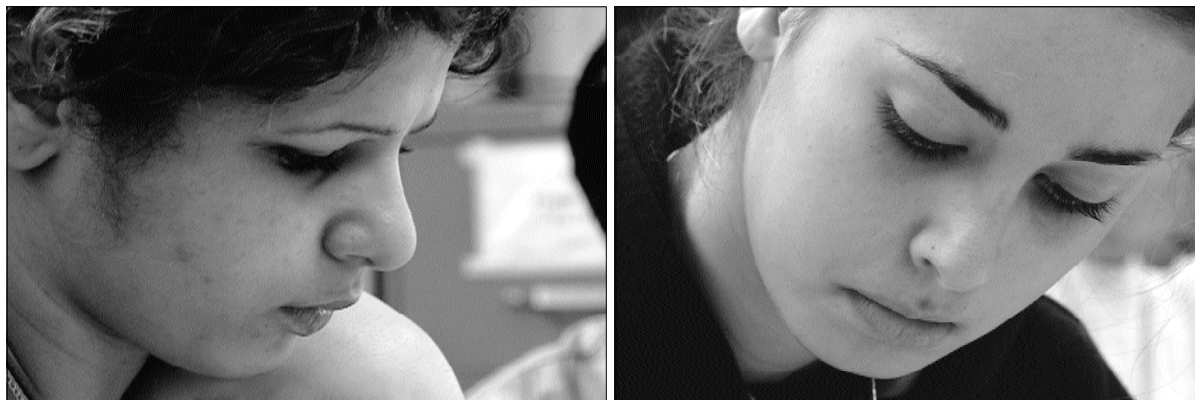
Parental enthusiasm for the SLCs likely reflects the sense of belonging and community created among freshmen and sophomores. While students initially expressed concerns about being isolated among just 80 students, these concerns seemed to wane as they bonded with their community during the first year. As one 12th-grade teacher commented, "It's easy to tell who the freshmen are in the hallways; they're the ones who look happy to be here."

Students sometimes grumble about teachers knowing everything about them, but it is the same kind of half-hearted complaint teens might make about a parent whom they really wouldn't want to behave any differently. This improved personalization comes from having a core curriculum, smaller pupil loads and looping. "Each student is like a jigsaw," Florence teacher Chris Crockett muses. "Our understanding of our kids was so fragmented before SLCs. But now, with four other teachers helping out, the pieces really come together." One teacher observes, "In 14 years of teaching, I've never had so many kids just hanging out in my room before school, after school, at lunch ... sometimes I have to shoo them away just to get something done!"

*"It's easy to tell who the freshmen are in the hallways; they're the ones who look happy to be here."*

– 12TH GRADE TEACHER

There are many anecdotes about students making changes in their academic identity because of the personalization offered by the SLCs. In one focus group conducted by Hillsdale's outside evaluator in the spring of 2004, two students had the following exchange:



*Student A: I just want to say that the houses or SLCs have really helped me improve my grades personally. At the beginning of the year I didn't really care about school at all. My advisor told me I can raise my grades if I try. That gave me hope. So, I tried, and I've totally switched around the person I was. I'm thankful for that.*

*Student B: The same thing happened to me. We met and figured out all I needed to do was my homework and study for tests. So, now I do.*

Of course, these same kinds of conversation happened between students and teachers in the old school structure, but the conversation dynamics and frequency seem to be vastly different in the more personalized atmosphere of SLCs. One teacher says:

*They finally got the idea and really started to care about doing well and to care about their learning. It was really neat to see that kids who have done the D and F work all year want to get the A or the B... I don't know how much of it is them being self-motivated and how much is us never letting them off the hook, never letting them do less than what they're capable of.*

Students at Hillsdale seem very aware that their teachers are not giving up on them, and this often results in their not giving up on themselves either.

### **Senior exhibitions spur increased use of performance benchmarks**

Although Hillsdale's English, government and economics classes have required senior exhibitions for many years, teachers outside of these areas became involved in assessing

*It is not uncommon to hear students at Hillsdale excitedly telling others in the hallway, “I passed my benchmark!”*

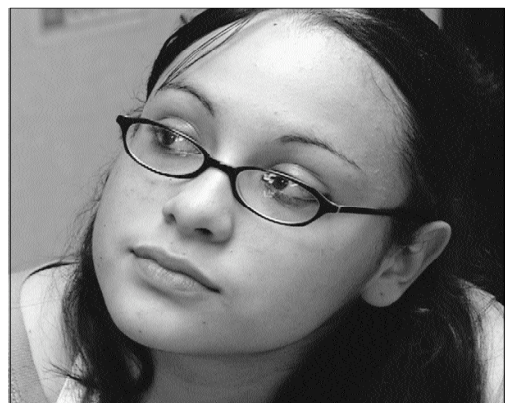
exhibitions during the second year of redesign. In 2004-05, Hillsdale’s entire faculty agreed to each read, provide feedback on and assess the work of three seniors. The six senior English, government and economics teachers each took on about eight of the students in need of the most assistance. The staff used a number of minimum days throughout the school year to discuss strategies for

assessing student work and to consider how this task could be educative to the faculty as a whole. Faculty-wide participation in assessment reflects the degree to which the exhibitions have influenced the development and use of performance assessments and benchmarks in earlier grades.

Hillsdale’s emerging success with student performance in a rigorous curriculum partly reflects the increased use of performance benchmarks that students must meet to pass a class. These very tangible and explicit tests or tasks offer students concrete examples of how to improve their grades and prepare them for their senior exhibitions.

Whether it is solving for “x” in an algebraic equation, supporting a thesis statement in an essay or understanding how to round off significant figures in chemistry, students in these courses have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. English teacher Marty Kongsle recounts the beneficial effects of performance tasks. Three boys came to her classroom after school. After they told her they had not yet passed their significant figure benchmark in chemistry, she proceeded to show them how to do the calculations. After she had modeled the procedure (which, she noted ironically, the chemistry teacher had taught her), the boys remarked, “Is that it?!” “That’s it!” she replied. “Why don’t you go find Mr. Luzar and see if you can pass the benchmark?” And off they went. The next day, one of the three reported that he had passed the benchmark, but the others had not. Again the boys came to Kongsle’s room after school, and this time the boy who had passed tutored the two who had not. When the second boy passed, the two tutored the third until he too passed the benchmark.

Personalization combined with high but clear expectations has begun to create an academic identity for students who never would have had one in the old school. It is not uncommon to hear students at Hillsdale excitedly telling others in the hallway, “I passed my benchmark!” What’s more, one teacher notes, when a student succeeds “it’s often not just one teacher congratulating her, but four!”



Whereas teachers in the traditional structure nearly broke down under the strain of trying to get 165 students to revise and retry until they met a standard, a system of revision and redemption is possible with classes of 25 and pupil loads of 100. In fact, more than 100 students showed up for a Revision and Redemption Night, during which biology teachers offered review sessions, students tutored their peers, chemistry teachers monitored tests and freshman passed benchmarks they had not yet mastered. "Some kids don't get it until the fifth try, but there never would have been a fifth try in the old Hillsdale," remarks one veteran teacher. SLC teachers of freshmen and sophomores at Hillsdale frequently use words such as "cajole," "prod" and "sit down with." Lower pupil loads make this personalized attention more sustainable and effective. Although academic performance and study habits do not change in a single year, Hillsdale's clear expectations for mastery seem to be motivating more students to achieve than abstract grades have done in the past.

In 2004, in an effort to help all students pass their benchmarks, Hillsdale offered a Benchmark Summer School, distinct from the district's regular summer school. Students who had Ds or Fs in English, social science or algebra but were within range of passing were given two weeks of added instruction and opportunity to pass the benchmark assignments that would demonstrate their ability to move on to the sophomore level. For many students, Principal Leydig notes, "It's ridiculous to have a kid sit through six weeks of district summer school and just repeat the same curriculum when all he might need is some help in one or two key areas." Many struggling students or students who didn't become motivated until late in the year took advantage of this added support and were able to move on to the sophomore year.

By the spring of year two, all three houses asked 10th-grade students to synthesize their learning from the past two years and defend a thesis-based essay and oral presentation. One house had students select a Nobel Prize winner, research why that person deserved the prize and then make connections to various pieces of literature and history studied over the past two years. In the other two houses students were asked to select several pieces of literature and several units from history, create a unifying thesis and defend that thesis with specific examples from the literature and history they had studied. As a benchmarked assignment, students were asked to rewrite their essays until they met the minimum standard laid out in the writing rubric used throughout the two years. Some students were asked to revise and present their oral defense a second time as well.

*"Some kids don't get it until the fifth try, but there never would have been a fifth try in the old Hillsdale."*

– HILLSDALE TEACHER



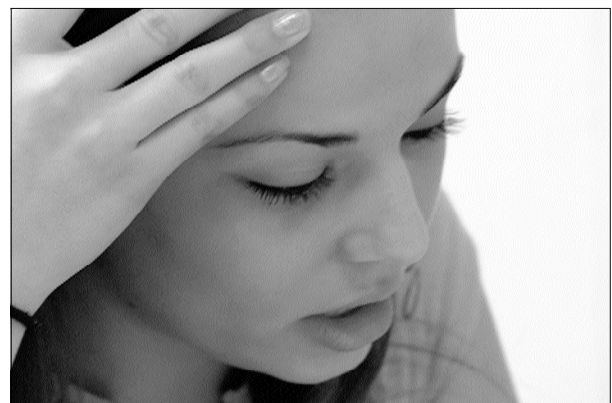
Although a culture of oral examination and standards-based assignments predated SLCs, the personalization and collaboration facilitated by the redesign allows teachers to give a great deal of attention to students' needs. As a result, a vast majority of the students successfully completed the 10th grade synthesis assignment with a level of competence that many of them had never demonstrated in school before. "This was definitely the best work I have ever done," remarks one Marrakech student. "I was surprised to realize how much I had really learned over the past two years."

### **Moving toward detracking**

As noted earlier, Hillsdale's proposal to detrack its freshman world history and English classes elicited negative parent reactions, suggesting to staff a bigger battle than they were ready to fight in the first year of their redesign. In Hillsdale's highly competitive open-enrollment district with several higher performing high schools (as measured by state test scores) to choose from, the debate around detracking is a hot one. At district curriculum council meetings, Hillsdale has often been the lone voice for detracking. Hillsdale's staff felt that a unilateral decision to detrack its ninth grade English courses would sharply increase the number of applications for intra-district transfer out of the school. At the same time, Hillsdale has experienced a net gain of intra-district student transfers into the school since implementing SLCs. As a result, the school has reached its freshman enrollment cap of 300 students for three consecutive years.

Although Hillsdale students continue to be tracked according to their English and social studies enrollment, greater equity occurred in the first two years of SLC implementation through eliminating general science classes (thus increasing minority enrollment in biology and chemistry, a trend discussed in the outcomes section). Hillsdale also gave all teachers honors sections, increasing the overall number of honors classes offered and providing greater student mobility into these courses.

Before the start of year two, the decision to close one of Hillsdale's four SLCs meant increasing the size of the three remaining houses to 100-105 students instead of 80. Balancing classes within the houses presented a dilemma related to the continued tracking of students in English and world history. Each subject within a



house is only offered four times, and in most of the houses more than 25 students want to take honors. By adding honors sections so that every English and world history teacher teaches both honors and college-prep classes, Hillsdale has facilitated more frequent and fluid advancement from college-prep into honors — possibly because students do not have to change teachers or even classrooms to do so.



The number of students motivated and ready to take the higher-level course quickly exceeded the number of honors sections available. Several solutions to this dilemma were proposed: detracking completely, giving one house more honors students than the other two in alternating years and creating two honors classes in each house. One house explored the possibility of detracking completely and again ran up against the problem of properly preparing parents for this change. Many teachers in all three houses also were concerned about jumping into fully heterogeneous classrooms without being trained in differentiated instruction. They wanted to feel at least reasonably confident that they could offer quality instruction to all the students in their classrooms.

It was not until summer 2005 that the 9th and 10th grade teams, plus a few others, spent a week exploring and planning for differentiated instruction. Much of Hillsdale's 2005 Summer Institute was devoted to collaborating with a local charter school in learning about and developing plans for differentiated units of instruction.

Administrators and faculty feel they may have built up enough social capital and trust to pursue detracking in freshman and sophomore English and social science once again. Hillsdale teachers have discussed offering a differentiated and detracked unit in 2005-06 to convince parents that it can be done well, so that detracking can occur in the fall of 2006.

*“This was definitely the best work I have ever done. I was surprised to realize how much I had really learned over the past two years.”*

– 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENT

*“That middle 50 percent is being served in a way that it probably wasn’t ever before. I think that kids are engaged in academic work. They have expectations to do the core curriculum. They have expectations to do the major projects that were probably before normally reserved for the honors kids.”*

—TEACHER GREG JOURILES



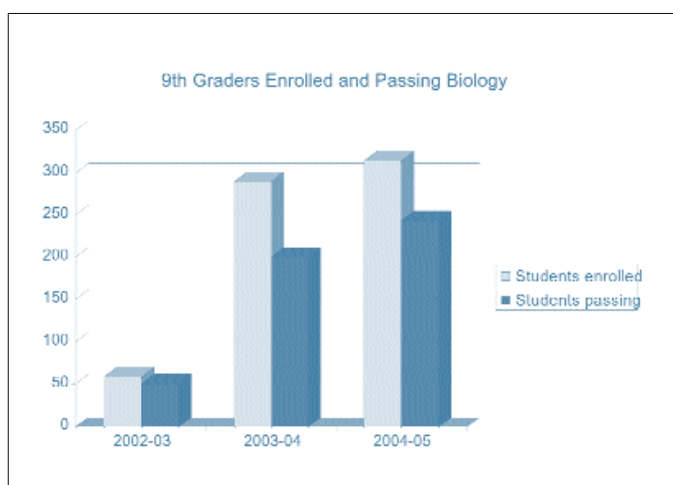


# Promising Outcomes in Improved Student Achievement

Hillsdale's goal is to provide a rigorous curriculum that maintains students' University of California/California State University (UC/CSU) eligibility throughout their high school careers, so that all students have the option of attending a four-year college upon graduation. Hillsdale has seen some tremendous progress toward this goal. For example, 100 percent of freshmen and sophomores (except for ELD 1-2 students and some Special Day Class students) are currently enrolled in a UC/CSU preparatory curriculum and, as of summer 2005, 97 percent of sophomores remain UC/CSU eligible in math.

Overall, the most notable outcome gains are in the sciences. Life science, physical science and integrated science have been eliminated and all students are now enrolled in biology and chemistry classes in the freshman and sophomore years, respectively. As a result, African American and Hispanic enrollment and performance in the sciences has increased tremendously. As of 2004, nearly one-fourth of all chemistry students in the district are taking chemistry at Hillsdale. Sixty percent of all district African American and 35 percent of Hispanic students taking chemistry are at Hillsdale.

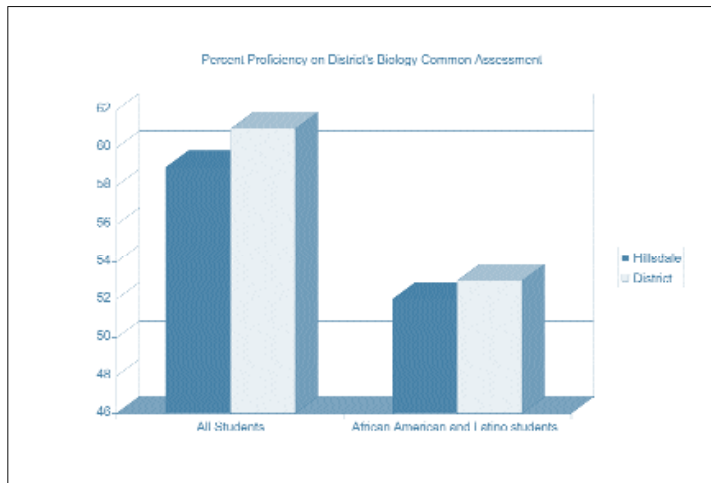
Similar positive outcomes are evident in biology enrollment and achievement. Prior to smaller learning communities (SLCs) in 2002-03 only 58 students (16 percent of all 9th graders) enrolled in ninth grade biology, 50 of whom (86 percent) received a grade of C or better. By 2004-05 321 students (nearly 100 percent) were enrolled in biology, 243 of whom (66 percent) received a grade of C or better (only beginning English learners and special needs students in special day classes are not enrolled in biology).



Enrolling all students in biology dramatically increased the numbers of African American and Latino students taking and passing biology. In 2002-03, only 19 African American and Latino students (18 percent) were enrolled in freshman biology. In 2003-04, 99 African American and Latino students (nearly 100 percent) were enrolled in the course, with nearly 50 percent of these students receiving grades of C or better.

While grades may subjectively measure student success, Hillsdale's district also administers a districtwide common assessment (DCA) in biology. In 2003-04, with 100 percent of its freshmen enrolled in biology, Hillsdale's average score of 59 percent was only slightly lower than the district average of 61 percent even though the rest of the district enrolled only small numbers of freshman in biology. None of the other five schools in Hillsdale's district enroll more than 35 percent of freshmen in biology. In chemistry, Hillsdale's 2004-05 DCA average of 57 percent came close to the district average of 61 percent despite a much more inclusive enrollment.

In addition to enrollment gains in biology and chemistry, there are also positive data related to narrowing the achievement gap. Hillsdale's African American/Hispanic student



performance on the 2004 DCA in biology is roughly equal to the district average (52 percent at Hillsdale compared to 53 percent for the district), despite the fact that all African American/Hispanic students at Hillsdale are taking biology compared to only higher-track students at other schools. Hillsdale's African American/Hispanic student performance on the 2005 chemistry DCA approaches the district average

(48.4 percent vs. 48.8 percent) despite the fact that Hillsdale enrolls all students in chemistry and not just a select few.

Hillsdale also demonstrated a 28 percent gain in the number of sophomore students scoring proficient or advanced on the 2005 state social science assessment. Overall, however, Hillsdale's performance increases in English and social science, which remain divided into an honors track and a college-preparatory track, lag behind the gains made in biology and chemistry. Discussion and planning for detracking these courses for freshman in 2006 has





*African American and Latino student enrollment in ninth grade biology increased from 18 percent in 2002-03 to 100 percent in 2003-04.*

begun. It is hoped that detracking will result in increased enrollment in AP courses of students of color. For example, while there was a significant increase (26 percent) in the number of students enrolled in sophomore Advanced Standing English between fall 2003 and fall 2004, there was no corresponding increase in the number of Latinos, African Americans or Pacific Islanders enrolled.

### **The road ahead**

The 2005-06 school year will be the mark of a new Hillsdale in many ways. After 16 years as principal, Donald Leydig retired and opened the door to a new governance model. Former Assistant Principal Yvonne Shiu will become principal of Kyoto House and the district's primary contact person on the campus. Jeff Gilbert, returning from East Palo Charter High School, will be the principal of Marrakech House. Florence House will be led by Assistant Principal Rich Mazzoncini in 2005-06, until it hires its own SLC principal in 2006-07.

Each house will have a teacher leader who will take on some administrative and instructional leadership roles. The position of department head, except in the cases of special education and English language development, has largely been eliminated. At an hourly rate, teachers will take care of the remaining tasks formerly done by the department head. Further reclassification of staff in order to create house secretaries is being negotiated. A new site council that includes parents, teachers, students and administrators from each of the three houses is being formed. A new student government structure, allowing greater involvement of a more diverse group of students from across all three houses, will be put in place. A team of teachers is in the process of developing a portfolio-based performance assessment system that will be aligned with state standards and integrated into all three houses at all grade levels. A new discipline policy, aimed at consistently communicating shared values and rewarding positive behaviors rather than just punishing negative ones is in the works. Eleventh and 12th-grade advisors will assume the responsibility of ensuring that every graduate has an appropriate postsecondary educational plan.

Not surprisingly, the potential for teacher burn-out continues to be one of the most pressing issues. Large school conversions like Hillsdale's combine the intense atmosphere

of a start up with additional internal political stresses that new small schools often do not have to address. Nevertheless, there seems to be a sense that, while it is hard work pushing the redesign rock uphill, it is now moving steadily upward. Teachers are able to develop the kinds of relationships and see the impact they hoped to have when they first went into teaching. The empowerment and innovation that has taken place at Hillsdale is a direct result of the teacher-led and democratically driven redesign. Hillsdale staff can proudly claim that achievement gaps are shrinking, the rigor of student work is increasing and a strong sense of belonging amongst staff and students continues to grow. With the continued support of its district office, school board and community, Hillsdale may well be poised to create a new kind of high school that is truly designed to meet the needs of a diverse student population in a time when all students need to achieve at high levels. In this sense, Hillsdale's story may yet remain to be told.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A — SAMPLE TEAM TEACHER SCHEDULE

10 <sup>th</sup> Grade Team (Regular Schedule), Marrakech						
Regular Bell Schedule Mon/Thu/Fri	Ms. A—Science	Ms. B—Math	Mr. C—Social Studies	Mr. H—English		
Period 1 7:40-8:30	Chemistry	Geometry	Modern World History AS	No class assigned		
Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory		
Period 2 9:10-10:00	Prep Period	Algebra 3-4	Modern World History AS	Prep		
Period 3 10:05-10:55	Chemistry	Prep Period	Modern World History	English 3-4 AS		
Brunch 10:55-11:05						
Period 4 11:10-12:00	Chemistry	House Leader	Modern World History	English 3-4 AS		
Period 5 12:05-12:55	Collaboration	Collaboration	Collaboration	Collaboration		
Lunch 12:55-1:05						
Period 6 1:30-2:20	Chemistry	Geometry	Prep Period	English 3-4		
Period 7 2:25-3:15	No class assigned	No class assigned	No class assigned	English 3-4		

10 <sup>th</sup> Grade Team (Block Schedule), Marrakech						
Block Bell Schedule Tue/Wed	Ms. A—Science	Ms. B—Math	Mr. C—Social Studies	Mr. H—English		
Period 1 7:40-8:30	Chemistry	Geometry	Modern World History AS	No class	Tue	Wed
Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory		
Period 8:35-9:20	Chemistry	Geometry	Modern World History AS	Modern World History		
Period 9:25-11:05 2/3	Prep	Algebra 3-4	Prep	Modern World History		
Brunch 11:05-11:15						
Period 11:20-1:00 4/5	Chemistry	Geometry	Collaboration	Collaboration		
Lunch 1:00-1:30						
Period 1:35-3:15 6/7	Chemistry	Geometry	Prep	English 3-4	English 3-4	English 3-4

## APPENDIX B — SAMPLE STUDENTS’ BLOCK AND REGULAR SCHEDULE

Regular Bell Schedule Mon/Thu/Fri	Sample Students’ Schedules (Regular Schedule)		
	Student Y	Student Z	Student Z
Period 1 7:40-8:30	Modern World History AS (Advanced Standing)	Geometry	Geometry
Advisory 8:35-9:05	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory
Period 2 9:10-10:00	Algebra 3-4	Geometry	Geometry
Period 3 10:05-10:55	Chemistry	Spanish I	Spanish I
Brunch 10:55-11:05			
Period 4 11:10-12:00	Spanish 3	Chemistry	Chemistry
Period 5 12:05-12:55	English 3-4 AS	Modern World History	Modern World History
Lunch 12:55-1:05			
Period 6 1:30-2:20	Elective 1	Elective 1	Elective 1
Period 7 2:25-3:15	Elective 2	Elective 2	Elective 2

Block Bell Schedule (Tue/Wed)	Student Y			Student Z	
	Tue	Wed	Tue	Tue	Wed
Period 1 7:40-8:30	Modern World History AS	Modern World History AS	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry
Advisory 8:35-9:20	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory
Period 2/3 9:25-11:05	Algebra 3-4	Chemistry	Spanish I	Spanish I	Chemistry
Brunch 11:05-11:15			Modern World History AS	Modern World History AS	PE 3
Period 4/5 11:20-1:00	Spanish 3	English 3-4 AS	English 3-4	English 3-4	--
Lunch 1:00-1:30					
Period 6/7 1:35-3:15	Elective 1	Elective 2	Elective 1	Elective 1	Elective 2



## APPENDIX C

### HILLSDALE HOUSE AND WHOLE SCHOOL STAFFING

Building Administrators	Lead Principal (Kyoto)	
	Principal (Marrakech)	
	Assistant Principal of Student Services (Florence)	
House Administrators	Dean (Florence)	
	Counselor 1 (Kyoto)	
	Counselor 2 (Marrakech)	
	Counselor 3 (Florence)	
Attached Core Teachers	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Core House Team	
	Mathematics	
	Science	
	English	
	Social Studies	
	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade Core House Team	
	Mathematics	
	Science	
	English	
	Social Studies	
	11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Core House Teams	
	English, U.S. History, World Language, Chemistry (11 <sup>th</sup> grade)	
	English, Economics/Government, Mathematics (12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	
	Non-Core Teachers in each house (number of teachers per house)	ELD and World Language (Florence and Marrakech two each; Kyoto, three)
		Visual and Performing Arts (one for each house)
Home Economics & Industrial Technology (Kyoto and Florence one each)		
Special Education (Florence and Marrakech three each and Kyoto two)		
Physical Education (one for each house)		
Affiliated Staff	Librarian	

## APPENDIX D

### HILLSDALE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade
English 1-2	English 3-4
Algebra or above	Mathematics (Geometry or above)
Modern World History 1-2	Modern World History 3-4
Biology	Chemistry
Physical Education	Physical Education
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
English 5-6	English 7-8
Mathematics (Algebra 3-4 or above)	Economics/U.S. Government
America and the World Level III	
Physics	
Additional Graduation Requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two semesters in two of the following areas: world language, vocational education, fine arts</li> <li>▪ Senior exhibition that meets the benchmarked standard on the school-wide rubric</li> <li>▪ A post-secondary plan approved by advisor</li> <li>▪ One semester of health</li> <li>▪ Electives adding up to 55 credits (five credits/semester)</li> <li>▪ Hillsdale's graduation requirements exceed district requirements, Hillsdale requires two years of Modern World History compared to the district's one year requirement.</li> </ul>	

## APPENDIX E

### SLC YEAR TWO REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The following information will help us create balanced and effective teams for next year's houses. We realize it would be possible to write full essays in response to each of these, but please don't! Try to limit yourself to as succinct a response as possible.

#### COLLABORATION #1

*Please address the following:* your definition of collaboration, your willingness to collaborate with team and department members, and what you feel is the appropriate time commitment necessary for successful collaboration.

#### COLLABORATION #2

*Please address the following:* what you need or expect from those you collaborate with, what strengths and weaknesses you bring to a team, and the extent of your willingness to compromise or conform on curriculum, classroom management and behavioral expectations.

#### TEACHING # 1

*Please address the following:* your passion and philosophy, why you became a teacher, and the relative value you place on content and skills.

#### TEACHING #2

*Please address:* your professional experience, including years of teaching and related experience, your strengths and areas for improvement.

#### TEACHING #3

*Describe:* your relationship with students in and outside the classroom, what kind of student achieves for you, and how you think students would describe you.

#### OPEN-ENDED

What else would you like to say to that might help us in the process of team formation (no names, please)?

## APPENDIX F

### SENIOR EXHIBITION

Dear Seniors:

Welcome to the Senior Exhibition, also known as the "Senior Expedition." This second name is equally fitting in that this project is a year-long journey, during which you will be given the opportunity (your last before college and the "real world") to develop essential academic skills and "good intellectual habits."<sup>1</sup> By the end of this journey you will have *exhibited* these habits and skills through: writing and researching a paper of at least 12 pages in length, working with an adult mentor, conducting research and interviews, and presenting your findings and ideas before a small group from the community. In the course of this "expedition" you will be given the opportunity to develop or hone such skills and habits as:

- asking meaningful questions and knowing where to find the answers;
- analyzing the content and quality of information you find;
- approaching an expert with confidence and maturity;
- seeking advice and help when necessary;
- pursuing a project in depth and maintaining focus over time;
- developing and managing independence by organizing your time;
- presenting your ideas clearly and effectively before others;
- writing clearly and logically in support of your point of view; and,
- seeking out an area of interest to *you* and pursuing that interest actively and passionately.

These skills and habits will be challenges along your journey. Some of you will battle them with frustration or try to find easier paths around them. You might do only what each deadline requires, approaching the project with simply one goal—*getting it done*. We hope, however, that you choose not to exhibit yourself as one who just "gets by." Such a person is generally the one who is passed over for promotions, ignored during the interview process, or lost in a sea of others more eager to succeed.

Instead, we hope you will embrace the challenges of this project and become focused on higher goals—*finding the best possible answer to your question and having your work reflect who you are in a positive way*. With this approach, you will be driven not just by deadlines, but by a curiosity and desire to know something thoroughly, and by a concern for wanting to show what you are truly capable of to your community. If this is the kind of expedition you conduct, when it is time to *exhibit* what you have done, you will feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride. The Senior Exhibition can be a momentous culmination of your secondary education, demonstrating, in a way far more meaningful than letter grades, that you are ready to graduate from Hillsdale High School. Begin this journey knowing we are committed to guiding you through each step and that we believe each of you is capable of meeting these challenges and producing work of which you, your family, and your community can be very proud!

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<sup>1</sup> TheodoreSizer, *Horace's School* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), p. 73.



### Senior Exhibition Calendar of Due Dates

September 1, 2 (W, Th)	CSM Library Visit
September 3 (F)	Binder Organization Check Handbook Quiz Begin reading book related to topic Begin book notes/research journal/quickwrites (min 7pgs/week)
September 16 (Th)	Mentor Found and Mentor Data Form due
September 17 (F)	14 pages of notes due
September 30 (Th)	Project Proposal w/ Essential Q. and Thesis due
October 1 (F)	28 pages of notes due; begin second book
Week of October 4 <sup>th</sup>	Mentor Orientation Meetings
October 14 (Th)	First Formal Meeting with Mentor due
October 15 (F)	42 pages of notes due
October 21 (Th)	Outline due
October 29 (F)	56 pages of notes
October 26-27 (Tu,W)	Initial Caseload Conferences—during advisory/ or by app't.
November 10 (W)	<u>Draft #1</u> Stamped in class (Then Due to Mentor with Stamp)
November 22 (M)	<u>Draft # 1 w/ Mentor Comments</u> Stamped in class (Revise) AND Interview Brainstorming Form -- Part A Due
December 2 (Th)	<u>Draft #1 w/ revisions based on mentor's comments</u> due between 7:30am and 7:55am
December 16 (Th)	Graded Draft #1 returned to you...must receive C- or higher to avoid rewrite over the holiday
January 6 (Th)	Make Initial Contact with Interviewee by this date (Interview Brainstorm/Contact Form -- Part B due)
January 21 (F)	Secure interview with interviewee (Interview Brainstorm/Contact Form -- Part C due)
January 27 (Th)	Backwards Outline due

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Caseload Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

## SENIOR EXHIBITION DRAFT #2

/250 points

Accepted ☺

Re-do / Re-write ☹

\*Due on: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Thesis</b>	<b>/20</b>
<b>Organization (thesis/outline followed)</b>	<b>/30</b>
<b>Evidence (min. 7 quality sources, not counting interview)</b>	<b>/35</b>
<b>Expert interview (reliable expert, integrated and cited properly)</b>	<b>/20</b>
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>/45</b>
<b>Writing quality</b>	<b>/20</b>
<b>Writing quantity (12pp. min.)</b>	<b>/10</b>
<b>Source Citation (in text)</b>	<b>/20</b>
<b>Works Cited page (bibliography)</b>	<b>/20</b>
<b>Mentor comments addressed</b>	<b>/10</b>
<b>Caseload comments addressed</b>	<b>/20</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>/250</b>

Turned in on Thursday after 8:00 a.m.	-15 points
Turned in Friday	-25 points
Turned in Monday	-125 points

**Any paper under C- (<174)  
 must be rewritten during  
 Spring Break!**

250	A+
232	A
224	A-
217	B+
207	B
199	B-
192	C+
182	C
174	C-
157	D
150	D-
<150	F

**Comments:**

