

## Evaluation Report

# New Jersey Department of Education Personalized Student Learning Plan Pilot Program 2010-2011 Evaluation Report

### Executive Summary

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has completed a two-year evaluation of the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) Personalized Student Learning Plan (PSLP) pilot program. This report summarizes the key findings and lessons learned following the program's second year of implementation, the 2010-2011 school year.

NJDOE sought to implement PSLPs as a first step toward transforming New Jersey's schools into student-centered learning environments. As defined by the New Jersey Administrative Code, a personalized student learning plan is a "formalized plan and process that involves students setting learning goals based on personal, academic and career interests, beginning in the middle school grades and continuing throughout high school with the close support of adult mentors that include teachers, school counselors and parents."

NJDOE initiated the PSLP pilot program to identify promising PSLP formats, curricula, resource materials, and implementation and assessment practices. A total of 16 schools from urban, suburban, and rural districts throughout New Jersey — including 6 middle schools and 10 high schools — applied and were selected in a competitive review process to participate in the pilot program. Together, the schools are representative of New Jersey's schools and student population. The participating schools committed to a pilot program that ran from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2011. At the end of Year 1, one school removed itself from the pilot program because of staff cutbacks.

Two years into the pilot program, the Heldrich Center has found *emerging* evidence that suggests that students are benefiting from participation in the PSLP pilot program. Teachers report that, overall, PSLPs have had a positive influence on students' attitudes and their abilities to set career and education goals and on relationships between students and adults in the pilot schools. Although

evidence indicates that PSLP programs have had a positive influence on certain aspects of student engagement, a majority of school staff reported that, in general, PSLPs have had little influence on some key academic behaviors, such as homework completion and attendance.

Successfully implementing a PSLP requires significant planning. Some schools have been more successful than others in planning and implementing PSLPs. Evidence of success is greatest in schools that experienced consistent support from administrators, received high levels of teacher buy-in, implemented effective staff training, established session structures that supported meaningful interaction among students and staff, and utilized PSLP web-based guidance systems that met their needs. Although the results to date are promising, schools need to continue to engage in ongoing evaluation of their implementation processes in order to strengthen program outcomes and sustainability.

## Evaluation Purpose and Methodologies

NJDOE asked the Heldrich Center to address 10 research questions in the evaluation (see Appendix A). In the Year 1 evaluation, the evaluators answered 8 of the research questions. Based on the first year of research, the Heldrich Center identified 11 key findings.

- Finding #1. For a majority of the pilot schools, implementing the PSLPs substantially shifted the way they approached student development.

- Finding #2. Almost all PSLP pilot schools implemented PSLPs using some sort of a web-based student planning and career guidance system.
- Finding #3. A committed program coordinator who guides the overall initiative was necessary for successful PSLP implementation.
- Finding #4. The schools that reported the greatest positive impact from the PSLPs were those that in addition to presenting PSLP lessons in average-sized classes created opportunities for small group interaction between students and school staff.
- Finding #5. District size, socioeconomic status, location, and past experience with implementing PSLPs were unrelated to how well the pilot schools implemented the PSLP program.
- Finding #6. The degree of teacher buy-in, training quality, staff resources, and staff communication had the greatest influence on whether a school reported that the PSLP program had a great impact.
- Finding #7. Principals who provided verbal support, but who were unwilling to “take action,” were perceived by staff as not being supportive of PSLPs.
- Finding #8. School staff reported that students were able to discuss long-term goals, but were less likely to outline actions and plan short-term goals.

- Finding #9. The evaluators identified three challenges common to most pilot schools: teacher buy-in, scheduling, and access to technology.
- Finding #10. A clear majority of participating teachers and school staff from pilot schools reported that the PSLP process had a positive impact on students in the first year.
- Finding #11. A majority of teachers and administrators from pilot schools would recommend that other schools consider implementing PSLPs. Even respondents who had encountered problems with their own PSLP programs often stated they would encourage colleagues in other districts to explore the PSLP option.

The Year 2 evaluation report addresses the remaining two research questions:

- Were the components of the initiative implemented consistently from Year 1 to Year 2? How did program implementation change from Year 1 to Year 2?
- To what extent do the plans work in coordination with other existing student plans (Individualized Education Programs)?

This report compares implementation processes across the 2009-2010 and the 2010-2011 school years, examines the degree to which schools coordinate the implementation of their PSLP programs with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), explores the roles of school counselors and parents, examines the degree to which the PSLP program is

perceived to be a comprehensive initiative, and provides lessons learned related to PSLP implementation.

To answer the research questions, the evaluators conducted 20 in-person interviews with school principals, teachers, and counseling staff and facilitated 6 focus groups with first-year and second-year PSLP students. The evaluators also collected survey data from approximately 330 respondents.

## PSLP Common Model Components

In the course of the evaluation, the Heldrich Center identified six components of PSLP programs that were common across the pilot schools. To highlight the key elements that PSLP programs shared, the Heldrich Center identified the “who, what, where, when, and how” of PSLP programs.

- **Who participated in implementing PSLP programs at the pilot schools?** The schools typically developed a *team that consisted of a program coordinator, principal, teachers, school counselors, and other school staff members*. The team established roles for each of these member groups, parents, and community members.
- **What did the pilot schools teach during PSLP sessions?** Each school developed a *PSLP curriculum* that addressed various topics related to academic, career, and personal development.

- **When and where was the PSLP curriculum delivered?** Each school had to make important *PSLP scheduling decisions*, including when during the school day to hold PSLP sessions and where in the building to hold them.
- **How did the schools deliver the PSLP curriculum?** Each of the schools:
  - Selected some version of a *web-based guidance system* as the primary resource for the PSLP sessions. The web-based guidance systems provided career and college exploration, self-assessments, and résumé building and goal planning tools.
  - Established a *PSLP session structure*. The schools determined the teacher-to-student ratio in PSLP sessions and the degree to which students and adults interacted to carry out PSLP activities. The schools typically structure PSLP sessions as small groups, full-size class groups, or somewhere in between.
  - Provided *staff training*. PSLP pilot programs provided training to introduce staff to the PSLP process and the web-based guidance system and to teach them how to facilitate the PSLP sessions.

Although it really cannot be classified as a component of PSLPs, the staff's motivation to implement PSLPs strongly influenced the degree to which staff members engaged in activities associated

with each of the six PSLP program components.

## Principal Findings

The Heldrich Center's research generated 11 principal findings. Findings that address the Year 2 primary research questions are presented first, followed by overall findings about the perceived impact of PSLPs among students and school staff, and finally, challenges related to implementing PSLPs.

**Finding #1. The pilot schools generally implemented the common model components consistently across Years 1 and 2.** Several of the findings related to how schools implemented PSLPs were the same as or similar to findings from Year 1:

- The roles and concerns of the various adult groups remained the same:
  - Program coordinators organized all PSLP activities;
  - Teachers primarily facilitated PSLP sessions and participated in curriculum development;
  - School counselors continued to carry out a variety of roles across schools; and
  - Parental involvement in PSLP activities remained limited, despite school efforts to engage parents (e.g., workshops).
- Schools continued to report that principal support was a necessary component for successful implementation of PSLPs.

- Staff members again thought that staff training sessions did not adequately prepare them to facilitate PSLP sessions.
- Pilot schools continued to use the web-based guidance systems and schedules that they used in Year 1.

The Heldrich Center identified one important difference between Years 1 and 2 related to PSLP structure. Although the schools maintained their overall PSLP session structures, several schools attempted to improve “personalization” by creating new opportunities for students to develop relationships with staff and/or peer mentors.

**Finding #2. PSLP programs were implemented simultaneously, but not in coordination with IEPs.** School staff reported implementing PSLPs and IEPs concurrently, but independently. Program coordinators and teachers reported that students participating in the special education program participated in the same PSLP activities as mainstream students and received the same accommodations in the PSLP sessions that they received in other courses. Common challenges reported by special education teachers were similar to those reported by mainstream teachers.

**Finding #3. Seventy percent of school staff reported that the PSLP process continued to have a positive impact on students in the second year. The average overall impact did not change significantly from Year 1 to Year 2.** More than 70% of teachers and school staff participating in Year 2 reported their PSLPs having a positive impact on

student ability to set short- and long-term career and academic goals, student-teacher interactions, overall motivation to succeed in school, and student understanding the academic expectations and requirements of their schools (see Appendix B). On a scale from 1 to 5, the average teacher rated the overall impact of PSLPs on students as 3.8 across years, the same as Year 1.

**Finding #4. Some schools reported improved implementation of PSLPs in Year 2 compared with Year 1, while other schools reported less effective implementation in Year 2 than Year 1.** Intuitively, one would expect that the personnel implementing any program would apply lessons learned each year, adapt the program accordingly, and improve each year. However, the reality is that in many instances, resources, personnel, and environmental factors are often unstable from school year to school year. These factors interact with each other and ultimately affect the quality of program implementation, for better or worse. The schools participating in the pilot program experienced various changes between Year 1 and Year 2. As a result, many of the schools also experienced differences in the overall quality of PSLP implementation. Schools that reported an improved overall implementation, relative to their counterparts, reported positive statistically significant differences in teacher buy-in and belief in the concept of PSLPs. Conversely, schools that reported less effective implementation in Year 2, relative to their counterparts, reported negative statistically significant differences on student impact, teacher buy-in, training effectiveness, and teacher

participation in implementation (see Appendix C).

**Finding #5. In Year 2, several teachers called for the PSLP curriculum to be improved in future years. Teachers who delivered the curriculum thought that the PSLP curriculum developed by some schools in Year 2 included topics that were not grade-level appropriate.** In interviews with the evaluators, teachers reported wanting a curriculum for the PSLP program that is designed according to grade level and that addresses topics and issues that are appropriate for students by both grade and maturity level. In addition, they want the curriculum to align with the state’s Core Curriculum Content Standards.

**Finding #6. In Year 2, more staff reported that PSLPs had a positive impact on students’ abilities to set short-term, career-related and academic goals than they did in Year 1.** In Year 1, school staff reported that students were able to discuss long-term goals, but were less likely to outline actions and plan short-term goals. Teachers and school staff at the pilot schools explained that they used the first year to focus on long-term goals and placed more emphasis on short-term goal setting in the second year. The percentage of teachers reporting that the PSLPs had a positive impact on students’ abilities to set short-term goals increased from Year 1 to Year 2 for academic goals by 23.3 percentage points and for career goals by 12.6 percentage points.

**Finding #7. Staff reports indicate that PSLPs did not affect key academic behaviors (i.e., attendance, study time, homework completion) in Year 2.**

Personalized learning promotes academic achievement by encouraging all students to become motivated and actively engaged in learning. Student engagement refers to student behavior, emotions, and thought processes (Klem & Connel, 2004). Although a majority of school staff who were surveyed reported positive impact on various indicators of student engagement related to emotions and thought processes (i.e., school motivation), survey results indicate that respondents generally did not believe that PSLPs had an impact on behavioral indicators, such as study time, homework completion, and class attendance.

**Finding #8. Many teachers who completed the staff survey recommended PSLPs for other schools in their districts.** Although nearly two-thirds of the 311 teachers and staff responding to the Year 2 survey were still undecided about the PSLPs’ long-term impact, 85% of those who shared their opinions said that they would recommend PSLPs to other schools in their districts.

**Finding #9. There are mixed opinions among administrators, teachers, school counselors, and students about the appropriateness of implementing PSLPs at the middle school level.** The evaluation team documented survey, focus group, and interview responses from students and school staff regarding the appropriateness of PSLPs at the middle school level. Members *within* each stakeholder group reported opposing opinions regarding the value of the PSLP program at the middle school level. While some believe that it is essential to expose young students to individual planning and careers, others

believe that middle school students are too young to benefit from PSLP programs.

**Finding #10. Teacher buy-in continued to be a significant challenge in many schools.** Although teachers are in favor of PSLPs and the basic concept of personalization in learning, actual teacher support for implementing PSLPs at their own schools is low. Included as a Year 1 challenge as well, teacher buy-in remained a challenge for schools attempting to implement the PSLP model in Year 2 and threatened the sustainability of the PSLP in many schools.

**Finding #11. The quality of PSLP implementation continued to depend on administrator support.** Researchers found systematic differences in the quality of PSLP implementation for schools that changed principals from Year 1 to Year 2, depending on the degree to which the new principal supported PSLPs. In some schools, new principals supported the implementation process by supporting staff and assisting the team in addressing lessons learned from Year 1. In other schools, principals disrupted the PSLP process by changing scheduling policies, reassigning staff, and demonstrating to staff that PSLPs were not a priority. The data collected in Year 2 demonstrate that the quality of implementation improved when principals were supportive and stagnated or regressed when principals were not supportive.

## Lessons Learned

New Jersey schools interested in the experiences of the 15 schools that participated in the first two years of NJDOE's pilot PSLP program may want to consider the following lessons learned from the pilot. The lessons that the Heldrich Center gleaned from two years spent evaluating PSLPs include lessons related to common model components and lessons related to strategies for overcoming challenges.

**Lesson #1. Web-based Guidance System.** When selecting a web-based guidance system, schools should prioritize system features based on how teachers and school counselors anticipate using the system to support students and the anticipated needs of the families in the school community. School staff reported that web-based access, exposure to accounts of day-to-day work experience, tools that produce living documents, "student-friendly" interfaces, assorted self-assessment tools, and language system features were particularly beneficial to students and their families. In addition, teachers and school staff indicated that access to student information, updateable pre-packaged lessons, and usage data summaries provided teachers with opportunities to gain insight about their students, customize lesson plans, and monitor system usage.

**Lesson #2. PSLP Session Structure.** Hybrid models that combine the logistic convenience of the average class size model with the interpersonal advantages of the small group model may be viable options for schools that are not able to

**implement all or nearly all PSLP activities in small group settings.** This year, the Heldrich Center found that schools adapted their programs to infuse a stronger sense of “personalization” in their PSLP programs. Schools moved away from full-size class models of PSLPs. In the full-size class models, students typically worked independently. As a result, students and staff did not participate in activities that reinforced the bond between the two groups. Implementing PSLPs in small group or one-on-one student-teacher sessions foster the personalization that PSLPs are intended to achieve, but scheduling, space, and time constraints may make it impossible for schools to use a small group approach. When small groups are not feasible, schools should consider implementing alternative PSLP strategies that encourage relationship building between students and staff and hold students accountable for participatory learning. Hybrid models that combine the logistic convenience of the full-class model with the interpersonal advantages of the small group model may be viable options for schools that are not able to facilitate the small group component. For example, several schools that were not able to implement formal small group approaches, incorporated activities (e.g., peer mentoring) that supported one-on-one relationship building among students participating in the PSLP program, peer mentors, and teachers.

**Lesson #3. Curriculum. When outlining the curriculum development timeline, schools should consider the time it takes to develop curriculum, incentives for curriculum developers, timing for curriculum distribution, and processes**

**for obtaining feedback on the curriculum.** Schools should consider developing curriculum prior to PSLP implementation so that they can distribute lesson plans to teachers well in advance of the PSLP sessions, allow for teacher input, and discuss concerns of the teachers who facilitate the sessions. Developing curriculum before PSLP implementation can both improve the quality of the lessons the teachers deliver and foster teacher buy-in.

**Lesson #4. Curriculum. In developing curriculum, schools should identify PSLP concepts that can be sequentially introduced and built upon as students progress from grade to grade.** PSLP teams should identify the most important and age-appropriate skills, and implement activities in ways that allow the students to build on the PSLP-related skills across all grade levels.

**Lesson #5. Curriculum. Schools should focus on “quality vs. quantity” when choosing PSLP activities.** Schools should consider prioritizing a small set of useful assessments to give teachers and students opportunities to delve deeper into conversations about the assessment feedback and PSLP topics, rather than completing several assessments and briefly addressing many PSLP topics.

**Lesson #6. Curriculum. Schools should link PSLP activities to the curriculum.** Using a collaborative approach, teachers should ideally work with staff who have a background in career development to identify opportunities to integrate PSLP content into core curriculum areas. Schools interested in developing ideas for curriculum integration should consider

reviewing the literature on learning communities as well as resources provided by education departments throughout the nation.

**Lesson #7. Adult Mentor Roles. Schools implementing PSLP programs should be sure to identify and clearly communicate the roles of the various adults in the school community (e.g., principal, teachers, school counselors, and parents).** To support comprehensive PSLP program implementation, schools should define the key roles and responsibilities of participating school staff, parents, and members of the community, and share all role descriptions with members of each adult mentor group (e.g., teachers, school counselors, parents).

**Lesson #8. Staff Training. Schools should elicit feedback from teachers about the training they receive to implement PSLPs and work to ensure that training opportunities prepare teachers to deliver PSLP curriculum.** Schools should increase effective training opportunities for teachers. Schools should gather regular feedback from school staff and teachers to determine staff needs and ensure that training opportunities meet their needs.

**Lesson #9. Scheduling. Ideally, schools will be able to implement a PSLP session structure that aligns well with the existing schedule. However, schools that determine that they need significant scheduling changes to implement a PSLP program will require a committed leader who is willing to implement the changes necessary to accommodate the PSLP program.** In both Years 1 and 2, schools typically addressed PSLP scheduling

conflicts by holding PSLP sessions during a previously scheduled period of time when everyone in the school was doing the same thing, a class period in which the schools substituted the PSLP curriculum for the traditional lesson, or a custom period of time that was created to accommodate the PSLP program. Although small group sessions were generally desired, school space was limited and carving out additional time outside of classes in either the students' or the teachers' day required extensive planning and commitment from school leadership.

**Lesson #10. Motivation to Implement PSLP Programs. Stability in principal support is necessary for the sustained implementation of PSLPs over the long term. New principals should consider how changes in administrative support, school policies, and staff assignments will affect the quality of the PSLP implementation.** Sustained principal leadership is essential to the comprehensive implementation of PSLPs in school culture and student learning. Principals who demonstrate a lack of continuous support and consideration for the PSLP program will have a negative influence on staff buy-in. In addition, school principals should ensure that policy or procedural changes will not have a deleterious effect on the quality of PSLP implementation.

**Lesson #11. Throughout the school year, PSLP planning teams should revisit the key common components identified in this report (e.g., training, the school community's motivation to implement) so that they can address problems that may affect program success.** Schools

should consider conducting multi-dimensional assessments of the PSLP process so that they can track several components of implementation over time.

**Lesson #12. Increasing the number of people and/or grades involved at each school will not, by itself, result in a more comprehensive PSLP program. Schools need to begin to plan and consider strategies for developing a**

**comprehensive PSLP program.** While many teachers and program staff acknowledged that, overall, more students and teachers in the school building were aware of and involved in the PSLP program in 2010-2011 compared with 2009-2010, for the most part, several program coordinators reported that they had inadvertently taken non-comprehensive approaches to implementing PSLPs. In reflecting on what they would do differently, many program coordinators suggested that they would spend more time planning and coordinating with other staff members in the school to support a more comprehensive approach to PSLP. Strategies for implementing comprehensive PSLP programs are included in the “Strategies for Overcoming Challenges” section of this report (see pages 41 to 44).

## **Strategies for Overcoming Key Challenges**

**Strategies for improving teacher buy-in.**

School representatives identified several strategies for improving teacher buy-in. These strategies include providing teacher leadership opportunities, exposing teachers to PSLPs several

months before asking them to implement them, explaining PSLP rationale to school staff by providing clear explanations for how the PSLP program relates to the academic mission of the school and to the students’ everyday lives, and creating a PSLP portfolio or other appropriate document that can be used internally to introduce new principals, staff members, parents, and community partners to the PSLP program.

**Strategies for implementing**

**comprehensive PSLP programs.** School representatives identified several recommendations for implementing comprehensive PSLP programs. These strategies include providing professional development that addresses both technical and non-technical components of implementing PSLPs, identifying PSLP concepts that can be sequentially introduced and built upon across grades, focusing on “quality vs. quantity” when choosing PSLP activities, continuing efforts to engage parents, linking PSLP activities to curriculum, and working with school counselors who are not heavily involved to establish strategies and procedures for linking the PSLP lessons and concepts to guidance discussions.

## **Considerations for Statewide Implementation**

NJDOE will have to take into account several factors in its effort to outline strategies for statewide implementation of PSLPs. In implementing a statewide PSLP program, NJDOE will have to dedicate resources to develop and implement a strategy for identifying schools that are “PSLP ready,” continue to develop

resources and be prepared to provide ongoing technical assistance and training to schools, ensure that reporting documents encourage schools to use a multi-dimensional approach to monitoring their own implementation processes and outcomes, and expect schools implementing PSLPs for the first time to fully implement PSLPs only after a year of planning. The recommended year of planning will give schools the opportunity to be strategic in building their PSLP processes and content.

This report includes an outline of recommended tasks and a timeline of proposed activities (see pages 45 to 46). This timeline was reviewed and modified based on the feedback of pilot program coordinators and administrators. Included in the timeline are the following key components: selection of a program coordinator, establishment of a team consisting of representative stakeholders, time for planning, continuous training and establishment of teacher buy-in, role clarification for all stakeholders, multiple efforts to communicate with parents, staff training that focuses on both the use of the software and the PSLP concept, early exposure to teachers to facilitate buy-in, and participation in NJDOE professional development opportunities.

## Introduction

### Background

The New Jersey Administrative Code defines a Personalized Student Learning Plan (PSLP) as “a formalized plan and process that involves students setting learning goals based on personal, academic and career interests, beginning

in the middle school grades and continuing throughout high school with the support of adult mentors that include teachers, school counselors and parents” (N.J.A.C. 6A:8). PSLPs are grounded on the notion that students perform better and achieve more under a smaller, more personalized approach to learning.

New Jersey schools are pursuing personalized learning education strategies because they improve academic achievement and decrease the likelihood of risky social behaviors. The Education Alliance at Brown University (2003) refers to a personalized approach to learning as a “student-centered reform” that emphasizes real engagement of the student with the school community. In a more personalized approach to education, students avoid anonymity because the school has found a way to connect the student to something or someone who is paying attention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) defines student connectedness as students feeling “they are part of the school, are personally cared about by adults, their learning matters and is a high priority and the staff consistently treats them with respect.” An example of what many consider a personalization strategy might include creating an advisory class that students must attend, as they would any other academic class, and work with a teacher on interest and personality inventories, college exploration, study skills, time management, high school requirements, and other similar topics. Other personalization strategies include student-to-student mentoring, the expansion of extracurricular offerings and enrollments, high school courses for

college credit, and changes to traditional classroom instruction to appeal to a broader range of learning styles (The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003).

Empirical research demonstrates that PSLPs can improve academic achievement, student connectedness to school, and social and developmental behaviors. The National Association of Secondary School Principals regards PSLPs as a “cornerstone to improving student performance” (Cotton, 2004). Students who feel engaged in the school community are less likely to drop out and more likely to perform better in classes and on standardized tests (Klem & Connell, 2004). Students who feel a connection to their school, and to a caring adult in the school building, are also likely to smoke less, to engage in fewer risky sexual behaviors, to consume less alcohol, and are less likely to commit suicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

Recognizing the benefits of personalization, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) launched the PSLP pilot project in July 2009. NJDOE’s purpose in initiating the pilot program was to identify the model or models of PSLPs that would be most effective in school districts across the state and have the greatest potential for yielding positive outcomes for New Jersey students in the future. NJDOE released an application and invited schools to apply. Ninety schools from 66 school districts applied. NJDOE selected 16 schools to participate in the pilot program and provided each school with \$7,500 each year to support the

implementation of the PSLP program. The pilot was launched on July 1, 2009.

NJDOE contracted with the Heldrich Center to evaluate the pilot schools’ implementation of PSLPs at both the end of Year 1 and the end of Year 2. The goal of the evaluation was to identify the practices and models of implementing PSLPs that were the most effective at meeting the needs of the students, teachers, and school administrators. The Heldrich Center also sought to identify the implementation challenges that the participating schools faced and document how the schools overcame those challenges. This evaluation provides critical information about promising practices. Lessons from the evaluation can be used to offer technical assistance to school districts that may implement PSLPs in the future.

In addition to documenting the changes to implementation from Year 1 to Year 2 and assessing the effectiveness of those changes, the Year 2 evaluation report explores the degree to which the PSLPs work in coordination with other types of learning plans as well as the role of parents and the community in different PSLP program models.

## **Overview of the NJDOE PSLP Pilot Program**

In 2009, NJDOE implemented the PSLP program with the expectation that the 16 selected pilot schools would participate for two years. NJDOE instructed the pilot schools to implement PSLP programs in 6th grade or 9th grade during the first year and in two grade levels during the second year. In the second year,

incoming 6th- and 9th-grade students participated for the first time, while students who participated in Year 1 participated for a second consecutive year in either the 7th or the 10th grade.

The PSLP program started with 16 schools. After Year 1, one school removed itself from the pilot program due to a reduction in guidance staff. A second school participated in Year 2, but did not, for the most part, participate in data collection associated with this evaluation.

As intended, NJDOE provided financial support, distributed resources, and facilitated PSLP-related professional development sessions throughout the pilot period. In the first year, the workshops focused on providing guidance to schools to support their initial implementation and allowed schools to network and share concerns, strategies, and lessons learned. In the second year, NJDOE facilitated networking opportunities for the pilot schools, provided evaluation-related feedback, and offered support to schools to help them in their efforts to improve parental involvement. NJDOE maintained the overall structure and implementation of the pilot program from Year 1 to Year 2.

## **Evaluation Purpose and Methodology**

The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the PSLP initiative in relation to the 10 research questions outlined at the start of the evaluation process (see Appendix A). Eight of the research questions were

addressed in Year 1. This report addresses the remaining questions, documents changes in PSLP implementation, and revisits topic areas that were deemed inconclusive in the first report. This evaluation report explores the role of school counselors and parents, examines the degree to which schools implement the PSLP program in coordination with individualized education programs (IEPs), and examines the degree to which the PSLP program is perceived to be a comprehensive, school-wide initiative. NJDOE and the Heldrich Center agreed to adapt one of the remaining research questions (Are all components of the initiative implemented consistently throughout the year and in accordance with each school's original plan?). The evaluators agreed to adapt this question in Year 2 because the pilot schools were encouraged to adapt their models throughout both years as needed to better serve students and staff. The final remaining research questions addressed are as follows:

- To what extent do the plans work in coordination with other existing student plans (i.e., IEPs)?
- Were the components of the initiative implemented consistently from Year 1 to Year 2? How did program implementation change from Year 1 to Year 2?

The Heldrich Center used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to evaluate the PSLP pilot program. The evaluators conducted 20 in-person interviews with school principals, teachers, and counseling staff; 6 focus groups with students; and collected survey data from approximately 330 school staff members.

## **Data Collection Methodologies**

### **Online Questionnaires**

In May 2011, the Heldrich Center emailed an end-of-year online questionnaire to the program coordinators at all 15 pilot schools. Evaluators collected information on the PSLP implementation design, teacher buy-in, student engagement, perceived benefits of the PSLPs, implementation challenges, and strategies for overcoming barriers.

Using an online questionnaire, the evaluators also surveyed school staff members from all 15 pilot schools at the end of the 2010-2011 school year to collect information on teacher buy-in, belief in the personalized learning concept, teacher control of classroom implementation, training, administrator buy-in, school-community collaboration, student impact, teacher impact, and lessons learned.

The evaluators developed customized items for the surveys, and included adapted items from Turnbull (2002). The reliabilities for the subscales ranged between 0.72 and 0.95.

### **Site Visits**

In Year 1, the evaluators selected seven pilot schools that would receive three site visits throughout the course of the evaluation. The Heldrich Center partnered with NJDOE to identify this subset of schools. The schools were roughly representative of the 16 original pilot schools. The site visit schools represented five district factor groups, had different levels of past experience in implementing PSLPs, and had differently sized student bodies. Five schools were high schools and two were middle schools. On average, 449 students participated in the PSLPs at each school.

In Year 1, the evaluators visited each of the site visit schools twice. In Year 2, the evaluators conducted the third and final site visit under this contract. The purpose of all the site visits was to gather more detailed participant feedback about the schools' personalized learning plan strategies.

During the site visits in Year 2, the school principal and the program coordinators participated in one-on-one interviews with the evaluators. General education teachers, special education teachers, school counselors, and students all participated in focus groups. The focus groups ranged from three to seven participants.

## **PSLP Common Model Components**

In the course of the evaluation, the Heldrich Center identified the components of the PSLP programs that

were common across the pilot schools. To highlight the key elements that PSLP programs shared, the Heldrich Center identified the “who, what, where, when, and how” of PSLP programs.

### **Who participated in implementing PSLP programs at the pilot schools?**

The schools typically developed a team that consisted of a program coordinator, principal, teachers, school counselors, and other school staff members. The team established roles for each of these member groups, parents, and community members. The establishment of specific roles for adult mentors was a necessary and common component of PSLP implementation.

### **What did the pilot schools teach during PSLP sessions?**

Each school established a PSLP curriculum that addressed various topics related to academic, career, and personal development.

### **When and where was the PSLP curriculum delivered?**

Each school had to make important PSLP *scheduling decisions*. For example, school planning teams decided when during the school day to hold PSLP sessions and where in the building to hold them.

### **How did the schools deliver the PSLP curriculum?**

Each of the schools:

- Selected some version of a web-based guidance system as the primary resource for the PSLP sessions. The web-based guidance systems provided career and college exploration, self-assessments, and résumé building and goal planning tools.
- Established a PSLP session structure. The schools determined the teacher-to-student ratio in PSLP sessions and the degree to which students and adults interacted to carry out PSLP activities. The schools typically implemented either small group, the full-size class, or hybrid approaches to structuring PSLP sessions.
- Provided staff training. PSLP pilot programs provided training to introduce staff to the PSLP process and the web-based guidance system, and to teach them how to facilitate the PSLP sessions.

The pilot schools relied on the motivation of their staff members to implement every aspect of the PSLP program. The staff motivation to implement strongly influenced the degree to which staff members engaged in activities associated with each of the PSLP program components discussed above.

Figure 1 outlines the key common components. The common elements include a web-based guidance system, PSLP session structure, PSLP curriculum, adult mentor roles, staff training, and scheduling decisions. Each common component is described below.

**Figure 1. PSLP Common Model Components**



### **PSLP Web-based Guidance System**

Nearly all of the schools used a web-based guidance system as the center of their PSLP implementation. In Year 2, the evaluation team collected additional information to learn more about the web-based systems used to implement PSLP programs. The purpose of this research was to provide an overview of useful functionality as well as shortcomings of web-based guidance systems, not to compare system brands or recommend any particular system.

NJDOE encouraged the schools to choose the web-based guidance systems best suited for their schools. Each school

in the pilot selected one of the following three systems as the primary system: Career Cruising, Naviance, and Kuder. Five schools used Career Cruising, five schools used Naviance, and four schools used Kuder. Although each of these systems offered unique features and presented the information using unique interfaces, all three systems were web-based, and provided career and college exploration, a series of self-assessments for students, and résumé building and goal planning tools.

School staff found the following web-based guidance system features to be most beneficial to students:

- **Web-based access.** The major benefit of having a web-based program was that students were able to access information from any computer. This was beneficial because it allowed students to complete assignments that they were not able to complete in class, at home, or at another remote location. In addition, this feature allowed parents to have access to the students' online system without having to go to the school to view student files. Finally, teachers reported that the online system was helpful because it allowed them to post and retrieve assignments from any computer.
- **Exposure to accounts of day-to-day work experience.** In surveys and interviews administered by the evaluation team, teachers highlighted the fact that students often have pre-conceived ideas and glorified notions of particular careers. Teachers and students both found system features that supported realistic job previews to be helpful to students. The systems often presented previews in the form of career descriptions, job description videos, interview videos, or online access to real people working in real jobs. The information provided in the day-to-day accounts encouraged students to visualize themselves in those various roles and to identify goals and steps that they would need to take in order to work in particular careers.

Common limitations reported by both teachers and students include generic descriptions for less common jobs, text written at advanced reading

levels, and outdated videos. Outdated videos were quickly discredited by students and classified as irrelevant.

- **Tools that produce living documents.** Teachers reported that tools that produce living documents (i.e., those that students can hold on to and update over time) were particularly beneficial to students. Examples include résumés, planning guides, and work portfolios:
  - **Résumé builders.** Each system's résumé builder function required students to provide information on their past experiences and activities. Students completed input forms and the systems produced simply formatted résumés. Teachers reported that the process encouraged students to recognize that they are developing useful skills by participating in age-appropriate activities, while also encouraging students to think about what they might do in subsequent years to add to their activities. In Year 2, teachers reported that students were able to experience the process of updating their résumés, learned valuable lessons about documenting activities, and, in a few instances, used the résumés to apply for summer and after-school jobs.

Although many teachers highlighted the benefits associated with the résumé building process, some — at both middle and high schools — found the résumé tools to be too rigid. For example, if

students did not complete each field (e.g., start and end date) the system would not allow them to move forward in the résumé development process. Although these technical problems are minor, they may have had a negative impact on student engagement in the PSLP program.

- **Planning guides.** Each system provided some form of a template plan to help students identify long- and short-term goals. The planning tools (e.g., worksheets, goal-setting guides) helped students establish short-term goals that directly relate to their long-term goals and support school staff in being able to relay information to students about the process of goal setting. In addition, teachers and school counselors, who had access to student files, were able to use the insight that they acquired in reviewing the plans to provide strategic guidance and feedback to students. Although goal setting was not a priority in Year 1 of the pilot program, teachers using each system noted the benefits associated with goal-setting discussions in Year 2.
- **Well-designed/“student-friendly” interfaces.** Survey and interview responses from teachers indicated that there are several factors associated with a well-designed interface. Most of the concerns that emerged related to the degree to which teachers perceived the system to be student friendly. Teachers indicated positive regard for systems that were visually

attractive to students. Teachers reported that the attractive systems were colorful and used designs that were age-appropriate, provided clear directions to guide students in completing system-based assignments (i.e., résumé builder), and grouped information in ways that intuitively made sense to students. For example, one system grouped careers by relevance to the student’s favorite subject in school.

Teachers recommended systems improvements that were related to improving navigation of the site to make it easier for students to work independently to find web-based tools. In addition, teachers reported that the system developers should ensure that all text is written at an appropriate reading level for the intended user (i.e., middle school, high school) and that activities that require higher-level computer skills (e.g., uploading) are supported with detailed instructions on carrying out the necessary steps. In particular, several middle school staff members reported that across systems, the written text and, in some cases, computer skills required to use the system were too advanced for middle school students.

- **Assorted self-assessment tools.** Formal self-exploration tools provide feedback and help students communicate information about themselves to their teachers and school counselors. All three of the systems provide opportunities for students to take personal assessments that apply immediate customized

feedback. Some of the assessments that teachers classified as beneficial included learning style, interest inventory, work value survey, and skill assessment.

In interviews with the evaluation team, learning style inventories stood out as the most beneficial. At the middle school level, teachers reported that they embraced the learning styles assessment more than other activities because they saw the relevance for young students. In Year 1, the evaluators noted that students at one school reported that they were encouraged by teachers to apply what they learned about themselves in several different courses. These students reported that teachers assigned students to groups based on learning styles, allowed students to create projects based on their learning styles, and encouraged students to study using strategies that work best for their learning styles. In Year 2, more teachers and students reported finding the learning styles to be a beneficial component of the PSLP process. In one school, students described a teacher who provided examples and opportunities based on the fact that a majority of the students in the class held a similar learning style. Teachers at several schools interviewed by the evaluation team concluded that, while some have been influenced by their participation in the PSLP process, the *typical* teacher would not go as far as adapting his or her style, activities, or lesson plans to accommodate students' learning styles.

Although self-assessments can be valuable, it takes commitment and time for teachers to develop ideas and strategies to support students in applying what they learn about themselves outside of the PSLP sessions. Teachers consistently reported that they need more time to plan and work with the systems to implement the program more effectively. On several occasions, teachers noted a desire to "go deeper" in developing and exploring student assessment results with students.

Overall, school staff reported two primary weaknesses associated with the assessments. Many respondents reported that the assessments were very long and that the items often seemed repetitive. In focus groups with students, the students reiterated this point and noted that many of their classmates filled in responses without reading all of the items. Although school staff thought the length of the assessments was problematic, the evaluators do not see this as a weakness. Test developers often include many items to ensure that the assessments capture an accurate measure of the respondents' preferences or inclinations. The reliability and validity of these items are critical because the assessments are designed to give feedback to guide young users in making life choices. System developers and/or program coordinators need to provide explanations to ensure that the school staff members who facilitate PSLP sessions understand why the assessments are long and seemingly repetitive. In addition, schools and

NJDOE need to encourage school staff to provide students with appropriate explanations that explain why each student should answer each question as accurately as possible.

- **Language features.** Language options are important for both parents and students who struggle to read English. In a focus group with the evaluation team, a student reported that she had to translate during class for a fellow student, whenever she could, because the student struggled to read the items and descriptions in English. In addition, teachers reported that several of their students have parents who do not read English. Unfortunately, parents who did not read English were inadvertently excluded from participation in the web-based component of the PSLP process at schools that did not have the capability to offer non-English options.

School staff found the following web-based guidance system features to be most beneficial to teachers:

- **Access to student information.** Many students may be reluctant to overtly share their thoughts, concerns, considerations, and dreams with school staff members in a substantive way. Teacher access to student information provides an opportunity for teachers to gain a bit of insight into student preferences, goals, strengths, weaknesses, and concerns. In Year 2, teachers reported in surveys that access to student profiles helped to facilitate teacher buy-in and supported teachers in being able to

provide guidance to students. In support of the same point, teachers who did not have access to student information highlighted the lack of access as a major weakness in the PSLP processes.

- **Updateable pre-packaged presentations/lessons.** In Year 1, teachers reported that they wanted the PSLP team to give them lesson plans that they could customize. In Year 2, this sentiment continued. In surveys distributed by the evaluators, teachers admitted that they found “off-the-shelf” presentations for students and parents to be very helpful. In addition, they reported that they also appreciated the fact that they were able to adapt the presentations to meet their local needs.
- **Usage data summaries.** Schools use usage data to gain insight about system users. These data can tell schools who logs on, how often they use the system, how long they log on, and which features they access. Schools that use this function monitor usage and adapt their implementation accordingly. For example, schools have redesigned PSLP activities to focus on hot topics. In addition, schools also engage in efforts to drive traffic to underutilized areas of their Web site that administrators and teachers deem to be important.

## PSLP Session Structure

Each school had to determine its own structure for delivering PSLP sessions. The schools determined the teacher-to-

student ratio in PSLP sessions and the degree to which students and adults interacted to carry out PSLP activities.

In Year 1, the evaluation team found that PSLPs at schools that implemented “small group” PSLP approaches had a more significant impact on students compared to schools that did not implement small group approaches. In the *small group approach*, a facilitator conducts a lesson or leads a discussion or activity to a small group of 1 to 10 students for all or nearly all PSLP activities. In contrast, the *full-size class approach* describes a model whereby a facilitator introduces a lesson according to a prepared curriculum and gives assignments to a full-size academic class (i.e., 18.4 students; NJDOE School Report Card) for all or nearly all PSLP activities. In the full-size class approach, the students complete the assignments independently. A third approach used by schools is a *hybrid model* where schools combine some degree of the full-class size and the small group approach to facilitate all or nearly all of their PSLP activities.

In focus groups with the evaluation team, several school staff members reported that small groups were essential in developing stronger relationships between students, teachers, and staff members. In Year 1, however, the evaluators found that, despite the value of delivering PSLPs using the small group approach, many schools found it logistically difficult to carve out the time for students to meet in small groups and to identify space in the school building where the small groups could be held.

In Year 2, logistical barriers to using the small group approach continued to limit the pilot schools’ ability to implement small groups, and only one additional school adopted the small group approach. Despite the logistical challenges that schools faced in their attempts to implement PSLPs in small groups, schools seemed to recognize the importance and value of small groups. In Year 2, several schools reduced their reliance on implementing PSLPs in full-size groups. More than a third (38%) of schools reported primarily implementing PSLP activities in a full-class size group, while in Year 2 only one in five (20%) reported doing so.

Moreover, some schools reported that they implemented a hybrid model that combined the full-size class approach with one-on-one staff or peer mentoring components. Below are examples of how some schools used a hybrid approach to implementing PSLPs:

- **School A. Full-size class approach with a small group/advisory component.** School A provides weekly class instructions, using an advisory curriculum as the framework, but also sets aside time and space for all students to meet with an adult in the school in groups ranging from 7 to 10 students. These groups meet on a weekly basis for almost an hour.
- **School B. Full-size class PSLP activities during a period of a specific course and peer mentoring for selected students.** School B implements PSLP activities to all students in a full-size class, perhaps

during physical education. In PSLP sessions, the course instructors provide some guidance but students work independently to complete assignments. This PSLP program incorporates a small group component by offering one-on-one peer mentoring opportunities for targeted students. Typically, peer mentors work with new students, students who need additional assistance, or students who missed PSLP sessions. In this model, peer mentors tend to provide one-on-one services to some students and in-depth ongoing services to others on an as-needed basis.

- **School C. Full-size class approach with peer mentoring for all students in a grade level.** School C implements PSLP activities during a class period that is set aside for grade-wide student development activities. Depending on the scheduled activity, students either work independently to complete assignments or with an assigned peer mentor. PSLP students are required to complete some activities, but are also encouraged to communicate outside of the PSLP sessions.

## PSLP Curriculum

### *Curriculum Content*

NJDOE suggested that schools develop a curriculum that focused on academic, career, and personal development. NJDOE defined each focus area. The personal development focus area incorporates interest and skills assessments, learning style assessment, and portfolio development. The career

development focus area incorporates planning for career goals, career exploration, and résumé development. Finally, the academic development focus area incorporates planning for academic goals, activities linked to statewide test results and curriculum standards, postsecondary transition planning, course selection, and other student learning opportunities.

In Year 1, most schools focused primarily on career development and personal development. Activities related to career development and personal development were readily available in the web-based guidance systems. Most of the academic development components of the curriculum required each school to develop customized activities and systematically align the PSLP with their existing curriculum and processes. Although schools reported to evaluators that they are interested in making substantive connections between PSLPs, the core curriculum, and the course selection process in the future, most reported that they focused their academic development efforts on academic goal-setting activities in Year 2.

### *Curriculum Development*

In Years 1 and 2, a program coordinator typically worked with a small group of teachers to create the curriculum and then disseminate it to the larger group of participating teachers. In Year 1, many of the pilot schools attempted to cover every topic discussed in their early orientation to the PSLP pilot program.

In Year 2, schools had to develop and deliver a second year of lessons or

modules that were relevant and not duplicative for second-year students. During the course of the site visit interviews, several pilot program coordinators discussed having difficulty coming up with another year's worth of topics and assignments for now two different grade levels that were involved in PSLP. A few schools addressed this challenge by allocating a portion of the NJDOE stipend to pay teachers to develop the curriculum for the next grade level, based on their needs and what they saw as the relevant topic areas.

Pilot program coordinators expressed a real need for time and resources to design curriculum that capitalizes on the strengths of their teachers and meets the needs of their students. A few program coordinators and teachers expressed a desire to draw from a standardized, statewide PSLP curriculum that all schools used so that quality would not vary across schools and that included the best of PSLP curricula from all the pilot schools.

## **Adult Mentor Roles**

According to the New Jersey Administrative Code, adult mentors in a PSLP program include teachers, school counselors, and parents. NJDOE recommended that the pilot schools establish a team of adult mentors in implementing PSLPs. The schools typically developed a team that consisted of a program coordinator, principal, teachers, and school counselors. In Year 1, the roles of program coordinators, principals, and teachers were similar across schools, but the role of school counselors varied. In addition, schools

did not establish formal roles for parents and community members in either year. The Year 1 report provided an explanation of the role of principals, teachers, and program coordinators. In Year 2, the evaluators found that the roles were typically the same. In both years:

- Principals provided ancillary support by speaking to the staff, working with the program coordinator to make scheduling changes, and providing resources and flexibility related to training.
- Teachers primarily participated in planning and facilitated PSLP sessions.
- Program coordinators coordinated the professional development for school staff, oversaw the development and delivery of the curriculum and planning for carrying out the sessions, and maintained communication with school administrators, teachers and counseling staff, students, and the community.

In Year 2, the evaluators conducted additional research to explore the roles of school counselors and parents. The roles of these two stakeholders are described below.

## **School Counselors**

In implementing PSLPs, school counselors play a variety of roles across schools, ranging from limited involvement to being the program coordinator. School counselors engaged in a variety of activities across schools in both years of the pilot. A few of the

common activities included taking the lead in creating and meeting with small groups, facilitating PSLP sessions, incorporating PSLPs into regular guidance discussions, and developing portions of the PSLP curriculum. Program coordinators provided written descriptions of the roles that school counselors played in PSLP implementation. Table 1 provides sample descriptions.

Overall, school counselors view PSLPs as beneficial to their work. In a survey conducted by the evaluation team, 96% of school counselors reported that the PSLP program either has already or will positively affect how they interact with students. In explaining their responses, school counselors provided several reasons why they thought that PSLPs were helpful in their work. Common explanations indicated that the PSLP programs:

**Table 1. Sample Descriptions of School Counselor Roles**

The program coordinator is the guidance counselor.

Very active in training and classroom sessions in Year 1 but were reassigned to another school-based initiative in Year 2.

The school counselor facilitates online sessions and also meets with the students several times a year to discuss college and careers.

They have been supplementary but have not taken a major role in implementation.

Our counselor has been very instrumental in weaving the PSLP program into the guidance program. The counselor regularly works with students on the web-based system and attends PSLP workshops. Next year, we plan to bring the rest of the guidance counselors on board in a greater capacity.

The school counselors have been the ones to take the lead in facilitating small groups of teachers in developing the PSLP activities. The counselors are also the only ones with access to all student accounts in the web-based system, so they have the role of checking the data, emailing students who may not be up-to-date with expectations, and helping students with technical difficulties.

Our counselor runs student groups, meets with parents, organizes IEP meetings, and is available always to talk to a student. Her input is about students is very helpful.

The counselors were the group who originally were trained and trained the students. They meet with the students. They are encouraging the use of [our web-based guidance system] the most. They were instrumental in the distribution of parent codes and participation.

Each time a student is called to meet with their counselor, the counselor checks the progress of a student's PSLP and provides personal guidance toward completion and appropriate goals.

The school counselors take the lead role in bringing the PSLPs to the students. We have a few teachers from each grade level who assist, but mainly it is the guidance department who facilitates and initiates the actions in regards to our Career Cruising and online record-keeping portion of the PSLPs.

Our counselors generally assist with the small group implementation each month.

Counselors are involved in creating the content of the academics and activities portions of the PSLP.

- Help school counselors identify student interests and needs more quickly,
- Encourage students to engage in substantive reflection about their futures before entering the guidance office,
- Help students to communicate their interests and needs more effectively, and
- Provide a starting place for school counselors to work with students to identify steps for achieving goals.

### **Parents**

Parental involvement in PSLP activities remained limited throughout both years of the pilot, despite school efforts — such as brochures and workshops — to engage parents. Personalized learning initiatives across the nation recognize that parental involvement is an important factor in supporting student engagement, participation in school activities, and overall engagement (Georgia State Department of Education, 1982; Jones, 2010; New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). The pilot schools have implemented a host of activities to promote parent participation in their PSLP programs. A few of the highlighted efforts include:

- Generating a decision pyramid to describe the purpose of the PSLP program to parents and students.
- Distributing multiple brochures about the PSLP program to parents at an array of events throughout the school

year (e.g., parent nights, student performances).

- Hosting evening parent nights (system workshops, parental involvement workshops).
- Sending a personal business card to each parent with login information.
- Partnering with school groups (e.g., PTA) to expose parents to PSLP programs.
- Asking teachers to communicate with parents about PSLPs.
- Having teachers mention the PSLP program to each parent during one-on-one discussions.

In spite of the schools' efforts, parents were not heavily involved in the PSLP process in Year 2 overall. In staff surveys, 62% of staff members reported that PSLPs did not affect parental involvement at their schools. Students told evaluators that they typically engaged in very general conversations about the PSLP program with their parents. The evaluation team attempted to collect responses from parents in online surveys and interviews. Unfortunately, only one parent completed the PSLP parent survey and most schools were not able to schedule parent focus groups or interviews with the evaluation team.

Likewise, compared with Year 1, schools reported no significant difference in their efforts to partner with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums, local colleges, and/or other organizations in implementing their PSLP programs. As

reported in Year 1, a few schools were able to recruit community members to participate in career exposure activities, but most schools did not attempt to engage the local community.

## Staff Training

Staff training is an important component of PSLP because it supports quality of facilitation and promotes teacher buy-in. Most of the PSLP pilot programs provided training to introduce staff to the PSLP process and the web-based guidance system in Year 1. Many of the training sessions were facilitated by representatives from the organizations that developed the web-based guidance systems. Across both years, reports from teachers suggest that training needed to:

- Be customized to the trainee needs,
- Be provided throughout the year,
- Be conducted well in advance of PSLP program rollout,
- Include substantial time for practice and interacting with the system, and
- Address teacher concerns about session facilitation.

In Year 2, many teachers reported several training limitations. In a survey conducted by the evaluation team, 51.1% of responding school staff agreed that the training opportunities were effective in preparing them to deliver the PSLP curriculum. Two common training-related limitations included not having enough time in training and having training facilitators who did not

customize the training to the schools' needs. First, many teachers reported that they needed more time to practice using the web-based guidance systems and additional opportunities for follow-up training. Only 52.8% of teachers reported that their schools provided ongoing training related to PSLPs. They explained that additional training would have helped them to maximize the usefulness of the system, identify strategies for handling program glitches, and assist students in navigating the less user-friendly components associated with each system. Second, at some schools, the training facilitators did not customize the training sessions. In interviews with the evaluation team, several teachers explained that while the training sessions were helpful in that they provided broad exposure to the system, the sessions did not provide enough in-depth information about the tools that were most applicable to the teachers being trained. One facilitator, for example, focused on high school applications when presenting at a middle school, while another facilitator focused primarily on the college application process when presenting to teachers who worked with high school freshmen.

## Scheduling Decisions

In two years of study, the Heldrich Center found that there was no "best" approach to scheduling. Each school has several varying factors that affect how it addresses scheduling. In both Years 1 and 2, schools varied in the scheduling commitments, but generally held PSLP sessions during one of the three following period types:

- A previously scheduled period of time when everyone in the school was doing the same thing (e.g., a homework or special activity period).
- A class period in which the schools substituted the PSLP curriculum for the traditional lesson. This typically happened in subject areas in which all of the students in a particular grade were required to take the course (i.e., physical education/health).
- A custom period of time that was created to accommodate the implementation of the PSLP program.

Scheduling was difficult for many schools. Small group sessions, desired by most schools, were hard to schedule because finding a quiet place within the school building, during the school day, for personalized instruction and peer group discussions was very challenging. In addition, carving out additional time outside of classes in either the students' or the teachers' day required extensive planning and commitment from school leadership.

### **Motivation to Implement the PSLP Program**

Motivation dictates the form, direction, intensity, and duration in which one allocates physical and cognitive resources in engaging in a behavior or activity (Pinder, 1998). Motivation to implement the PSLP program influences the degree to which teachers engage in carrying out all of the implementation components discussed. Although, motivation cannot be explicitly measured

or observed, the pilot schools have shared several indicators that they use to gauge the overall motivation to implement PSLPs. Pilot school members explain that they look at the principal's actions to determine if the PSLP implementation is a priority for the school, teacher responsiveness to PSLP activities, parents' participation in the PSLP process, and the degree to which students are engaged and completing PSLP assignments.

### **The Comprehensive Nature of PSLP Programs**

In Year 1, program coordinators and other school staff members began voicing concerns about the scope of the PSLP programs at their schools. Many explained that in the first year they worked with a dedicated group of staff members to implement the PSLP sessions and develop the curriculum. At the end of the year, many reported that they believed that PSLPs would be far more effective in improving school culture if more of the staff were involved and if school staff supported students in applying what they learned during the PSLPs in their other courses and school activities. NJDOE recognized this emerging issue and asked the Heldrich Center to study the degree to which the PSLP program was perceived to be a comprehensive initiative in Year 2.

Based on feedback from school staff members from the pilot programs and a review of various educational programs that are designed to strengthen school culture, the Heldrich Center identified

several indicators of a comprehensive PSLP implementation. These indicators include:

- Most adults in the school are aware of the program and understand the concept of personalized learning.
- School staff encourage students and provide guidance related to applying PSLP concepts throughout their academic and personal lives.
- Teachers incorporate personalized learning concepts in non-PSLP course curriculum.
- School counselors systematically incorporate PSLP information and concepts in counseling sessions.

Even though coordinators discuss PSLP and the related staff training at school-wide faculty meetings and school events, PSLP programs generally lack a cohesive, full-scale integration into the core subject areas, though they are beginning to be applied more regularly in school counseling sessions. During site visits, many teachers explained that for the most part, adults in the school who were not directly involved in the program did not understand the concept of personalized learning. Sixty-five percent of participating staff reported that teachers who were not directly involved did not understand how PSLPs relate to student learning. Further, school staff who were involved were not sure how to guide students in applying PSLP concepts throughout their academic and personal lives. During site visits, school staff members reported that they did not know how to embed lessons of the PSLP into

their subject areas. In a survey conducted by the evaluation team, 56% of school staff reported that PSLP concepts were not integrated into core subject areas. In addition, none of the schools reported linking PSLP to state curriculum standards. Teachers suggested that they would benefit from guidance related to how to connect PSLP activities to other courses and to the Core Curriculum Content Standards. On the other hand, school counselors seem to have made progress this year in incorporating PSLPs in their sessions. During the site visits, school counselors reported that they found PSLPs to be helpful and that they were looking forward to implementing additional strategies for connecting PSLPs to counseling (e.g., course planning).

It should be noted that PSLP pilot schools have only completed two years of implementation at two grade levels. Research on programs that are designed to enhance school culture suggests that such programs typically take several years of implementation to begin to have significant impact on school culture. Although it is still early in the implementation process, it is never too early for schools to set goals and discuss strategies related to improving the comprehensive nature of PSLP implementation.

## PSLP Coordination with Special Education Programs

At the end of Year 1, NJDOE asked the Heldrich Center to gather additional information to determine the extent to which schools implemented PSLP programs in coordination with the IEPs.

PSLP programs were implemented simultaneously, but not in coordination, with IEPs. In interviews conducted by the Heldrich Center in Year 2, pilot schools reported that students with special needs completed the same PSLP assignments as mainstream students. Schools provided students with the same accommodation that they received in core subject areas. The concerns that teachers of special education reported about the web-based system echoed those of teachers working in mainstream classrooms. Special education teachers reported that the writing was too advanced for some students and that some of the assessments were overwhelmingly long and repetitive.

The pilot schools also noted that they viewed the IEP process as independent of the PSLP process and did not make any attempts to link the two plans. School staff explained that the PSLP differs from IEP in that it is not a formal plan. The IEP is a formal document that outlines services to be provided and specific developmental academic and behavioral goals for the student. The IEP is established, reviewed, and modified by a team of stakeholders (i.e., learning specialists, parents, and students). Although the PSLPs are defined as a “plan and a process,” schools in the pilot

program have not typically asked students to establish a documented plan, but rather have required students to create portfolios. NJDOE (2009) defines portfolios as a portable personal collection of papers/artifacts/reflections used by students to illustrate learning, accomplishments, skills, strengths, and best works. Although schools require specific activities, students are free to create and modify PSLP-related documents as they wish. School staff members also pointed out that from their perspectives, PSLPs differed from IEPs because IEPs focus on core academic skill and abilities, while PSLPs focus on student engagement, personal exploration, and building school-based support networks to promote academic, career, and personal development in a much more general sense. Overall, school staff seemed proud of the fact that they were able to develop a program that could be applied to support personalized learning for all of their students.

## Challenges

As is the case with all pilot programs, implementation challenges arise that force program staff to reconsider their plans and make mid-course alterations to achieve the desired outcomes. The Heldrich Center’s Year 1 evaluation report identified five main challenges that schools faced during the first year of New Jersey’s PSLP pilot program implementation: teacher buy-in, scheduling, physical space in which to implement the program, accessibility for all students, and consistent, high-quality implementation across the school. In Year 2, many schools saw improvements in many of these areas, but some

continued to be a barrier to implementation.

In addition to the logistical challenges, Year 2 uncovered more fundamental challenges related to motivation to implement PSLP programs. Teacher buy-in was still the most consistent challenge facing schools across the state in Year 2. In relation, program coordinators found it challenging to maintain staff motivation to implement PSLPs at schools with new principals who did not demonstrate support for the PSLP program.

### Challenges Related to Teacher Buy-In

Although teachers are in favor of PSLPs and the basic concept of personalization in learning, actual teacher support for implementing PSLPs at their own schools is low. With respect to the concept of PSLPs, teachers have a very favorable opinion of them. Nearly all (91%) of the teachers think meaningful teacher-student interactions (the core of the PSLP) are essential for personalized learning. A majority (76%) of teachers feel that PSLPs are a good choice for their school, and 76% feel that PSLPs can make a difference in student engagement.

In Year 1, the evaluation team found the importance of teacher buy-in could not be overstated. Without teacher buy-in, the success of the PSLP in a school would only ever be tenuous. In Year 2, 60% of participating teachers reported that they were personally motivated to make PSLPs work in their classrooms.

Several key issues continue to frustrate teachers and contribute to their

reluctance to embrace the PSLP at their schools.

**Lack of Inclusion in the PSLP Planning Process.** The data indicate that teachers still do not have a voice in the PSLP models at their schools. According to the End of Year 2 School Staff Survey, teachers reported a seeming lack of inclusion in the PSLPs at their school. Only half (52%) of the teachers felt they had opportunities to provide input, ask questions, and express concerns about the PSLP plans at their schools. Less than half (45%) said they participated in decisions regarding how changes should be made to the PSLP in Year 2.

**Inadequate Training.** The End of Year 2 School Staff Survey demonstrated that teachers felt unprepared for facilitating the PSLP sessions. Just over a third (37%) of teachers thought they had the resources necessary to implement a PSLP and only half (51%) thought that they had received sufficient training to prepare them to deliver the PSLP curriculum. Many staff members reported that they needed more time to become familiar with the web-based systems and more training to address topics related to both the web-based systems and personalized learning in general.

Teachers implementing PSLP for the first time in Year 2 received less intensive training than those teachers who participated in PSLP starting in Year 1. One reason for the less intensive training was because additional training on PSLP software was expensive. As a result, more program coordinators relied on internal training sessions. One coordinator described how she hoped that Year 1

teachers would train the additional Year 2 teachers, but went on to explain that this did not happen.

**Insufficient Time to Prepare.** One of the more pervasive themes heard throughout the site visits for the Year 2 evaluation from teachers was a lack of time to prepare to implement the PSLP along with their other responsibilities in the classroom.

### Challenges Related to Transitions in Leadership

Program pilot coordinators struggled to maintain momentum and commitment to the PSLP under new leadership that did not see PSLP as a priority. A total of six schools experienced administration change during the course of Year 2 of their PSLP pilot program. In some cases, the leadership change had the effect of making the PSLP a lower priority and slowed the schools' progress in implementing their programs.

In Year 1, school staff indicated that principals who signaled strong administrative support for PSLPs (e.g., by adapting scheduling to accommodate the program) delivered a strong message that the program was important. For schools where the principal was replaced, the new principal often had a different priority list. In one school, for instance, the principal discussed how she agreed with the concept behind the PSLP but her top priority was developing and managing a new data system where teachers could extract real live data on any given day to identify how their students scored on standardized tests and where the strengths and weaknesses lie

so they could adjust their lesson plans accordingly. Another principal came into his position and went through the arduous process of instituting block scheduling in an effort to improve academic performance. He admitted that the PSLP fell short of his top priority and he argued that he could only encourage and enforce so much change on his faculty at one time. In both cases, the pilot coordinators struggled to convey a sense of urgency to the teachers without the full backing of the principal and admitted that when teachers realized the principal was not fully committed, they lost their interest.

## Principal Findings

The Heldrich Center's research generated 11 principal findings. Findings that address the primary research questions for this report are presented first, then overall findings about the perceived impact of PSLPs among students and teachers, and finally challenges related to implementing PSLPs.

**Finding #1. The pilot schools generally implemented the common model components consistently across Years 1 and 2.** The Heldrich Center identified the components of the PSLP programs that were common across the pilot schools. The common elements include a web-based guidance system, PSLP session structure, PSLP curriculum, adult mentor roles, staff training, and scheduling decisions. Pilot schools typically implemented the common model components consistently across years. The roles and concerns of the various adult groups remained similar. The program coordinators organized all PSLP

activities, teachers primarily facilitated PSLP sessions and participated in curriculum development, school counselors continued to carry out a variety of roles across schools, and parental involvement in PSLP activities remained limited, despite school efforts to engage parents (e.g., workshops). Schools continued to report that principal support was a necessary component for successful implementation of PSLPs, staff members continued to suggest that training sessions did not adequately prepare them to facilitate PSLP sessions, and pilot schools continued to use the web-based guidance systems and schedules used in Year 1.

The Heldrich Center identified one important difference between Years 1 and 2 related to PSLP structure. Although the schools maintained their overall PSLP session structures, several schools attempted to improve “personalization” by creating new opportunities for students to develop relationships with staff and/or peer mentors.

**Finding #2. PSLP programs were implemented simultaneously, but not in coordination, with IEPs.** Program coordinators and teachers reported that students participating in the special education program participated in the same PSLP activities as mainstream students. Further, the schools provided special education students with the same accommodations in the PSLP sessions that they provided in other courses. School staff reported implementing PSLPs and the IEPs concurrently, but independently. Although school personnel recognize that both initiatives support overall student development,

they reported that these efforts differ in several important ways. Schools implement the plans at different times, include different stakeholders in plan development, have different procedures for updating, and have different reasons for implementing the plans. In addition, the PSLP process results in a portfolio, whereas the IEP process results in a plan that outlines concrete, contractual tasks.

**Finding #3. Over 70% of school staff reported that the PSLP process continued to have a positive impact on students in the second year. The average overall impact did not change significantly from Year 1 to Year 2.** More than 70% said that the PSLP process had a positive impact on several indicators (see Appendix B, Table B-1). These indicators include:

- Students’ abilities to set long-term career and academic goals,
- Students’ abilities to set short-term academic and career goals,
- Students’ abilities to understand the academic expectations and requirements of their schools,
- Students’ abilities to understand the importance of decision making,
- Student-teacher interaction, and
- Overall student motivation to succeed in school.

These indicators are key to student success. Goal setting, decision making, and interacting with people of authority are all key skills that support both

academic success and workplace readiness. In addition, overall student motivation speaks directly to the students' engagement because it drives a student's willingness to employ personal resources (e.g., energy) in carrying out school-related behaviors.

On the whole, teachers were less likely to report positive impacts for teachers than they were for students. A strong majority of school staff (i.e., at least 70%) reported that 8 of 14 indicators of student impact were positively influenced by PSLPs (i.e., 57%). However, a strong majority of school staff reported that only one of eight indicators of teacher impact was positively influenced by PSLPs. In regard to staff, 72% said it had a positive impact on teachers' commitment to students (see Appendix B, Table B-2).

Although most reported positive impacts, the average rating of impact indicates that the perception of positive impacts are just emerging and remain identical to the levels reported last year. Evaluators used a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 to measure student impact. An average rating of 3 would indicate no impact and an average rating of 4 would indicate a positive impact. In both years, the average student impact was 3.8 and the average teacher impact was 3.7.

**Finding #4. Some schools reported improved implementation of PSLPs in Year 2 compared with Year 1, while other schools reported less effective implementation in Year 2 than Year 1.** In Year 1, the evaluators identified lessons learned for implementing successful PSLP programs. In Year 2, the evaluators found that despite many of the lessons learned

and recommendations for ideal implementation, many schools found themselves balancing priorities as resources, personnel, and environmental factors shifted from Year 1 to Year 2. In some instances, school-level changes supported PSLP implementation and, in other instances, school-level changes hindered schools from implementing program improvements that had been developed at the end of Year 1. As a result, overall quality of PSLP implementation fluctuated across schools.

In Years 1 and 2, the evaluators measured implementation effectiveness by developing a composite profile score for each school. The composite profile score for each school was only used to identify broad implementation trends and patterns across schools, not to definitely prove one school was directly more effective than the school ranked immediately below it and less effective than the one ranked immediately above it. In Year 2, the evaluators compared relative composite scores in Year 1 to relative composite scores in Year 2 to determine if there were differences in the way the schools were distributed relative to each other across years. The evaluation team found that although a few schools maintained their relative position in the distribution, some schools reported implementing a significantly less effective PSLP programs compared to their counterparts in Year 1. Conversely, a few schools reported implementing significantly more effective PSLP programs compared to their counterparts in Year 2. The evaluation team compared schools whose relative composite scores decreased from Year 1 to Year 2 with

schools whose relative composite scores increased from Year 1 to Year 2 on multiple implementation dimensions using paired samples *t*-test.

Schools that reported an improved overall implementation, relative to their counterparts, reported positive statistically significant differences in teacher buy-in and belief in the concept of PSLPs. The evaluation team found that the schools that improved demonstrated statistically significant differences from Year 1 to Year 2 on teacher buy-in and belief in the PSLP process. Student impact nearly reached significance at the traditional .05 level of significance, but did reach significance at the more lenient .10 level of significance ( $t = -3.00$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .058$ ). All of these differences were related to increases in effectiveness (see Appendix C, Table C-1).

Conversely, schools that reported less effective implementation in Year 2, relative to their counterparts, reported negative statistically significant differences on student impact, teacher buy-in, training effectiveness, and teacher participation in implementation. The schools that reported less effective implementation in Year 2 than in Year 1 demonstrated statistically significant differences in teacher buy-in, staff belief in the PSLP process, training effectiveness, and teacher input in the PSLP implementation process. All of these differences indicated decreases in effectiveness (see Appendix C, Table C-2).

**Finding #5. In Year 2, several teachers called for PSLP curriculum to be improved in future years. Teachers who delivered the curriculum thought that the PSLP curriculum developed by some schools in Year 2 included topics that were not grade-level appropriate.**

Teachers reported wanting a curriculum for the PSLP program that is designed according to grade level and that addresses topics and issues that are appropriate for students by both grade and maturity level. In addition, they want the curriculum to align with the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards.

**Finding #6. In Year 2, more staff reported that PSLPs had a positive impact on students' abilities to set short-term career-related and academic goals than they did in Year 1.**

In Year 1, teachers and school staff at the pilot schools explained that they used the first year to focus on long-term goals and that they planned to focus on short-term goals in the second year. In Year 2, the teachers did in fact engage in more short-term goal-setting activities. In responding to a survey conducted by the evaluation staff, 12 of the 14 program coordinators who completed the survey reported focusing on goal setting as an important component of the PSLP program. In addition, the percentage of teachers reporting that the PSLPs had a positive impact on students' ability to set short-term career goals increased. The percentage of teachers reporting that the PSLPs had a positive impact on students' abilities to set short-term academic goals increased by 23.3 percentage points.

**Table 2. Goal Setting Comparison Across Year 1 and Year 2**

	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact
<b>2009-2010</b>			
Ability to set short-term career-related goals	0.4%	33.9%	65.7%
Ability to set short-term academic goals	0.9%	45.2%	53.9%
<b>2010-2011</b>			
Ability to set short-term career related goals	0.4%	21.2%	78.3%
Ability to set short-term academic goals	0.0%	22.8%	77.2%

**Table 3. Academic Behavior Comparison Across Year 2**

	Negative Impact	No Impact	Positive Impact
Homework completion	0.0%	51.2%	48.8%
Study time	0.0%	51.2%	48.3%
Attendance in class	0.5%	56.2%	43.3%

Similarly, the percentage of teachers reporting that the PSLPs had a positive impact on students’ abilities to set short-term career goals increased by 12.6 percentage points (see Table 2).

**Finding #7. Staff reports indicate that PSLPs did not affect key academic behaviors (i.e., attendance, study time, homework completion) in Year 2.** PSLPs are intended to promote academic success by improving student engagement. Researchers suggest that student engagement is multi-faceted. Although there is not a complete consensus, most researchers agree that behavioral engagement is distinct from cognitive, emotional, or attitudinal engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). The National Center for School Engagement (2006) defines behavioral student engagement as students investing in effort to do their school work and follow school rules.

Although over 70% of school staff in this study reported positive impact on various indicators of student emotions and cognitive processes (i.e., school motivation; see Appendix B-1), the results indicate that, for the most part, school staff did not believe that PSLPs had an impact on key academic behaviors, such as study time, homework completion, and class attendance (see Table 3.).

**Finding #8. Nearly all of those who completed this survey recommended PSLPs for other schools in their districts.** Three hundred and eleven school staff members, representing teachers across the pilot sites, completed the PSLP pilot program end-of-year survey in Year 2. Of those survey respondents, 114 felt comfortable assessing whether they would recommend PSLPs to schools in their district. Eighty-five percent of the teachers and school staff that responded to the survey said that they would

recommend PSLPs to the schools in their districts.

**Finding #9. There are mixed opinions among administrators, teachers, counselors, and students about the appropriateness of implementing PSLPs at the middle school level.** In surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the evaluation team recorded strong

contrasting opinions around the topic of middle school PSLP implementation. In this evaluation, administrators, teachers, and students provided mixed feedback on this subject. Table 4 shows sample statements from each type of stakeholder. Although evaluators did not hear directly from parents, the third-party reports provided by school staff were also mixed.

**Table 4. Example Comments Regarding PSLPs in Grades Six through Eight**

<b>Program Coordinators</b>	
“PSLP is a natural program that all students starting at the middle school need to be involved in.”	“PSLPs seem most appropriate to begin with the 9th grade. Post graduation planning seems to distant for a 7th or 8th grader.”
“I would recommend that the middle schools implement the PSLP program because it is never too early for our students to start thinking about their futures and set post-secondary goals.”	“We feel that it would be most beneficial at the 8 <sup>th</sup> grade level- many topics and career choices are too advanced or inappropriate at the sixth and seventh grade levels.”
<b>Teachers</b>	
“The use of [PSLPs activities] should begin at the middle school level along with more time for students to use the program during the school day.”	“I do not feel that this program is suited for middle school students. It is difficult for them to make connections to their future careers. I do feel that it may be a valuable tool for High Schools.”
“It is helpful in middle school, but should be more challenging for H.S.”	[PSLPs should be implemented in] “high school only. No relevance to middle school students.”
<b>Students</b>	
“It [the PSLP program] helped me because it made me think about long term for the first time.”	“Some kids don’t take it seriously, for some it is just entertaining and used as a contest to see who can get the better jobs.”
“The goal setting helped me really think about what I might want to do as a career.”	“I did something like this in middle school and I did not get it. Now that I’m doing it in high school it makes more sense to me.”

Unfortunately, these mixed feelings did not support teacher buy-in at the middle school level, where it seemed that the split opinion at the school level paralleled that of the statewide comparison. A few schools reported that they were able to reduce tension by using feedback from teachers to focus on topics that seemed most appropriate for the younger students. As mentioned earlier in this report, learning styles seemed to be a topic area that middle school teachers across pilot schools felt comfortable with and motivated to discuss with younger students.

**Finding #10. The Heldrich Center found that staff buy-in continued to be a significant challenge in many schools and that principal support was difficult to earn from new principals in some schools.** Although teachers are in favor of PSLPs and the basic concept of personalization in learning, actual teacher support for implementing PSLPs at their own schools is low. Included as a Year 1 challenge as well, teacher buy-in remained a difficult challenge facing schools attempting to implement the PSLP model in Year 2 and threatens the sustainability of the PSLP in many schools. In addition, some program coordinators struggled to maintain momentum and commitment to the PSLP under new principals who did not see PSLP as a priority. Turnover in leadership left many schools in Year 2 struggling to find an advocate for the PSLP program and a leader to make the difficult decisions necessary to put PSLP on the priority list of programs for the school.

**Finding #11. The quality of PSLP implementation continued to depend on**

**administrator support.** Researchers found systematic differences in the quality of PSLP implementation for schools that changed principals from Year 1 to Year 2, depending on the degree to which the new principal supported PSLPs.

In order to understand how changes in school leadership affected PSLP implementation, the evaluators examined qualitative data. The data indicate that the disruption in PSLP implementation seemed to be highly contingent on the principals' priorities. In a few schools, incoming principals reduced the small group component to allocate resources (space and staff) to other initiatives and reassigned staff from PSLP to other projects. In other schools, the principals reassigned staff. Other principals, by contrast, facilitated the implementation process by supporting staff, providing visible support for PSLP implementation, and assisting the team in addressing lessons learned from Year 1. The data collected in Year 2 demonstrate that the quality of implementation improved when principals were supportive and stagnated or regressed when principals were not supportive.

## Lessons Learned in Year 2

New Jersey schools interested in the PSLP experience of the 15 pilot schools during the first two years of the NJDOE study may want to consider the following lessons learned from the pilot. The Heldrich Center's research presents lessons learned related to common model components, then goes on to

present strategies for overcoming challenges.

**Lesson #1. Web-based Guidance System. When selecting a web-based guidance system, schools should prioritize system features based on how teachers and school counselors anticipate using the system to support students and the anticipated needs of the families in the school community.**

School staff reported that web-based access, exposure to accounts of day-to-day work experience, tools that produce living documents, “student-friendly” interfaces, assorted self-assessment tools, and language system features were particularly beneficial to students and their families. In addition, teachers and school staff indicated that access to student information, updateable pre-packaged lessons, and usage data summaries provided teachers with opportunities to gain insight about their students, customize lesson plans, and monitor system usage.

**Lesson #2. PSLP Session Structure. Hybrid models that combine the logistic convenience of the average class size model with the interpersonal advantages of the small group model may be viable options for schools that are not able to implement all or nearly all PSLP activities in small group settings.**

In Year 2, evaluators found that schools adapted their programs to infuse a stronger sense of “personalization” in their PSLP programs. Schools moved away from classroom-only models of PSLPs. The evaluators encourage schools to continue to move away from PSLP strategies that rely solely on full class group sessions to carry out PSLP sessions. When small

groups are not feasible, schools should consider implementing alternative PSLP strategies that encourage relationship building between students and staff and hold students accountable for participatory learning. Hybrid models that combine the logistic convenience of the full-class model with the interpersonal advantages of the small group model may be viable options for schools that are not able to implement all PSLP activities in small groups. For example, several schools that were not able to implement formal small group approaches incorporated activities that supported one-on-one relationship building among junior and advanced students and teachers.

**Lesson #3. Curriculum. When outlining the curriculum development timeline, schools should consider the time it takes to develop curriculum, incentives for curriculum developers, timing for curriculum distribution, and processes for obtaining feedback related to curriculum.**

In Year 2, staff reported that they benefited from being able to develop the curriculum in advance of implementation. In Year 1, the schools developed the curriculum throughout the first year of implementation. In Year 2, staff reported benefiting from being able to plan and develop curriculum prior to the start of the school year. In addition, when the core team had the opportunity to develop the curriculum in advance, they were able to distribute the lesson plans to teachers well in advance of the sessions and were better able to incorporate ideas and discuss concerns of the teachers who facilitated the sessions.

**Lesson #4. Curriculum. In developing curriculum, schools should identify PSLP concepts that can be sequentially introduced and built upon as students progress from grade to grade.** Just as in core academic areas, PSLP teams should consider the students' experiences across years, identify the most important and age-appropriate skills, and implement activities in ways that allow students to build on the PSLP-related skills sequentially. School teams that are less familiar with guidance-related curricula should be sure to collaborate with the guidance department, solicit help from a curriculum specialist, and/or review the resources made available by organizations such as the American School Counselor Association.

**Lesson #5. Curriculum. Schools should focus on "quality vs. quantity" when choosing PSLP activities.** In the first year of the pilot program, some schools attempted to expose their students to every topic outlined in the resources that they reviewed when establishing their PSLP programs. Many students and school staff members explained that they felt rushed and that they wanted to be able to delve into certain topic areas more deeply. Schools should consider choosing a small set of useful topics and assessments so that teachers and students will have the time to go into deeper conversations about the assessment feedback and PSLP topics in general.

**Lesson #6. Curriculum. Schools should link PSLP activities to the curriculum.** Previous research suggests that teachers are typically not trained to incorporate non-traditional topics and concepts in core classes (Quint, 2006). Developing a

strong core curriculum that incorporates PSLP concepts is challenging and should be addressed using a collaborative approach. Ideally, representatives with a background in career development will partner with core curriculum teachers, the PSLP team, and perhaps a curriculum specialist to look for opportunities to integrate selected topic areas.

Although it would be ideal for the PSLP concept to be implemented in every discipline, schools that are just beginning to link PSLP curriculum to core subjects may want to start by focusing on one course, implementing a few activities that combine topics and by identifying opportunities for PSLP concepts to support learning in the core subject areas, rather than solely looking for opportunities to mention concepts from one course during the class period of the other course. Schools interested in developing ideas for curriculum integration should consider reviewing resources in the learning community literature as well as those provided by education departments throughout the nation.

**Lesson #7. Adult Mentor Roles. Schools implementing PSLP programs should be sure to identify and clearly communicate the roles of the various adults in the school community (e.g., principal, teachers, school counselors, and parents).** Schools should define the key roles and responsibilities of participating school staff, parents, and members of the community, and share all of the role descriptions with "adult mentors" in each role. Role clarification will support the adults in carrying out their own roles and will help each type of school community

member (e.g., teacher, school counselor) to have a stronger understanding of the entire PSLP program.

**Lesson #8. Staff Training. Schools should elicit feedback from teachers about the training they receive to implement PSLPs and work to ensure that training opportunities prepare teachers to deliver PSLP curriculum.** Teachers clearly called for more effective and frequent training opportunities in Year 2. Nearly one in two teachers reported that training was not effective. In addition, schools that reported an overall reduction in implementation success also reported statistically significant decreases in training effectiveness. Schools should gather regular feedback from staff and use the information to ensure that training opportunities meet staff needs.

**Lesson #9. Scheduling. Ideally, schools will be able to implement a PSLP session structure that aligns well with the existing schedule. However, schools that determine that they need significant scheduling changes to implement a PSLP program will require a committed leader who is willing to implement the changes necessary to accommodate the PSLP program.** In both Years 1 and 2, schools typically addressed PSLP scheduling conflicts by holding PSLP sessions during a previously scheduled period of time when everyone in the school was doing the same thing, a class period in which the schools substituted the PSLP curriculum for the traditional lesson, or a custom period of time that was created to accommodate the PSLP program. Although small group sessions were generally desired, school space was limited and carving out additional time

outside of classes in either the students' or the teachers' day required extensive planning and commitment from school leadership.

**Lesson #10. Motivation to Implement PSLP Programs. Stability in principal support is necessary for the sustained implementation of PSLPs over the long term. New principals should consider how changes in administrative support, school policies, and staff assignments will affect the quality of the PSLP implementation.** Schools are pursuing personalized learning education strategies because they have been found to improve academic success. NJDOE encourages schools to work to increase student success by developing "student-centered learning environments." PSLP programs support schools in transitioning into student-centered learning environments by providing a flexible process that schools can use to focus on the personal and intellectual development of all students. PSLPs need to be implemented comprehensively over several years to substantially affect school culture and student learning. Without sustained principal leadership, it will be difficult for PSLPs to become well embedded in the school culture to increase academic achievement.

In Year 2, the Heldrich Center found that significant changes in the level of principal support, school procedures, policy, and staffing can have either positive or negative effects on the quality of PSLP implementation. Substantial changes that have negative effects are particularly detrimental in the early years of implementation when the program has not yet become institutionalized.

Principals who implement school changes that have negative effects on PSLP implementation essentially “veto” PSLP effectiveness in the same year and in the long term.

Principals should be careful to ensure that the changes that they introduce do not have a negative influence on the success of the PSLP program. If schools anticipate that a policy or procedure change will have a deleterious effect on the quality of the PSLP implementation, the planning team should meet with administrators to identify strategies to offset the predicted effect. Further, school leaders should be aware that principal buy-in can influence the overall implementation. School staff members look to school leadership to determine if programs are worthy of their buy-in and effort. Further, school staff members consider both verbal support and principal action when assessing administrative buy-in. It is likely that principals who do not *demonstrate* continuous support and consideration for the program will have a negative influence on the willingness of the staff to fully participate in PSLP implementation.

**Lesson #11. Throughout the school year, PSLP planning teams should revisit the key common components identified in this report (e.g., training, motivation to implement) so that they can address problems that may affect program success.** The PSLP team should be sure to discuss and consider all of the common model components. PSLP planning teams should revisit these topics throughout the school year in discussions and seek feedback from staff to monitor the key components. Not only will this exercise

foster communication, it will also allow the PSLP teams to identify and address problem areas throughout the implementation process before they begin to weaken the overall positive impact of PSLPs for students and staff.

**Lesson #12. Increasing the number of people and/or grades involved at each school will not, by itself, result in a more comprehensive PSLP program. Schools need to plan and consider strategies for developing a comprehensive PSLP program.** In interviews with the evaluation team, most school staff members reported that PSLPs have not yet become part of the overall school culture. In order to improve outcomes, schools will need to assume a more targeted approach and engage in activities to make the PSLP programs more comprehensive.

## Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

### Strategies for Improving Teacher Buy-In

Listed below are several recommendations for improving staff buy-in.

- **Provide teacher leadership opportunities.** In Year 2, the evaluators continue to believe that teacher buy-in and effectiveness in implementing PSLP activities is related to the degree to which teachers are invited to take on active roles in developing the PSLP program. Feedback from school staff support existing academic research, which

finds that teacher self-efficacy as an instructional leader is positively correlated with teachers' willingness and ability to implement innovative strategies in the classroom (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010). Schools that reported an overall reduction in implementation success also reported statistically significant decreases in factors associated with staff belief in the PSLP concept, and reported teacher control in implementing PSLPs and teacher input in the PSLP program overall. If possible, schools should attempt to provide additional opportunities for teachers to participate in PSLP program development.

- **Expose teachers to PSLPs several months before asking them to implement them.** In discussions pertaining to teacher buy-in strategies, staff at some schools reported that they were able to improve teacher buy-in in Year 2 by introducing the PSLP program to teachers in the school year before they were asked to implement it. Schools should begin as early as possible to engage teachers and expose them to the various components of the PSLP concept and program.
- **At the very least, be sure to explain PSLP rationale to school staff by providing clear explanations for how the PSLP program relates to the academic mission of the school and to the students' everyday lives.** Across schools, skeptical school staff reported that they struggled to see the relevance of the PSLP program. The school planning teams may need to

implement strategies (e.g., targeted discussions among staff) to ensure that staff and students understand how the PSLP program contributes both to the school's mission as well as to student development and success. Schools should consider creating a PSLP portfolio or other appropriate document that can be used internally to introduce new principals, staff members, parents, and community partners to the PSLP program. This document should explain personalized learning, the PSLP program, lessons learned in the pilot, successes, strategies for teacher buy-in, the roles of various stakeholders, and strategies for school-wide collaboration. In addition, these school-level documents may also provide links to or copies of resources from NJDOE that provide guidance to particular stakeholders (e.g., new principals at schools with existing PSLP programs).

## Strategies for Implementing Comprehensive PSLP Programs

Listed below are several recommendations for implementing comprehensive PSLP programs.

- **Provide professional development that addresses both technical and non-technical components of implementing PSLPs.** Teachers need more time to practice using the web-based guidance system. In addition, some teachers may benefit from guidance related to working in small group settings and motivating students to think deeply about PSLP activities.

- **Identifying PSLP concepts that can be sequentially introduced and built upon across grades.** Just as in core academic areas, PSLP teams should consider the students' experiences across years, identify the most important and age-appropriate skills, and implement activities in ways that allow the students to build on the PSLP-related skills sequentially. School teams that are less familiar with guidance-related curricula should be sure to collaborate with the guidance department, solicit help from a curriculum specialist, and/or review the resources made available by organizations such as the American School Counselor Association.
- **Focus on “quality vs. quantity” when choosing PSLP activities.** In the first year of the pilot program, many schools attempted to expose their students to every topic outlined in the resources that they reviewed when establishing their PSLP programs. Many students and school staff members explained that they felt rushed and that they wanted to be able to delve into certain topic areas more deeply. Schools should consider choosing a small set of useful assessments so that teachers and students will have the time to go into deeper conversations about the assessment feedback and PSLP topics in general.
- **Continue efforts to engage parents.** Although parental involvement is one of the biggest challenges facing schools throughout the United States, it is also one of the most important

factors of student success and adjustment (Epstein, 2001). It is widely known that children perform better academically and have positive attitudes toward school when their parents are more knowledgeable and involved in their education. Schools in the pilot program and in PSLP programs in other states reported several promising practices for promoting parental involvement in PSLP-related activities. Some of these promising practices include exposing parents to PSLPs at events that traditionally attract parents (e.g., back-to-school night), having teachers mention the PSLP program to each parent in the classroom at some point during informal discussions, linking PSLP activities to performances or children-led events, and requiring parental signatures on portfolios. In addition, schools in this study suggested that the peer mentoring component of the PSLP program intrigued parents and seems to have led to more parental interest in the program.

- **Link PSLP activities to curriculum.** Previous research suggests that teachers are typically not trained to incorporate non-traditional topics and concepts in core classes (Quint, 2006). Developing a strong core curriculum that incorporates PSLP concepts is challenging and should be addressed using a collaborative approach. Ideally, representatives with a background in career development will partner with core curriculum teachers, the PSLP team, and perhaps a curriculum specialist to

look for opportunities to integrate selected topic areas.

Although it would be ideal for the PSLP concept to be implemented in every discipline, schools that are just beginning to link PSLP curriculum to core subjects may want to start by focusing on one course, implementing a few activities that combine topics and by identifying opportunities for PSLP concepts to support learning in the core subject areas, rather than solely looking for opportunities to mention concepts from one course during the class period of the other course. Schools interested in developing ideas for curriculum integration should consider reviewing resources in the learning community literature as well as those provided by education departments throughout the nation.

- **Work with school counselors who are not heavily involved to establish strategies and procedures for linking the PSLP lessons and concepts to guidance discussions.** Students report that they are interested in discussing their PSLP-related thoughts and concerns about short-term goals, college, and careers with their school counselors. Even if school counselors are not heavily involved, they should at the very least be conversant in PSLPs. In addition, school counselors should establish strategies for using the PSLP process to strengthen their interactions with students.

## Considerations for Statewide Implementation

NJDOE may want to make the following considerations in its effort to outline strategies for statewide implementation of PSLPs:

- Dedicate resources to develop and implement a strategy for identifying schools that are “PSLP ready.”
- Continue to develop resources and be prepared to provide ongoing technical assistance and training to schools implementing PSLPs.
- Expect new schools to fully implement PSLPs only after a year of planning.
- Ensure that reporting documents encourage schools to use a multi-dimensional approach to monitoring their own implementation process and outcomes.

Provided below are detailed descriptions of each suggestion.

**NJDOE should consider targeting schools that are “PSLP ready.”** The Heldrich Center’s research in Years 1 and 2 suggest that PSLP success is not determined by school size, location, or district factor grouping. Rather, schools that are PSLP ready are ones that have administrators who believe in the usefulness of PSLPs, can afford to assign someone to be the program coordinator for PSLPs, are committed to planning for PSLPs, and able to provide teachers with

training and opportunities to provide input on the process of implementing a PSLP program. Schools that have a schedule that will allow for small groups are better suited because typically fewer logistics-related challenges arise.

When examining school readiness, NJDOE should also consider the existing portfolio of programs and initiatives being implemented at potential PSLP schools. Staff and administrators who are already committed to several initiatives may not have the time and/or drive to implement a well-coordinated PSLP program.

**NJDOE should consider continuing to develop resources and be prepared to provide ongoing technical assistance and training to schools implementing PSLPs.**

In interviews with the PSLP teams, many staff members suggested that they would appreciate more guidance and additional resources from NJDOE. The staff did not mention monetary resources, but recommended that NJDOE provide additional guidance in helping the schools to take steps to be more strategic in curriculum development and gaining teacher buy-in. Examples of specific products included a brochure-type document that outlines the relevance and positive outcomes associated with implementing PSLPs, guidance related to how to link PSLP sessions to the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards, and guidance related to training teachers to become small group leaders.

Administrators and staff believe that these resources will help them to promote PSLPs to those who have not yet bought in to the concept of personalized learning, demonstrate relevance to

school leaders, and be more strategic in tailoring PSLP curricula to each grade level.

NJDOE might also consider providing written documents that schools can use to describe the PSLP effort in New Jersey to various stakeholders. For example, NJDOE may want to consider providing targeted resources for new principals starting at schools with existing PSLP programs, administrators looking to start PSLP programs, teachers, and school counselors.

**NJDOE should consider recommending that new schools fully implement PSLPs after a year of planning.**

NJDOE should allow schools a year of planning. This will give schools the opportunity to promote buy-in, establish a sequential curriculum that builds on concepts across years, set program goals, and establish a link between the goals and personnel roles. Outlined below are recommended tasks and an example timeline. This timeline was reviewed and modified based on the feedback of pilot program coordinators and administrators.

**Example School Level: PSLP Implementation. Recommended Tasks and Timeline**

**Year 1: Planning, Training, and Curriculum Development**

*Fall 2011 Tasks*

- The principal selects a program coordinator.

- The principal and program coordinator establish a PSLP team (staff, parents, etc.).
- The PSLP team gets training/guidance from NJDOE (e.g., reports, webinar, conferences).
- The PSLP team:
  - Plans for small group sessions (i.e., scheduling);
  - Selects and purchases software;
  - Outlines roles for teachers, school counselors, parents, and peer mentors;
  - Schedules training for staff; and
  - Discusses concerns and strategies related to staff buy-in (e.g., incentives).

#### *Spring 2012 Tasks*

- The PSLP team offers staff PSLP orientation. Topics may include:
  - PSLP concept,
  - Training on technology,
  - Identification of staff PSLP-related needs and concerns, and
  - Sharing of PSLPs curriculum ideas.
- (if applicable) The PSLP team recruits peer mentors and ensures that school counselors assist students in planning their schedules to accommodate participation in PSLPs.

- The PSLP team establishes the PSLP curriculum and instructional materials

### **Year 2: PSLP Implementation**

#### *Summer 2012 Tasks*

- The PSLP team informs parents and new students about the PSLP concepts and general implementation plan.

#### *Fall 2012 Implementation*

- The school staff implements PSLPs for first-year students.
- The PSLP team informs parents of PSLPs at early school year events (e.g., back-to-school night) and offers parents training on the selected electronic portfolio system.
- The PSLP team implements a strategy for ongoing staff support. Strategies may include:
  - A process for sharing and resolving concerns,
  - Refresher training, and
  - Additional training or support.

#### *Spring 2013*

- The PSLP team reviews successes and failures of the first year and starts planning for second year implementation (e.g., considers requirements for implementing PSLPs for two grade levels).

**NJDOE should consider developing school reporting documents that encourage schools to use a multi-dimensional approach to monitoring their own implementation process and outcomes.** The Heldrich Center's research suggests that PSLP implementation quality can be influenced by several key factors. It is important that PSLP teams monitor their progress in multiple areas of implementation throughout the implementation process. NJDOE may be able to support schools in establishing this multi-dimensional perspective by incorporating both process and outcome measures in any tools that it develops to monitor PSLP schools.

## References

Berry, B., Daughtrey, A. & Wieder, A. (2010). *Teacher leadership: Leading the way to effective teaching and learning*. Retrieved from [http://teachersnetwork.org/effectiveteachers/images/CTQPolicyBriefOn\\_TEACHER\\_LEADERSHIP\\_021810.pdf](http://teachersnetwork.org/effectiveteachers/images/CTQPolicyBriefOn_TEACHER_LEADERSHIP_021810.pdf).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). *School connectedness: Strategies for increasing protective factors among youth*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Cotton, K. (2004). *New small learning communities: Findings from recent literature*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Epstein, J.L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

The Education Alliance at Brown University. (2003). *Changing systems to personalize learning introduction to the personalization workshops*. Providence, RI: Author.

Fredricks, J.A., Blumenfeld, P.C., & Paris, A.H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109.

Georgia State Department of Education. (1982). *Personalizing education for children: Handbook for early childhood education K-4*. Atlanta: Author.

Jones, V. (2010). *Virginia's Academic and Career Plan Emphasizes Middle School. Techniques*, 85(7). Retrieved from <http://www.actonline.org>.

Klem, A.M., & Connell J.P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 262-273.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. (2004). *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for leading high school reform*. Reston, VA: Author.

National Center for Student Engagement. (2006). *Quantifying student engagement: Research report*. Denver: Author.

New Jersey Department of Education. (2009). *New Jersey Department of Education secondary education transformation: Personalized student learning plans resource guide*. Trenton, NJ: Author.

Pinder, C.C. (1998). *Work motivation in organizational behavior*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Quint, J. (2006). *Meeting five critical challenges of high school reform: Lessons from research on three reform models*. Retrieved from <http://www.mdrc.org>.

Turnbull, B. (2002). Teacher participation and buy-in: Implications for school reform initiatives. *Learning Environments Research*, 5(3), 235-252.

## Appendix A. Evaluation Research Questions

### Process Assessment

1. Are all components of the initiative implemented consistently throughout the year and in accordance with each school's original plan?
2. To what extent do the personalized learning plans that are developed incorporate the essential elements of personal, academic, and career development?
3. What roles do principals, teachers, school counselors, students, parents, and the community play in the implementation of the plans? Were these roles clearly defined prior to implementation?
4. To what extent do the plans work in coordination with other existing student plans (health/Individualized Education Programs)?
5. What are the primary challenges associated with the implementation of student plans?

### Outcomes

6. To what extent have participating students increased their ability to articulate specific personal, academic and career-related, short-term and long-term learning goals?
7. To what extent are students implementing their plans and performing the short-term activities

outlined in their personalized learning plans?

8. Does development of a personalized learning plan influence student behavior (e.g., improve attendance, reduce disciplinary action, and increase reported study time)?

### Additional Questions

9. What impact did school-level individual difference factors have on the implementation of personalized learning plans?
10. What strategies were implemented to promote buy-in from teachers and counselors?

## Appendix B: Method Summary — Student and Teacher Impact

The Heldrich Center measured school staff perceptions of the PSLP initiative’s impact on students and school staff. The school staff’s opinions are extremely valuable because staff interact with students on a daily basis. The respondents indicated the degree to which they thought the PSLP process had influenced a series of student attitudes, school motivation, and behavioral items in the first year. In addition, the evaluators asked the school staff to report the degree to which they believed that the PSLP process affected staff commitment, morale, communication, and comfort with technology.

For each item, survey respondents indicated the nature of the PSLP’s impact by rating their responses on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from “very negative” to “very positive,” with “no impact” being the center option. In addition, the evaluators gave respondents the option of indicating if they were “not sure” about the particular attitude or behavior of interest. Between 11% and 19% of the respondents indicated that they were not sure of the impact on any given item. The overall results for each item, excluding the “not sure” responses, are listed in Tables B-1 and B-2.

The evaluators computed an overall student impact score and an overall teacher impact score for each school by averaging the associated impact items. Finally, the program coordinator data were reviewed to ensure consistency.

**Table B-1. Perceived Impact of PSLP on Students**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Negative Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Positive Impact</b>	<b>N</b>
Ability to set long-term career-related goals	0.0%	20.0%	80.0%	225
Student-teacher interaction	0.0%	20.8%	79.2%	221
Ability to set long-term academic goals	0.9%	20.4%	78.7%	221
Ability to set short-term career-related goals	0.4%	21.2%	78.3%	226
Ability to set short-term academic goals	0.0%	22.8%	77.2%	219
Understanding the academic expectations and requirements of their school	0.9%	25.2%	73.9%	222
Understanding the importance of decision making	0.4%	25.8%	73.8%	225
Overall motivation to succeed in school	0.0%	28.6%	71.4%	224
Help seeking	0.4%	33.5%	66.1%	224
Participation in class	0.5%	35.1%	64.4%	208
Participation in clubs	1.0%	45.2%	53.8%	210
Homework completion	0.0%	51.2%	48.8%	205
Study time	0.0%	51.2%	48.3%	203
Attendance in class	0.5%	56.2%	43.3%	203

**Table B-2. Perceived Impact of PSLP on Teachers**

	<b>Negative Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Positive Impact</b>	<b>N</b>
Counseling staff commitment to students	0.5%	27.0%	72.5%	205
Teacher comfort with technology	0.5%	30.7%	68.8%	209
Overall teacher morale	1.1%	35.8%	63.2%	211
Teacher-administrator communication	1.5%	37.2%	61.3%	222
Counseling staff-administrator communication	2.0%	38.4%	59.6%	203
Overall counseling staff morale	2.4%	40.2%	57.4%	199
Teacher commitment to students	4.1%	44.6%	51.4%	222
Counseling staff comfort with technology	9.0%	39.8%	51.2%	190

## Appendix C: Method Summary – Changes in PSLP Implementation Over Time

In Years 1 and 2, the evaluators measured implementation effectiveness by developing a composite profile score for each school. The composite profile score for each school was only used to identify broad implementation trends and patterns across schools, not to definitely prove one school was directly more effective than the school ranked immediately below it and less effective than the one ranked immediately above it. In Year 2, the evaluators compared relative composite scores in Year 1 to

relative composite scores in Year 2 to determine if there were differences in the way the schools were distributed relative to each other across years. The evaluation team found that although a few schools maintained their relative position in the distribution, some schools reported implementing a significantly less effective PSLP program compared to their counterparts in Year 1. Conversely, a few schools reported implementing significantly more effective PSLP programs compared to their counterparts in Year 2. The evaluation team compared schools whose relative composite scores decreased from Year 1 to Year 2 with schools whose relative composite scores increased from Year 1 to Year 2 on multiple implementation dimensions using paired samples *t*-test.

**Table C-1. Paired *t*-test Results for Schools that Reported Improved PSLP Implementation in Year 2**

	<b>Year 1 Means</b>	<b>Year 2 Means</b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>
Student Impact	3.7	3.93	-3.00 <sup>†</sup>	3
Teacher Impact	3.74	3.99	-1.06	3
Teacher Buy-In	3.5	3.87	-3.93**	3
Staff Belief in PSLPs	3.98	4.28	-2.86**	3
Control of Classroom Implementation	2.94	3.43	-1.64	3
Training Effectiveness	3.09	3.36	-1.65	3
Resources	2.79	3.32	-2.17	3
Teacher Input in the PSLP Process	3.15	3.44	-0.69	3

Note: † =  $p < .10$ , \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$ .

**Table C-2 Paired t-test Results for Schools that Reported Regressed PSLP Implementation in Year 2**

	<b>Year 1 Means</b>	<b>Year 2 Means</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>
Student Impact	3.93	3.71	4.12**	7
Teacher Impact	3.75	3.64	1.27	7
Teacher Buy-In	3.93	3.52	5.45**	7
Staff Belief in PSLPs	4.18	3.98	3.39**	7
Control of Classroom Implementation	3.81	3.45	4.26**	7
Training Effectiveness	3.69	3.37	2.79*	7
Resources	3.36	3	1.35	7
Teacher Input in the PSLP Process	3.87	3.58	2.37*	7

*Note.*  $t = p < .10$ , \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$ .