Turning around a low-performing high school: Learning from the story of Jones Senior High School

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Abstract:

Turning around a low-performing school is complex and challenging work. This monograph tells the story of Jones Senior High School, a rural school that increased its achievement from less than 65% passing to approximately 90% passing. Included in this monograph are tips and tools that were developed by the principal and instructional coach who led the turnaround.

Keywords: strategies | High School | success | Policymakers | Administrators |Teachers

Article:

***Note: Full text of article below

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Learning from the Story of

JONES SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Turning Around a Low-Performing High School:

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JONES SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Developed by
Pascal Mubenga, Laura Fleming, Julie Edmunds
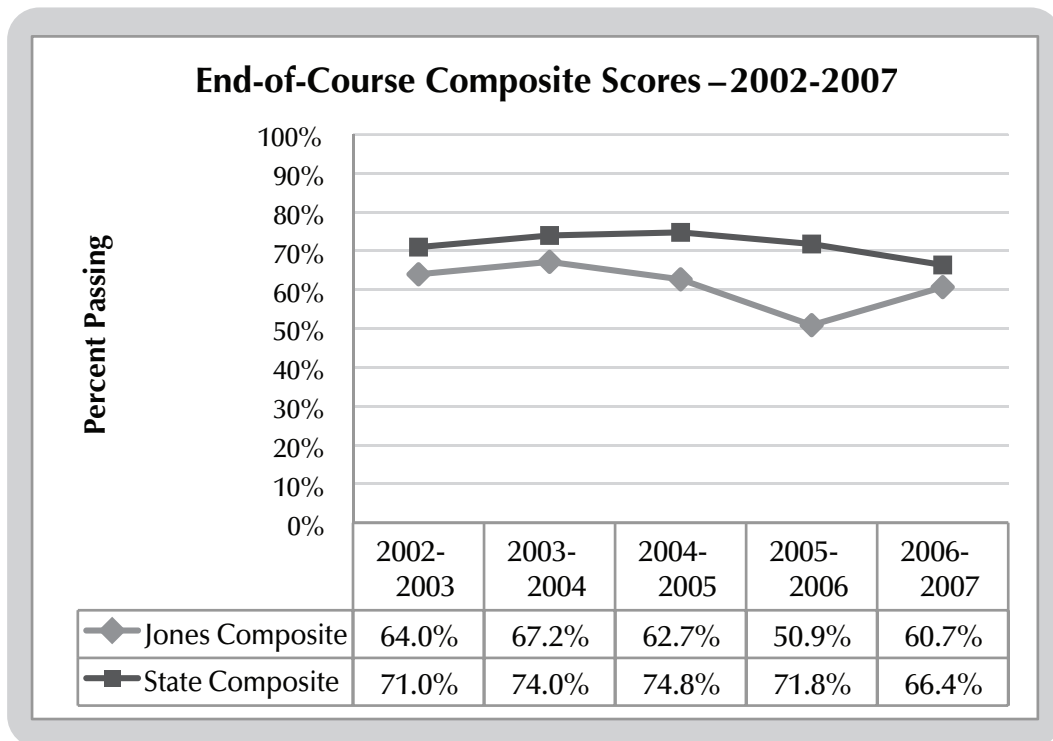
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Setting the Context:
Where Jones Started Out and Where It Ended Up

Jones Senior High School is a small, rural school about 25 minutes from the mid-size city of New Bern. The building was built in the 1950's and although it has a fresh coat of paint and the carpets have been cleaned, little else has been done in terms of renovation. In the 2010-2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 335 students. According to the principal and the instructional coach, the community has long seen the school as unsuccessful. The superintendent agreed, "Districtwide there was a perception and still is a perception that schools are not what they should be." At Jones, this perception has had a racial component, as many of the white parents in the county chose to send their children to a different high school. According to the school's instructional coach, "There was a lot of white flight, and we had a lot of white kids in the county that were not coming to Jones County schools. They would go through the elementary school, and then they would jump ship and leave, so there was this perception that Jones Senior was just the poor black school."

The school had a long history of mediocre to poor performance on North Carolina's standardized tests, with test scores remaining consistently below the state average. Figure 1 shows historic trends for Jones Senior High from 2002 through the 2006-2007 school year. In the years 2005-2007, with less than 60% of its students on grade

End-of-Course Composite Scores – 2002-2007

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Jones Composite	64.0%	67.2%	62.7%	50.9%	60.7%
State Composite	71.0%	74.0%	74.8%	71.8%	66.4%

level, the school was designated a turnaround school by the state of North Carolina. Individuals later involved with the school, including staff members and an external leadership coach, gave a variety of reasons for the school's low performance. One of the consistent themes was a history of low expectations: teachers and the students could not see themselves as high performing. The perception was that the kids attending Jones Senior High were poor and rural and this level of achievement was all that one could expect from them. The school's instructional coach described what the attitude of the staff and students had been when she came to the school as a science teacher:

> So when I got here, I remember asking the teacher beside me to say, "So what does the district consider good? What is considered a good score in the end-of-course test?" And I remember her specifically saying, "Well, they're happy if you can get 50 percent." And that always will stick in my mind that that was pretty much the expectation, that 50 percent was good because at the time, they were 30, 40 percent, so that was better than where they were.

> And the perception that the kids had of themselves -- they thought they were poor; they thought that they were rural. I can remember kids saying, "Why are you here?" I would teach, I would give them the little background of my credentials and that sort of thing. "Why are you here? You can go anywhere." I said, "Do you not think that you deserve a good teacher?" ...They're like, "Oh, I never thought about it that way."

The external leadership coach agreed, "They didn't believe that they could do it. They were in a poor county; if you believe what you read, this school was not going to do well because of the students who are in the school."

Not only were there low expectations for students, but there appeared to be low expectations for teachers as well. One teacher described how some staff appeared not to care about the students.

> One thing I noticed [when I first got here] is I felt like some of the staff here that are gone now, thankfully, just didn't seem to care. Like we were either a stepping stone or somewhere where they got moved from another school and they just thought they could come here and kind of hide out...

Another teacher described how there were no consistent expectations for teachers concerning what they should do in the classroom.

> Nobody bothered whether their teacher gave a test or a quiz or not... I can tell you that earlier no teacher was serious about giving progress reports... there

was no set, a fixed date for them... I remember earlier another teacher had to be told, "You must give them a midterm." You know, a teacher needs not to be told.

Another frequently-mentioned reason for low performance was the high level of turnover among both teachers and principals, which caused turmoil in the school. One of the teachers who had been there 20 years commented that he had had 12 to 13 principals during that time period. Many of the principals also were not seen as strong leaders.
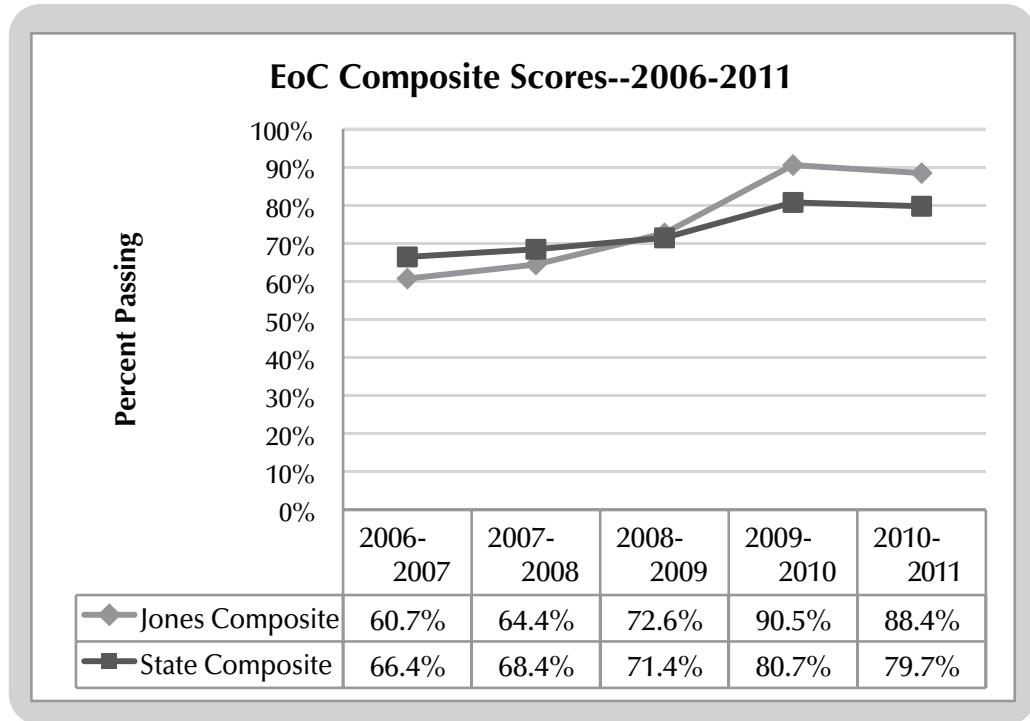
The turnover among teachers was also not helpful. A teacher noted, "We were having a large teacher turnover. I mean we were losing five or six teachers a year, and that kind of really got hard to keep consistency to get your scores up."

While discipline and chaos are often reasons for a school's low performance, this does not appear to be a core part of the story at Jones Senior High. The principal did describe some problems with gang activity and violence, and one teacher commented on how interruptions in the classroom are reduced now. Another teacher said, "We had a huge discipline problem when I first started out [20 years ago] with fighting and stuff like that. Just kids not caring and no school pride or anything like that. And then it kind of started getting slowed down when a First Lieutenant Colonel came in and was a principal. He stayed a year. He kind of got it knocked down and then after that, we've kind of kept going with the discipline like it was supposed to be."

Near the end of the 2007-2008 school year, Dr. Pascal Mubenga became the principal of this school, serving side-by-side with the previous principal until she retired. Originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dr. Mubenga had been an Assistant Principal at a high school in Franklin County until he moved to Jones County. He was principal at the district middle school until he was moved to become principal at Jones Senior. He placed Laura Fleming in the position of instructional coach. Mrs. Fleming had taught science in the school since 2000 and had very high performance among her students, with pass rates of over 90% on the end-of-course exams. Together, they formed a team that, according to all individuals interviewed, worked well together and balanced each other on a number of dimensions. Although Dr. Mubenga had worked in Jones County before, he was new to the high school and brought a different perspective, while Mrs. Fleming was already a known and respected individual in the school. In addition, Dr. Mubenga is Black while Mrs. Fleming is White.

The administrative team, working with teachers in the school, instituted a series

of changes that dramatically increased the school's performance. Since 2007-2008, the school has exhibited a pattern of steady increase in test scores, surpassing the statewide average starting in 2008-2009. Figure 2 shows the performance trends starting from the baseline year of 2006-2007.

EoC Composite Scores--2006-2011

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Jones Composite	60.7%	64.4%	72.6%	90.5%	88.4%
State Composite	66.4%	68.4%	71.4%	80.7%	79.7%

Percent Passing (y-axis, 0% to 100%)

What did this new administrative team do to change the trajectory of the school? The rest of this monograph describes the process of change. Each section includes a description of what happened in the school, incorporating the words of the participants. At the end of each section are key questions that school staff seeking similar improvement might want to consider. There are also tools and tip sheets—created by Dr. Mubenga and Mrs. Fleming—that are designed to help other schools implement similar strategies.

How Turnaround Happens

Many schools attempt to turn themselves around and end up with a year of improvement (sometimes even dramatic) only to fall back to their original scores a year or two later. Jones's pattern of growth is different: the scores exhibited positive but smaller growth in the first full year (2008-2009), leading with a large jump in year 2 of the turnaround, then plateauing at approximately 90% pass rate on the End-of-Course composite scores.

This section of the monograph is divided into core areas in which the Jones leadership team made changes. Each section also includes some questions and tools for school teams to use when they are considering how to improve their school.

"QUICK WINS"

Research on turning around low-performing schools suggests that leaders should rapidly implement visible improvements in the school, what is often called "quick wins" (Herman et al., 2008). These short-term improvements indicate that change is coming to the school and, if they are successful, can help leaders get buy-in from the rest of the staff. During the end of the 2007-2008 school year, when Dr. Mubenga was working with the retiring principal, he chose to focus on two areas: *discipline* and *tutoring*.

The very first step for Dr. Mubenga was to empower teachers to handle discipline within their own classrooms. Within his first two weeks at the school, he introduced In-School Suspension (ISS) and gave teachers the authority to send a student directly to ISS. According to the principal, previously, "Any minor thing that teachers were sending those kids to the principal's office, the principal was really tied up dealing with discipline all day." The introduction of ISS has "freed the principal's time to deal with other issues, and the teachers, they felt like they were empowered dealing with the discipline, so that really helped – kids being in school; not being sent home." One of the teachers agreed that the introduction of ISS was very helpful in reducing disruptions in her class:

> *We have this in-school suspension. That has made a lot of difference. So there are 20 students and two of them don't listen to the teacher. You just send them to the ISS. That leaves the remaining 18 [who] will try to understand what you are trying to teach them and be more serious. So two of them go there to the ISS, we give them work, of course, but at least they are not there to disturb the class.*

The second thing that happened at the end of that transition year was the creation of an intensive after-school tutoring program for the two weeks prior to the end-of-course exams. During that time, students had the opportunity to work with any of the teachers in the specific subjects with which they were struggling. According to Dr. Mubenga, "A lot of teachers said, 'That has helped us a lot.'"

By the end of the transition year, Jones Senior High was at 64% passing and was no longer identified by the state as a turnaround school; instead, it was identified as a "School of Progress" because over 60% of students scored on grade level and had made the amount of growth expected. These early gains made the teachers more likely to recognize that change was possible.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. What are some "quick wins" that you could implement immediately in your school to signal that change is coming?

DEVELOPING A COLLECTIVE VISION

Because Jones Senior High was identified as a turnaround school, it was required by the state to develop a "Framework for Action" that incorporated certain specific components. This process began under Dr. Mubenga's predecessor. Developing such a framework was generally seen as a very helpful process, although some of the activities chosen by Jones Senior as part of the Framework for Action ended up being inappropriate for them. For example, all schools were expected to implement a transition program for ninth graders and Jones chose a Freshman Academy, but that ended up being a "debacle" for Jones because the school was too small. As Mrs. Fleming noted, "We had started the Freshman Academy, and data went up immediately. But then the next year, it didn't go up because the best teachers were in that Academy, and so scores went down. And then we moved the best teachers out of the Academy, and then we put all the inexperienced teachers in the Academy, and it was just a huge debacle."

In the summer of 2008, the beginning of the first full year of Dr. Mubenga's principalship, he pulled together a leadership team from the school for a retreat at the beach. During this retreat, the leadership team was meant to revisit this plan and revise it to reflect their own approach to improvement. Instead of incorporating all of the components of the Framework for Action or adopting an existing school reform model, the principal told his staff, "We're going to come up with the product that is Jones Senior, that's going to fit our population, the program that's going to fit our community, the program that's going to fit our school."

The teachers who participated in the retreat were hand-selected to include a balance of some new teachers and some teachers who were loyal to the previous principal. Dr. Mubenga had a sense of the teachers' strengths and weaknesses and knew who he wanted to be on the team (see the tool at the end of this section for more explicit guidance on creating a leadership team). Also on the team was the leadership coach provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as part of their turnaround assistance. Her role was primarily as a facilitator.

During the retreat, the team identified their problems and brainstormed solutions for those problems around discipline, academics, and athletics. They identified their needs and prioritized the top three needs as a group. At the retreat, they focused on SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) goals. According to Dr. Mubenga, the idea was to create a vision that they could implement as a team.

Leaving that leadership retreat, those teachers felt pretty much empowered; it was not the principal's ideas that they have to carry through. They were pretty much their ideas. So from that concept, they were able to come back and go to the departments and be able to sell it because they had the input throughout the process. And we set up our goal. We said at the end of the year we're going to be 70 percent proficiency with all students passing the EOC. From 64 [percent], the goal was specifically 70 percent.

In striving toward these performance goals, the leadership team made recommendations in a variety of areas, as described in the remaining sections.

Because the leadership team developed the goals as a team, those individuals bought into the process of change that would be required. During each of the following summers, the leadership team would meet to revisit the plan and revise the strategies appropriately.

One of the most important aspects of this meeting is that it was a genuinely collaborative process. All of the team members were actively involved in creating the goals and the strategies. As the external leadership coach commented, "It was not a 'talking at them' kind of workshop; they [the staff] were very involved."

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. Who is involved in your school improvement planning process? Does the group include people with diverse perspectives who have some power and authority within the organization? Does it include people who are committed to the success of the school? (See suggestions in the tool that follows.)

2. To what extent are your school improvement planning efforts truly collaborative in nature? Do you make real decisions as a group, or have the real decisions already been made elsewhere?

TOOL A
Selecting and Creating a Leadership Team

The success of a school as a learning organization depends upon the cohesiveness of its school leadership members. The selection of a school leadership team is vital for the success of any school. Thus, here are the suggested steps school leaders should consider in selecting the leadership team for a school that struggles or a school that does not have a culture of collaboration.

Steps for a leader to take prior to selecting a winning leadership team:

- *Have a clear vision about the organization.*

- *Analyze the organization in terms of talents, strengths, and weaknesses of its members.*

- *Self-reflect and complete an inventory of his/her own strengths and weaknesses.*

- *Consider the selection of team members who will complement his/her talents.*

- *Consider the selection of team members who will be a good representation of the organization.*

- *Consider the selection of team members with varied life experiences and years of teaching.*

List of desired characteristics for effective leadership team members:

- *Recognize and respect differences in others*

- *Contribute ideas and solutions*

- *Value the ideas and contributions of others*

- *Listen and share information*

- *Ask questions and get clarification*

- *Be able to participate fully and keep commitments*

- *Be flexible and respect the partnership created by a team*

- *Have fun and care about the team and the outcomes.*

Sample checklist for selecting leadership team members:

❑ *The candidate has followers in the organization.*

❑ *The candidate cares about the organization.*

❑ *The candidate can recognize and respect differences in others.*

❑ *The candidate has the ability to work with others toward a common goal.*

❑ *The candidate is able and willing to bring innovative ideas and/or propose solutions to the organization's weaknesses.*

CREATING A CULTURE OF TRUST

In visiting Jones Senior High School, one thing stood out. The teachers and students had a high level of respect for and trust in the school's leadership team. The administrative team began by trying to create rapport with the students, with the idea that this would help students do better academically, as well as reduce discipline problems. The team spent the bulk of their time talking to students in order to prevent discipline problems, but this did not mean that misbehavior had no consequences. As Dr. Mubenga said,

> At the beginning of the year when we lay the expectations, we tell them, "We don't mind. I'll spend an hour, two hours. If you have a conflict, come to me. Come to Mr. Meadows, the Assistant Principal. Go to Mrs. Fleming, or go to the Guidance Counselor. You have an adult in the middle. We will try to get the problem resolved. If you don't want to follow that route, you want to resolve it yourself, you get into a fight, you're going to get your 10 days [of out-of-school suspension] and you're going to get charged [with assault]." I'm telling you girls, boys, underclassmen, seniors, they come to our office all the time.

Just as the staff have worked to create a relationship of trust and rapport with the students, Dr. Mubenga has worked to create an environment where teachers feel empowered and trusted. He and Mrs. Fleming are constantly in the classrooms and are doing everything that the teachers are asked to do. Teachers commented that having a principal and instructional facilitator who were right in the middle of everything was very important.

> TEACHER 1: ...You've got to roll up the sleeves and do the things you're asking your people to do. [Principal Mubenga] was in Algebra I tutoring.

> TEACHER 2: And he does [that] every day.

> TEACHER 1: And he took the tie off. That was the sign he's not an administrator anymore. He would get in there teaching just for you, and I think that shows a lot. He's willing to put forth his effort to do the same thing he's asking of you and I think that kind of sold to everybody. Whatever it takes, and that includes him sitting in the classroom and not behind his nice fluffy chair.

This idea that the principal needs to work just as hard as the teachers appears to be very important. In another low-performing school visited by a researcher, the staff

bemoaned the fact that their previous principal had just hidden away in the office and was never around the school. This was associated with low teacher morale and poor performance.

On a related note, the leadership team provided many opportunities to empower their staff. This started with the leadership retreat, where the goal was not to impose a vision but to get everyone to agree on one. Everyone needed to realize that they were all in this together and that the leadership would hold them accountable for their performance. This empowerment of staff was also represented by the fact that the majority of professional development was provided in-house by fellow teachers (see section "Hiring and Supporting Staff").

The teachers reported that leadership team had respect for them and their abilities. One teacher said,

> So it's like they look to the teachers as the ones who know their students and know their curriculum. They look to them for ideas of what isn't working, what do we need to do to help your students do better, and they'll actually take those ideas and try to put them in place as best as possible... I've had some principals in the past that if they didn't have the idea, they didn't want it to go into effect. It's like they were threatened or something by it. So these principals do not mind at all using their teachers as experts also, because they know that that was my specialty and I've been doing it for you, at that point, five or six years.

While creating a culture of trust is not necessarily easy, it is possible. The tip sheet at the end of this section includes specific ideas for creating such a culture.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. What is the climate like in your school? Is there an atmosphere of trust?

2. Is the principal working alongside the teachers? Is he or she shut away in the principal's office?

TOOL B
Tip Sheet For How A Principal Can Create A Culture Of Trust

As a principal who is brought in to a new school or may be appointed in a low performing school, it is imperative to acknowledge that not EVERYTHING about that school is bad. As a newly hired principal you should acknowledge that there are people in that school who have the best intentions to do well for their students. Also, there are people who are likely loyal to their previous leader. As a newcomer or newly appointed principal, the way you treat your predecessor's legacy will gain you friends or enemies. There is no best way to do it other than being a professional and treating others as you would like to be treated. Here are the suggested steps to take to create a culture of trust as a new principal of a school:

1. *Analyze your school data prior to meeting with your staff;*

2. *In the light of the data, select a group of people (lead teachers, coaches, parent representatives, students, clerical representatives, etc.) who you will interview separately about the school data;*

3. *Get your staff in groups to brainstorm on the positives and areas for improvement for your school;*

4. *Present to your staff your findings regarding the school data and the interviews that you have conducted;*

5. *With your quantitative and qualitative data, coupled with the results of your staff's brainstorming report, share with the staff your vision for the organization;*

6. *Get your staff to appoint people who will constitute the leadership team, in the light of specific criteria that you should establish with them in advance;*

7. *Go on a retreat with your leadership team to analyze all data and make short- and long-term goals for the school;*

8. *Present to the staff the goals for the school and specific steps that will help the school meet its goals and its mission;*

9. *Establish an environment of trust and accountability by having an open door policy and actually listening to and acting upon comments and*

concerns.

10. *Be highly visible on campus and in classrooms several times a week so teachers and students view you as a supportive leader.*

11. *Lead by example and you will earn the trust of your staff; subsequently, that will create the culture of trust. Never expect your staff to work harder than you do.*

FOCUSING ON ACADEMICS

The goals set at the retreats signaled that expectations were changing at Jones Senior High and that academic performance would be valued. As one teacher commented, "...the whole atmosphere has changed now. So the students are more serious and they want to do better and they try to excel in the class, try their best."

Jones Senior High has tried to create higher performance expectations and a more academically-focused culture through a variety of efforts. The principal met with the students frequently and communicated the importance of academic work. The staff began having explicit conversations around academic topics, such as how GPA is calculated.

To communicate the value of academics, the school began to incentivize good performance. They rewarded students for good grades; for example, they took honors students bowling and took Principal's List students out to a restaurant. They allocated most of their fundraising dollars to rewarding students for good academics. (The tip sheet at the end of this section has specific ideas for rewarding academic behavior.)

One of the most straightforward strategies was to increase the GPA requirement for sports participation to a 2.0. Almost every staff member interviewed at the school stressed that this increased GPA requirement signaled an increased focus on academics. According to one of the teachers,

> *...those students who are in sports, earlier they just used to take [classes]. Any student could be in the sports... but now they are to have a minimum GPA of 2.0 at least. So for them, in order to be in those sports, they try to work hard. That's very recently introduced; it wasn't there earlier. Earlier...nobody used to bother about their academic progress at all.*

In changing this policy, the administrative team did receive some pushback from individual community and board members because this meant that their sports teams might not win as often. For example, they had to ban their football quarterback from playing because his GPA was below a 2.0; as a result, the team did not do well in football that year. A majority of the community did support their efforts, however, and the school was able to maintain the GPA requirement.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. What does your school do to indicate that academic achievement is important? Do you celebrate academic performance as much as or more than you celebrate other accomplishments?

2. Are there specific policies and practices that suggest that other aspects of school (e.g. sports, arts) are more important than students' academic performance? What would it take to change those policies and practices?

TOOL C
Celebrating Success: List Of Sample Activities To Reward Students And Teachers

Rewarding students and teachers should be done instantly in order to reinforce that good behavior. There are rewards or incentives that work for some and do not work for others. Specific items on this list will work better for some people than for others, depending on interests and comfort level. Here are some sample activities that schools may use for positive reinforcement:

1. *All students that pass their classes and pass all end-of-course exams can go out with the principal on a designated day on a bowling trip and have a pizza party upon their return to campus.*

2. *Students who pass the end-of-course exams at level III can have their names put into a drawing for $100 on the day of the end-of-course exams celebration. Students who pass at level IV can have their name put into a drawing for $200.*

3. *Teachers with honors classes who have 100% of students score at level IV can have their names put in for a $200 drawing, and teachers with a regular class with 100 % of students scoring at level III or IV can have their name put in for a $200 drawing.*

4. *As students meet the schoolwide goal, the principal can ask the superintendent and the board for special privileges, such as making Fridays a day when students are exempt from wearing the required uniforms.*

5. *Students who pass the end-of-course exams can participate at the end of the year field day celebration that will include games, music, food, etc.*

6. *All A/B honor roll students can be treated to a day of day of fun in the gym, and all students who make the principal's list can go off campus with the administrative team for a special lunch.*

7. *All teachers who met or exceeded the expectations of the administrative team can be invited to a special lunch off campus with the team.*

HIRING AND SUPPORTING STAFF

A key part of the reform effort involved creating a staff that could achieve the school's ambitious goals. Jones' story about staff incorporates several different strategies:

1) provide enough staff to have small class sizes;

2) replace some staff with new staff who buy into the vision of the school; and

3) build the capacity of existing and new staff.

The district has been able to pay for additional staffing positions, which has resulted in much smaller class sizes. The superintendent said, "I gave [Dr. Mubenga] additional positions, because [according to] state allotted positions the high school should have fourteen, and he currently employs twenty-one, so we've got some really, really small class sizes to make that happen."

In 2008-2009, the first full year of Dr. Mubenga's principalship, the school hired 12 new teachers, which meant that approximately one-third of the staff was new. Three of the 12 came from New Bern High School, while 9 were first year teachers. Even though the new teachers had no experience, the leadership team believed that they could be trained appropriately to fit into Jones Senior and what the school was trying to do. The district ensures that teachers in Jones County receive an annual $2,000 salary that supplements the normal state salary; this puts them on par with the counties surrounding them. Given that the salaries were comparable, the teachers were attracted by the working conditions, particularly the opportunity to have small class sizes and a small school.

The new teachers were selected by a leadership team at the school and not by the district, as had been done in the past. As Dr. Mubenga described,

I have to screen those candidates based on the need of the school. And everybody's input was really involved, and I had a chairperson of each department, they were a part of that process as well...It was really a team collaborative effort to bring the right people in...and I look for the best.

Mrs. Fleming described how many of the existing teachers at the school were perfectly capable teachers, but that they needed to work in an environment that allowed them to shine.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: ...We also had some teachers that were just not good teachers, and there was nobody in place to train them to be good teachers. And it's interesting, in the last three years, some of those teachers that were not at the top of their game have turned into fabulous teachers. They just needed somebody to help them along, and that was us.

INTERVIEWER 2: So it wasn't, they weren't just permanently ineffective?

INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: No, right. I mean, there were some that have since retired, but some of those teachers that are here now were here then, and they were just kind of there, I guess I should say. But now, they're fabulous. If you walk into their classroom now versus five years ago, it was just a completely different dynamic in the classroom.

INTERVIEWER 1: And what causes that, or why?

INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: I think it goes back to belief. I think it goes back to empowerment and training. We've done a lot of staff development. We've done a lot of going into teachers' classroom and picking up on the positive things and letting them know about those positive things... and kind of coaching those teachers through, "Okay, you need to continue this and how can I help you, or how can we help you to become better with the skills that you're not proficient with." I also think we had that first year, that was 2008-2009, we hired a lot of new teachers, fresh out of college, or with only one semester of teaching under their belt. And we worked really hard with those teachers.

And then at the end of the year when those teachers did just as well as our veteran teachers did on the standardized testing, there was a competition, and a friendly competition; not in a cutthroat kind of way. But if I had been a teacher in the classroom at the time, and I was scoring 70 percent, and a first-year teacher came out at 75 percent, it really makes me look at, "What do I need to do?" So I think that was a contributing factor, but a lot of the staff development that we've done has been in-house, and I think that's made all the difference in the world, because the teachers see each other as professionals, and not just 'the teacher next door that we have no association with'. It was a collaborative effort for whole-school improvement.

As indicated in the above quote, the school provides a lot of in-house staff development. Most of the staff development involves teachers sharing what they can do with each other. Every month, there is a staff meeting with 30 minutes dedicated to staff development. During the first year of turnaround, the teachers shared

strategies that they learned at AVID that were applicable to every content area. This year, they have been focusing on technology integration. They have done SmartBoard training, training on using a Wiki and training on Google Docs, Google Forms, and Microsoft Office.

The members of the leadership team are also considered instructional leaders. The teachers receive instructional coaching primarily from Mrs. Fleming but also from Dr. Mubenga. Dr. Mubenga described how he provided coaching to his math teachers:

> *Laura and I have been really successful classroom teachers. We know how to get students engaged, where in classrooms, for instance, for Math teachers… I will go ahead and model a lesson. You've got 90 minutes. How do you teach a lesson? …How do you engage students as soon as they get to your classroom for that first five, 10 minutes?*

A large part of Mrs. Fleming's job is to provide coaching to teachers. Since she was previously a science teacher, her first year as leadership coach was spent primarily working with the science department, which had four new staff members. She modeled lessons for them, set up kits with resources for them, and conducted monthly observations during which she would encourage the teachers to evaluate their own practices. She has videotaped some classes and sat down with the teachers to observe the video.

The new administrative team also began spending more time in the classroom, which represented a tremendous shift. Mrs. Fleming indicated that when she had been teaching, she had only been observed formally twice in eight years. When the principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach began visiting the classrooms very frequently, "that was kind of a shock to some teachers at the beginning." The principal believes that teachers got used to this because

> *…you do it in a way that you don't threaten them. You may see something that they're doing well. You praise them for that. Areas for improvement, you do it in a very nice way. It may not be formally. The teacher may have a planning period, [and you] say, "I came to your class, this is what I saw. Can you adjust this?" and then you just move on. … I think there's a matter of trust and that rapport that we have created that has helped a lot. Our teachers not only see us as administrators, but they respect us as experts in a classroom as well. They know that we know our content, and when we go and we discuss with them, there is that mutual respect.*

There are numerous opportunities for collaboration and learning from each other. As noted above, most of the professional development is provided by the teachers themselves. In addition, the observation responsibilities are also shared with the teachers. All teachers have to observe at least three other teachers throughout the year and complete a 2+2 protocol, developed by the school. This protocol asks them to identify two things that are going well and two things that the teacher could improve, with specific suggestions for improving those things. The teachers also meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) once a month when students are dismissed 30 minutes early. To ensure that there is accountability, the teachers have to submit a form stating what they discussed, and that form is posted on the Wiki so that everyone can see it.

The tools associated with this section include a tip sheet on classroom monitoring, a classroom observation tool for administrators to use, and an Instructional Monitoring Reflection table. The monitoring tool can be used during PLCs, Instructional Coach and teacher sessions, or during departmental meetings to make sure that teachers are effectively covering course content for student learning. So often, teachers teach the curriculum with little thought about whether the students are grasping the concepts being taught.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. Are school staff given time to collaborate and learn from each other? Is there accountability for how that time is spent?

2. How often does the leadership team visit classrooms? Are those visits collaborative and helpful in nature, instead of being punitive?

TOOL D
Tip Sheet on Monitoring Instruction

Monitoring instruction is something that every administrator knows is important, but is almost always a challenge. While it is a difficult task, it is vital to school success. Most administrators collect weekly lesson plans but seldom analyze them or provide the teacher with feedback. In fact, many teachers merely pull out lesson plans from a previous year, post them for the administrator, and may or may not follow them in the classroom. They complete the plan because it is a paper trail, but in truth, many great teachers may have a plan for the week and then monitor and adjust their lesson plans on a daily basis to meet the needs of their students. The mediocre or not-so-great teacher actually may try to follow the weekly plan which does not allow for instructional adjustment from formative assessment. While lesson plans are not necessarily a bad practice, they are not the best avenue for monitoring instruction. So how should classroom instruction be monitored? There are three important aspects. First, the administrator should have a broad understanding of the curriculum. It is unlikely that administrators are well-versed in every subject area curriculum, but they should have a basic understanding of the state standards for the subject. This requires research and time (preferably during the summer before school starts) in each subject area. If there are several administrators in the school, each one should learn a core subject (English, math, science, and social studies) in-depth. This allows the administrator to converse with teachers, curriculum coordinators, and other administrators about topics. It also lets them collaborate with teachers about course sequence and help teachers with instructional strategies for specific topics. Teachers are resentful when administrators provide mandates and/or suggestions but have no background knowledge in the area. When teachers turn in long-range plans or pacing guides, the administrator needs to review them and make sure that they correlate appropriately with the state standards. He or she needs to have faith in teachers, but should not operate under the premise that the teacher is always an expert in curriculum content, sequence, and instruction.

Secondly, the administrator must visit classrooms frequently. In many schools, teachers are observed less than five times a year, and this is usually for the formal observation practice. Every administrator is busy, but he or she should make it a priority to visit at least one or two rooms a day for a walkthrough, which can range in time from five to twenty minutes. In a month's time, twenty to forty different teachers will have been observed. If there are three administrators on campus and each one has made even one observation per day, then at least sixty classrooms will

have been observed in a month. At first, teachers may be resistant to visits all the time, but in time they will come to realize that you are not there to "catch" them doing something wrong, but rather to offer support. Most teachers are pleasers and want to be viewed by their administrators in a positive light. If the teacher knows there may be an observation a couple of times a week, lesson quality improves. After informally observing a teacher a few times, one can tell if the teacher is following standards, presenting information effectively, and teaching with appropriate pedagogy and rigor. It is helpful to use an informal observation sheet (see attached) that focuses on what is happening rather than what is not happening during an observation. The sheet can be used as a dialogue instrument during conversation with teachers. If the administrator has suggestions for improvement, he or she can write them down, but it is vital that he or she verbally discusses the topic(s) so there is no room for misinterpretation.

It is appropriate for administrators to observe the whole classroom, but it is also necessary for some observations to focus on specific topics such as literacy integration, involvement of all students, and instructional delivery strategy. When administrators see trends through their observations that need to be addressed with the whole faculty, they can use these problem issues for professional development topics. For example, if 80 percent of the teachers visited over a two-month period of time are lecturing, regardless of the level of class or time of day, the issue needs to be addressed.

The last and debatably the most important aspect of monitoring instruction is reflection. Once again, this takes allocated time. Reflection is fairly simple for those teachers with benchmark exams, because the dialogue about the data (strengths, weaknesses, and instructional adjustment) forces reflection. For those teachers that do not administer benchmarks, it is more of a challenge. Reflection is a great topic for Professional Learning Communities. It is good when an administrator can be part of the PLC meeting, but teachers can hold their own meetings successfully if a reflective tool is used to stimulate dialogue. Whether an administrator is present or not, a simple reflective tool (see attached) is beneficial for the PLC.

It is also important for the entire faculty to reflect on instructional topics such as how often they have implemented information learned from on-site professional development, how school procedures and protocols support instruction, and how student behavior is impacting instruction. This can be done mid-year and at the end of the year through an anonymous survey. The survey results should be disseminated, discussed, and appropriate action should be taken (if necessary) by the school leadership team.

TOOL E
Classroom Observation Form

Teacher: _____   Subject: _____

Date:_____   Period:_____

A. Curriculum

___ *Learning objective is posted and correlated to state standards*

___ *Lesson is well-planned / Daily Agenda is posted*

___ *Essential question is posted and relevant to instruction*

COMMENTS:

B. Instruction

___ *Demonstration*	___ *Cooperative Learning / Group Project*
___ *Discussion*	___ *Giving directions / instructions*
___ *Hands-on activity / Lab*	___ *Student practice*
___ *Lecture / Presentation*	___ *Teacher-directed Q & A*
___ *Modeling*	___ *Visuals*
___ *Jigsaw Activity*	___ *Learning Centers*
___ *Instructional Game*	___ *Worksheet*
___ *Differentiated Instruction*	___ *Other - _____*

___*Writing Across the Curriculum*

___ *pre-write*	___ *learning log/journals*
___ *draft*	___ *lab report*
___ *written project presentation*	___ *revise draft*
___ *Cornell Notes*	___ *edit (peer or self)*
___ *class notes*	___ *Interactive notebook*
___ *quickwrite*	___ *other - _____*

___*Reading Across the Curriculum*

___ *Use of a pre-reading strategy*	___ *Vocabulary building strategy*
___ *Newspaper/Magazine Reading*	___ *Graphic Organizer / Thinking Maps*
___ *Novel Reading*	___ *Other - _____*

COMMENTS:

C. Student Grouping

___ *Whole Group*   ___ *Small Group*   ___ *Pairs*   ___ *Individual*

COMMENTS:

D. Instructional Materials

___ *Published print materials / worksheets*   ___ *Teacher-created materials*

___ *Student-created materials*   ___ *Interactive White Board*

___ *Content-specific manipulative*   ___ *Real world objects*

___ *Oral*   ___ *Audio*

___ *Video*   ___ *Computer / Technology Integration*

___ *Laboratory supplies*   ___ *Overhead / Board / Flip Chart*

___ *Textbooks*   ___ *Other - _____*

COMMENTS:

E. Level of Class Engagement

___ *HIGH – most students are authentically engaged*

___ *MODERATE – students are willingly compliant; ritually engaged*

___ *LOW – many students actively reject the assigned task or substitute with another activity*

COMMENTS:

F. Classroom Environment

___ *Class rules / Expectations are visible*   ___ *Evidence of established routines*

___ *Teacher moves about the room*   ___ *Student talk is appropriate*

___ *Students are alert*   ___ *System for acknowledging positive behavior evident*

___ *Teacher monitors all students*   ___ *Transitions between activities are timely and orderly*

___ *Student work displayed*   ___ *Materials for activities are accessible during activity*

___ *Relevant subject-related models, posters, etc.*

___ *Adequate lighting*   ___ *Student seating arrangement appropriate*

COMMENTS:

G. Student Inquiry Level – Based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

GUIDED   *INDEPENDENT*

_____   REMEMBERING *(Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory.)*

_____   UNDERSTANDING *(Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.)*

_____   APPLYING *(Carrying out or using a procedure through executing or implementing.)*

_____   ANALYZING *(Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.)*

_____   EVALUATING *(Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.)*

_____   CREATING *(Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing.)*

COMMENTS:

H. Formative Assessment

___ *Teacher-directed Q & A*	___ *Informal monitoring (thumbs up / down)*
___ *Written Quiz*	___ *Review Game*
___ *Paired student review*	___ *Lab Practical*
___ *Group Presentation (no rubric)*	___ *Individual Presentation (no rubric)*
___ *Group Presentation (with rubric)*	___ *Individual Presentation (with rubric)*
___ *Scavenger Hunt*	___ *Teacher-made test*
___ *Test / EOC Practice*	___ *Ticket out the door*
___ *Other - _____*	___ *Other -_____*

COMMENTS:

I. Lesson Closure

___ *Review of lesson content*	___ *Reference to next lesson*
___ *Reminder of homework / deadline*	___ *Other*

COMMENTS:

Administrator Signature: _____   *Date:* _____

TOOL F
Instructional Reflection Tool
(Can be used in PLCs) – Completed every 4 to 6 weeks

What topics should have been covered based on the Pacing Guide?	Are there any topics that did not get covered?	Based on data (student grades, benchmark scores, teacher Q & A), what topics need to be retaught to the whole class?	How can the instructional schedule be altered for re-teaching?	Are there classroom procedures that need to be modified to increase instructional productivity?

Improving Scheduling

The new administrative team at Jones Senior High knew that school's schedule was extremely important to the school's success. As a result, they spent a significant amount of effort each year developing a master schedule that they believed would maximize students' success.

Dr. Mubenga believed that it was critical that the administrative team should be involved in developing the master schedule:

> *We are involved in designing schedules. When you get to bigger schools, 2,000 students and all that kind of stuff, where the principal pretty much leaves the master schedule in the guidance department, [that] is a failure practice. It's not good practice at all because a lot of these guidance counselors probably, they never taught... And the guidance counselor doesn't observe teachers to know whether or not they are good for this group of students, but the principal goes to the classroom and knows that as well.*

Designing the schedule included identifying classes that were most appropriate for students' levels and that allowed students to remain on-track for meeting the graduation requirements, identifying the best teachers to teach those classes, building in time for student support, and building in time for teacher collaboration.

The administrative team looked at varied sources of information to identify the most appropriate classes for students. The team looked at each incoming 9th grade student's academic performance in middle school to determine what courses they should take. Students who were advanced were placed in more advanced courses, while students who were performing below grade level were put into a first-semester "bridge" course that led in second semester to the course they were expected to take. The principal and instructional coach discussed how it played out regarding math:

> PRINCIPAL: *A lot of kids, they come to us struggling. In eighth grade math, they did not pass the EOG [but scored] Level I, Level II. They go to Foundations of Algebra.*

> INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: *Or even if they did pass EOG just barely*

> PRINCIPAL: *They go to Foundation of Algebra, then Algebra I... Algebra I, we have four goals. When you look at EOC, you may have 60 percent of the test come from Goal 3 and Goal 4, so we design our curriculum in a way that*

Foundation of Algebra will get Goal 3 and Goal 4. So those kids, if they're successful in Foundation of Algebra, they pretty much master the bulk of what the state exam is going to be.

The bridge courses were designed to prepare students for regular courses, but it is also important to note that taking a bridge course did not result in the student necessarily being behind in their required courses. Students' schedules were designed to ensure that the student participated in a bridge course in the first semester and then took the regular course in the second semester. More information on bridge courses is included in the "Addressing Curriculum" section.

Scheduling also meant that the best teachers were assigned to the students who needed them most. The administrative team would seek out the best match for specific courses and identify which teachers would be most effective with which sets of students.

The schedule was also designed to accommodate time to provide students with extra remediation or enrichment. Dr. Mubenga described how they were able to modify the schedule to find an extra 30 minutes in the day.

So we have 30 minutes built in during the school hours for every student to get support or enrichment time...even our Superintendent did not realize how we came up with that 30 minutes. We're able to stretch our time a little bit. We start school at 7:50. We dismiss at 3:15. We stay longer than most schools. Before I came here, they had 10 minutes every day for break time. ... Supervision was an issue; teachers were not willing to be out there supervising, so we got rid of that. That's give us a good 10 minutes there....[we took five minutes off of each class] and cut five minutes off lunches as well, then we're able to come up with that 30 minutes. So on Mondays, everybody goes to their first period after lunch at 1:00, [from] 1:05 till 1:40. Monday, they go to first period. Tuesday, they go to second period. Wednesday, they go to third, then Thursday they go to fourth. Then on Fridays, we have clubs, homerooms, or advisors then.

More information on this Great Expectations time is included in the "Supporting Students" section.

Finally, the schedule was built to encourage time for collaboration. The administrative team ensured that teachers teaching the same subject had a common planning time. The principal acknowledged that this was challenging in a small school. "In a small school like ours, that was really hard ... but our priority was let's

do as much as possible to give them same planning period so they can collaborate."

Tools in this section include a tip sheet for creating a master schedule and some sample master schedules and individual student schedules.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. Who is responsible for creating the schedule?

2. Are teachers assigned to teach specific classes based on their skills, not just by who has been there the longest?

3. What courses do you give students who come to you underprepared? Does your schedule allow students to take bridge courses while also making sure that they don't fall permanently behind?

4. Do you have time for support embedded into the daily schedule?

5. Do teachers have time for collaboration?

TOOL G
Tip Sheet: Creating the Master Schedule

Creating the master schedule can be a mammoth job. There are numerous needs to address in this one crucial item. Key for yearly academic success, creating the master schedule includes determining which classes will be taught, who will teach them, which students will be eligible for each class, what time of day each class will be offered, and which classes need bridge courses (both for the same school year and as part of the plan for the next school year). The master schedule for one year can be used as a guide for the next school year, but it should never be simply duplicated from year to year. The master schedule should be reviewed yearly so appropriate adjustments can be made.

Who creates the master schedule? Unfortunately, the task of master schedule creation is often left to the responsibility of the head guidance counselor or a group of counselors. Although guidance counselor input is crucial, the schedule should be the joint creation of administration, key support staff, and teacher leaders (usually departmental leads). District leadership may also provide input, but this input varies amongst districts. It is important to include all of these individuals for the reasons listed below.

1. *Principals are responsible for the performance of the school. They should be heavily involved in this crucial component of the school year.*

2. *Assistant principals and instructional coaches provide valuable insight into teacher strengths and weaknesses because they have made classroom observations. Additionally, these individuals are likely to become principals and need to be trained in the process.*

3. *Some guidance counselors have great insight into student strengths, weaknesses, and course requirements, but many have never taught and have limited perspective on curriculum and course flow.*

4. *Some administrators have not been teachers for many years and sometimes lose perspective of course difficulty, workload, and prerequisites.*

5. *Department chairs can bring great insight into the strengths and weaknesses of student groups and teachers. In addition, from a morale perspective, teachers hate to implement a plan that they have had no*

say in. If administration wants teacher buy-in and teamwork, teachers must be involved in the process.

6. *The media specialist provides insight into the flow of the schedule. This is especially important for elementary and middle schools where the media center is scheduled daily for class visitation.*

7. *Lastly, the old adage that two heads are better than one is just good advice. When adults collaborate and share ideas under good leadership, the result is usually better than if only one person had been involved.*

Ensuring that courses meet the needs of students. In education, we often follow the same schedule and course offerings from one year to the next with little consideration as to whether the courses offered meet the needs of all students. Below are key questions that need to be asked and acted upon before determining the schedule.

FRESHMAN TRANSITION

1. Are students entering ninth grade below, at, or above grade level?

   a. If below, do they need *a bridge course with a strong teacher?* For example, if a quarter of the students in the rising ninth grade are not on grade level for reading and were socially promoted, how is the master schedule designed to help them be successful in the ninth grade? Does the school have enough personnel to offer a reading (not language arts) course? Is there someone qualified to teach it? If someone is not qualified, is there a strong teacher who would be willing to become trained? If something is not done to teach students basic reading skills, these students will continue to struggle and be retained, and are likely to become dropouts. The same scenario would apply to math in regard to basic skills. If a bridge course is created, it must be taught by a teacher who has a track record that shows the ability to reach struggling students.

   Motivational and discipline issues in foundational bridge classes create challenges for the experienced teacher, much less the inexperienced teacher. Unfortunately, these are the classes where inexperienced teachers are often assigned because older teachers feel they have already "paid their dues".

   b. If students are at grade level based upon middle school referrals, dialogue with middle school personnel, previous observations of ninth grade students, etc., is there a need for a *freshman transition ("introduction to high*

school") course? Topics for the class could include goal setting, study skills, character education, development of literacy skills for understanding informational text, writing (creative and informative), research skills, diversity, conflict resolution, team building, public speaking, etc. Basically, this course helps students transition from a semi-sheltered middle school environment, and also helps promote important life skills that may or may not be taught at home. The teacher(s) of the course would have to develop the curriculum based upon the specific needs of the students and the school.

c. If students are above grade level, does the *schedule offer them enough courses to take?* For example, could the honors and academically gifted students take Honors Chemistry in the spring after they have taken Honors Algebra II (and possibly Physical Science) in the fall? Some Chemistry teachers might balk at freshmen taking Chemistry, but this model has been successful at other schools and it allowed the top students to have room in their high school plan for college and Advanced Placement courses during their junior and senior years.

2. In regard to electives, *are the electives being offered truly helping students to grow?*

For example, if all students take keyboarding (or a similar course) during their eighth grade year, do they need to take keyboarding in high school? Could that traditional course be replaced with something else that builds upon keyboarding? Obviously, this would involve having dialogue with the feeder middle school(s) to learn more about their courses and curricula. If a student is below grade level, he/she should have one or two high-interest electives, but the focus of electives should be on those bridge courses such as Foundations of Algebra (if offered).

There are different points of view about the load a student should have during their freshman year. With block scheduling, it is crucial that students (especially struggling students) have no more than two core courses (math, science, English, and social studies) in a semester. This means that sections of freshman courses (both elective and core) must be carefully arranged in the master schedule. A traditional (seven period a day) schedule or an A / B block schedule has less flexibility with regard to student workload. For low-level students (and some others, depending upon maturity), the school could consider postponing either science or social studies until the sophomore year. This strategy only works if students are required to have three instead of four credits in these areas to fulfill graduation requirements.

1. Are *bridge classes* needed beyond the freshman year? This answer will depend upon retention rates, standardized test scores, grades, availability of personnel, and other relevant data.

2. Is it possible to schedule the *majority of the core and/or required courses in the morning* and early afternoon? This is important because students tend to be more alert earlier in the day. In addition, if a student has to be signed out for appointments or leave for an athletic event, it is usually at the end of the day.

3. Is it necessary to *double-block or shorten any particular classes?* For example, on a traditional schedule, it may be imperative to double-block advanced placement courses to allow time to cover the curriculum.

4. When in the schedule will *a remediation / enrichment period* be offered? Many schools have added a support period to their schedule. Most periods meet for 30 - 40 minutes a day, with students rotating through their classes on specific days. More on this topic is discussed in the "Supporting Students" section.

Once these questions have been answered, the master schedule team needs to establish the type of classes offered, the time of day they are offered, the number of sections of each class, and which teachers are needed to teach each class. Prior to this determination, it would be advisable for the guidance counselor(s) to have met with students and determined the students' preferred elective course selections. Student placement in core courses (including possible bridge courses and honors-level courses) should be made according to clearly defined written criteria. Criteria should be shared with students and parents prior to student registration. Sometimes parents will request a different placement (usually in regard to wanting their child in an honors-level course) and the school needs to determine how it will handle these requests prior to student registration.

TOOL H
Sample Abbreviated Master Schedule
Core Courses Only

MATHEMATICS

Teacher #1

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Honors Pre-Calculus	1st AP Calculus AB
2nd Foundations of Algebra	2nd *Planning*
3rd Foundations of Algebra	3rd Statistics
4th *Planning*	4th Algebra II

Teacher #2

First Semester	Second Semester
1st *Planning*	1st *Planning*
2nd Geometry	2nd Algebra II
3rd Honors Algebra II	3rd Algebra II
4th Algebra II	4th Geometry

Teacher #3

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Algebra I	1st Algebra I
2nd *Planning*	2nd Algebra I
3rd Foundations of Advanced Algebra	3rd Algebra I
4th Foundations of Advanced Algebra	4th *Planning*

Teacher #4

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Foundations of Algebra	1st Discrete Mathematics
2nd *Planning*	2nd Discrete Mathematics
3rd SAT Preparation	3rd Foundations of Algebra
4th Discrete Mathematics	4th *Planning*

ENGLISH

Teacher #1

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Occupational English 9 and 10	1st *Planning*
2nd *Planning*	2nd English 11
3rd Honors English 12	3rd English 11
4th English 12	4th Occupational English 11 and 12

Teacher #2

First Semester	Second Semester
1st AVID 9 and 11	1st AVID 9 and 11
2nd English 10	2nd English 10
3rd SAT Preparation	3rd English 10
4th *Planning*	4th *Planning*

Teacher #3

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Honors English 9	1st *Planning*
2nd *Planning*	2nd Honors English 11
3rd Language Arts / Reading	3rd Honors English 12
4th Language Arts / Reading	4th English 12

Teacher #4

First Semester	Second Semester
1st English 11	1st English 9
2nd Honors English 10	2nd English 9
3rd Freshman Seminar	3rd English 9
4th *Planning*	4th *Planning*

SOCIAL STUDIES

Teacher #1

First Semester	Second Semester
1st *Planning*	1st Honors U.S. History
2nd U.S. History	2nd World History
3rd Psychology	3rd *Planning*
4th U.S. Studies	4th World History

Teacher #2

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Foundations of Civic and Economics	1st U.S. History
2nd *Planning*	2nd *Planning*
3rd World History	3rd Honors World History
4th World History	4th U.S. History

Teacher #3

First Semester	Second Semester
1st AVID 10 / Honors Civics and Economics	1st AVID 10 / Honors Civics and Economics
2nd Civics and Economics	2nd Honors Civics and Economics
3rd Civics and Economics	3rd *Planning*
4th *Planning*	4th Civics and Economics

SCIENCES

Teacher #1

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Physical Science	1st Physical Science
2nd *Planning*	2nd *Planning*
3rd Physical Science	3rd Chemistry
4th Honors Chemistry	4th Physical Science

Teacher #2

First Semester	Second Semester
1st Introduction to Biology	1st *Planning*
2nd Earth Science	2nd Plant Biology
3rd *Planning*	3rd AP Environmental Science
4th Earth Science	4th Honors Biology

Teacher #3

First Semester	Second Semester
1st *Planning*	1st Physics
2nd Honors Ecology / Pre-AP Environmental Science	2nd Biology
3rd Earth Science	3rd Biology
4th Physical Science	4th *Planning*

Sample Student Schedules

Example #1 - Struggling Student – Bridge Classes are scheduled when available, and enrollment is based on cumulative test scores and classroom performance. Bridge classes do not count for credit as math, English, science, or social studies classes. They count as elective credits and this needs to be communicated to students and parents, along with the purpose of these classes.

9th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – Foundations of Algebra (Bridge to Algebra)	1st Period – Elective / CTE
2nd Period – Language Arts (Bridge to English I)	2nd Period – Algebra I
3rd Period – Freshman Seminar	3rd Period – English I
4th Period – World History	4th Period – PE

10th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – Physical Science	1st Period – English II
2nd Period – Civics and Economics	2nd Period – Elective / CTE
3rd Period – Bridge Class to Algebra II	3rd Period – Algebra II
4th Period – Elective / CTE	4th Period – Elective / CTE

11th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – Earth and Environmental Science	1st Period – Biology
2nd Period – English III	2nd Period – Elective / CTE
3rd Period – Foundations of U.S. History (Bridge to U.S. History)	3rd Period – U.S. History
4th Period – Geometry	4th Period – Foreign Language I

12th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – English IV	1st Period – Elective / CTE
2nd Period – Discrete Math or other 4th Math	2nd Period – Plant Biology or other 4th Science
3rd Period – Foreign Language II	3rd Period – Foreign Language III
4th Period – Elective / CTE	4th Period – Elective / CTE

Example 2 – Above Average College-Bound Student Planning on a STEM Career Path. A close relationship with a community college is vital for the schedule below. At Jones Senior, Lenoir Community College (LCC) offered on-line and face-to-face instruction. For many of the face-to-face classes, the LCC instructor taught on campus at Jones Senior. LCC also offered a variety of career development courses that complemented Jones Senior's Career and Technical course offerings. If no strong relationship exists between a community college and a high school, virtual public high school is a good option for students to take Advanced Placement courses.

8th GRADE

Algebra I

9th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – Honors English I	1st Period – Chemistry
2nd Period – Physical Science	2nd Period – PE
3rd Period – Honors Algebra II	3rd Period – Elective / CTE /College transfer Class (such as Introduction to Computers)
4th Period – Elective / CTE	4th Period – Honors World History

10th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – College Algebra	1st Period – Honors Geometry
2nd Period – Honors Biology	2nd Period – Elective / CTE / College Transfer Course
3rd Period – Elective / CTE / College Transfer Course	3rd Period – Honors Civics and Economics
4th Period – Honors English	4th Period – Elective / CTE / College Transfer Course

11th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – AP Environmental Science	1st Period – Honors U.S. History
2nd Period – Honors English III	2nd Period – College Transfer Biology
3rd Period – College Transfer Statistics	3rd Period – Elective / CTE / College Transfer Course
4th Period – Foreign Language I	4th Period – Foreign Language II

12th GRADE

Fall	Spring
1st Period – Honors English IV	1st Period – AP English Literature
2nd Period – Pre-Calculus	2nd Period – AP Calculus
3rd Period – Honors Physics	3rd Period – Elective / CTE / College Transfer Course
4th Period – College Transfer Psychology or Sociology	4th Period – Elective / CTE / College Transfer Course

TOOL I

Sample Daily Schedule: Block Schedule, 4 Semester-Long Courses

Includes Student Academic Support System

7:50 – 9:20   *1st Period*

      7:50 – 7:55   Announcements

9:20 – 10:55   *2nd Period*

10:55 – 11:30   ***Great Expectations - Enrichment / Re-teaching / Review Period***

      Monday – All students report to 1st Period class

      Tueday – All students report to 2nd Period class

      Wednesday – 1st and 3rd of the month - Club Day; 2nd and
               4th of month - Daily schedule is altered
               and students leave school early to allow for
               teacher Professional Learning Communities

      Thursday – All students report to 3rd Period class

      Friday – All students report to 4th Period class

11:30 – 12:05   *Lunch*

12:10 – 1:35   *3rd Period*

1:40 – 3:05   *4th Period*

ADDRESSING CURRICULUM

One of the first foci regarding curriculum was ensuring that everyone was teaching North Carolina's Standard Course of Study (SCOS). When the external leadership coach required by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction first came to the school, her focus was ensuring that teachers were teaching the curriculum. She examined what they were doing with lesson planning and monitoring and found it insufficient; however, she was unable to implement any changes with the previous principal. When Dr. Mubenga came on, the coach provided teachers with a lesson plan format that they tweaked and adapted to their own needs. Everyone was required to use the same lesson plan format, moving from Bell Ringer to Guided Practice and Independent Practice, etc. In the first year, Dr. Mubenga asked teachers to submit lesson plans daily; that requirement was removed after the first year because the administration believed that it was unnecessary.

The leadership team also developed their own pacing guides for courses (see tool at the end of this section for guidance on the process). When the leadership team is monitoring the classrooms, they have the Standard Course of Study in hand and are looking to see if the teachers are on track with the pacing guide. The external coach described the process:

> When the lesson plans are monitored, they are checked against the SCOS. The administrators have the SCOS right there and are checking the plans. If [teachers] were not on track, there was a personal meeting with the principal and the instructional facilitator....
>
> Sometimes the teachers think they are focusing on SCOS but they're not doing it. If you have 10 percent of your [test] questions on the Civil War and you're spending 40 percent of your time on that, there is going to be a problem. That is the beauty of the pacing guides.

In addition to developing pacing guides, the administrative team developed curricula for bridge courses. These courses, which were already in place, were originally implemented primarily as tutoring and had no curriculum. The new administrative team redesigned the curriculum to provide early exposure to the concepts taught in the core courses and to provide clear support for the most challenging part of the upcoming subject. Dr. Mubenga discussed how this played out with Algebra I.

They go to Foundations of Algebra, then Algebra I. Now, I've seen a lot of schools...call it Algebra IA, IB, Foundations, [but] what is so essential is what you teach. In Algebra I, we have four goals. When you look at the EOC, you may have 60 percent of the test come from Goal 3 and Goal 4, so we design our curriculum in a way that Foundations of Algebra will get Goal 3 and Goal 4. So those kids, if they're successful in Foundation of Algebra, they pretty much master the bulk of what the state exam is going to be. By the time they get to Algebra I, it's pretty much a repetition of those tough goals, Goal 3 and Goal 4, and they get Goal 1 and Goal 2 along the way as well. So the pacing guide is crucial. You may have a course, a bridge course, but [if it] does not have a good pacing guide [it] is a failure, because I've seen students go into Algebra IA, IB still struggling because of the way the pacing guide was designed.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. Does your school have and use pacing guides to ensure that classroom instruction is aligned with state standards and assessments?

2. Do you offer bridge courses that are clearly aligned with the content students will be learning in the regular course?

Process for Developing and Revising Pacing Guides

1. Item Analysis

   The first step is to determine what content is emphasized by the state assessments. It is important when developing a good pacing guide that is aligned with the assessment to consider the number of questions that are representative of each goal. There are valid reasons that test developers have more items associated with some specific goals than with others. Therefore, as we designed pacing guides with the intention of preparing students for a successful course and with the ultimate goal of mastering concepts and representing that knowledge on assessments, the number of questions connected to each goal should be taken into consideration. The table below shows how many questions were included in the North Carolina Algebra Assessment of 2010 – 2011 for each goal. This table shows us that Goal 4 ("The learner will use relations and functions to solve problems") has the largest number of questions associated with it; this is primarily because it a very broad goal that represents the crux of algebra. As a result, our pacing guide should place more emphasis on Goal 4, relative to the other goals. Similarly, Goal 2 ("The learner will describe geometric figures in the coordinate plane algebraically") is much more specific, has fewer questions associated with it, and should have less emphasis placed on it.

GOAL #	Number of Assessment Questions
1	15
2	7
3	19
4	23
5	N/A
Total Items	64

2. How much time to allocate for each goal.

   The amount of time you allocate for each goal depends on a variety of factors, including the answers to the questions below.

- *How hard is it to teach and to learn?*

- *What background information is necessary to learn it?*

- *What background information was already taught in previous courses or in a bridge course?*

- *What percentage of the test does it make up?*

- *What sequence is best for student retention?*

It is important as a team of educators gathers together to craft a pacing guide to consider the aforementioned questions. There are some goals/objectives that are easy or hard to teach. Knowing the level of our students and their learning styles, some topics can be scheduled to be taught in the beginning of the year, with time provided in the pacing guides for reviewing or maintaining those skills throughout the year. Other practitioners would like to schedule difficult lessons close to the end of the year, for good retention. Both schools of thought yield good results, but in both it is worth considering the difficulty of teaching or learning given skills when developing a pacing guide. A good pacing guide will thus consider the time to be allocated for each goal or objective, the necessary background information, the sequence that promotes good retention and the percentage of questions on the test allocated to that content.

Using Data

Data and the use of data permeated Jones Senior High School throughout the turnaround process. The school used the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), developed by SAS Institute and provided to North Carolina schools, which predicts an individual student's performance based on previous test scores. Jones used these data to place students in courses, determine the amount of help that students would need, and help inform class goals.

The school also administered benchmark assessments every 4 ½ weeks (twice a quarter). Afterwards, the principal and instructional coach met with the teachers to look at their scores. On the board in the principal's office were listed all of the teachers of core classes with their benchmark scores. Each teacher had a goal for the number of students who should pass (17 out of 19, 16 out of 20, etc.), based on the students' EVAAS scores. The actual performance on the last benchmark was then listed. After each benchmark, Dr. Mubenga and Mrs. Fleming met with the teachers. Dr. Mubenga described how the conversation would go if a teacher was shooting for 17 students passing and only had 10 do so:

> *Based on the benchmark, we only have 10 that are proficient at that point, but we're missing seven that need to be there …so we'll have a dialog. "What's going on with this kid? Yes, they're going to be put in pull-out. We're going to have to call parents so that they can stay in after-school for extra help. What else?" We're going to look at objectives, how the teacher's doing compared to another teacher as well, so just have that dialog. Say, "Hmm, look at this Civic Economics teacher. For Goal/objective 2.1, she had about 70 percent. You got 40. You need to collaborate."*

Two tools in this section provide tips for leading data-driven discussions with teachers.

In addition to using the data to lead discussions with teachers, the leadership team uses the data to identify and place students in specific services. When the team looks at the benchmark scores, they identify the students who are not being successful and target those students for extra pull-out support.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. What kinds of data do you look at as a school? How do you use those data?

2. Are teachers comfortable having conversations about their students' performance? If not, what is needed to make them comfortable?

TOOL K
Facilitating A Post-Benchmark Discussion

A school that is focused on meeting its goals for student achievement should have benchmarks along the way to measure where students are and what adjustments should be made in order to meet those target goals. Most benchmark reports will provide a detailed report on what students are doing well and areas where students are not doing well. With this report, teachers in the Professional Learning Community should study the data and analyze them in the light of what needs to be done to help all students grow.

If a benchmark is given mid-way through a quarter:

1. *Benchmark results should be given to teachers within two days after administration to be relevant for feedback and adjustment purposes;*

2. *The principal/assistant principal or the instructional coach should personally meet with teachers to discuss these results also within two days to help the teachers adjust their instruction.*

3. *Recommendations are made to adjust classroom instruction and remediation and/or support to instruction are established for at-risk students*

Framework for the Professional Learning Community discussion:

GOAL AND OBJECTIVE DATA REPORT FOR MS. X

Goals & Objectives	1.01	3.01	3.02	4.01	4.02	4.03	5.01
Ms. X ~% Passing	66	47	31	70	64	58	29

With the above table, the principal will ask Ms. X to reteach objective 5.01 because less than one third of the students understood the content. Also, the principal will ask Ms. X to review objective 3.01 as she proceeds along with her pacing guide. The review can be done during bell ringer or warm-up time or during remediation period. During her collaboration time with other teachers, Ms. X will ask her colleagues or Critical Friends Group for assistance or resources on how to reteach objective 5.01.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVE DATA REPORT —MS. X AND MS. Y

Goals & Objectives	1.01	3.01	3.02	4.01	4.02	4.03	5.01
Ms. X ~% Passing	66	47	31	70	64	58	29
Ms. Y ~% Passing	55	61	89	82	60	85	35

The above data shows the performance of two teachers with the same level of student. During the Professional Learning Community discussion, Ms. X will share with Ms. Y her strategies for teaching objective 1.01, and Ms. Y will share with Ms. X her strategies for effectively teaching goal 4.03. While the two teachers have a meaningful dialog on how to teach the above objectives, they should brainstorm on what went wrong with teaching objective 5.01 and strategize on re-teaching that objective. The two teachers may get to the point of calling teachers at a different school and seeking additional advice on how to effectively teach objective 5.01. For objective 3.02, not only does Ms. X need to learn from Ms. Y, the two teachers should make arrangements for Ms. Y to come teach that objective in Ms. X's class while Ms. X is sitting behind to learn from her peer.

 ***Prior to one teacher teaching in another course, there needs to be great effort made by administration to have faculty build relationships with each other and embrace the concept of learning from each other. Otherwise, having one teacher teach for another could potentially cause a divide in the faculty.

In addition to looking at students' performance on objectives, the teachers can look at students' performance on specific questions, as represented in the Benchmark Item Analysis report below.

BENCHMARK ITEM ANALYSIS

Item #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Objective	1.01	1.01	4.01	4.02	4.03	5.01	3.01	4.02
% Correct	47	98	44	28	98	11	35	70

This is another good report that may help teachers to see which questions students did well on or did not do well on. For example, objective 5.01 and question number 6 should be discussed in the Professional Learning Community to see why only 11 percent of students got it right. The discussion may generate some good insights that the teacher will take back to his or her classroom.

TOOL L
Tip Sheet for Leading a Data-driven Discussion with Teachers

1. *Make sure the school has a specific goal that it intends to meet at the end of the semester.*

2. *Make sure each teacher has a specific goal that he/she is held accountable for; for example, 18 of the teacher's students must pass the end-of-course exams for the school to meet its goal.*

3. *The meeting should begin with the end in mind; for example, "Our goal for this year is that 80 percent of our students will pass the end-of-course exams."*

4. *The principal or the person leading the data meeting should present the data, benchmarks or any other common assessments by presenting to each teacher the actual proficiency he or she has thus far.*

5. *The principal or the person leading the data meeting should set a contrast between the score that was predicted using EVAAS (or other predictive data) and the score that the teacher has on the benchmarks or other common assessments.*

6. *The principal or the person leading the meeting should ask teachers or the team about the next steps to take to make sure the projected proficient number is met.*

7. *The principal or the leadership team should make sure that some forms of support (e.g. schedule change, after-school support, in-school remediation, different teachers) are provided to at-risk students to meet the target goals.*

8. *The principal or the person leading the data meeting and the team should set up a follow-up data meeting for monitoring or adjustment purposes.*

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

When the data showed that students were not meeting expectations, Jones Senior High set several strategies in place to support students. As has been mentioned previously, the school offers bridge courses for students who come into a grade below grade level (levels I, II or borderline IIIs on the EOG) or to those students who were predicted by EVAAS to have difficulty passing the course. These bridge courses are offered for English 9, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Biology, Civics and Economics, and U.S. History, and are taught the first semester of the year. These bridge courses are thus designed to provide a preview of the content of the regular course taught in the second semester. 9th grade students also take a freshman seminar course, which is designed to facilitate students' transition to high school.

Similar to many schools, Jones offered an after-school program for its students, but the staff had found that, also similar to many schools, few students were taking advantage of it. One of the problems was transportation; many of the students could not provide their own. As a result, the leadership team embedded support in the school day—a time that they call Great Expectations.

Great Expectations is 30 minutes of support that occurs in the middle of the day. As mentioned in the section "Improving Scheduling," the leadership team found time in the schedule by eliminating the 10 minute break the students had had and shaving 5 minutes off each class. The schedule for Great Expectations rotates –on Monday, students go to their first period class during the support time; on Tuesday, they go to their second period class, etc. Friday is a bit more flexible.

The content and focus of Great Expectations has been evolving. In year 1, the emphasis was on reviewing and reteaching, but the administrative team found that teachers weren't really using the time as wisely as they could. As a result, the team had to clearly communicate what was and what was not to be done during this time. Mrs. Fleming described the process of change:

> ...[the] dos and don'ts of what they can and cannot do during that time. They can't show movies. They can't introduce new material. They can't provide just free time for students to work. So after benchmark assessments, we sit down with teachers, and we look at, as a whole, your class is struggling with… whatever the objective is… we very clearly say, "This is what you need to reteach during Great Expectations time," for those classes that are benchmark

tested. For classes that are not benchmark tested, we ask teachers to reflect, "If 50 percent of your class did not do well on the test, then you need to go and pretty much do item analysis to determine what your whole class needs help on." So the teachers know what they need to reteach.

Students can also be pulled out of their usual Great Expectations session if they need intensive help in specific classes. The focus of the pull-out sessions may change over time. For example, there was an intensive focus on writing right before the writing test. Pull-out is most likely to be required for help in core courses, but teachers of non-tested subjects such as Spanish or Band can also recommend students for pull-out. Almost all of the staff are involved in pull-outs, with the principal taking a math section and Mrs. Fleming taking a science section. This allows students to receive more intensive and targeted intervention. Students who may be passing but are not making expected levels of growth in their subject areas will also be subject to pull-outs. At any given time, 1/3 to 1/2 of the school will be in pull-out tutoring, so it is not a stigma. The administrative team is constantly looking at the benchmarks and other data to determine which students need to be in which sessions during Great Expectations.

One recent addition to the suite of support services is an added 5th period for credit recovery, which is open to all students. The effort was funded by a Dropout Prevention Grant, and transportation is provided so that students can stay after school.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. What opportunities do you have for students to receive extra help or remediation? Are those opportunities scheduled at a time that 1) makes it easy for students to attend, and 2) does not take away from regular classroom time?

2. To what extent do you assign students to receive extra help based on data? Do you look at those data regularly and make adjustments in what students are receiving extra help for?

TOOL M
Structuring Support during the School Day

Individual student data should be analyzed at the beginning of the year and any necessary student interventions should begin immediately. The Great Expectations (GE) enrichment/remediation period is a great opportunity to provide individualized help. This enrichment/remediation period is an extra 30-35 minute period that occurs during the day. The Great Expectations period can be scheduled between any two periods of the day, but it is advisable to not have it at the start or end of the school day; during these times students are more likely to be tardy or sign out of school early.

During this enrichment/remediation time, the schedule is set up so that students return to their regular classes one day a week. With whole classes returning to a different class on each specific day, this means that every teacher covers four days of Great Expectations and then has an extra thirty-five minutes per week of planning. During the Great Expectations time, teachers revisit concepts with which the whole class may be struggling or they may provide additional supplemental remediation.

During the Great Expectations time, students can also be pulled out for targeted tutoring with teachers and administrators serving as tutors. Having administrators assist in the tutoring helps the administrator stay connected with students and it earns respect with teachers, parents, and students. Have targeted tutoring during this time can result in tremendous student gains. For example, imagine a student entering the ninth grade having failed eighth grade English and not showing proficiency on standardized tests in the seventh and eighth grade. The student has already been scheduled in a bridge course for English, but will need additional help. To help make the child successful, he or she could be placed in small group pull-out tutoring during the enrichment/remediation period in which he or she would usually have Physical Education. The student will miss Great Expectations time with his or her elective class, but will gain support for a core area course. Starting intervention before the student fails will increase the chances of success.

This process takes a tremendous amount of preparation and planning. As the semester progresses, every time benchmarks are administered or progress reports/report cards go home, the pull-out tutoring schedule needs to be updated. It is rare that any student is removed from tutoring, because even if the child is doing acceptably in the present, their progress could be attributed to the individualized

help. As a pull-out tutoring program becomes established, students who are not at risk of failure may start asking for a tutor, because they see the benefits that it brings other students. If a school gets to the point where there are too many students needing help and not enough teachers, peer tutoring is a viable option. Peer tutors can be just as effective as teacher tutors if they have been properly trained and know exactly which topics to tutor.

Sample Schedule for Pull-out Tutoring during Great Expectations

Student	Core Subject for Pull-out Tutoring	Day for Tutoring	Tutoring Teacher	Regurlarly-scheduled Great Expectations session student will be pulled form	Location for Tutoring
A	Algebra II	Monday	Peer Tutor	Family & Consumer Science	Media Center
B	Civics & Economics	Monday	Assistant Principal	Computer Applications	17
C	U.S. History	Monday	Social Studies Teacher	Chorus	107
D	Algebra I	Tuesday	Principal	Music	Principal's Office
E	Algebra I	Tuesday	Math Teacher	ROTC	Guidance Office
F	English 9	Tuesday	English Teacher	PE	3
G	Biology	Wednesday	Instructional Coach	PE	105
H	Geometry	Wednesday	Math Teacher	ROTC	24
I	Biology	Wednesday	Peer Tutor	Art	Media Center
J	English 10	Thursday	English Teacher	Automotive	109
K	English 9	Thursday	Peer Tutor	Freshman Seminar	Media Center
L	Civics & Economics	Thursday	Assistant Principal	Curriculum Assistance	Assistant Principal's Office

Getting Stakeholder Buy-in

Many of the changes made at Jones Senior High School could have been easily derailed by a lack of community or political support. In particular, changes such as requiring athletes to meet a GPA requirement had the potential to create a backlash against the leadership team's work.

From the very beginning, Dr. Mubenga realized the value of reaching out to the community and to the school board members to obtain their support. He met with a group of Black ministers to ask for their support. He also met and talked with school board members one-on-one (what he calls "micro-politics") to get their support for his activities. He commented, "I talked to them constantly and they had a respect for me. They believed in what I was doing and they pretty much [said], 'Leave him alone. He knows what he's doing.'"

As described in the section "Creating a Culture of Trust," both Dr. Mubenga and Mrs. Fleming took the time to get buy-in from some of the most important stakeholders in a school—the teachers and the students. The teachers believed that Dr. Mubenga respected them as professionals. As one teacher said, "You don't have to do it his particular way…he's showing the respect of us as professionals to do what we do best."

The administrators recognized that some of the individuals who were very powerful in the community did not always have the students' best interest at heart. A key way to work around this was getting parents on board. It was important to have parent information nights and for the administrators to be highly visible at school and community events. As parents became satisfied with the education that their children were receiving, they became the school's advocates. Therefore, the partnership with parents allowed the school to minimize the influence of any negativity that infiltrated community talk. There were also board members who bought into the vision of the school, and gave the school unconditional support.

The administrative team was also visible in the community. The team became engaged with the local Rotary and other civic organizations. They used this avenue to convey to all stakeholders what was taking place at the school, and used civic organizations' influence to support the school's mission. This outreach was very instrumental for the school's success. Knowing that there was a negative perception regarding the school based on previous years, the only option the administrative

team had was to engage the community with their presence and spread the message of the great things that were happening at the school. During school transformation and under new school leadership, they were able to bring back some groups of the community who had felt disfranchised within the school. Parents and community members came back and became part of the school community, and supported different functions organized by the school.

Forming relationships with religious leaders was another bridge that was used to reconnect with the community. The leadership of the school attended various religious activities as a way to remain visible in the community; consequently, school events were announced in the churches and they supported the annual fund-raiser.

Dr. Mubenga also served on the advisory council of the two local colleges: Craven Community College and Lenoir Community College. This provided a good venue for the school to share its success and also strengthened the relationship between the school and the community colleges. A side benefit was that the partnership helped the school to reduce the drop-out rate. Students who felt that they could just drop-out and take a short route to the community college were discouraged from doing so due to the strong partnerships. Given the small size of Jones Senior, the partnership with Lenoir Community College enabled them to offer classes that allowed students to meet career development certification requirements and take a variety of college transfer classes. Some students earned enough college credits that they were able to skip their freshman year in college. The two educational institutions, Jones Senior High School and Jones County Lenoir Community College, have worked in a close collaboration that has not only prevented some of the students from switching out of Jones Senior to neighboring schools, but has also prepared the future workforce that the community will need for its economic expansion.

The school administration was very proactive about getting the school's good news to the public: student recognition, end-of-course scores and various events were disseminated through the school website and published in the local paper. As result, more positive stories started appearing in the local press.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF TO DISCUSS:

1. Who are the most powerful stakeholders at your school? Are they parents, specific community members, specific school board members? Who needs to buy into what you are trying to do?

2. What kinds of outreach are you doing to those stakeholders? Do they understand what you are trying to do?

Concluding Thoughts

In some ways, the story of Jones Senior High is an unusual one, because they have achieved success when many turnaround schools do not. In other ways, however, the story of Jones is not unusual at all. None of the strategies described in this monograph are earth-shattering or strikingly innovative. All could be implemented relatively easily by schools across the country. What may set Jones apart is that these strategies are clearly aligned with each other to improve academic achievement. This was driven at least partly by an administrative team that cared deeply about what it was doing and managed to command the respect of the teachers in the school. Yet, what the Jones story tells us also is that teachers respect leaders who respect them and who are willing to work just as hard as they are. The Jones story tells us that turnaround is attainable if people's efforts are aligned in the right direction.

As a concluding tool in this monograph, we present a timeline that lays out the changes made in the school.

TOOL N

School Improvement Timeline

	Spring 2008 Dr. Mubenga arrives	2008–2009 School Year	2009–2010 School Year	2010–2011 School Year
EOC Composite Scores	64.4%	72%	90.5%	88.4%
		ACTIVITIES		
Quick Wins	Institute In-School-Suspension, give teachers authority to send students directly to ISS Begin after-school tutoring program			
Developing a Collective Vision		Summer before school—Leadership Retreat at the beach Set goal of 75% passing on EOC Composite	Summer before school—Leadership Retreat Set goal of 85% passing on EOC composite	Summer before school—Leadership Retreat Set goal to be a School of Distinction (80-90% on grade level)
Creating a Culture of Trust	Leaders get involved in doing all the work with the teachers Communicate expectations to students	Leaders are involved in doing all the work with the teachers Begin year with expectations for students	Leaders are involved in doing all the work with the teachers Begin year with expectations for students	Leaders are involved in doing all the work with the teachers Begin year with expectations for students
Focusing on Academics	Begin a 30-minute review period at the end of the day.	Begin incentives for honor roll students Require athletes to have 2.0 GPA, but grandfather in older students Start Academic Advising program Move the 30-minute enrichment / review period to between 3rd and 4th period. Start pull-out tutoring six weeks before the end of the semester Start offering a wide variety of community college courses available for 9th – 12th graders.	Offer incentives for students who met academic goals Require athletes to have 2.0 GPA, but grandfather in older students Start pull-out tutoring during the first month of school.	Offer incentives for students who met academic goals Modify athletic policy to require 2.0 GPA of all athletes

	Spring 2008 Dr. Mubenga arrives	2008–2009 School Year	2009–2010 School Year	2010–2011 School Year
Hiring and Supporting Staff		Hire 30% new staff Begin walk-throughs and classroom observations Have teachers share strategies from AVID workshop Principal/Coach model best practices Instructional Coach works intensively with science department, modeling lessons, lesson preparation, conducting observations Coach mentors all 1st – 3rd year teachers Introduce 2+2 peer observations	Walk-throughs and classroom observations Principal/coach model best practices Coach works with all teachers Fully implement 2+2 peer observations Teachers share strategies with each other during monthly faculty meetings. Provide training on effective Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Administration visits and monitors PLC meetings	Walk-throughs and classroom observations Sharing around technology integration, preparing to be a 1:1 school Coach works with all teachers 2+2 peer observations
Improving Scheduling		Leadership team develops master schedule Examine data to assign students to appropriate level classes Match teachers to appropriate classes Revamp bridge program Revise schedule to include Great Expectations time	Leadership team develops master schedule Examine data to assign students to appropriate level classes Match teachers to appropriate classes	Leadership team develops master schedule Examine data to assign students to appropriate level classes Match teachers to appropriate classes
Addressing Curriculum		Develop pacing guides to ensure teachers are teaching state standards Revamp bridge course to English I	Adjust pacing guides as needed Develop curricula for Bridge courses to Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, Civics, and U.S. History	Adjust pacing guides as needed

	Spring 2008 Dr. Mubenga arrives	2008–2009 School Year	2009–2010 School Year	2010–2011 School Year
Using Data		Use EVAAS to identify students for Bridge Courses Use EVAAS to set teachers' goals Evaluate progress on benchmarks every 4.5 weeks Meet with teachers around benchmark data	Use EVAAS to identify students for Bridge Courses Use EVAAS to set teachers' goals Evaluate progress on benchmarks every 4.5 weeks Meet with teachers around bench-mark data	Use EVAAS to identify students for Bridge Courses Use EVAAS to set teachers' goals Evaluate progress on benchmarks every 4.5 weeks Meet with teachers around benchmark data
Supporting Students	Get rid of Freshman Academy, begin Freshman Seminar (AVID) Revamp intensive after-school tutoring	Freshman Seminar/AVID Revise Bridge to English I Introduce Bridge Courses for Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, Civics, U.S. History and Biology Introduce Great Expectations—30 minutes in middle of day	Freshman Seminar/AVID Bridge courses for all EOC courses Great Expectations Introduce pull-out extra help for EOC courses only (pull out during Great Expectations time)	Freshman Seminar/AVID Bridge courses for all EOC courses Great Expectations Offer pull-out extra help for EOC courses only (pull out during Great Expectations time) Add 5th period credit recovery
Getting Stakeholder Buy-In		Meet with faith-based community to ask for support Meet with school board members to obtain support	Update community members on progress Update school board members on progress	Update community members on progress Update school board members on progress

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The SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is a university-based research, development, dissemination, evaluation, and technical assistance center. Its mission is to foster empowered, information-rich educational systems by:

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