



Chapter Three

reconceiving the roles of teachers, counselors, and community- based partners as coaches for student success

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Problem of Practice

How to promote student-centered learning in college and career pathway schools by integrating and reconceiving the role of teachers, counselors, and community-based partners as “student success coaches?”

Abstract

In this chapter, we focus on how one school’s ambition to create a student-centered learning environment led its leaders to reconceive the work and time of teachers, counselors, and partners. These individuals went from being opportunity providers to becoming student success coaches and embedded college and career readiness partners. As the community school coordinator explained, the ultimate aim was to “*maximize adult collaboration among teachers and partners in the classroom for the benefit of creating authentic relationships with students and to allow for effective, on-demand support which creates mutual trust and responsibility.*” Pathway leaders envisioned providing every student with a coherent experience of support where at least one adult bonded with them, advocated for their academic success, and served as a bridge to further learning and work beyond high school. This strategy is distinguished from “push-in” approaches—where out-of-school time partners may also spend time in classrooms—because embedded partners are set up with structures and conditions designed to build professional capacity and to maximize coherence and alignment. Pathway leaders reported being motivated to make these changes by their shared belief that if all adults modeled norms and habits of collaboration, they would be more likely to see students adopt those same practices with peers in the classroom and in work-based learning experiences.

Introduction

John O’Connell High School in San Francisco’s Mission neighborhood has a long history of engaging community-based partners to provide expanded opportunities for student learning and youth development, and for helping students to make successful postsecondary transitions. Community-based partners at O’Connell, for example, offer services to promote student health and wellness; support academic engagement; and provide tutoring, arts enrichment, college counseling, and workplace learning experiences. However, as educators at O’Connell designed and implemented their college and career pathways, they came to share two related concerns about the supports they were providing to students. The first was that student supports—especially those that pre-existed the pathway reforms—were not always well aligned to the student learning objectives (SLOs) of the emerging pathways. The second was that the “opt-in” approach to student service—



provided before school, after school, and during breaks in the school day—often had the unintended effect of reproducing patterns of social and racial stratification. Some students engaged in multiple opportunities, while others—often the neediest students—remained disconnected from services. School staff report that the initial thinking about this dilemma at O’Connell focused on intensifying student identification, referral, and outreach efforts. But these solutions still placed the onus of engagement on struggling students themselves and so tended to favor those with strong help-seeking dispositions. Ultimately, pathway team leaders at O’Connell concluded that to make dramatic improvements toward their equity goals, they needed to make more fundamental changes to the way that staff and partners organized their work and time with students.

Background

DEMOGRAPHICS

John O’Connell High School sits in one of San Francisco Unified School District’s (SFUSD) most densely populated and racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods. According to data from the American Community Survey, over one-third (35%) of residents in the Mission neighborhood are foreign-born, 34% of households include Spanish-speakers, and another 23% of households include residents who speak an Asian language. About two-thirds of residents in the Mission neighborhood are renters, and 15% percent of families have incomes below the federal poverty line (San Francisco Planning Department, 2017). In 2016-17, 54% of O’Connell’s 375 students were Latino, 17% were African-American, 14% were Asian/Filipino, and about 8% were non-Hispanic white students.

EARLY REFORM HISTORY AT O’CONNELL

One reason we are drawn to O’Connell’s reform experience is that it is distinct from many other case studies of career-themed pathway implementation in the available literature. Existing case studies often focus on schools that were either conceived as pathway schools at their inception (like the CHAS example in Chapter 2) or that implemented a comprehensive and rapid transition to pathways using a specific reform model. O’Connell, by contrast, represents the more typical experience of comprehensive high schools across the country, with a history of engaging in numerous, often competing, reforms and transformations. This profile is an example of a self-directed school turnaround in which

a core group of dedicated school leaders, teachers, and community-based partners had the autonomy needed to reform instructional practices, change the school schedule, and move to more student-centered approaches using an incremental, multi-year, bottom-up approach.

Additional Case Studies of Career-Themed Pathways

- [The Stanford Center for Opportunity Research in Education’s District Leadership Series](#)

These case studies highlight lessons learned from nine districts across California that once received implementation grants from the James Irvine Foundation as part of the California Linked Learning District Initiative.

- [Linked Learning: A Guide to Making High School Work](#)

Prepared by The Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access at UCLA and made possible by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation, this guide is designed to answer questions about how high schools are practicing Linked Learning, shedding light on the ways they address practical challenges, set high expectations, and adapt to changing circumstances.

In 2000, O’Connell opened its doors as a “Middle College High School” with vocational and technical course strands linked to San Francisco’s community college where eleventh and twelfth graders took their courses. By the end of its first decade, the school had moved away from the Middle College approach and focused on developing O’Connell as an “alternative vocational high school.”

The current approach to college and career pathways at O’Connell began roughly in 2010, with efforts to integrate more rigorous academic instruction into the curriculum of the then-existing vocational and technical programs. As school principal Susan Ryan explained, the approach at O’Connell “*has been about making drastic reform [. . .] without signaling a drastic change that would overwhelm teachers and students.*” Instead, Ryan continued, the approach was to begin with staff “*agreement on some structures and goals and then to iterate on the implementation. So, we started there and are refining.*”

Identified as a chronically low-performing school in the three years prior to the 2010-11 school year, O’Connell was the recipient of a three-year federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) beginning in 2010. Subsequently, the school also participated in a five-year federal Promise Neighborhood grant that has enabled school- and community-based leaders at O’Connell to enact a set of reforms over an eight-year period from fall of 2010 through the spring of 2018. Slowly, across a decade of change, staff and partners at O’Connell drew inspiration from a number of models and reform frameworks and collaborated to design the unique approach to pathways that we find at O’Connell today. This history is important because in considering integrated student supports, school leaders could not begin with fully aligned community partners who were already bought-in to the Linked Learning model from day one. Some of O’Connell’s community-based student support partners pre-existed the transformation to college and career pathways. As such, school leaders and community-based partners had to engage in a multi-year dialogue about goal-setting and how all adults at O’Connell would need to adjust their approach to work, youth engagement, and the use of time across a reconceived school day.

WHOLE-SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION UNDER A FEDERAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT: 2010-13

For more on the federal SIG program in San Francisco, see Resource- and Approach-Driven Multidimensional Change: Three-Year Effects of School Improvement Grants. *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol 54, Issue 4, pp. 607 – 643.

As noted earlier, the transformation of O’Connell High School that began in 2010 was animated by the SIG reform initiative and was initially guided by SFUSD’s adoption of the Chicago Consortium for School Reform’s “essential supports” for effective school organization (Bryk et al., 2010). Chief among these supports are:

- cultivating a cohesive instructional guidance that promotes ambitious academic achievement for all youth;
- nurturing a student-centered learning climate; and
- fostering stronger parent and community partnerships to expand learning opportunities.

School staff familiar with the early days of school turnaround efforts at O’Connell recall that their initial focus was on building capacity to implement the first of the goals outlined above. These efforts concentrated on introducing student-centered approaches to teaching the academic content of the Common Core State Standards adopted in California in math and English language arts. Nevertheless, the Federal SIG reform introduced a number of structural changes at O’Connell during the 2010-13 period that have become critical elements of the subsequent transformation to college and career pathways. The first reform element was the introduction of a community school approach with a coordinator dedicated to connecting students to expanded learning opportunities with local businesses and community-based organizations. The community school approach was a centerpiece of the schools’ effort to become more student-centered, by ensuring that locally-generated SLOs were informed and supported by input from families, community-based partners, and employers. The second reform element was the school-wide adoption of Response to Intervention (RTI) as a process for ensuring that all students have access to student-centered practices, differentiated instruction, and interventions where appropriate. RTI was also focused on reducing the number of students inappropriately identified for Special Education. The incorporation of these elements into the pathway reforms is discussed in greater detail below.

Transitioning to a Career-Themed Pathway Model

Prior to the SIG reforms, O’Connell had a history of building instructional capacity for elective course offerings in vocational and technical training. Indeed, the unique architectural design of the school was intended to accommodate teaching in technical fields and trades, with dedicated space for studios and workshops. As the three-year SIG process came to a close, school leaders and teachers wanted to focus the next stage of reform on leveraging O’Connell’s capacities and partnerships with employers in the technical trades and to encourage more collaboration among its technical and academic teaching staff. Inspired by the laboratory approach at the Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART) in Clovis, California, school leaders focused on planning and developing integrated academic and career-themed pathways for youth. Ultimately, pathway leaders settled on a two-tiered design for the school that began in earnest in the 2013-14 school year and that continues to be refined.

LOWER-DIVISION HOUSES

In grades 9 and 10, students are organized into two small learning communities called “houses” that offer opportunities to prepare for college and career. Teachers in each of the lower-division houses team up to integrate academic content focused on the house theme.

- *Humanities and Social Justice House.* The thematic focus in these classes allows students to meet the Common Core State Standards through sustained inquiry into the systems of culture, power, oppression, uprisings, and movements that shaped our modern economic and social structures.
- *Science, Community, and Sustainability House.* Students in this house meet the Common Core State Standards through sustained inquiry into the connections between physics, biology, human culture, their own personal development.

The small learning community structure within the lower-division houses facilitates relationship and community building among teachers, students, and the community-based partners who work with ninth and tenth grade students. As it has evolved over a four-year period, an important objective of the house structure is to deliver the California Common



Core State Standards in a way that activates a student-centered culture of academic inquiry and collaborative learning, and that integrates career exploration and service-learning opportunities.

UPPER-DIVISION LABS

In grades 11 and 12, students at O’Connell graduate into integrated, project-based “lab” pathways with courses taught by teams of academic and technical skills educators. In these upper-division labs, students continue to work on academic learning through the lens and skills required by specified careers. They complete A-G coursework for admission to college, including dual enrolment and theme-aligned workplace learning opportunities.

The integrated labs are:

- Construction and Environmental Technologies
- Entrepreneurship and Culinary Arts
- Health and Behavioral Sciences

A fourth pathway lab was launched in the 2018-19 school year:

- Public Service

Promise Neighborhoods are designated by the U.S. Department of Education and receive grants to build a continuum of cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with public schools at the organizational center. Grants are to be used to increase the capacity of public agencies and community-based nonprofits to focus on achieving results for children and youth throughout an entire neighborhood.

Concurrent with the transition to pathways, O’Connell High School was included as a community partner with the Mission Promise Neighborhood (MPN) initiative in 2013-14. Participation in the MPN initiative brought funding that allowed O’Connell to stay the course with its curricular reforms, and to make a successful transition to pathways with integrated student supports. MPN initiative participation enable the school to expand the role of the community school coordinator who worked to strengthen the school’s ties to community-based partners, the local community college, families, and nearby elementary and middle schools. Their new partnership with the MPN initiative helped school leaders to focus on a key remaining challenge: creating a student-centered learning climate and a college-going culture. Indeed, the new focus on student supports ultimately brought the school to the concept of

providing each student in the lower-division houses with a classroom-embedded student success coach, and later in the upper-division labs, to fully incorporate their out-of-school time support providers as classroom-embedded college and career success partners. This singular decision was based on the staffs' analysis that for O'Connell to meet its ambitious student achievement goals, all the adults, including its community-based partners, needed to shift away from building siloed support programs that ran in parallel to the classroom experience, and toward collaborative arrangements that felt aligned and coherent from the student perspective.

WORKING WITH TEACHERS ON INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS

Curriculum Reform and Teaching

The move to integrated students supports at O'Connell began with teachers. The principal and lead teachers at O'Connell describe a concentric evolution of reforms in adult practices that began with the instructional core, then the counselors, and finally moved to a focus on the student support partners in more recent years. *"In the very first year of the shift,"* explained Principal Ryan, the focus was on teachers and *"the ask of teachers was very gentle—we asked the CTE (Career and Technical Education) and academic teachers to pair up and co-plan and do some projects together. We had a construction and math teacher pair, then electronics teacher with English teacher."* As teachers moved to embrace this collaborative, student-centered model, they found that they needed more planning time to work together. *"So then,"* continued Principal Ryan, *"we had to think about changing our master schedule and planning structures for integrated projects."* In the second and third year of the transition to pathways, the focus turned to student engagement and productivity within these evolving project-based, collaborative learning structures. But the focus was still on building the capacity of instructional staff to work together and use time in new ways. So, to fully develop a student-centered culture, the first step was for the instructional heart of the school—its teachers—to model student-centered practices through collaborating and establishing norms of inquiry and continuous learning and improvement among the staff.

Consonant with prior studies of equity-focused pathway models, the staff and leadership at O'Connell conceived of a relevant and rigorous curriculum as an integrated student support (Friedlaender & Darling-Hammond, 2007). Teachers encouraged students to engage in projects that were

meaningful to them and that reflected their communities and cultures. The student-centered approach was intentionally designed to provide students with authentic learning experiences and teaching that was adapted to individual learning and youth development needs. School leaders and classroom teachers describe the design of common teacher planning time as focused both on refining disciplinary practice and supporting colleagues to cultivate the skills needed for adaptive, student-centered, and culturally responsive teaching.

Special Education teachers and paraprofessionals have been integrated with the pathway teams and participate with content teachers in co-planning curriculum. They work in classrooms, not only to provide support for students, but also to help the content teachers identify broader opportunities for instructional differentiation.

Advisory

Another way that teachers at O'Connell take the lead in creating a more student-centered culture is through instituting a teacher-led advisory class for every student. Although O'Connell continues to experiment with the frequency in which advisory classes are convened, the program is designed to connect every student with at least one caring staff person on campus. Teachers say that the advisory program aims to create personal relationships between advisors and their advisees. Collaborative planning among the teachers helps to clarify their role as an adult advocate for advisees. In addition to opportunities for one-on-one conversations with students about their academic and personal goals, teachers have also developed a curriculum and series of guided group conversations in Advisory. These provide a space for students to share their experiences, successes, and fears as part of their social and emotional learning. In the 2017-18 school year, for example, students identified the issue of sexual harassment and its damaging effects as an object of inquiry. This spurred the teachers in Advisory to hold guided discussion and reflection sessions to explore the challenges students face and how they can address them effectively. Teachers report that Advisory creates opportunities for them to learn about their students as individuals while monitoring student pathway progress through academic check ins. As teachers track student grades, they are able to make informed recommendations, like referring students to the afterschool tutoring program or helping students devise work plans to improve their grades. While teachers are the primary advisors to youth, over time, the counselors and some of the community-based partners

have been integrated into the advisory period (especially in the lower-division houses) and take on advisor roles for individual students.

BUILDING STRONGER BRIDGES TO STUDENT SUPPORTS OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

The experience in Advisory helped to solidify the teacher and leadership team’s convictions: to address students’ social, emotional, and youth development needs, they had to better connect their students to opportunities beyond the classroom and the school. In *You Can’t Be What You Can’t See: The Power of Opportunity to Change Young Lives*, Stanford researcher Milbrey McLaughlin underscores the importance of “bridging” structures, resources, and opportunities that form a critical subset of the social capital that young people need to navigate institutions like high schools. Youth in “high-poverty, culturally and socially isolated communities.... generally lack the resources and networks needed to create productive connections, or bridges, to [people and opportunities in] the broader community” (McLaughlin, 2018, p. 176). Teachers, counselors, and school leaders at O’Connell indicated that they understood well the importance of bridging capital for their students and sought to re-shape or strengthen the structures and conditions that would help build these connections for their students.

Since its very inception, O’Connell has had a deep bench of community-based partners and employers who provide expanded learning opportunities to students. Given this set of resources, the first iteration of bridge-building for students was to strengthen the systems they had in place to identify youth who needed help, and to better connect them to expanded learning opportunities. The integration of a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach within the pathway model was the next step in that direction.

Implementing Response to Intervention Protocols

One early mechanism that O’Connell staff put in place to build stronger bridges between its students and its partners is the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) protocols. RTI is a set of procedures for identifying students’ learning and behavioral challenges early so that educators can intervene with appropriate tiered supports (<https://www.rti4success.org/>). At O’Connell, RTI has focused on elaborating a Student Assistance Program where teams of school faculty, counselors, and other student services staff meet regularly to identify and have in-depth discussions



about individual struggling students. This includes discussion about how to engage community-based partners, employers, and parents to share information and design a student support plan. Within the RTI model, the school also established a Culture Leadership Team composed of teachers and support services staff and charged with developing school-wide actions for positive school climate, including restorative behavior practices, discipline policy and procedures, Advisory curriculum development, student leadership opportunities, and other strategies for promoting a supportive learning environment for all students. The community school coordinator remarked:

“RTI helped cement an equity lens in our strategies for student support at O’Connell, and the multi-tiered system of supports helped us to clarify the roles of the Student Assistance Program teams and the Culture Leadership Team.”

Rethinking How Counselors Connect with Students

Once RTI was adapted to the pathway model, O’Connell school leaders began to fully recognize how counselors could play new and important bridging roles for students in pathways and small learning communities. They were not

just a direct support for students but were well positioned to connect students to the wide array of available people and organizations at O’Connell and in the community. Yet, large student-to-counselor ratios in the typical public high school most often result in a counseling function that is essentially an “opt-in” service—one that favors students who are already motivated to seek help and have formed clear goals. Consequently, while there are some tasks that put counselors in contact with most students (e.g., scheduling classes, or working with college-bound seniors) the bulk of a counselor’s time would be spent with two types of students: those who opted-in for guidance, and those who had been identified as needing additional supports or targeted behavioral intervention (i.e., in RTI language, Tier 2 students). Staff leaders at O’Connell wanted the counseling department to develop a more robust set of Tier 1 strategies. In RTI language, Tier 1 strategies are those universal counseling interventions that are routinely provided to all students. Over time, O’Connell counselors developed two strategies for all students as integrated bridges to college and career readiness.

- *Universal Transcript Evaluations and Academic Planning.*

Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, counselors at O’Connell began implementing a transcript evaluation every semester for all students. This process aims to systematically monitor student progress toward graduation and to engage each student in a twice-yearly conversation about developing and persisting with an academic plan. Counselors explain that one of their priorities is to evaluate transcripts as part of individual conferences. This assures that every student has an academic plan and enables counselors to identify those students who are not meeting graduation requirements and connect them with credit recovery and/or afterschool supports. They also use the transcript reviews as an opportunity to systematize communications with families of all juniors and seniors about graduation progress status and about the availability of timely interventions.

- *Integrating the Counseling Function into Classrooms.*

In addition to conducting routine transcript reviews and academic planning during office hours, counselors at O’Connell now also connect with students in their weekly advisory class sessions. By conducting one-on-one sessions with students in the advisory class, counselors are able to signal that academic planning and counselor check-ins are an expectation for all students. More recently, principal Ryan has encouraged the entire counseling team to get out of the office and into regular classrooms. With the cooperation of academic and pathway teachers, some counselors have begun to work in classrooms with students individually and

in small groups in collaboration with regular teachers. One counselor remarked about all of the additional counseling services he could provide in the classroom setting:

“Typically, I spend about 6 hours per week in classrooms with other teachers. I’ll check in with a few tables and check in with the students who don’t seem engaged. I’ll model how to de-escalate a [behavioral] situation with a student or have a hallway conversation. You’re so much more efficient with your time in meeting students’ needs where they are, in the classroom, rather than having them request time with you in your office. I think being in the classroom and seeing how kids are actually learning really helps you do your job as a counselor. You are another person who can take the time to engage with them, understand what’s going on with them.”

Other staff remarked that this routine “push into classrooms” helps counselors to extend their reach, both by engaging the teachers in the process of academic planning and by offering the counselor an opportunity to observe teacher-student interactions in real time.

GOING DEEPER: RE-EXAMINING HOW LONG-TERM CBO PARTNERS & EMPLOYERS WORK WITH STUDENTS

Taking a Community School Approach

As noted earlier, during the 2013-14 school year, O’Connell joined in a collective impact collaboration with the Mission Promise Neighborhood (MPN) Initiative, which was a “cradle to career” set of youth services, and includes two elementary schools and a feeder middle school in the Mission neighborhood. School leaders and Paola Zuniga, the MPN Community School Coordinator, saw this new initiative as an opportunity for O’Connell to re-examine how each of its longstanding community-based and employer partners worked with students. In the first year of the MPN initiative, students were surveyed about their experiences at O’Connell. Despite the work that teachers, counselors, and staff were doing to connect with all students, less than 61% of O’Connell students indicated that there was “at least one adult at my school that I can really count on who can help me with my problems.” Only about one-third of students surveyed indicated that there was “at least one adult at my school that I can really count on who believes in me” or “who makes sure I am doing well.”

These results were both disappointing and puzzling given the stellar array of community-based partners who were working with students on any given day. Some sample community-based partners include:

- Bayview Association for Youth
- Compass Education Group
- CUESA Schoolyard to Market
- FACES for the Future Coalition
- Generation Citizen
- JCYC Upward Bound
- Jewish Vocational Services
- Mission Graduates
- Tech 21
- School Health Mentoring for Success
- University of California, San Francisco: Early Academic Outreach Program
- Urban Services YMCA
- Youth Arts Exchange
- Youth Speaks

About 19 different community-based organizations and their staff were routinely on the campus—six providing college and career guidance and support, another six offering enrichment classes on Wednesdays, an additional seven providing a range of other services. But like the typical counseling service in high schools, partner organizations also generally worked with students by referral, on an “opt-in” basis after school, or in drop-in spaces like the school library or counseling center.

And so, O’Connell’s first response was to look for ways to use the school’s RTI structures to build better bridges to partners and to help them recruit more students into services. This approach resulted in some students opting into multiple services, while others—often those most in need—did not connect with partners at all. The 2013 student survey underscored this pattern. Could the community-based partners, like the counselors and special education staff, be encouraged to break out of their stove-pipe routines, and integrate their services into the classroom? This idea for “universalizing” access to more caring adults and their services was intriguing to the school leaders and to the community school coordinator who had weaved into the reform process the school district’s guiding principles for community schools: Shared Vision and Planning, Matching Needs and Assets, Continuous Improvement, and Coherence and Integration.

In the summer of 2014, the MPN initiative team, school leaders, and staff held a retreat to plan for the next year. Here

the idea of considering all community-based partner staff as potential “student success coaches” was born. Over the course of the 2014-15 school year the community school coordinator took on the task of organizing quarterly partnership meetings as a way for partners and school administrators to collectively assess their progress toward universal engagement of all students in integrated supports. In these meetings, the community school coordinator introduced CBO partners to the idea of “embedding” their services and outreach in regular classrooms with teachers or with the counselors in the counseling center for at least some set of hours each week. In addition, each CBO partner was asked to commit to a work plan that described the responsibilities of each organization and the specific O’Connell student learning objectives that would be achieved through its work.

During the 2015-16 school year, the community school coordinator began to systematize the process of negotiating memoranda of understandings with CBOs aimed at better aligning their work to O’Connell’s vision of universal access to services. The following year, 2016-17, five organizations—Jewish Vocational Services, Mission Graduates, Bayview Association for Youth, Urban Services YMCA, and School Health Mentoring for Success—agreed to formally embed their staff in the school’s counseling center. These staff would also spend two to eight hours a week in content classrooms



as “student success coaches” under the supervision of one of the school’s counselors. Gradually, over the course of the next two years, the participating partner organizations committed to increase the hours of classroom integration and expand their participation in common planning time with teachers.

Student Success Coaches and College and Career Success Partners in the Classroom

In the lower division grades, student success coaches from the community-based partners have collaborated with teachers to develop social and emotional learning (SEL) goals for students and to co-design and support delivery of a SEL curriculum. They also spend time in English classrooms meeting with students on a one-to-one basis as mentors or tutors. Over time, these student success coaches have formed a professional learning community (PLC) that was initially facilitated by a clinical psychologist specializing in trauma, inclusion, and diversity. The purpose of the PLC was to share dilemmas and best practices in student support. In 2016-17, student success coaches expanded their role by leading social and emotional lessons and, in the 2017-18 school year, student success coaches began working with the English teachers to apply effective strategies to support individualized writing and reading skills development, as well as group work.

In the upper-division lab pathways, participating community-based partners called classroom-embedded College and Career Success Partners have been drawn from CBO programs that focus on improving college and career access. Jewish Vocational Services and FACES for the Future, which organize work-based learning internships for students, have gradually embedded their services into the day-to-day operations of pathway classes and the school's Counseling and Career Center. College and Career Success Partners from these organizations provide students with support for college applications, resume writing, and financial aid applications in classroom settings where they can reach *all* students. Some of the coaches also attend common planning time meetings with the classroom and CTE teachers to assist in co-teaching units on career readiness skills (e.g., time management, presentation and communications skills, or conflict resolution) and planning the work-based internships for individual students that are central to the O'Connell educational experience. Ultimately, explained the community school coordinator:

“Our principal is in the classroom constantly, as are the academic counselors and afterschool tutoring staff (partners). Everyone does classroom support and/or teacher collaboration except the Wellness Center staff because that needs to be a confidential space.”

Many of the school's community-based partners were, as one counselor explained:

“always trying to get access to kids. But when you're able to ... embed those staff into the classroom, they don't have the same challenges around recruitment. At traditionally structured schools, counselors are often negotiating giving space and time to CBO partners to attract kids to their programs. So, it has been a huge help to embed partners in classrooms, to give them access and then to expect them to really be with us in the classroom for six to eight hours per week. It helps us eliminate so many programs that would only attract the most motivated students and families. I think that's a really positive structure. Kids will work with you if they know you. I think it's great to have partners embedded more like staff, you have much more leverage with students.”

Wednesdays at O'Connell

One other way that leaders at O'Connell have created opportunities for their CBO partners to integrate their services into classrooms and into venues where they are universally accessible to all students has been through collaborative and flexible use of an early release schedule once a week. On Wednesdays, O'Connell has an abbreviated schedule. On that day, the lower division students are offered Math and English support classes, health education, and enrichment classes that are credit-bearing and co-taught by a community-based partner and a teacher. In the upper division, eleventh and twelfth graders are in their labs working with classroom-embedded College and Career Success Partners from the CBO groups who lead weekly college and career workshops. In other cases, they are participating in off-campus work-based learning assignments. The last two periods of Wednesday afternoon also provide regularly scheduled time for community-based partners to co-teach courses in their domain of expertise. These might include, for example, courses or seminars focused on social and emotional learning, study skills, resumé writing, how to prepare for a workplace internship, college application strategies and financial aid procedures. The flexible nature of the last two periods of the Wednesday schedule allows for staff and community-based partners to engage in common professional development, or to plan together in role-alike teams, as needed. One staff from a community-based partner



commented that, at first, she was not totally comfortable moving from a mentor or advisor role to a role where she found herself in front of a class as a co-teacher. But over time, she found that the teachers embraced her presence in the class. As well, she reported that the new classroom-embedded role allowed her to convey and model important career readiness skills and college knowledge to more students equitably.

Conclusion

The work of elaborating, modifying, and deepening the unique role of the Student Success Coach and classroom-embedded College and Career Success Partners continues at O’Connell via regular partner convenings and iterative inquiry among staff, students, community-based partners, and engaged families. So far, staff at O’Connell have been heartened by the results they are getting. Over the course of the last three years, they have seen a steady decline in the percentage of lower division students who fall “off-track” for on-time graduation. And in the upper division, graduation and college matriculation rates have steadily grown to exceed the district-wide performance of their peer demographic cohorts. On a more immediate term, the response of students to integrated student supports has convinced staff and school leaders that they are on the right track. In 2015-16, only 61% of O’Connell students responded favorably to a survey question regarding whether

“At least one adult makes sure I am doing well.” In 2017, 74% responded favorably to that statement.

O’Connell embarked on a journey of student-centered learning, focusing on those students furthest from opportunity, as a central tenant for achieving more equitable outcomes for all. The community school coordinator said:

“This equity lens drove administration, teachers and staff to structure space and time to support deeper learning, adult collaboration, and the integration of partners as coaches in the classroom.”

The approach to integrated student supports at O’Connell derives from an understanding among school leaders and teachers that providing “bridges” from the school to the community and postsecondary opportunities through support programs is often not enough for youth who live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. As McLaughlin points out, connections to the broader community, by themselves, are insufficient to set youth on a positive and productive path. They also need access to “bonding capital”—that is, opportunities to bond with at least one caring adult—concrete real-life examples of people just like them who [can] provide the advice about how to get there and the reassurance that they [can] be successful. She concludes, “bonding capital—secure connections with caring adults and supportive peers—galvanizes bridging capital” (McLaughlin, 2018, pp.177-78.).

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About the Authors

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Ph.D., is deputy director of the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University where the focus of his work is on the study and promotion of change in public schools; the implications of education reform for disadvantaged students, education law, and policy; and the effect of immigration on schools and communities. He is an editor, with Marisa Saunders and Jeannie Oakes, of a book that address the importance of a youth-sector approach to education and the importance of expanded learning opportunities to low-income minority youth, *Learning Time: In Pursuit of Educational Equity*. He is also the lead author, with Elizabeth Newman and Graciela Borsato of *Equitable Access by Design: A Conceptual Framework for Integrated Student Supports within Linked Learning Pathways*. Prior to his appointment at the Gardner Center, Jorge served terms as a program officer for educational opportunity and scholarship at the Ford Foundation, and as a senior program officer at both the James Irvine and William & Flora Hewlett Foundations. He also served as a senior research associate at The Urban Institute and as a lawyer and policy analyst for the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Laurel Sipes, M.P.P., is a research associate at the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities with a background in education policy and mixed methods research. Her work is driven by questions about equitable access to quality educational and out-of-school time experiences, achievement and opportunity gaps, and the broader context in which young people and their families live. She also works to build the capacity of communities to plan and use data. Some of her work in San Francisco's Mission District has also been documented in *Expanded Learning Opportunities for Youth and Their Families in the Mission Promise Neighborhood: An Interim Assessment*.

Paola Zuniga is a consultant whose work focuses on projects that advance educational equity in the San Francisco Bay Area; her most recent partnerships include IDEO/d.school School Retool and Oakland School of the Arts. Ms. Zuniga also served a term as the community school coordinator at John O'Connell High School in San Francisco with support from the Mission Promise Neighborhood Initiative. There she played a key role in harnessing and aligning private and public investments to improve graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment for O'Connell high school students. Originally from

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