

Wiley H. Bates Middle School Case Study

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Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education in the State of Maryland

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Executive Summary

Wiley H. Bates Middle School is an example of the third category of schools – a school generating significant growth among student subgroups over time.

Wiley H. Bates Middle School, located in Annapolis, is an arts integration school that also contains a performance and visual arts magnet program. In fall 2014, the school enrolled 800 students, and school staff reported serving 881 students in early 2015. In 2014, 45.6 percent of students at Bates were eligible for free or reduce-priced meals (FRPM), 10.2 percent were limited English proficient (LEP), and 8.5 percent were special education students. The student body at Bates is racially and ethnically diverse. In 2014, 53.1 percent of students were ethnic minorities, with 27.5 percent African American and 25.6 percent Latino. White students constituted 39.6 percent of all students.

Between 2007 and 2012, Bates demonstrated substantial improvement in the performance of four subgroups of students: 1) FRPM-eligible students, 2) LEP students, 3) special education students, and 4) non-Asian/non-white students. For instance, from 2007 to 2012, the percentage of students who scored either proficient or advanced in reading, math, and science increased:

- 30 percentage points for FRPMs students (34.3 to 64.3 percent);
- 19 percentage points for LEP students (9.9 to 28.8 percent);
- 36 percentage points for students with special needs (12.9 to 48.8 percent); and
- 29 percentage points for students whose race/ethnicity is not white or Asian (36.8 to 66.0 percent).¹

Interviews with staff members at Bates and reviews of documents related to Bates suggest that a number of factors contributed to these gains. These factors are associated with significant instructional resources. They include:

1. A large instructional staff. Bates has the resources to maintain a large instructional staff, including teachers of core subjects, teachers of elective subjects, special education teachers, and teachers of LEP students. The ability to maintain this staff allows the school to have:
 - a. Small homerooms and core classes;
 - b. ample release time for teacher planning;
 - c. common release time for collaborative planning; and
 - d. multiple educators who can support students at risk of academic failure.

¹ Percentage point calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

2. Multiple instructional coach positions. Bates employs several instructional coaches, including a school improvement coach, a literacy coach, an arts integration specialist, a novice teacher mentor, and department chairs in English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and special education. Because these instructional coaches do not have teaching responsibilities, they can focus their efforts on supporting teachers, which they do in a variety of ways.
3. Arts integration and performance and visual arts magnet programs. Bates encourages student participation in the arts through whole-school arts integration and through a specialized performance and visual arts magnet program. Since the introduction of the arts focus at Bates, the school has had access to a number of continued supports that maintain a strong commitment to the arts, such as arts-centric professional development and the presence of an arts integration specialist. School staff report that a focus on the arts has improved outcomes for students at Bates by providing students with multiple ways to learn and master course content and providing students with common experiences that unify them and give them a sense of belonging.
4. Control over hiring. School administration reports that it has significant control over which prospective employees will be offered a job at Bates. Accordingly, school administrators are able to select staff members who will participate meaningfully in collaborative planning sessions, embrace the arts focus of the school, and engage in other behaviors that school administrators deem priorities at Bates.
5. Committed and relationship-driven staff. One of the priorities for Bates administrators is the willingness of staff members to create and maintain positive relationships with each other, with students, and with the community at large. Perhaps due, at least in part, to significant school-level control over hiring, staff members throughout the school report that they are committed to the mission of the school and want to build relationships that will foster a positive learning community.

Introduction

Wiley H. Bates Middle School, located in Annapolis, is one of 19 middle schools in Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS). The school, which sits next to the Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, practices an arts integration model wherein teachers of all subjects infuse their lessons with arts curriculum and instruction. Accordingly, throughout the day, students at Bates are exposed to instruction in core subjects as well as an array of arts disciplines.

Students at Bates come from a variety of backgrounds. According to staff members at the school, Bates students come from low-income, middle-class, and wealthy homes. Some parents do not work outside the home, and others work in a range of other occupations, including in the military (some of whom work at the nearby U.S. Naval Academy), in vocational fields, and in professional fields such as education and healthcare.

School staff reports that as of spring 2015, Bates served approximately 881 students. According to staff, students at Bates are organized into one of three grade-level homerooms: 302 students are in grade six homerooms, 300 students are in grade seven homerooms, and 259 students are in grade eight homerooms. About 20 students are in mixed-grade homerooms. Mixed-grade homerooms are for students with individualized education plans (IEP) who participate in specific special education programs at the school. These include a program for students with emotional disabilities, a Functional Life Skills program, and a High Roads program. Table 1 presents average class sizes based on the approximate number of students in each type of homeroom and the number of homerooms of each type.

Table 1
Wiley H. Bates Middle School Class Sizes

Grade-Level	Class Size
Six (20 homerooms)	15
Seven (20 homerooms)	15.1
Eight (17 homerooms)	15.2
Mixed (3 homerooms)	6.7

Source: Personal communication with school staff.

In addition to integrating art instruction into classes across the curriculum, Bates has a magnet program for performance and visual arts. According to school staff, approximately 40 percent of the school's students are enrolled in the performance and visual arts magnet program. The magnet program draws students from both within and outside the school's typical catchment area. School administrators estimate that about 150 students (17.0 percent) live out of the school's catchment area.

The student population at Bates is diverse (Table 2). In 2014, the majority of students were minorities – African American (27.5 percent) or Latino (25.6 percent) – with the remaining students being white (39.6 percent). Just under half (46.5 percent) of Bates students were eligible

for FRPM. Smaller proportions of the student body were LEP (10.2 percent) or special education (8.5 percent).

Table 2
Wiley H. Bates Middle Student Characteristics, 2014

Student Characteristics	Percentage of Bates Student Population
Race/ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaska Native	-
Asian	2.4
Black/African American	27.5
Hispanic/Latino	25.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-
Two or more races	4.3
White	39.6
Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals	46.5
Limited English Proficient (LEP) students	10.2
Special education students	8.5

A “-“ indicates either no students or the number of students was suppressed due to too few students in the category.

Source: Maryland Report Card (www.mdreportcard.org).

School staff highlighted two noteworthy changes in student enrollment over the past several years. First, the total enrollment of the school has grown. For instance, according to data from the Maryland Report Card, student enrollment grew from 644 in 2011 to 800 in 2014, and school staff report a total of 881 students in spring 2015. Second, the number and proportion of Latino students in the school has increased. Specifically, according to data from the Maryland Report Card, Latino enrollment increased from 119 students in 2011 (18.5 percent) to 205 students in 2014 (25.6 percent).

Student Performance

In recent years, student performance on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) has improved at Bates (Table 3). Overall, students’ achievement on the MSA improved by more than 25 percentage points between 2007 and 2012. Gains in student performance for subgroups of students (such as FRPM students, LEP students, special education students, and students whose race/ethnicity is not white or Asian have been particularly noteworthy.

For instance, from 2007 to 2012, the percentage of students who scored either proficient or advanced in reading, math, and science increased:

- 30 percentage points for FRPM students (34.3 to 64.3 percent);
- 19 percentage points for LEP students (9.9 to 28.8 percent);
- 36 percentage points for special education students (12.9 to 48.8 percent); and
- 29 percentage points for students whose race/ethnicity is not white or Asian (36.8 to 66.0 percent).²

Table 3
Wiley H. Bates Middle School Performance, Maryland School Assessment (MSA), 2007-2014

Average School-Wide Percent Scoring Proficient/Advanced in Reading, Math and Science								
Performance Level	MSA 2007	MSA 2008	MSA 2009	MSA 2010	MSA 2011	MSA 2012	MSA* 2013	MSA* 2014
All Students	53.3	63.4	65.6	67.1	75.3	78.6	78.0	70.4
Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FRPM) Students	34.3	51.0	53.0	53.2	64.1	64.3	NA	NA
Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students	9.9	13.7	17.6	19.0	32.5	28.8	NA	NA
Special Education Students	12.9	27.0	30.1	24.3	43.0	48.8	NA	NA
Non-white/Non-Asian Students	36.8	49.8	54.4	54.1	64.5	66.0	NA	NA

*Assessment data by student subgroup for 2013 and 2014 were not available at the time this report was written.

Source: Data provided by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

A number of staff members attribute these gains in achievement, at least in part, to particular curricular, instructional, and other resources. For instance, staff members express that the school's arts integration model and the performance and visual arts magnet program are key

² Percentage point calculations are based on unrounded numbers.

ingredients in the improvement of student outcomes at Bates. Teachers also attribute student achievement gains to the availability of collaborative planning time for teachers, who work together to create curricular and instructional strategies that they think will be most beneficial for their particular students.

This case narrative explores these and other resources that have been integral to improving student achievement at Wiley H. Bates Middle School. The case has 11 sections: 1) school performance, 2) school staffing, 3) school goals, 4) school schedule and collaborative planning time, 5) curriculum and instructional program, 6) assessments, 7) extra help for students at risk of academic failure, 8) professional development, 9) school culture and leadership, 10) summary and challenges, and 11) the degree of alignment between the school's strategies and the school improvement strategies embedded in the EB Funding Model. These sections draw upon information from two main sources: a review of documents provided by school officials or available online, and individual and focus group interviews held in late January 2015 with school staff, including school administrators, instructional staff, and support staff.

School Staff

In 2008, after failing to meet adequate yearly progress goals for several years, Bates was restructured. As part of the school restructuring process, the arts integration model was introduced at the school and many members of the school staff were replaced. At that time, the school experienced a high level of turnover. New staff and those who remained at the school were committed to the school and its new arts integration mission.

In the years following the formal restructuring process, the school has experienced some degree of staff turnover. The principal who was in place after the restructuring process left the school, but was replaced by another administrator from within the building. Staff members estimate that the school needs to fill about 15 to 20 positions a year. Staff members perceive that these positions become open due to promotions of Bates staff to leadership positions across the district.

The school administration reports that it has substantial control over hiring. School administrators look for prospective employees who are willing to:

- Collaborate with colleagues;
- adopt data-driven instruction;
- implement arts integration;
- participate in a relationship-driven culture;
- run a classroom where the instructional and classroom expectations are clear;
- put students at the center of teaching and learning;
- integrate reading and writing strategies across content areas to meet state standards;
- engage with the community on and off campus;
- demonstrate a visible passion for learning; and

- achieve professional growth.

According to a school administrator, the school prioritizes these 10 qualities in discussions with applicants for open positions and has the authority to select candidates whose preferences and experiences align with these qualities.

Bates employs a large staff that includes several instructional positions as well as a number of support staff for both teachers and students. Table 4 provides an overview of the school's staff by full-time equivalent (FTE) position for the 2014-15 school year.

Table 4
Staffing in Wiley H. Bates Middle School, 2014-15

Category	FTE
<u>Administration</u>	
Principal	1
Assistant Principal	3
Clerical, Business, and Technical Support	9
<u>Main Program</u>	
Core Teachers	41.5
Elective Teachers	14.3
Instructional Coaches	8.8
Special Education Self-Contained	7
Special Education	8
LEP Teachers	3
Permanent Substitute	1
<u>Aides</u>	
Instructional (Media/Library Room)	1
Special Education (Self-Contained)	1
<u>Pupil Support</u>	
Guidance Counselor	3
Nurse	1
Psychologist	1
Social Worker	0.8
Speech Therapist	1
Other Pupil Support	4
Cafeteria Staff	5
Custodians	8

In addition to the compensated staff listed in Table 4, cadets from the U.S. Naval Academy volunteer as tutors for students at the school.

The school employs a large instructional staff that includes 41.5 FTE teachers of English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, Spanish, and Italian. The average class size of these core classes is approximately 21 students. The Bates staff also includes 14.3 FTE elective positions and an instructional aide in the library. This instructional staff implements the arts-integrated core and elective program as well as the performance and visual arts magnet program.

A cadre of school leaders supports the work of teaching and learning at Bates. Each of the school's three assistant principals works closely with one grade-level and follows students as they progress through the school so that students receive support from the same administrator for three years. Bates also has almost nine instructional coach positions. These include a school improvement coach, who analyzes student achievement data and supports teachers in implementing the school improvement plan; a literacy specialist, who works with teachers in all disciplines to incorporate strategies to help students develop strong literacy skills; department chairs in English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and special education; a 0.8 FTE arts integration specialist; and a Right Start advisor, who mentors novice teachers. These instructional leaders do not have teaching loads, allowing them to focus their time and energy on supporting teachers and their instructional programs.

Several specialized educators work at Bates in a variety of capacities. Seven special educators work with higher-needs students who participate in self-contained programs for at least part of the day. The most intensive of these programs is the Functional Life Skills program, which helps students with severe and profound disabilities gain important skills they need to navigate life in society. The Functional Life Skills program is entirely self-contained. The other two programs, one for students with emotional disabilities and another for students with a range of disabilities (called the High Roads program), provides students with targeted support for part of the day and receive instruction in the general education program for the remainder of the day. Eight special educators work within the general education program in order to provide students with disabilities the support they need for successful participation in the integrated environment. Six special educators (two in each grade) co-teach with general educators so that students have access to two teachers in the classroom setting. Bates also employs three LEP teachers who support the growing population of students for whom English is not a first language.

Bates is able to offer its students substantial non-instructional assistance through a team of pupil support personnel. The school employs three guidance counselors – one for each grade – and also has access to the expertise of a psychologist, a speech therapist, a nurse, and a social worker (who comes to the school four-days a week). Other pupil support personnel include behavior interventionists, an educator who works with traditionally underserved potential college enrollees, and a pupil personnel worker who helps to ensure that students are not absent from school.

In sum, Bates has significant human resources for supporting its instructional program. Notable among these resources are: 1) an adequate number of teachers needed to offer small class sizes and provide time for common planning; 2) sufficient administrators to provide school-wide support as well as targeted grade-level support; 3) a team of instructional coaches for providing curricular and instructional support throughout the building; 4) several special educators and LEP teachers for providing extra assistance to those students with unique challenges in the classroom; and 5) a team of staff members who support students' socio-emotional well-being and ensure that students are emotionally equipped to participate in a learning environment.

School Goals

The Bates school improvement plan incorporates the goals outlined in the AACPS strategic plan. These goals provide broad objectives that all schools in the district must achieve. They include:

- 50 percent of all students in each student group in grades three through eight will be performing at the advanced level on the MSA in reading and math;
- 80 percent of all students in each student group will have completed at least one world and classical language course by the end of their grade eight year;
- 80 percent of all secondary students in each student group will receive fewer than two [disciplinary] referrals;
- 95 percent of all secondary students in each student group will receive fewer than six [disciplinary] referrals; and
- 90 percent of all secondary students in each student group will not be suspended from school.

In recent years, the school has focused its school improvement plan on specific academic and behavioral goals. For example, to ensure that students will be able to understand content well enough to achieve advanced performance, academic goals include a focus on depth of knowledge rather than breadth of content coverage. For the past few years, the school has placed an increased emphasis on literacy and has incorporated literacy across content areas. Amid the transition to the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and given the emphasis that the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment places on writing, the school has incorporated Common Core-aligned math practices into mathematics instruction and emphasized writing across the curriculum.

Not all goals are strictly academic. Rather, some goals pertain to student behavior and how the school responds to behavioral issues. A consistent theme that arose in conversations with school staff was the prioritization of building strong relationships among staff members, and between staff and students. This focus on relationship-building, paired with a number of behavioral interventions (discussed in more detail below), are the means through which school staff aims to address behavioral goals.

School Schedule

Students start the day at 8 a.m. with a 20-minute homeroom/breakfast period. The instructional day includes six 55-minute periods. One period includes an extra 25 to 30 minutes for lunch and the last period includes an additional nine minutes for closing announcements. Twice a week classes are shortened by approximately five minutes each to provide time during the school day for an additional class period. The school uses these two additional classes to provide interventions for students at risk of academic failure. Students who do not need academic interventions use this time for independent activities, such as recess. The students' school day ends at 2:50 p.m., and after-school activities take place from 3 to 4:30 p.m.

Each day, students attend four core classes (English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science) and two elective classes. In general, school administrators assign students to classrooms such that the classes contain students from a variety of ability groups. Within these heterogeneous groupings, administrators make sure that each class contains a larger number of high-performing students than students who struggle with the content. In mathematics, administrators assign one group of students to classes that cover above-level content and another group of students to classes that cover on-level content. Students in the performance and visual arts (PVA) magnet program, who have two hours of PVA content every other day, participate in core curriculum with non-magnet students.

Teachers have four classes of students per day and two daily planning periods – one for individual planning and one for collaborative planning. The section on professional development later in this report describes teachers planning period schedules in more detail.

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum

Teachers follow the AACPS district curriculum for the core subjects of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The school also offers two world languages. Spanish is offered to all students in the school and Italian is available to students in the performance and visual arts magnet program. The school supplements its core instructional program with several electives. Elective offerings include creative writing, physical education, technical education, media education, band, chorus, music, dance, and art (for both the entire school and the performance and visual arts magnet). Many of these elective offerings reflect the arts focus of the school.

Teachers at Bates receive core curricular materials from the district and follow district guidelines regarding when to introduce particular content. Teachers from all core areas, however, report that they supplement district materials with content that they gather from outside sources. In English/language arts, teachers supplement district content with material from Holt McDougal's Teacher One Stop. They also use Scholastic Scope (which consists of magazines and online readings) and other materials that the English/language arts department chair or teachers have

found. In mathematics, teachers supplement district materials with Carnegie MATHia software, which allows students to access instructional materials and practice problems. In science, teachers supplement district materials with content from online tools such as Explore Learning, the Science Spot, Science-Class.net, and MiddleSchoolScience.com. Social studies teachers often collaborate with each other to find supplemental materials from a variety of outside sources. Across multiple disciplines, teachers report that they use Edmodo, an online community of educators, to gather curricular resources.

Many resources support the curricular program at the school. In addition to curricular resources such as district curriculum pacing guides, teacher texts, and student texts, teachers at Bates have access to strategically allocated planning time. Teachers use common planning time to meet with their departmental peers and discuss curricular matters. During these meetings, teachers share content that they gather from outside sources. They also work together to plan lessons that will be consistent across sections of the same grade and vertically aligned across grades. They create common assignments and analyze student performance on these assignments to decide when they need to spend more time on certain parts of the curriculum and when and how they should advance to new parts of the curriculum.

Instruction

According to school staff, teachers at Bates use a variety of instructional strategies to help students master the curriculum. The most consistent theme in discussions with school staff about instruction was that arts integration strategies pervade the building and teachers report that the infusion of a variety of arts disciplines (including but not limited to visual arts, music, and dance) into core disciplines allows students to understand core concepts more deeply. Teachers use integrated lessons to teach, and when necessary, re-teach core content material to students. For instance, a lesson where students used lines with different line weights to represent slopes of algebraic equations is used to teach students content in both visual arts and mathematics.

Beyond arts integration, teachers throughout the school report using warm-ups to start lessons and closing activities to end lessons. Many teachers report relying on visual aids and graphic organizers to convey material, which they perceive to be particularly helpful for LEP and special needs students.

Assessments

Staff members at Wiley H. Bates use a variety of assessments to measure students' proficiency. First, the school uses commercially available assessments, such as the Gates-MacGintie reading test and the WIDA ACCESS test of English language proficiency. Second, the school administers state assessments. Through the 2013-14 school year the State administered the MSA. Beginning in 2014-15, the State will administer the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, which is aligned with the Common Core standards. Third, in both English/language arts and mathematics, teachers use district-created

unit assessments. Finally, in all core subjects, teachers use collaborative planning time to create common assessments to supplement the district-provided assessments.

In concert with the school improvement coach and department chairs, teachers continuously review student data from this suite of assessments. Staff at Bates use information from the Gates-MacGintie and WIDA ACCESS tests to place students in classes or interventions. Teachers use data from district and in-house assessments to determine how to group and re-group students within classrooms. They also use these data to identify which content seems to be the most challenging for students and to gauge whether or not they need to re-teach any content in order to ensure that students have a deep understanding of course material. According to school leaders, while school staff look at the achievement of all students, they pay particular attention to how students with special needs perform on state, district, and in-house assessments, and attempt to identify and address gaps between these students and other students in the school.

The use of assessments and resulting data to inform instruction at Bates requires a variety of resources. These include staff access to the assessments themselves and/or time to create in-house common assessments. Further, the school improvement coach serves as a significant resource in the process of identifying patterns in student assessment data and making sense of how to use data to meet specific school goals. Additionally, teachers need time to review their students' data and to discuss how trends in the data will impact their curricular and instructional plans going forward.

Interventions

Wiley H. Bates Middle School uses several strategies to help students succeed. Some of these strategies are aimed at improving students' academic outcomes, while other strategies are aimed at improving students' behavioral outcomes.

Academic Interventions

Bates began implementing an Intervention and Independence (I & I) program in the 2014-15 school year. Two days a week, the school shortens classes by five minutes to make time for an extra 40-minute class period. School staff use this extra 40-minute period to provide interventions to students who have a grade of 75 or below in a core class. While teachers in mathematics select their own materials for these intervention periods, staff at Bates use externally developed intervention packages for English/language arts. These programs include the McDougal Bridges to Literature program, the Wilson Reading System, the Soar to Success Reading program, and the Corrective Reading program.

Formal intervention for Bates students also exists outside the traditional school day. After-school twice a week, the school holds Help Day, where students can receive tutoring, make up missed work, or engage in other instructional activities. The school staff also reports that, during the summer, Bates students participate in a district-run mathematics program called Summer Bridge.

The program is open to students throughout the district, but it is convenient for Bates students to attend because the district uses the Bates school facility as one of the program's sites.

Bates also uses a number of informal strategies to help students at risk of academic failure. School staff members report that many teachers spend their lunch hours tutoring and mentoring students and that department chairs sometimes also tutor students, if needed. Additionally, some school staff volunteer at the community Boys and Girls Club to help students with their homework.

Behavioral Interventions

A consistent theme at Bates was the notion that staff work hard to establish relationships with students and their families. The relationship-driven environment reported by staff is the foundation upon which more formal behavioral supports reside.

Bates staff members rely on three formal strategies to support positive behavior (and attempt to prevent the need to address negative behaviors). The first of these supports is the CHAMPS (Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, and Success) system. The CHAMPS system provides school staff with a common and consistent language to talk about standards of appropriate behavior that is school-wide. The second is the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Through the PBIS system, school staff members reward students when they demonstrate positive behavior, and students who earn enough rewards can participate in special events coordinated by teachers and other staff members. The third support, Community First, is new this academic year (2014-15). If students do not have course grades and therefore cannot be assigned to an Intervention and Independence period during the first marking period, they are required to participate with their homerooms in Community First, a program that promotes community and school values.

Bates addresses negative behavior in a variety of ways. As noted above, the school employs several counselors, a psychologist, a social worker, and other student behavior support personnel. These staff members consistently provide support to students who may struggle to behave appropriately in an educational setting. Additionally, the school houses a "decision-making room," where students who become angry or engage in problematic behavior can go to calm down and reflect on their actions. Staff members throughout the school mentor students with discipline issues. This involves a formal "check in, check out" relationship so that students who have trouble with discipline have a daily opportunity to interact with caring adults. A small number of staff members have been trained to conduct restorative justice circles with students, wherein students who have committed an offense meet with those who have been wronged in order to repair the broken relationship. Finally, in an effort to reduce loss of instructional time, Bates uses Saturday school as an alternative to suspensions when students do engage in behavior that merits suspension.

Professional Development

Teachers at Wiley H. Bates have access to several professional supports. One major source of professional support for Bates teachers is daily individual and collaborative planning time. Every teacher has two planning periods every day. One of the periods is reserved for individual planning, while the other period is reserved for collaboration with other educators in the building. Three times every week, teachers use the collaborative planning time to work with colleagues in cross grade-level department teams. Once a week, the meeting is used as either a targeted professional development session or a collaborative decision-making session. The targeted professional development sessions are often focused either on literacy, given the school's goal to incorporate a focus on literacy into all academic areas, or about the arts, given the school's arts integration mission. The collaborative decision-making sessions typically provide time for multiple staff members to discuss the supports they can provide to particular students who are struggling academically or behaviorally. Teachers use the final collaborative planning time each week to meet with their grade-level peers who work across a variety of subjects.

In addition to the professional development sessions that are embedded in the week during common planning periods, teachers at Bates have access to two other types of professional development. First, the district has one early dismissal professional development day each month. Bates staff members typically use this professional development time to focus either on arts integration or on a goal from the school improvement plan. Second, teachers report that the school supports their engagement in additional, outside professional development opportunities and pays for them to attend these opportunities.

Bates employs several instructional coaches who provide consistent support to teachers both within and outside these formal times for collaboration and development. Because the school improvement coach, literacy coach, arts integration specialist, and department chairs do not teach, they are able to focus their efforts on supporting teachers. The school improvement coach monitors student achievement and provides assistance to teachers as they analyze student data and determine how to use those data to inform practice. The school's Right Start advisor mentors first-year teachers and provides instructional support to second-year teachers. The other instructional leaders help teachers plan lessons, provide materials and content for lessons, mentor new teachers, and team-teach. Department chairs often informally observe teachers' lessons. The staff reports that teachers welcome feedback on their practice based on these informal observations. Typically, the department chairs will provide teacher-specific feedback only to the teacher and not to others, such as school administrators.

As the preceding paragraphs make clear, Bates has access to several resources that support teachers' work and encourage their professional growth. Bates is able to provide teachers with ample planning time due to the fact that it employs enough teachers to make school-embedded release time possible. School administrators are intentional about how they organize teachers for instruction and schedule students into classes so that teachers can use their planning time to

collaborate with their colleagues and engage in professional development activities. The school employs several non-teaching instructional coaches who are able to provide continuous support to teachers. In conversations with researchers, school staff members repeatedly attributed school success to the existence of collaborative planning time and to the substantial support they receive from the many instructional coaches throughout the building.

School Culture

Staff members report that while the school restructuring process that took place several years ago was very challenging, the process ensured that staff members who stayed and those new to the school committed to Bates and its arts integration mission. Staff members also report that the introduction of arts integration and the performance and visual arts magnet, which occurred close to the time of the staff restructure, also changed the culture of the school by providing a unifying vision.

School administrators place high value on strong relationships and, as noted above in the section on school staffing, make hiring decisions based in part on employees' willingness to engage in a relationship-driven environment. Use of relational language and discussions of support permeates staff discourse. According to school staff, the school culture is built on strong relationships among staff members; among students; and between staff members and students, their families, and the community at large.

Strong relationships among staff members lead to a culture of encouragement and reflection. According to school staff, teachers regularly work together, support each other, and assist each other. School staff report that activities such as common planning and informal observations by instructional coaches lead to trusting relationships that foster an environment where teachers feel safe enough to reflect on their practice, be creative in instructional approaches, and share their successes and struggles with each other.

Building strong relationships among students is also an important part of the Bates culture. Teachers report that students feel connected to the school and that the school is a safe place for them to be. Because the school contains a regional magnet program, the school attracts students from a variety of backgrounds. Staff members report that a number of factors contribute to an environment where students from all backgrounds feel like a united student body. First, the staff reports that the arts integration focus unifies the school. Regardless of whether they are part of the magnet program, students have regular access to the arts. Both day-to-day and special art experiences provide common ground for students. Second, staff members report that they work to instill a common set of values in all students so that everyone feels connected to the Bates community. Finally, students at Bates are required to wear uniforms, which the staff perceives to foster a sense of cohesion.

School staff members state that they work hard to cultivate caring relationships between staff and students at Bates. Teachers report that they devote substantial time, during class time, during

lunchtime, and outside of school hours, to providing students the support they need to succeed. The school administration invites parents to come to the school and engages with families regarding their children's education. School staff members describe ways that they try to extend these relationships beyond the school walls. For instance, they volunteer in the community to show their support for the students, they run a food pantry for families at the school, and they go into the community to engage with parents in settings that are comfortable to them.

Summary

Wiley H. Bates Middle School has demonstrated substantial improvement in the performance of four subgroups of students: 1) low-income students, 2) English language learners, 3) special education students, and 4) non-Asian/non-white students. The preceding sections, based on information gathered through interviews with staff members at Bates and reviews of documents related to Bates, suggest that these gains are associated with the strategic use of instructional resources. They include:

1. A large instructional staff. Bates has the resources to maintain a large instructional staff, including teachers of core subjects, teachers of elective subjects, special education teachers, and LEP teachers.
 - a. The ability to maintain this staff allows the school to have:
 - b. Small homerooms and core classes;
 - c. ample release time for teacher planning;
 - d. common release time for collaborative planning; and
 - e. multiple educators who can support students at risk of academic failure.
2. Multiple instructional coach positions. Bates employs several instructional coaches, including a school improvement coach; a literacy coach; an arts integration specialist; a novice teacher mentor; and department chairs in English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and special education. Because these instructional coaches do not have teaching responsibilities they can focus their efforts on supporting teachers, which they do in a variety of ways.
3. Arts integration and performance and visual arts magnet programs. Bates encourages student participation in the arts through whole-school arts integration and through a specialized performance and visual arts magnet program. Since the introduction of the arts focus at Bates, the school has had access to a number of continued supports that maintain a strong commitment to the arts, such as ongoing arts-centric professional development and the presence of an arts integration specialist. School staff report that a focus on the arts has improved outcomes for students at Bates by providing students with multiple ways to learn and master course content and providing students with common experiences that unify them and give them a sense of belonging.
4. Control over hiring. School administration reports that it has significant control over which prospective employees will be offered a job at Bates. Accordingly, school

administrators are able to select staff members who will participate meaningfully in collaborative planning sessions, embrace the arts focus of the school, and engage in other behaviors that school administrators deem priorities at Bates.

5. A committed and relationship-driven staff. One of the priorities for Bates administrators is the willingness of staff members to create and maintain positive relationships with each other, with students, and with the community at large. Perhaps due, at least in part, to significant school-level control over hiring, staff members throughout the school report that they are committed to the mission of the school and want to build relationships that will foster a positive learning community.

Alignment with the Evidence-Based Model

There are many ways in which the resources at Wiley H. Bates Middle School align with and, in some cases exceed, the recommendations in the evidence-based (EB) model.

First, in recent years, the school adopted an arts integration focus and started a magnet program for the performance and visual arts. These changes provided a foundation for change in the school. At this time, school staff attributes many student successes to a consistent, school-wide commitment to using the arts to improve instruction in all content areas. School administrators report that they have significant control over hiring and are able to select prospective employees who are committed to the school and its unique mission.

Additionally, Bates has taken an intentional approach to creating a collaborative environment among its instructional staff and has a number of resources that support this approach. The Bates staff includes a higher percentage of elective teachers than is recommended by the EB model (20 percent for middle schools). This high proportion of elective teachers allows for the incorporation of two teacher planning periods per day. Because of this large teaching staff and the strategic organization of teachers and students, teachers at Bates have daily opportunities to collaborate with their peers. Teachers meet with their departmental colleagues three times a week and with their grade-level colleagues once a week. They use collaborative planning time to plan lessons, create common assessments, share course content, and discuss successful instructional strategies for students.

Bates also supports teachers' professional growth, both within and outside of this collaborative planning time. The school has one instructional coach per 100 students, which is a smaller ratio than the EB recommendation of one coach per 200 students. These instructional coaches support the work of teacher teams and provide teachers with targeted assistance. With support from the school improvement coach, teachers analyze student achievement results and use that information to make decisions about how to approach lessons. Department chairs, the arts integration specialist, the literacy coach, and the new teacher mentor provide teachers at Bates job-embedded professional development, and teachers are encouraged to pursue outside professional development opportunities that will help them promote student success.

Finally, the school maintains an average core class size of 21, which is lower than the EB recommendation of 25 students. The school also provides multiple additional supports to help students who may need additional assistance in the classroom. Bates employs a number of LEP and special education teachers. Six special educators co-teach with general education teachers to ensure that students have access to multiple educators in the regular class setting. Additional supports for students who are struggling academically include interventions provided twice a week during the school day or tutoring at lunchtime and after-school.

Gains in student achievement and a positive school climate suggest that the staff at Wiley H. Bates Middle School has been able to leverage its resources to help students succeed. By investing in arts integration, securing many teaching and instructional coach positions, and being intentional about the use of time, Bates has been able to work toward meaningful school improvement.