
Small Learning Communities SLC Design Proposal

II. COVER SHEET

Name of School: East Valley High School

Location Code: 8607

Proposed SLC Name: Freshman Academy

Design Team Leader:

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**Small Learning Communities
SLC Design Proposal**

III. TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	SLC Design Proposal Routing Sheet.....	Attached
II.	Cover Sheet.....	1
III.	Table of Contents	2
IV.	Letter of Intent	3
V.	SLC Technical Assistance Options Checklist	4
VI.	SLC Design by Attribute	5

**Small Learning Communities
SLC Design Proposal**

submitted to
Los Angeles Unified School District

IV. LETTER OF INTENT

Letter of Intent to the School Site Council

In February 2005, the Los Angeles Board of Education issued a policy bulletin indicating that all high schools in the District must create or convert to small learning communities. The purpose of this school reorganization is “to provide students and teachers with a more personalized and caring learning environment, to provide a rigorous, standards-based curriculum in an identifiable context to all students, and to provide a portfolio of quality option for students, teachers, and parents” (Policy Bulletin 1600).

The purpose of this letter is to inform the parents, teachers and East Valley High School stakeholders of East Valley’s intent to design and submit our Small Learning Communities reorganization plan to the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools for approval.

The impact of this restructuring should be slight as we are already a Talent Development school, a model which is itself based on the principles of small learning communities; that is, we are already creating small learning communities through our Freshman House and our Career Academies, Business Finance and Marketing, Media and Communications, and Performing Arts.

As per the requirements of Bulletin 1600, attached is an Assistance Checklist for each of our small learning community design proposals. The Assistance Checklist indicates the kinds of support each academy feels it will need from LAUSD in order to successfully implement its small learning community plan.

I look forward to working with you all as we develop our Small Learning Community plan.

Sincerely,

Marcy Hamm, Principal
East Valley High School

V. SLC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CHECKLIST

The Office of School Redesign will offer professional development and technical support. What are the greatest challenges that you can foresee at this time to completing your work? What assistance do you need? Please check all that apply and attach to your letter of intent.

Foreseeable Challenges	Check All That Apply
Attribute analysis	
Vision creation/identity	
Student outcomes	
Matrix	
School to work transition	
Academic requirements: A-G	
Content integration	X
Assessments/evaluation	
Alterations to facilities	X
Resilience building	X
Youth development strategies	X
Advisories	
Leadership roles	
Bell schedules	
Contract issues/waivers	
Best practices	X
Articulation	
Budgets	X
Sustainability	X
Community partnerships	X
Parent outreach and involvement	X
Student outreach and involvement	X
School staff Outreach and Involvement	
Union (UTLA) agreements	

VI. SLC DESIGN BY ATTRIBUTE: Ninth Grade Success Academy

1A. Unifying Vision

East Valley High School is a Talent Development school working in partnership with John Hopkins University. The Talent Development program utilizes core strategies which are known to increase student performance in high school, and in particular uses a Small Learning Community structure as the underpinning of its reform model. This model includes a ninth grade freshman academy which feeds into Career Academies in grades ten through twelve. East Valley's Freshman Academy feeds into three career academies.

The Freshman Academy at East Valley High School is a student-centered program designed to enable teachers and staff to work together to effectively to diagnose and address individual student needs. It is our belief that all students are capable of building the academic and social skills they need to become successful, productive, and responsible members of society. All staff members of the Freshman Academy are committed to holding high expectations for student academic achievement, attending to students' academic and social development, adopting a caring and supportive approach to students' problems, and working together to create a strong foundation to support student growth throughout their education and into their adult lives.

Nearly every 9th grade classroom on campus, with the exception of the gymnasium, is located in the east end of the North Wing building, right above the administration offices and the main entrance to the campus. Each of three ninth grade teams is located on one of three floors in the wing. This facilitates our staff knowing each and every student that is in our academy, and allows us to build relationships with all of our students.

The Freshman Academy teachers and staff strongly believe that students learn best in a structured, well-ordered environment. It is our firm belief that a strong and supportive learning community, along with strong parent involvement, is essential in supporting student achievement. We work closely with the parents in our community, giving them a clear idea of what help is needed to ensure their students' success. We hold an assembly in late August to which all of our students and their parents are invited. At this assembly, we explain the structure of our academy and describe the ninth grade academic year's goals. At this time, parents and students are introduced to staff members and given a schedule for monthly parent success meetings, which will alternate between 7:30 AM and 5:30 PM each month. It is our goal to facilitate parent-teacher collaboration to promote success for each and every student.

Many students enter high school lacking needed literacy, math, and critical thinking skills necessary to have a successful educational experience. In addition, some students have special learning needs. We are an academy that incorporates all students at all skill levels, and works to address all student deficiencies and special needs. Our 4x4 block schedule allows us to incorporate courses from the Johns Hopkins Talent Development Program in English and Math

that have been proven to strengthen students basic skills, and this program is supplemented with additional tutoring available after school. Students at risk find caring teachers who will help them gain the knowledge they need to succeed. We work closely with a Special Education teacher to determine best practice for each student with specific disabilities so as to facilitate their success. Gifted students are placed in Honors English classes as well as in appropriate Math classes.

To bolster student success, every student in our academy will take a Freshman Seminar course to introduce and/or reinforce the study and social skills necessary to be successful in high school. Freshman Seminar is a course designed by Johns Hopkins University and is part of its Talent Development program. Its in-depth lessons use a variety of both innovative and traditional teaching techniques, including long-range projects, cooperative learning activities, and reflective journal writing. In this class, students practice the note-taking, time management, study skills, and social and human relations skills they need every day in their academic coursework and in their lives outside of school.

The Freshman Advisory class is carefully structured to reflect the needs of students as well as their interests. Time is allotted for study groups, specific topics that support the building of social and/or study skills, and other activities beneficial to positive student growth.

To further our goal of a strong and supportive learning community, each student is assigned to a team of teachers representing the academic areas of Math, English, Life Skills/Health, and Physical Education. Each team supports between 100-150 students; each team of teachers shares a common planning period allowing team members to develop instructional strategies which will lead to increased student success. Likewise, students at risk can be identified by teacher teams who can work with the students and their parents towards implementing specific intervention strategies designed to boost academic success in areas of weakness.

Our teachers and staff follow the protocol of the East Valley High School Discipline Committee—modeled after the District’s Positive Behavior Support Policy—to ensure a safe and equitable learning environment. In addition, our teacher teams discuss classroom management techniques and how to establish clear behavioral expectation so as to ensure we uphold high standards for student conduct and keep our environment safe and conducive to learning.

Because our academy has our students for only one year, we do not have partnerships with employers. We plan to partner with Los Angeles Valley College, a two year community college, so that students who are eligible and interested in courses outside our structured curriculum have access to classes at this college. We work with Ecohelpers and other groups connected with the National Park Service to introduce our students to projects connected to the natural world as well as to community service projects.

Our staff discusses and provides input on issues related to teacher staffing, use of facilities, and SLC budget priorities, working together so that decisions are made in the best interests of our students and their learning needs.

We believe that building a strong community of parents, students, staff, and community members allows students the support and guidance they need to increase their academic and social skills, readying them for the rest of their high school career and facilitating their success in future endeavors. A nationwide “bottleneck” exists in which students fail to advance past the ninth grade (Wheelock, 2005¹). The Talent Development freshman academy program has been demonstrated by its success in matriculating students to 10th grade in schools around the country (for example, see Balfanz, Legters & Jordan, 2004²), and at Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles with a similar population of students. By providing a comprehensive support team, addressing academic deficiencies, increasing parental involvement, and providing extra help, if needed, at every step, we believe we can significantly increase student success.

¹ Wheelock, Anne. “The ninth-grade bottleneck: an enrollment bulge in a transition year that demands careful attention and action”. *School Administrator*. March 2005.

² <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report69.pdf>

1B. Identity

Ninth graders at East Valley High School at risk of getting stuck in the “bottleneck”, or of dropping out of school due to multiple factors, including but not limited to weak academic skills, peer pressure from students in their grade and in higher grades, a lack of parental involvement, and a lack of structure in their lives.. To address these issues, we created our student-centered program designed to enable teachers and staff to work together to effectively diagnose and address individual student needs. It is our belief that all students are capable of building the academic and social skills they need to become successful, productive, and responsible members of society. All staff members of the Freshman Academy are committed to holding high expectations for student academic achievement, attending to students’ academic and social development, adopting a caring and supportive approach to students’ problems, and working together to create a strong foundation to support student growth throughout their education and into their adult lives. Since we believe that students learn best in a structured, well-ordered environment, our students are assigned to teams of teachers with each team representing the academic areas of Math, English, Life Skills/Health, and Physical Education. Each team is located in a cluster of classrooms at the east end of the North Wing (there is one team per floor, since we are located on the second, third, and fourth floors of the North Wing). Each team of teachers supports between 100-150 students and shares the same planning period(s) to better facilitate student success. Students at risk can be identified by their team of teachers, who will work with the students’ parents towards implementing specific strategies designed to boost academic success in areas of weakness. Our Academy will serve a maximum of 400 students, our entire ninth grade class.

The Freshman Academy at East Valley High School strongly believes that a strong and supportive learning community, along with strong parent involvement, is essential in supporting student achievement. We work closely with the parents in our community, giving them a clear idea of what help is needed to ensure their students’ success. We hold an assembly in late August to which all of our students and their parents are invited. At this assembly, we explain who we are, how the Talent Development model works, and describe our social and academic goals for our incoming ninth grade students. Parents and students are introduced to staff members and we share our schedule for monthly parent success meetings (which alternate between 7:30 AM and 5:30 PM each month). It is our goal to enhance and support parent-teacher collaboration to promote success for each and every student.

The lead teacher for the Freshman Academy is Susan Troyanek, who was elected to this post by all members of this Academy. We believe she will help us make our vision of success a reality for all of our students.

The Freshman Academy coursework is based on the California State Standards for all academic classes. To monitor our students’ progress, we rely on district and state testing, as well as individual testing of students. We use multiple forms of standards-based assessments, including written, oral, and project-based assessments. Our program is based on A-G college entrance requirements.

All courses are taught using multiple modalities, making the curriculum more easily accessible for all students. Classes use appropriate instructional technology to enhance student learning. We have English and Math coaches who work closely with all teachers to align instruction and bring consistency to instructional delivery in every classroom. Our rigorous standards-based curriculum is supplemented with additional tutoring available after school, and students at risk find caring teachers who will help them gain the knowledge they need to succeed. In addition, we have found that by having classrooms near one another, teachers are able to use the advisory period to “switch out” students so that a student who is in need of additional help in a content area (English, math, etc.) is able to consult with his or her teacher from that content area during the advisory period.

Our school supports our academy by providing a separate place on campus for our academy, as well as providing a separate lunch period for our students. We will as much as possible keep our students separate from the other students on campus, providing a nurturing environment that allows them a successful transition into high school.

The Freshman Academy teachers and staff strongly believe that students will feel more a part of their school if it provides a safe and orderly campus and classrooms. Our discipline committee is working with the Districts Positive Discipline Support plan to help create an atmosphere of clear behavioral expectations and personal support and safety. We believe that by building teams of teachers who regularly monitor and discuss with each other the personal and academic needs of the students within our student teams, we can minimize situations that may be unsafe or disruptive of learning conditions.

2. Rigorous Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Benchmark

The Freshman Academy at East Valley High School has a very specific curriculum for all of our ninth grade students. Since our students are ninth graders, their coursework supports A-G requirements and prepares them for the rigors of their entire high school career. Their coursework, which includes state required English, Math, Life Skills, Health, and Physical Education classes, creates a foundation for the rest of their education. Their Freshman Seminar class introduces and/or reinforces the study and social skills necessary to be successful in high school. Its in-depth lessons use a variety of both innovative and traditional teaching techniques, including long-range projects, cooperative learning activities, and reflective journal writing. In this class, students practice the note-taking, time management, study skills, and social and human relations skills they need every day in their academic coursework and in their lives outside of school. Finally, their Intro to Social Studies course gives them a foundation in geography and other areas that will help them in future Social Studies and/or Government coursework.

The specific coursework utilized in our Academy aligns with state content and performance standards. All coursework is based upon California State Standards and is meant to provide a framework upon which to build a strong and comprehensive educational experience. We have incorporated District instructional initiatives (such as, Instructional Guides, Periodic Assessments, Concept Lessons) within our core instruction. While our academy has no specific theme, the ninth grade experience should be a nurturing and supportive introduction to high school that allows for academic and personal growth. Coursework is designed to build upon students' previous knowledge and support future growth in each academic field.

Project-based learning is included in all academic classes, and students are expected to complete projects designed to demonstrate their competency. Scaffolding is provided as needed to adjust for student individual needs.

To monitor our students' progress, we rely on district and state testing, as well as individual testing of students. We use multiple forms of standards-based assessments, including written, oral, and project-based assessments. All courses are taught using multiple modalities, making the curriculum more easily accessible for all students, and use appropriate instructional technology to enhance student learning. Teachers in our Academy look closely at student assessments to determine if students are meeting state standards in each academic area, and adjust or supplement teaching practices as needed to help students meet state standards. Students whose test scores indicate they are far ahead of state standards will be placed in Honors classes (in English) or in the appropriate Math courses for their skill levels. Students who are below standards or who are weak in basic skills will have the opportunity to build strong foundational skills in our Transition to Advanced Math (TAM) and Strategic Reading coursework. In addition, we provide additional tutoring available after school, and students at risk find caring teachers who will help them gain the knowledge they need to succeed.

We work closely with a Special Education teacher to determine best practice for our students with specific disabilities so as to facilitate their success. English Learners find teachers who use multiple modalities and provide varying methods of instruction so as to ensure student

understanding and promote student success. Teachers provide scaffolding as needed to ensure that each child has the information they need to work towards meeting state standards. Appropriate instructional technology is utilized in all courses.

The “highly qualified” teachers in our Academy have comprehensive backgrounds in their instructional subjects. They are University Interns, District Interns, hold preliminary credentials in their subject, hold permanent credentials in their subject, and/or are National Board Certified Instructors. All teachers in each subject have time set aside to work together as a team to ensure best practice is utilized in teaching the specifics of their individual subjects. Teachers in each academic subject are expected to work together to decide best practice in teaching to support student learning.

Curricular Interventions

All Career Academies at East Valley offer Talent Development’s “double-dose” program. In this program, all freshmen who are found to have scored below Proficient on the ELA or math portions of the California Standards Tests are enrolled in a Strategic Reading course (in addition to their required 9th Grade English course) and/or into one of three math “foundations” classes in addition to their required math class (i.e., Transition to Advanced Math or, Algebra II Foundations or, Geometry Foundations, as appropriate). Students who qualify for the District’s Developing Readers and Writers (DRW) intervention are enrolled into the appropriate DRW level.

Because East Valley High School operates on the 4x4 block schedule, students in need of credit recovery may be enrolled into up to two additional courses during the school year.

Additionally, Freshman teams meet regularly to review which students in our academy are struggling and have, through our advisories, created curriculum which is intended to 1) provide skills designed to prevent falling behind and, 2) provide “in-house” academic tutoring.

3. Equity and Access

All incoming ninth grade students at East Valley High School will be in the Freshman Academy. In addition, our school has open enrollment during the spring so that students from local and traveling communities have an opportunity to attend our school. Our students are from the subgroups present in our school and our community.

Students at East Valley High School's Freshman Academy are given a firm foundation upon which the rest of their high school education can be built, enabling them to eventually meet high school graduation requirements, complete A-G requirements, and enter college or the workforce. To monitor our students' progress, we rely on district and state testing, as well as individual testing of students. We use multiple forms of standards-based assessments, including written, oral, and project-based assessments. All courses are taught using multiple modalities, as we recognize our students have diverse learning styles. In this way our curriculum is more easily accessible for all students. We use appropriate instructional technology to enhance student learning. In addition, coursework is built upon student experience, allowing students easier access to curriculum.

We believe many of our students may be lacking needed literacy, math, and critical thinking skills necessary to have a successful educational experience. We are an academy that incorporates all students at all skill levels. This includes English Language Learners, RSP students who have specific learning disabilities, English and Math students who are several years below grade level as demonstrated both by district testing and by class performance, and gifted students, who have specific needs as well. Our curriculum provides double-dosing courses in math and English to help students strengthen basic skills, and this program is supplemented with additional tutoring available after school. Students at risk find caring teachers who will help them gain the knowledge they need to succeed. In addition, we work closely with a Special Education teacher to determine best practice for each student with specific disabilities so as to facilitate their success. Gifted students are placed in Honors classes as well as in appropriate Math classes.

Our students are placed in English and Math classes according to their testing scores and academic needs. Students who tested into *Developing Readers and Writers Classes* for their English component will be placed in *Read 180* according to LAUSD mandate.

Our teachers are dedicated professionals who work well together to ensure the educational needs of all of our students are met. We meet during common planning periods to discuss student progress as shown in our assessments and determine what additional help may be needed for each and every student. House-based common planning periods ensure that teachers who share students can work closely together to provide the help needed for at risk students. In addition, parent conferences scheduled during this time allow teachers to work together with the parent towards creating a more successful educational experience for their student.

Our Academy is staffed with a dedicated administrator, counselor, and teachers who are committed to addressing the unique needs of incoming freshman. All teachers are organized in

interdisciplinary teams (Math, English, Freshman Seminar, and physical education) who share common planning time as well as the same group of students. This structure allows every student a dedicated group of caring adults to assist them, further personalizing their experience and enhancing their chances of success. Ninth grade students have a higher risk of dropping out of school than other students. By providing a dedicated support team for each and every student, we can maximize student success and prevent students from dropping out of school for academic reasons.

All students who enter East Valley High School in the Ninth Grade are placed in the Freshman Academy. For greater access, the Freshman Academy is on the 4x4 schedule, allowing our students to complete 80 high school credits in one academic year instead of the traditional 60 high school credits. All students in the ninth grade are enrolled in a Freshman Seminar course. All students, with the exception of Honors students, are enrolled in a double-dose course sequence in both Math and English, since these courses are crucial for future success in high school.

9th GRADE ACADEMY - Master Program

Daily Schedule	FALL		SPRING	
	Mester 1	Mester 2	Mester 3	Mester 4
Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory
Course 1	*Strategic Reading	**Strategic Reading	*English 9A	*English 9B
	or H English 9A	H English 9B	Elective	Elective
	or Read 180	Read 180	Read 180	Read 180
Course 2	*Transition to Adv Math	*Transition to Adv Math	*Algebra 1A	*Algebra 1B
	or *Geometry Foundations	*Geometry Foundations	*Geometry A	*Geometry B
	or *Algebra II Foundations	*Algebra II Foundations	*Algebra 2A	*Algebra 2B
Course 3	*Freshman Seminar (Life Skills)	*Freshman Seminar (Life Skills)	Health	Intro to Social Studies
Course 4	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Ed.	Physical Ed.

Notes: Student yearly course sequences is read left to right, daily schedule top to bottom.

Each student has four courses plus an advisory each day. Courses 1 & 2 have three course options each.

* = Talent Development "Double-Dose" course sequence

The table above shows the academic program of ninth graders at East Valley High School. By preceding the core 9th grade math and English courses with rigorous, standards-based

foundational courses, students will experience greater success. Preparing our students to succeed in their core courses in high school will provide them with greater academic equity and access to college preparatory core and elective courses in the upper grades. Because our ninth grade coursework is well-structured, students will be ready to choose the academy they desire, knowing they have the foundation they need for success.

Students at East Valley High School's Freshman Academy build a firm foundation upon which the rest of their high school education can be built. They are well-equipped to move to the 10th grade and to eventually meet high school graduation requirements, as well as A-G requirements.

4. Personalization

The Freshman Academy affords students a high level of personalization. A key element in the personalization of our academy lies in our location on campus. Nearly every 9th grade classroom on campus is located in the east end of the North Wing building, right above the administration offices and the main entrance to the campus. Ninth grade students will be kept separate from the rest of the student population both by location and by holding a separate lunch period for them. By placing our freshman in their own academy and by providing coursework designed to improve student study skills and personal skills, we are able to provide the support they need, transitioning them into the high school experience in a way that nurtures them and allows for greater student success. Our academy will have no more than 400 students, allowing teachers to have more personalized relationships with their students and increasing their opportunities for academic success.

By using the Johns Hopkins Talent Development model, which allows for a Freshman Seminar, we are able to teach needed study skills and social skills to our students, further enhancing their opportunities for success. Another core component of the Freshman Academy is its advisory. The advisory structure allows individual teachers to advocate for a specific group of students to further meet their academic and social needs, maximizing teacher-student contact and allowing students to develop a relationship with a caring adult who can advocate for them and help them work towards academic success. Although our students will only be in our academy for one year, we believe the individual attention and guidance provided will provide them the foundations for success for the rest of their high school years.

Students at East Valley High School's Freshman Academy are given a firm foundation upon which the rest of their high school education can be built, enabling them to eventually meet high school graduation requirements, complete A-G requirements, and enter college or the workforce. To monitor our students' progress, we rely on district and state testing, as well as individual testing of students. We use multiple forms of standards-based assessments, including written, oral, and project-based assessments. All courses are taught using multiple modalities, as we recognize our students have diverse learning styles. In this way our curriculum is more easily accessible for all students. We use appropriate instructional technology to enhance student learning. In addition, coursework is built upon student experience, allowing students easier access to curriculum.

A dedicated guidance counselor serves as an additional resource and advocate of every ninth grade student. Counselors work with each student and their parent(s) to create a secondary course plan and postsecondary plan by the end of their first school year.

The Ninth Grade Success Academy believes parental support is essential for student success. To increase parental involvement, we hold monthly parent meetings and invite parents to work with us to help their students succeed. Our staff also communicates with the parents of individual students, holding conferences with parents to further maximize student success.

Opportunities for learning should not end with the confines of a classroom. We plan field trips, work with community members to set up opportunities for our students outside the confines of a classroom, and supply after school opportunities for our students to enhance their educational experience.

5. Accountability and Distributed Leadership

Staff and teachers of the Freshman Academy work together to ensure the success of all students. We work as a group to promote our vision and ensure that we are in constant communication to the benefit of all our students. We are organized in teams that teach specific groups of students and share information so as to inform the teaching practices and/or interventions needed for the success of individual students.

As a team, our teachers and staff share the responsibility of providing a safe and structured environment which is conducive to learning. We integrate our positive discipline policy with our own strategies so as best to serve our student population and promote our vision, which is to provide a strong foundation to support student growth throughout their education and into their adult lives. All decisions in our Academy are made by consensus or by majority vote. In this way all members of our team take responsibility for fulfilling our vision.

To monitor our students' progress, we rely on District and State testing, as well as individual assessment in our classrooms (periodic assessments, and teacher-designed measures including written, oral, and project-based assessments). Other indicators we watch are student attendance, work habits and classroom behavior. Meeting during our common planning time enables us to share individual student information about these measures so that we may design strategies to maximize their success. All courses are taught using multiple modalities, as we recognize our students have diverse learning styles. In this way our curriculum is more easily accessible for all students. We use appropriate instructional technology to enhance student learning. In addition, coursework is built upon student experience, allowing students easier access to curriculum.

The lead teacher of our academy is our liaison between our academy and our school administration, as well as parents, parent advisory groups, community partners, and our counselor. She/he will facilitate staff meetings, as well as professional development, setting agendas for meetings and looking for professional development opportunities that benefit all staff members. She/he will work with all staff members in evaluating student driven data so as to maximize student success, as well as facilitating meetings to incorporate parents as active members of our community. She/he will work with other staff members to develop and distribute brochures and newsletters to our parents and community members, as well as keep statistics on overall student development. She/he will implement the SLC budget in coordination with the SLC coordinator, plan and organize SLC related field trips with the input of other staff members, and coordinate intervention efforts to meet the instructional needs of students. She/he will ensure that information is disseminated in a timely fashion to all concerned, including staff members, administration, parents, and community partners.

In addition to our ongoing monitoring of our SLC and of student success, we will evaluate our program yearly, guiding our evaluation with student test scores, attendance and matriculation (to 10th grade) rates, and through student and parent surveys which measure satisfaction, communication, student safety, etc. We are committed as a team to working towards the success of each and every student in our academy.

All teachers in our academy are "Highly Qualified" as required by national and state law.

6. Collaboration/Parent and Community Engagement

The Freshman Academy strongly believes that parents are an important part of their child's success in school. We recognize that parents are their child's first teachers and we welcome their input as we build our SLC and seek ways to improve it. We facilitate and begin our encouragement of parent involvement by holding an assembly before school starts to introduce them to our staff and our program. Parent meetings are held monthly, alternating between before-school meetings and early evening meetings so as to encourage parent attendance and maximize opportunity for parent involvement. We believe parent involvement is essential to student success. We are working closely with the Parent Center on campus in planning activities for parents of students at East Valley High School. In addition, we are actively involved in finding community partners to work with our students in order to plan to develop service-based learning projects with these partners.

Our academy will have outside speakers from community organizations or businesses present information in classes, as well as in assemblies, to provide students with information useful not only in coursework but for their future as well. Although our curriculum is highly structured so as to facilitate student success, we will provide activities outside the school day, such as clubs, sports activities, and arts activities, to increase student involvement and meet student interests. We will be using community based groups to support some of these activities. When it is time for students to choose career academies for the rest of their high school years, we will hold presentations for their parents in order to give them the information they need to help their students make appropriate decisions. In addition, we hope to encourage teacher/parent and counselor/parent relationships through frequent home communication and by providing forums for parents and teachers to dialog during Back-to-School Night, during PHBAO conferencing and other special event nights.

Freshman Academy focuses on building student skills to facilitate success in high school, but we recognize that it is also the launch pad into our Career Academies and career choices. We will hold assemblies with community partners to introduce various career options to our students, and we plan to build co-partnerships with the career/community partners of our Career Academies so that we can inform our students of the career pathways that each of our upper-grade level academies focus on.

As an academy, we will work closely with feeder schools so as to prepare curriculum that is supportive of student learning. During our summer intersession, we offer a special Bridge or Transition program which introduces incoming 9th graders to our campus and to some of the study, literacy and math skills they will need in high school. We are working with the Project STEPS program, which is following and working with a cohort of our students in order to boost college attendance rates. We will also work with local community colleges, universities, and technical schools to provide our students information on future career options and academic options.

7. Professional Development

East Valley High School is a Talent Development School in partnership with John Hopkins University. The Talent Development model is itself a small learning community model. The Freshman Academy works actively throughout the year with trainers and coaches from Talent Development/John Hopkins in order to build the essential components of our SLC. These components include, but are not limited to, aligning academy instruction with research-based instructional strategies, building advisories, looking at student work, developing career connections and curriculum, developing parent and community connections.

Teachers in our academy teams have shared conference periods, which will be used at least one day a week to discuss student learning and identify at risk students. This time will also be used, when needed, to hold parent conferences as a team for a particular student.

Staff meetings for all members of the Academy will be held on a regular basis during Banked Days or after school. Luncheon meetings will also be scheduled if necessary. During these meetings, staff can plan and implement SLC activities. Since our academy strongly believes parents are a not only a valuable resource but an integral part of our community, we will hold monthly meetings at times which facilitate parent involvement.

During staff meetings, teachers can share successful projects and teaching practices with their colleagues during this time, as well as discuss ideas for increasing the success of our students. We will periodically review our curriculum to see that it aligns with state standards and is facilitating student learning. We will also discuss ideas for site-specific improvement goals and ideas for professional development which will benefit our staff.

Staff meetings will periodically include the use of student data and assessment results and will examine how these can be used to inform student instruction and instructional practices. These will be led by the Lead Teacher. Our Local District 2 School Improvement Facilitator will provide training on how to look at student results.

We will hold professional development that helps staff personalize students' educational experiences by providing ways in which teachers can facilitate individual student growth.

Professional development will be held periodically that will facilitate teacher involvement in our academy. We are a small academy with a small staff; it is beneficial to all concerned that we work together closely as a team to shape our academy and facilitate student success. To that end, we will come up with suggestions for professional development and decide as a group what would most benefit our students. This professional development will support student success.

Instructors and/or facilitators for professional development may consist of but are not limited to the following: teachers, administrators, literacy and/or math coaches, and outside professionals who specialize in specific fields. Johns Hopkins University Talent Development personnel will continue to work with us about six days each year. We expect many of our professional development activities on site to be interactive and/or collaborative in nature. Staff will evaluate

these sessions both verbally and in survey form to ensure that we work towards best practices in finding activities that positively affect our teaching practices.

Teachers also take advantage of District-offered/sponsored professional development, as well as common planning time built into our schedule, to improve their teaching practices and address student performance issues. Funding is available from East Valley High School to allow teachers to attend conferences in their discipline, increasing their knowledge base and allowing them to share new information in their discipline with other teachers. Teachers will then disseminate information from conferences to members of their department both within the academy and in the school as a whole.

Department meetings are held periodically, with members of other Academies on campus, to use student data and assessment results to inform instructional practices. Student results from a departmental viewpoint will help us to evaluate the effectiveness of our team collaboration.

Banked days will be held with members of all Academies on campus to address site-specific school improvement goals, including instructional and disciplinary issues. This will also provide us with opportunities to celebrate our successes.