Multiple Pathways to Meeting a Promise: Creating Coherence So All Students Can Remain, Recuperate, and Recover

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Multiple Pathways to Meeting a Promise
Creating coherence so all students can remain, recuperate, and recover

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) Capstone

Submitted by Jordy L. Sparks

To the Harvard Graduate School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education Leadership.

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Abstract

When a district creates a “no wrong door”\(^1\) policy that provides that provides options and second or more chances at a diploma, students and families win.” To effect systems-level change, what can be learned from alternative schools and how they provide alternate points of entry for students? What might be understood from the rejection of established ideas, as educators attempt to establish new ways of supporting and responding to students’ increasingly diverse needs? How might systems provide coherent, equitable, and diverse opportunities for students to remain on-track to graduation and success, as well as support them with options when they fall off-track or disconnect completely?

I came to Oceanside Unified School District (OUSD) as the Innovative Education Specialist to rethink alternative education, examining how the personalized and intervention-driven approach in the alternative model that is good for the most vulnerable students is good for all. My capstone illustrates this claim through a “Multiple Pathways to Graduation” framework to explore the Oceanside Unified School District’s (OUSD) responsiveness to support options for students to \textit{remain}, \textit{recuperate}, and \textit{recover}. In leading district efforts to articulate a coherent model and plan, I imagine how to better ensure students \textit{remain} on-track to graduation and future success, have accessible and diverse options for \textit{recuperation} when they fall off-track, and have options for \textit{recovery} and reconnection when they disconnect from school completely.

\footnote{Disconnected Youth and Multiple Pathways to Graduation by Public Impact for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, December 2008, retrieved from \url{https://www.issuelab.org/resources/7067/7067.pdf}}
“Stories are data with a soul.”

Dr. Brené Brown, professor and prominent researcher on human connection asserts, “Stories are data with a soul” (Brown, 2012). My residency and leadership journey as the Innovative Education Specialist with the Oceanside Unified School District (OUSD) begins with stories of students gracious enough to share their experiences with me.

Reprieve from exhaustion

Aaron\(^2\), a graduating senior who has found school to be a struggle for years, told his story of frustration about asking for help in class and being ignored or put off until later. He would sit stuck, every once in a while, asking a classmate for help (personal communication, August 25, 2017). As a 6’2” young man approaching 300 pounds of mostly muscle, sporting a mohawk, and holding multiple records for powerlifting, he found himself being ridiculed when he would ask for help. He explained to me how he was exhausted - tired of not understanding, tired of feeling behind, tired of being frustrated, and tired of being unable to slow things down to make sense of the instruction. When he looked at his classmates, he saw they were exhausted as well from the painstakingly fast pace of instruction.

Surprisingly, on advice from his counselor, he opted into Clair Burgener Academy (CBA), an independent study option, as a way to make the work more manageable. CBA is an “Academic Acceleration and Recovery Center” (AARC), where

\(^2\) All student names are pseudonyms used to protect the student’s privacy.
students work to recuperate credit or potentially graduate early, and one which students normally opt into, rather than be assigned. In theory, a student is expected to do equal work in shorter sprints, completing a class about every three weeks. If the pace was fast before, it would therefore seem to be exponentially so at CBA. However, Aaron described to me that the introduction to material and process is intentional and appropriately timed, and as a result, he has been able to successfully identify the steps needed to solve a problem: the problem was modeled by the teacher, students were provided opportunities to ask questions throughout the process – effectively hitting the pause button - and students were then given the chance to practice without the ringing bell interrupting learning. Aaron described his learning experience as though the world slowed to a comfortable pace where he could take full advantage of the space it provides. Aaron has a team of teachers and specialists who intentionally slow the pace of curriculum on the front end, so that he can complete his courses as he understands the content. In one year, Aaron went from a severely credit-deficient junior, to a senior who will graduate early and begin pursuing college credit, eventually becoming an electrician.

Looking for grace

Carlos graduated from Oceanside High School (OHS) in 2009, is currently studying aeronautical engineering, was recently promoted to manager at his firm, is married and raising two children, is a local activist and humanitarian, and has published poetry. His path to high school graduation in 2009, however, was a tumultuous one that was nearly impossible to navigate without the intervention by staff - particularly a teacher that personalized her approach to ensure his success.
In 2006, Carlos was identified under a federal gang injunction which immediately — and, he will tell you, permanently — placed a target on him. Growing up in his neighborhood, he acknowledged gangs were a way to have a voice in the larger community. Over time, however, the intentions of gangs have become distorted and he has therefore tried to distance himself, which has proved to be nearly impossible. Carlos recounted how his actions in school were interpreted as gang affiliation no matter how inconsequential. At one point, he was suspended for staring at a teacher because it was interpreted as communicating a threat of gang violence, which in public school falls under the gang injunction. He looked to an alternative option, particularly CBA, as an escape - a chance to catch his breath. His entry point outside of the comprehensive high school enabled him to work, study, and connect with teachers without the stigma that hung over him like a cloud everywhere else. Experiencing success in school demonstrated to others, but most importantly to himself, that he could succeed in a system that he feared was becoming out of reach for him. Carlos explains that staff viewed him differently, embraced his identity, challenged him to complete work, and held him to high expectations while others made excuses for his expedited exit. He chose an alternative opportunity to recuperate credits and experience success, which allowed him to experience redemption and to return to OHS with his team of educators as coaches, cheerleaders, and advocates in his corner.
**Smiling at success**

During a home visit to a 17-year old senior, Stephanie, I met a student with a history of school struggles, attendance concerns, run-ins with the law, and estranged relationships. She had been in and out of schools, as well as the district’s alternative options, and returned a day before, sitting at the large conference table in the lobby, working on assignments, and feeding Cheerios to her 1-year old brother. When the principal noticed the sibling in tow, she asked if everything was okay. They stepped into her office, and Stephanie broke down, explaining the challenges at home with daycare for her sibling, her lack of job prospects, relationship challenges, and, most immediately concerning – her recently developed drinking problem. The principal scheduled a visit with Stephanie and her mother to search for a solution for daycare, so that the student could focus on school. She was a senior and needed over 100 credits, which would likely take her over a year to achieve. The purpose of the home visit was to communicate that Stephanie *can* graduate and to show the family that they have our attention and support.

The mother was conflicted between supporting her daughter attending school and wanting her to care for the brother; the student was emotional because she knew she was creating a tough situation for her family. She was also sad about her drinking and potentially giving up an opportunity to graduate from high school. The principal, a teacher, and I expressed that we were proud of her for seeking help, and instead of leaving the student’s fate up to chance, we instead pursued options, listened to her and her mother, and considered circumstances facing the family. The next day, the student arrived at school by 7:30 AM. Two hours into the school day, Stephanie looked up and
said, “I’m actually getting work done” (personal communication, August 29, 2017), smiling at her success.

**Meeting a promise**

These are stories of redemption and alternate opportunities. They suggest students have viable alternative options and choice in OUSD; however, even these success stories are countered with those where the outcome is vastly different. Currently, Oceanside Unified does not employ a coherent or comprehensive approach to identify students early, intervene equitably, and support students systematically. As a result, the district response to student learning needs is more reactive than responsive, incomplete rather than integrative, and constrained rather than comprehensive. Demand is increasing for differentiated points of access and for greater options, but offerings for such alternatives only serve about 5% of OUSD students. Further, students receiving special education services is soaring to nearly 17% projected for the 2018-2019 school year – above the average in the state – with over $9 million spent on one-to-one services for students, resulting from a gap in the types of alternative offerings, and district programming between general education and special education options (district official, personal communication, January 19, 2018). There is a better approach. A Public Impact report (2008) details a more holistic response, suggesting focus “…on a full continuum of activities designed to: Identify the youth in the community at risk for disconnection, prevent initial disconnection through broad-based efforts, intervene with youth most at risk for falling off track, and recover youth who become disconnected and provide transition back into appropriate systems of support” (p.12). Under Superintendent Dr.
Duane Coleman’s leadership, OUSD has launched a flagship Community Impact Initiative, called the Oceanside Promise,³ “a cross-sector community-wide initiative to ensure every student graduates college and career ready,” prioritizing: Kindergarten Readiness, Third Grade Literacy, Ninth Grade On Track, Graduate College and Career Ready, and College/Certificate Completion, Social-Emotional Support. The commitment of the Promise seeded the ground for my residency in examining how OUSD is meeting the needs of students on a PK-12 continuum, in alternative models, as well as overall, in a coherent and comprehensive manner. These stories, coupled with this urgent data, add to OUSD’s pursuit to develop a shared purpose and mindset in serving all kids. When a district commits to a “no wrong door”⁴ policy that provides students and families with options that range from traditional and comprehensive to more personalized and tailored avenues, students and families win.

**Strategic Project: Alternative Education Innovation and OUSD Context**

Serving 17,615 students across 23 schools including sixteen elementary, four middle schools, two comprehensive high schools, one alternative high school, and Pre-Kindergarten, OUSD also operates a Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through 5th grade virtual/homeschool option as of 2017, as well as Clair Burgener Academy (CBA), an independent study site (a satellite for the two comprehensive high schools). OUSD is majority students of color (76%), and 58% of students are Hispanic. More than 60% of students are considered economically disadvantaged, and nearly 17% are English Language Learners.

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³ [http://oceansidepromise.org](http://oceansidepromise.org)
⁴ [Disconnected Youth and Multiple Pathways to Graduation by Public Impact for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, December 2008, retrieved from https://www.issuelab.org/resources/7067/7067.pdf](https://www.issuelab.org/resources/7067/7067.pdf)
OUSD offers some options (see Appendix A: Alternative and nontraditional options in OUSD) for students and families who are seeking either credit recovery or acceleration opportunities. Academic Acceleration and Recovery Centers (AARC) – independent study models – operate at two comprehensive high schools, El Camino High School (ECHS) and Oceanside High School, and at one off-site center at CBA. Additionally, the district operates one continuation high school, Ocean Shores Continuation High School (OSCHS), and a newly developed Transitional Kindergarten (TK)-8th grade component serving students in a blended learning model. The TK-5 component operates at a separate site and is run by one teacher, and the middle school component (grades 6-8) is run out of CBA AARC in a separate wing. In total, there are nearly 800 students, or nearly 5% of the total district population, currently served by the “alternative” and “non-traditional” models in OUSD. Enrollment in alternative options in OUSD has quickly and steadily increased (see Figure 1: Alternative enrollment in OUSD from Aug. 2017 – Sept. 2017). Additionally, other enrollment trends demonstrate increased enrollment in alternatives by examining CBA, whose numbers rose from 90...
students two years ago to over 350 students in 2017. Enrollment in the district overall has decreased for many reasons, a primary reason being personal decisions of families to enroll in charters as those options (see Appendix B: Charter school enrollment in Oceanside, CA) continue to increase in the area, contributing to declining enrollment, decreased funding, and threatening subpar programs. Right now, the district loses about 500 students per year with enrollment data showing 21,215 students in 2012-2013, and 17,500 currently. As families continue to have increased options for choice outside of the district, and as OUSD pursues being all things to all kids, the district must offer “traditional” and “nontraditional” options; “standard” and “alternative” options that serve as the core and the complementary, or the “standard” and the supplemental. I am intentionally using quotations here because I believe that many educators, districts, and institutions are struggling with how to identify what is “traditional” or “nontraditional.” In OUSD, for example, terms such as innovation, personalized learning, blended learning, “alternative,” and others are used to describe how the district is grappling with tailoring teaching and learning of students to their needs, circumstances, and intended outcomes. Oceanside Unified is not necessarily pursuing some new set of “alternative” options in order to supplement the core, but they are trying to figure out how to ensure that all needs of all kids are met through a variety of delivery models, and Dr. Coleman envisions a time when OUSD moves beyond what he believes has become deficit-language of alternative versus normal, or traditional versus non-traditional, stripping away the assumptions that are made about “alternative” or “non-traditional” education. Instead, he talks about inclusive language that encompasses multiple pathways of learning and options towards success for students – personalized and tailored to their
needs (personal communication, January 18, 2018). In OUSD, however, there is not yet a shared mindset or purpose, nor a theory of change for multiple pathways for students. In many districts, this approach exists under a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) defined as “…an integrated, comprehensive framework that focuses on standards, core instruction, differentiated learning, student-centered learning, individualized student needs, and the alignment of systems necessary for all students’ academic, behavioral, and social success” (California Department of Education, n.d.). While there previously was a task force who began designing this approach for OUSD, the district does not yet utilize an MTSS framework and in many respects, has a practice of implementing intervention and prevention further in a student’s academic career. There is little coordination of practices, which leads to inconsistency and incoherence in the options offered to families.

In a report prepared by Public Impact for the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2008), the authors offer caution to the absence of an MTSS model saying, “The skills and expertise of leaders in each system remain within silos while youth move within and across systems” (p.11). This incoherence is a missed opportunity to highlight the current promising practices in OUSD. This incoherence, as it currently stands, translates to families not knowing all the options available to them and their students, as well as the quality of those options. Inconsistency and incoherence compromises OUSD’s desire and efforts to personalize and tailor education to the student needs. And while there are personalized practices at the alternative/non-traditional sites in OUSD – practices that contribute to an overall unspoken but promising menu of options - if codified, aligned, and brought into coordination with one another, they could make OUSD a premier school district with options for every student, every family, in every circumstance.
As the Innovative Education Specialist, my role was to envision an improved approach to alternative education and explore how to bring about more options for students. According to Dr. Coleman, current options were working for some, yet the district was still missing students and failing to learn from the promising practices at the alternative sites. In assessing the alternative models, the gaps in coordination and programming across sites made it clear improvement was possible in district options, and that overall, students and families needed more options (including guidance and support towards those options) and they needed them earlier. My capstone uses a Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) framework to explore and analyze OUSD’s responsive capacity to support options for students to remain, recuperate, and recover. More specifically, I led efforts during my residency to articulate our approach to ensuring students remain on-track to graduation and future success through a diverse set of options and to increase options for recuperation when students fall off-track, as well as options for recovery and reconnection when they disconnect from school completely. In this Capstone, I examine how an MPG framework can achieve coherence in policy and practice —what authors Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn (2016) call “shared mindset rather than alignment” (p.25). I also examine how an MPG framework can foster improved prevention, intervention, and an increase in the diversity of options – leveraging the current practices and opportunities in OUSD.

It is important to note some additional context given my work around innovation during times of significant constraint. As of the 2017-2018 school year, OUSD is running
a structural deficit.\textsuperscript{5} With over 90% of their expenditures going towards employee compensation, a significantly declining enrollment (8% from 2013 to 2017), deeply impacted revenue given declining enrollment, and a history of meeting ongoing financial commitments with one-time money, OUSD’s cash reserves could be negative as of one year from now. They could possibly enter receivership if a thorough fiscal stabilization plan is not implemented and demonstrating progress. Added to this is the inability of the district and teachers’ union to reach contract agreement through the negotiations process, and teachers have been working on an expired contract for over 550 days. Other factors that have contributed to what has felt like a slow-down are contentious board meetings, an early retirement incentive made available to district staff, a potential school closure, a new vetting process at the cabinet level to determine what is or is not “mission critical,” upcoming administrative cuts, and in January – the announcement that Dr. Coleman would be retiring. Most recently, negotiations have failed again and the teachers and district have gone to impasse, hiring a mediator to step in. The combination of the district’s financial condition and the demands placed on the district by the union, especially the inability of the district to not only meet the demands but offer less than what has been requested\textsuperscript{6} – the political context and overall environment of the district has been controversial, confrontational, and challenging to lead change within.

Conversely, the context could be ripe for learning and for potentially creating conditions of urgency, yielding focus on the most critical offerings of the district.

\textsuperscript{5} Reports and presentations prepared by School Services of California (SSC) can be found here: https://ousdca.schoolloop.com/file/1242796835555/1442126474998/8728842100434185795.pdf?filename=SSC%2BOceanside%2BUSD%2BBBudget%2BReview%2B11-7-17.pdf

\textsuperscript{6} As of March 2018, agreements between certificated and classified associations and the district have been ratified.
**Review of Knowledge for Action**

**RKA summary**

There has always been a tension between a system built to standardize instruction and the process through which it is delivered, and the desire for instruction to be responsive to the constantly evolving needs of students. This gap is one of the primary reasons movements towards alternative models have been as much part of the story of public education in our country as public education itself. In this section, I begin in the alternative education space, as it represents most clearly the attempt at providing options to students and families, and at the same time – although not always - can illustrate some of the systems gaps in prevention and intervention. Alternative/non-traditional education has the potential to instruct us in what can be done to better respond to students so that we may provide equitable opportunities for students to remain on-track to graduation and success, as well as support them with options when they fall off-track or disconnect. Because effective alternative options offer models and practices that support a wide range of learners, especially those who find the traditional path a struggle, they are critical. They are also, however, insufficient in regard to a comprehensive approach to serve all students in a PK-12 setting. In order to do this well, a district must commit to a problem-solving approach that emphasizes strong prevention and intervention models, a variety of options tailored to specific learning needs, and opportunities for students to recuperate and recover in meaningful ways when disconnection occurs. As described in greater detail below, a Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) framework is useful. I present a Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) framework that I am simultaneously using to
diagnose opportunity and aiming to implement as a systems model for coherence and problem-solving (Marsh and Hill, 2010, p.5). An MPG approach requires that district leadership, staff, and the community beyond commit to shared purpose and collective action, focused in a common direction – in other words, coherence. And such coherence requires district functions and programming that integrates work across departments and from the central office throughout the district.

Thus, this section answers two questions. First, what does current research literature say about effective alternative/non-traditional education models, especially as they pertain to creating more options for students? Second, what might a coherent approach look like, especially as it pertains to supporting students as early as possible and throughout their academic career with accessible and equitable options? To answer these two questions, I explore the following: 1) current research on models of alternative education, as well as the flexibility and innovation offered in these models. Further, in an attempt to realize Dr. Coleman’s inclusive vision for OUSD to be “all things to all kids” (personal communication, June 2017), I examine the influence of alternative/non-traditional education in Oceanside and explore what can be learned from these models; 2) how OUSD can utilize a Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework for purposes of identification, prevention, intervention, and reconnection; and 3) the challenges to be overcome for a district to achieve coherence around such a framework.

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7 While I unpack coherence in greater detail later in my RKA, for now I suggest that coherence is shared mindset and collective action.
Current research base

In a report from the Urban Institute (2006), author Laudan Aron illuminates the gap in how we are serving our students who are off-track or disconnected entirely, pointing out “…as many as 3.5 million youth are not enrolled in school, lack a high school diploma (or GED), and are unemployed. Current alternative routes…are very limited; estimates range between 100,000 to 200,000 slots nationally” (p.23). The individual reasons contributing to this gap are many: anxiety, immigration status, credit deficiency, full-time jobs, serving as a primary for caretaker for parents and/or siblings, discipline concerns, military families, inability to keep up academically, gang affiliation, etc. – to name only some.

With this landscape in mind, I entered into my residency asking: How do students arrive at alternative options in the first place? Is it a failure of the system, or a desire for choice? Or is it a combination? Could the district be reacting to students not succeeding in traditional settings and not taking a proactive stance earlier (i.e., prevention and intervention)? And what exactly is alternative, anyway?

The practice of an educational experience, curriculum, and method of learning was once assumed to be able to meet the needs of all students, but Young (1990) summarizes the shift in understanding that marks alternative schools:

Before alternative schools, we believed everyone learned in the same way and should be taught in the same way using a common curriculum. We thought all schools should be alike. We thought children and their parents were incapable of making decisions about what and how they learned. We now know that we were wrong, that there is no single best way for all to learn. Alternative schools helped us understand that different students could best learn in very different ways (vi).
The emergence of alternative education was a surprising and underestimated movement, as Timothy Young (1990) writes: “The alternative school movement in public education is a reform effort that is not supposed to exist” (v). Young is primarily referring to the type of alternative schooling that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s within the public school system, characterized mostly as the “Open Schools” movement – predicated on the notion that parents were seeking alternatives to schools they were displeased with. Prior to this movement, however, the 1960s saw alternatives outside of the public school system emerge through the “Freedom Schools” and “Free Schools,” mostly out of response to the racist and exclusive practices of the traditional public schools. For purposes of this Capstone, I am mostly considering the alternative models that families looked to or initiated themselves as a means of choice to traditional schools.

As the “choice movement” is alive and well today, this notion of students and families having agency in their experience emphasizes a critical opportunity of alternative education. Furthermore, parents and students are seeking more customized and personalized learning opportunities, and districts are using more of their resources to answer – perhaps placing the spotlight back on practices in alternative models and how they effectively employ prevention and intervention. Raywid (1994) concludes that although there have been differences in models or approach, “two enduring consistencies have characterized alternative schools from the start: they have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and, consequently have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs and environments” (p. 26).
A Rennie Center policy brief (2014) summarizes models of alternative schools, “…separate schools, separate programs, and focused strategies implemented within existing schools” (p. 3), and suggests characteristics of their students (see Appendix C: Characteristics of students in alternative schools). However, these are surprisingly deficit-based and fail to capture all reasons why a student may seek out additional or alternative support, outside of a traditional school environment. The report goes on to highlight effective approaches to delivery in alternative models, which I employ here, noting why they are important, and why it could benefit a district to approach educating all students in this manner. The first suggestion from successful alternative models is that the school(s) develop and offer “a comprehensive alternative pathway (not an “add-on” or piecemeal approach)” (p. 4). Clayton Christensen and Michael Raynor (2003) describe how organizations have resources, processes, and priorities, which collectively become culture. An organization’s resources (i.e., for a school, curriculum, staff, materials, facilities, etc.), processes (i.e., for a school, enrollment practices, hiring practices, budgeting processes, etc.), must be aligned with its priorities (the goals or stated mission, or an organization’s profit formula); and when there is misalignment between the three, which collectively determine the culture of the organization, then there is a disconnect and disservice to delivering on its stated goals. Alternative models, in other words, benefit from the ability to provide a nontraditional and/or alternative pathway to success for students that encompass changes and innovation from its goals to the resources it employs to achieve stated priorities to the processes used to realize this model. This approach is able to offer flexibility, personalization, and responsiveness to students who are seeking alternative options. Further, the National League of Cities (2016) recently
released a report and action toolkit to aid districts in reengaging youth who disconnect.

Suggestions range from the imperative to intervene early, noting that “prevention is always less costly, in both human and financial terms, than later attempts to reverse bad outcomes” (p.4), to a caution to not give up on older youth because “second chances are also essential” (p.4). The report challenges educators and municipal leaders to view youth as resources and focus on creating multiple pathways to success, noting that students are not simply problems to be fixed and that narrow or singular programs will not reach all students in need. The report champions a comprehensive approach that goes beyond education to address issues “…such as mental health, housing, substance, etc.” (p.4). And finally, and most notably, districts must, “Insist upon accountability. Build interventions on the premise that young people will be held accountable for their actions and the systems leading these efforts will be held accountable for outcomes as well” (p.4).

Another component from the National League of Cities (2016) report of effectiveness is clearly identified goals with high expectations for social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth. Shifting from a narrow focus on alternative education to a wider focus on social emotional learning (SEL), in a meta-analysis of impact on 270,034 K-12 students, where some students participated in a SEL curriculum and others did not, Durlack et al. (2011) found that, “Compared to controls, social emotional learning (SEL) participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement” (p. 1). Low adult-student ratios and significant staff autonomy allow for staff to be responsive to student needs, flexible, and intentional in how curriculum decisions are tailored to meet students at their place of need. This flexibility
and autonomy leads to a different approach in alternative schools where staff employ “a non-deficit philosophy (teachers adjust their instructional approaches to accommodate individuals, rather than demanding that students change to fit the approach)” (Rennie Center, 2014, p. 4). In order to support the additional flexibility and autonomy provided to teachers and staff, successful alternative models offer, “Training and support for teachers in areas such as behavior management, alternative learning styles, and communication with families” (p. 4). Finally, the report highlights how “individualized student support with links to multiple agencies and individuals outside of the school building, including students’ families” (p. 4). Illustrating more specific components of high-quality alternative education, author Laudan Aron of the Urban Institute (2006), notes just how much intentional effort goes into creating an environment that supports a more personalized learning opportunity (see Figure 2).

These two sources mostly agree on what makes for effective alternative models, prioritizing a comprehensive and integrated approach to curriculum, committed staff who are effective at building relationships, low student to teacher ratios, and flexibility away from the larger system. Aron’s list of characteristics takes it perhaps one step further in noting that part of the flexibility should be that the physical location of the site should be “neutral” and preferably detached from a comprehensive model.
Figure 2: Attributes for high-quality alternative education

| Academic Instruction | • Clear focus on academic learning that combines high academic standards with engaging and creative instruction and a culture of high expectations  
| | • Curricula address the education and career interests of the students  
| | • Students have personalized learning plans and set learning goals based on their individual plans  
| | • Opportunities for youth to catch up and accelerate knowledge and skills  
| Instructional Staff | • Instructional staff choose to be part of the program and establish rapport with students and peers  
| | • Have a role in governing the school and designing the program and curriculum  
| Professional Development | • Staff development involved teacher input and work with colleagues  
| | • Ongoing PD provided that help them maintain an academic focus, enhance teaching strategies, and develop alternative instructional methods  
| Size | • Many are small with a low teacher/student ratio and have small classes  
| Facility | • Clean and well-maintained buildings that are attractive and inviting and that foster emotional well-being, a sense of pride, and safety  
| | • Located in “neutral” territory and close to public transportation  
| Relationships/Building a Sense of Community | • Links to a wide variety of community organizations (cultural, social service, educational, etc.) and the business community to provide assistance and opportunities for participants  
| Leadership, Governance, Administrations, and Oversight | • Administrative and bureaucratic autonomy and operational flexibility  
| | • Strong, engaged, continuous, and competent leadership, preferably with a teacher/director administering the program  
| Student Supports | • Flexible and individualized programming with high expectations and clear rules of conduct  
| | • Balance between flexibility and structure  
| Other contributing factors | • Clearly identified goals  
| | • Integration of research into practice  
| | • Integration of special education services and ELL  
| | • Stable and diverse funding  

Source: According to Laudan Y. Aron (2006) of the Urban Institute, author of *An Overview of Alternative Education*, a first in a series of papers published for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Training and Administration, there are nine consistent attributes of high-quality alternative education programs.

**Alternative education in the context of California**

Dr. Lucia Moritz, Executive Director of Intensive Pathways (Alternative Education) in the Oakland Unified School District, explains that while California likely has the strictest education code in the U.S., alternative education gives some of the most
flexibility (personal communication, March 30, 2017). According to California Education Code, “…an alternative school is defined as a school or separate class group within a school” and under the code, it is specified that this model is designed to accomplish the following:

Maximize opportunity to develop positive values of self-reliance, initiative, kindness, spontaneity, resourcefulness, courage, creativity, responsibility, and joy. Recognize that the best learning takes place when the student learns because of his desire to learn. Maintain a learning situation maximizing student self-motivation and encouraging the student in his own time to follow his own interests. These interests may be conceived by him totally and independently or may result in whole or in part from a presentation by his teachers of choices of learning projects. Maximize opportunity for teachers, parents and students to cooperatively develop the learning process and its subject matter. This opportunity shall be a continuous, permanent process. Maximize opportunity for students, teachers, and parents to continuously react to the changing world, including but not limited to the community in which the school is located (California Education Code § 58500(a-e)).

There are different models of alternative education in California, Moritz explains. Alternative Schools of Choice offer the most autonomy and flexibility. The second model, Continuation Schools, serve students who are at risk of not graduating and the seat-time requirements, the amount of time a student has “sat” in a classroom to earn credits, are largely different. For example, different graduation requirements can be set instead of the statewide requirement of 130 credit hours. The third model is the Community Day School (CDS), which primarily serves students who are expelled from the district. Finally, there is a possible fourth model, called an “Independent Studies Based Attendance” (ISBA). In this model, created originally for child actors and student athletes, there are no seat-time requirements and average daily attendance (ADA) is determined by the work completed and submitted, translating into credits (including
home school, virtual learning, and independent study). According to Moritz, this model allows for the most innovative work as the general requirements are that a principal can authorize “site-based” (individual) ISBA and they must have “teacher of record.” OUSD operates two of these models, independent study sites and a continuation model.

Multiple Pathways to Graduation

Districts that are attempting to respond to challenges such as student engagement, prevention and intervention needs, social emotional learning, graduation results, and attendance concerns are pursuing models that provide students and families with multiple options for success, PK-12. Maintaining a coherent and integrated approach in this work is a significant challenge that grows as the student population gets larger and more diverse. Multiple Pathways to Graduation (see Figure 3) is a promising framework that supports a district's efforts to help students remain on track by identifying early warning indicators for purposes of intervention early in student's experience; recuperate students by getting them back on track once they fall off; and recover by opening doors to students who have fallen off-track and disconnected. Most critical to OUSD’s context, the MPG framework provides for additional points of access into teaching and learning, providing a menu of options for an increasingly diverse population with changing needs and changing demands. In many ways, the MPG framework and approach folds the promising practices from the alternative models and approaches to prevention and intervention into a comprehensive district strategy.
Beyond the stories of individuals and families, quantitative data points to gaps in student performance and suggests that what works for some does not work for all. And further, gaps in achievement in later years suggest that this work must start early and operate at both ends of the academic continuum – elementary to secondary. In OUSD for example, sobering data collected by the Oceanside Promise reveals that as early as kindergarten, students are falling behind, noting that only 37% of students are entering “ready to learn” (see Appendix D: OUSD snapshot data prepared by the Oceanside Promise). The data shows that between the grades of K-3, there is a significant number of students falling short of meeting standards of proficiency. Additionally, as students advance in OUSD, some headline data suggests that a fraction of students are meeting A-G requirements (those set by California education code that denotes student preparedness for admission to a four-year college or university) thereby limiting opportunities at

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Figure 3: Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework


8 Oceanside Promise: https://www.oceansidepromise.org/
enrollment in those institutions. Data shows that, of the over 90% of students earning a high school diploma through the alternative options, only ~34% of students have also met A-G requirements.

The MPG framework, first codified in a guide from Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG) and prepared by MetisNet (2008), explores how other districts - Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Portland, Oregon, to name a few - responded to a graduation crisis by scaffolding support at both ends of the system in order to identify students early for intervention and provide opportunities for reconnection later on. In YTFG’s report and guide, the charge is framed as follows:

Addressing the needs of all students…requires rigorous data collection, systemic planning, honest analysis, strategic collaboration, and willful dedication to doing what is necessary to make schools work. Knowing that African-American and Hispanic males are disproportionately over-represented among those students who never get their high school diploma, we must disaggregate at every decision point to prevent them from sliding off the path to graduation (p.2).

Districts such as Portland Public Schools in Oregon, New York City Public Schools, and Chicago Public Schools, have employed the MPG approach to respond to a graduation crisis. However, the MPG framework can also be applied, as in OUSD’s case, to respond in a way that will engage more learners and families, increase enrollment, and therefore increase average daily attendance (ADA), which in turns increases district revenue and creates a social market in education where students and families can select the best approach for them. The YTFG guide continues, “...declining enrollments weaken the overall strength of a school district and contribute to the fiscal concerns. Keeping current students on-track to graduation and reengaging students who have stopped
attending school makes educational and financial sense for districts and communities” (p.4). Portland Public Schools (PPS) in Oregon, a successful MPG model, utilizes Community Based Organizations (see Appendix E: Community Based Organizations for Alternative Schools in Portland Public School) to serve a diverse (in regard to learning needs) population; over a three-year period, the district increased graduation rates by at least 5%. In another example of success, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) collected cohort data to develop an “on-track indicator” for youth at the end of their freshman year. According to the Public Impact report (2008), CPS’s “on-track” included the following simple indicators: having at least five full-year credits at the end of freshman year and having no more than one F in a core course. Results from this on-track indicator illustrated that students “on-track” at the end of their freshman year were four times more likely to graduate than those “off-track” by the above measures. Additionally, in the 2010 working paper of an analysis of Multiple Pathways to Graduation schools/district approaches, data showed that in New York, underage and over-credited students graduate at a 19% rate in comprehensive high schools, but 56% of the underage and over-credited students in multiple pathways schools graduated through 2009. And in Boston, 100 at-risk students graduated through an accelerated summer 2008 program (Marsh and Hill, 2010).

**Early Warning Systems: Getting the proper inputs to tell the complete story**

Part of a successful MPG framework is the use of early warning indicators. Early in a student’s academic career, districts can utilize early warning systems (EWS) of data such as attendance, behavior referrals/incidents, or number of failing grades, to identify which students might be at risk of dropping out or disengaging to develop processes of
support, prevention, and intervention. The Public Impact Report (2008) agrees with early identification claiming it is, “the best weapon against disconnection. As the only system through which nearly every child passes, the K-12 education system has a unique opportunity—and responsibility—to reach children before disconnection occurs” (p. 28). Use of EWS equips educators, leaders, and systems to respond in comprehensive and coherent ways, to those factors that could otherwise contribute to a student becoming off-track to graduation.

In addition to an EWS dashboard, which is usually the systematized version that provides educators with easy to access information, an MPG framework looks to strengthen those interventions and supports throughout a student’s career, including but not limited to, the recuperation opportunities for students if and when they fall off track. These consist of programs such as independent study models, credit recovery and acceleration, and others – as well as those that reconnect students for purposes of recovery and reengagement if they disconnect completely. For example, returning to the three students whose stories I shared in the Introduction, it is notable that their struggles were primarily told through the lens of their high school experience. How – after being in the same district for ten or more years – did their difficulties seemed to present so late in their academic career? Each student spoke about “social promotion,” a district’s choice to promote a student to the next grade in elementary, and often middle school, regardless of performance. Others I spoke with could seldom recall earlier interventions available to help them remain on track to graduation. They noted high school is when accountability truly set in for the first time and inconsistency in performance was rarely noted and when it was, no programming existed to help these students and others to transition well. The
MPG framework challenges districts to do more to ensure students keep on track moving towards a menu of options through early identification and prevention (see Figure 4: Characteristics for keeping students on track in an MPG framework) and might have helped these three students. The ability to identify early helps focus a school’s (and eventually a district’s) efforts on what preventions and interventions can be used to support students early who show signs of struggle, or who may not initially respond to traditional instruction. Whether or not a district effectively utilizes an MTSS approach to enable students to respond to instruction in a variety of ways, employ interventions when they do not, and monitor and adjust those interventions along the way, are all part of a commitment to ensure students remain on track to graduation.

In summary, the MPG framework helps to understand where to focus energy to be responsive and strengthen interventions on both ends of a student’s continuum. While filling the gaps where students could potentially fall off-track, the system also strengthens its responsiveness for those students who either do fall off-track, or are simply seeking...
alternative opportunities and increased options for any number of reasons. In developing a range of options for students to recuperate credits such as expanding transfer options and providing flexibility, districts can do more to build capacity in helping students get back on track to graduation (see Figure 5). Research supports the need for opportunities available to students to recuperate to be in a separate and neutral site. In the YTFG guide, the following serves as a suggestion and best practice for these types of transition schools “…are specially designed to help students make quick and focused credit gains are needed. Districts are most challenged by developing innovative programming for students who are “old and far” (youth who are close to aging out of school but are many credits shy of a diploma) (p. 25). And finally, by opening doors to off-track and out-of-school students, a district can provide better recovery options (see Figure 6) enlist the support of more community partners.

Figure 5: Characteristics to support students in recuperating in a Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework

Coherence

Scribed on a Church in Sussex, England (1730), a quote says: “A vision without a task is but a dream, a task without a vision is drudgery, a vision and a task is the hope of the world.” Districts that have successfully implemented an MPG approach —effectively intervening early and completely with more options, improved options through alternative models, and pathways to reentry — have done so through a coherent, systemic approach. According to Fullan and Quinn (2016), “Coherence is a shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work in the minds and actions individually and especially collectively” (p. 16). In OUSD, the purpose behind why students need alternative options, greater points of entry and access, and why a district must be responsive rather than reactive is discussed, but by no means is agreed or acted collectively upon. Sometimes difficult to define, coherence can be created through a balance between getting proximate to the challenges at school sites, and building integrated solutions at the district level to address the challenges. Put another way, Johnson, et al (2015) note, “Coherence may be hard to see, but it is not invisible to those
who spend their time in schools” (pp. 160-161). My first reaction to that notion is positive, affirming even – that we only get to coherence by being in schools! Not so fast, though. The authors continue, “For this reason, the role of intermediaries can be very informative and constructive. These agents of the central office who are active and present in the schools can discover unforeseen synergies and identify mismatched strategies and, in the process, can see what works and what doesn’t” (p. 160-161). In other words, as an agent of the central office, while spending time in schools is necessary – what is critical is lifting up the challenges and pain-points from the schools to repair system gaps.

Authors Fullan and Quinn (2016) offer four “right drivers” for schools, districts, and systems to move towards coherence (see Figure 7: The Coherence Framework). These drivers are: Focusing Direction, Cultivating Collaborative Cultures, Securing Accountability, and Deepening Learning. In my Capstone, I emphasize the two drivers of “Focusing Direction” and “Cultivating Collaborative Cultures”, while understanding that the authors suggest that all four drivers must be emphasized.

![Figure 7: The Coherence Framework](source: Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2016). Coherence: the right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.)
simultaneously. I chose to do this primarily because I believe these two drivers are precursors to the other two in OUSD’s context, where accountability and shared (also deeper) learning occur as environments are built to foster opportunity for the other drivers. Moving beyond an organizational chart or feeder pattern for structure, beyond aligning projects and/or roles, and beyond naming a strategy, coherence must get to a shared understanding and purpose in the minds of all the actors and through their actions. Focusing direction, one of the four drivers is a critical step towards coherence. Simon Sinek (2009) explains this purpose-driven driver, when he says, “Leadership requires two things: a vision of the world that does not yet exist and the ability to communicate it. The question is, where does vision come from? And this is the power of WHY” (p. 228). The following three drivers, which Fullan and Quinn note should be tended to simultaneously, emphasize the capacity-building ability of an organization through collaboration, accountability, and learning through process and practice. This process of coherence-making not only provides for purpose-driven practice and leadership, but also solidifies and secures the learning and improvement throughout the process. Fullan and Quinn (2016) assert: “When large numbers of people have a deeply understood sense of what needs to be done – and see their part in achieving that purpose – coherence emerges and powerful things happen” (p.1).

**Cultivating collaborative cultures**

Being intentional about overcoming the barriers that exist to create collaborative cultures requires creating certain conditions, which provide for many things: shared purpose, collaboration, coherence, growth, sustainability, role clarification, effectiveness,
The necessary work in creating collaborative cultures cannot be overstated and overcoming the barriers to do so is critical in leadership in any sector and often, at the systems-level in particular, not much attention is given to being intentional in our approach. Instead, we often expect collaboration through “executive order,” assembling a group of people and giving them a task but not giving them a purpose. Collaborative cultures, however, are not simply “formed” and then people begin executing at top capacity. Instead, they move through a process, or stages, of development.

Psychologist Bruce Tuckman wrote about this first in 1965, in his work *Stage Theory*. Tuckman finds that when groups of people get together to collaborate, they move through the developmental stages of form (coming together), storm (disagreement and arguing, hopefully productively), norm (group rules are developed), and perform (conditions exist for the team to accomplish objectives and get work done). Often times, these groups can dissolve, stall, or simply implode when they hit the storm stage. Generally, out of this stage the need to develop norms arises to establish some formal and informal authority, gain role clarification, and focus on and towards objectives. Viewed from another lens and framework, Patrick Lencioni (2010), writes about building effective cultures as well as the barriers that exist. In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Lencioni illustrates that when groups of individuals do not trust each other, the absence of trust prohibits members from being vulnerable with one another. This of course reinforces the absence of trust, and Lencioni suggests that overcoming this invulnerability is the first and most necessary step to moving ahead in developing as a team. He suggests that invulnerability and an absence of trust from members creates a fear of conflict and therefore, groups expected to collaborate operate with artificial harmony. This fear of
conflict creates a lack of commitment which often times, as Lencioni suggests, breeds ambiguity. This ambiguity creates a host of other challenges where people are not sure of their roles, or their purpose or the team’s purpose. With a lack of commitment, there is an avoidance of accountability, and groups and organizations can resort to operating with low standards - without any real “skin in the game.” As noted, the coherence framework highlights accountability – external and internal – as a driver to coherence, and I am amplifying here how collaborative cultures can or can’t build towards this type of accountability. Finally, these compounding challenges, stemming from an absence of trust, create inattention to results and reinforce status and ego.

In an effort to illuminate the “fear of conflict” component from Lencioni and the “storm” notion from Tuckman, I call on another resource, author and leader Ron Heifetz. In his book (2008), *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Danger of Leading*, Heifetz suggests that to intentionally take members through this process and do so in a way that strategically manages the emotions and changes people will experience, you must “Orchestrate the Conflict.” To do so, Heifetz recommends leaders do four things with great intention: Create a holding environment, control the temperature, set the pace, and show them the future – suggestions in agreement with focusing direction and setting goals from the coherence framework. In order to create the holding environment, Heifetz explains that, “When you exercise leadership, you need a holding environment to contain and adjust the heat that is being generated by addressing difficult issues or wide value differences” (p. 102). In short, this allows for a space to tackle challenges, to have conflict, to disagree and agree, or in other words – to develop shared purpose.
Amy Edmonson refers to the condition necessary for such exchanges as “psychological safety,” and explains: “Because...vital interpersonal exchanges don’t always happen spontaneously, leaders must facilitate them by creating a climate of psychological safety in which it’s expected that people will speak up and disagree” (2012, p. 9). This practice is not necessarily new to leadership - it’s always been recommended that one “practices what they preach” or model what one wants others to do, or how one wants them to act. However, this practice takes on an interesting turn and becomes slightly (if not substantially) more challenging when that practice involves holding conflict, tension, and creating the space where everyone on a team feels safe to enter into those areas as well. Even when a leader manages to create an environment of psychological safety, one where conflict is orchestrated and takes into consideration the stages of team development, there are still barriers! That’s right, even after all this work, individual people come with their own unique packaging, personality, and perceptions. This is where the true work of creating the conditions of psychological safety and orchestrating conflict exist. Each person will test out the environment to see where they can engage, to what extent, and when, and this will all be measured against their level of understanding, perceived or real, of how the group will respond.

A person’s status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and/or fairness being called into question or threatened must be taken into consideration. This research comes from the SCARF model of approach or avoid, the reward or threat understanding for how people engage with one another. David Rock (2008), co-founder of the NeuroLeadership Institute and Editor of the NeuroLeadership Journal, summarizes the SCARF model and its five domains of human social experience. Rock explains, “Status is about relative
importance to others. Certainty concerns being able to predict the future. Autonomy provides a sense of control over events. Relatedness is a sense of safety with others, of friend rather than foe. And fairness is a perception of fair exchanges between people” (p. 1). The research around the SCARF model suggests that the drivers of human behavior are activated by whether or not a person feels one or more of their domains is either under threat, which can actually trigger similar reactions to having one’s life threatened, or whether one or more of their domains are being rewarded, in which case, the behavior and interaction is reinforcing. What this means for creating collaborative cultures is that as a facilitator or leader, working to create the conditions for psychological safety and aiming to “orchestrate the conflict,” one must take into account what is necessary in order to reduce the triggers that cause people to avoid engaging, and increase those that work to engage and allow members to approach the work. **Creating these conditions and being mindful of the response and reaction throughout, is the leadership work.** Rock further illustrates the fragile nature of these drivers and interactions: “Many everyday conversations devolve into arguments driven by a status threat, a desire to not be perceived as less than another” (p. 4). Finally, returning to coherence and one of the four crucial drivers of “collaborative cultures,” Fullan and Quinn (2016) remind leaders that “Meaningful collaborative work is more likely to flourish when the foundation conditions are in place” (p. 65). These foundational conditions, explained here with the help of Tuckman, Lencioni, Heifetz, Edmondson, and Rock, are vital components of a district approach to building cultures of collaboration.
Implications and Conclusion

As OUSD reconciles enrollment declines and as a result, its budget crisis, while simultaneously aiming to deliver on its ambitions to be all things to all kids, they have the opportunity to improve the options for alternatives and recuperation opportunities while also increasing the ability of the core offerings to be responsive (see Appendix F: Simultaneous system improvement in a Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework). These efforts, however, will demand that OUSD do some detailed work around developing a focused direction, a shared mindset, and collaborative cultures in order for leadership at school and district levels to be held accountable to improving outcomes for students and share learning along the way. Improvement from both ends of the PK-12 spectrum could decrease the need for alternative programs for purposes of solely serving students who are off-track, and develop more responsive options for students who do in fact fall off-track to graduation, and furthermore, for those students seeking more responsive learning experiences. The YTFG guide highlights, “…nearly all districts analyzing these factors have concluded that course failure—especially at the ninth grade—is the single most powerful indicator of students who will fall off-track to graduation” (p. 5), conjuring critical questions to ask such as, “What are the middle school characteristics of entering ninth graders, e.g.: proficiency test scores, GPA, number of courses failed, attendance, number of grade retentions, number of suspensions, number of schools attended?” (p. 21). The data we need to answer these questions is not available in a dashboard form in OUSD. And as we are implored to do, we must answer the call to respond: “Districts play a key role in ensuring that schools have information on educational needs of incoming ninth graders as soon as possible to enable greater
responsiveness” (p. 24). Developing our shared mindset, collaborative culture, methods of trust, and shared learning – our coherence – remains a critical priority for OUSD.

**Theory of Action**

In my introduction to OUSD, as well as in my research, I was struck by the lack of understanding regarding how and why students explore alternative options, how they are assigned to those options, and how they are supported early in their academic experience. The district approach appeared to be more reactive than proactive. I began exploring the relationship and collaboration between the secondary district leadership, particularly the high school principals, and found little collaboration. With coherence as a necessary ingredient to comprehensive and wraparound support, my initial theory of action (ToA) was: *If I convene, facilitate, and lead the team of educators/leaders of the alternative sites, then there will be opportunities for idea exchange, thought-partnership, and collaboration, which will in turn result in greater coherence, mission alignment, and improved practices across all alternative options available to families in OUSD.* After leading this work, my evolved ToA was: *If I discover and understand the barriers and threats that the alternative education site leaders experience to working as a team and if I effectively create the conditions that are responsive to those barriers and threats so that members experience psychological safety, agency, and productivity, then there will be a collaborative team leading alternative education in OUSD, which in turn will result in greater coherence, articulated mission and vision alignment, improved practices and programming for students and families, increased agency of leaders and staff, and the*

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9 Amy Edmondson defines psychological safety as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.
ability to advocate for the long-term growth needs and sustainability for alternative education in OUSD. My initial thinking, which illuminated one of my big assumptions about teaming, emphasized that simply getting people to work together would foster the necessary power to enhance alternative education in the district and bring about greater coherence. However, as I illustrate in the implications section, I have learned that coherence is not dependent solely on a team, but on other factors for collaboration as well.

After convening this team and identifying gaps in coherence, the same trends continued to emerge from our conversations (see Appendix G: Leadership meeting agenda). There was a disconnect in the understanding between the comprehensive site principals as to why students were pursuing alternative options, having not realized some ways in which their sites were not meeting the needs of all students, and with the alternative site principals who were constantly asking the question as to why students were enrolling into their programs and schools with such credit deficiencies. Questions that continued to emerge were:

- Why aren’t we noticing these students earlier?
- How can we ensure that identified students receive the best support?
- How can we ensure options are high-quality and equitable?
- How can we retain students and parents through improved options?

After wrestling with these questions with this group of leaders, I was rerouted to my original research regarding early warning indicators and support, the quality of interventions for purposes of recovery, and the ability to reconnect students who fall off-track. My emphasis on teaming and convening leaders to examine our practices in alternative education, as well as the core, resurfaced the themes around early intervention
and prevention, effectively redirecting to where the problem was in the first place. It was only after this redirection, that I discovered the Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework and research and revised my theory of action\textsuperscript{10} to the following (Table 1:

Theory of Action):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“If” Statement</th>
<th>Selected Evidence of Leadership</th>
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| **If I:**  
* (purpose) Facilitate learning and a shared understanding (knowledge base) of what a Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework looks like for OUSD and how it complements and strengthens our current practices; and  
| Share MPG framework and connect concept to Oceanside Promise, district’s goals, and district’s needs as far as increasing enrollment.  
Solicit feedback regularly from leadership, principals, and school staff about district’s capacity and opportunity to implement MPG.  
Leverage and hold in reverence the history of the district’s approach to alternative education.  
Demonstrate the need for greater coherence among systems to ensure more effective transitions for students as well as best practices.  
Highlight best practices and successful implementation of MPG from other districts (Portland Public Schools – Oregon)  
|  
| **(task) Partner with members of leadership (cabinet and principal leadership) in identifying strengths/gaps in our current practices; and**  
| ID current best practices, even if in silos.  
Survey stakeholders to gain qualitative data and understanding of context.  
|  
| **(task) foster coherence across current practices and processes and facilitate the development of solutions for identified gaps, where partners perceive constraints as opportunity for innovation; and pilot three initiatives as part of an MPG framework that are accessible and hold potential for momentum,**  
| 1. Develop and implement the use of an early warning indicators system for K-8.  
2. Amplify and build on work of MTSS planning from previous year, as part of EWS.  
3. Push out support in partnership with community agencies for independent study  
Re vamp the current system used in secondary (specifically HS)  
|  
| **THEN:**  
OUSD will be prepared to implement an MPG framework that provides a “no wrong door” education system where students and families can choose the approach that best fits their needs and one where students receive appropriate and necessary interventions and support PK-12.  
| Develop a “one-stop-shop” where all options for students and families are provided and from which they can choose.  
Families have more choice.  
Enrollment increases, as well as ADA.  
Coherent vision and practices to support students for purposes of prevention, intervention, and beyond.  

\textsuperscript{10} This model of a theory of action is adapted from the example of Dr. Mary Wall: Wall, Mary C. 2017. A Bias Toward Teams: Are We Teaming Well? Does It Even Matter? Implications for Teams in Public School Districts From a Case Study at Boston Public Schools. Doctoral Capstone, Harvard Graduate School of Education.
Description, Evidence, and Analysis of the Strategic Project

Description: Observations, Learnings, and Questions

As an overview, my project consisted of developing an MPG framework that the district would adopt as their model and problem-solving approach to intervene with students earlier and more equitably – in regard to number and quality of later options.

Tasked with “innovating in the alternative education space,” I began with that context in mind and began backwards-mapping from the experience of students who were participating in alternative options. I asked questions such as, “How did students arrive at the alternative models?” and “Did our system set them up for success early?” Through use of the MPG framework, I examined how OUSD supports students to remain on track to graduation, recuperate when off-track, and recover when disconnected completely. I tested these three areas with smaller pilots, in some places leveraging work that is occurring in pockets in the district, and in others, trying something new to push the responsive capacity. In that regard, the work around building early warning systems and reviving previous work around MTSS fall into the intersecting remain and recuperate buckets. The pilot for the AARC in the Park falls into the intersection of recuperate and recover. The work to integrate all these attempts is my push for coherence in how the district responds to students’ learning, diversifies options, and commits to a "no wrong door" policy for students and families. Finally, I approached this work by immersing myself in the work at the school sites, with teachers, staff, students, and principals.
Doing the work

I began my residency with both a broad and narrow mandate. The broad mandate was that given to me by district leadership to find ways to enhance and innovate within the alternative models in OUSD. The narrow mandate became clearer and more defined as I pursued my initial wonderings and held conversations with a variety of stakeholders. I wanted to find ways to improve practices in the recuperate and recover spaces in the district, while also looking at how we might improve in helping students remain on track to graduation.

I wanted to ensure that my research, observations, and understanding would be firmly rooted in the history and experience of Oceanside, while also sharpened through best practices beyond our district, so I chose to prioritize learning at a deeper level the context, successes, and challenges in Oceanside the city and in the school system. As indicated in my Theory of Action, I wanted to learn how efforts were coordinated, get a sense of the culture of collaboration, and learn about the larger spoken and unspoken expectations as they pertain to how coherence is or is not built. I conducted site visits to all AARCs, as well as to other school sites and departments in the district. By February 2018, I visited 20 of the 26 sites. During my visits, I supported students in small group work settings (tutoring, mentoring, etc.), as getting proximate to students provided firsthand information about the impact of the school’s and district’s processes, priorities, and procedures. From my countless interviews, home visits, and intake meetings, which tell similar stories to the three experiences I have shared, I tried to identify and codify a profile of a typical student in the alternative and/or non-traditional options, both for my own understanding and at the request of district leaders. What I have found instead is, for
every student I meet and every story told, I discover another reason for alternative options. I came to understand that a true promise of personalized learning is in being responsive to the individual learning needs and personal circumstances of each student.

I made it a goal to participate in: daily professional learning community (PLC) meetings at sites, home visits, intakes with counselors and teachers, and interviews with students (current and former) in order to better understand their experience as “the customer,” how their experience in OUSD has benefitted them, and/or what “customer service” gaps existed. I interviewed families of OUSD students (current and former) for the same reason. I also participated in weekly meetings with district leadership including: the Superintendent, Board members, and members of executive staff including the Deputy Superintendent, Senior Directors, Project Specialists and Coordinators. I had over 100 conversations with community members including: President of Rotary, local pastors, mental health and counseling agency employees, members of Chamber of Commerce, staff at Housing Authority and the Oceanside Promise Foundation, etc. I conducted observations of and participated in district meetings. I also completed power mapping to determine where formal/informal authority exists within school sites, within departments, and throughout the district and larger community – even becoming an official (and youngest) member of the local Rotary club. And finally, I requested office space at a school rather than at the district office in order to be rooted in the student and staff experience, while at the same time having full access to district leadership.

At the systems-level, my work consisted primarily of leading principal professional development (PD). My goal in leading professional development for principals was to better understand how coherence was created, or not, at the district
level, as well as support principals’ learning and leadership through times of significant uncertainty. I wanted to better understand how principals were supported in decision-making, how they were or were not provided with autonomy, and what type of direction they received from the district in their own initiatives at their sites. I led sessions on norming and purpose-setting towards improved district-to-school/principal collaboration, as well as facilitated sessions to build coherence between district and school leadership, and collaboration towards the development of some common goals among principals. I viewed these actions and leadership moves as part of my broad mandate. These actions enabled me to build relationships and trust with those doing the work, use their experiences and circumstances firsthand to inform my knowledge, research, and recommendations, and begin to chip away at my narrower mandate – which would actually become more significant.

By immersing myself in the culture of OUSD, my primary aim was to learn about and hold in reverence the experience of others as I was a new person stepping into a new space. I recalled an encouraging conversation with Professor Ron Heifetz prior to embarking on my residency in which he reminded me what is core to this “problem of practice” and strategic project. Heifetz shared that for each system at its most foundational level, there is a kid (personal communication, May 4, 2017). He explained that around every single child is an ecosystem including but not limited to: a school, a faith community, a family, a neighborhood, and a group of peers. Considering Heifetz’s theory and my own experience, I wanted to listen to those who had grown accustomed to not being heard, learn through conversation and questions, and challenge my own assumptions. As I considered the project ahead, I committed to being mindfully listening
for ways the district might develop the capacity to work the ecosystem around each of its students to ensure its delivery method and experience is for them.

Additionally, I remained interested to learn if there was a dashboard in the district to identify students early in their academic careers for intervention. In my initial research around early warning indicators, a common best practice of districts was to use a dashboard to identify students early. I returned to my three central questions: *How do we use broad data (meaning aggregate and disaggregated data) to prevent kids from getting off-track? How do we use that data to create a portfolio of options to meet the needs of kids & families when they get off track? How do we ensure each component (program/school/setting) in the portfolio of options is highly qualified, positioning kids for college and career opportunity?* I captured my understanding and initial landscape analysis along the way (for landscape analysis notes see Appendix H). I shared this document with my supervisor, the deputy superintendent, and three board members as I began my initial conversations regarding what I had observed. My goal was to gauge from them whether or not this coincided with what they experienced, and to what extent there was a shared mindset and focused direction around the work in the district.

**Remain and recuperate: Building EWS and leveraging MTSS work**

Building our capacity to help for prevention and intervention consisted of me bringing departments together, collecting data for principals/schools to use to intervene early, working with directors to make the data “digestible” and usable, and most importantly, listening to those doing the work and getting proximate to the challenges. As EWS work shifted towards a persisting need in OUSD, the implementation of an MTSS approach, I shifted some of my processes as well. I worked with principals and teachers...
and we diagnosed a gap in programming and discussed possible root causes, I revived the MTSS task force from previous year, whose work was important but was never implemented, and again, I prioritized listening to those doing the work and got proximate to challenges by being in the schools, meetings, and conversations around MTSS.

I met with OUSD’s Educational Technology Coordinator (ETC) to discuss his understanding of a district dashboard for early warning indicators. I knew that he had been in the district for a long time, had experience as a teacher, and was part of the initial team several years ago who began asking similar questions around dashboards. Having been an AVID teacher and trained on using indicators at the secondary level to determine a student’s progress and whether or not they were at-risk of not graduating, he wanted to systemize this process for the district because there was not one in use at the time. The platform used by the district allowed for the creation of an early warning indicator system and dashboard. By 2015, the ETC and his team built an EWS dashboard for high school that consisted of a list of indicators and were assigned point values. In essence, the higher the overall point value for a student, the more concerned someone should be about that student’s likelihood of graduating.

However, there was little evidence of use of the dashboard in the district, and further, the dashboard was only functional for high school students, which meant that students were in our district nearly nine years, or 1,650 days, before we used data to “flag” them for being at-risk or potentially off-track to graduation. This gap is not to say however, that other practices were not being employed. In fact, what became clear was counselors, teachers, principals, and other staff created their own practices to monitor student progress and had methods to intervene early on in a child’s academic career.
What was lacking was a coherent and comprehensive approach to ensure that no students were falling through the cracks. To develop a better approach, I solicited principals’ input. Working with a group of principals in elementary and middle school to determine what indicators they would like to see used and what information would be most helpful to them, I shared that having five to seven indicators that range from attendance, behavior data, number of failing grades, early literacy, etc., is best practice.

I met again with the tech/data and accountability team to revisit our conversation about creating a data dashboard for early warning indicators that principals, teachers, and counselors could begin using – particularly at the K-8 level. The platform that I planned on using was likely being phased out and creating a dashboard as a function would not be available next year. Discouraged and surprised, I pressed for why this decision was being made as it seemed to be a step in the wrong direction, even further away from having more predictive data. I learned that the dashboard created previously for one of the high schools has zero usability and a big reason why, according to the team, was the heavy data input and labor-intensive process needed for the dashboard. Additionally, the measures were not predictive at all, and while this is not the most important use of EWS data – it does encourage use. Finally, returning to the coherence framework, there was no accountability in place to encourage those at school sites to use the data for a specific purpose. I was pleased to learn that the team I was working with (data, tech, accountability) could create a simple dashboard for these same purposes. Further, they could improve usability for grades 5-12, pull all the data for teachers and principals and counselors, and share the data in raw and analyzed form with color-coded themes to identify students of concern. Additionally, we selected our own indicators to focus on:
math grades and English grades (on a scale 1-4, with 2 or less showing concern), attendance patterns, and discipline data separated into classroom versus schoolwide incidents (see Appendix I for most recent development). Our progress meant that principals, teachers, and counselors would have this data at their disposal, already analyzed and color-coded for them, and hopefully be a first step in moving towards more responsive approaches earlier on. The next move, which we discussed, would be to move towards a more standards-based assessment and data platform that will provide standards-based feedback and provide more opportunity for intervention earlier on with more specificity on student need.

**Recuperate and recover: Building the “AARC in the Park” pilot**

At the intersection of the recuperate and recover levers from the MPG approach, stood the idea of how to bring independent study opportunities to students, through the use of community centers, rather than expecting them to come to the sites for opportunities to gain credit. To create urgency and build will around this pilot I used research for Community Based Organizations from the MPG framework, which I shared with staff and leadership. To make the shift feasible, I created schedules with options and worked through multiple iterations with teachers interested in supporting the initiative. I fostered the relationship between staff and community partners, such as leadership at the community parks and recreation department. I secured buy-in from leadership that this idea would work, but that they would also enthusiastically support it if it meant we were catching students who were leaving OUSD. And finally, I worked to merge needs between students, schools, and community by exploring convenient but also practical
opportunities for them to reconnect in a low-risk setting, with a teacher who would be effective at building a relationship with them and support them academically.

While Clair Burgener and the AARCs in general run an independent study model, their program still struggles with maintaining daily attendance and therefore, bringing in ADA for the district and ensuring that students who need credits to graduate are earning those credits. There are a number of reasons as to why students are not attending even the alternative options regularly and some of them include: working at a job instead of attending school, the necessity to cross gang lines, the time of day they are assigned a block at IS (some students struggle with the early start time), or other personal reasons. Regardless of the particular reason, we see an opportunity to bring the education and opportunity to the students – ensuring access and equity in the program and approaching the education of each student with a “no barriers” mindset.

In a ride-along with a long-time community partner and head of the housing authority/parks and recreation of Oceanside, I noticed that the community recreation centers had several promising amenities that could be leveraged and used to reach more students. They were proximate to the students, situated in neighborhoods and specifically intended to support those neighborhoods only, were generally in good condition, and had Wi-Fi and other resources that could be utilized. They were mostly empty during the day or had sparse programming, providing open blocks of time throughout the day of free space. After the ride-along, I pitched the idea to the principal of taking the IS blocks to the neighborhoods to potentially reach additional students and she was supportive. She shared the idea with staff during the PLC, and received interest from several staff
members. From there, we met again with the parks and rec director and we began planning for options at three community centers.

Tuesday, November 28, 2017, we began our initial planning during the daily PLC. The program received its first major endorsement with an appropriate nickname: AARC in the Park. It was rewarding and encouraging to see staff at CBA provide multiple options and suggestions about who would be best served by this attempt – would it be expelled students, those with attendance issues, those who skipped first block? Additionally, what would it look like to entice those who were initially reluctant to come to the CBA site to eventually feel welcomed and encouraged enough to walk through the front doors? In essence, our greatest selling point is the relationships built between students and teachers, and we were banking on that being what draws more and more students into such a model.

Creating coherence: shared purpose, collective action, and collaboration

I attempted to bring many of the promising, but disparate, practices across the district into a more coherent and integrated approach that would help us focus our direction and develop a shared mindset, set of actions, and role clarity around creating options for students. As part of this work, I aimed to stretch the responsiveness of the district through implementing two smaller, but impactful, components of an MPG framework through developing an EWS dashboard that would complement the developing but not-yet-implemented MTSS process and by creating more re-entry options for students through community site-based independent study. My attempt at building coherence consisted of securing buy-in from the senior director (my supervisor), the deputy superintendent, the superintendent, and the union president by sharing with
them how an MPG framework and approach connected, amplified, and leveraged previous work, as well as how it filled some of our gaps in programming in regard to lack of implementation of MTSS, soaring SPED numbers with rising costs, and lack of knowledge by families of the options OUSD provided. Additionally, I shared ideas for common language, such as how an MPG framework integrates district work around personalizing learning, MTSS, and the Oceanside Promise – to name a few. Finally, I leveraged the listening I had done to those doing the work and shared stories and examples of what I had heard.

**Evidence**

**Survey from an MPG Landscape Analysis**

I collected qualitative data from district leadership, school principals, and teachers and staff (including counselors) regarding the district’s capacity and current practices to help students **remain** on track to graduation early, **recuperate** when they fall off-track, and **recover** when they disconnect from school completely. The survey tool (see Appendix J for the survey communication) has been a way for me to understand the perspective and assessment of staff, while also to elicit innovative ideas and suggestions to build on and improve the district’s current practices.
Remain: Assessing OUSD’s effectiveness to support students to remain on-track

![Figure 8: OUSD’s effectiveness at using early warning indicators (data and responses)](image)

On a scale from 1 (ineffective) to 5 (extremely effective), respondents rated the district’s capacity to support students to remain on track through early prevention and intervention at 2.81 (Figure 8). (See Appendix K for responses). Most responses suggested that practices are disparate and varied from site to site and many responses highlighted the Student Study Team (SST) as a process that was available, but inconsistently used. Further, where used, the SST process seemed to be a favorable practice for discussing student progress. The data revealed that when student progress is discussed after formative assessments, student concerns are identified sooner rather than later. A gap that was illuminated was that after students were discussed, next steps for prevention or intervention were not discussed. One respondent said, “…formative feedback by grade level to support areas of strength and struggle and addressing areas of student need is something we say we do but focused effort isn’t always present,” suggesting a challenge with accountability. This trend was present in the responses from district leadership and site principals, counselors, and teachers.
Recuperate: Assessing OUSD’s effectiveness to support students to recuperate when they fall off-track

Slightly higher in average, was respondents’ rating of OUSD’s effectiveness at and capacity to support students when they fall off-track, at 2.92 (see Figure 9) (see Appendix L for responses). Most responses highlighted programs such as CBA and Ocean Shores, the continuation high school, as options available to students. Largely absent from responses were mention of the AARC programs and credit recovery classes on the comprehensive campuses, virtual/homeschool options, and when mentioned – quality, beyond concerns with the rigor of the curriculum – was mostly ignored.

Where concerns were noted, curriculum was at the root. According to the MPG Landscape Analysis survey I conducted, one respondent notes: “…we need more work on making sure these students are being supported with challenging curriculum across all alternative choices.” Another response highlights the gap in district response: “…there is no systematic long-term strategy. Currently, the system waits until the end of the semester to ID kids who now completely failed.” Finally, one elementary school response points to the inconsistency that has become a theme in my inquiry, saying, “At the elementary level, it has been hit and miss practices which lack consistent support.”
Important to note here is that the district, while having limited options for **recuperation**, does have an increasingly effective model for best practice and potential for scale. Returning the Urban Institute’s “Attributes For High-Quality of Alternative Ed” *(see Figure 10)*, Clair Burgener Academy meets nearly all of the descriptors for effective alternative education. While the rigor of student work remains a challenge, which staff at CBA will share – illustrating the A-G requirement gap noted earlier - and the funding is not diverse (CBA only receives funding through ADA, which can be problematic), on nearly every other indicator CBA is excelling. Telling this story about the best practices of CBA in conversations with leadership, board members, community, and in director meetings became a regular practice of mine. Reframing the narrative was my goal and became an important part of shifting the conversation on effective personalized options. Some notable components of CBA (and Independent Study) that demonstrate effectiveness are as follows: Every week on Fridays, the whole school comes together at the beginning of each block (students attend CBA in blocks and come and go throughout the day) for “Family Meetings,” where students are celebrated for progress, goals are addressed, and culture is built within a small community. All certified staff participate in a daily professional learning community (PLC), which is staff-led to discuss student progress, challenges, and plans for action. Every student signs a contract that commits them to a weekly check-in with each teacher, where goals and progress are addressed and revised. While the site is independent study, teachers still offer workshop opportunities that address the direct instruction needs that some students have. The site also offers a seat time option for students who are not meeting IS expectations, which layers the support and intervention for students who are off-track. This year, the school has opened
a 5th block for expelled students, previously a gap in the district’s programming. The site accepts and tailors curriculum for 5th-year seniors, providing them with one more option prior to having to enroll in adult education. Home visits are conducted on an almost daily basis to meet families, meet students where they are, check-in on their well-being, and ensure they’re meeting the expectations spelled out in their contract. The campus, while small, is also mighty in regard to the wrap-around support offered to students which includes but is not limited to: drug counseling, Migrant Education to support immigrant families with a variety of needs, Interfaith organization that offers career support in the local community, family counseling that offers on-site counseling for students and connects families with supports outside of the school, a group of counselors and educators who have an office on-site and respond to crisis needs, social worker/psychologist and student interns who support students on a daily basis, and environment and space at CBA that is aesthetically welcoming and encouraging. Finally, CBA is an exemplar because they heed the challenges that research has shown, that alternative pathways can become a second-class system and further institutionalize tracking. By providing student choice, ensuring opportunities for re-enrollment in “traditional” school, and enforcing quality measures to prevent separate and unequal programming across alternative programs, the CBA leadership and staff are attempting to meet the immediate needs of a growing student population while also planning for sustainability and effectiveness long-term.
Recover: Assessing OUSD’s effectiveness to support students to recover when they disconnect completely

Responses for this component of a comprehensive prevention and intervention model were mixed with an average response of 2.76 out of 5 (see Figure 11) (see
Appendix M responses), noting a mostly ineffective district response. While many respondents were not aware of opportunities for students to recover and reconnect when they have disconnected completely, some answers pointed back to the independent study models as a possibility, although not necessarily sure if that was an option. Otherwise, responses suggested a gap in understanding between counselors and administrators at all sites for what types of opportunities were available for this type of student and situation.

**Remain and recuperate: Early warning systems and MTSS**

After working with a small group of directors and tech staff, we determined the previous tool for building an EWS dashboard was inadequate and decided to move towards a new tool. I was able to have the indicators readily available with the team to build this new tool based on the conversations with principals and what was supported by research. Our final list of indicators included: attendance, behavior incidents (in and out of school), math and science grades beginning in 4th grade. A significant challenge was spending the necessary time with the programmers in tech, who often spoke a different language than I in regard to what data systems could and could not do. Listening,
paraphrasing, making sense, and asking questions were practices for all of us during those meetings. The tool is in development stages for use going into 2018-19 school year and, because it was important to have a level of accountability – one of the core drivers of building coherence – we scheduled regular times to check-in on progress on the new tool, refining it with principal/teacher input.

Regarding MTSS, after I used survey data to contribute to a diagnosed gap in programming and identified root causes, I shared findings far and wide to develop common concern. I supported learnings with survey data to match gaps and opportunities for next steps. And I worked to revive the task force from the previous year by meeting one-on-one with members, then coordinating a larger meeting. From these meetings, I worked with district leadership to re-introduce the MTSS process on a suggestion from the task force and as a result, district leadership approved ten MTSS “Teacher on special assignment (TOSA)” positions for the 2018-19 school year.

**Recuperate and recover: AARC in the Park**

By February 2018, I was able to gain enough traction with CBA staff to gather the necessary feedback and present the Associate Superintendent of Human Resources and the Deputy Superintendent with options for launching the AARC in the Park model (see Appendix N for notes and options for AARC in the Park). I recently followed up with my contact at parks and recreation, and she gave the green light as well. Pending OUSD cabinet approval, we can pilot before the end of the year, which could be an opportune time to do so because it would provide an entry point for students that allows for them to ease into a site in the fall. The proposal included: research around best practices,
identified gaps, opportunities to recuperate credits and ADA for students, with examples from other districts/cities, and possible schedules.

**Creating coherence: shared purpose, collective action, and collaboration**

I have been slowly building a common commitment with district leadership for next year beginning with EWS, MTSS, and AARC in the Park. I have secured the necessary teacher and counselor commitment to implementation by providing pathways to opportunity and committing to the work alongside them, as well as buy-in from senior leadership and union leadership.

I recently sat in a board showcase where middle school and high school administrators shared updates with the school board regarding their progress and their success, and I noticed an emerging theme. Teams from an elementary and middle school shared their vision of a “California Street Academy of Science and Engineering,” a small high school concept that would extend the science, technology, engineering, and math emphasis from K-8 to 60 students in a ninth-grade model, adding a grade each year. Oceanside High School representatives shared the vision for “Pirate Pathways,” a wall-to-wall pathway model that would create additional entry points for students based on their interests and needs. Additionally, administration from OHS shared that an emphasis for them this year was a shift towards being more intentional about intervention during the common formative assessment cycles. Administration from the other comprehensive high school chose to focus on a “School is Real” concept, emphasizing the opportunity for students to pursue their strengths, interests, and values through “real world” entrepreneurial options – again, providing multiple points of access to all students. All presentations were coupled with the overall sentiment of the board supporting the notion
that more opportunities for engagement, access, and personalized learning were critical moving forward.

At the site in particular, my role was to understand the intake process, the course assignment, and the contract agreement between student and school, and to offer feedback on ways to improve this process from start to finish. Much of the improvement opportunities existed in bringing clarity and congruence to the process from one site to the next. After participating in intakes at the three sites, I worked with counselors and teachers to lift up best practices and highlight discrepancies, ultimately ensuring that students at each AARC were receiving similar intake instructions and plans for success. In my intake meetings with principals, staff, and students, I saw many promising practices being applied to personalize and customize learning and plans for success for students. In particular, I observed an integrated, “tag team” approach, where students meet with administration, counselors, and teachers in order to develop their plan for graduation. Students were provided with options regarding how they wanted to complete their courses, by when, and in what order. From my observations, this coordination fostered agency and engagement on behalf of the student. For example, once, a student noted to the counselor that they finally felt like they could “keep up;” another time, a student who would be taking courses through dual-enrollment at the community college learned how to advocate for accommodations given his current individualized education plan (IEP).

I observed that these processes existed in a vacuum though and were largely specific to each site. While the district leadership is looking to schools and principals to elicit personalized learning practices, the sharing of and coordination of these practices
are virtually non-existent - which could prove to be a significant missed opportunity. I worked directly with the site principal to build out learning agendas for both Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. These meetings, the reflection after, and my own personal reflection were used to make sense of the changing landscape in real-time in hopes of getting us to shift to a responsive approach as we plan for continuing growth. Finally, at the site-level, I supported the principal and staff in launching the TK-5 virtual/homeschool program as an extension of the independent study model.

**Analysis**

**Revering the context**

Respecting the context and environment through finding ways to tap into current work and goals, sharing stories of students, exploring cost-neutral (or saving) measures, and building slowly – but mindfully - due to challenges with union and district, are leadership approaches I chose to employ and that helped the success of this project.

Clair Burgener Academy, an independent study option run as a satellite AARC from the comprehensive high schools, is a place in which I immersed myself into the daily life of students who are served by and are selecting the alternative options. My immersive approach worked on two levels: one, it enabled me to see firsthand the challenges, successes, and opportunities to both amplify and improve upon; and two, it enabled me to build trust with students over time, a necessary ingredient in a place like CBA to hear the student perspective.
Creating coherence through the power of the one-on-one

In this project, I built capacity, understanding, shared purpose, and common language – one meeting at a time. I lifted up individual understanding that was common in spaces where collective action was needed, and utilized a one-on-one approach that I had observed to be effective in organizing practices. Senior Lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School and veteran organizer Marshall Ganz highlights the importance of one-on-one relationship building noting: “Leadership begins with understanding yourself: your values, your motivation, your story. But leadership is about enabling others to achieve purpose. The foundation of this kind of leadership is the relationships built with others, most especially others with whom we can share leadership” (personal communication, organizing workshop, April 2016).

My role and project were largely undefined beyond “innovating in alternative education,” so I needed to make sense of what this charge meant in OUSD by talking with others, listening, and observing. While I understood there was a desire from district leadership to innovate and/or improve the alternative education options for students in Oceanside, I wanted to understand why that was identified as a need and what others perceived as a need. The “problem” can actually be in how the “problem” is framed to begin with. By devoting a large piece of my time to observing where I was welcomed, holding one-on-one conversations with whomever would talk with me, and utilizing many of the same skills for questioning that I learned as a public narrative coach, I was able to better understand how I could be of value to the district, the students, and the families. However, this approach took a tremendous amount of time. Returning to organizing practices for one-on-one meetings, Ganz and other organizers follow five key
steps to successful one on one meetings, they are: **Attention**, being up front about the purpose of meeting; **Interest**, share common values and interests up front to connect with each other and with the purpose of the conversation; **Exploration**, asking probing questions to learn about the other person’s values, interests, and resources; **Exchange**, of resources, ideas, and mutual support laying the groundwork for future collaboration; and **Commitment**, ensuring that there is follow-up and reconnection in the future. As I utilized this approach in my one-on-one conversations, it created accountability and the need to follow-up with others so that the progress wouldn’t be loss, and moving towards coherence would be possible.

Another reason I prioritized one-on-one conversations as a means to organize people, ideas, and bring about some type of coherence, was that relational politics are important in OUSD. I needed to constantly make connections between ideas of different people as a way to build social capital and gain credibility. I learned early that there were often competing frames in regard to what effective alternative education looked like, whether or not we needed alternative education, and what stereotypes people held of students and families pursuing alternative options. Additionally, relationships matter tremendously in Oceanside, a town where people are so intricately connected through friends, family, school, work, community, etc. I found that if I could make connections between two people who knew each other, had worked with each other, and perhaps needed only an indication of agreement from the other person they knew – I could make progress. In essence, I built relationships, which took time and patience, to leverage existing relationships and move ideas forward. For example, two months into my residency, I was asked by the principal at my office site if I would be willing to share
office space with a local pastor, community organizer, and lifelong resident of Oceanside. I had met this man previously at a community literacy event and after moments of interacting with him, it was clear that he held significant knowledge, influence, and command in the city. Sharing space with him was an opportunity for me to learn from him, better understand Oceanside and the stories of the community who look to him for guidance, and to have access to more people. The access that his mere presence provided in my interacting with students and community members cannot be understated.

Finally, I felt a moral mandate to do more and do it earlier for kids at CBA. The problem I ran into often, though, was groupthink. I noticed early on that when I convened groups, the agenda would morph into something else and the time was ineffective. I identified a challenge of not operating with a shared mindset and a clear purpose in mind. Coupled with an absence of a mandate from the district, which often received more response from principals, teachers, etc., there was not accountability driving the purpose behind these meetings, either. Thus, I recognized that I needed to build a collective understanding and shared mindset around common threads that emerged in one-on-one meetings, to join together later in the stream of work. An example is how I came to understand that there was previously an MTSS task force working on intervention and prevention. Several different people in one-on-one conversations shared about their work as part of the task force, how it should be revived, and what work would continue when rejoined. It was more time-consuming, but I saw it as necessary. Sometimes, however, what lacks in terms of achieving coherence is not simply teams or people collaborating. And in fact, getting people together in teams is not always necessarily a good thing.

Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn (2016) caution against this thinking saying, “Groups
are powerful, which means that they can be powerfully wrong. Getting together without
the discipline and specificity of collective deliberation can be a grand waste of time” (p. 13). Though reflection on the coherence framework that emphasizes collaborative
cultures as one of the many necessary drivers to coherence is helpful, I decided to
increase the number of 1:1 meetings because I could move ideas and conversations
forward much more effectively one-on-one, leveraging relationships and illuminating the
work already happening in the district, to get buy-in.

As I utilized this approach throughout residency, I found that in one-on-one’s, participants would reference another conversation they had with a colleague about the work I was part of (EWS, MPG, MTSS, etc.). When that was mentioned, I offered to bring those stakeholders together. For example, two recent one-on-one meetings occurred with a special education teacher and a school psychologist, both of whom were previously on a task force that worked on developing an MTSS approach for the district. After spending time with them individually, bridging their work and understanding around my own, we moved to coordinate a larger meeting more inclusive of the entire task force from the year before where we would revive the group’s previous work and build from there. It took extra time than simply calling a meeting, but it was built out of shared purpose and focused direction – as well as “the why” – and because of that, I believe it was worth the extra time.

**Amplifying and building from the current work**

As a resident with a new title to the district, as well as having an office out of the school site and not at the district office, my role was often perceived as ambiguous and
mostly undefined. Given that, plus the current state of the district, I found it most useful to find work that aligned with programs and ideas that were already gaining traction such as the Oceanside Promise, social emotional learning, and personalized learning. I wanted to complement the work happening and amplify the success already gaining steam. I also wanted to operate as much as possible under the radar of the teachers’ association, to avoid the overall environment of the challenging negotiations process. It is also fair to say that my inexperience with unions (my prior professional experience was in North Carolina, a “right-to-work” state) prior to my role in OUSD contributed to me not engaging with union leadership initially. Avoiding collaborating with union leadership proved impossible because late in the game the AARC in the Park pilot was stalled due to contract language. In late January, I was called into a meeting with the associate superintendent of human resources whose curiosity was piqued during a cabinet meeting when “AARC in the Park” was referenced. During this meeting, we reviewed contract language that spelled out exactly what a teacher’s day and contractual hours could and could not entail. After discussing possible hours, I knew I had to go back to the teachers and work out a more specific schedule, detail the schedule in a contract, pursue an addendum to the association’s contract, get approval from the president, then approval from cabinet. While I had met with the union president earlier in the year, shared my work and vision, and found our conversation to be productive – I found myself in a precarious spot of “us” (district leadership) versus “them” (union) without any real evidence that this was necessary to do. In fact, I made some faulty assumptions about potential interest in my work, seeing them as barriers and doing what I could to avoid bringing them into the conversation. My assumption changed towards the end of the year
where, in February, I met again with the president and subsequently other teachers who were part of the bargaining unit and found them to not only offer endorsement of my work around early warning systems and a reimagined MTSS approach, but also resources and processes they had worked on previously. My assumptions translated to a missed opportunity for me earlier on in the year and it rests on my shoulders completely, as I was making inferences about their process given the larger union context in the district, and I avoided doing the work of one-on-one conversations because of this type of thinking.

**Making sense of my theory of action**

Reflecting on both my progress and my theory of action, I am confident that my shift in learning regarding what is necessary for coherence greatly informed my approach moving forward. Initially, I believed that the primary means to coherence was through teaming. My thinking was that if people collaborated more effectively and were more intentional about how to work as a team, then more coherence would happen. Fullan and Quinn (2016) are clear, however, that the drivers of coherence need to operate simultaneously. By ignoring the others and focusing solely on creating teams, I ignored the larger call of creating collaborative cultures as well as the remaining three drivers of focused direction, accountability, and deepening learning. I began to consider how coherence could also be about having a goal, shared purpose, or a vision for whatever it was to achieve coherence around. Additionally, coherence could be about developing a knowledge base necessary in order to bring about coherence – or a shared purpose – among other factors.
After determining there was no coordinated approach or understanding of a PK-12 model, I understood there was a knowledge gap. Once I began describing the necessary steps and approach through the Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework, as a means to support students to remain on track and recuperate and recover when they fall off or disconnect, the shared language and understanding provided for more productive conversations and identification of opportunities. Additionally, I was sensitive to the conditions and environment of the district, where the context was one of multiple changes in a short period of time, “initiative fatigue” as it was described by one district official (personal communication, May 2018), and where it had been shared with me time and again how decisions were often made without input from those that the decisions impacted most. Fullan and Quinn (2016) caution against this “initiativeitis” pointing to how it is possible that “constant overload and fragmentation overwhelm moral purpose” (p. 17). Given this context, I wanted to complement and amplify what was already happening in the district, specifically in regard to alternative education. Being mindful of the constant turnover in the district, of ideas and people, I attempted in every way to hold previous practices and people’s experiences in reverence and begin from a place of empathy when learning from others. Respecting this history, however, was not always possible, as much as I tried, because I was still seen as someone who was a) from outside, and b) temporary. In multiple conversations, an interesting question was asked of me when I would begin talking with others about their experiences. They would ask, “What are your plans next year/after this?” While I cannot be completely sure, it seemed as though people were hesitant to be completely honest and forthcoming with me when they suspected that I would be leaving soon, which made pursuing relationships, leveraging
connections, and listening all the more important to my work and my learning. I addressed this by leading more often with a longer-term vision and connecting it to the more immediate actions, and acted as though I would be in OUSD for the foreseeable future. Upon reflection, I realized the question was more so my own concern around status and certainty than the concerns from others.

The next two actions, partnering with leadership and working to build coherence, were to be done in tandem and for the purpose of moving the work forward, were critical. I frequently observed that much of the work in OUSD, both at the cabinet level and at the school site, operated in silos. I have captured two conversations from different leadership meetings to illustrate this challenge (detailed in Appendix O). In fact, while I note that my approach to leveraging one-on-one conversations was intentional and important, I am sure that it also has to do with the fact that I was mirroring the environment where I noticed that individual conversations were more instrumental in sharing ideas and moving work forward. And while this benefitted my ability to build relationships, it also slowed the work and blinded me at times from seeing initiatives as more integrated. My approach in partnering with leadership was intentional though for two reasons: first, as a former principal, I recognize how important it is to be included in the planning of decisions that impact you and your school; and second, principals would serve as the major actors at the elementary and secondary sites in implementing and overseeing prevention and intervention. A frequent theme I heard in conversations with principals was that they felt as though decisions were made for them and not necessarily by them. Pulling from my experience as a school principal, I felt it necessary to challenge this
narrative, while understanding that aligning too closely with site leadership could compromise my legitimacy at the district level.

**Mirroring the environment**

I was saying one thing and practicing another when I found myself in cabinet meetings, advocating only for alternative options and alternative (in the form of different) points of access to a PK-12 experience. While I had an original stance of “Why is everyone in such a silo? Why don’t they care about alternative options?”, I came to understand that I was doing the exact same thing. During this time of constraints and budget shortages, I wanted to ensure there was a voice at the table for alternative options as well. I was mirroring the environment in the same way in which colleagues of mine were advocating for their own departments, programs, and initiatives. This move limited my ability to see opportunities for coherence as I was looking with a lens that was less about integrating work and more about protecting my context. With the help of counsel from others, I began taking a different perspective and instead began asking, “What programming is protected? What are the allegiances to what program and why?” What I began to understand was that the decision-making process at the district I was observing was one that existed through the lens of constraints, and that thinking was inhibiting my ability to think beyond “my program” and into a place of greater coherence with others’ programs, initiatives, and departments. I reflected this learning back to the superintendent and to my supervisor, lifting up the tension I was experiencing between so quickly acclimating to the environment and going into a mode of protection for the alternative models while critiquing everyone else for doing the same for their respective areas – and
being charged with (along with several other high-ranking officials in the district) being innovative in our thinking.

I wondered how much mirroring the environment was actually inhibiting our best ideas without us even knowing it was happening. I had created some boundaries for myself in regard to thinking towards greater coherence and more adaptive challenges in this time of constraint by simply doing what everyone else was doing. Heifetz and Linksy (2002) caution against this type of thinking issuing the challenge that: “Adaptive work…requires engagement with something in the environment lying outside of our perceived boundaries” (p. 101). Our perceived boundaries, and those that I began to operate between, were those created by this notion of constraint and scarcity, while much of the adaptive work needed to get to coherence and align programming already existing in silos was just beyond those boundaries.

A Microscope and a Telescope

I love Oceanside and so does my family. We chose to move from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Boston, Massachusetts, to Oceanside, California, for opportunities to work in public education. Our cross-country trip during the summer of 2017 consisted of ten days, a five-year old and eight-day old, a packed car, and a moving truck. I selected residency in a place where I felt as though I could commit to working and leading beyond ten months and Oceanside was that place. Upon interviewing, it was clear that leadership in the district had a long-term vision for transformation in alternative education, as well as what it would take to realize the Oceanside Promise in partnership between district and community. With that said, I have not approached my work in OUSD with a ten-month
timeline; instead I have intentionally operated with what University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) coach John Wooden, famous around these parts, considers a “microscope in one eye and a telescope in another.” Further, and more importantly, I did not believe that the goals around creating greater systems of prevention and intervention, and building the district’s capacity and coherence to respond, was a ten-month job. For me, seeing the project as a long-term one meant that while I had to accomplish certain tasks and a project within a certain window of time, I would focus on this work with intensity and specificity, but that I would also be considering the long-term implications and outcomes of transformative work and relationship building. I recognize that this approach is my own anxiety manifested through two SCARF threats, returning to David Rock’s work. Status is about relative importance to others, and I wanted to be sure that I was making an impact that would be noticed and appreciated. Certainty concerns being able to predict the future, and I was constantly uneasy not knowing what would come at the end of residency, or if the work I had begun would continue.

I see my role in helping OUSD realize more equitable and accessible pathways to teaching and learning as a commitment that extends beyond the scope of this project, this residency, and this year, and so – I operated with that mindset, which impacted the work in a number of ways. Most notably, it required me to be more intentional about building the capacity of colleagues and being more methodical about marrying work that was happening across departments and initiatives. I have found the most success in this approach recently and much later in my residency with the group of people I am working with on EWS and the MTSS processes. We are now using regular check-ins and adding partners to the work, including cross-departmental components, and sharing out more of
our progress. Our “touchpoints” are increasing in frequency, and departments that have not worked together previously seem to be doing so more now as is evidenced in the work with data, technology, and curriculum and instruction. It also helped me to slow down and work on building relationships with those who could potentially be my colleagues moving forward. Further, I found myself operating with a healthy amount of caution in a fragile district context, not pushing change to happen too quickly or forcing initiatives where they did not fit at the current time. And finally, my intent in most, if not all, of my conversations with district leadership was to help create a container in which conversations could begin to sound different than what they sounded like before. Doing so would create the opportunity to build the holding environment necessary for district leadership, myself included, to move towards greater collaboration and coherence. I wanted to stretch the depth and the capacity at which we talked about equity, opportunity, and accessibility for students and this really only happened over multiple iterations over time – not all at once. To change the narrative about who the students in the alternative settings were and to push past the stereotypes that existed and the biases that served as barriers, I needed to share stories of students and staff, time and time again. I needed to be able to stay on message consistently over time about how we can get better at how we support students to remain on track, recuperate when off-track, and recover when disconnected – each time I had the opportunity to do so. In essence, I saw my project as tilling the ground from which greater and more equitable opportunities would grow in the future. This approach bought me time, opportunity, and legitimacy over time with district leadership and with the task force who was working on implementing MTSS.
Implications for Self

Leadership is bigger than my comfort zone

I have a preferred definition of leadership. Returning to Marshall Ganz’s (2010) complete definition of leadership, which says leadership is: “Accepting the responsibility for creating the conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty” (p. 527), I want to acknowledge my leadership moves amid uncertainty in OUSD. In the midst of such uncertain times in OUSD with sharply declining enrollment, a budget crisis, an impending teacher strike, increased charter competition, a pending reorganization, and new superintendent, my initial desire and efforts were to focus primarily on supporting and leading this team of education leaders – site principals and counselor coordinators – to develop shared purpose, vision and mission, and coherence in their work so that they are able to respond to the district’s demands as well as the needs of their students and families, with agency, in unity, and with consistency. This approach meant that I was constantly being pulled (while likely also pushing myself) into the principal and leadership development work in the district. Recognizing from personal experience how challenging and critical the role of the principal is, I wanted to mostly be a direct support for them and help them to respond to the uncertain times and challenges in their respective schools. The tension of being pulled into different streams of work continued to be a challenge for me personally as there was always an opportunity to help develop the leadership agendas, professional learning, and facilitate learning sessions. Moving forward in my leadership, I will need to work towards a balance that allows for the development of shared purpose not by solely doing the work alongside principals, while important, but also by working towards systems change which can in turn create
the necessary conditions that I believe are necessary for effective schools, and what principals are requesting from district leadership.

**Prioritize getting proximate, but own my bias**

Moving forward, I must be aware of and own my bias. I have a belief that says the further one gets away from the classroom or the school, the less one impacts students and teachers directly. I struggled with this notion in my transition from teacher to principal, from principal to graduate student seeking systems change, and I have continued to struggle with it in my residency. I feel a strong alignment with the principals, the staff at the AARC sites, and the students – and less so with district leadership. If I am being honest, I make the assumption that those who are not in schools are out of touch with the work and with the students the system serves. I understand that this assumption is unfair and not true, although there are times that I believe a day or two spent in a school and with students would serve some district leaders well. I am not questioning the integrity with which anyone in OUSD approaches their work on behalf of students. What I am acknowledging is that I often stay in my comfort zone, which happens to be the schoolhouse. While I celebrate having my office at a site and working daily with students and school staff, I also recognize that the trade-off is that I am many times out of the loop when it comes to systems-level discussions, decision-making, and collaboration. This, in turn, sometimes leads me to make false assumptions about the work those who are not in schools do and whether or not they are concerned with “us.” Those assumptions create a certain level of resentment that can be unproductive. To be clear, I sincerely value the opportunity to be proximate, to listen, to learn from the callouses of the students and
families served at the school sites directly. I embrace and value their stories and experiences, and I see my ability to remain a learner and reflective practitioner inextricably connected to my ability to be this proximate, but I must be able to not conflate this with leading at the systems-level where change in policy, practice, and precedent are also necessary. To become an agent of change (Johnson, et al., 2015), I must fully understand that coherence can be created through a balance between getting proximate to the challenges at school sites and building integrated solutions at the district level to address the challenges.

Achieving coherence is complex and multi-faceted

My bias towards being proximate and not “out of touch” colors my understanding of where coherence is created. So, this approach is more so my aspiration. To be an “agent of the central office,” I recognize that what I observe at the sites is critical in informing the decisions that are made centrally and that transfer across schools in a system. Furthermore, I am learning to recognize and challenge my biases towards teaming, especially as a means to achieve coherence. My most simplistic thinking is that the only way to achieve coherence is to team well. In that regard, I have to step back and ask more often, “What are all the barriers to achieving coherence?” recognizing that teaming can very well be one of many factors, but it is typically not the factor. Instead, there are other drivers that must be activated and simultaneously managed in order for system coherence, shared purpose, and collective impact. My role as a leader is to identify those drivers, their current impact, and possible opportunity for improvement in order to move towards collaboration and greater coherence.
Challenge my traditional assumptions about learning

I began my residency skeptical of the independent study model and partially critical of alternative education. I was intrigued on one hand by the “second chance” nature of it but unsure whether or not it was rigorous enough, whether there were disadvantages from not interacting with a teacher and classroom of peers when learning, and if expectations were too low or curriculum too watered down for students who presented struggles. When presented with the task and project of “transforming alternative education,” my confirmation bias was activated, and I assumed that these models were inadequate and that OUSD was taking a shortcut in educating students who did not respond well to the traditional and/or comprehensive models. Time and again, I was wrong.

Through the stories of current and former students, conversations with current and former staff, home visits, daily interactions with students, and visits to other sites outside of OUSD, I came to understand that my own idea of what good teaching and learning consisted of, propped up by a traditional and standardized model given my own experience, needed to be challenged and that I needed to return to my core values of compassion and curiosity. I needed to consider what need(s) this type of program was meeting and for whom, and ask more questions than assume answers – and push myself to consider (truly) alternate opportunities to teaching and learning. The stereotypes of students that I might have had needed to be checked and dispelled, reactions of “that’s not how I would do it” needed to be suspended, and I had to place myself in a learning stance where I could understand why these types of opportunities were good for students, not only if they were. Placing myself in a learning stance and being curious is a discipline
that I have worked on developing as a teacher, a principal, and now again as a systems-level leader, and as I step into other leadership decisions, I must constantly explore my bias, regularly come down the ladder of inference, and return to curiosity and compassion in order to be considerate of opportunities for all types of learners. The best practice I’ve found to better understand diverse learners is to ask questions, practice empathetic listening, and check my assumption that my way is the way.

**Implications for Site**

**Articulate a shared mindset and act with a shared purpose**

Fullan and Quinn (2016), remind us that “Great leaders connect others to the reasons they became educators – their moral purpose. They make purpose part of the organization’s DNA by creating opportunities for people to make meaning of the possibilities, work on aspects of the challenge, and achieve success” (p. 19). A Multiple Pathways to Graduation problem-solving approach and model holds a promise for OUSD that strips the stigma from the “alternative” and more personalized options, illuminates the many possible entry points for students and families under any circumstance, and boasts a personalized, tailored, and inclusive vision for all kids, including those options that provide accessible and equitable prevention and intervention along the way. This shared mindset, that OUSD can create a “no wrong door” system, must be articulated, advertised, and amplified as something of which we can all be proud. Providing pathways of options for students enables OUSD to be responsive in a way that meets the growing needs and demands of families and students. An illustration of what such a message could look like can be found in Appendix P, which serves as a first pass at the paper.
version and organizational chart of options for students in OUSD. This model on paper is far from implementation and collective action, as coherence calls for, but it is a first step in finding common language and shared purpose. Messaging, however, matters tremendously here. If OUSD articulates a shared message about how we have multiple pathways to serve the needs of all families in all circumstances, then we are committing to the promise that we have made to families time and again. Through public advertising, common and consistent messaging from leaders, amplification of multiple pathways, and commitment of resources to building out this portfolio – OUSD can shift its approach to be responsive, integrated, and coherent. Further, moving forward from the articulation of a shared mindset, OUSD leadership must act with a shared purpose. As opportunities to integrate the work around prevention, intervention, and increased options arise, leadership must act collectively and purposefully in seeing the integration through. Recalling the coherence framework, district leadership must employ accountability among each other and through schools to realize an MPG approach, all the while being intentional about utilizing a collaborative culture to deepen the learning that occurs.

**Build coherence through focusing direction and creating collaborative cultures**

The people of OUSD are committed, passionate, and hard-working individuals who share a dedication to their community. Many employees, having grown up in Oceanside, are determined to fight for their students’ futures and preserve opportunities for all of OUSD’s students. Doing so in a constantly changing environment without regular realignment and integration of collective practices, however, can compromise efforts or create feelings of disillusionment. A shared mindset and focused direction, as a
means towards coherence, is critical. The Public Impact (2008) report implores districts to commit to a mindset where the practice is to intervene early, not give up on older youth, view youth as resources, create multiple pathways to success, commit to comprehensive approaches beyond education and work initiatives, and insist upon accountability. While teachers, staff, and leaders throughout OUSD are making attempts at one or more of these, what is clear from survey results and observations is that these practices are not integrated and do not characterize the district shared mindset. Fortunately, OUSD can make this shift if they commit to doing so, and that is precisely what staff are waiting on – a signal from leadership that a comprehensive approach is priority. To accomplish this shift, OUSD must get serious about how collaborative cultures at the systems level are created. Returning to Tuckman (1965), he suggests that managers can effectively lead the process of transitioning from storming and norming to one of performing by drawing out differences and clarifying roles and objectives. These processes are important, they are natural, and they are unavoidable - especially if followed through with. Now, if followed through, they are necessary prerequisites to a healthy and productive culture - one that operates on trust, norms, attention to results, and collaboration. The work of leadership must be creating this “holding environment” and creating psychological safety, per the advice of Heifetz and Edmondson. Doing so is not currently a priority in regard to action of leadership. Avoiding this process or trying to usurp the process in some way, removes critical elements to developing a shared mindset, a shared purpose, and discredits the natural and personal side to individuals working collectively. Especially important for this point is that an MPG framework, when
effective, is a shift in mindset for the adults in a district and require this type of norming, collaboration, and collective work.

**Build on district momentum to adopt an MPG framework**

Returning to the board showcase where administrators shared their schools’ successes, as I listened, my mind centered on one value – the value of **equity**. I heard the leaders of the district and of the school sites talking about equity. An unnamed thread of coherence ran through everyone’s vision that, if named, would center on the idea that all students in OUSD deserve a personalized, responsive, and accessible opportunity to pursue their education through a choice that best fits their need and their goals. I could not agree more. In fact, this goal is exactly what a Multiple Pathways to Graduation approach offers – and more. While sharing their passions and their visions, administrators were also realistic about their challenges. More than once, I heard principals name the struggle of wanting to offer more opportunities to students through different programming but finding it nearly impossible to do so with the caseload it would require and the amount of remediation needed in the early high school years. One principal noted, “We want students to have access to three career and technical education courses back-to-back in order for them to access the pathway of their choice, but the load of remediation needed for them is too much” (personal communication, January 30, 2018). Another principal shared a struggle, noting that only some students, usually those without individualized education plans or English language learning needs, have access to classes outside of the core. Overall, access to equitable learning opportunities is the desire in OUSD, and the barrier is still ensuring students are ready for those earlier, through more intervention and prevention in years PK-8. I recommend using the MPG framework and
approach to codify the ideas of equity that are talked about in the district but are not yet as front and center as the MPG would be make them.

As part of an MPG framework, to fully support students in options to remain on-track to graduation, recuperate when behind through various avenues, and recover through re-entry if students disconnect, community based organizations are critical. Whether it is working with partners in early literacy efforts or after-school programming, or partnering with local organizations for work opportunities or more, OUSD needs committed partners to step in with the vision and ideas of a MPG framework. Returning to Fullan’s and Quinn’s (2016) definition of coherence, they remind us that “Coherence is a shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work in the minds and actions individually and especially collectively” (p. 16). To this end, OUSD must understand that coherence achieved in a district only goes so far and work mindfully to build coherence, or a shared depth of understanding in the minds and actions, among the community beyond the four walls. This is essentially why an approach like MPG must be complemented by and integrated with an approach in the community such as the Oceanside Promise. Without a community model to meld the work of the district with that of the community, coherence falls short and fails to close the deal on being all things for all kids. This type of “both/and” approach to building systems of support within the OUSD and throughout the community is critical to the success of an MPG framework.

**Lose the limiting language**

Language matters. What is said and espoused is often what defines a culture and the excuses we use serve as barriers. The language and phrases used from the district
level are deficit-based and not opportunistic – when they could be. What is communicated and how can translate to protecting people from taking risks. If they speak through the language of restrictions and constraints, they immediately provide themselves with opportunities to do less, be less innovative, be less solution-oriented. The trends I noticed were as follows: June through October “We don’t have money;” and October to current, “In this climate,” referencing the stalled negotiations with the teachers’ association, the budget crisis, and uncertainty about cuts and leadership moves. My caution, however, is to consider what assumptions might be made when the narrative is always “can’t” or “not right now.” I suggest that it in some respects paralyzes innovative thinking, experimentation, and risk-taking. Additionally, it takes away the agency of people and compromises purpose. In my interviews, observations, and conversations with staff from leadership to security guards, there is a common theme that sounds like apathy but comes from a real place of feeling as though they (the alternative sites and programs) have been forgotten about and are not high-priority..

**Increase options for students to remain, recuperate, and recover**

OUSD should prioritize CBA as a model and exemplar and commit to preserving the model as costs for this approach increase and budgets get tight. Beyond solely defining it as a “nontraditional” option, where students go when they do not respond to a comprehensive or traditional site, but as one of many personalized options that provide for a multiple pathways approach to graduation and college/career success. There are many promising practices that CBA is implementing that are good for kids as evidenced by the success/growth they have achieved and supported by research. As the demand is
rising, the district should learn from and invest in the model significantly. From the recruitment processes, which consist of the staff pulling detailed queries of students with chronic absenteeism and visiting their homes to determine the causes and offer solutions, to the intake processes, goal setting conversations, and monitoring of student progress – there is a tremendous amount of personalized learning and programming that other members in the district could learn from. The district could support this model by doing a human resources audit to determine if the site is appropriately staffed (current staff will likely say it is not). Additionally, OUSD could provide district professional support for a rebranding and communications campaign for the site. And finally, district personnel should partner with site leadership to determine effective ADA percentages and goals, and recognize and reward success of the staff for achieving what is most difficult to achieve – getting disconnected youth to reconnect and graduate.

Follow the “end user”

I admittedly still have concerns about the rigor of the content and curriculum for students participating in independent study as well as the bar that is set for them in achieving success. There is room for improvement here and the staff in the independent study model are working to write their own curriculum to use through Google classroom, rather than some of the current, packaged curriculum used now. This question of whether or not content is rigorous enough should continue to push us to raise the bar and improve opportunities for students, while also helping us develop a better understanding as to why that particular curriculum (level, pace, content, etc.) is meeting the need of that student and being responsive to that understanding as a result. My greatest learning throughout
my residency was through the conversations that I had with current and former students from Oceanside, as well as with those who for one reason or another dropped out of high school. In these conversations, and through asking a few simple questions that brought us to origin stories of where students first experienced challenge or a disruption, I learned an incredible amount about where the system failed children – not where the students failed. Dr. Chris Emdin, Associate Professor at the Teacher’s College, Columbia University, speaks to this perspective often as he encourages other educators to follow the “end user” and pursue the student who dropped out to learn why. Oceanside Unified can work to create a clear recovery strategy that includes wrap-around transition support for students that had previously dropped out or disconnected from school. Utilizing the CBO model found in the Portland Public Schools example, OUSD could partner with community organizations specializing in supporting this population, establish a re-engagement center for those in need of transitional support. This center could potentially begin as a one-stop-shop and serve as a student’s first step in a sometimes-daunting re-entry process. Pending results from the AARC in the Park model, OUSD could utilize the model as a potential first step as it is low-cost, generally in neutral territory, and serves as a low-risk entry point for students looking to re-engage.

**Implications for Sector**

**Use MPG as a problem-solving approach**

Multiple Pathways to Graduation is a framework of options and entry points that, when implemented with fidelity, can help students remain on-track to graduation, support students to recuperate credit and time when they fall behind, and help those to recover
who have disconnected. This menu of options provides for personalized approaches to serve a diverse population of students fostering choice and agency for all. But, it is not the framework alone, written down on a paper and spoken in the halls of schools and district offices, that ensures a shift in practice for the adults and opportunity for the students. MPG must be viewed and exercised as a problem-solving approach throughout the sector, a way to examine a district’s processes, practices, and priorities in how they intervene early and equitably. Researchers Shannon Marsh and Paul Hill (2010) acknowledge that because traditional schools are not necessarily designed to identify or be responsive to barriers to graduation, a true MPG approach must be used through many schools and varied programs to achieve responsiveness and differentiated entry points. An MPG problem-solving approach uses data to identify students who are struggling or could potentially struggle as early as possible, builds the capacity of schools or models or programs in a district to respond, and incorporates flexibility and adaptability for students who do not respond to the comprehensive and traditional models, welcoming them in the same manner as every other student.

**Employ targeted universalism to design equitable options for all**

One promise of the MPG framework is that what benefits a small or targeted group of students – perhaps those seeking or needing alternative and/or nontraditional approaches – can actually benefit all. As districts and systems work to become more personalized and responsive to student needs and in turn attempt to customize learning opportunities for their constituents, attempting to introduce flexibility in a standardized institution will continue to be a tremendous challenge. An MPG problem-solving
approach and framework identifies students who are most at-risk of not being served well by this inflexibility, identifies them early, follows through with appropriate prevention and intervention, and offers increased and more diverse options for responsiveness for these students, and, as a byproduct, for all. John A. Powell (2008) describes this approach as targeted universalism and offers that in order to get institutions to do the work we would have them do, we must have strategies that are targeted and universal.

Powell says, “A targeted universal strategy is one that is inclusive of the needs of both the dominant and the marginal groups, but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginal group” (pp. 802-803). Beginning with the marginal group (students whose needs are not met in the traditional and comprehensive system in this case), a strategy becomes more inclusive of all, effectively filling the gaps identified in the system as a whole. Powell goes on to say, “Targeted universalism rejects a blanket universal which is likely to be indifferent to the reality that different groups are situated differently relative to the institutions and resources of society. It also rejects the claim of formal equality that would treat all people the same as a way of denying difference” (p. 803).

Acknowledging and prioritizing the student’s identity, circumstances, and experience are central to those students and families pursuing alternative options, nontraditional pathways, and increasingly diverse entry points into learning. A targeted universal approach, such as MPG, is structured so as to be responsive to a student’s identity and its chief aim is equity, rather than equality. Beginning with students who are already challenging the status quo of educational offerings and curriculum and addressing

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11 John A. Powell, Williams Chair in Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Moritz College of Law at the Ohio State University, does not capitalize his name.
their needs, as well as their family’s needs, the sector can in turn serve all students in the same capacity.

**Conclusion**

I am where I am and who I am today because of access and opportunity – ideas and values that I have committed to fighting for on behalf of others throughout my entire career. In high school, I experienced inequitable options when it was assumed that students from “my side of town” were uninterested and unprepared to take advanced placement courses, as well as to pursue college. Ignoring the expectations as a sophomore, I fought for the opportunity for placement in courses that would prepare me to compete. I continued to advocate for greater options by switching high school counselors, recognizing that certain students had certain advisors depending on what their predicted outcomes were – and I was not predicted to attend college. That changed when I shared my plans with the college counselor and handed her my applications.

As a freshman in college, I pursued a more inexpensive and strategic track, beginning community college at a fourth of the costs with the option to transfer all credits to my four-year institution. At The Ohio State University, I then petitioned to create my own major through a personalized study program that would prepare me to teach history and political science through the lens of urban and regional planning. After graduating college, I joined Teach For America, an alternative pathway into teaching where I committed to teaching two years in Charlotte, North Carolina, and which changed my life as it inspired me to make education my profession. Pursuing my career move into school leadership, I entered the New Leaders program, which also gave me the option to earn my administrative credentials through an alternatively certificated program. I am now
completing my Doctorate in Education Leadership, a feat that never seemed within my reach, through a program that emphasizes challenging the status quo and uniformity of systems that contribute to less access and opportunity for students.

As a teacher and school leader, I encouraged my students and staff to never accept low expectations, to always ask why, and to imagine greater possibilities without boundaries. I have done the same now as a father to two beautiful children. The list of these alternative pathways, nontraditional routes, and varied points of entry for me continues. In my life, I have experienced that status quo, challenged its monopoly on resources and practices, and questioned precedent in order to imagine and eventually realize other options that are personalized, tailored, and equitable. This path has led me to this work in the OUSD, directly supporting the alternative and nontraditional models, learning from the experience and paths of students and staff who imagine more possibilities, and reaffirming my commitment to the belief that there are multiple pathways to meeting a promise.

In 1963, James Baldwin, one of history’s greatest minds, wrote in *The Saturday Review* some advice to teachers. In his letter, Baldwin challenges educators to re-examine their beliefs and understanding of the purpose of education and how they pursue fulfilling that purpose, suggesting teachers and those who lead teachers should work to counter the segregating and standardizing efforts that plagued public education during that time and which still exist today. “I would teach him that he doesn’t have to be bound by the expediencies of any given administration, any given policy, any given morality; that he has the right and the necessity to examine everything…” (Baldwin, 1963). This freedom is the promise of education — the promise of alternative, nontraditional, and personalized
options — and it is the promise of democracy: to educate every child with every learning need and in every circumstance. To fulfill this promise, then, education must provide multiple pathways and entry points to education, prevention and intervention; encompass and be responsive to student identity, voice, and choice; and center on the belief that critique, challenge, and agency are vital to realize the principles of a democracy that is equitable and accessible for all.

In the recent OUSD Board of Education showcase, after school teams pitched their various plans to meet the needs of more students or shared the work they were proud of, the Board President commented: “This is all an excellent reflection of the diversity of our community and our attempt at meeting their needs” (personal communication, January 30, 2018). The passion, potential, and plans for meeting a promise made to all students in Oceanside Unified is present, and OUSD is poised to meet the demands of and needs of their students and families. Moving beyond an attempt to meet a diverse community’s needs, OUSD must deliver on its promise through a coherent commitment to multiple pathways to ensure that students remain on track to graduation through prevention, intervention, and varied options; recuperate fully through high-quality programs and models that are equitable and accessible; and have the opportunity to recover and reconnect when they have disconnected from learning altogether. Fulfilling this promise in a manner that is coherent, integrated completely, and employed in the actions and shared mindset of all serving the students and families in OUSD should be the top priority. Fullan and Quinn (2016) remind us: “It is human nature to rise to a larger call if the problems are serious enough and if there is a way forward where they can play a role with others” (p. xi). May we rise to this larger call.
References


Disconnected Youth and Multiple Pathways to Graduation by Public Impact for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, December 2008.


Appendix A: Alternative and nontraditional options in OUSD

Source: Data collected by the California Department of Education (CDE) through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). Aggregate data files are provided by the CDE Data Report Office [http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/fi](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/fi)

(2015-16 data pending.) This graph shows counts of students in school and program alternatives that accommodate different student needs, interests, and learning styles. With the exception of independent study and magnets, these programs largely serve high school students. Some educational options may be a program within a school, while others may constitute the entire enrollment of a school. Students may be engaged concurrently in more than one education option.
APPENDIX B
Charter school enrollment in Oceanside, CA

Appendix B: Charter school enrollment in Oceanside, CA

Source. Data collected by the California Department of Education (CDE) through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). Aggregate data files are provided by the CDE – Data Reporting Office at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.a

This graph presents K-12 enrollment for charter schools in this district. Enrollment is measured by counting the number of students enrolled in school on a particular day in October. Charter schools are part of the state’s public education system and are funded by public dollars.
### APPENDIX C

Characteristics of students in alternative schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix C: Characteristics of students in alternative schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Poor attendance/chronic absenteeism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disciplinary removal (suspension or expulsion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learning difficulties or disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- External stressors, family disruption, or conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social/emotional difficulties/disorders, behavior challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Court referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Limited English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Underperforming or need academic remediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dropped out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pregnant or parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- More likely to live in single-parent families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Likely to have parents without a high school diploma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### APPENDIX D
OUSD snapshot data prepared by the Oceanside Promise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of children entering kindergarten ready to learn</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of 3rd graders meeting standards in English Language Arts/Literacy</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students with a “C or Better” in A-G coursework</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of graduates who met A-G requirements</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of graduates entering college within the first year</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Chart: Oceanside Promise]
APPENDIX E
Community Based Organizations for Alternative Schools in Portland Public Schools

INTERVENTION:
Community Based Organizations (CBO) Alternative Schools

School options for students moderately and significantly off-track which provide:
- Academic skill growth
- Credit attainment
- College and career readiness activities
- CTE and/or work experiences
- Social and behavioral supports
- Dual credit options
- High school diploma
- GED completion with bridge to post secondary

CBOs serve students who have been expelled by PPS.
APPENDIX F
Simultaneous system improvement in a Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework.

Appendix F: Simultaneous system improvement in a Multiple Pathways to Graduation framework.

MPG: A Balancing Act
MPG involves undertaking simultaneous system improvement and risk-prevention programs to reduce the need for alternatives while developing a variety of options that serve vulnerable youth now.

Source: Disconnected Youth and Multiple Pathways to Graduation by Public Impact for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, December 2008
APPENDIX G
Principal meeting agenda

Innovative Education Meeting Thursday, Sept. 21, 2017 10:00a-11:00a
“Adaptive work requires engagement with something in the environment lying outside of our perceived boundaries.”
(Ron Heifetz, Leadership on the Line)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00a-</td>
<td>Warm Up: Our Preoccupations</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05</td>
<td>My Public Narrative and Framing: Why Are We Here?</td>
<td>Jordy</td>
<td>Reflections/reactions: \n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>served well?</td>
<td>especially the stats about 3rd grade reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the problem we’re trying to solve?</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative data was shared.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What opportunities for impact exist?</td>
<td>How can we rightly respond to both sets of data in ways that meets students where they are/their needs are?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What do you see? | **Recent questions:**
| Who is leaving and why are they leaving? | Who is leaving and why are they leaving? |

| **10:45-10:55** | **Teaming:** Ever been on a team where you’ve broken up at this point: it’s hard? Why is that? Ever been on a team where you’ve persevered? Why is that? What do we need to be as a team as a group? | **All** | **Norms:**
| | *Didn’t make it here, will revisit next team meeting.* | |

| **10:55-11:00** | Questions/feedback/next steps | **Jordy** | **Oct. 4 meeting**
| | *Second half of our time together.* | | Revisit challenges you prioritized in previous principal’s meeting

**Story of Self**
- For our next meeting, think about what calls you to this work, what is a time where you can think back to a challenge, a choice you made, and an outcome from that choice that connects to the work you’re doing today?
- How has your thinking about this work evolved?

**Team name**
Professional Learning and first problem of practice
*potential problem of practice – what do we want our working definition of PL to be? What do we want to pursue?*

**Other potential work:**
- Exploring and understanding Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness (SCARF) threats and how they may inhibit innovation and effective teaming.
### Questions for feedback after first Principal’s meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What worked? What best facilitated your learning and our time together?</th>
<th>What could be better?</th>
<th>What lingering questions do you have?</th>
<th>What would you like from/expect from this team moving forward, in order to effectively and productively work to address adaptive challenges?</th>
<th>Given our ability to have the four HS principals in one room and work on specific adaptive challenges, what would you like us to tackle?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---
## How do we use broad data (meaning aggregate and disaggregated data) to prevent kids from getting off-track?

### Current
2014 - Early Warning dashboard became part of Aeries adoption. Current thinking is that this system is very maintenance heavy.

Initial feedback from district personnel is that the question around “**How are we getting the proper inputs to tell the story?**” is a very important question.

The district will be piloting IBM Watson in the 2017-18 year that will enable them to use AI to track standard-specific progress of students and be more intelligent in their collection and use of data.

### Questions
Are we leveraging available data using best practices around EW to identify, differentiate?
Can this work reach earlier into early grades?
**What are the right inputs and how are we getting them?**
When we get a student and see their need, can we backwards map?

### Opportunities
*Introducing an early warning indicators and intervention system (likely an option in current SIS or easy low-hanging fruit stuff that can be introduced)*
*Extending it to earlier grades*
*Explicit and meaningful connections to the Oceanside Promise*
*Panorama’s SEL dashboard*
*Utilize current data team to build coherence*

### Considerations
**Situation Assessment**
- Segmented population analysis that looks at over-age and under credited (OA-UC) population and crosswalks that to their demographics and geographics
- Student focus groups or surveys to contextualize information
- Special attention to credit recovery, literacy, age, employment/child care issues

## How do we use that data to create a portfolio of options to meet the needs of kids & families when they get off track?

### Current
AARCs
Alternative HS
LCAP funding
MTSS (talk to APs/Deans/Counselors)
K-5 Blended Learning @Ditmar

### Questions
Do we options that serve all our kids needs?
Are the options **accessible**? Are the options **equitable**?
What is working?
### What is the coordinated vision of AARC?  
How does LCAP funding factor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population analysis to determine if have right options for the right kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisit formal and informal processes that identify and steer kids towards those options</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**District push:** Shift from data for compliance to data for strategy.

### Considerations  
**Portfolio Development**
- Develop clear, differentiated portfolio that is clear to kids/families, the educators in those different settings (comprehensive school, AARC, alternative HS), what type of acceleration/getting back on track is the goal in this setting
- Clear communication strategy to community, kids/parents about these new visions

### How do ensure each component (program/school/setting) in the portfolio of options is HQ, positioning kids for college and career opportunity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District has a partnership w/the National Clearinghouse regarding post-secondary success of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the coordinated vision among AARCs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are kids receiving robust education in these programs? How do we increase the quality?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revisit accountability structure (related to definition of schools, cohorts, exit codes, and which school gets “credit” for which kids”) to ensure comprehensive high schools have stake in serving these kids and the good work of the alt places is recognized and leveraged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Longitudinal data: what do graduates of these program:**
- A-G
- College enrollment, matriculation, completion
- Workforce outcomes

**What would HQ career pathways look like in these settings?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New CHS at Ocean Shores?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Considerations  
**Ensure portfolio options are great for kids**
- Student focus groups or surveys to contextualize information
APPENDIX I

Latest developments in implementing an EWS

Predicting 9th Grade Success

Dean Robinson <dan.robinson@ocste.net> Thu, Feb 22, 2018 at 11:50 AM
To: Jordy Sparks <jordy.sparks@ocste.net>, Joshua Thibodeaux <joshua.thibodeaux@ocste.net>

Hi guys,

I've been digging through a boatload of data (9th grade classes for 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18) and am getting to a point where we can make some interesting predictions at a per-subject level.

After loading the data then imputing missing absence%, suspension%, and subject level GPA's based on school, ethnicity, and gender with subjective mean values, then computed linear regressions for each "category" (Absences% grade 6-8, Suspension% grade 6-8, ELA 07th grade 5-8, etc). At that point, I ran those engineered features into a Principal Component Analysis to determine which features influence the dataset the most. Here they are in order:

(0.8239187094830642, 'MATH_intercept'),
(0.7461610264566651, 'SCI_intercept'),
(0.6887400513777273, 'ELA_intercept'),
(0.3409814952038934, 'SOC_intercept'),
(0.1732928295335619, 'MATH_slope'),
(0.2774188241659942, 'SCI_slope'),
(0.1208740267339056, 'SOC_slope'),
(0.1065249950824337, 'ELA_slope'),
(0.02297705151102049, 'Absences_intercept'),
(0.013329217665132918, 'Absences_slope'),
(0.00529555242385503, 'Suspensions_slope'),
(0.0012745564558943885, 'Suspensions_intercept')

With that said, simplifying 9th grade subjects to 4 'grades' (A/D), 'OK' (C), and 'Bad' (F/P) my algorithm can predict student performance in 9th grade subjects with 95%-98% accuracy.

Analysis for PCA Components-2 and KNeighbors-1

Predicting 9th Grade Social Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>precision</th>
<th>recall</th>
<th>f-score</th>
<th>support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avg / total</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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</table>

Predicting 9th Grade ELA

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<tr>
<th>precision</th>
<th>recall</th>
<th>f-score</th>
<th>support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avg / total</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Predicting 9th Grade Math

<table>
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<th>recall</th>
<th>f-score</th>
<th>support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avg / total</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Predicting 9th Grade Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>precision</th>
<th>recall</th>
<th>f-score</th>
<th>support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avg / total</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perhaps his can be used as our 'Early Warning' list (obviously we'd produce a ranked list with their actual data, not these algorithm performance metrics)...come by sometime to check it out and I can explain the concepts a little more thoroughly!
MPG Landscape Analysis (survey)

Districts attempting to address challenges such as student engagement, social emotional learning, graduation results, attendance concerns among many others are pursuing models that provide students and families with multiple options for success, TK12. Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) is a promising framework that supports a district's efforts to help students REMAIN on track by identifying early warning indicators for purposes of intervention early in student's experience; RECUPERATE a student by getting them back on track once they fall off; and RECOVER by opening doors to students who have fallen off track and disconnected. The purpose of this survey is to assess OUSD's environment, success, and readiness to meet these needs of students, TK12. Thank you in advance for taking the time to provide your honest and anonymous feedback on the following questions.

REMAIN: Early identification & prevention aimed at helping students REMAIN on-track to graduation.
1. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being ineffective to 5 being extremely effective), how effective is OUSD at using early warning indicators to identify students who are "at-risk" off becoming off-track to graduation?

2. To your knowledge, what are OUSD's practices for identifying students who are at-risk of becoming off-track to graduation?

3. In your opinion, what are some early intervention and prevention practices you would like to see in addressing students who might be off track to graduation?

4. From your experience and understanding, what are possible reasons that students become at-risk of being off-track to graduation?

RECUPERATE: The capacity for intervention & recovery to help students get back on-track.
5. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being ineffective to 5 being extremely effective), how effective is OUSD at helping those students who are off-track to graduation, get back on track?

6. To your knowledge, what are OUSD's practices for helping those students who are off-track to graduation, get back on track?

7. In your opinion, what are some practices you would like to see in addressing students who are off-track to graduation?

8. From your experience and understanding, what are barriers to implementing practices to address students who are off-track to graduation?

RECOVER: The capacity for reconnection & reengagement to open doors to off-track, out-of-school students
9. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being ineffective to 5 being extremely effective), how effective is OUSD at opening doors to off-track, out-of-school students?

10. To your knowledge, what are OUSD's practices for opening doors to off-track, out-of-school students?

11. In your opinion, what are some practices you would like to see in opening doors to off-track, out-of-school students?

12. From your experience and understanding, what are barriers to implementing practices that open doors to off-track, out-of-school students?
## APPENDIX K
OUSD’s effectiveness at using early warning indicators (responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To your knowledge, what are OUSD's practices for identifying students who are at-risk of becoming off-track to graduation?</th>
<th>In your opinion, what are some early intervention and prevention practices you would like to see in addressing students who might be off-track to graduation?</th>
<th>From your experience and understanding, what are possible reasons that students become at-risk of being off-track to graduation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The early warning indicators are basically just the lack of appropriate credits for individual students. The main campus HS counselors do a great job of analyzing their student's credits at key points along the way. The counselors discuss options with students (and their parents) who are critically behind in credits and refer them to an appropriate option- one of the AARCs or Ocean Shores continuation.</td>
<td>I think what we have now works well. Again, it is a matter of having counselors with appropriate case load sizes to be able to address concerns with students who are falling behind in any number of ways- credits, attendance, etc.</td>
<td>This is an extremely complicated issue. In my opinion, and I think the research will back this up, the most important factor for a student's success in school has to do with their home life. After that, it's school issues. Large class sizes mean that students get less personal and individual attention. Unimaginative curriculum and &quot;one size fits all&quot; programs mean that students are treated according to one standard of measure only. We know that this is extremely short-sighted and lacks insight into human nature and, again, an imaginative approach to engaging students' interests and passions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing GPA, behavioral data (i.e, referrals, suspensions), attendance, benchmark exam data. Lower scores in the academics and higher numbers in negative behaviors are typically seen as indicators of failure to achieve graduation requirements.</td>
<td>Mentorships in which a trusted adult is available to guide each individual student (increasing/supporting the student's awareness of their current standing and progress toward meeting grad requirements); formative feedback by grade level to support identification of areas of strength and struggle; focus on and support for teachers addressing areas of student need (although we say we do this, focused effort isn't always present); variation in our course offerings where skills are developed in context and applied purposefully; flexibility in schedules to allow all students opportunities to take the classes they want (right now, certain student groups can't take elective classes due to a need to have ELD or SpEd supports in their day)</td>
<td>Low literacy and numeracy, leading to low self-esteem (fixed mindset causes students to think they can't get better at something they find difficult); teachers unprepared to address the challenges of student learning; too much to &quot;cover&quot; prevents some educators from taking the time they need to assist students because they feel pressure to keep moving into new topics/content; seeing content as separate entities/students aren't shown how their learning is used and what thinking like a disciplinarian truly is/looks like</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

109
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit recovery courses</th>
<th>Reading intervention for students who are not reading at third grade level in third grade</th>
<th>Third grade reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 week reviews by counselors</td>
<td>Summer school, after school classes offered</td>
<td>Time management and organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SST Process</td>
<td>Double and Triple Doses of Guided Reading Intervention</td>
<td>Wow... Socio-economics is #1 for predicting academic success. Lack of education and $ creates more challenging family dynamics. Less talking, reading and writing in home. More families stressed and more crises. Other issues like second language learners. Early literacy is critical and once behind, it becomes exponentially more difficult to catch up and keep up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the Student Study Team process.</td>
<td>Teachers building relationships with students who are disengaged.</td>
<td>Students do not see themselves as part of the school due to economics, language and culture. Teachers are not accountable for student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not think that the district has or uses a method for tracking any students with 3 or more F’s. We do this at our site to capture kids who are drowning...</td>
<td>Prevention and intervention starts with relationships. You can't prevent or start interventions if you can't get a student to school. the first step in this is to build a trusting relationship with students.</td>
<td>Gang involvement, lack of a feeling of belonging at a school. Feeling like it doesn't matter. Students feel that it is impossible to catch up...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It varies from site to site. Typically, there are some kind of at risk meeting, and interventions are put in place to support the students. The SST process is often used. In the middle schools, the admin team will discuss students at risk weekly. In elementary, students will also be brought up during PLC time.</td>
<td>More academic support and intervention in the earlier grades. The kids who struggle to read often start to become at-risk as they grow up. Also, support specifically with dyslexia.</td>
<td>Academic struggles, home/social struggles, not feeling connected, loss of self-worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom assessments, counselors observations, parent input,</td>
<td>Dashboard that reflects a social/emotional component that flags counselors about potential risks or changes in behavior.</td>
<td>Not being attached or understood at school, socio-economic issues at home, language barriers, gangs and other peer influences. Depression and other mental health Issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the elementary level there are SST meetings, PST forms that teachers fill out and also ongoing formative and summative</td>
<td>Full time psych and counseling services for the larger elementary sites</td>
<td>Lack of parental support at home, very limited resources at the elementary level for students who are identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessments</td>
<td>as needing extra help</td>
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<tr>
<td>Though I'm not aware of all practices, OUSD does use assessment results and teacher input to identify at-risk students.</td>
<td>Low academic achievement, in our traditional model of solely using grades and assessment results, turns students away from school. In addition, difficult home environments make it hard for students to be successful in school. Combine these two factors with students who do not feel connected to school, and it creates great risk of students being off-track to graduation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAT team meetings; IEP meetings; looking at guided reading data for TK-5; looking at SBAC data grad 3-8 &amp; 11; RFEP follow up; benchmark ELA and Math assessments; 4 year plans used by counselors at the high schools; monitoring grades and referring D/F students to tutoring;</td>
<td>Students haven't built a strong relationship with their teacher; students think their teacher doesn't care about them or respect them; students feel they aren't being held accountable; low expectations from parents; parents not knowing how to navigate the U.S. educational system and therefore aren't asking the &quot;right&quot; questions of their students; parents not knowing how to support their students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to see a documented system of intervention that is either site specific or a district system of intervention that is research based. I believe that site practitioners are well intended, but I am not entirely sure that our practice is research based or data driven based on my experience. I believe that we need to shift our focus to timely instructional intervention rather than remediation after the fact. It's a difficult challenge to shift instruction, but it's definitely a high leverage action step. When students are struggling, it's too late to wait until the 6 week grading mark. Maybe we can pull attendance data earlier to identify students prior to the 6-week mark. I wonder if we can pull grade data from the Aeries grade book prior to the 6-week mark as well. My wondering is what interventions are research based to improve student</td>
<td>This is a very complex issue. :) In my opinion, lack of engagement and genuine relationship/connection are two major factors that impact student achievement. There aren't simple solutions to increasing engagement and connection, especially in the current budget, but I have to believe that there are ways that we can restructure to meet student needs. I think the challenge in a traditional school is that even if you want to build engagement and connection, it's virtually impossible with the volume of students that we're responsible for. Even the most committed educators aren't able to keep up with the current needs of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the practice and implementation of intervention varies depending on the school site. I don't know of a unified process for intervention district wide.</td>
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</table>

As far as I understand, counselors identify at risk students at the 6-week grading period with multiple D's or F's. I believe the practice and implementation of intervention varies depending on the school site. I don't know of a unified process for intervention district wide.
outcomes and how can we restructure
our current resources to ensure that our
most at risk students are receiving the
level of service and intervention that
they need to get back on track. We
shouldn't wait for them to fail and then
sign them up for after school credit
recovery or compel them to retake
courses during the regular school day.
There has to be a way to support them
in achieving the first time around in a
course.

Our culture/society has
become more complex and
I'm not entirely sure that
we're utilizing social and
devotional research to
inform our practice. As I
enroll students who are
looking for an alternative
learning environment, I see
students with demands
outside of school (either
home, work or both), mental
health issues, anxiety, low
academic performance,
family concerns,
disengagement from the
traditional model of
education, discipline issues,
challenges with the juvenile
justice system, attendance
issues, the desire to
accelerate their learning,
school phobia, substance
abuse/addiction issues, grief
and loss, past/current
trauma, homelessness or
transitional issues, etc. The
student needs are great and
the resources are not always
organized in an efficient way
to meet student needs so
students inevitably fall
through the cracks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D, F rates, credit deficient reports, absenteeism</th>
<th>growth and support for the MPG model</th>
<th>not seeing the school to work connection, flexible programming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidance counselors track this at the high school level.</td>
<td>I believe counselors should be evaluating this every year to re-direct class choices. Also, teachers should be informing counselors before report cards are due when a student is failing and needs support.</td>
<td>failing classes, choosing “wrong” classes that don't meet graduation and/or university requirements, too many electives and not enough required classes, lack of focus on life direction, lack of parent involvement in choosing classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Unit Completion Tracking and GPA Tracking | Identification to Teachers of at risk students | Too many to list here: Usually around either emotionalism, lack of strong relationships in school, or lack of academic preparation. Each student is
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of the ARC program</th>
<th>Classes in 9th grade to evaluate their interest in college and career. Administer the PSAT to all 9th graders.</th>
<th>Low literacy, no alternative programs to A-G courses.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring student progress by counselors (D/F rates) Identify select students for support programs such as College Bound, AVID etc. Past and present assessment results such as SBAC, CELDT</td>
<td>Designing learning experiences that are accessible to all students Creating classroom cultures conducive to students &quot;feeling safe&quot; Designing systems that support students in identifying their strengths, interests and &quot;pathways&quot; to develop these assets</td>
<td>Challenges accessing content (there are multiple variables: instruction, language etc.) Unstable home environment and/or emotionally detrimental personnel experiences which detract from engaging with learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Guidance Counselors monitoring their students</td>
<td>Middle grades alternative school options that focus on SEL and school success and a more systematic approach to monitoring high school students</td>
<td>Social emotional issues, lack of parental support, gaps in learning caused by attendance problems, unidentified learning challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the elementary level, sites identify at-risk students, but prevention and intervention is not comprehensive and is limited based on site funding allocation.</td>
<td>Early prevention/intervention in Kinder-2nd literacy to ensure students read and write at grade level by the end of 2nd grade. Support for orientation and additional support for incoming middle and high school students. Continue promoting a college going culture with programs like AVID, College Bound, Simon Scholars, CTE pathways, etc.</td>
<td>I believe most at risk students enter school at risk because in addition to learn the content, they have to learn a new language. Another group of at risk students are those with high socio-emotional needs that need to be addressed before these students can learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades, attendance and teacher input are the beginnings, of course, but I do not know, in this digital world, what else we our using at OUSD.</td>
<td>I'd love to see more regular mentors that stay with kids longer through their schooling; district personnel specifically in-charge of bridging mentors to our schools from MCC, Palomar, etc.; Big Brother/Big Sister Programs, etc. Yet, someone has to have that position who oversees connections to the public, safety, matching and following through with these bridges.</td>
<td>Family Life - the real reality of: death, divorce, abuse, mental illness, medical emergencies, sibling(s) crisis, upbringing...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While I cannot speak for the entire district, at our school and at a neighboring school, besides grade level PLC meetings, our resource team and I meet with general education teachers every 6 weeks to discuss students who are most at risk either academically or behaviorally. We discuss interventions for</td>
<td>I think that this depends grade levels of the school. I know that our district utilizes counseling services through district counseling and through contracted services through local family counseling agencies. Currently, we do not have a great deal of funding for intervention teachers to address academic needs at the elementary level. I believe that the best intervention</td>
<td>Early struggles with reading at the primary levels. Especially in the primary years, students develop at different rates. They also have a variety of preschool experiences from non-existent to multiple years. For those late bloomer students who really struggle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
these students and monitor their progress. Actually occurs within the classroom. We would do well to train our teachers in both effective academic and behavioral interventions that work within the general education classroom. Most general education teachers have a limited set of tools to address oftentimes complex behavioral issues. Early on, there seems to be a never-ending game of catch-up with their peers. It does not take long for them to develop a false self-perception that they are not as smart as their peers and unfortunately some turn that belief into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Another major issue affecting many young people, especially at the middle and high school level, is a lack of a sense of belonging. While the causes may be different, a number of students feel that they are not part of a group of close friends. Unfortunately, as a result they seek the acceptance of others which at times comes in the form of high risk behavior (drugs, gangs, etc.).

| Credit evaluations, parent voiced concerns | A definitive flow chart to identify and intervene with students and families who eventually become off track to graduation. | Low confidence of potential success in school, lack of home involvement in school success, under identified learning issues, lack of system in schools to identify and intervene in the best interest of the STUDENT, lack of student centered connection with school success and future personal success. Lack of academic cultural context in student's lives. |
| Annual standardized testing, grading policies | Graduation needs to become an elementary school problem. Elementary and middle schools need to have data for how their students do in high school. | Boredom. Perceived lack of relevance in the curriculum. Little student choice in learning experiences or modalities. Deficit-based intervention is de-motivating to students. For secondary students motivation is everything. |
| It is hard to say as I work at an elementary school. | | Attendance and behavior. |
# APPENDIX L

OUSD’s effectiveness at helping students recuperate (responses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To your knowledge, what are OUSD’s practices for helping those students who are off-track to graduation, get back on track?</th>
<th>In your opinion, what are some practices you would like to see in addressing students who are off-track to graduation?</th>
<th>From your experience and understanding, what are barriers to implementing practices to address students who are off-track to graduation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The AARC's and Ocean Shores. Special education would add additional, and more individual, interventions.</td>
<td>I think we do a good job of addressing student who are off-track, but we need more work on making sure that these students are being supported with challenging curriculum across all alternative choices.</td>
<td>limited resources (people, money, time); limited capacity and know-how (in terms of meeting students' academic and social/emotional needs); too much going on in the system and this seems like &quot;another thing&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutoring; remediation classes; change of classes/teachers in some cases</td>
<td>supports for students so they can identify why they are interested in being graduation ready (increase student ownership of their learning process and help them see why they want and/or need to be fully prepared to graduate); personal connections with struggling students so they are aware that we care about their lives and success; flexibility in how we support our students while still holding them to rigorous standards</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intervention groups</td>
<td>Coordinated follow up at the district level on informing parents of the importance.</td>
<td>Parent availability and personnel to follow up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are dozens, maybe hundreds of cases where different schools, or different teachers have helped students get back on track. However, there is no systematic long-term strategy. Over the years we keep throwing things at this issues such as Read 180 with minimal success. The number one practice is to provide personalized early intervention (E.g. Guided Reading) and at upper grades providing immediate intervention which allows students to re-engage without be punished. For example, at the middle school and high school level, a student who scores below 70% on a chapter 1 math test should be provided immediate</td>
<td>You really need to ID what grade level you are talking about (e.g. Elementary, Middle or High School). 1. Great engaging teaching to begin with that includes lots of checking for understanding and student discourse. 2. Immediate short-term intervention to support students after the first assessment. 3. Students given chance to re-take assessment/test and given full credit if they demonstrate understanding.</td>
<td>Again, this is a really broad question and barriers very for why individual students are off track. Is it an academic issue, drug/drinking, family crises? If Academic: 1. The typical high school teacher doesn't believe in given kids a second chance in the short term. 2. Resources (e.g. teachers) who can provide small group instruction for intervention.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intervention and an opportunity to retake test with full credit to prove they now get it. Typically Kids quickly figure out after the first two or three test in a semester that it is close to impossible to pass, therefore they mentally and/or physically drop out and quite trying. Currently, the system waits until the end of semester to ID kids who now completely failed.</td>
<td>Providing students a different way to learn vs. giving them the same learning tasks over and over. We have go to be innovative if we want students to stay with us!</td>
<td>Teacher accountability. Lack of defined instructional programs for teaching staff to use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credit Recovery, AARC</td>
<td>I think we need to bring school to kids...let school work for kids not against them</td>
<td>Being stuck in a traditional mindset and an unwillingness to implement out of the box thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs like CBA are great for getting kids back on track. The focus on SEL seems like it will support kids in feeling more connected.</td>
<td>Mentoring relationships...kids need support and strong sounding boards.</td>
<td>Time, so many kids need TLC...how do we reach them all. Frustration and blame game from the staff at the current grade level towards previous years, because the kiddo hasn't mastered a concept, therefore the kiddo is not able to be taught...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Burgener and the ARC programs. Caring teachers.</td>
<td>Personalized Learning plans for all kids.</td>
<td>Budgetary limitations play a role. Also, it's important to have the right personnel, which can be difficult to find when working with students who are off-track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't have enough knowledge of our practices to answer this question.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer tutoring (which many students don't attend); having 1:1 conversations with students; putting students on an academic plan;</td>
<td>Assigning mentors to students who are off track; getting students plugged in to something that they are interested in; developing student passion through projects; making learning relevant; job internships to explore career possibilities; school within a school model at the high schools.</td>
<td>Lack of time, personnel and money to do it all. A change in mindset regarding the current way we &quot;do business&quot; is required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My only knowledge of recuperation opportunities available on the traditional school sites are after school credit recovery offerings and/or the ability to retake courses during their regular school day (within a students 6 period schedule). We also offer limited</td>
<td>Prevention and timely intervention so that we can minimize the number of students who need to recuperate credits all together. :) I feel like if the number of students who need to recuperate credits is limited, then we can focus the higher level of intervention on a manageable number</td>
<td>I think the biggest barrier is the fact that there is not a common system for intervention. Our district has two comprehensive sites, one continuation site and three IS programs. It boggles my mind that we cannot have a</td>
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</table>
summer school options. Our district also offers independent study (the AARC's) and continuation education (Ocean Shores HS) options for students as an opportunity to recuperate credits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>credit recovery, CBA</th>
<th>flexible scheduling to personalize the learning, growth of the MPG model</th>
<th>traditional high school model, funding, Fixed mindsets throughout the system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>after school credit recovery, AARC, local college classes</td>
<td>more individual interest in how kids are doing!</td>
<td>need more counselors, students want classes that hold their attention and give them a &quot;reason&quot; to study/self-motivate, old teaching practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolling them in AARC or Ocean Shores</td>
<td>Alternatives in Comprehensive High schools which take into account strengths interests and skills of the students</td>
<td>Limitation of adults in our system, and the schedule inflexibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC, Credit Recovery and CBA programs.</td>
<td>Vocational programs. (Welding, carpentry, health field etc...)</td>
<td>Lack of personnel and lack of funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative school settings such as OSHS, Clair Burgener Dual enrollment classes (developing) Tutoring during and after regular school hours Supplementary courses for some subjects at some grade levels (e.g. math)</td>
<td>Practice #1- Invest a significant and thorough effort in understanding the causes of students being off track Practice #2- Use the learnings from practice #1 to gather and apply resources to support students in &quot;getting back on track.&quot; Practice #3- Ensure resources for staying on track are accessible to all students through clear and consistent communication (and reaching out)</td>
<td>I wonder if our resources/personnel are best structured for supporting students in staying on track. In other words, is our system best designed for this purpose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit recovery options (ARC, CBA, OSHS)</td>
<td>Earlier interventions, credit recovery options delivered direct instruction on the comprehensive campuses via a night school and build an alternative high school.</td>
<td>Lack of district focus, inconsistent practices, poor communication, lack of support, lack of equitable resources, lack of vision and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the elementary level, it has been hit and miss practices which lack consistent support.</td>
<td>More focus on prevention will mean a decrease in needed interventions.</td>
<td>Prevention and intervention practices are not targeted based on students' needs. Conflicting interests and limited available resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AARC Programs, after school programs, some mentor visits from MCC</td>
<td>I can write a paper on what we have done and what we could do...The problem is nothing ever stays around.</td>
<td>True OUSD commitment; do not through the &quot;Baby Out with the Bath Water&quot; add to, revise, rearrange, etc. but take a stance on what and how we will do it here and keep it permanently as our</td>
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<tr>
<th>AARC programs (ECHS, OHS, CBA), Ocean Shores. Either direct instruction program or independent option online.</th>
<th>Students who are at-risk need to work closely with caring adults with the knowledge and skills to help these students. In order to do this effectively you need enough of these adults to work with small groups of students. Financially, this can be burdensome for many districts with so many needs competing for the same limited funding sources.</th>
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<tr>
<td>OUSD is building new alternative academic programs to reach students who are off-track as result of a variety of factors. While these programs are still in their infancy, they show a great deal of promise for those who need that level of support.</td>
<td>I like what I am seeing in the alternative program development that is happening in OUSD. I believe that we need far more counseling available at the elementary level to catch the issues earlier in the lives of these students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AARCs, ALC, Restorative Practice</td>
<td>“This is how it always has been done”, Not getting information from all stakeholders (i.e. teachers and other school employees) to better understand what is best for students and the school, Parent involvement to support the student and school is difficult to receive, Assessment that is student specific to identify early gaps in reading and math, A flow chart and mechanism to identify when a student is falling behind and when and what interventions need to happen at that point in the best interest of the student would help but there is no such thing which leaves students and families floundering sometimes for years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>More personalized instruction to address student motivation. All post-primary learning in real-world contexts emphasizing relevance. Prepare kids for life and careers rather than compliance with a-g pigeonholes.</td>
<td>Our unwillingness to adjust our program to the actual needs of students rather than what we have decided is best for them. In other words, rather than trying to get them back “on-track”, we need to have multiple tracks so that when a kid gets off one track they're still on another track.</td>
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### APPENDIX M
OUSD’s effectiveness at recovering when disconnected (responses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To your knowledge, what are OUSD's practices for opening doors to off-track, out-of-school students?</th>
<th>In your opinion, what are some practices you would like to see in opening doors to off-track, out-of-school students?</th>
<th>From your experience and understanding, what are barriers to implementing practices that open doors to off-track, out-of-school students?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a tough one. I am not familiar with these practices as much as others. This question really deals with our SARB process and follow up. I can't comment as to how effective it currently is or what may need to be improved.</td>
<td>More follow up with our SARB process.</td>
<td>A truly open and on-going conversation involving the whole community. This is not a difficult thing to do, but we have to start with the mindset that it's not just a small group of people that are going to have all the answers for everything. But this takes, again, an imaginative and open attitude towards including all stakeholders in solution-based discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am unaware of these practices, outside of SARB which requires our students to be in school or families are subject to legal action</td>
<td>I'm unsure of what this could look like but I'm thinking initially making social connections in outside facilities where our off-track kids spend their days could begin to build connections between them and our school system/people</td>
<td>Access to off-track students (how do we find these students and make meaningful connections with these kids when we are essentially strangers to them); people prepared, willing, and able to put in the time to get to know our students who are off-track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent meetings.</td>
<td>Parent contact at the district level.</td>
<td>Parent availability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative schools</td>
<td>More alternatives for students</td>
<td>Budgets and buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is Ocean Shores.</td>
<td>Innovative, hands-on, student centered learning experiences with the most talented and devoted educators.</td>
<td>Greatest barrier is that this is not a priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to Shores or the AARC</td>
<td>We need to be welcoming. Make schools a place where kids feel comfortable, welcomed, and supported.</td>
<td>There is often a lot of talk on what would be great to do for this type of student but not a lot of action. We all know of great programs that are proven to be successful but if it is not deemed &quot;Mission Critical&quot; it will not happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBA, the virtual academy,</td>
<td>Flexible options to meet their needs...sometime in class, sometime off campus, real life experiences, connections with mentors</td>
<td>Money, time, staffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again... Claire Burgener. Great program for reaching kids on the verge of dropping out.</td>
<td>Online, off site, customized academic programs.</td>
<td>Any place any time relevant learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know we have ARC and the programs at CBA to help recover our off-track, out-of-school students.</td>
<td>I'd like to offer more programs for students that develop skills that will help them find jobs with or without going to a university. More technical, computer and vocational programs to give students choices.</td>
<td>Once again, budgetary constraints, which affect hiring practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AARC, Ocean Shores and CBA are all kind of last draw alternatives for students, but we need to do more within our traditional settings!</td>
<td>Assigning mentors to students who are off track; getting students plugged in to something that they are interested in; developing student passion through projects; making learning relevant; job internships to explore career possibilities; school within a school model at the high schools.</td>
<td>Lack of time, personnel and money to do it all. A change in mindset regarding the current way we &quot;do business&quot; is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students are severely off track, they are referred out to an independent study program, Ocean Shores and/or MiraCosta Adult school when appropriate. I'm not entirely sure that comprehensive school site practitioners have a good working understanding of each of these programs, so referrals are sometimes not appropriate based on the different offerings of each program.</td>
<td>Going out into the community and making families aware of our IS programs has been great in re-engaging out of school students and bringing out of district students into our program. One of the issues with this is that not all students are appropriate for IS, so sometimes I feel like we are enrolling students who may be better served in a smaller classroom instructional environment. I would like to see a systematic process like this district wide. In my observation, we have one site administrator who is in the community reaching out to families and doing home visits, but this isn't part of our system district wide. What if we had a district position that was responsible for this and well versed in each program so they could facilitate student enrollment in the program that best fits the students needs?</td>
<td>We want to open doors to off-track and out of school students, but we also want to be cognizant of the individual student needs. If we see that a student might not be a good candidate for independent study, then we need to get them into the program that best suits their needs. We want to keep the doors open, but we also are responsible for guiding to the appropriate program based on student needs. If a student is not making progress in an IS program, I do feel that we're responsible for We hamper our efforts by not having a system...If we as a district had a culture of welcoming all students and a system to support getting students into the program that best suits them, we could make much more progress in getting students back on track and back into school.</td>
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</table>
getting them into a program that will suit their needs in a timely manner. Holding on to a student who is not making progress because we're afraid that they will drop out isn't always what is best for a student long-term. Sometimes we put them at greater risk of not graduating on time when we hold on to non-producing students rather than get them into a program with a greater level of instructional support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>none that I know of, unless an adult takes a personal interest and makes a personal connection that entices a student to return</th>
<th>knowledge of these students, connection to make them return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none that I have any knowledge of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking career fields into account so there is a reprieved need for education by the student to enhance future success</td>
<td>Lack of teachers to create these programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time employment opportunities and college courses.</td>
<td>Motivation and social emotional support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to see our primary high schools structured to meet the needs of all students so alternative schools are not necessary. This means ensuring students understand the system and are provided with opportunities to build upon their inherent strengths and skills while building capacity in supporting skills and knowledge.</td>
<td>Our system offers some incredible opportunities for students; however, those opportunities and supports are not equitably provided across the system. In other words, not all students are provided the same opportunities due to variability from site to site and teacher to teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUSD offers alternative schools for students who are off track.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUSD to provide an Adult and Family Education Center for community members aged 17 1/2 yrs. and up that offers an Adult Ed High School Diploma, English Language courses, and GED preparation classes -</td>
<td>Lack of focus, vision, and planning -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent study @ CBA, OSHS, OHS, &amp; ECHS and online ed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It depends on the off-track, out-of-school students that are being served. Increased options.</td>
<td>I do not have experience or knowledge on this subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow chart with interventions. A credit marker (AERIES) that alerts counselors and administration that the student is in trouble. Better communication with parents and families of what might be best for students when problems START. Assessment of all students entering high school and immediate interventions put into place for gap areas in academics.</td>
<td>Poor or negative communication. Focusing on student enrollment numbers instead of focusing on getting students to the type of school that may better suit their academic needs. Not thinking outside the box when it comes to individual schools and how they serve these struggling students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB AARC</td>
<td>More flexibility in our graduation requirements or different diploma options could lower barriers for OOS youth and motivate students to work toward a diploma that they feel is relevant for them and might actually prepare them for a career rather than further academic life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX N
AARC in the Park agenda items, proposals, and feedback

“AARC in the Park”
Academic Acceleration & Recovery Center learning options through community-site options.
In partnership with Oceanside Parks and Recreation.

AARC in the Park meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.16.18 - Cabinet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.17.18 – Supporting staff and teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.18.18 – Follow up with supporting staff and teachers</td>
<td><strong>1.18.18 - Discussion items:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the intake procedure? Will it vary from how it’s done at the sites?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Who will facilitate?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Where will the intake occur?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What block of time is best?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Morning?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Mid-afternoon?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Late afternoon?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are there opportunities to partner with nonprofits and/or city?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Tutoring options possibly through Vista Community Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Office space?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Computer and wifi accessibility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Start at 1, 2, or 3 parks?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Or pilot only at 1?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Administration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o What happens if kids are at “AARC in the Park” and break school rules?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• District expectations?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Staffing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Must be relationship-builders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Flexible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Tolerant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o At location or trip to CB?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25.18 - Meeting with HR and Sr. Director of Innovation</td>
<td>Review of teacher contract and workday non-negotiables. Review of possible schedules. Explore mileage reimbursement options. Review MOU and certificate of insurance with city agencies (global certificate of insurance) Review of vetting process used by cabinet to move forward with new ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Session Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12.18</td>
<td>PLC Meeting at CBA&lt;br&gt;Teacher interest and feedback.&lt;br&gt;Barriers and hurdles to overcome.&lt;br&gt;Vision for students entering then eventually transitioning into AARC programs on school sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15.18</td>
<td>Counselors, Psychologists, Teachers&lt;br&gt;Concern about security at sites for students/staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16.18</td>
<td>Counselors, Teachers&lt;br&gt;Be mindful about not taking students away from the program (i.e. AARC) where they are finding success.&lt;br&gt;Counselor open to supporting with intakes, says their geography is important regarding who takes care of intakes.&lt;br&gt;What will entice a student who begins at AARC in the Park to eventually transition into a school-based program?&lt;br&gt;Expressed the desire for improved communication in the district about programs and offerings.&lt;br&gt;Schedules matter and there is less flexibility at school-based AARC sites than at CBA.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What will the responsibilities of the guidance tech be, especially regarding ADA?<br>What about inputting of grades?<br>What does monitoring look like?<br>More work-intensive?<br>**Are they independent learners?** (We need to be asking this question)<br>What does admin support look like?<br>Can we get parents in for intakes?<br>SPED support?<br>How can we be sure we get records?<br>Are we invested in the student? Oceanside Promise?<br>How can VCC at a place like Balderama serve in this capacity/partner with us?<br>Could students who meet at the park also come to AARC sites during the week for extra help?<br>What does the time look like between interest, intake, and beginning assignments?<br>Can the intake be fast-tracked?<br>The one day a week option impacts this.
Possible schedule options for AARC in the Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option 1: One teacher, one day per week, during 5th block at Balderrama</th>
<th>Option 2: Two teachers, one day per week, during 5th block at Balderama and Melba Bishop</th>
<th>Option 3: Three teachers, one day per week, during 5th block at Balderama, Crown Heights, and Melba Bishop</th>
<th>Option 4: Three teachers, three consecutive days per month (M, T, W or T, W, Th), during 5th block at Crown Heights, Balderama, Melba Bishop</th>
<th>Option 5: Three teachers, three consecutive days per month (M, T, W or T, W, Th), during 5th block at one site (likely Balderama)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12:30-2:30 block

Requirements for scheduling according to teacher contract article 26.1.3:
- Teachers assigned to an 8.5 hour workday, including:
  - 30 minute duty free lunch
  - Up to three (3) two (2) hour instructional blocks
  - 55 minutes designated as prep time
  - 50 minutes designated for calling parents, conferences, calling students, and other related activities directed by admin.

What about mileage for travel between sites?
APPENDIX O
Snapshots of conversations in cabinet and in principals’ meetings

10.3.17 Cabinet
In cabinet, there was a presentation that pitched purchasing and shifting to a new information management system to support human resources, payroll, and finance - essentially abandoning the previous system of PeopleSoft and shifting to a newer platform called “Digital Schools”. While it was alarming that cabinet representatives were proposing purchasing a new platform to replace an existing one that would cost a start up fee of $125K and an annual fee of $157K with a one-time injection of money that was to come from a previous settlement, as this has been described as the thinking that created a structural deficit in the first place; what was most alarming was the comments made about collaboration from cabinet. First, the reps from human resources and payroll had attended several demonstrations of the software and concluded that it would be a great resource for the district and they indicated that this is the first time their departments have worked together at this level. Second, while these departments collaborated on vetting a new resource, they neglected the most critical team and cabinet member for implementation of such resource: technology. The director of technology was asked to respond to the presentation as though he had been part of the vetting process but he shared that this was the first he had heard about the resource. There was a visible shock in the room from the other cabinet members who seemed to be thinking, “why wasn’t he involved? His department will be most impacted and we’ll depend on them the most for implementation.” The director of technology shared the same sentiment and indicated that he thought the resource was a good one, an important one, but that it would require an incredible amount of work and whatever cost savings would take place in other departments would surely be used up in the tech department in order to implement such a change.

This exchange was interesting. I was first surprised to hear that cross-departmental collaboration was not a regular occurrence. Further, I wondered why someone and a department so critical to the implementation of a resource was not included in the vetting process in the first place.

10.4.17 Secondary Principals Meeting
I started by sharing Marshall’s definition of leadership. I followed up with two questions that led to a rich and emotional conversation with principals. The questions were: To lead in this regard, what does this require of you? Do you have those skills/capacity? If not, how might you leverage others in this room?

The response to the second question elicited a lot of responses from principals and directors, both new and veteran. There were three themes that arose in leaders’ responses: the willingness to be vulnerable, the need to be part of a team and learn from one another, and the necessary role of the principal to create the conditions for their staff. In response to the leadership definition, we discussed how the conditions that principals were often responsible for creating were those that addressed Maslow’s Hierarchy before addressing Bloom’s Taxonomy. Several principals noted the need to be more vulnerable in admitting their gaps and struggles in order to get more support and set a more inviting tone for their staff who struggle in the same way. Additionally, a few of the new principals and directors expressed a regret for not visiting more of their colleagues’ schools at this point in the year and indicated that they were missing learning by not collaborating more with their counterparts.

Notes from the meeting: We need more opportunities to share and collaborate on challenges we are facing the sites. With limited resources how can we manage a school as well as be the instructional leader? We need to schedule site visits during our meetings and informally walk campuses with a small team to share ideas. Leadership capacity should be the focus of our larger district leadership meetings.

Some more veteran staff in the room told the story of a compliance culture of years before and shared that when they were vulnerable, expressed confusion, or challenged authority that they came to regret it sooner rather than later by being punished in some way or another. Essentially, they shared that there was a lack of trust which prevented vulnerability and therefore, making this shift towards a different culture comes with reservations. This is not the first time this conversation has been elevated in fact, it’s a consistent sentiment I hear in conversations from teachers, school leaders, directors, former staff, and executive staff.
### APPENDIX P
OUSD Multiple Pathways model

#### Oceanside Unified School District
**Multiple Pathways to Meeting a Promise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-School Learning Options</th>
<th>Oceanside High School</th>
<th>El Camino High School</th>
<th>California Street Academy of Science &amp; Engineering (CSASE)</th>
<th>Ocean Shores High School</th>
<th>Independent Study</th>
<th>Recovery Options</th>
<th>Community Based Organizations &amp; Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Del Rio Elementary</td>
<td>Pirate Pathways</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>An 8-12 Extension Pathway (K-5) &amp; Lincoln (6-8) Science &amp; Engineering option</td>
<td>Seat time</td>
<td>Credit recovery</td>
<td>On-site childcare for student-parents</td>
<td>Credit Recovery Classes at OHS &amp; ECHS (in addition to AARC on site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>21st Century Learning</td>
<td>Small school concept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult Education at Ditmars Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Terrace Elementary (located on military base)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Career/Tech Ed Learning Options</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult Education at Mira Costa College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Margarita Elementary (located on military base)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Automotive Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saturday Academy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY & NOTES**

**AARC - Academic Acceleration and Recovery Center**

Pirate Pathways - Wall to wall pathways model at Oceanside High School to provide opportunities for students and staff to specialize in teaching and learning opportunities.

*A proposed program where we can provide mental health awareness for students in both special and general education environments using a social emotional learning curriculum.

**The Oceanside Promise is community-wide partnership to ensure every Oceanside student graduates ready to succeed in college, career and life. Individuals and organizations that invest in the Promise are helping bring the education, business, nonprofit, government, and the faith-based communities together to better meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of Oceanside's children, youth, and families. From improving the kindergarten readiness of young children to increasing postsecondary completion, the Oceanside Promise strives to build a vibrant and promising future for everyone in our community.**