

Evaluating Student Placement in 9-12 Advanced Programming

Andrea M. Elliott, Mary E. Rockrohr and Matthew T. Williams

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Dr. Eve Rifkin, Capstone Advisor

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Executive Summary

High school course placement processes determine which students will be allocated to each academic track. Practices rely on evaluating both academic and non-academic factors to place students according to their perceived academic level. A myriad of factors contribute to a student's enrollment in advanced programming, including actual or perceived ability, content interest, parental expectation, peer pressure, academic status, and/or the desire to please college admissions. At West Genesee High School (WGHS), student placement occurs without the use of a standardized placement process. Inconsistent practices contribute to inequitable placement particularly affecting students of color and those of low socioeconomic status.

This quality improvement inquiry seeks to develop a framework to place *all* students in a coordinated and consistent manner. Analysis of quantitative demographic and survey data coupled with a qualitative analysis of stakeholder surveys and interviews helped to develop a framework for the placement process that, when implemented with fidelity, centers on student need and individualized academic paths.

Our investigation of the placement process at West Genesee High School is structurally inspired by Jacobs' (2010) work with first-year science students at the university level. Jacobs' model incorporates literature and empirical findings, creating a bridge between high school and higher education. In our framework, we integrate key factors specific to secondary-level placement revealed through existing literature, such as achievement (Hwang, et al., 2015), motivation and effort (Carbonaro, 2006), cognitive engagement (Halverson & Graham, 2019), self-efficacy (Bandura, 2012; Tsang et al., 2012), school structures (Jones et al., 1995; Legette, 2018), and placement bias (Francis et al., 2019; Pfeiffer, 2002). These factors support our three foundational principles of organizational structures, student learner characteristics, and student

self-assessment, guide and analyze the placement process. Through the lens of our conceptual framework, the questions below seek to (1) understand the WGHS placement process in its current state and (2) inform potential areas for improvement to develop a standardized, coordinated approach.

Our three foundational principles of (1) organizational structures, (2) student learner characteristics, and (3) student self-assessment guided the inquiry and subsequently served as a lens to organize our findings and recommendations. At an organizational level, a lack of communication and common understandings fueled inconsistencies in placement practices. The school culture created social stigmas and academic pressures that affect course selection. The data demonstrated that relationships between teachers and students led to a perception of more appropriate placements due to considering the multitude of student learner characteristics (academic, behavior, and attitude). Finally, students desired a venue for self-advocacy to share self-reflection centering on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors. Recommendations include organizational change that focuses on a common language and explicit practice, coupled with a transparent communication plan. We recommend that teachers and counselors focus individualized conversations on student interests, academic goals, and school-life balance, giving students the opportunity to understand expectations of available courses. An annual review will ensure fidelity and provide an opportunity for feedback from all stakeholders and data informed revision of the process, as needed. Implementing these recommendations will address organizational challenges, establish clear communication, ensure equity, and empower students in their educational journeys.

Introduction

Secondary schools struggle to equitably and accurately place students in appropriate classes using processes that often rely on standardized test scores and students' prior academic records. The process places hundreds of students to dozens of course options, with limited developed relationships between educators and students early in the school year. The placement system can be a proverbial minefield. Tensions surrounding limited class sizes, allocation of resources, parent/guardian input, the scheduling process as it exists within the organization, and teacher preferences influence placement outcomes. Despite its shortcomings, the process continues in this manner because of perceived efficiency and the timetable of the school year. Systemic failure to adequately recognize students' abilities and needs could ultimately change the trajectory of their education, their futures, and their social emotional well-being.

The organizational structure of a school directly impacts how the placement process is carried out and viewed by stakeholders. West Genesee High School (WGHS) is in a large suburban district, caught between how 'things have always been done' and pushing toward a deliberate, engaging, and equitable process. The academic student placement process acts as a mechanism of utmost importance. Educators attempt to align students to academic courses that best suit their abilities and interests. Standardized test scores and historical course grades are the dominant data used to place students in courses. While this approach gives the impression of impartiality, placement decisions based on quantitative criteria typically result in low enrollment of under-represented groups in advanced programming (Archbald, 2009; Finn, 2012). A comprehensive learner inventory and engagement of students and their families would give educators a more complete representation of the student in context as a learner (Pfeiffer, 2002).

Thus, the debate of utilizing a numerical based or meritocratic system for placement and what components should be included continues.

Expanding beyond the system, the accurate placement of students necessitates the consideration of the student as a whole learner, the student's self-efficacy and what placement would benefit their academic engagement. Halverson and Graham (2019) describe learner engagement as a combination of "cognitive and emotional energy," crucial to academic success and the development of self-efficacy. Bandura (2001) suggests classroom engagement is dependent upon a student's perceived self-efficacy, influenced by the academic setting which shapes an individual's mindset. When students are misaligned with their academic placement, disengagement and negative self-perception can result (Pfeiffer, 2002). School policies, practices and culture impact academic experiences as these school structures shape the placement process, resulting placements and overall environment (Jones et al., 1995). Therefore, successful placement of individual students is the amalgamation of student effort and ability coupled with the influence of the school and its practices (Rosenfeld & Sorensen, 1987 as cited in Jones et al., 1995).

This inquiry utilizes a unique framework designed to consider a multitude of factors guiding placement of students. A careful examination of organizational structures, student learner characteristics, and student self-assessment serves as a lens to understand the placement process of students in its current state at West Genesee High School and to inform and surface potential areas for improvement with the purpose of developing a standardized, coordinated approach. Using the aforementioned foundational principles, findings revealed recommendations that center on organizational restructuring, communication, and student advocacy.

Organization Context

West Genesee High School (WGHS) is the senior high school in the West Genesee Central School District in Camillus, New York. This region of Central New York State has succumbed to many of the woes of rust belt states: dwindling industry, failing infrastructure, high cost of operations, among others. A recent bright spot is the development of a massive \$100 billion Micron semiconductor chip plant in Clay, NY. This development will change the economic landscape of central New York with a projected 20,000 high paying jobs, increased tax revenue, and a potential restructuring of the middle class (Syracuse University; the Daily Orange Corporation, 2023).

According to 2020-2021 data, the school district served just over 4300 students, including 1349 high school students (The New York State Education Department, 2022). Over the past fifteen years, WGHS experienced a demographic shift, increasing diversity in both race and socioeconomic backgrounds. In 2005, 92% of WGHS's enrollment was white, and 8% was eligible for free and reduced lunch, indicating a socioeconomic status near or below the poverty level. In 2022, WGHS's population was 84% white, and those experiencing poverty increased to 26% (The New York State Education Department, 2022); this puts WGHS above the school-wide poverty threshold for a state program that provides free lunch to all students.

West Genesee High School's 2022 profile (Appendix A) features several accolades. The students in the class of 2022, having a 95% graduation rate, identified the following post high school plans: 84% will further their education, and 3% will enlist in the military or begin an apprenticeship in the trades (The New York State Education Department, 2022). Approximately half of the class earned a Regents Diploma with advanced designation and honors; according to New York State Education Department this designation is earned when a student has a computed

average score of 90 or higher on seven Regents exams, one Pathway exam, and has completed one three-sequence course in either World Languages, the Arts, or Career and Technical Education (CTE). Impressive test scores are supported by 83% of the students in the class earning a 3.0 grade point average or higher and two high-achieving students named National Merit Commended Scholars.

The teachers are required to hold a bachelor's degree, state teaching certificate in their content area, and passing scores on two state licensing exams. Additionally, according to New York State requirements, teachers must complete a master's degree within the first five years of teaching. These staff credentials help support the menu of dual credit options WGHS offers. Students can earn college credit through the Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) and the State University of New York (SUNY) through Onondaga Community College and Tompkins Cortland Community College in a wide variety of content areas including computer programming, architecture, and marketing. WGHS has a minimal 1% drop out rate, and a mere 1% of students leave to earn a GED (The New York State Education Department, 2022).

During their four-year journey, WGHS students enroll in coursework in three academic levels: regents, enriched and advanced. Regents level and enriched courses follow the same curriculum, educational standards and share summative assessments. However, the pace of each course and the scaffolding offered to students differs, with the enriched course being more in depth over a shorter time. Advanced coursework includes Advanced Placement (AP) courses as approved by the College Board and dual credit courses highlighted in the school profile from outside organizations. Advanced programming instructors must possess minimum credentials and adhere to an existing curriculum provided by the cooperating institutions.

Problem of Practice

Placement processes aim to make decisions that direct students to different high school course levels and tracks. This presumably meritocratic selection process, as identified by Conant (1967), relies on both academic and non-academic factors to track students in homogeneous groupings (Archbald et al., 2009). Schools historically trust in standardized test data for placement purposes. Research continually reveals that Black students perform lower than White students on standardized tests; therefore, nationally normed test data generally results in a disproportionately low number of students of color in advanced courses (Archbald et al., 2009). WGHS does not differ from this national norm. Table 1 identifies the discrepancy that exists between White students enrolled in advanced programming and underrepresented minority groups. The AP Biology enrollment alone highlights the extreme difference in the course selection of minority students.

Table 1

Enrollment of Underrepresented Minority Groups (UMG) versus Total Enrollment in AP Courses

AP Course	12th Grade		11th Grade		10th Grade	
	Total (%)	UMG (%)	Total (%)	UMG (%)	Total (%)	UMG (%)
AP English Language & Composition	<1%	0%	17%	4%		
AP English Literature & Composition	10%	10%				
AP Music Theory	1%	0%	1%	0%		
AP Studio Art-Three-Dimensional	1%	0%	<1%	0%		
AP Biology	<1%	0%	24%	4%		
AP World History					13%	8%

Data Source: NYSED, 2022

Table 2 provides further evidence of this discrepancy in enrollment of underrepresented minority groups in advanced courses. Inequitable placement processes extend beyond race and negatively impact students of lower socioeconomic status. In AP English Language and Composition, for example, 17% of the total enrollment of 11th grade students take the course while only 8% of the total enrollment of socioeconomically disadvantaged students are represented in this advanced English course. The enrollment of AP English Literature and Composition, a senior level course, provides a more concerning example where the discrepancy between socioeconomic disadvantaged students and the total enrollment is further intensified.

Table 2

Enrollment of Students who are Socio Economic Disadvantaged (SED) versus Total Enrollment in AP Courses

AP Course	12th Grade		11th Grade		10th Grade	
	Total (%)	SED (%)	Total (%)	SED (%)	Total (%)	SED (%)
AP English Language & Composition	<1%	1%	17%	8%		
AP English Literature & Composition	10%	3%				
AP Music Theory	1%		1%			
AP Studio Art-Three-Dimensional	1%		<1%	1%		
AP Biology	<1%	1%	24%	9%		
AP World History					13%	6%

Data Source: NYSED, 2022

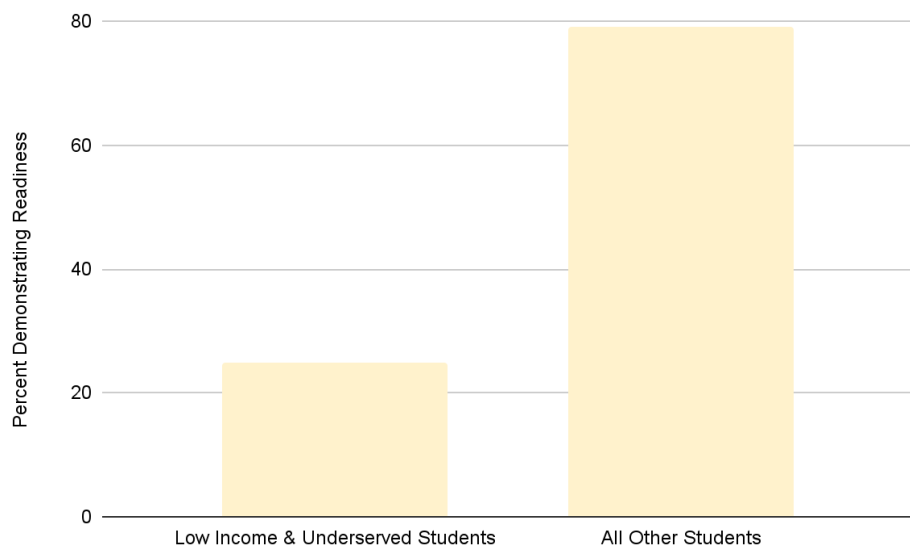
According to Great Schools (2022), WGHS earned an equity rating that falls below average. The equity rating measures how well a school serves the academic development of underrepresented groups including both minority groups and students with low socioeconomic status. Based on a combination of factors, the rating includes student growth demonstrated on

standardized tests and performance gaps between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students in a school. This rating shows how well a school educates disadvantaged student groups compared to all students using performance as an indicator. In 2022, WGHS earned a rating of four on a ten-point scale, indicating that some student groups do not receive the support they need at the school.

The college readiness measure rates how likely it is that students from a particular school will find success in college and career and allows for comparison across schools in the state. The rating is based on several factors including graduation rate, college entrance exam scores and advanced programming enrollment. AP course enrollment, specifically, in Table 1 and Table 2, in conjunction with the equity rating, translates to the startling discrepancy in college readiness of all students and low-income students at WGHS, as seen in Figure 1 (GreatSchools, 2022).

Figure 1

College Readiness at West Genesee High School



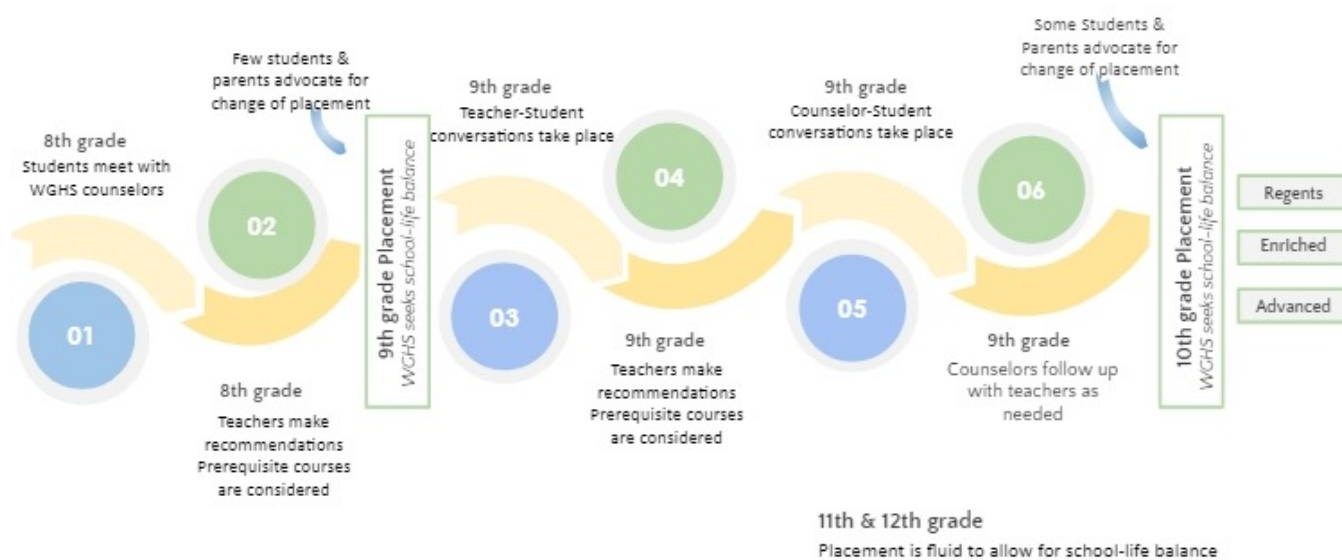
Data Source: GreatSchools, 2022

The WGHS placement process is comprehensive but not standardized. The process begins in eighth grade when students meet with counselors, identify career interests, and chart a

curricular path in regents, enriched or advanced programming. Students continue to meet annually with their counselor to discuss their placement for the following year. WGHS engages parents and students through direct communication, school meetings and teacher recommendations.

Key constituents, including the head of guidance and the building principal, provided insight to the structure of the current placement process at WGHS. Synthesized details of the conversations helped create a visual (Figure 2) highlighting the involvement of parents, students, counselors, and teachers throughout the process.

Figure 2: *West Genesee High School Current Placement Process*



Counselors prioritize teacher recommendations and additionally consider assessment data and course grades when determining placement. A rubric or other standardized document that inventories academic and non-academic student characteristics does not exist. Without standardization, teachers autonomously evaluate and prioritize different student criteria and habits when determining course placement (Participant 1, administrator, personal communication, October 27, 2022). Participant 3 (teacher, personal communication, April 27,

2023) acknowledged the lack of a standardized rubric-type document for guiding teachers on the elements of placement; they explained that while they assumed other teachers made placement considerations according to similar criteria, they were not certain (Participant 3, teacher). After recommendations occur, vocal students and/or parents can override the placement. However, according to Participant 1 (administrator), students from underrepresented groups possess limited self- and parental advocacy, suggesting that placement partially results from ascriptive characteristics, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and at-home advocacy.

A student's enrollment in advanced programming is influenced by various factors, such as their actual or perceived ability, interest in the content, parental expectations, peer pressure, academic status, and the desire to please college admissions (Foust et al., 2009; Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2015). At WGHS, students must evaluate personal short and long-term goals, aptitude, interest, motivation, the degree of difficulty of individual courses, and overall course load when considering advance placement (WGHS Course Guide, 2022). In addition, teacher recommendation plays a significant role in course selection (Participant 1, administrator, personal communication, October 27, 2022; Participant 8, administrator, personal communication, January 5, 2023; WGHS Course, 2022). Teacher recommendation based on prerequisite coursework, academic behaviors and grade cut-offs could reinforce pre-existing judgments made about students at lower levels and introduce teacher bias. In examining how students are chosen for advanced studies, a school district, counselors, or team of teachers could be inadvertently discriminatory (Francis et al., 2019; Kerr, 2014).

At WGHS, student placement into advanced programming occurs without the use of a universal, coordinated, and standardized placement process; this project seeks to understand the WGHS placement process in its current state and surface potential areas for improvement with

the purpose of developing a standardized, coordinated approach. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to data analysis. Through a quantitative analysis of available assessment, demographic, and survey data coupled with a qualitative analysis of stakeholder surveys and interviews, we hope to develop a framework for the placement process at WGHS that will provide structured practices that, when implemented with fidelity, center on student need and individualized academic paths.

We begin the inquiry focusing on the following overarching questions:

1. Organizational Structures (Foundational Principle A)
 - a. What is the current placement process including both policy and practice?
 - b. How are data and dialogue used to evaluate the current placement process and practices to ensure a standardized, coordinated placement of all students?
2. Student Learner Characteristics (Foundational Principle B)
 - a. What characteristics and data currently contribute to course placement?
3. Student Self-Assessment (Foundational Principle C)
 - a. How do students participate in the placement process?
 - b. What characteristics do students think are used to determine placement?
 - c. How does a student's current placement impact his/her/their academic identity?

Review of Literature

A literature review provided our team with several relevant topics and concepts with foundational research that provided, defined, and conceptualized terminology used throughout our inquiry (Appendix B). It remained critical to continue to filter for investigations associated with high school placement rather than post-undergraduate programs. This filter bounded our

search within the realm of secondary schooling, serving not as an obstacle but as a mechanism for streamlining our work.

The literature review includes material relevant to the placement of students, specifically, in advanced programming. The body of work is plentiful and includes a variety of topics spanning from the advantages of advanced programming to student identity and self-efficacy. In addition, the literature review delves into the biases that exist among those who recommend academic programming. We categorized our research into three categories: (a) organizational structures, (b) student learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment as a foundation for our conceptual framework. At WHGS, student placement into advanced programming occurs without the use of a coordinated or standardized placement process; the trends identified in the literature provide general themes to guide qualitative and quantitative investigation methods as we delve into this inquiry.

Organizational Culture and Structures

Structures within a school provide an environment that directly influences placement (Jones et al., 1995). School policies and processes, for example, directly impact the method of student placement and potentially, the quality of their academic experiences (Jones et al., 1995). According to Hallinan (1994) and Sorensen (1970), placement is a result of effort and ability and the influence the organization has on the students (as cited in Jones et al., 1995). Tracked levels, for example, are structures within a school designed to sort students based on knowledge and skill. Policies and processes, like tracking, that exist within a school determine how curricular levels are shaped (Jones et al., 1995). Sorensen argues that schools differ in levels of inclusivity and electivity; these two factors, among others, impact the differentiation of students (as cited in Jones, et al., 1995). An inclusive school offers the same opportunities for all students, while

schools with high levels of electivity allow students to make their own academic decisions (Sorensen, 1970, as cited in Jones et al., 1995). As a result, electivity, student characteristics, and school structures are interwoven, all impacting the placement process.

The conundrum of identifying which students to place in advanced programming is compounded by implicit and unrecognized, or unopposed biases on the part of educators doing the placing. Francis et al. (2019) argue that school counselors, who hold tremendous power in the student placement process, engaged in statistical discrimination, meaning that when they did not have direct knowledge of an individual student, they relied on perceived group characteristics to make inferences about that individual. This resulted from an audit study that asked counselors to make placement determinations for students with highly similar profiles who differed only by their “white or black-sounding names, and male or female-sounding names” (Francis et al., 2019, pp. 2-3). A blind recommendation scenario acted as an experimental intervention. The results showed that black female students remained the least likely to be recommended for AP Calculus, even if their academic and behavioral history met the placement criteria. Inadvertent discriminatory practices, like statistical discrimination, continue to fuel an inequitable culture that results in the underrepresentation of historically marginalized student groups (e.g., African American, Native American, and Hispanic) in gifted programming (Pfeiffer, 2002).

Teemant et al. (2021) suggest that for systemic inequities to be addressed, stakeholders must see the “larger system of interconnected and independent processes, structures, or interactions that result in inequities” (p. 34). That larger system reflects the surrounding community and includes the established process for placement and curriculum development- what gets taught and to whom. Dialogue designed for change needs to “encompass both reflection and action” (Freire, 1994, as cited in Teemant et al., 2021, p. 31). Fundamentally

altering individuals' behaviors and organizational processes requires an acknowledgment that the current status of a scenario cannot continue; real change requires a disruption of the status quo.

To continue based on the notion that 'this is the way things have been done' is antiquated thinking and counterintuitive to promoting equity.

Building off a College Board report indicating that non-white students with appropriate skill levels did not enroll in AP courses, Kerr (2014) initiated a study in her high school to examine the placement of non-white versus white students in AP history courses. Kerr noted that the AP enrollment trended more white, the higher the grade level, and identified "the most significant damage comes in the form of lost future opportunities" (p. 491). Kerr developed cross-sectional, vertical teams to examine the school's processes, comparing them to best practices and searching for possible areas of implicit bias; this type of critical investigation coupled with intersectional communication from multiple sources within the scenario is tantamount to developing an updated plan of action.

Advanced programming can be enticing to students for a variety of reasons. For example, Shaunessy-Dedrick et al. (2015) claim that students may enroll in advanced placement (AP) courses in an attempt to impress college admissions officers, however, striving for admittance to a 'reach' college through an exhaustively rigorous high school schedule can have a negative impact on one's high school experience. In turn, a student's ability to manage academic challenges may impact their ability to accurately assess themselves as a learner.

Shaunessy-Dedrick et al. further suggest that students select AP courses for the opportunity to cognitively engage in challenging content and experience genuine and meaningful relationships with teachers and classmates. Foust et al. (2009) posits the positive social-emotional impact of

these courses through individual pride, respect, and a special bond created among classmates during the AP journey each year.

Student Learner Characteristics

When determining course placement, academic and non-academic placement factors are utilized at disproportionate rates (Archbald et al., 2009). Track placement, referring to differentiated levels of a given course and not the rigidity of ‘tracking’ of the past, is typically based on meritocratic selection as identified by Conant in the late sixties and focuses on performance-based factors such as academic achievement, standardized test data, and course grades (Archbald et al., 2009). However, controversy surrounding meritocratic selection centers on concerns of equity (Archbald et al., 2009). Archbald’s (2009) team reveals the “placement decisions based solely on measurable criteria will result in disproportionately low representation of African American students in prevalent American high schools” (p. 67). Despite this finding, the debate of utilizing meritocratic versus ascriptive characteristics in placement continues. Some critics believe that when placement relies on quantitative data alone, biases and personal shaping of student placement is significantly reduced, therefore eliminating the need for disadvantaged families to advocate for their students (Archbald et al., 2009).

Performance and achievement comprise the most relevant criterion used to place students in curricular levels (Archbald et al., 2009). Termed meritocratic selection, the process relies on quantitative data that ideally would significantly limit the impact cultural and personal biases exert when selecting courses for individual students (Archbald et al., 2009). The process eliminates the need for parental influence and advocacy, which historically limits members of underrepresented populations including, but not limited to, socioeconomically disadvantaged and students of color.

Nationwide, schools lack a standardized and accepted process to guide educators on how to recognize and appropriately place gifted students. The lack of established guidance stems from wavering definitions and considerations of what contributes to giftedness (Heuser et al., 2017). The use of quantitative data (such as state assessments, course grades, IQ tests) is considered of equal prominence with teacher evaluation and recommendation (Brown et al., 2005). The default of school districts' use of state assessment data coupled with student course grades to determine student placement ignores the multifaceted nature of intelligence and achievement. Furthermore, the potential lack of teacher training in identifying giftedness, coupled with the lack of commonly accepted behaviors and definitions of giftedness, leads to a conglomeration of divergent interpretations and approaches to student placement. In a nationwide survey ($n=2918$), educators from a diverse representation of schools regarded ongoing and multiple criteria assessment of student capability as among the most important features in helping determine giftedness (Brown et al., 2005). There seems to be agreement that intelligence alone is not a sole determinant of giftedness- importance of task commitment, creativity, and the acknowledgement that there exists a disconnect between test scores and real-world accomplishments (Renzulli, 2011, as cited in Turkman, 2020).

Halverson and Graham (2019) define learner engagement as a critical combination and balance of “cognitive and emotional energy” needed to bring a learning task to fruition (p. 145). The balance of these two components creates not simply a ‘can I?’ scenario from an individual's perspective in addition to a ‘will I?’, meaning it is not enough that an individual knows how to intellectually complete the task but also has the emotional investment to move forward and do so. This choice relies on a student’s self-efficacy, which stems from two areas: past experiences and performance (Bandura, 2001). The perceived self-efficacy boils down to what Bandura

(2001) terms a student's judgment regarding their ability to succeed in a certain setting that influences their mindset, positively or negatively, and results in how they either engage in or avoid tasks in the classroom.

If student engagement influences self-efficacy and academic success, schools must consider how engagement can be impacted by course placement. The misalignment of students to their most appropriate academic setting creates a possible series of repercussions, including potential student disengagement or failure to thrive academically. Francis et al. (2019) link immersion in advanced programming coupled with being surrounded by academically motivated peers to improved self-esteem, higher academic performance, and increased access to networks rich in social capital, among other benefits.

The theory of cognitive engagement involves both the use and "reception of mental energy," delineated into two groups: quantity factors and quality factors (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Zimmerman, 2002, as cited in Halverson & Graham, 2019). Cognitive Engagement Theory analyzes engagement utilizing a variety of factors: attention, effort and persistence, and time-on-task (quantity factors), along with (meta)cognitive strategies, absorption (i.e., deep concentration), and curiosity (i.e., individual interest) (quality factors) (Halverson & Graham, 2019). Our examination of the placement process uses both quality and quantity factors in determining student academic placement; these factors act as determinants of the student educational experience.

While placement processes that rely solely on quantitative data attempt to remove biases, they fail to take non-academic student qualities into consideration (Archbald et al., 2009). This introduces the challenge of considering each student as an individual whole entity while keeping personal biases at bay. A student's strengths and unusual talents can be noted, discussed, and

evaluated from multiple perspectives and on multiple occasions. The Deans for Impacts note that mastery of content takes place in ‘fits and starts,’ so while a middle school student may not seem especially ready for acceleration in November, their development as an individual and a learner could be significant by the end of April, necessitating the multiple implementation points of the evaluation process (The Science of Learning, 2015). Additionally, factors which the Deans for Impact identify as important contributory principles to student learning and experience which may not be actively reflected in standardized assessments including motivation, metacognition and acquisition of new knowledge and skills (The Science of Learning, 2015).

Student motivation and effort influence placement. Motivation is not a singular entity but can differ in amount, orientation, and origin (Ryan & Deci, 2000). From a process standpoint, teachers can utilize tools like learner (student) characteristic inventories to alter the lens through which they view and consider students for course placement. When taking motivational factors like interest and work ethic into consideration, the student profile becomes whole, considering qualities as a learner rather than just a numerical value measuring achievement.

Student Self-Assessment

Self-efficacy, as presented by Tsang et al. (2012) focus on people's beliefs regarding their ability to succeed, or fail, in a variety of situations, including social and academic. Self-efficacy theory delves into how people feel, motivate themselves, and behave, all of which evolve over time due to the developmental stages.

Perceived self-efficacy serves as a strong predictor of success academically (Hwang et al., 2015), likely through its inherent connection to engagement. High self-efficacy not only relates to positive outcomes but also to resilience and grit (Bandura, 2001). The perceived self-efficacy, a result from life experiences, boils down to what Bandura (2001) describes as a

student's judgment regarding their ability to excel in a certain setting (e.g., course placement) that positively or negatively influences their mindset and results in how they either engage in or avoid tasks in the classroom. Confidence in their perceived ability to succeed encourages students to attempt a wider range of tasks and to persist through or endure difficulties in learning (Hwang et al., 2015).

Self Determination Theory provides explanations regarding motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic. While intrinsic motivation promotes an action that is inherently interesting or enjoyable, extrinsic motivation is a drive that leads to an outcome. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation results in creativity, academic success, and high-quality learning. Alternatively, extrinsically motivated decisions are more likely to be accompanied with resentment and resistance. The rationale a student has for enrolling in an AP course may predetermine the academic success achieved, the amount of stress encountered, and the ability, or inability, to cope with the challenge.

Academic placement presents a genuine issue with respect to equity and access. Non-honors courses serve as the tracking destination for minority students and low-income students (Legette, 2018). While comparing themselves to their peers throughout the schooling process, the middle school years present a significant challenge for students as they wrestle with questions regarding their identity and their future (Legette, 2018). The timing of this identity forming process, coupled with the simultaneous placement in an academic track, could prove problematic for the psychological and academic development of a student (Legette, 2018). A student's academic identity, connected to their academic success, impacts not only their grades, but also their motivation, participation, school retention and behavior (Legette, 2018).

In conclusion, examination of the literature provided additional theories tangentially relevant to our investigation. To understand the learner in an organizational context, Greeno & Gresalfi (2008) Opportunity to Learn identifies the trajectory of an individual's learning as related to the participation of that individual within a learning system. The structure of the system itself, the interactions between the participants, and the interplay between informational and interpersonal learning can influence the level of effectiveness within the environment which ties to our area regarding both the design and mechanism of the placement process.

Conceptual Framework

Our inquiry into the placement process at West Genesee High School is informed in two ways: (1) the physical appearance is influenced by the structure of the framework of Jacobs (2010) and (2) from a conceptual point of view, it synthesizes content from the literature of a variety of authors (Bandura, 2001; Carbonaro, 2005; Cicognani, 2011; Francis et al., 2019; Halverson & Graham, 2019; House, 2017; Hwang et al., 2015; Jones et al., 1995; Legette, 2018; Pfeiffer, 2002; Tsang et al., 2012). In the context of our inquiry, the Jacobs (2010) framework served as an inspiration for our visual representation, while our literature review surfaces relevant content for the development of our own novel framework for investigating placement for advanced programming that results from a process that lacks coordination and standardization.

Jacobs (2010) developed their framework to address course failures for first-year science students at the university level; this Jacobs' framework (Appendix C) builds upon previously constructed frameworks Gravett (1993), Greyling (1993), De Bruin (2000), and Gous (2002). Gravett (1993) sought to elicit a conceptual shift in the approach of collegiate lecturers toward creating and delivering content to students, from an information-presenting disposition toward

designing a “context conducive to student learning” (p. 4). Greyling (1993) compared residential and distance education programs at the university level to determine characteristics of a hybrid approach to offer students an opportunity for success. Meanwhile, De Bruin (2000) constructed a framework for enhancing self-directed learning in first-year university students. Finally, Gous (2002) investigated the influence of organizational culture on higher educational leadership practices. Jacobs (2010) selected aspects of each to construct a new framework that supports student success in university coursework (specifically science), the identified problem of practice for their study.

The Jacobs (2010) model shows a funnel that incorporates both literature and empirical findings into deductions about three categories that increase in specificity as they approach the bottom of the funnel: (1) higher education in general, (2) science in universities, and (3) first-year science students (p. 279). The six foundational principles of the Jacobs model, depicted underneath the funnel, derive directly from (or flow out of) these three categories. Jacobs’s model suggests that these six principles work in concert to form a “bridge” that helps students transition into their first year at the university level, “filling in the gap between [high] school and Higher Education” (p. 278). The six principles of the Jacobs model are:

- acknowledging a potential lack of adequate preparation for the rigors of collegiate coursework,
- introducing an extended a generic curriculum for the first semester,
- providing expert lecturers in both content and pedagogical practices,
- offering continuous student support services (e.g., mentoring),
- assessing student characteristics related to academic performance, and

- delivering a First Year Experience program focused on the transition to the university level (pp. 278-279).

While respecting the work of Jacobs, our team incorporated Follett's (1995) philosophy, which advocates for integration. This approach acknowledges that all stakeholders bring specialized skill sets, experiences, and voices that serve as necessary tools to create an ideal framework for the placement process at WGHS. Much like Follett, we view our inquiry as a challenge through the lens of a “sign of health, a prophecy of progress” as it has the power to move an organization in a positive direction if harnessed effectively (Follett, 1995, p. 71).

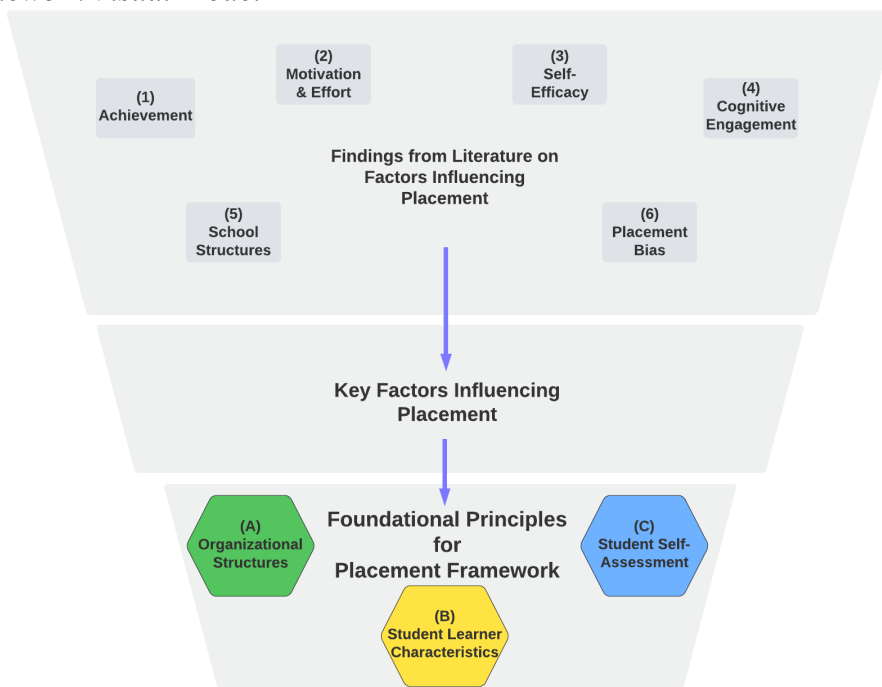
Our conceptual framework utilizes Jacobs’s model as a visual guideline, instead, integrating key factors that influence placement processes or its outcome specifically at the secondary level, rather than at the university level. Graphically, like the one Jacobs (2010) proposed, our conceptual framework depicts a funnel that demonstrates the distillation of findings from the literature down to six characteristics, or factors, that influence placement, ultimately to three foundational principles to analyze or guide a placement process (the six in the Jacobs model remain specific to the context of placement in collegiate science coursework).

Our conceptual frame contains six major characteristic factors that influence placement at the secondary level that surfaced as a result of our in-depth literature review. These factors appear at the top and middle of our framework visual model (Figure 3): (1) achievement, (2) motivation and effort, (3) cognitive engagement, (4) self-efficacy, (5) school structures, and (6) placement bias. Through examination of placement studies and accompanying literature, our team synthesized three foundational principles: (a) organizational structures, (b) student learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment. Our novel framework (Appendix D), unlike previous attempts, incorporates all three foundational principles to guide and analyze the student

placement process. Each of the six major characteristic factors informs the three foundational principles, discussed below; the conceptual framework model visually emphasizes these relationships with arrows.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework Visual Model



Three Principles for Placement Framework

Various studies in the literature investigate placement from one of three perspectives: (a) organizational structures, (b) student learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment. Our novel conceptual framework includes each aspect to suggest a combined framework with three guiding, foundational principles, each described below.

Organizational Structures

Cultural processes and climate within schools contribute to student outcomes, thus indirectly impacting placement, among other aspects of student life (Marcoulides et al., 2005). A school's sociocultural subsystem, according to Marcoulides et al. (2005), impacts student and

teacher attitudes. This subsystem includes both organizational structures including course access and placement as well as organizational processes and values that shape instructional practices, school climate, and the sense of belonging within the classroom and larger school community (Marcoulides et al., 2005). School administrators can influence the sociocultural subsystem that exists to positively impact student performance (Heck & Marcoulides, 1996, as cited in Marcoulides et al., 2005). According to Leithwood (1992), adept school leaders focus on organizational improvement, seeking to build a solid learning community for all stakeholders (as cited in Marcoulides et al., 2005). Through a relationship-focused lens, school improvement-based efforts seek to evaluate processes, student groupings, instructional strategies, as well as teacher and student attitudes with the goal of an improved student experience and performance (Marcoulides et al., 2005).

Francis et al. (2019) suggest recognizing student potential is complicated by implicit and explicit teacher biases. Sanders (2012) posits that cultural biases are not the only prejudices that influence placement decisions and individual and/or peer group interactions impact teacher decisions as well (MacLeod, 1995; Willis, 1997, as cited in Sanders, 2012). Marcoulides et al. (2005) would argue impactful school leadership could combat these biases by dedicating efforts towards a positive school culture. With an emphasis on inclusivity and electivity, students would have a voice in their academic decisions and access to the same opportunities (Sorensen, 1970, as cited in Jones et al., 1995).

Student Learner Characteristics

In the interest of expediency, many school districts rely solely on a student's standardized test scores and quarterly averages as the basis to determine whether the student's ability is aligned with the increased rigor and workload of an advanced program. This rudimentary

evaluation of a student's ability does not evaluate the myriad of components that can form an individual's capacity to complete advanced work. The inclusion of a student-learner inventory seeks to remedy this issue.

Tuttle et al. (1988) evaluate gifted or high achievers on a set of 12 characteristics using grouped categories: personal (1-3), interpersonal (4-7), and information processing (8-12) (p.16).

The evaluation characteristics include that a "gifted individual...

1. is curious.
2. is persistent in pursuit of interests and questions.
3. is perceptive of the environment.
4. is critical of self and others.
5. has a highly developed sense of humor, often a verbal orientation.
6. is sensitive to injustices on personal and worldwide levels.
7. is a leader in various areas.
8. is not willing to accept superficial statements, responses, or evaluations.
9. understands general principles easily.
10. often responds to the environment through media and means other than print and writing.
11. sees relationships among seemingly diverse ideas.
12. generates many ideas for a specific stimulus" (Tuttle et al., 1988, p.15).

Using this method involves evaluating behaviors through their comparison to typical behaviors of the student's age group (Tuttle et al., 1988). While teachers at WGHS commonly recommend some students for advanced learning opportunities, (biases may play a role here, too, as mentioned previously) rarely do they actively consider both commonly accepted, explicitly outlined student behaviors and learner characteristics. Tuttle et al. (1988) explain the lack of appreciation and recognition of giftedness in school contexts compounds accurate student identification; teachers fail to identify students accurately sometimes due to contradictory behaviors and that students may hide their true abilities. Unattended bias can influence placement. The recognition of the existence of bias is key to developing explicit definitions, processes, and commonality of language which may help mitigate its effects.

Student Self-Assessment

The inherent connection to engagement likely makes perceived self-efficacy a strong predictor of academic success (Hwang et al., 2015). Confidence in their perceived ability to succeed encourages students to attempt a wider range of tasks and to persist through, or endure, difficulties in learning (Hwang et al., 2015).

Intertwined with self-efficacy is the act of engagement. Engagement improves both individual performance and organizational performance. It increases connection and satisfaction while also leading to desired outcomes such as increased effort and persistence, and greater curiosity, concentration, and attention. Engagement leads to increased individual performance which allows organizational goals to be achieved (Bagus & Satata, 2021).

Project Questions

When applied to the context of the West Genesee High School placement process, the three foundational principles of the placement framework guide our inquiry. Each principle elicits one to two overarching questions for consideration; each question including several sub-questions that target one or more of the six characteristic factors influencing placement (Appendix E).

1. Organizational Structures (Foundational Principle A)
 - a. What is the current placement process including both policy and practice?
 - b. How are data and dialogue used to evaluate the current placement process and practices to ensure a standardized, coordinated placement of all students?
2. Student Learner Characteristics (Foundational Principle B)
 - a. What characteristics and data currently contribute to course placement?
3. Student Self-Assessment (Foundational Principle C)

- a. How do students participate in the placement process?
- b. What characteristics do students think are used to determine placement?
- c. How does a student's current placement impact his/her/their academic identity?

In light of our conceptual framework, the questions above seek to (1) understand the WGHS placement process in its current state and (2) inform and surface potential areas for improvement with the purpose of developing a standardized, coordinated approach.

Project Design and Methodology

Our inquiry into the placement process at West Genesee High School centered on components of our conceptual framework. Through this lens, we developed the following data collection and analysis plan which is aligned directly with project questions: (see Appendix E for detailed outline).

This study utilized a mix-methods approach, combining quantitative and quantitative data collection methods to address our project questions in each of the three foundational principles: (a) organizational structures, (b) student learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment. Data sources for this project included: insight from stakeholders elicited through three surveys (Appendix F, G, H) and interview tools (Appendix I, J, K) unique to each of the stakeholder groups, existing placement process communications (e.g., emails, course catalogs), existing placement criteria documentation, and published school data. The following sections describe the data collection and analysis methods utilized in this inquiry.

Data Collection Tool Design

Using our conceptual framework as a guide, we sought research-based surveys to adapt for the three stakeholder groups. Jinks and Morgan's (1999) "Children's Perceived Academic Self-Efficacy: An Inventory Scale" served as a foundation for all three stakeholder groups: (1)

parents and guardians, (2) students, and (3) teachers and counselors. The parent/guardian survey was a particularly unique stakeholder group because, based on the current process, parents only participate in course selection if they initiate a concern. In addition, according to Legette (2018) and Bandura (2001) homelife and past experiences can impact a student's self-efficacy and thereby influence placement. As a result, we supplemented the work of Jinks and Morgan with the Harvard Graduate School of Education "Parent Survey: Improve Parental Involvement" (n.d.). Harvard's Parent Survey focused on several key components, bolstering the three foundational principles identified in our conceptual framework such as school climate and program fit, parental responsibilities, support, engagement, and efficacy and student behaviors.

Using the aforementioned research-based resources, a survey tool was created and designed to: (1) gauge the parent and guardian's participation in the policies and practices of the organization, (2) provide insight on what parents value regarding course placement, and (3) determine the extent that they believe their student should have a voice in their own curricular path. These key components aligned directly with the foundational principles identified in our conceptual framework: (a) organizational structures, (b) student-learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment, respectively.

Similarly, we grounded the student survey in the work of Jinks and Morgan (1999). The student survey aimed at understanding participation in the placement process through the lens of a student who considered the impact that WGHS's placement and communication practices as well as culture have on the course selection process (organizational structures); what characteristics in the eyes of the student should be considered when selecting a curricular path (student learner characteristics); and how self-assessment and independence (student

self-assessment) plays a role in course selection. Educational jargon and technical language were eliminated to avoid comprehension barriers.

In addition to Jinks and Morgan (1999), the teacher and counselor survey relied heavily on the district-wide teacher survey distributed to all teachers in the Philadelphia School District. To connect to the practices of the placement process and the role of the counselor, we sought out resources from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The ASCA's work as presented in "School Counselors' Perceptions of Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs: A National Survey" designed to uncover the relationship between the effectiveness of guidance programming and ownership of the counselors who implement such programs (Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001). The teacher and counselor survey tool that resulted from the three instruments mentioned afforded our inquiry team the ability to craft questions aimed at revealing perceptions and realities centered on the three foundational principles in our conceptual framework.

The interview questions provided a semi-structured conversational path. Tailored questions, organized in three segments based on the foundational principles of placement from our conceptual framework, centered on (a) organizational structure, (b) student learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment to ensure consistency from one interviewee to the next, yet flexible enough to grant the participant an opportunity to share freely. Based on guidance from Ravitch and Carl (2016), questions are designed to deepen the understanding of perceptions of teachers and counselors. Knowledge questions, aimed at identifying concrete experiences of teachers and counselors allowed a direct connection to organizational structures, particularly communication and practices. Experience and behavior questions gained an understanding of current placement processes while opinion questions were asked to delve into

the philosophical viewpoints of the participants, both of which provided additional insight into the latter two foundational principles of the conceptual framework: student learner characteristics and student self-assessment.

The intentional connections embedded in the design of the three surveys and interview questions sought to illuminate the viewpoints of all stakeholders involved in the placement process at WGHS, resulting in data collection tools that directly align with the project questions as exemplified in Table 3; the color-coding of Table 3 aligns with the conceptual framework visual model (Appendix D) and serves as the basis for our coding of the qualitative data.

Table 3

Project Questions and Tool Alignment

Foundational Principle	Project Question	Survey Question	Interview Question
Organizational Structure	How does the school culture impact the placement process?	The placement process at WGHS perpetuates course stereotypes (Likert scale) <i>Stakeholder: Teachers/Counselors</i>	Do you feel as though course selection has a social stigma attached to it? [Yes or No] Why do you think that is? <i>Stakeholder: Parents/Guardians</i>
Student Learner Characteristics	What characteristics and data <i>should</i> contribute to course placement?	The course selection/placement process relies too heavily on student behaviors (work completion, in class participation, etc) <i>Stakeholder: Parents/Guardians</i>	What do you think teachers look for when placing students in advanced courses like AP and SUPA? <i>Stakeholder: Students</i>
Student Self-Assessment	How do students determine their desired placement?	In general, I prefer to challenge myself with course selection. <i>Stakeholder: Students</i>	For what reasons do you think students enroll in AP courses? <i>Stakeholder: Teachers/Counselors</i>

Sampling Methods

To conduct data collection for our inquiry, point people at various leadership levels within the district provided insight: Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Brian Kesel (district level), Academic Dean and Principal TJ Vaughan (building level), Counseling Department Chair Tara Buckman (department level), and Social Studies teacher Cara Graham (department level). The tiered approach allowed us the most direct access to promote participation and address issues as they arise. Suggested communication (Appendix L) and a timeline were agreed upon.

We administered survey tools to gather insight from three distinct stakeholder groups: students, teachers and counselors, and parents or guardians with assistance from WGHS. The team recruited survey participants in a variety of ways, depending on the stakeholder. Electronic means were used to invite parents and guardians to complete the survey; an all-school newsletter included a link to the survey and teachers posted it on the classroom learning management system. Parental consent was also shared electronically, providing an option to opt students out of the in-class survey (Appendix M). Forty-one parents responded to the survey representing 51 current students and 27 WGHS graduates. Of the parents and guardians who responded to the survey, 78% ($n=41$) have earned a bachelor's or higher-level degree, suggesting that education is valued in the home. Students completed the survey in their social studies course; department chairpersons asked teachers to provide time in class for students to complete the survey. This convenience approach to data collection was effective, collecting data from 151 students, representing approximately 35% of the 10th grade class and 11% of the student body overall. Although the percentage represented is low, the race and ethnicity represented in the sample is

consistent with the overall student body makeup. Parent/guardian and student survey participant demographics can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Survey Participant Demographics

	Year in School		Race/Ethnicity		Family Structure		Identified Gender			Education	
	10th	11th	White	Non white	Nuclear	Other	Male	Female	Other	Post HS College Plans	Bachelor's Degree & Beyond
Survey Participants											
Parent/Guardian Participants			88%	12%	71%	29%					78%
Student Participants	79%	21%	75%	25%	64%	36%	45%	52%	3%	76%	

Data Source: Parent (n=41) & Student Survey (n=151)

WGHS administration asked department chairpersons to disseminate and encourage teacher survey participation at several points throughout the data collection phase. Eighteen teachers responded, representing 16.6% of the 108 teachers and 6 counselors employed by the high school. Thirteen of the respondents were teachers, while the remaining five were counselors. The small sample, however, provided a wealth of experience as 78% ($n=18$) reported serving as a teacher or counselor for twelve or more years.

Follow-up interviews offered deeper insight via pointed, yet open-ended questions. The team relied on identified point persons at WGHS to identify candidates to participate in interviews. Departmental level contacts were especially helpful, providing five participants, three of whom are teachers and two counselors. A pair of team members conducted confidential interviews with one member facilitating the interview and the other serving as a passive participant. All interviews took place using video conferencing, with the transcript feature capturing participants' insights. Table 5 identifies participants by a pseudonym and their role in the district. WGHS was unable to identify parents/guardians or students to interview, therefore

the team relied on the qualitative data provided in the open-ended survey questions for these stakeholder groups.

Table 5

Interview Participant Pseudonym & Role in District

Pseudonym	Role in District
Participant 1	Administrator
Participant 2	Administrator
Participant 3	Teacher
Participant 4	Teacher
Participant 5	Counselor
Participant 6	Teacher
Participant 7	Counselor
Participant 8	Administrator

Limitations

Findings of this study directly align with the reviewed literature and conceptual framework. However, there were limitations to this inquiry. Given the distance-related nature of the Capstone project, as a team we were unable to personally visit WGHS, possibly impacting the comfort level existing between our investigative team and the faculty and administrators at WGHS. We assume that the lack of in-person connection negatively impacted the number of survey respondents and interview candidates.

Principal Vaughan was our primary contact for survey recruitment. According to Vaughn, the school and district recently completed extensive climate surveys and that process may have affected teacher completion of our survey. We sent out additional staff reminders and asked our

administrative point person, Principal Vaughan, to solicit department heads and share our project information and survey link in a staff meeting to further encourage teacher participation. Despite these efforts, there was a low teacher survey response rate; we received a mere 18 responses out of 106 teachers. Some teachers gave feedback to our instructional point person and indicated they felt they did not have adequate information about the placement process to answer the questions. By design, our survey eliminated the neutral position in Likert scale questions and focused on the experience of an individual within the process, having no inherently right or wrong answers. Teachers' reticence to answer may indicate a lack of clarity and understanding about the process itself or concern with the chance of retribution having shared personal thoughts. The teachers who did not believe they had adequate information to respond to the survey, were open and communicative as volunteers for the interview process.

Buckman, the department chairperson for counseling, was extremely attentive and encouraged the small group of counselors to complete the survey. In addition, Buckman provided two interviewees, one novice, one veteran. Although the support was welcomed, there is some concern regarding the hand-picked counselors to interview.

Due to the abrupt lack of communication with the school administration, we lost contact to have the opportunity to interview parents, guardians, and students. Fortunately, our survey included the request for some qualitative responses. Although minimal, the survey response gave significant insight through the lens of the parents, guardians, and students. The lack of administrative support also led to a narrow group of student survey respondents. Almost 80% of the students came from the 10th grade. Of those surveyed, only 4.6% identified as 'below average,' while 76% identified as 'above average.' Our intent was to reach a broad range of students regarding year in school, ability levels, race, and socioeconomic groups.

As a result of the above limitations, our recommendations were made based on the data collected.

Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data was initially reviewed in a direct relationship to the three foundational principles identified in the conceptual framework: (a) organizational structures (green), (b) student learner characteristics (yellow), and (c) student self-assessment (blue). After highlighting each survey question, project questions were ‘answered’ using the data. Because our survey was designed to glean information from a variety of stakeholders, comparable questions from all three surveys were identified and compared via Likert scale visuals. Means and standard deviations determined if significant differences existed among responses. As appropriate, we displayed differences and similarities among and within stakeholder groups graphically.

To explore survey responses in an in-depth manner, the team highlighted and sorted qualitative data according to project question and sub question (Appendix N). Analysis deepened and/or clarified the ‘answers’ derived from the quantitative survey data. As a result, the three foundational principles of our conceptual framework: (a) organizational structures (green), (b) student learner characteristics (yellow), and (c) student self-assessment (blue) established the basis for a codebook which directed the color coding and organization of questions. Descriptive, yet anonymous, codes tracked authors. A series of general interpretations arose through reviewing quotes and their subsequent alignment with quantitative results.

Organizational Structures

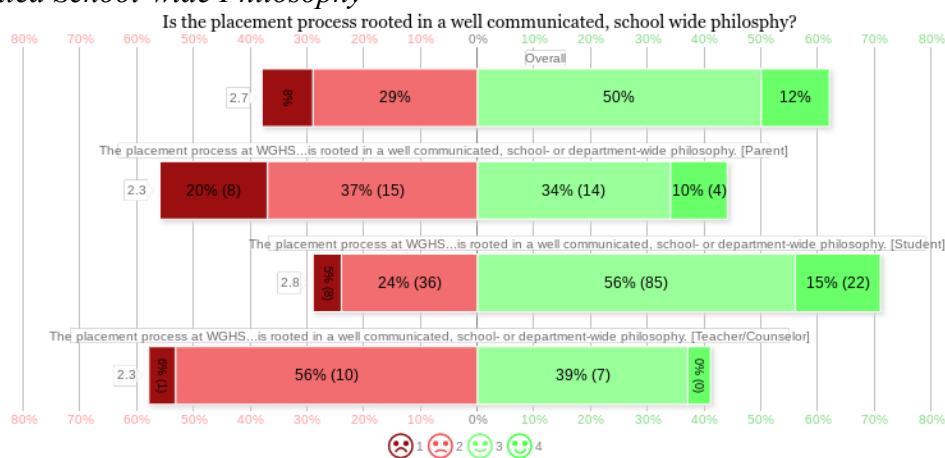
The student academic placement process at WGHS begins in eighth grade when students meet with their eighth-grade counselor and chart a curricular path based on academic recommendations, career interest, student interest, and student academic performance. Ninth

grade counselors travel to the junior high school, giving presentations on expectations associated with different course levels. A wide variety of courses at different levels of rigor (regents, enriched, AP/dual credit, electives) are available, some of which require recommendations. Parents are engaged via Synergy, the district-wide learning management system, school-wide newsletters published twice monthly, updated district and school websites, and supplemental special communications. Parent and student advocacy can influence placement.

Once students are enrolled at WGHS as ninth graders, the placement process follows a path similar to many schools in which students review the course catalog and options, receive recommendations from their classroom teachers, and meet with counselors to build subsequent schedules; parents retain the ability to override any recommendation. The general flow of these events within the process is not disputed by stakeholders; the degree of their efficacy and consistency remains debatable according to findings revealed in surveys and interviews.

Figure 4 displays data from a four-point Likert scale survey of parents, teachers/counselors and students rating their agreement with the statement, “The placement process is rooted in a well communicated, school or department wide philosophy;” on the survey scale, 1 indicates a strong disagreement and 4 indicates a strong agreement. Survey data reveals significant numbers of stakeholders view the process as not well communicated or defined. Meanwhile, 65% of teachers/counselors ($n=18$) and 53% of parents ($n=41$) strongly disagreed/disagreed, both with a mean of 2.3. The student group survey ($n=151$) showed the most positive results with a mean of 2.8; at the time of the survey, students have experienced the process at least twice at this stage in their academic career.

Figure 4

Communicated School-wide Philosophy

DataSource: Parent (n=41), Student (n=151) & Teacher/Counselor (n=18) Survey

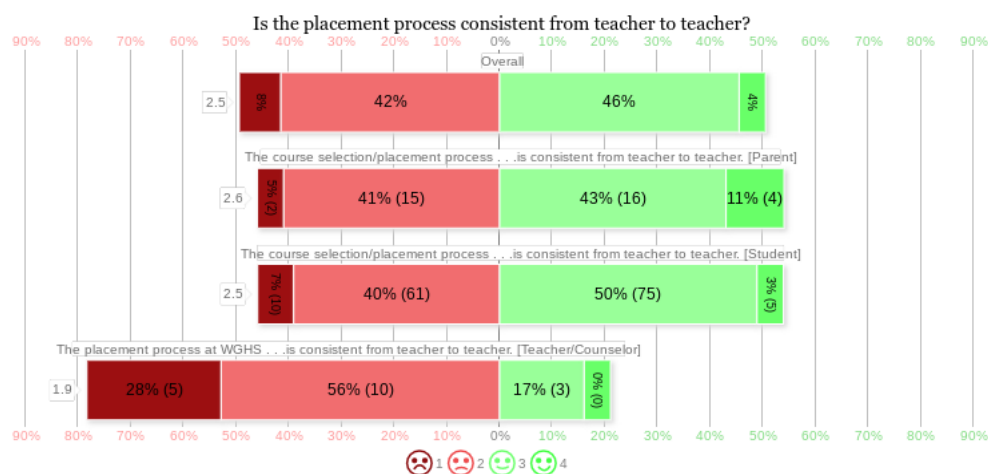
In the initial conversation regarding the overall layout of the process, Participant 2 (administrator, personal communication, October 27, 2022) acknowledged a lack of a specific guidelines document, in part because the school did not want to deny any student who felt they wanted to challenge themselves; a procedure might inhibit flexibility. Other staff affirmed this sentiment throughout subsequent interviews. When asked specifically to describe the placement process, Participant 6 (teacher) half-jokingly said, “what process?” (personal communication, May 17, 2023). Participant 6 (teacher) continued by describing pitfalls in the process including, “ninth grade teachers never know if their recommendations were followed,” “I don't have the data on which of my kids were recommended for AP world versus which of my kids voted [in] and who has been more successful,” and “ I don't necessarily know that teachers know what happens when the counselors meet with their students.” Participant 3 explained the steps of a generalized placement process but acknowledged “we do not have a standardized document, teacher to teacher, we do not all use the same thing” (teacher, personal communication, April 27, 2023). Participant 3 (teacher) continued, acknowledging an assumption that they think “a lot of

the teachers will look at the same things, but we don't have it set in stone” to maintain “flexibility.”

Survey data, using the same four-point Likert scale, revealed that many stakeholders felt that placement lacked consistency between teachers (Figure 5). Seventy-six percent of the teachers surveyed ($n=18$) disagreed with the statement “A final placement recommendation at WGHS is a result of an evaluation of a set of consistent student characteristics.” Parents ($n=41$) and students ($n=151$) responded similarly, split evenly between disagreement and agreement, with a mean of 2.6 and 2.5, respectively. Teachers felt the most strongly that the process was not consistent between teachers, with a mean of 1.9.

Figure 5

Placement Process Consistency



DataSource: Parent (n=41), Student (n=151) & Teacher/Counselor (n=18) Survey

Participant 3 (teacher, personal communication, April 27, 2023) explained the different criteria they use personally to evaluate student readiness for an AP class, but they also recognized that “we [teachers] all kind of have our own little checklist” (personal communication, April 27, 2023). Participant 6 (teacher, personal communication, May 17, 2023) acknowledged that the lack of specific guidance, common criteria, and data collection and

analysis resulted in their (Participant 6's) adoption of an open enrollment format for their advanced classes.

The teacher-student relationship forms a component that bridges the theoretical placement process and its implementation. When asked, "How might your relationship with a teacher impact their placement decision?," 59% of student responses ($n=151$) indicated a positive relationship would impact a placement recommendation positively. Roughly tied were comments that indicated a negative relationship would result in a potential demotion of placement (21%) and comments that indicated that the student-teacher relationship made no difference in placement recommendations (20%).

Data and dialogue play an essential role in aiding stakeholders in the understanding of the process and in the potential iteration of a process. The data criteria for student placement at WGHS relies strongly on previous student performance and learning behaviors (grades, homework completion and class participation), teacher recommendation, parent input, and whole student evaluation. The vast majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that these components were accurate.

Ninety-eight percent of students surveyed ($n=151$) reported meeting with their counselors to determine placement, and 96% of those surveyed felt counselors helped them better understand their options. Seventy-nine percent of surveyed students reported feeling that teachers 'knew them as individuals' but only 35% reported meeting with their teachers to specifically discuss course placement.

Stakeholders identified the importance and differing experiences of WGHS's communication regarding student placement. While parents acknowledged the WGHS environment to be generally welcoming, 45% of those surveyed ($n=41$) disagreed with the

statement “the course selection/academic placement process has been clearly communicated to parents/guardians.” At the same time, 88% of parent respondents agreed with the statement that “WGHS makes parents feel welcome to call, attend events, or visit school.” In open survey responses, multiple parents indicated that more descriptions regarding course options and procedures involved in the placement process were warranted.

Survey data revealed 67% of teachers ($n=18$) disagreed with the statement, “A final placement recommendation at WGHS is a result of shared decision-making among counselors, teachers, and students;” 36% of parents surveyed ($n=41$) disagreed with the same statement. Additionally, 72% of surveyed parents disagreed with the statement, “My student’s course replacement at WGHS relies on parent involvement.”

Interviewed teachers reported that the process failed to allow for conversations about placement to occur with students in real time. Participant 6 (teacher) described putting student course recommendations into the LMS as sending them “into the ether,” continuing that students did not see, know, understand, or could access these recommendations (personal communication, May 17, 2023). All teachers acknowledged that parents had the most power in the recommendation process, and virtually any recommendation could be overturned by a parent's contact with counseling. On the other hand, when asked what they might change about the placement process, parents’ survey comments included the following three statements:

- (1) “The school asking about [sic] more input about the selection process,”
- (2) “More parent communication about what opportunities are available to everyone.

I have ever seen the choices my child has but she knows and communicates it with me,” and

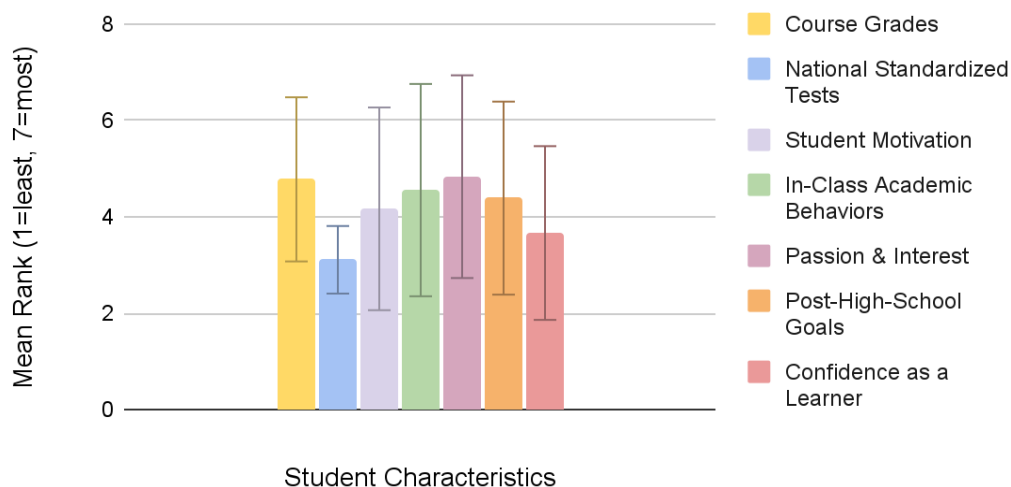
- (3) “There is zero communication between home & guidance/teachers about placement. While I believe ultimately it is between the student & teachers, it would be nice if parents were better informed on when the process of choosing classes is taking place & what exactly the student is recommended for before it happens so that discussions can happen at home if desired.”

Student Learner Characteristics

Figure 6 below shows the mean survey responses by teachers and counselors to the prompt: “Review the list of student characteristics and rank them from least important (1) to most important (7) when determining placement.”

Figure 6

Student Characteristics Ranked by Importance for Placement



Data Source: Teacher/Counselor Survey (n=18)

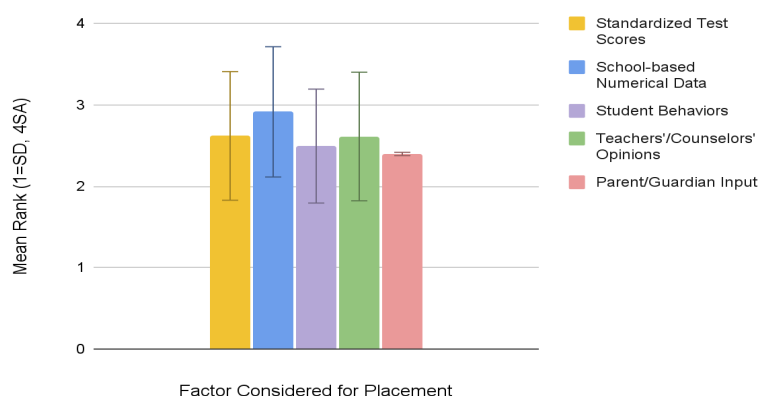
The responses suggest that teachers and counselors place the least emphasis on national standardized assessment data and the individual student’s confidence as a learner. Course grades, passion or interest in the subject, motivation, and post-high-school goals all rank equally according to this stakeholder group. However, the overlap of each error bar suggests that from

the responses to this question, no apparent clear-cut ranking of these seven characteristics exists for teachers and counselors to place students at WGHS.

Students responded to a similar series of prompts: “The course selection process relies too heavily on or is dependent on/influenced by [...].” The mean responses to these prompts appear in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7

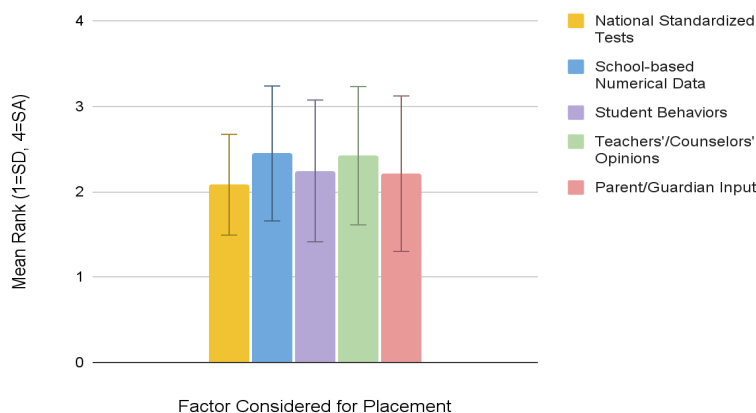
Student Perceptions of Factors Influencing Placement



Data Source: Student Survey (n=151)

The mean student survey responses lean toward “agree” and “strongly agree” concerning the placement process being too heavily influenced by test scores, grades, behaviors, and the opinions of teachers and counselors. Students tend to agree or strongly agree that parent/guardian input can influence the process. Here, we see a clear disconnect between what the teachers and counselors believe influences the placement process, and what students themselves claim to experience.

The parent/guardian responses to the same survey prompt appear in Figure 8.

Figure 8*Parental Perceptions of Factors Influencing Placement*

Data Source: Parent Survey (n=41)

The thoughts of parents/guardians on the factors that influence the placement process remain more widespread than the other stakeholder groups. Each category contains a mean response closer to disagree (2) than agree (3). However, some parents appear unclear on the placement process itself; one parent commented in the survey, for example, “The school has never included us in placement decisions, so I have no clue [...].”

Interview responses provided additional commentary on the academic and non-academic qualities that factor into course placement. For advanced coursework, counselors noted that students typically are “forward-thinking” and have a “desire to be competitive for college” (counselor). Students who “want to stretch themselves” and experience taking college courses “get the most out of it” (Participant 6, teacher, personal communication, May 17, 2023). Additionally, the counselors discussed a certain “tenacity,” a characteristic where students will not “give up [when faced with] adversity,” but instead exhibit a “growth mindset” (Participant 5, counselor, personal communication, May 5, 2023). According to the counselors, students with this mindset will find resources on their own to improve (e.g., YouTube) and “advocate” to their

teacher (Participant 5, counselor). However, the counselors identified a “founding principle” of success in AP courses: “internal motivation and drive” (Participant 6, teacher).

The counselors noted the qualities they believed teachers search for in advanced placement students, stating that teachers “worry about being able to predict if students have the ability to succeed in AP” (Participant 5, counselor, personal communication, May 5, 2023). As a result, the counselors think that teachers emphasize: “past speed” (i.e., in reading, and writing), “hallway behaviors, attendance, and past scores” (Participant 6, teacher, personal communication, May 17, 2023). Meanwhile, the teachers identified that for success in AP courses, students must be “willing to push themselves” (Participant 4, teacher, personal communication, April 28, 2023). They noted that AP courses typically have a “dedicated set of students [...] behaviorally [that changes the] atmosphere” in the classroom (Participant 4, teacher). Teachers expect students to be “motivated,” “driven,” and “able to handle the workload on their own” (Participant 7, counselor, personal communication, May 28, 2023). From an academic standpoint, teachers place emphasis on advanced reading and writing ability; from a reading comprehension standpoint, “they can read it one time and have it” (Participant 4, teacher). Like the counselors, teachers noted that a “forward-thinking” mindset for students remains critical for success in advanced courses (Participant 6, teacher).

While teachers and counselors acknowledged that recommendations for certain (advanced) classes focus on “really talented” (teacher) students or the “brightest of the brightest,” (Participant 7, counselor, personal communication, May 18, 2023) both groups emphasized the importance of synergy between two specific characteristics: interest and drive. Students must be “driven toward academics” and exhibit a general “interest” in the content (Participant 4, teacher, personal communication, April 28, 2023). With these two characteristics,

students typically demonstrate “a willingness to make mistakes,” the ability to self-advocate, and “get connected to resources when they are struggling to find success” (Participant 5, counselor, personal communication, May 5, 2023). Without these qualities, each group noted that “it would be very challenging for a student to find success in those (advanced) classes” (Teacher).

Counselors noted that a lack of interest in a subject can lead to “burnout” for students; instead, they look for students who are “interested” in “challenging themselves in a class setting where there are extra writing assignments,” for example (Participant 5, counselor). The counselors emphasize “balance” with respect to course selection; balance considers passion or interest and necessity (Participant 5, counselor; Participant 7, counselor). College-bound students feel burdened to take every AP, regardless of interest, which leads to “no breaks in their day” and results in burnout (Participant 5, counselor). Both stakeholder groups connect engagement in courses to this pairing of responsibility (i.e., drive) and “interest” (Participant 4, teacher; Participant 7, counselor).

Teachers and counselors agree that the placement process must account for students on the individual level. One teacher noted that acknowledging the individuality of each student allows you to “do what’s best” for them in placement (Participant 4, teacher, personal communication, April 28, 2023). The counselors described the individualistic nature of this process as looking at the “whole person” when approaching placement (Participant 5, counselor, personal communication, May 5, 2023; Participant 7, counselor, personal communication, May 18, 2023). One counselor stated, “It’s not just the grades, not just the types of courses - we take that comprehensive whole-person look and feed it into everything that we present to a student” (Participant 5, counselor).

Both teachers and counselors noted that advanced placement should not be a “black and white,” advanced or not, situation for students, meaning that it is possible for students to be advanced in one subject and not in another (Participant 7, counselor, personal communication, May 18, 2023). Advanced placement is perceived as a binary system at WGHS; one is either placed in all or no advanced courses. This perception likely contributes to the pressure students experience to enroll in several advanced courses in a given school year. Unfortunately, a teacher noted that from a demographic standpoint, advanced courses tend to have “students from upper, you know, socioeconomic levels” and not “as many students of color in those courses as we would love to see” (Participant 4, teacher, personal communication, April 28, 2023). This appears to be an equity issue that the district actively seeks to address.

According to the counselors, the student-teacher relationship can “cloud a recommendation sometimes” (Participant 5, counselor, personal communication, May 5, 2023). Especially for repeat students (retaking a course), the “perception of the student” from the past by the teachers often is “not an accurate representation of the student” (Participant 5, counselor). For example, one counselor described a particular student who struggled in 9th and 10th grades and showed extra energy at school, likely because of a tumultuous home life with which they (the student) did not know how to cope. The counselor described that with access to mental health services, the student “became a different person, but that reputation stuck with some of the teachers that they worked with” during 9th and 10th grades (Participant 5, counselor). Although the student demonstrated interest in business, the business teachers remembered the student’s past behavior and stated that “there is no way [this student is] ever going to hack it in our advanced college level business classes” (Participant 5, counselor). However, in this scenario, the student self-advocated to the counselor, demonstrated a willingness to have the “tough

conversations,” and eventually found success in the advanced courses (Participant 5, counselor). The counselor summed up this situation, noting that each student is “entitled” to both grow and try something new (Participant 5, counselor).

Another counselor described this type of situation as the only type of “pushback” they receive from class placements (Participant 6, teacher, personal communication, May 17, 2023). As eighth graders, students with disciplinary records, with “lots of energy,” that may act like a bit of a “goofball,” may appear on the surface to not be ready for advanced courses (Participant 6, teacher). However, the counselor believes that these students may not be actively “challenged enough” in their current placement, which leads to “disruptive” or “chatty” behaviors (Participant 6, teacher). Instead, this counselor introduced rectifying such a situation as a goal of the placement process: “We should direct that energy to a more appropriate place” (i.e., a more rigorous course) (Participant 6, teacher).

A parent commented that teachers and counselors at times hold significant power in deciding which students are “qualified for advanced classes.” A parent noted the potential for students to “get lost in the cracks” if they lack either the ability to self-advocate or a parent/guardian who will advocate for them. Additionally, parents see that students can be pushed into advanced courses because of demonstrated ability, which (they suggest) leads a student to feel obligated to take the course (regardless of interest); in these situations, the student can struggle with the workload. One parent described the importance of both a student’s ability to self-advocate and their parent/guardian’s involvement in, or knowledge of, the placement process, noting that although their son had a 98 in Chemistry 1, “AP Chemistry would really stress him out so opted not to take it.” This parent emphasized the importance of teachers for the placement process by “watching for signs” of ability, workload stress, and lack of balance: “We

don't see our kids in school so it's hard to assess what they really can do and want to do sometimes.”

Student Self-Assessment

As indicated in the Current Placement Process (Figure 2), students can advocate for course and level placement if they choose. Student input is not a defined point in the process, however, “parent voice is the overwhelming driving force” (Participant 2, administrator, personal communication, October 27, 2022). School officials further contend that if a student “has the drive to change their placement and is an advocate for their own programming,” change will happen (Participant 2, administrator). Minority groups, on the other hand, are known to demonstrate “limited advocacy” and “do not understand the consequences of decisions” (Participant 2, administrator). As a result, a West Genesee leader admits that very few minority students advocate for change thereby perpetuating the cultural biases that exist in society within the walls of West Genesee High School (Participant 2, administrator). The counseling department welcomes advocacy but confesses that they are ‘worried’ if a student “extends themselves” because the challenge may be too great; however, in the same interview, they confirm that “ultimately, whatever the kid thinks that they can do, I want to sort of say, ‘okay. Let's try it!’” (Participant 3, teacher, personal communication, May 5, 2023). Participant 3 (teacher) further shares that “a couple students, this year, advocated for themselves when they weren't recommended for AP World;” this challenge led to a course change.

Qualitative questions on the student survey provided insight regarding the extent of process awareness through the lens of the student. Despite the linear placement process that was revealed through conversation with WGHS staff and administration, one student confessed:

I admit, I don't know a lot of what goes into the placement process. However, I believe that a teacher's recommendation should not be mandatory, as it might be biased, and that

a student should know what type of teacher they might have as part of an influence in whether they would like to take a class (10th grader).

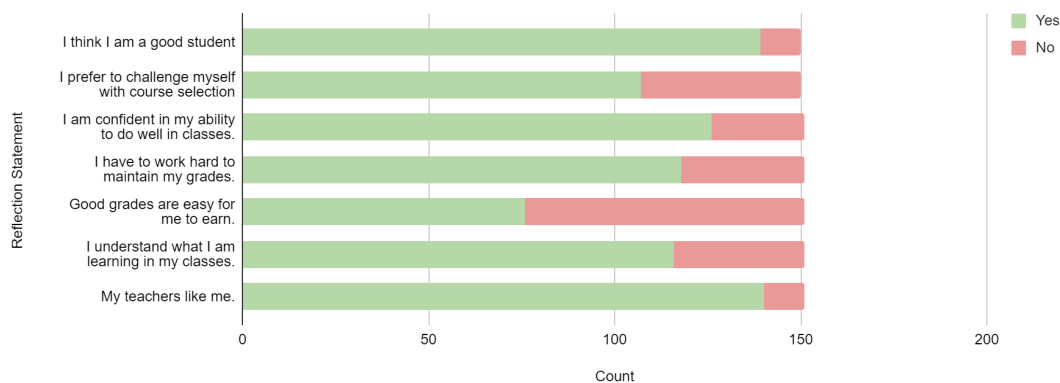
A request for additional information, “explain[ing] why or why not [we] were recommended” was made by another (10th grader). While it is evident in Figure 2 that student voice is an afterthought, one student suggests that “the students should be able to give more input and change the direction of school based on their education and personal experience and not solely by the school system” (10th grader).

Student self-reflection data showed that over 70% of all students surveyed ($n=151$) indicated a preference for a challenging academic experience, as seen in Figure 9. Students overwhelmingly admitted they are confident in their abilities and recognize that hard work helps to maintain grades. Figure 9 illustrates that while almost 77 % of students admit they understand the material presented, only about half reveal that good grades come easily.

Figure 9

Student Self Reflection

Read each statement below and answer Yes or No. In general, . . . [. . .]



Data source: Student Survey (n=151)

Students’ opinions provided through qualitative survey questions illuminated their desire to have “more control over the classes they have to or choose to take,” suggesting that the school should

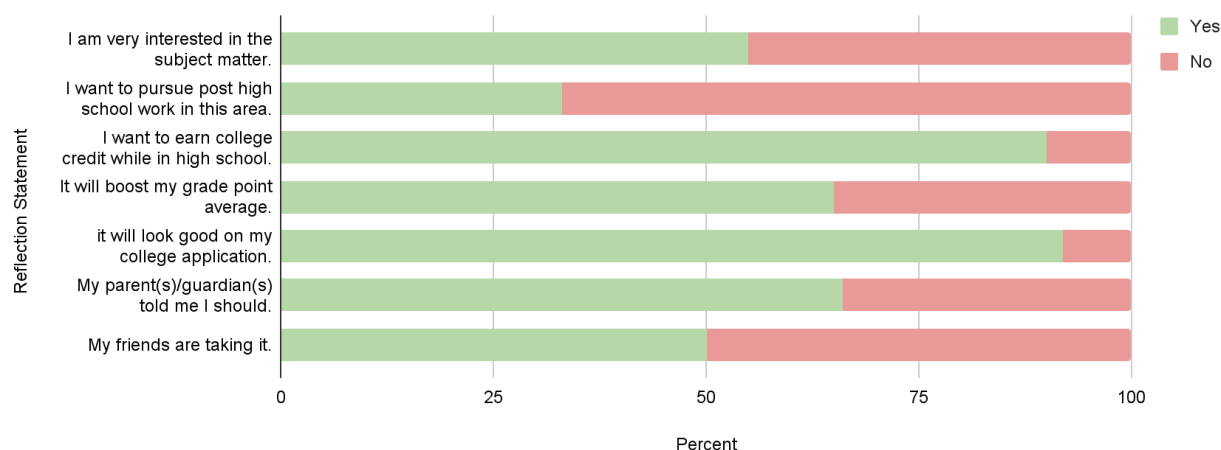
ask “if the students would actually be interested in all the material that will be involved with the course,” and “honestly just let the students decide because it's like kind of unnecessary for them to be placed” (10th grader).

College demands, including admissions incentives and earned credit, rank the highest for advanced course enrollment with only 10% of those surveyed admitting that college was not a driving force as seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Rationale for Advanced Course Enrollment

Think of a specific advanced course (AP, Honors, SUPA) in which you are currently enrolled. Read each statement below and answer Yes or No. The statements are written to finish the sentence: I took this class because... [. . .]



DataSource: Student Survey (n=151)

Given the opportunity to share why one opted out of advanced courses, a 10th grade student voiced a concern about the physical capacity of courses sharing that they:

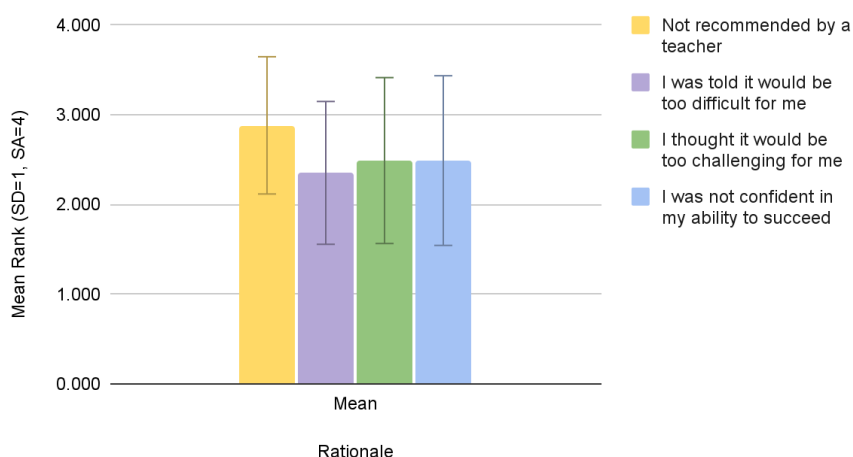
have heard that some teachers tell counselors that there is a certain amount of seats available for a class yet the counselors still go over that amount of students; I could tell that this frustrates teachers because some classes physically do not have any more room in said classrooms to house more students. As a student, this also would frustrate me as having too many people in a classroom takes away from the learning experience.

Figure 11 illustrates that there is not one primary reason for opting out of advanced placement based on standard deviation calculation error bars.

Figure 11

Opting out of Advanced Courses

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. A reason I might NOT enroll in an advanced course is that... [. . .]



DataSource: Student Survey (n=151)

Participant 4 provided insight suggesting that when a student is placed in the regents level, and once the “kid decides or believes in that label, you can see it in the amount of time they put in and the expectations they place on themselves” (teacher, personal communication, April 28, 2023). They further suggest that the “kids know what kids are what level, and they fall into those traps” (Participant 4, teacher). Participant 4 (teacher) concedes that placement can diminish one’s self-worth or work ethic. A student suggested that if one aspect of the placement process could change, the organization should consider: “mak[ing] sure the student gets more freedom and choice, and not to feel forced to do certain things. The placement puts us away from friends, now it may cause some distractions, but students need people to rely on” (10th grader).

Some students have trouble creating partners for projects and can't just "make friends" (10th grader). As high schoolers, it is really hard for a student to "talk to anyone due to cliques and personalities" (10th grader).

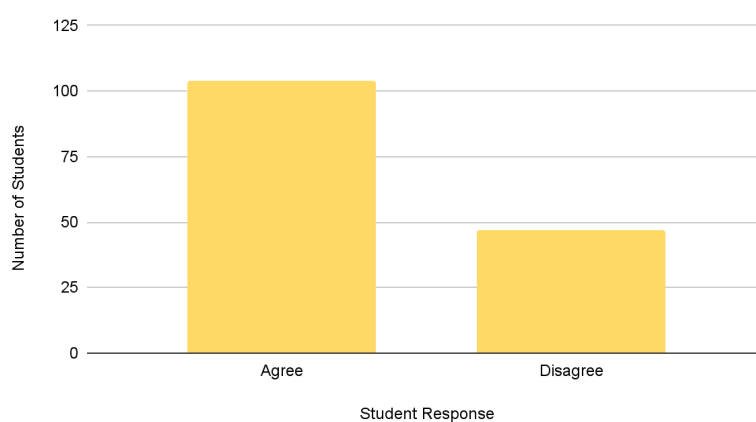
In contrast, Participant 3 believes that the recommendation process, when students are encouraged to challenge themselves academically or when they advocate for advanced courses, that "something as small as changing one class" can boost "self-esteem" for a child giving them a fresh lens to view their future selves (teacher, personal communication, April 27, 2023).

Student survey data demonstrates that students agree that stigmas accompany courses. Approximately two-thirds of the students ($n=151$) agree that the placement process perpetuates stigmas and academic stereotypes as seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Survey Data: Placement Process Perpetuate Stigmas and Academic Stereotypes

The course selection/placement process perpetuates social-academic stigmas (certain classes are known for certain 'types' of students).



DataSource: Student Survey (n=151)

Findings

Qualitative and quantitative data collected via surveys and interviews provided a lens through which our team gained a deeper understanding of stakeholder participation in the

placement process at WGHS. Three foundational principles identified in the conceptual framework: (a) organizational structures, (b) student learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment informed the findings. Through careful analysis of survey quantitative data, followed by a concentrated examination into the qualitative data collected via both survey and interviews, general interpretations surfaced (Appendix O). These interpretations served as preliminary ‘answers’ to our project questions, leading to overarching findings.

The findings mirrored research as it relates to each of the three foundational principles, not only confirming the work of Jones et al. (1995) and Archibald (2009) but providing experiential insight that further supports the views of Hallinan (1994), Sorensen (1970) and Hwang et al. (2015). Jones et al. hold an organization responsible for shaping processes; students recognize this accusation, one requesting a change in the process that would “make sure the student gets more freedom and choice, and not to feel forced to [adhere to teacher recommendations]” (10th grader). This appeal demonstrates an appreciation for Sorensen’s push for inclusivity and electivity (student choice). Archibald suggests that academic and non-academic placement factors are used at disproportionate rates when determining course placement; survey data reveals that this inconsistency remains true regarding the current practice at WGHS. Students identified the need to place the ‘whole student’ and ‘improve guidance’ to help ensure a more consistent process, using both traditional academic data as well as student interest and motivation. Hwang et al. posit that perceived self-efficacy directly connects to engagement and thereby academic success. WGHS students share that viewpoint, one asking that “if us [*sic*] as students had the opportunity to choose if we want to take an AP class based on the confidence in ourselves” that WGHS should support that choice and our efforts (10th grader). The findings that follow are classified into our conceptual framework’s three foundational

principles, are supported by research, literature, and are true to experiences shared by multiple stakeholders.

The subsections of our findings below focus on each of the three foundational principles of our conceptual framework: (a) organizational structures, (b) student learner characteristics, and (c) student self-assessment. The overarching findings from each foundational principle frame each subsection. Conceptual frame coding tables (Appendix O) provide overarching findings outlined by project questions (and subquestions) backed by stakeholder quotes and general interpretations of the qualitative data. A descriptive narrative provides a connection between findings, data, and existing literature.

Organizational Structures

Findings

1.1 Teachers and departments within the school use inconsistent practices to place students.

1.2 Teachers and counselors lack a comprehensive understanding of each other's practices, resulting in limited consistency across the school.

2. Course options, placement policies and procedures, and decisions are not well communicated with students and parents.

3. Extrinsic pressure (parents, college, peers) pressure students to enroll in advance level courses while a stigma accompanies regent level courses.

4. Formal feedback (qualitative, data analysis) does not exist.

The placement process as it exists lacks common language, corresponding practices, and similar application of student evaluation criteria by teachers. Essentially, a theoretical process exists; but, individual teachers understand the process in a vacuum, working through components

of the process in their own way, interpreting student performance and applying weight to student evaluation criteria which they personally deem most important. There is not a formal document outlining which placement components should be considered, the level of importance in the placement process, and a description of the roles of staff. Nor is there a document which would clarify prevailing vocabulary to alleviate inter-rater reliability in the examination of student performance, to achieve more accurate placements. The lack of commonality in language and process may allow for bias to seep into the placement process; Francis et al. (2019) acknowledge unintentional bias exists in school placement and interferes with realizing accurate placement.

Greeno & Gresalfi (2008) postulate that structures either enable or constrain individual learning. Teachers/counselors do not engage each other on a level that fosters understanding, cooperation or development regarding the placement process. The lack of engagement by the staff on this topic affects other stakeholders. Bandura (2001) acknowledges that student academic performance is related to self-efficacy, which is built on experience; the organizational structure directly impacts students as a delivery system of the placement experience. The organizational failure to provide an explicit process followed with fidelity reverberates to the student and family experience.

While the placement process initially may seem direct, according to survey and interview data, it leaves stakeholders experiencing the process quite differently. A lack of explicit conveyance of the process and potential student pathways by the school and district is noticeable. Interview and qualitative answers revealed the perception that inconsistencies exist may lead to the notion of favoritism, randomness, or bias. The belief among students that the recommendation process can be influenced by the type of relationship a student has with the teacher further highlights the consequences of lacking a concrete, well-explained and thorough

process. When asked how the teacher relationship might affect their placement recommendation, student comments included, “the better the relationship, usually the better the placement” and “if you have a better and more active relationship, they are more likely to take all matters into the decision making” (students). Interestingly, there were multiple student comments that addressed the situation of introverts. One student noted:

If a teacher hasn't been able to recognize and connect with a student on a personal level, it's more difficult for them to recognize the student's work ethic and potential. Therefore, a student who may be extremely quiet may not be recognized as a student who would excel in advanced classes because they may have a distant relationship from a teacher (10th grader).

Another mentioned, “If you have a good relationship they will see you more then (*sic*) the quiet kid who just sits in class”(10th grader). The placement process as it exists is perceived to reward students who are extroverts as well as students who have social capital, including but not limited to involved and active parents, elevated social networks, or higher socioeconomic status.

The existing process hinders in-depth conversations between teachers and students, preventing some students from understanding the process overall and/or the evaluation criteria involved in their course recommendation. The placement recommendation process begins early in the school year; multiple staff members commented that this timeline prevented teachers from knowing and having a better understanding of the student as an individual. This teacher-student relationship was recognized by all stakeholders as a pivotal instrument in the process. Teacher interviews revealed that some teachers felt that students did not understand the criteria involved in the recommendation process or made choices based on questionable rationale, such as in which class their friends would be enrolling or the stereotype associated with being in a certain level class.

Overall, 87% of students ($n=151$) surveyed responded overwhelmingly in agreement to the statement “My teachers encourage me to challenge myself.” In comparison, only 58% of students surveyed agreed with the statement “The course placement process looks at me as a whole student.” Student responses indicated that the teacher-student relationship was valuable to the student process in placement. The disconnect continued as students reported meeting with teachers at a lower level than they met with their counselors regarding placement, even though students also reported that teachers tended to know them better as individuals. The placement process does not require teachers to meet one on one with students for discussion.

The placement process has multiple independent components which fail to connect thereby yielding incomplete assessment of student capabilities, opening the potential for misunderstanding, or leaving some stakeholders frustrated by the lack of process information in a segmented experience. Multiple staff identified the desire and perceived need for “flexibility” in placement and to encourage student interest and advocacy. Pfeiffer (2002) asserted that gaining familiarity with students and their families, and recognizing multiple manifestations of advanced student ability is essential for staff to make informed decisions. Teachers recommend based on independent criteria, and students neither fully understand the criteria nor receive the recommendation in real time. Teachers are uncertain regarding the intricacies of the counseling component of schedule building. Parents are primarily informed via their children and are under-engaged directly with the school. Data enrollment in advanced programming showed discrepancy of underserved groups. Kerr (2014) identified the need for organizations to combat the dire effects of low socioeconomic status, absence of parental support, and peer pressure; Kerr argued these components adversely influenced the goal of identifying high ability students and accurately placing them.

Student Learner Characteristics

Findings:

1. Placement recommendations are based on a variety of perspectives (academic, behavior, and attitude) that are not consistent among all teachers across the school or within departments.
2. Teacher-Student and Counselor-Student relationships support thoughtful, individualized conversations regarding course selection and school-life balance.

Teachers and counselors, the primary stakeholders involved in placement recommendations and decisions, consider a combination of academic and non-academic factors. The data collected through interviews and surveys indicate that various perspectives exist regarding the key characteristics used for determining placement. When recommending advanced courses, teachers and counselors focus on academic traits such as class average, analytical and critical thinking skills, reading comprehension, and writing ability (Participant 3, teacher, personal communication, April 27, 2023; Participant 4, teacher, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Stakeholders also value students' ability to work independently rather than relying on others, which aligns with the concept of learner engagement described by Halverson and Graham (2019).

Non-academic characteristics such as motivation, drive, and interest in the course content remain critical for teachers and counselors making placement recommendations. Both groups look for students who demonstrate motivation to learn and interest in topics beyond the classroom. The level of interest described by Participant 4 (teacher) aligns with the concept of individual curiosity, a factor of cognitive engagement theory defined by Halverson and Graham (2019).

While some stakeholders prioritize skills over behaviors for placement recommendations, the data suggests that behavior still plays a significant role. Both overt and covert behaviors influence placement decisions. One counselor (personal communication, May 5, 2023) noted that student behavior in eighth grade causes the “main pushback” in course placements; meanwhile, another teacher mentioned that students must exhibit the appropriate behaviors to succeed in advanced placement courses (Participant 6, teacher, personal communication, May 17, 2023). Another teacher noted that the general behavior in advanced classrooms, resulting from a “more dedicated” group of students, creates a “different kind of atmosphere” (Participant 4, teacher, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Such behavior in an advanced classroom creates a different atmosphere that fosters improved self-esteem and higher academic performance among the students, as described by Francis et al. (2019).

One consistent finding from the survey and interview responses is the lack of clearly communicated and standardized academic and non-academic characteristics for student placement. This lack of consistency and communication serves as the first finding, indicating that placement recommendations rely on different, non-uniform perspectives across teachers, counselors, or departments. This disparity can lead to biases in the placement process and inequitable outcomes for minority students (Archbald, 2009; Legette, 2018).

The data also highlights the importance of relationships between students and teachers or counselors in the placement process. Positive relationships facilitate placement conversations and lead to individualized decisions. Knowing students on an individual level, the most powerful placement tool, allows for recommendations based on their interests and a better understanding of their life outside of school (teacher). This personalized knowledge helps to achieve a balanced approach to a student's schedule (counselor). Understanding the student as a whole person, as

described by Participant 7 (counselor) aligns with the whole-student approach advocated by Deans for Impact (2015). This finding emphasizes the significance of teacher-student and counselor-student relationships in guiding course selection and supporting students' school-life balance.

In summary, the stakeholders involved in placement decisions consider a combination of academic and non-academic factors. However, there is a lack of consistency and communication in the characteristics used for placement recommendations. Additionally, behavior plays a significant role in the decision-making process. Finally, positive relationships between students and teachers or counselors facilitate personalized placement conversations and support the identification of individual student needs.

Student Self-Assessment

Findings

1. Students reflect on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors and academic behaviors when considering course selection.
2. Students desire a space to advocate for their own academic path.

Students at WGHS understand that course placement is based on a multitude of factors including grades, prerequisite coursework, participation, and interest. Placement appears to be an objective process. However, the line between objectivity and subjectivity becomes quite blurred.

An individual's learning trajectory relates to their participation with their organization (Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008); student participation in the placement process is no different. One student reported that they are "unaware of the inner workings of the placement process" (10th grader). Additional data gleaned from student surveys differed regarding individual participation in the placement process, revealing no apparent themes regarding current academic path (regents,

enriched, advanced), race or ethnicity, or gender. However, school personnel remain concerned that underrepresented families and underchallenged students are more likely to be content with school derived recommendations, thereby engaging even less than the typical student.

Most students recognize the value of teacher-student relationships. While one student suggests that “I think most of the time the teacher just wants what's best for us as students,” another admits that “having a stronger relationship with a teacher causes them [teachers] to place you in classes they know will be right for you rather than the kids they don't know as well” (10th grader). Counselors and teachers agree. A counselor admits that “the more I know about a student the better I can advocate for them based on their interests,” and a teacher similarly states that “by getting to know the student, we can identify interests, capability, and capacity to complete the proper workload in a balanced approach.” These viewpoints support the value of ensuring that all parties participate in the placement process whether directly through making recommendations or indirectly by developing relationships and getting to know the ‘whole’ student.

Students believe that their introspection, combined with guidance from school personnel, can help establish a well-suited placement. One student mentioned that “If a teacher hasn't been able to recognize and connect with a student on a personal level, it's more difficult for them to recognize the student's work ethic and potential,” while another noted that “[a student's] participation and communication, willingness to do well in the class will make [a teacher's] decision easier to decide whether you have a good relationship or not” (11th grader). Survey responses suggest that students recognize that the teacher-student relationship may help teachers to make recommendations with confidence. In addition, students speculate that engagement and academic eagerness can influence a placement recommendation in advanced programming.

Ryan and Deci (2000) remind us that extrinsic decision-making factors are more likely to create feelings of opposition, whereas intrinsic motivational factors for enrolling in a course may promote high-quality learning. Students purportedly use interest and motivation as a catalyst to enroll in advanced courses. Ryan and Deci suggest that student passion and effort positively influence placement. Furthermore, others argue that perceived self-efficacy due to past experiences and performance is a strong predictor of academic success (Bandura, 2001; Hwang et al. 2015). Bandura asserts that high self-efficacy yields resilience and grit; these two characteristics help those students who may, at times feel over challenged, persevere. While Hwang et al. (2015) also recognizes that positive perceived self-efficacy encourages students to attempt a variety of challenges such as advanced coursework, negative self-efficacy limits engagement in coursework and encourages students to avoid academic challenges.

Students factor in interest and work ethic when considering placement, acknowledging that numerical data alone does not provide an accurate profile. According to school personnel, a menu of extrinsic pressures including post high school plans, along with peer and parental pressure play a role in opting in or out of honors and AP courses. While several students believe there is too much pressure on standardized test scores and requisite grades, many believe extrinsic factors such as organizational constraints limit access to advanced programming.

Through the student lens, course placement perpetuates stigmas and academic stereotypes. This likely impacts academic performance, confidence, and social status. The academic and social identity due to course placement can have a negative or positive impact on the student. Teens often find themselves grappling with their identity; academic placement can create an identity crisis in a teen due to the psychological and academic development of a student (Legette, 2018). A student's academic identity, connected to their academic success, impacts not

only their grades, but also their motivation, participation, school retention and behavior (Legette, 2018). Some may argue that the placement serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

To proactively address the identities that are associated with specific courses and levels, one student suggested making “it easier to find out what classes you *can* take and *should* take based on your grade, recommendations, and future career path” (10th grader). While two-thirds of students surveyed believe the process is well communicated, there is concern that the students, themselves, are mere passive recipients. Central to the data was a desire to be included, not only as a recipient of placement information, but one who helps to formulate the best combination of courses. A venue for student voice was clear across all constituents. School personnel believe dialogue between teachers and students is a necessity for accurate placement, while students seek active participation in the decision making since courses have a profound impact on academic and social circles. Conversation and shared responsibility, over time, may lessen the feeling of being ‘placed’ in a class and increase the feeling of being ‘chosen’ for a course.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to improve the placement process at WHGS. Findings and general interpretations informed recommendations to develop structured practices centered on responsible student placement and individualized academic paths. Each recommendation aligns to the findings and the three foundational principles of our conceptual framework as seen in Table 6 below (detailed in Appendix P). A brief narrative surfaced from the foundational principles of our conceptual framework accompanies the recommendations.

Table 6

Findings & Aligned Recommendations

Recommendation #1
Develop a placement process guide that addresses necessary organizational structures, salient learner characteristics, and invites stakeholder participation and feedback.
Findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and departments within the school use inconsistent practices to place students. • Teachers and counselors lack a comprehensive understanding of each other's practices, resulting in limited consistency across the school. • Placement recommendations are based on a variety of perspectives (academic, behavior, and attitude) that are not consistent among all teachers across the school or within departments. • Course options, placement policies and procedures, and decisions are not well communicated with students and parents. • Extrinsic pressure (parents, college, peers) pressure students to enroll in advance level courses while a stigma accompanies regent level courses • Formal feedback (qualitative, data analysis) does not exist.
Recommendation #2
Create a partnership with WGHS families via several venues including email, webinar and in-person presentation/Q & A centering on age-specific placement related decisions.
Findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course options, placement policies and procedures, and decisions are not well communicated with students and parents.
Recommendation #3
Deliberately teach reflective techniques centered on school-life balance, interests and passion, and academic abilities, limitations, and goals to integrate meaningful student participation.
Findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course options, placement policies and procedures, and decisions are not well communicated with students and parents. • Extrinsic pressure (parents, college, peers) pressure students to enroll in advance level courses while a stigma accompanies regent level courses • Teacher-Student and Counselor-Student relationships support thoughtful, individualized conversations regarding course selection and school-life balance • Students reflect on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors in addition to academic behaviors when considering course selection. • Students desire a space to advocate for their own academic path.

Recommendation #1

Develop a placement process guide that addresses necessary organizational structures, salient learner characteristics, and invites stakeholder participation and feedback.

The most pressing organizational challenge within the placement process is to create a defined student academic placement process that is rooted in an accepted philosophy, uses common language which is understood and interpreted similarly, and thereafter followed with fidelity. The creation of such a process needs to be initiated by the administration and developed by a group of passionate stakeholders. Coordination at the departmental level should determine relevant categories of placement criteria, devise strategies to support accurate placement, allow stakeholders opportunities to engage school staff in the process, and communicate the plan openly to all stakeholders. The process should serve as a guideline rather than a constraint to still allow for exceptional student circumstances to override the guidance offered by the placement process. Prior to the implementation of the clearly defined process, professional development is necessary to ensure a deep understanding of the common language, theoretical process, and practical application. Teachers and counselors should workshop to create a mutual understanding of the verbiage and criteria, as this is vital to the functionality of the process (Heuser et al., 2017). A collective approach and professional development will address inter-rater reliability and build a foundation to increase consistency across the school.

Across all stakeholder groups, there is a lack of understanding or guidance in the process and procedures, likely connected to the notion that standardized criteria for each course level do not exist. Communication of the placement process, course options and selection criteria could be improved by a multi-pronged approach. The first step would be the creation of a visualization

of the process from the beginning to end within a school year, marked with important dates, to help stakeholders understand and prepare for responsibilities.

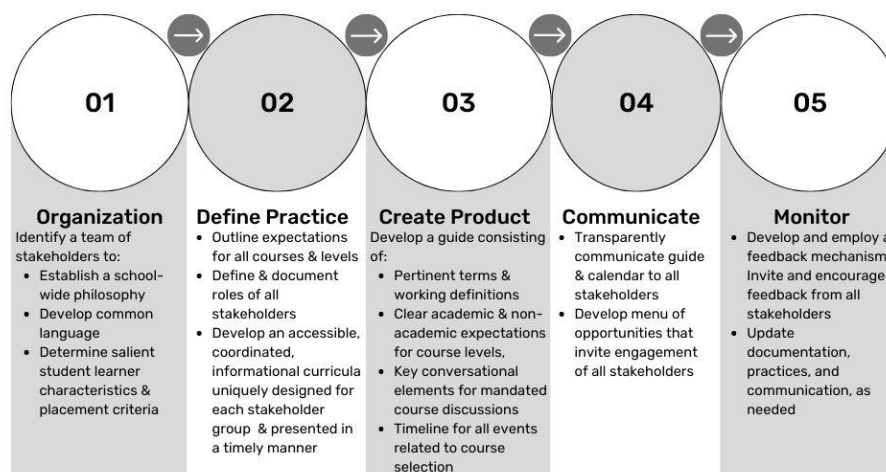
Additionally, stakeholders identified several factors that must remain, or become, present in the placement process. Highly important to all stakeholders were placement conversations; mandated placement conversations help students understand their recommendations, allow for self-advocacy in a one-on-one environment, and, ideally, contribute to a more equitable outcome. Francis, et al. (2019) argues that direct knowledge of a student's goals and ambitions is a powerful tool that can be leveraged to guide the most appropriate course selection. The data showed that relationships between teachers and students, and counselors and students, supported thoughtful, individualized conversations regarding course selection and school-life balance.

Improvement relies on feedback from stakeholders and iteration of practices. To achieve this, the administration needs to establish a process for collecting feedback from stakeholders that includes analyzing current and past placement data and ongoing dialogue with a focus group consisting of key stakeholders to ensure input from all constituents.

Figure 13 illustrates five steps that should be considered when developing the placement guide as referenced in recommendation #1.

Figure 13

Recommendation: Develop a Placement Process Guide



Recommendation #2

Create a partnership with WGHS families via several venues including email, webinar, and in-person presentation/Q & A centering on age-specific placement related decisions.

Structures constructed by schools establish the environmental conditions in which student placement occurs (Jones et al., 1995). Therefore, under the lead of the administration and the counseling department, introducing a new structural component to the placement process, such as a series of informational webinars akin to a “frequently asked questions” page could target important topics and dates, for example graduation requirements, prerequisites, sequencing of courses, considerations for good decision making, readiness for AP, among others. These videos should be short, targeted, and specific; for convenience, a dedicated social media channel should be created for ease of access and streamlined ability to make modifications. Jones et al. note that because school placement policies and processes directly influence the mechanism of placement, they also can impact the quality of the academic experience for a student. Introducing processes like novel, convenient options for information dissemination, can alter this placement mechanism and potentially improve outcomes.

Placement decisions result from a combination of student effort and ability, and the impact of the school itself on the student and the process (Rosenfeld & Sorensen, 1987 as cited in Jones et al.,). Therefore, this recommendation also addresses the parent and guardian response regarding the conflict between busy work schedules and family obligations and placement-related event attendance at the school. To alleviate this process-related concern, these proposed informational tools remain widely available at one’s convenience. Parental expectation, among a plethora of factors, contributes to a student’s decision to enroll in advanced coursework (Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2015); this recommendation seeks to increase parental access to

placement resources. One of the first steps to diminishing inequalities is affording opportunities for families to understand the course selection process (Teemant et al., 2021).

Recommendation #3

Deliberately teach reflective techniques centered on school-life balance, interests and passion, and academic abilities, limitations, and goals to integrate meaningful student participation.

The passion, interest, and goals of the student should contribute to course selection. Enrollment fueled by intrinsic motivation will lead to high quality learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000) resulting in increased self confidence that compounds for the student into the grit and perseverance needed to tackle academic challenges (Hwang et al., 2015). Stakeholders believe that students should receive the opportunity to demonstrate academic maturity and growth through the placement process (e.g., by moving into a more advanced placement than their current one). The motivation, drive, and grit exhibited by the student should contribute to placement decisions. The informational aspect of the placement guide will provide concrete knowledge and thereby enable increased student understanding and self-reflection providing the first step to effective student participation in the placement process.

Secondly, to ensure that a proactive student voice has value, WGHS must first deliberately teach students strategies that promote self-reflection and collectively develop and promote school-wide philosophy. Student voice was a common theme identified by survey and interview participants. WGHS faculty emphasized ‘balance’ as a consideration when placing students. However, students and parents failed to recognize this motif. A philosophical shift emphasizing electivity (student choice in placement) will result in collective, student-centered decisions (Sorensen, 1970, as cited in Jones et al., 1995). Once a school-wide focus is established

and students are provided the tools and space needed to reflect, students can be called to the conversation to collectively decide on their most appropriate academic and curricular path.

Conclusion

While the recommendations center on each of the foundational principles, WGHS should begin with a careful examination of organizational structures. The culture and policies that exist within an organization influence the integrity of the results (Jones, et al., 1995). WGHS has impressive academic distinctions and an eagerness among its educators to forge a plan which aids in each pupil's accurate placement and academic development. WGHS must explore how to leverage current practices while introducing new ones that, when combined, will serve as mediational means to enable the community (including students, parents, and educational partners) to contribute towards successful student placements.

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Appendix A

West Genesee High School: School Profile



WEST GENESSEE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

5201 West Genesee Street
Camillus, NY 13031

Mr. David Bills, Superintendent

Mrs. Tracy Klefbeck, Lead Principal
Mrs. Michelle Collier, Assistant Principal

Mr. Thomas Vaughan, Academic Principal
Mr. Daniel MacCollum, Assistant Principal

WEST GENESSEE SCHOOL DISTRICT

4400+ school population K-12
Residential community within 6 miles of Syracuse serving the Town of Camillus and portions of the Towns of Onondaga, Geddes, Van Buren and Elbridge. Encompasses 41 square miles including suburban, rural and light industrial areas.

SCHOOL

Enrollment 1349
Faculty 146

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

College preparatory programs that include the following designations:
Enriched (Enr) Regents (R)
Advanced (Adv) Advanced Science (AS)

*COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES

Advanced Placement (AP):

English Language & Composition, English Literature & Composition, World History, Statistics, Biology, Music Theory, Studio Art, Studio Art 3D, Studio Art 2D-Design

Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA):

Economics, Psychology, Policy Studies, Sociology

SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry

The Global Environment

SUNY Oswego

French IV, French V, Spanish IV, Spanish V

Onondaga Community College (OCC):

Astronomy, Composition, Literature, United States History, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Statistics, Physics, Intro to Business, Financial Accounting, Information Systems, Mechanical Computer Aided Design, Computer and Information Literacy, Drawing and Design, Computer Forensics and Security, Drafting Studio, Design and Manufacturing, Digital Photo III, Advanced Principles of Drawing, Architectural Design and Production

Cazenovia College:

Principles of Marketing, Principles of Business Management

Tompkins County Community College:

Helpdesk and User Support
Hardware Repair and Maintenance

*College level courses are weighted by 1.1

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Class of 2022

2 National Merit Commended Scholar

Please note: - 2019-2020 COVID year grading: Average of Q1, Q2, Q3 = Final Average ·
2020-2021 Courses across all content areas either not offered or were restricted, no enriched courses were offered.

GRADUATING CLASS OF 2022

Size: 346
100% Regents Diploma
65% Regents Diploma w/Advanced Designation
46% Regents Diploma w/Advanced Designation w/Honors
84% of class attending post-high school education
54% to four-year colleges
26% to two-year colleges
3% Other (Military, Apprentice, Career Ed., other schools)

GRADING SYSTEM

Range 0-100
90+ High Honors
85-89 Honors
65 Passing

Final grade computed by average of:

1/5 First Quarter Grade
1/5 Second Quarter Grade
1/5 Third Quarter Grade
1/5 Fourth Quarter Grade
1/5 Final Exam

Weighting given to selected college level courses for class rank only. Transcript shows actual grades.

DISTRIBUTION OF GPA

Average 2022

90+ 45%
89-85 19%
84-80 14%
79-75 9%
74-70 6%
69-below 5%

TESTING PROGRAMS

CEEB Code = 331-175
SAT/PSAT
ACT

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Mrs. Tara Buckman
Mrs. Katherine Callaghan
Ms. Abigail Mulloy
Mrs. Lauren Navarra
Mrs. Annette Pickup
Ms. Maura Secor

Appendix B

Conceptualization and Operationalization of Variables

For the purpose of this capstone project at West Genesee High School, the following terms have been defined:

Academic Stress: A feeling of an inability to manage academic requirements including but not limited to content, pace, test preparation, homework completion, in-class participation, and/or project management (workload and cooperative group) in a single course or as a result of an overall course load.

Accurate Placement: Enrollment in a course that provides learning experiences that address students' academic needs and challenges the student in a manner that promotes growth and student-defined goals are attainable with consistent effort.

Advanced Placement Courses: Courses that have been approved by the College Board, are denoted as an Advanced Placement course by the district in which college-level coursework is taught in the high school setting, and culminates in a nationally recognized, subject-specific exam.

Advanced Placement Exam: Standardized exams that accompany each AP course. A student can elect to take the AP exam to receive college credit or advanced placement, as determined by the requirements established by the individual college or university (Howell, 2019, p.17).

Advanced Programming/Advanced Courses: Courses recognized by Central School District and West Genesee High School that are 'above average.' These courses include Advanced Placement Courses (AP), Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA), and District identified Enriched and Advanced courses.

College Board: A non-profit organization that, since 1955, has continued to develop and maintain the AP program; supports high schools, colleges, and universities; and coordinates the administration and assessment of the AP exams (Howell, 2019, p. 17).

Environmental Stress: A feeling of a threat to one's well-being to the cumulative number of external events occurring during a specific timeframe (as cited in Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2015, p. 112).

Extracurricular Obligations: Commitments held by students that take place outside of the normal school day and include but are not limited to athletics, activities, volunteer, and charitable work, pay employment, family obligations, and college research and applications.

Nontraditional Advanced Placement Student: Students who have not enrolled in honors level courses and therefore have not experienced the prerequisite rigor with regards to content and/or skills.

Open Enrollment/Access: Procedure that allows non-traditional students to enroll in AP courses without prerequisite honors placement, minimum grade requirements, and/or teacher recommendation.

Perceived Stress: Feeling experienced after one's resources to deal with a given challenge are deemed by the individual to be taxed (as cited in Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2015, p. 112).

Placement: Course (title and level) in which students are currently enrolled based on recommendation.

Placement Process: Process and/or procedure practiced by stakeholders to guide students toward course selection.

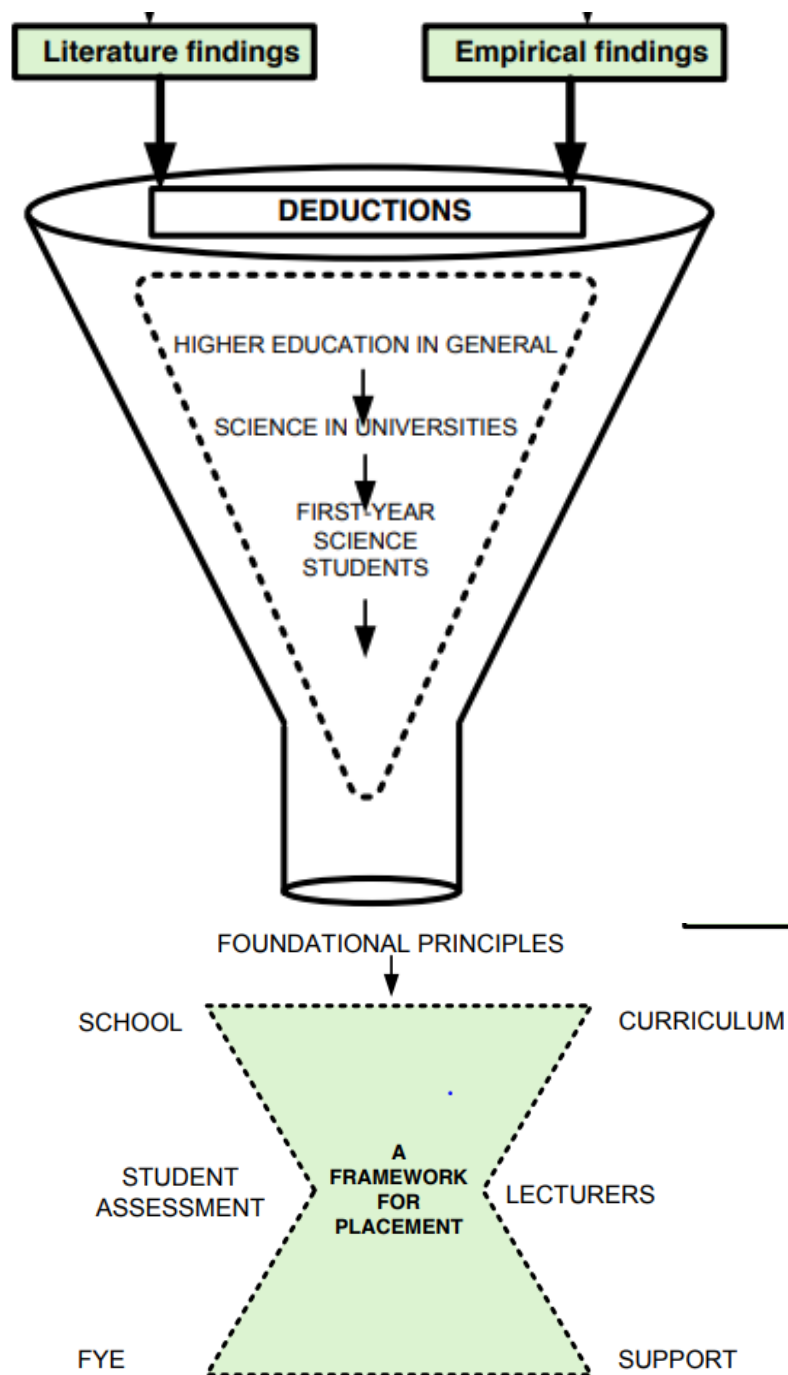
Track Placement: Differentiated levels of a given course; not the meritocratically selected tracks of the past.

Traditional Advanced Placement Student: Students who have experienced the necessary prerequisites that best support their AP interests with regard to rigorous content and/or skills and have primarily been enrolled in honors-level courses.

Appendix C

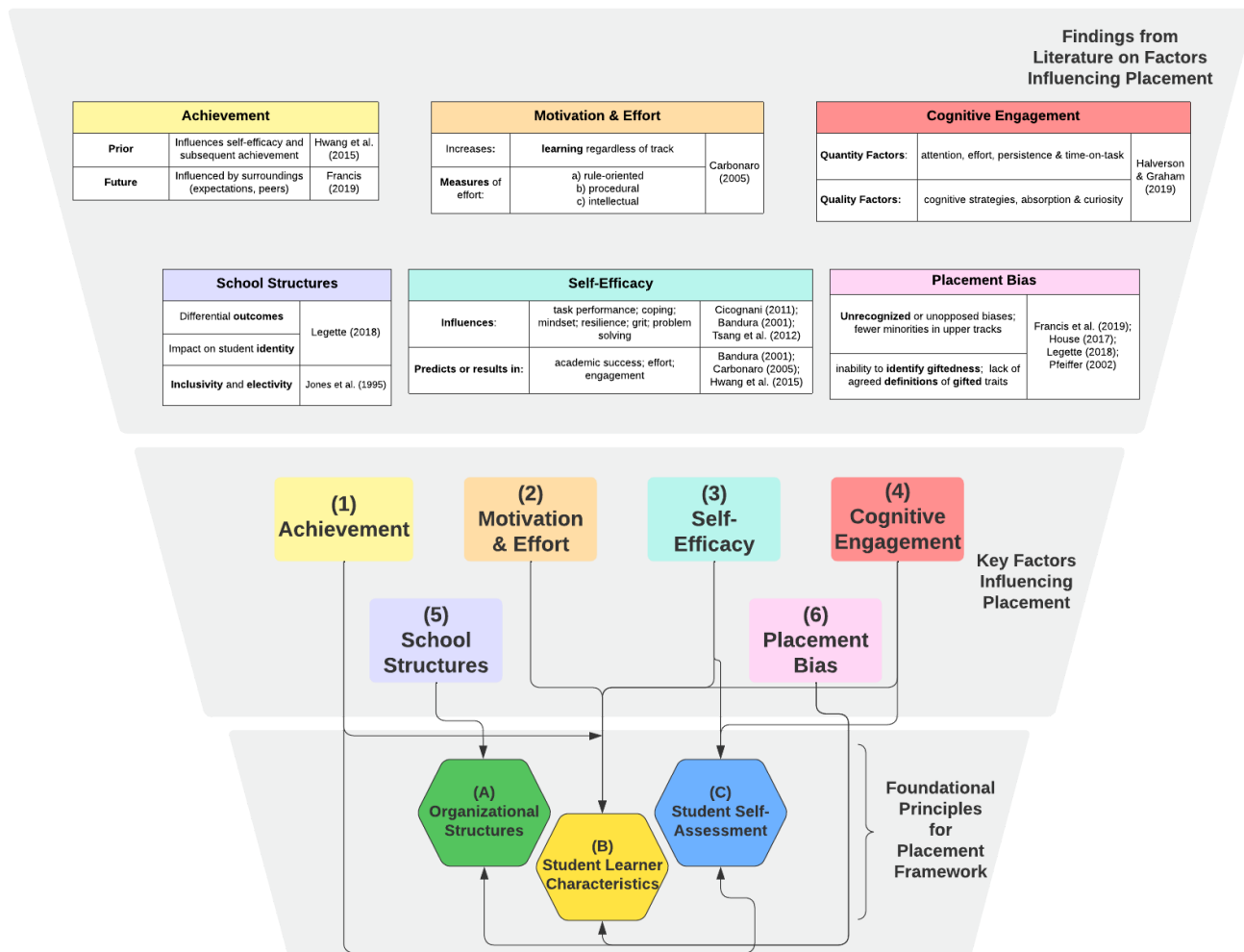
Jacobs (2010)

A Framework for the Placement of University Students in Science Programmes



Appendix D Conceptual Framework

Student Placement Conceptual Framework



Appendix E

Project Questions

Three foundational principles of the placement framework guide our inquiry. Each principle elicits overarching questions that are further delineated into sub-questions designed to target one or more of the six characteristic factors influencing placement.

1. Organizational Structures (Foundational Principle A)
 - a. What is the current placement process including both policy and practice?
 - i. How does the school culture impact the placement process?
 - ii. How are the practices that align with the current placement process communicated to all stakeholders?
 1. Faculty and staff?
 2. Parents?
 3. Students?
 - b. How are data and dialogue used to evaluate the current placement process and practices to ensure a standardized, coordinated placement of all students?
 - i. How do students and families engage in the placement process?
 1. How can they *currently* participate?
 2. What role have students and families played in the evolution of the process?
 3. Ideally, what role should students and families play in the evolution of the process?
 - ii. How do school faculty and staff participate in the evolution of the placement process?
 1. How can they *currently* participate?
 2. What role, if any, have school faculty and staff played in the evolution of the process?
 3. Ideally, what role should school faculty and staff play in the evolution of the process?
 - iii. How can biases (cultural, gender, historical, personal) be identified, and combatted?
2. Student Learner Characteristics (Foundational Principle B)

- a. What characteristics and data currently contribute to course placement?
 - i. What academic and non-academic qualities factor into course placement?
 - 1. Can academic and non-academic qualities be standardized to provide consistency among teachers and grade levels for subsequent placement?
 - ii. How does the student-teacher relationship impact the placement process?
 - iii. What characteristics and data *should* contribute to course placement?
- 3. Student Self-Assessment (Foundational Principle C)
 - a. How do students participate in the placement process?
 - i. What criteria do students use to evaluate their abilities?
 - ii. How do students determine their desired placement?
 - b. What characteristics do students think are used to determine placement?
 - c. How does a student's current placement impact his/her/their academic identity?

Appendix F

Parent/Guardian Survey¹

The Placement Process at WGHS

A team of doctoral students from Vanderbilt University is investigating the placement process at West Genesee High School as a capstone project. The team seeks your feedback as a parent/guardian of a WGHS student. Your responses are anonymous and will not impact your student in any way. Thank you in advance for your honest feedback.

Read each statement below and determine the frequency you encountered each. The statements are written to finish the sentence: *In a single school year, I . . .*

	Never	1-4 times a year	Once a month	Weekly or about weekly
visited WGHS for an academic event (parent night, community forum, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
visited WGHS for an extracurricular event (athletic competition, fine arts performance, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
have been involved with a WGHS parent group (PTO, Boosters, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which of the following challenges, if any, prevent you from being involved at WGHS?
(check all that apply or none at all)

- Busy work schedule
- Childcare
- Family obligations
- Language barrier
- Transportation issues

¹ Adapted from Harvard (n.d.); Jinks & Morgan (1999)

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
WGHS makes parents feel welcome to call, attend events, or visit school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WGHS communicates events and provides information for parents in a multitude of formats.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WGHS does not communicate well with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WGHS staff seem too busy to respond to or meet with parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am unsure how to communicate with WGHS faculty and administration.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My student does not want me to contact the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In a single school year, how often do you believe each of the following occur?

	Never	1-4 times a year	Once a month	Weekly or about weekly
You are contacted about your student's behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You are contacted about your student's academic progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You are contacted about your student's achievements and successes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You are contacted to be informed about the placement process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You called school with placement questions or concerns.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You called school about disagreement regarding placement recommendations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. The statements are written to finish the sentence: *The course selection/placement process . . .*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
has been clearly communicated to parents and guardians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is consistent from teacher to teacher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is fair.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
takes individual learning needs of students into account.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
takes into account the whole student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encourages students to challenge themselves academically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
creates barriers for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
perpetuates social-academic stigmas (certain classes are known for certain 'types' of students).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
promotes positive parent/guardian engagement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is reviewed annually by students and families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. Each of the statements are written to finish the sentence: *My student's course placement at WGHS* .

..

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
is a result of shared decision-making among school staff, families, and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
promotes school-life balance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relies on parental involvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
can be contentious between parents/students and school personnel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. Each of the statements are written to finish the sentence: *The course selection/placement process* ..

.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
relies too heavily on standardized test scores (ACT, SAT, MAP, Star, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relies too heavily on school-based numerical data (grades, class test scores, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relies too heavily on student behaviors (work completion, in class participation, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is too dependent on teachers'/counselors' opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is influenced by parent/guardian input.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How might your student's relationship with teachers impact placement decisions?

Your answer

Who do you believe is **most** responsible for each of the statements below?

	Student	Parent	School
Calling attention to decisions which do not seem to be in the best interest of a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring students are challenged appropriately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring students understand what is being taught in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying what students are most interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Initiating and maintaining communication between home and school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you could change one or two things about the placement process what would you change and why?

Long answer text

How many children do you currently have attending WGHS?

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. more than 4

How many of your children have graduated or completed their schooling at WGHS?

1. none
2. 1
3. 2
4. 3
5. 4
6. more than 4

Which race/ethnicity best describes you

1. American Indian/Alaskan Native
2. Asian/Pacific American
3. Black/African America
4. Hispanic American
5. White/Caucasian
6. Multiple Ethnicity
7. Prefer not to say

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. Grade School (K-8)
2. High School
3. Some college/vocational school
4. Associate's Degree
5. Trade School
6. Bachelor's Degree
7. Master's Degree
8. Post-Master's Work

How would you describe your family structure?

1. Blended Family (1 biological parent, step parent, 1/2 or step siblings)
2. Nuclear Family (two biological parents and children)
3. Single Parent Family
4. Multi-generational family (grandparent(s) + parent(s) in the home)
5. Other

Appendix G

Student Survey²

Section 1 of 4

The Placement Process at WGHS



A team of doctoral students from Vanderbilt University is investigating the placement process at West Genesee High School as a capstone project. *The team seeks your feedback as a WHGS student.* Your responses are anonymous and will not impact your grades in any way. Thank you in advance for your honest feedback.

What year are you at WGHS?

1. 9th
2. 10th
3. 11th
4. 12th

Read each statement below and answer yes or no based on your experience at WGHS.

	Yes	No
Academically, I would consider myself an average student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academically, I would consider myself an above average student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academically, I would consider myself a below average student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am involved in the arts at WGHS (choir, theater, band, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am involved in athletics at WGHS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am active in a school-sponsored club or activity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

² Adapted from Jinks & Morgan (1999); School District of Philadelphia (2017)

Read each statement below and apply the statement to your experience at WGHS.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I meet with my counselor when it is time to select courses for the next school year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My counselor knows me as an individual.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My counselor helps me understand my course options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I meet with my teachers when it is time to select courses for the next school year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers know me as an individual.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers help me understand my course options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Based on your experiences in general as a student at WGHS, read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. The statements are written to finish the sentence: ***My teachers . . .***

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
believe in my ability.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encourage me to challenge myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ask me what classes I want to take.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
recommend students who do all of their homework for advanced classes (honors, AP, SUPA).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
recommend students who participate a lot for advanced classes (honors, AP, SUPA).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
think everyone should work to earn an A.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
like students who get good grades more than other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
think their class is my only responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How many advanced classes are you currently taking (AP, Honors, SUPA, etc.)?

1. 0

2. 1

3. 2

4. 3

5. 4

6. 5 or more

Course Input

The next two questions are to learn a little more about you as a student.

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. The statements are written to finish the sentence: ***A reason I might NOT enroll in an advanced course is that...***

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was not recommended for an advanced course by a teacher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
a teacher told me advanced courses would be too difficult for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was recommended for an advanced course, but I thought it would be too challenging for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was recommended for an advanced course, but I was not confident in my ability to succeed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the fees/cost associated with the advanced classes are too high.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I maintain a part time job that prevents me from committing to so much school work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need to watch my younger siblings or care for elderly relatives which prevents me from committing to so much school work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Course Selection & the Placement Process

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. The statements are written to finish the sentence: **The course selection/placement process . . .**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
has been clearly communicated to students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is consistent from teacher to teacher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is fair.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
takes my individual learning needs into account.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
looks at me as a whole student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encourages me to challenge myself academically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
creates barriers for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
perpetuates social-academic stigmas (certain classes are known for certain 'types' of students).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. Each of the statements are written to finish the sentence: ***The course selection/placement process . .***

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
relies too heavily on standardized test scores (ACT, SAT, MAP, Star, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relies too heavily on school-based numerical data (grades, class test scores, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relies too heavily on student behaviors (work completion, in-class participation, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is too dependent on teachers'/counselors' opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is influenced by parent/guardian input.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How might your relationship with a teacher impact their placement decision?

Your answer

Who do you believe is **most** responsible for each of the statements below?

	Student	Parent	School
Calling attention to decisions which do not seem to be in the best interest of a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring students are challenged appropriately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring students understand what is being taught in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying what students are most interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Initiating and maintaining communication between home and school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you could change one or two things about the placement process what would you change and why?

Your answer

Read each statement below and answer True or Not True. The statements are written to finish the sentence: *In general* . . .

	True	Not True
I think I am a good student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer to challenge myself with course selection.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident in my ability to do well in classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have to work hard to maintain my grades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good grades are easy for me to earn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand what I am learning in my classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teachers like me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Complete the sentence with the options below: *After graduating from high school I plan to . . .*

1. attend college.
 2. take a gap year.
 3. join the workforce.
 4. enlist in the armed services.
 5. I am unsure at this time.
-

With what gender do you identify?

1. Female
 2. Male
 3. Non-binary
 4. prefer not to say
-

Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

1. American Indian/Alaskan Native
 2. Asian/Pacific American
 3. Black/African American
 4. Hispanic American
 5. White/Caucasian
 6. Multiple Ethnicity
 7. Prefer not to say
-

How would you describe your family structure?

1. Blended Family (1 biological parent, step parent, 1/2 or step siblings)
2. Nuclear Family (two biological parents and children)
3. Single Parent Family
4. Multi-generational (grandparent(s) live with us)
5. Other

Appendix H

Teacher/Counselor Survey³

The Placement Process at WGHS

A team of doctoral students from Vanderbilt University, comprised of educators with over 40 years of classroom teaching experience, is investigating the placement process at West Genesee High School as a capstone project. *As someone who engages with the placement process each year*, the team seeks your feedback. Your responses are *anonymous*, will not be shared with your supervisor and will have no impact on your evaluation. Thank you in advance for your honest feedback.

What best describes your role at WGHS? *

- Teacher
- Counselor
- Other...

³ Adapted from Jinks & Morgan (1999); School District of Philadelphia (2017); Sink & Yillik-Downer (2001)

Think of a typical student. In a single school year, how often do you do each of the following for that student? *

	Never	1-4 times a year	Once a month	Weekly or about weekly
Contact their parents and guardians about their behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact their parents and guardians regarding the student's academic progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact their parents and guardians about their achievements and successes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet individually to discuss course placement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact their parents and guardians to help them understand placement process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Field parent or guardian phone calls regarding placement questions or concerns.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Field parent or guardian phone calls centered on a disagreement regarding placement recommendations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. Each of the statements are written to finish the sentence: *The placement process at WGHS . . .* *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
is rooted in a well communicated, school- or department-wide philosophy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is guided by a school or department rubric that defines student characteristics relevant to placement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
utilizes common vocabulary for all stakeholders.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is consistent from teacher to teacher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
takes individual learning needs of students into account.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
takes into account the whole student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

encourages students to challenge themselves academically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
creates barriers for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
perpetuates course stereotypes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
promotes positive parent/guardian engagement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is reviewed annually by teachers and counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is reviewed annually by students and families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. Each of the statements are written to finish the sentence: **A final placement recommendation at WGHS . . .** *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
is a result of shared decision-making among counselors, teachers, and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is a result of an evaluation of a set of consistent student characteristics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
takes into account the individual learning needs of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
promotes school-life balance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
can be dependent upon parental involvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

perpetuates student stereotypes that exist within courses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
can be contentious between teachers and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
can be contentious between counselors and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
can be contentious between counselors and teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. Each of the statements are written to finish the sentence: *The placement process at WGHS . . .* *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
relies too heavily on standardized test scores (ACT, SAT, MAP, Star, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relies too heavily on school-based numerical data (grades, class test scores, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
relies too heavily on student behaviors (work completion, in-class participation, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
takes into account students' individualized learning goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is too dependent on teachers'/counselors' subjective opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is based on teacher recommendation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is based on counselor recommendation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
is based on parent/guardian input.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Review the list of student characteristics and rank them from **most important (1)** to **least important (7)** when determining placement. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Course Grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nationally Normed Standardized Tests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-class Academic Behaviors (participation, work completion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Passion & Interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post High School Goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence as a Learner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How might your relationship with individual students impact your placement decisions? *

Your answer

Read each statement below and determine your level of agreement. Each of the statements are written to finish the sentence: *When it comes to course placement students at WGHS . . .*

*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
seek out challenging/rigorous course load.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
seek to find school-life balance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
engage in self assessment prior to making decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
have unrealistic perceptions of themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
make decisions based on external factors (social, college admissions, etc).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
should agree with the teacher recommendation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
should agree with the counselor recommendation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
should consult their parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Who do you believe is **most** responsible for each of the statements below? *

	Student	Parent	School
Calling attention to decisions which do not seem to be in the best interest of a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring students are challenged appropriately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring students understand what is being taught in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying what students are most interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Initiating and maintaining communication between home and schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I would be . . . *

	Yes	No
interested in updating our placement process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
learning how other schools/district place students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
seeking input on the placement process from students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
seeking input on the placement process from parents/guardians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your total case/student load? *

1. less than 100
 2. 101-150
 3. 151-200
 4. More than 200
-

My student load affords the opportunity to get to know each student at the individual level. *

1. Yes
 2. Somewhat
 3. No
-

What term below describes the academic level of the students you interact with most? (check all that apply) *

- Advanced (Enriched, Honors, AP)
- Average Ability
- Academically Challenged

How many years in total have you been a counselor/teacher? *

1. Less than 6 year
2. 7-12 years
3. More than 12 years

Appendix I

Parent/Guardian Focus Group and Individual Interviews⁴

Focus Groups/Interview Script & Questions:

Thank you for your participation today.

I'm hoping you could give me some deeper insight into your experiences with the placement process. I'm especially interested in your role during the decision-making process.

I plan to record this session so I can be sure to report accurately and use your information to evaluate the place process at WGHS. Do I have your permission?

1. Before we start, I want to get an idea of your familiarity with West Genesee.
How many students have you had attend WGHS? What year in school are they?

[Response] That's a total of #placement process experiences

Are your students in advanced programming?

2. There are several reasons why students enroll or do not enroll in advanced courses.

Please do your best to describe why you wanted your student to enroll in advanced courses?

OR

Please do your best to describe why you did not want your student to enroll in advanced courses?

3. *Do you feel as though course selection has a social stigma attached to it? [Yes or No]*
Why do you think that is?
4. *How do you think the organization of the school contributes to the academic stereotypes and social influence courses have on kids? Does the school try to combat and break down the stereotypes? If so, how?*
5. *As a parent, how have you been engaged in the placement process?*
Follow up: How did your counselors or teachers guide, or restrict your decisions?
6. I've been told that teacher recommendations carry a lot of weight.
What do you think teachers look for when placing students in advanced courses like AP and SUPA?

⁴ Adapted from Harvard (n.d.); Jinks & Morgan (1999)

*What student characteristics do you think teachers prefer and why?
Is there anything you listed that you think teachers place too much importance on?*

7. *Follow up: How do you think your student's relationship with their teacher impacts placement?
Follow up: Please share an example of a time you believe an interaction between your student and a teacher either positively or negatively impacted your student's placement for the following year (don't use names)*
8. *I'd like to know your role in the decision-making process with regards to course selection.
Do you feel like you have a voice in course selection? [Yes or No]
Explain a time that you felt as though you stood up for your student with regards to course selection. What characteristics did you base your stance on and what were the results?*
9. *If you could change 1 or 2 things about the process, what would it be and why?*

Appendix J

Student Focus Group and Individual Interviews⁵

Focus Groups/Interview Script & Questions:

Thank you for your participation today.

I'm hoping you could give me some deeper insight into your experiences with the placement process and how you decided on the courses in which you are enrolled. I'm especially interested in your role during the decision-making process.

I plan to record this session so I can be sure to report accurately and use your information to evaluate the placement process at WGHS. Do I have your permission?

1. Before we start, I want to get an idea of your course load.

What classes are you taking now?

[Response] That's a total of # advanced courses.

2. There are several reasons why students enroll or do not enroll in advanced courses.

Please do your best to describe your reasons for enrolling/not enrolling in advanced classes?

3. *Do you think academic stereotypes exist?*

Could you describe one that you think exists in your school?

4. *Does course selection have an impact on your social circle?* [Yes or No]

Why do you think that is?

5. *How does the organization of the school contribute to the academic stereotypes and social influence courses have on kids? Does the school try to combat and break down the stereotypes? If so, how?*

6. *Think back, and please tell me how you selected your courses as an incoming 9th grader and what did the process look like this year?*

Follow up: How did your counselor, teachers, parents push, guide, or restrict your decisions?

7. I've been told that teacher recommendations carry a lot of weight.

What do you think teachers look for when placing students in advanced courses like AP and SUPA?

⁵ Adapted from Jinks & Morgan (1999); School District of Philadelphia (2017)

*What student characteristics do you think teachers prefer and why?
Is there anything you listed that you think teachers place too much importance on?*

8. *How do you think your relationship with your teacher impacts your future placement?
Follow up: Please share an example of a time you believe your interaction with a teacher either positively or negatively impacted your placement for the following year (don't use names)*
9. *I'd like to know your role in the decision-making process with regards to course selection.
Do you feel like you have a voice in course selection? [Yes or No]
Explain a time that you felt as though you stood up for yourself with regards to course selection. What characteristics did you base your personal reflection on and what were the results?*
10. *If you could change 1 or 2 things about the placement process, what would it be and why?*

Appendix K

Teacher/Counselor Focus Group and Individual Interviews⁶

Focus Groups/Interview Script & Questions:

Thank you for your participation today. Our Capstone project is investigating the student academic placement process from a variety of stakeholder perspectives.

I'm hoping you could give me some deeper insight into your experiences with the placement process and how your practices impact course selection for your students.

Everyone we are interviewing will be asked similar questions. And, WGHS and your specific answers will be anonymous in our project .

Is it ok with you that I plan on recording this session so I can be sure to report accurately and use your information to evaluate the place process at WGHS?

1. I want to get an idea of your role in the school.
What subject/ classes do you teach?
Do you have any other roles (administrative, coaching, extracurricular)?
How would you describe your role in the school/ department overall?
2. Can you describe the placement process for incoming ninth grade students; how are their courses chosen?
What does the process look like for students once they are at WGHS? Is this different from what the "official" process is?
In your opinion, who can push or restrict placements- teacher, counselor, parent, individual student?
3. Many reasons can affect students' enrollment decisions surrounding advanced courses.
For what reasons do you think students enroll in AP courses?
For what reasons do you think students should enroll in AP courses?
4. *Do you think academic stereotypes exist at WGHS (either among students, staff or both)?*
To what extent do you think your department feeds or combats existing academic stereotypes?
5. *Do you think course selection can impact a students' social circle? (Y/N) Why or how so?*
6. *When considering a student's placement, what student characteristics are important to you personally when placing students in advanced courses like AP and SUPA?*
Do you think these characteristics carry the same weight with other teachers or departments?

⁶ Adapted from Jinks & Morgan (1999); School District of Philadelphia (2017); Sink & Yillik-Downer (2001)

7. *If student engagement is a goal within the educational system, what role does placement play in helping educators achieve engagement?*
8. *How do you think an individual student's relationship with their teacher can impact their placement guidance?
Can you think of a time when your interaction with a student impacted their placement for the following year and share this experience?*
9. *Think of a time when you pushed for a student to have access to advanced programming.
What factors made advanced placement questionable for this student?
What characteristics of that situation helped to solidify your willingness to push?*
10. *If you could change aspects of the placement process- what might they be? Why?*
11. *What other teachers do you recommend we speak with or would you be comfortable forwarding our survey link to other staff members?*

Appendix L

Suggested Communication

Audience: Counselors

Date of Communication: March 10, 2023

Subject: Vanderbilt Doctoral Students partner with West Genesee

Career educators who are Doctoral students at Vanderbilt University are conducting their Capstone Project in partnership with West Genesee High School. The team is investigating the student academic placement process from a variety of viewpoints including students, parents, teachers, and counselors. Research informed surveys were developed to capture your honest feedback. The brief survey should take approximately 5 minutes. Your anonymous answers will help us ensure a variety of viewpoints and opinions are heard.

Your honest feedback is appreciated by **March 20th**. Thank you for completing the survey and sharing your experience with the student academic placement process.

Audience: Teachers

Date of Communication: March 13, 2023

Subject: Vanderbilt Doctoral Students partner with West Genesee

Career educators who are Doctoral students at Vanderbilt University are conducting their Capstone Project in partnership with West Genesee High School. The team is investigating the student academic placement process from a variety of viewpoints including students, parents, teachers, and counselors. Research informed surveys were developed to capture your honest feedback. The brief survey should take approximately 5 minutes. Your anonymous answers will help us ensure a variety of viewpoints and opinions are heard.

Your honest feedback is appreciated by **March 23rd**. Thank you for completing the survey and sharing your experience with the student academic placement process.

Audience: Parents

Date of Communication: March 10, 2023

Subject: Vanderbilt Doctoral Students partner with West Genesee

Career educators who are Doctoral students at Vanderbilt University are conducting their Capstone Project in partnership with West Genesee High School. The team is investigating the student academic placement process from a variety of viewpoints including students, parents, teachers, and counselors. Research informed surveys were developed to capture your honest feedback. The brief survey should take approximately 5 minutes. Your anonymous answers will help us ensure a variety of viewpoints and opinions are heard.

In addition, we will be seeking feedback from the WGHS students about their experiences in the course registration process. Please review the consent form with the option to opt-out of participation by March 13th.

Your honest feedback is appreciated by **March 23rd**. Thank you for completing the survey and sharing your experience with the student academic placement process.

Audience: Students in Cara Graham's class or all?

Date of Communication: March 13, 2023

Subject: Vanderbilt Doctoral Students partner with West Genesee

Career educators who are Doctoral students at Vanderbilt University are conducting their Capstone Project in partnership with West Genesee High School. The team is investigating the student academic placement process from a variety of viewpoints including students, parents, teachers, and counselors. Research informed surveys were developed to capture your honest feedback. The brief survey should take approximately 5 minutes. Your anonymous answers will help us ensure a variety of viewpoints and opinions are heard.

Your honest feedback is appreciated by **March 23rd**. Thank you for completing the survey and sharing your experience with the student academic placement process.

Appendix M

Information & Consent for Participation

Dear Parents and Students:

A team of doctoral students from the Leadership and Learning in Organizations program at Vanderbilt University is investigating the placement process at West Genesee High School as a capstone project. The doctoral students wish to examine the current placement process and its implications at WGHS from a variety of stakeholder viewpoints. You are a stakeholder, an individual with a vested interest, and the team wishes to survey and/or interview you.

Parent/Guardian Survey available here: Upon completion of analysis of available data, as well as stakeholder surveys and interviews, the team hopes to develop a framework for the placement process.

The doctoral candidates are all professional educators having completed master's degrees in teaching and learning, curriculum development, and/or educational leadership with a combined forty years of classroom experience. The team consists of:

- Andrea Elliott is a former high school social studies teacher and current CEO & Founder of Exceeding Standards Inc., an educational non-profit, in Rochester, New York.
- Mary Rockrohr is the Instructional Supervisor of Science at Glenbrook North High School in Northbrook, Illinois.
- Matthew Williams teaches AP Biology and Chemistry at Science Hill High School in Johnson City, Tennessee.

What does participation look like?

Students will engage in a short survey (approximately 5 minutes) to provide general information regarding demographics, course selection, placement, and general feelings regarding their enrollment in advanced programming. Participation in the study may include an optional follow up in the form of individual or group interview to better understand survey responses; the interview portion would be expected to take no longer than 15 minutes. We ask that students provide their honest insight.

Why is the study taking place?

Our doctoral inquiry seeks to shed light on current issues within education. We are specifically

interested in placement processes for advanced programming. Student voice is essential in understanding the effectiveness of placement processes.

Further questions or concerns?

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the team at LLOCapstone@gmail.com .

Participation

Should you wish to opt out and **NOT** participate, please submit your electronic signature [here](#).

Conditions

- Even if you agree to participate now, you can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- You will not benefit directly from participating in this study.
- If interviewed, you will have the option to agree to be audio recorded.
- Any student data considered will remain completely anonymous (all identifying factors including student name and ID number will be eliminated prior to review).
- Data will be stored as received until August 15, 2023, then destroyed.

Appendix N
Qualitative Data Analysis

Organizational Structures

<i>Organizational Structures</i>	
Question	Quote
<p>What is the current placement process including both policy and practice?</p>	<p>So Global 10 and there's State Exam at the end of Global 10 and I have two classes of that. I've got a 15 to 1. So it's me, a special education teacher, and usually a couple aids in there. And then I also teach a global 10 ell class. So English language learners. So half of that class is English language learners. (P4)</p> <p>, I do try to explain the balance aspect of it. That maybe they would be appropriate for a, region's level version of something because we don't want to, Overwhelm them as they are transitioning to a new building and maybe I encourage having the conversation with the teacher. Why they augmented for a certain class. So a recommendation primarily does come from the discussions between the student and the teacher. (P5)</p> <p>But for the most part, it's the middle school. (who determines incoming placement) (P5)</p> <p>, when students are going from 8th, eighth grade, the schedules pretty set for the most part. There aren't a lot of you know, you have to take Earth science. Everybody takes Earth science. Everybody takes either algebra or Math 8. So our students are actually recommended for accelerated math going into seventh grade. There is a little bit of fluidity there. So we have some students who maybe miss the opportunity but we've tutored them and given them some extra support. So they could go into algebra, you know, going into eighth grade. So we have I'm sorry, going into ninth grade, (P7)</p> <p>the where we have to get some teacher input is with English and with social studies. So most of our students go into what we call nine R, which is your standard English or social studies that they've been used to. But some students are recommended for enriched which is just more challenging, more in-depth and set Foundation for some AP, work, down the road. (P7)</p> <p>“they (teachers) can have conferences and individual students. If a teacher chooses to, but there's no form or paper” (P6)</p> <p>“. I put it into the student management system. When the student goes to meet with their counselor for their schedule, they find out their recommendations. They tell their counselor what they want to take.” (P6)</p> <p>“Although there's been official denials of this, we do get the feeling that like kids are pushed into certain classes over another.” (P6)</p> <p>TCS disconnect: “I don't necessarily know that teachers know what happens when the counselors meet with their students.” (P6)</p>

History of no paper trail: “It wasn't until a couple of years ago that counselors started to require parents to send an email and not just call because they wanted to have a paper trail.” (P6)

Can take class if not recommended: “I have kids in AP world this year, lots of them who are not recommended for AP world and it might not have been not because they weren't academically bright.” (P6)

the official and paper process even varies for eighth going into ninth. So we have teacher recommendations about feel students will do well but if a student advocates and you know, does not agree with, like to do something different. And then we always look at that and what the student and Parent support, what they want. Will override that teacher recommendation process and same goes for the high school as well, so teachers will make recommendations prior to the course selection process, but students can over what the teacher feels would be the best fit for a student, so, Virtual talk about those recommendations with the student, but it ultimately is the choice of the student and the parent. (P7)

the initial recommendation, that's made the feedback that's given. you know, it creates a framework that students work from so, (P7)

No knowledge of placement process if student transfers in after 8th grade (P3)

Lack of knowledge after placement: “The ninth grade teachers don't know that that student is in AP World, unless I show them my class list.” (P6)

- “how is it that the ninth grade teachers never know if their recommendations were followed?” (P6)
- “They're [admin] saying, Well, you know, recommendations are tracking kids. Well, how do we know that? Because I can't, I don't have the data on which of my kids were recommended for AP world versus which of my kids voted and who has been more successful, but I would keep that data if I had access to it. Does that make sense?”
- “And if they ended up getting an override, they end up getting an override. But it should be like, then that ninth grade teacher should get a notification.” (P6)
- CHANGE: TRACK THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLACEMENTS?

some teachers, are very good about having that placement process be a conversation. Right. This is why I'm recommending you for this right now because I see this in you and I want to see it continue to grow or this is why I'm not recommending you for And, and I want to see this happen first because I want to make sure when you get into that class that you have all the tools in your toolkit. So, the placement process I think can be very black and white for student. If those conversations aren't happening and there are we have several teachers who you know, it's placement processes and you guys are going to be working on this and I'm gonna be calling you the front of the room to have a little conversation. (P7)

About 30% have conversation (P7)

“when I teach my ninth graders, I help guide them to what course, they take the next year. What I think is appropriate for them and stuff like that.” (P5)

Often no switching tracks: “generally from my class they're not going from regular to AP the next year unless they are phenomenal. But usually those kids take enriched when they're freshmen.” (P5)

8th gr T recommends 9th gr courses

- “incoming 9th graders, their eighth grade teacher gets to recommend them for whether they take at least for social studies. It's either regular or enriched. Obviously, if they have an IEP then and, you know, 15 to one situation is gonna be better for them.” (P4)
- “eighth grade social studies teacher for example is going to determine what ninth grade social studies class they would be in whether that is the enriched level or the regents level.” (P3)

Reading and Writing matters for 8th placement convo:

- we also look at the student's strength in their reading and writing. That's not the only determining factor. But it's definitely something that we have those teachers look at. So for example, if a student is in enriched ninth grade global, they may or may not be in that same level for English class, they could be in the regents level for English class. So it's not like I said, it doesn't determine it, but it's just something that we ask them to look at. (P3)

So, can become advanced for other courses if advanced for one (P3)

No rubric or standardized doc at all: “we do not have a standardized document, teacher to teacher, we do not all use the same thing. And we have thought about that. But because our individual classes are also different, we're not lockstep, we don't want to be locked into that same, same formula” (P3)

- “their class average. And a lot of the teachers will look at the same thing, but we don't have it set in stone.” (P3)

Goal: “goal at West Genesee, that every student has the opportunity to take at least one of those (advanced) courses.” (P3)

“Cara, she has open arms” in reference to open enrollment in AP (P3)

Parents and students have “most power” in placement (P3)

Individuals have their own “checklist” → “I look at all of that data, then it doesn't always support what my original thought is. So I'm glad I do have a checklist for myself. And we all kind of have our own little checklist.” (P3)

Parents have “ultimate say:” “That's where they're going to be, but parents kind of getting their recommended students are recommended by their teachers. but then parents can supersede that and request that they be pushed up into the enriched or or not. so, the parents get the, the ultimate say” (P4)

9th gr T's not in conversation (P4)

Parents do not request regents over advanced (P4)

According to Principal (P2):

- As it stands the process begins in eighth grade; students meet with their counselors and are recommended by their teachers for either regents (in NYS that's regents, other states might call it "regular" track) or enriched.
- Teacher recommendations carry weight
- At the same time, they never say no to a kid (but noted that this requires either the student to really be driven or have an involved parent)
- Wonders how the eighth grade point of evaluating affects boy's enrollment (for example, generally boys are less mature and might not advocate for themselves even if they have the ability); said typically more girls than boys in advanced programming
- Acknowledged that kids tend to stay in the tracks in which they were initially recommended
- Three levels: regents, enriched, AP starting in 10th grade
- Of core classes only advanced high school credit class offered in 8th grade is algebra (out of approx 350 students; 120 take Algebra I)
- No complimentary earth science at 8th grade
- AP is not the only focus; dual enrollment classes with SUPA (Syracuse University Project Advance) and OCC (Onondaga Community College) (P2)

Recommendation convo example where T tells P that student is not sufficiently prepared for course:

- "I can recommend somebody but if the parents really want them to I'm like okay I mean that's I'm not gonna argue against and like you know, this is what I've seen. I show them what I've seen. I'm like and I say, but listen in the end like it's your choice. If you if you want to go that route, that's fine. But you they may need an extra support, you need may need to be, you know, provide help provide them and keep them on track. So I I give them kind of like my warning but my blessing like you know, you do what you want and I want nothing but the best for the kid. But these are the deficits. I see that you may want to be aware of." (P4)

T can encourage taking a higher course "And then those kids who are really super stellar. I'm like, you know, what are you doing here? Like you, you need to be in those higher level classes,..." (P4)

Grades influencing SS selection: "grade-grabbing is, you know all well and good and it's part of what you need to get into college nowadays" (P4)

Math and music influence where students placed: "math often and actually, our music program really, kind of determines where these kids are moving throughout the day." (P3)

Issue - preparation for advanced classes and differentiation in them: "You know, if I've got 20 students but you know, 10 of them are at a certain level. And, you know, I need

to make sure that I get them up to speed. So if I'm not necessarily reaching that top student, you're gonna try to do the whatever you can to diversify instruction and to give alternate instruction too. But, at that point, they have to be motivated to take those steps with that. So you risk them kind of not achieving where they could because they are kind of going to the lowest common denominator.” (P4)

Issue: That placement is or can be dependent upon conversations at home. WG has increasing poverty and changing demographics; large increase in single parent households, parent(s) who had bad school experiences and are then projecting that forward- all of those are contributing factors making it difficult to ‘get it right’ (P2)

Issue: do we challenge students enough → -”going through the motions” v. taking the “aggressive” track with each kid (are we pushing them enough?) (P2)

Change: involvement of teacher, parent, and student in placement convo: “So the parent, the teacher is definitely important in that, but it's it's the three-headed monster of, you know, teacher student and and parents as well. Like, you need to have all of them” (P4)

Change: have to use lower level courses to adequately prepare ALL students for success in advanced courses

Change: Having an actual written policy and process that follows that policy (TCS)

Change: teacher speak about their courses and actually talk to kids about offerings TCS

Change: Increase understanding of the process used by all teachers/departments to place students and increase communication with student and parents.TCS

Change: Have criteria/rubric of characteristics or abilities needed in order to be recommended for a class. Something that makes it a little more concrete for parents/students/counselors to understand. TCS

Change:A rubric to help determine placement. Less subjective.TCS

Change: use PLC to develop placement rubric? → “So our department we've started doing more of these professional learning communities” (P4)

IN response to relationship but this shows that some teachers do not have the conversation This topic isn't even discussed by me with my students. When recommending a placement, it is very rote - I'm to place them with the expectation they will pass their current class and move on to the next course in our flowchart. Very little flexibility is available as far as alternative course selections. TCS

I only have part in the placement process if asked directly by a counselor or student if they could take a certain course the following year. TCS

Change: I would change how the guidance office does it and how much influence parents have in the process. TCS

Change: I would change the time frame in which teachers recommend a class for a student. Usually this process happens in the beginning of the year but I think that we

	<p>should wait longer to see how the student performs in certain aspect of learning as a whole, and what their strengths and weaknesses are to ensure that they will receive the proper learning in their course selection in the upcoming year.SS</p> <p>Change: “Like a real process. But actually like one, it can't look, electronic stuff is great. But the thing is, we put recommendations out into the ether. And yes, you can say you know, oh, well, all teachers should, you know, conference with each of their kids. But like, I don't have anything tangible that I can like, show them. Right. Like, I don't have a you know, like, there's no form. There's no, there's nothing for them to see my signature on. There's nothing for me to check off. There's nothing tangible. And I understand that we're in a digital age. But sometimes kids need to see something tangible. And parents need to see something tangible.</p> <p>And the only time that there is something tangible is that if a kid wants to drop out of AP world, then I see the reason. Then I see like a form that I have to sign off on. Why isn't the form there for the kid get into AP world? Why is the form there for the kid to drop AP world? That makes no sense to me.” (P6)</p> <p>Change: I would like to see more interaction between the school/student/parent before, during, and at the conclusion of the selection/placement process. PS</p> <p>2 students said they should increase the GPA differential to account for advanced coursework SS</p> <p>11 students said they feel stuck in the track they are in or cannot change their minds after the school year begins SS</p>
<p>How does the school culture impact the placement process?</p>	<p>Teachers feel like they need to gate keep and only rec students who “fit the mold” (P1) WGHS pushes for balance - recognizing that academics is only a part of their life. (P1)</p> <p>expectations are built within different classes and I'm trying to think of a way to word that how umm they are lumped together and it does keep students around the same. (P5)</p> <p>Oftentimes put you on a path that surrounds you with other people on that same path and these students are lumped together even as far back as Like I said, eighth grade are they in algebra one and starting ahead, then that cohort often sticks together until senior year, not necessarily the best of friends. But constantly around one another, while other one other students who aren't as you... (P5)</p> <p>we did for many years, push everybody has to have at least one college class in there to, you know, better prep yourself for admissions and the future.(P5)</p> <p>another problem that I do kind of see is if a student is starting algebra 1 and 8th grade versus waiting until they get to the high school for algebra or even our pre-algebra class, they tend to be recommended across the board for enriched the advanced everything saying Hey you don't need to study hall. You can full, you know, have a full schedule</p>

	<p>and not have a break in the day, but if you're not in that cohort of taking the advanced math, they don't seem to be recommended for any But that's not really house (P5)</p> <p>little bit of pressure. If a lot of your friends are doing that that you want to do that as well.(P7)</p> <p>I think the students think about is, this is what I'm used to, this is what I've had growing up through the seventh, eighth grade. Most students take this. So if I just stay on this, this is my, you're kind of your standard path. (P7)</p> <p>chorus, you know, those courses that are technically open to everybody. But we'd like to get the best of the best and the brightest of the brightest. and those tend to be the conversations (P7)</p> <p>Admin moving to eliminate enriched courses:“there's a big movement through our administration to, to maybe get rid of like the enriched program. Get written and I, I don't know. I kind of think. To a certain degree. It's it's Good to have kids who are motivated, you know, so you can address those kids so you aren't losing those.” (P4)</p> <p>Change:Once a student gets into enriched, they seem to stay there, even if they are struggling. That should change. TCS</p> <p>Change: I would merge English 9E and 9R and I would merge Social Studies 9E and 9R TCS</p> <p>Change: That we examine the amount of advanced classes each student is taking in relation to what they can realistically manage.</p> <p>Students are different, teaching needs to change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Post-covid world where kids are still struggling socially to figure out, like, Oh, if you're not talking to me, I can take my phone out, right? Like, No. You know,…” ● So I'm not going to be the the old guy who shakes his fists of the kids, so it's okay. So like I have to change. The kids are gonna change, so I have to change to meet the kids. The kids have cell phones so it's like, all right, I can be the fuddy-dutty and fight the cell phones, but they're here to stay. So like,...how do I work with that and teach them the appropriate time to use them? And not because I have to be able to do that myself. Like I have to teach them how to be good adults. So I I don't know, it's the battle” (P4)
<p>How are the practices that align with the current placement process communicated to all stakeholders?</p>	<p>Change:[more communication] maybe middle year that way students are aware of what's out there because sometimes students don't even know until they step in our door in February. Of what they can take. So, a lot of our Is spent going over. Okay, here's everything that we have to offer. And it being the first time that they hear about these things. So more information that way students are [aware sooner and can consider throughout the school year] (P5)</p>

Communication by district to TCS about differentiation: “What we tell the school counselors in eighth grade and the eighth grade social studies teachers is that both levels enriched in regents, we are both looking to reach the exact same goals, we are using the same essential standards, we have some similar assignments. And we do have a uniform standard assessments and summative assessments. Our formative assessments are different, and that's based on the teacher in the class. And that changes every day, we do have some that are similar, but it's not. It's not it's not lockstep by any means. So we have the same goals. However, the major difference is the scaffolding that will happen between regents and enriched classes in order in order to reach those goals” (P3)

I was always a mentor to A new counselor I've had interns and practicum students. I've been the yearbook advisor. And right now I I facilitate a mentoring program or high school students, go to meet with eighth graders to just provide some support and preparation for transitions for next year. (P7)

Change: this is something that I think we are going to do, I, we need more parent nights, we need more parent nights of saying, Hey, these are our challenging courses. We would like to open them up to anybody, but we need you to have this information, right? We want you to advocate for your child because they're going to need your support. There or they're gonna need access to resources. They're gonna need to be able to stay after school or They're going to need that little bit of a push, so let's get you. (P7)

sometimes, you know, we tend to just, we tend to close students out just because we don't advertise enough. Right? What's out there? What's available and how it can benefit and what the challenges will be. So there's a little bit of mystery for some students who haven't Been you know that there aren't those conversations at home they're not the you know these are this is what I did as a child and this is what you're going to do, this is what your older brother did (P7)

Change Having an actual written policy and process that follows that policy TCS

Change I would set aside more time for student, parent and counselor communication and input but it would have to be independent of things that already take a significant amount of my time in order to build those relationships and foster academic growth. We do not have enough time to create recommendations and so this process is usually done quickly. TCS

Change: I wish we had a better way to disseminate information regarding more difficult course such as workload, class structure and difficulty level before teachers make their recommendations.

Change: teacher speak about their courses and actually talk to kids about offerings TCS

Change: Increase understanding of the process used by all teachers/departments to place students and increase communication with student and parents.TCS

Change: Have criteria/rubric of characteristics or abilities needed in order to be recommended for a class. Something that makes it a little more concrete for parents/students/counselors to understand. TCS

	<p>Change Parent/teacher communication and that a teacher's recommendation is based on what is observed in the classroom and that reality may be different from what a parent sees at home. TCS</p> <p>Change: I would make it easier to find out what classes you can take and should take based on your grade, recommendations, and future career path. SS</p> <p>22 Students mentioned the need to improve communication SS 12 parents mentioned the need to improve communication PS</p> <p>The school has never included us in placement decisions so I have no clue about the teacher's involvement or equity of the process PS</p> <p>There is zero communication between home & guidance/teachers about placement. While I believe ultimately it is between the student & teachers, it would be nice if parents were better informed on when the process of choosing classes is taking place & what exactly the student is recommended for before it happens so that discussions can happen at home if desired. PS</p> <p>I think WG does an excellent job communicating and offering a large variety of classes for placement. PS</p>
<p>Faculty and staff? Parents? Students?</p>	<p>That is where I'm unable to tell you how the middle school. (P5)</p> <p>I actually don't know confirmed, whether how whether they are. Mimicking each other. (They refers to 8th grade in and current student processes) (P5)</p> <p>They sound like they are from when we all meet in January. You know, where you meet with the student one-on-one they go through. So they work with this sheet, so they kind of go through the standard classes that they would be taking what they might be interested in, and that looks exactly like the conversations that we have with the other students moving forward. So they have a very similar roadmap but... (P5)</p> <p>If there was any drastic changes from when we met with the middle school counselors in January, to the summer, we do all meet again but more on a one-to-one basis where I meet specifically with the counselor that worked with my incoming students. (P5)</p> <p>ninth grade students. We start we start way back in. I want to say January communicating with the for their A year, we communicate with middle school counselors where we meet, we sit at a big round table, explain the courses to them and then the middle school counselors then go to their eighth graders. Our future ninth graders and do one-on-one scheduling with them. But this year, one of the counselors. And I went down for an eighth grade parent presentation night, where we discussed more about the classes, we have to offer at the high school. And kind of what the general path. (P5)</p> <p>They start their presentations for the our future, incoming 9th graders. Then we meet with the family and the February or March. I'm forgetting the exact date, but it was nice to physically, go and talk with the parents that will be working with for the next four years. And then, From then on it's really the middle school counselors handling the</p>

	<p>scheduling for when they get up here. So by the time we start discussing 9th grade orientation over the summer, they have their core selections already. (P5)</p>
<p>How are data and dialogue used to evaluate the current placement process and practices to ensure a standardized, coordinated placement of all students?</p>	<p>Reference to placing with demographics in mind (quoted in learner char below): So we are very cognizant of that and as a school system, where we're diving into those numbers to make sure that we are giving every kid an opportunity." (P4)</p> <p>Reference to stereotypes of advanced classes as a reason to improve diversity: "is that is what we want? Is that what we see in the classrooms? No, so we're working to get that to be more diverse." (P4)</p> <p>"don't think anybody's cognizantly like saying, Oh we're definitely gonna do this" (reference to addressing disparities in numbers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ^Change: increase opportunities to minority students in advanced classes (TCS) <p>Change: data drive placement process - "the data that that's what should be driving everything. So you can't fudge numbers. So like that's what we're looking at." to address demographic disparities in placement (P4)</p> <p>Eliminate advanced courses: "Our school is actually trying to move towards getting rid of the enriched and Regents in ninth grade. They've already gotten rid of it in ninth grade science, they would like to see it gone away with in English and social studies. But we have asked for data that shows that that would be best for our students who are trying to then take AP world. And we would like to see the data where students are successful in that environment and then continue to see success in AP world. And they have not provided that for us." (P3)</p> <p>Equity as reason to eliminate enriched: "a major reason why they would like to shift ninth grade social studies in English to everybody taking the same class is because of equity. And they have pulled all of our statistics to look at it boys versus girls in enriched versus regents, different races, especially special education status.... and they have looked at free and reduced lunch status. So socio economic status." (P3)</p>
<p>How do students and families engage in the placement process?</p>	<p>Change: Regardless of what the previous teacher or counselor recommends, if a parent wants their kid in a certain class, the kids goes into that class whether it's appropriate or not. TCS</p> <p>4 students mentioned they should decrease the parent and school pressure to take advanced classes SS</p> <p>8 parents mentioned they should have a voice in the process PS</p> <p>"lot of times parents want them in that class with that group of kids" (in reference to "dedicated group of SS" in advanced classes) (P4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents push even when students are not prepared: "sometimes they're not ready for it, but the parents want that."

<p>How can they currently participate?</p>	<p>Parent desire; Parent voice is the overwhelming driving force (P1) but I'm different now and I think I should be allowed that opportunity to continue to grow and when somebody shows that they are willing to advocate for themselves, I cannot say that enough that that self-advocacy piece (P5)</p> <p>I would be looking for a student to go have that conversation with that teacher and say Here's my case. Here's why I think I'm going to find success here (P5)</p> <p>During the transition I hear from Parents more than anything and then. Once the year starts. Sometimes I do have teachers reach out to me. Like why were they ever placed in this advance class? (P5)</p> <p>You know, it's that reading the body language looking at the face You know, How do we feel about this? What are your thoughts? So that's where that counsel. Student. Direction. Um, does come into play. (P7)</p> <p>students can over what the teacher feels would be the best fit for a student, so, Virtual talk about those recommendations with the student, but it ultimately is the choice of the student and the parent. (P7)</p> <p>I ask them to tell me what level to recommend them for. Generally speaking, their request matches my estimation TCS I think he has been able to advocate for the courses he enjoys, but also to challenge himselfPS</p> <p>Take ownership to challenge: "I think kids should essentially challenge himself in an environment like high school where you still have all these people are who are there to help you along the way." (P4)</p> <p>Parent push AP: "kids are social animals, they are gonna become whoever they are around" "that's why parents want their kids in AP classes because, you know, that is going to be the group. The peer group that they are in during the day. So they want to raise their level of academia as well" (P4)</p>
<p>What role have students and families played in the evolution of the process?</p>	
<p>Ideally, what role should students and families play in the evolution of the process?</p>	<p>We're looking at revamping well actually bringing back our mentorship program that got lost a couple years ago. So that is something that we've noticed a big need for because we Have this year, I want to say 90 new students throughout the year. So we are really looking for Mentorship program. We've had, you know, similar numbers leave the district but As for incoming people, I think it's So we are in need of starting something like that up again. (P5)</p> <p>Involve them! "It'd be great to have the teacher, the parent, and the student in the room together as they're deciding their placement, for the next year. but again, everything that</p>

	<p>would be, you know, More beneficial requires more time, and You know, which is at a premium.” (P4)</p>
<p>How do school faculty and staff participate in the evolution of the placement process?</p>	<p>P2: Considering moving overall placement evaluation for students to ninth grade (vs. current eighth grade), meaning that all students would enter ninth grade at a regents level and then be evaluated for advancement in their sophomore year</p>
<p>How can they <i>currently</i> participate?</p>	<p>I'm recommending that we hold and we watch and we see and then we regroup Talk again in June. (P7)</p> <p>I have more where it's like, no, You're going to take anybody who shows this interest, because the fact that they're showing this interest is broadening their horizons. (P7) (Context - if the class is really open to everyone then it's really open)</p> <p>Posing them to things that they wouldn't be exposed to otherwise and we're going to do this, and we're going to talk about differentiation, right? You You don't want to different. You want to have the best of the best but you need to differentiate. So this is, we can make this open to everybody. We don't you might not want to make it open to everybody but we do and... (P7)</p>
<p>What role have school faculty and staff played in the evolution of the process?</p>	<p>[Principal worked with CC to] help prep for students to directly funnel to micron. If that's something that they are interested. To really promote those types of jobs that will be popping up. (P5)</p> <p>they will not be ranked anymore. (P5)</p>
<p>Ideally, what role should school faculty and staff play in the evolution of the process?</p>	<p>Change: I would definitely love some more school-wide promotion and not just in your classes that are the enriched ones. Like, Hey, here are the electives that we have next year because somebody in that non-regions or regions class might also really be interested in [insert elective]. My also be interested in taking our financial accounting class that we have through a community college. (P5)</p> <p>The conversations we've been having a lot lately is is this because we want to create new opportunities or is this because we want to just have classes. (P7)</p> <p>create an open enrollment opportunity with support and Safety Nets Because we are high school. We're high school. So as much as we want to get that college level experience and exposure, we have to we have to create those opportunities and we have to provide that support and structure. (P7)</p> <p>T relationship with SS matters: “I know there's one kid I did not recommend for this year and he is struggling in AP this year. But like he he was always a very quiet kid, never really had much of a relationship with him in the classroom as well,…” (P4)</p>

	<p>Change: acknowledge the individual SS → “until you realize like every single kids an individual and you have to do what's best for that kid” (P4)</p> <p>Change: have SS create a portfolio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “ best thing is to to decide altogether to have like that portfolio, ready to go have a student, create their own portfolio, of what, you know, Why they thought they should take that class. I would Involve all of the, the stakeholders in that too. But unfortunately, you know, given time constraints and sizes and class size, and stuff like that, that just, that doesn't happen, but I would love to see that happen, more.” P4 <p>Work through the professional learning community and develop systems of using concrete data and comprehensive common assessments (P2)</p> <p>P3: “Oh, I would love to change the timing of it. Because we have to place these kids the first week of December. Yes. And so we are approximately 15 weeks into the school year. And so we're gathering our data for 15 weeks, but you know, you've got the honeymoon period for September and October. Then November, things start to get real. And so we've got a month of things getting real. So I would absolutely change the placement there ...the timing, so that it was well after the 20 week mark. We do have some flexibility. So I could certainly go back towards the end of the year and say, Actually, counselor, why...Student B, I think we really need to look at their placement. And I think we really need to make a move. And yes, I've spoken to the student and they agree or disagree, but I just don't feel like after 15 weeks, we really have the best picture of the student yet.”</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of students at placement decision time: “I have no idea why but it takes forever. I don't know. But it's a we won't even actually know our students until like the day before we get to school.” (P3)</p>
<p>How can biases (cultural, gender, historical, personal) be identified, and combatted?</p>	<p>In addition they [Minority groups] are not represented and there are cultural biases that exist in the organization (re:limited advocacy) (P1)</p> <p>Change: more promotion and promotion across the board, and not just to select Groups. (P5)</p> <p>getting such an influx of students that she is consistently pulled out of the classroom to do testing and stuff. Like At which she's phenomenal. She's wonderful. Does all that she can, but we're getting a lot of Ukrainian students. And also a lot of students who speak Arabic as well. (4)</p> <p>counseling department really tries to combat it. (foundations course) When we present to students, we say You're gonna, you're gonna take your own path and you're gonna find things that challenge you in several different areas. (P7)</p> <p>I think the message would be the same but the interpretation may be different. (P7)</p> <p>I tend to have that conversation more with teachers who I'm thinking about the teachers who teach like some of Electives where you can start early, you know, like we can start studio and art with our ninth graders. (starting convo so kids know where they want to</p>

	<p>end up so they can take prerecs - context is, if you don't ask questions or have parents that ask then you can't plan ahead.) (P7)</p> <p>Change: I admit, I don't know a lot of what goes into the placement process. However, I believe that a teachers recommendation should not be mandatory, as it might be biased, and that a student should know what type of teacher they might have as part of an influence in whether they would like to take a class.SS</p>
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Learner Characteristics

<i>Learner Characteristics</i>	
Question	Quote
What characteristics and data currently contribute to course placement?	<p>it's not just the grades, it's not just the types of courses, it's the whole person. So we really try to take that comprehensive whole person look and feed it into everything that we present to a student, (P5)</p> <p>Certainly colleges want to see that advance work (P4) -</p> <p>Students selecting “for the college exposure for the college readiness, but also to look good on a transcript to colleges.” (P4)</p> <p>Advanced students “push themselves” (P4)</p> <p>Behavior creates a different environment in advanced classes: “[advanced students are] a more dedicated, you know, set of students, maybe, you know, behaviorally. It's a different kind of atmosphere,” (P4)</p> <p>Change: Parent/teacher communication and that a teacher's recommendation is based on what is observed in the classroom and that reality may be different from what a parent sees at home.TCS</p> <p>Change: Placing students in courses that align with their individual abilities, goals and interests, rather than district expectations. TCS</p> <p>Demographics: “And one thing we're looking at, as a school system is like, okay. So, who's taking these classes? Do we have a proportionate number of students of color, taking these classes? We have a proportionate number of people, especially in like the sciences and Math? You know, male versus female, taking a look at socioeconomic level too.” (P4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change: use data to actually address placement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “those are kind of the stereotypes. or, you know, the data is showing, that this is what's happening. I don't think anybody's cognizantly like saying, Oh we're definitely gonna do this” (P4) <p>Skills over behaviors: “I think our teachers in our department really are looking at skills more than behaviors.” (P3)</p>
<p>What academic and non-academic qualities factor into course placement?</p>	<p>No standardized guidelines; No rubric; Grade cut lines (P1) Concern that placement is actually based on “student behaviors” (P1) Student Placement is based on teacher rec and completion of prerequisite classes (P1) Typically there’s a grade level requirement (P1) They had a lot of energy, they had some extra to go around and that was just because they had a very tumultuous home life. They didn't know how to cope with it. And with some mental health services, they became a different person,(P5)</p> <p>It seems that the main pushback that I do receive from class placements would be maybe how they their behaviors presented themselves in classes in eighth grade and that That I tend to see like when they come up. Oh these are the the goofballs that have a disciplinary record that. Oh, they might not be challenged. Maybe that's the reason why they're being so disruptive or chatty or anything because Maybe they're not being challenged enough. So I often see those with the behavioral challenges in quote, unquote, dub, the standard or not enriched version of courses (P5)</p> <p>teachers I know, sometimes are worried about being able to predict whether a student has that so they may look at past speed, they may look at hallway behaviors, they may look at attendance. They may look at past class scores and try to predict whether Student has it for that class. (P7)</p> <p>ounselors recognize that sometimes there's a there's a flashbulb moment. And we, That this course will be that flash. It for that student and that developmentally, they're going to be in a different place as 11th or 12th graders. Then they were as ninth and 10th graders as well. (p7)</p> <p>Teachers/counselors seemingly approve the children they deem qualified for advanced classes. A student may get lost in the cracks if they are smart and perhaps want to participate but don’t have the voice or the parental support to do so. Or, they may feel pushed into a higher level class because they’re smart, they feel like they have to take it, but struggle with the workload. My children are very vocal and pretty smart, we pay attention and are involved when we need to be, so we’ve let them make those decisions pretty much on their own based on their desires and what they feel will be best for them both mentally and academically. Our son for example was a 98 average student but knew AP Chemistry would really stress him out so opted not to take it. That’s ok. Teachers need to help watch for signs of all of it. We don’t see our kids in school so it’s hard to assess what they really can do, and want to do sometimes. PS</p> <p>Char for success in AP: Motivated, driven, able to handle workload, Advanced writing and reading comprehension ability, demonstrates interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you're looking for is that student is somebody who is self motivated, self-driven and is able to handle the workload on their own. They've usually

got advanced writing ability, advanced reading and they, you know, they're, they're reading comprehension is something, they read it once and its in there. They've got it. So I mean, that's If you're taking like a college level class, which is an AP, you are expected to be, you need to be that motivated, advanced student to be able to take that class. (P4)

- “It's it's Good to have kids who are motivated,” but we have to make sure we reach them (in reference to admin removing regents v. enriched) (P4)
- “they're motivated, they're turning in their work on time up, they want to be there, they're coming in with a good attitude. Then yeah, I'm gonna recommend them.” (P6)
- Writing ability “definitely has to be above [...] beyond that of an average student” (P4)
- “ the writing that [...] I think that just shows me everything else I need to know.” (P4)
- So we will look at their class average. We will look at their strength in writing. And we'll use our assessments throughout the year to do that. We will look at their analysis skills and their critical thinking skills. We'll look at if they are able to do tasks individually, or if they are relying on other students. So those are probably the main things we look at. And you know, when I am looking at this, I may be thinking of a student.” (P3)
- **Drive + Interest = success:** “somebody who's driven towards academics and learning like somebody who is interested in other things. Like, You know, I'll bring up a topic and they come back in and, you know, they've done some sort of outside research like, Oh, I was just sitting at home and I, you know, I saw about this or so it, you know, just general, interest has got to be Has got to be there as well, like it, you know, I'm not. I'm not gonna push them to do this, if that's not something they're interested in, it's got to be something that they're interested in, so they can be successful.” (P4)
 - “nice to see those kids who take courses because it's something they're really interested in and want to learn about and that's gonna be that's gonna be the difference.”

Writing as difference between AP and regular: “I believe that their writing ability shows their their ability for reading comprehension and that's and, you know, the depth of their investigation that definitely is what essentially to me sets, the standard between AP and the regular.” (P4)

Reason to not recommend → behavior: “But because the teacher, their ninth grade teacher was worried about maturity issues, worried about workload issues, worried about attendance issues, things like that.” (p6)

Need passion + behavior: “Yeah, not most of them (students with C's as freshman but are 'smart') are not super successful. They're not. Right, like they're not. Because they struggle with the workpiece. Right, like, they're not super successful. Well, I say no. But they have to have the behaviors as well. Like, it can't just be that I like history, they have to have the behaviors.”

Change: T challenge students with demonstrated ability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “if I know kid has the ability, they're just not showing it. They're not going that next step. I will like pull them aside and encourage them. Okay, show me what you got on this one. Push them and push them and push them. But if I have to continue to push, then maybe this isn't where is best for them. But I do have students who like write me way more than I need. And the depth is on that. And those kids, I have no problem encouraging them to take.” (P4)
<p>Can academic and non-academic qualities be standardized to provide consistency among teachers and grade levels for subsequent placement?</p>	<p>The conversations we've been having a lot lately is is this because we want to create new opportunities or is this because we want to just have classes. (P7)</p> <p>Change: Increase understanding of the process used by all teachers/departments to place students and increase communication with student and parents. TCS</p> <p>Change: Have criteria/rubric of characteristics or abilities needed in order to be recommended for a class. Something that makes it a little more concrete for parents/students/counselors to understand. TC</p> <p>Change: A rubric to help determine placement. Less subjective. TCS</p> <p>Change: Show a clear and understandable rubric of the minim standards to reach height placement. To work towards a goal. Students should be able to pick SS</p> <p>16 students mentioned the whole student and improved guidance (through a solid relationship) should be taken into account with regards to changing the process SS</p> <p>10 Students said they'd like to see consistency in the process and instruction so the process to get reced for advanced classes was more consistent SS</p>
<p>How does the student-teacher relationship impact the placement process?</p>	<p>but that reputation stuck with some of the teachers that they worked with (P5) sometimes teachers have repeat students and maybe a perception of a student from a while back or something that they did. That wasn't An accurate representation of the student. Clouds a recommendation sometimes. (P5)</p> <p>It's if I know I have a relationship with this specific teacher, I will do anything I can to get into this class, even if I despise science, I just enjoy being around this person because I know they push me each and every day. (P5)</p> <p>think that it just lends itself to having a comfort level to having those hard conversations with students. Those motivating conversation with students, you know, it's because I think it happens. Little bit more naturally for some teach. anyway, so to sit down and just Recap or reflection is just, yes, of course, this is what I would do. And also I think that It's some teachers recognize putting in. (P7)</p>

teachers I know, sometimes are worried about being able to predict whether a student has that so they may look at past speed, they may look at hallway behaviors, they may look at attendance. They may look at past class scores and try to predict whether Student has it for that class. (p7)

ounselors recognize that sometimes there's a there's a flashbulb moment. And we, That this course will be that flash. It for that student and that developmentally, they're going to be in a different place as 11th or 12th graders. Then they were as ninth and 10th graders as well. (p7)

Some students respond positively to being told how they would need to change their behaviors to be successful in a more challenging class. My relationship with a student helps inform whether or not they would be open to such a conversation and if they would follow through with that next year. Other students are not ready to hear constructive criticism or to respond by changing their pattern of behavior. TCS

If they willing to out in the effort, I would recommend them for a more challenging course TCS - this is the response to this exact question

If they know their goals it might affect things a little This is the response to this exact question. TCS

Very little. This topic isn't even discussed by me with my students. When recommending a placement, it is very rote - I'm to place them with the expectation they will pass their current class and move on to the next course in our flowchart. Very little flexibility is available as far as alternative course selections. TCS

But if it is positive in nature than I may tend toward a more favorable recommendation. TCS

My conversation with students can help determine their motivation and interest in a specific class as well as consider balancing their schedule. TCS

Knowing students better allows for more appropriate placement TCS

If I know them as a student I am more able to recommend them for placement for next year. I only have part in the placement process if asked directly by a counselor or student if they could take a certain course the following year. TCS

As a counselor, the more I know about a student the better I can advocate for them based on their interests. TCS

By getting to know the student, we can identify interests, capability, and capacity to complete the proper workload in a balanced approach. TCS

The more I know about a student's life and commitments outside of school, the more easily I can recommend a balance of classes (average vs. advanced, etc) TCS

If you have a strong relationship with students, it can impact where you place them. TCS

If I know they have a passion, an interest, are willing to do the required work and more I will suggest a placement that is reflective of that. I learn about both the educational needs of a student through building relationships. I very frequently recommend a student for a placement that doesn't just move them on to the same level as they

currently are in. TCS

I think most of the time the teacher just wants what's best for us as students SS
Having a stronger relationship with a teacher causes them to place you in classes they know will be right for you rather than the kids they don't know as well.SS

Having a good relationship with your teacher helps them be more understanding.SS
if your good friends with them it might impact you in a good way but it's not fair for other students.SS

If you have a better relationship with your teacher and you talk to them about their placement decisions, it might impact the outcome.SS

Also, if a teacher has a very positive relationship, they might recommend students for classes they are not equipped for.

SS

If a teacher hasn't been able to recognize and connect with a student on a personal level, it's more difficult for them to recognize the student's work ethic and potential.

Therefore, a student who may be extremely quiet may not be recognized as a student who would excel in advanced classes because they may have a distant relationship from a teacher. SS

The opinion on your lifestyle could depend on what they want for you school wise.SS

You can be a good student, do your homework, and participate, but if you don't meet their standards, they might tell you you aren't good enough for an AP class. SS

if you have a good relationship with a teacher you may be more likely to be placed in a class that is better suited for you if they understand you and the way you do things but if you aren't vocal and communicative with them you are likely going to be placed in classes that reflect the grades that you get.SS

If your teacher gets to know you personally, they might know which path you want to take and know what is best for you.SS

MOST of the teachers I've had would recommend you even if they didn't like how you acted.SS

your participation and communication, willingness to do well in the class will make their decision easier to decide whether you participate/have a good relationship or not.SS

More a teacher knows about you the more insight they have on making their decision.SS

Change: I think my counselor and teacher should be more involved. I feel like they don't really know me but also don't try to. I think that then they will better understand how I am doing and what I should take SS

Change: I would change the quickness of it. It takes 10 or so minutes to make these choices. I think everyone should be talked to on a personal level and get to be put in the best area they belong in.SS

Change: them talking about it more, and also getting my counselor to know me well, and not just tell me things.SS

16 students mentioned the whole student and improved guidance (through a solid relationship) should be taken into account with regards to changing the process SS

Based on Surveys:

	Relationship Impact Responses Categorized		
	SS	PS	
	55	4	
	6		
	35	5	
	16	2	

<p>What characteristics and data <i>should</i> contribute to course placement?</p>	<p>Growth: Hey, here's how far, the student has come just in junior year alone. Let's give this person a shot, their senior year because they really are a different person. And everybody's entitled to that growth and to try something. (P5)</p> <p>when I'm looking at a student, who is sitting in front of me, and I see that they were recommended for an advanced course, and if somebody wasn't recommended in their expressing interest, that they want to the biggest one, I think, sinks or swims, it helps the student is their self-advocacy and willingness to make mistakes. (P5)</p> <p>focus on balance is everything because without balance other things like sports outside activities that you are really passionate about jobs your family, life, your social life. Those things might you know, be pushed to the side. If all you're doing is focusing on doing what's best for your transcript what will serve my application in the strongest way possible? Even though that's not what college are looking at now? (P5)</p> <p>As we start the scheduling season, we really pushed the, it's all about balance, don't worry what everybody else. doing this is your journey and that might include some years you have a study hall, some years you might pull back on levels even though you previously enrich versions of something. (P5)</p> <p>I think students should take advanced courses if they're interested and they want to continue to challenge themselves in a class setting that would do that where there are extra writing assignments. That would be a great reason for student to take those advanced classes. If especially, if you know (P5)</p> <p>you have somebody interested in becoming a lawyer Someday, I would say Great. Let's get you into some of our college-level social studies classes.(P5)</p> <p>students who really and students who want to get a feel for what may be like to be in a college level course, and have to really stretch themselves. I think that they get the most out of those AP courses. (P7)</p> <p>You're gonna, you're gonna take your own path and you're gonna find things that challenge you in several different areas. So, it's all about finding that balance and challenging yourself, where you feel equipped and you feel ready and then finding that balance in other courses, that may be challenging. So we try really hard to just paint a</p>
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	<p>picture for students that high school is about your own individual path and it's about reaching those long-term goals and doing that but in different ways. (P7)</p> <p>You need to have that tenacity where if something is hard, you're not going to give up. So it's that growth mindset. So you may not be the best at everything in that class to get you where you're going to Exc. all, but if you're finding that you're struggling in one area, whether it's, you know, reading speed or you're writing ability, that you're going to stick to it and you're going to be after school with the teacher, you're going to be finding some of those resources on your (P7)</p> <p>that internal motivation and that drive. And and that really is The founding, you know, principle of being successful in those classes. (P7)</p> <p>If they willing to out in the effort, I would recommend them for a more challenging course TCS - this is the response to this exact question TCS</p> <p>If they know their goals it might affect things a little. TCS</p> <p>By getting to know the student, we can identify interests, capability, and capacity to complete the proper workload in a balanced approach. TCS The more I know about a student's life and commitments outside of school, the more easily I can recommend a balance of classes (average vs. advanced, etc) TCS If I know they have a passion, an interest, are willing to do the required work and more I will suggest a placement that is reflective of that. I learn about both the educational needs of a student through building relationships. I very frequently recommend a student for a placement that doesn't just move them on to the same level as they currently are in. TCS I want to encourage students to follow their interests TCS Have more cross-departmental conversations, to include counselors, to help ensure the "whole" student is considered when making course recommendations. TCS</p> <p>16 students mentioned the whole student and improved guidance (through a solid relationship) should be taken into account with regards to changing the process SS</p> <p>Time management & self-advocacy: “you have to figure out how that when you look at all of the data on freshman year success in college, it's time management and ability to self advocate that are the determining factors for success,” (P6)</p>
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<i>Student Self-Assessment</i>	
Question	Quote
How do students participate in the placement process?	Minority groups are known to have limited advocacy and do not understand the consequence of decisions (P1)

	<p>And sometimes, even when a student expresses, I don't want to be doing this. It's my parents or my guardians. Well, it's what I think I should be doing. Because my parents want me. even though I really do noy Want to do this. (P5)</p> <p>really does depend on how Receive that information and where they take it. So you know. I'm students take it as this is what they said, this is what I'm going to do and other students, if their personality is such that they you know, they want to forge their own path. They're not going to listen to that, they're going to listen to what's within them more. So, I do feel like there is some, you know, informal subtle. you know, decision making for (P7)</p> <p>21 students said they'd like to see an improved student voice component SS</p>
<p>What criteria do students use to evaluate their abilities?</p>	<p>self-esteem their where they think they can see their future going even something as I mean not really small is changing one class but yeah, one class can do that for a child. (P5)</p> <p>I would be worried but I ultimately whatever the kid thinks that they can do, I want to Sort them and say, okay. Let's try it. I've had a couple students this year that you know, advocated for themselves when they weren't recommended for AP World. (P5)</p> <p>there's the student who says, I, you know, I want to do. I I just want to challenge myself, I think. Can do it. It may I may use my score, I may not use my score, my friends may be doing it, they may not be doing it but I like the subject. I want to be challenged and I and I think I have the AB So it could be both, you know, intrinsic or x extrinsic reasons. (P7)</p> <p>I think for the most part students who are forward-thinking and want to be as competitive as possible for college, sign up to take AP classes. I think that there's a little bit of keeping up with peers. Right? We want to stay in the same social group and in that same friends cohort. (P7)</p> <p>if you want to challenge yourself, Want to take on some of those opportunitie (P7)</p> <p>Change:If us as students had the opportunity to choose if we want to take an AP class based on the confidence in ourselvesSS</p> <p>Passion/Interest: “if a student loves history, maybe their academics don't support it, but if they have this love for global history, go ahead and let them try it. So some students will take these AP classes because they love the course,” (P3)</p> <p>Challenge themselves: “ ultimately, it's up to the student and the parent and the counselor. So students can take it because they're really interested in the course, students take it because they want to challenge themselves” (P3)</p> <p>Weighted grades / transcript: “weighted grade, they want that. And they also take it because it looks good on their college transcripts.” (P3)</p>

How do students determine their desired placement?

If the student has the drive and is an advocate for their programming (P1)

In reference to selecting AP: “But I would honestly say more peer pressure, siblings, parents over genuine interest.” (P6)

- “taking AP world because your girlfriend, your boyfriend, your best friend, your brother, your sister, your second cousin twice removed to get like, that's not a good reason. And I promise you, no college is going to accept you solely because you took AP world th”

“ This is the schedule I think I want and they should have to have their ninth grade teacher sign off on their courses for next year.” (P6)

I'm going to be applying for jobs that want to see this challenge but then where we fall into a trap (P5)

so the question that I get asked thousands of times a day is, Is this gonna look good? Will this look good on my college application? (P5)

I think for the most part students who are forward-thinking and want to be as competitive as possible for college, sign up to take AP classes. I think that there's a little bit of keeping up with peers. Right? We want to stay in the same social group and in that same friends cohort. (P7)

Students should not doing it just because somebody says, I think you should do it for this one class because that adds up and... (P7)

“great to get the exposure to the higher level, and more independent learning.” (P4)

Can you handle the challenge of balancing workload? → “test yourself on if you are able to do it with distractions of life outside of the classroom and also be able to negotiate the amount of time required to do well in those classes too.” (P4)

Influence of stereotypes or peers: “You see them, trying to keep up with the Joneses.” (P3)

Influence of T: “kids that moved up to enriched who have thanked me afterwards like, you know, thank you very much and I appreciate that. You know, you let me know.” (P4)

Change: If us as students had the opportunity to choose if we want to take an AP class based on the confidence in ourselvesSS

Change:I would make it easier to find out what classes you can take and should take based on your grade, recommendations, and future career path.SS

“I also have students who have told me I don't want anything to do with AP. And they may be off the charts academically. And so I'll say to them, I'm still going to recommend you for it.” (P3)

<p>What characteristics do students think are used to determine placement?</p>	<p>MOST of the teachers I've had would recommend you even if they didn't like how you acted. SS your participation and communication, willingness to do well in the class will make their decision easier to decide whether you participate/have a good relationship or not.SS the closer you are (relationship) the more recommendations to more rigorous classes.SS If they don't believe in you as a student then they won't recommend you for advanced classesSS if the student isn't the teachers favorite they won't get placed in the higher class.SS You can be a good student, do your homework, and participate, but if you don't meet their standards, they might tell you you aren't good enough for an AP class. SS If a teacher hasn't been able to recognize and connect with a student on a personal level, its more difficult for them to recognize the student's work ethic and potential. Therefore, a student who may be extremely quiet may not be recognized as a student who would excel in advanced classes because they may have a distant relationship from a teacher. SS</p>
<p>How does a student's current placement impact his/her/their academic identity?</p>	<p>sure it was scary at first because they aren't used to being in a class that, you know, constantly being called on, having way more outside work (P5)</p> <p>. If I have a study hall, people are very worried about having study halls in their schedule. That is something I assure them. It will not make a break you when you're applying to college, if anything, it's going to help. (P5)</p> <p>: I want to be a ranked higher in my class, which I say, we're trying to shift away from that, because we are getting rid of our class rank for the sophomore cohorts. (P5)</p> <p>I (Counselor) think everybody should be able to get to high school and Become a new version of themselves (P5)</p> <p>I don't think that there's a stigma with being in the regents, I think that there is pressure. Sometimes to go above and beyond that, but I do think that there is stigma when students take level class that does not have a regents exam attached to it.and you know, in and that starts to happen especially a students get into 11th and 12th grade (P7)</p> <p>those recommendations sometimes can motivate or shut down a student. So on two different levels, right? I wasn't recommended. So why bother or I was recommended? So now my work is done. So we always worry. (P7)</p> <p>Change: I would make sure the student gets more freedom and choice, and not to feel forced to do certain things. The placement puts us away from friends, now it may cause some distractions but students need people to rely on. Some students have trouble creating partners for projects, and can't just "make friends." As high schoolers, it is really hard for a student to talk to anyone due to cliques and personalities.SS</p>

	<p>Belief in label of regents v. enriched:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “a kid decides that, you know, or beliefs in that label, they go I'm just a regents kid. You can start to see that being reflected in the amount of time, they put in , the expectations they place upon themselves. So that's something you know.” (P4)• “As educators were always trying to, you know, push a little bit harder. But you know this happens, obviously the kids amongst themselves. Kids know which kids are what level and you know they fall into those those traps.” (P4)
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- 27 students said there was no need for a change for the process; 4 parents said no need for change

Appendix O

General Interpretations

Conceptual Frame Code: <i>Organizational Structures</i>		
Question	Quotes	General Interpretations
What is the current placement process including both policy and practice?	<p>“They're [admin] saying, well, you know, recommendations are tracking kids. Well, how do we know that? Because I can't, I don't have the data on which of my kids were recommended for AP world versus which of my kids voted and who has been more successful, but I would keep that data if I had access to it. Does that make sense?” (P6)</p> <p>“Some teachers are very good about having that placement process be a conversation - about 30% have the conversation.” (P7)</p> <p>“Although there's been official denials of this, we do get the feeling that, like, kids are pushed into certain classes over another.” (P6)</p> <p>“We do not have a standardized document, teacher to teacher, we do not all use the same thing. And we have thought about that. But because our individual classes are also different, we're not lockstep, we don't want to be locked into that same, same formula” (P3)</p> <p>We use “their class average - and a lot of the teachers will look at the same thing, but we don't have it set in stone.” (P3)</p> <p>“I look at all of that data, then it doesn't always support what my original thought is, so I'm glad I do have a checklist for myself. And we all kind of have our own little checklist.” (P3)</p> <p>“That's where they're (students) going to be, but parents kind of getting their recommendation - students are recommended by their teachers, but then parents can supersede that and request that they be pushed up into the enriched or or not. So, the parents get the - the ultimate say.” (P4)</p>	<p>O1. The rising 9th-grade recommendation process is isolated from high school</p> <p>O2. Placement conversation between T and S is optional</p> <p>O3. Students lack understanding of placement after recommendation</p> <p>O4. Individual teachers prioritize their own “checklists” to guide placement decisions</p> <p>O5. Power: P/G > S > TC</p>
How does the school culture impact the	<p>“Oftentimes put you on a path that surrounds you with other people on that same path and these students are lumped together even as far back as, like I said, eighth grade. Are</p>	<p>O6. Placement groups students with similar academic & social</p>

<p>placement process?</p>	<p>they in algebra one and starting ahead? Then that cohort often sticks together until senior year, not necessarily the best of friends, but constantly around one another, while...” (P5)</p> <p>“There's a big movement through our administration to, to maybe get rid of, like, the enriched program. Get written and I, I don't know - I kind of think - to a certain degree, it's, it's good to have kids who are motivated, you know, so you can address those kids so you aren't losing those.” (P4)</p> <p>“Another problem that I do kind of see is if a student is starting Algebra 1 in 8th grade versus waiting until they get to the high school for Algebra or even our pre-Algebra class, they tend to be recommended across the board for enriched, the advanced everything, saying, ‘Hey you don't need to study hall. You can fill, you know, have a full schedule and not have a break in the day.’ But if you're not in that cohort of taking the advanced math, they don't seem to be recommended for any...” (P5)</p>	<p>characteristics into cohorts</p> <p>O7. Pressure to select all enriched/advanced classes</p> <p>O8. Tension between admin seeking to eliminate advanced classes and offering course selections for “motivated” students.</p>
<p>How are the practices that align with the current placement process communicated to all stakeholders?</p>	<p>“Sometimes, you know, we tend to just, we tend to close students out just because we don't advertise enough, right? What's out there? What's available and how it can benefit and what the challenges will be. So there's a little bit of mystery for some students who haven't been, you know, that there aren't those conversations at home, they're not the, you know, these are, this is what I did as a child, and this is what you're going to do, this is what your older brother did” (P7)</p> <p>“There is zero communication between home and guidance/teachers about placement. While I believe ultimately it is between the student and teachers, it would be nice if parents were better informed on when the process of choosing classes is taking place and what exactly the student is recommended for before it happens so that discussions can happen at home if desired.” (PS)</p>	<p>O9. Lack of communication and guidance about options, opportunities, and requirements to P/S</p> <p>O10. Lack of communication between TCS and P/S</p>
<p>Faculty and staff? Parents? Students?</p>	<p>“They start their presentations for the, our future, incoming 9th graders, ten we meet with the family in the February or March - I'm forgetting the exact date - but it was nice to physically go and talk with the parents that will be working with for the next four years. And then, From then on it's really the middle school counselors handling the scheduling for when they get up here. So, by the time we start discussing 9th grade orientation over the summer they have their core selections already.” (P5)</p>	

<p>How are data and dialogue used to evaluate the current placement process and practices to ensure a standardized, coordinated placement of all students?</p>	<p>“The data, that, that's what should be driving everything. So you can't fudge numbers. So like that's what we're looking at.” to address demographic disparities in placement (P4)</p> <p>Reference to stereotypes of advanced classes as a reason to improve diversity: “Is that, is what we want? Is that what we see in the classrooms? No, so we're working to get that to be more diverse.” (P4)</p> <p>“[I] don't think anybody's cognizantly like saying, ‘Oh we're definitely gonna do this.’” (reference to addressing disparities in numbers) (P4)</p>	<p>O11. Desire to use data to drive/influence placement process</p> <p>O12. Equity as reason to eliminate advanced courses</p>
<p>How do students and families engage in the placement process?</p>	<p>“[A] lot of times parents want them in that class with that group of kids” (in reference to “dedicated group of students” in advanced classes) (P4)</p> <p>“Sometimes they're not ready for it, but the parents want that.” (P4)</p>	<p>O13. Parents can push / influence placement outcome (regardless of preparation or desire by S)</p>
<p>How can they <i>currently</i> participate?</p>	<p>“During the transition, I hear from parents more than anything and then, once the year starts, sometimes I do have teachers reach out to me, ‘Like why were they ever placed in this advance class?’” (P5)</p>	<p>O14. Parental voice main driving force</p>
<p>What role have students and families played in the evolution of the process?</p>		<p>O15. There is no process used to collect formal feedback</p>
<p>Ideally, what role should students and families play in the evolution of the process?</p>	<p>“Involve them! ‘It'd be great to have the teacher, the parent, and the student in the room together as they're deciding their placement for the next year. but again, everything that would be, you know, more beneficial requires more time, and you know, which is at a premium.’” (P4)</p>	
<p>How do school faculty and staff participate in the evolution of the placement process?</p>	<p>“Considering moving overall placement evaluation for students to ninth grade (vs. current eighth grade), meaning that all students would enter ninth grade at a regents level and then be evaluated for advancement in their sophomore year.” (P2)</p>	<p>O15. There is no process used to collect formal feedback</p> <p>O16. Admin seeks to eliminate policy endorsements for advanced courses (ie eliminate class rank, discuss value of weighted grades)</p>

How can they <i>currently</i> participate?		
What role have school faculty and staff played in the evolution of the process?		
Ideally, what role should school faculty and staff play in the evolution of the process?	<p>“I would definitely love some more school-wide promotion, and not just in your classes that are the enriched ones. Like, ‘Hey, here are the electives that we have next year,’ because somebody in that non-regions or regions class might also really be interested in [insert elective]. May also be interested in taking our financial accounting class that we have through a community college.” (P5)</p> <p>Work through the professional learning community and develop systems of using concrete data and comprehensive common assessments (P2)</p> <p>“Oh, I would love to change the timing of it,. because we have to place these kids the first week of December. And so we are approximately 15 weeks into the school year, and so we're gathering our data for 15 weeks, but you know, you've got the honeymoon period for September and October. Then November, things start to get real. And so, we've got a month of things getting real. So I would absolutely change the placement there, the timing, so that it was well after the 20 week mark. We do have some flexibility, so, I could certainly go back towards the end of the year and say, ‘Actually, counselor, why - Student B, I think we really need to look at their placement. And I think we really need to make a move. And yes, I've spoken to the student and they agree or disagree,’ but I just don't feel like after 15 weeks, we really have the best picture of the student yet.” (P3)</p> <p>“[The] best thing is to decide altogether to have like that portfolio, ready to go have a student, create their own portfolio, of what, you know, why they thought they should take that class. I would involve all of the, the stakeholders in that too. But unfortunately, you know, given time constraints and sizes and class size, and stuff like that, that just, that doesn't happen, but I would love to see that happen, more.” P4</p>	<p>O17. Increase school-wide promotion of all classes</p> <p>O18. Create open enrollment opportunities with safety nets</p> <p>O19. Leverage PLCs to develop placement criteria</p> <p>O20. S develop a portfolio to use in placement</p>
How can biases (cultural, gender,	In addition they [minority groups] are not represented and there are cultural biases that exist in the organization	O21. Promotion of coursework remains

historical, personal) be identified, and combatted?	(re:limited advocacy) (P1) “More promotion and promotion across the board, and not just to select groups.” (P5)	specific to certain S groups
<p>Findings:</p> <p>1.1 Teachers and departments within the school use inconsistent practices to place students.</p> <p>1.2 Teachers and counselors lack a comprehensive understanding of each other's practices, resulting in limited consistency across the school.</p> <p>2. Course options, placement policies and procedures, and decisions are not well communicated with students and parents.</p> <p>3. Extrinsic pressure (parents, college, peers) pressure students to enroll in advanced level courses while a stigma accompanies regent level courses</p> <p>4. Formal feedback (qualitative, data analysis) does not exist.</p>		

Conceptual Frame Code: <i>Learner Characteristics</i>		
Question	Quotes	General Interpretations
What characteristics and data currently contribute to course placement?	<p>No standardized guidelines and no rubric; use grade cut lines, but have a concern that placement is actually based on “student behaviors” (P1)</p> <p>Student placement is based on teacher recommendation and completion of prerequisite classes (P1)</p>	<p>L1. Academic and nonacademic factors influence recommendation decisions</p>
What academic and non-academic qualities factor into course placement?	<p>“[The] main pushback that I do receive from class placements [is] how their behaviors presented themselves in classes in eighth grade [...]. Oh, these are the [...] goofballs that have a disciplinary record [...] they might not be challenged. Maybe that's the reason why they're being so disruptive or chatty [...] because [...] they're not being challenged enough. So I often see those with the behavioral challenges in [...] the ‘standard’ or not ‘enriched’ version of courses.” (P5)</p> <p>I think our teachers in our department really are looking at skills more than behaviors.” (P3)</p> <p>“[We] look at their class average [...] their strength in writing - and we'll use our assessments throughout the year to do that. [We] look at their analysis [and] critical thinking skills [and see if they can do] tasks individually, or if they are relying on other students. [Those are] the main things we look at [...]” (P3)</p> <p>“You're looking for [...] that student, [...] who is self-motivated, self-driven and is able to handle the</p>	<p>L2. A variety of perspectives exist on the most salient characteristics used to determine placement</p> <p>L3. Behaviors, both overt and covert, influence recommendation decisions</p>

	<p>workload on their own. They've usually got advanced writing ability, advanced reading and [...] reading comprehension [...]. [If] you're taking, [a] college-level class, [...] you are expected to be [and] need to be, that motivated, advanced student to be able to take that class.” (P4)</p> <p>“Somebody who's driven towards academics and learning [and is] interested in other things. Like [...] I'll bring up a topic and they come back in and [...] they've done some sort of outside research [...]. [Interest] has got to be [...] there as well - [...] I'm not gonna push them to do this if that's not something they're interested in. It's got to be something that they're interested in, so they can be successful.” (P4)</p> <p>“[Advanced students are] a more dedicated, you know, set of students, maybe, you know, behaviorally. It's a different kind of atmosphere,” (P4)</p> <p>“But because [their] ninth-grade teacher was worried about maturity issues, [...] workload issues, [and] attendance issues, things like that” [they were not recommended for advanced]. (P6)</p> <p>“Yeah, not most of them (students with C's as freshmen but are 'smart') are not super successful, [...] because they struggle with the workpiece [...]. But they have to have the behaviors as well. Like, it can't just be that I like history, they have to have the behaviors.”</p>	
<p>Can academic and non-academic qualities be standardized to provide consistency among teachers and grade levels for subsequent placement?</p>	<p>“Increase understanding of the process used by all teachers/departments to place students and increase communication with students and parents.” TCS</p> <p>“Have criteria/rubric of characteristics or abilities needed in order to be recommended for a class - something that makes it a little more concrete for parents/students/counselors to understand.” TC</p>	<p>L4. Lack of an understanding of or guidance in the process/procedures and its follow through</p> <p>L5. A standardized criteria for each level does not exist</p>
<p>How does the student-teacher relationship impact the placement process?</p>	<p>“[...] but that reputation stuck with some of the teachers that they worked with.” (P5)</p> <p>“Sometimes teachers have repeat students [where] a perception of a student from a while back or something that</p>	<p>L6. Relationships facilitate placement conversations</p> <p>L7. Relationships lead to individualized</p>

	<p>they did [...] wasn't an accurate representation of the student. [It] clouds a recommendation sometimes.” (P5)</p> <p>“[I] think that it (TS relationship) just lends itself to having a comfort level [for] having those hard conversations with students. Those motivating conversations with students,[...] because I think it happens [a] little bit more naturally for some teachers.” (P7)</p> <p>“By getting to know the student, we can identify interests, capability, and capacity to complete the proper workload in a balanced approach.” TCS</p> <p>If a teacher hasn't been able to recognize and connect with a student on a personal level, its more difficult for them to recognize the student's work ethic and potential. Therefore, a student who may be extremely quiet may not be recognized as a student who would excel in advanced classes because they may have a distant relationship from a teacher. SS</p> <p>The opinion on your lifestyle could depend on what they want for you school wise.SS</p>	<p>decisions</p>
<p>What characteristics and data <i>should</i> contribute to course placement?</p>	<p>“You're gonna [...] take your own path and [...] find things that challenge you in several different areas. [It's] all about finding that balance and challenging yourself, where you feel equipped, [...] ready, and then finding that balance in other courses that may be challenging. [We] try really hard to [paint] a picture for students that high school is about your own individual path and [...] reaching those long-term goals and doing that but in different ways.” (P7)</p> <p>“By getting to know the student, we can identify interests, capability, and capacity to complete the proper workload in a balanced approach.” TCS</p> <p>“[Here's] how far the student has come just in junior year alone. Let's give [them] a shot their senior year because they really are a different person. [Everybody's] entitled to that growth and to try something.” (P5)</p>	<p>L8. Passion, interest, and goals should contribute to course selection</p> <p>L9. With balance as an overarching goal, motivation, drive, and grit should contribute to placement decisions</p> <p>L10. Students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate academic maturity and growth</p>
<p>Findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Placement recommendations are based on a variety of perspectives (academic, behavior, and attitude) that are not consistent among all teachers across the school or within departments. 2. Teacher-Student and Counselor-Student relationships support thoughtful, individualized conversations regarding course selection and school-life balance 		

Conceptual Frame Code: <i>Student Self-Assessment</i>		
Question	Quotes	General Interpretations
How do students participate in the placement process?	<p>Minority groups are known to have limited advocacy and do not understand the consequence of decisions (P1)</p> <p>“And sometimes, even when a student expresses, ‘I don't want to be doing this, it's my parents or my guardians, well, it's what I think I should be doing, because my parents want me to even though I really do not want to do this.’” (P5)</p>	<p>S1. Underrepresented groups have limited advocacy</p> <p>S2. Information source (parents, counselors, etc) and delivery impact placement decision</p> <p>S3. The desire for improved student voice and proactive advocacy</p>
What criteria do students use to evaluate their abilities?	<p>“I think for the most part students who are forward-thinking and want to be as competitive as possible for college, sign up to take AP classes. I think that there's a little bit of keeping up with peers, right? We want to stay in the same social group and in that same friends cohort.” (P7)</p>	<p>S4. Extrinsic factors such as peer influence and social perception impact students' course selection</p>
How do students determine their desired placement?	<p>“There's the student who says, I, you know, I want to do. I I just want to challenge myself, I think I can do it. It may - I may use my score, I may not use my score; my friends may be doing it, they may not be doing it, but I like the subject. I want to be challenged - and I - and I think I have the A/B, so it could be both, you know, intrinsic or extrinsic reasons.” (P7)</p> <p>“If us as students had the opportunity to choose if we want to take an AP class based on the confidence in ourselves” SS</p> <p>“If a student loves history, maybe their academics don't support it, but if they have this love for global history, go ahead and let them try it. So some students will take these AP classes because they love the course,” (P3)</p>	<p>S5. Internal drive and/or desire to challenge themselves for college readiness (workload, rigor, independence)</p> <p>S6. Self-confidence and efficacy influence selection level</p> <p>S7. Passion and potential career interests influence course selection</p>
What characteristics do students think are used to determine placement?	<p>You can be a good student, do your homework, and participate, but if you don't meet their standards, they might tell you you aren't good enough for an AP class. SS</p> <p>If a teacher hasn't been able to recognize and connect with a student on a personal level, its more difficult for them to recognize the student's work ethic and potential. Therefore, a student who may be extremely quiet may not be</p>	<p>S8. Studenting skills (participation, work ethic, etc) impact placement decisions</p> <p>S9. T-S and C-S relationships, positive or negative, impact</p>

	recognized as a student who would excel in advanced classes because they may have a distant relationship from a teacher. SS	placement decisions
How does a student's current placement impact his/her/their academic identity?	<p>“a kid decides that, you know, or beliefs in that label, they go I'm just a regents kid. You can start to see that being reflected in the amount of time they put in , the expectations they place upon themselves. So that's something you know.” (P4)</p> <p>“I don't think that there's a stigma with being in the regents, I think that there is pressure. Sometimes to go above and beyond that, but I do think that there is stigma when students take level class that does not have a regents exam attached to it.and you know, in and that starts to happen especially a students get into 11th and 12th grade” (P7)</p>	<p>S10. Student behaviors, both academic and social, adhere to the expectations of the course level placement</p> <p>S11. Students seek high-level course placement as a means of self-preservation and/or due to self-perception</p>
<p>Findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students reflect on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors in addition to academic behaviors when considering course selection. 2. Students desire a space to advocate for their own academic path. 		

Appendix P

Findings and Detailed Recommendations

<i>Organizational Structures</i>		
Question	Findings	Detailed Recommendations
What is the current placement process including both policy and practice?	1.1. Teachers and departments within the school use inconsistent practices to place students.	<p>1. Develop a 9-12 guide for the placement process that is rooted in a well-defined, common practice, followed with fidelity across grades 9-12, transparently communicated to all stakeholders and that invites proactive parent/student engagement.</p> <p>2. Create a partnership with WGHS families via several venues including email, webinar and in-person presentation/Q & A centering on age-specific placement related decisions (graduation requirements, prerequisites & sequencing, parental pressure, and student voice).</p> <p>3. Employ a feedback mechanism to evaluate the placement policy including placement data analysis and survey/focus group of key stakeholders and evaluate annually; revise as needed.</p>
How does the school culture impact the placement process?	1.2. Teachers and counselors lack a comprehensive understanding of each other's practices, resulting in limited consistency across the school.	
How are the practices that align with the current placement process communicated to all stakeholders?	2.1 Course options, placement policies and procedures, and decisions are not well communicated with students and parents.	
How are data and dialogue used to evaluate the current placement process and practices to ensure a standardized, coordinated placement of all students?	3. Extrinsic pressure (parents, college, peers) pressure students to enroll in advance level courses while a stigma accompanies regent level courses	
How do students and families engage in the placement process?	4. Formal feedback (qualitative, data analysis) does not exist.	
How do school faculty and staff participate in the evolution of the placement process?		
How can biases (cultural, gender, historical, personal) be identified, and combatted?		

<i>Student Learner Characteristics</i>		
Question	Findings	Detailed Recommendations
What characteristics and data currently contribute to course placement?	1. Placement recommendations are based on a variety of perspectives (academic, behavior, and attitude) that are not consistent among all teachers across the school or within departments.	1. Develop a 9-12 guide for placement that includes academic-, behavioral- and attitude-related measures and is rooted in a well-defined, common language.
What academic and non-academic qualities factor into course placement?		

Can academic and non-academic qualities be standardized to provide consistency among teachers and grade levels for subsequent placement?	2. Teacher-Student and Counselor-Student relationships support thoughtful, individualized conversations regarding course selection and school-life balance	2. Develop a conversation guide for teachers and counselors to use during mandated placement discussions that promotes course selection based on individualized paths and seeks balance
How does the student-teacher relationship impact the placement process?		
What characteristics and data <i>should</i> contribute to course placement?		

<i>Student Self-Assessment</i>		
Question	Findings	Detailed Recommendations
How do students participate in the placement process?	1. Students reflect on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors in addition to academic behaviors when considering course selection. 2. Students desire a space to advocate for their own academic path.	1. Deliberately teach reflective techniques centered on school-life balance, interests and passion, and academic abilities, limitations and goals. 2. Develop a 9-12 guide for placement that includes a mechanism for student voice throughout the school year and just prior to course selection.
What criteria do students use to evaluate their abilities?		
How do students determine their desired placement?		
What characteristics do students think are used to determine placement?		
How does a student's current placement impact his/her/their academic identity?		