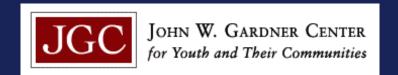


# RAISING THE BAR, BUILDING CAPACITY:

**Driving Improvement in California's Continuation High Schools** 







# A TWO-PHASE STUDY

Phase 1 (Descriptive Study)— 2007-08

- Nine Counties (Humboldt, Alameda, Santa Clara, Fresno, San Joaquin, Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, San Diego)
- 26 School Districts; 37 continuation schools
- What is a Continuation High School?
- Who are the students in Continuation Schools?
- How are these schools staffed and Supported?
- What do policymakers and educators need to know?





# **PHASE 1 FINDINGS:**

- Enormous variation in Design, Intensity of Effort, and Student Outcomes.
- Lack of Clarity about Goals (at all levels of the system)
- Incoherent State Accountability System
- Generally Opaque or Non-Existent Identification and Placement "Systems"
- State/District Funding system that did not reflect the needs of teachers and students





# PHASE 1 FINDINGS

# A Very Vulnerable Population (Healthy Kids Survey)

- Homeless youth; or in youth in foster care,
- Sexually or physically abused,
- Experiencing substance abuse,
- Parenting, pregnant,
- Former incarceration,
- mental health issues,
- gang involvement,
- English learners ("long-term LEP's and newcomers)





## PHASE 1 FINDINGS

We did find Effective Schools; Even if they were outliers.

- CHS students score lower on virtually all state-assessed measures of academic performance (By design)
- BUT: CHS students do at least as well (on average) as Comprehensive schools on CAHSEE pass rates
- Some CHS do better than Comprehensive HS on a range of persistence and course/school completion measures (given similar student profiles).
- CHS Could be an effective alternative route to the Diploma.





# PHASE 2 — A FOCUS ON HIGHER-PERFORMING SCHOOLS (2009-11)

What are the characteristics of higher performing schools?

What lessons can we draw from these schools that would inform State/District Policy?





#### **STATE POLICY – Goal Setting**

1. High Performing Schools Establish and Regularly Articulate Clear Academic Goals and Expectations and Align Systems to Support those Goals

**Lessons for State Policy** 

Clarify academic goals

Limit involuntary transfer Continuation Schools.

Require districts to articulate a coherent set of identification, placement, and school intake procedures.





#### **STATE POLICY - Accountability**

2. Higher-Performing Schools Create Strong School Accountability Norms in the Absence of State and District Standards.

**Lessons for State Policy** 

Hold continuation high schools accountable for results in any new Accountability System

Reward continuous student proficiency-based growth at the school level.

Use a 5 or 6-year graduation rate as a standard accountability measure for students who complete their education in a continuation high school.





#### **STATE POLICY – Data Issues**

3. Higher Performing Schools Use Data to Drive Practice

**Lessons for State Policy** 

- Invest in strengthening CALPADS and links to district administrative data
- Support cross-agency data integration strategies at local level
- Include indicators of social emotional learning in accountability system





#### **STATE POLICY – Supporting Equity**

4. Higher Performing Schools Focused on Equity Issues

**Lessons for State Policy** 

- Provide continuation students with the option of a statesupported full day of instruction [AB 570-Jones Sawyer]
- Examine demand/supply issues for alternative education
- Lower eligibility for CHS enrollment from 16 to 14 years of age, or 9<sup>th</sup> grade





#### **DISTRICT PRACTICES – Accountability Issues**

5. More Successful Schools Operated in Districts that Held Them Accountable for Student Opportunities and Outcomes

#### **Lessons for Districts**

- Provide clear & transparent district student Identification and placement policies
- Align credits between continuation and comprehensive high schools
- Track students into and out of CHS





#### **DISTRICT POLICIES – Supporting Leaders & Teachers**

6. Higher Performing Schools Received District Support for Meeting Student Needs

#### **Lessons for Districts**

- Offer on-going, targeted professional development opportunities
- Provide incentives for and attention to attracting highly- skilled principals and teachers to CHS
- Include CHS teachers & administrators in system-wide efforts to spur reform in secondary schools
- Require communication between comprehensive & continuation high schools re: student placement & instructional alignment





#### **SCHOOLS – Student Behavioral Supports**

7. School Leaders & Teachers in Higher Performing Pursued Student-centered, Asset-based strategies

#### **Lessons for Districts**

- Provide guidance to schools on promoting an asset-based, student-focused school climate
- Develop discipline systems that focus on positive behavioral supports and interventions
- Incorporate strategies and indicators of social emotional learning





#### **SCHOOLS – Social And Academic Supports For Youth**

8. More Successful Schools Attend to Both Academic and Social (community) Supports

#### **Lessons for State and District Policy**

- Provide opportunities for extended/linked learning; community service
- Support waivers/incentives for CHS partnerships with youthserving community & public agencies (E.g., health, mental and behavioral supports and interventions)
- Facilitate academic & social connections with higher education





#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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