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# The Human Services Academy Model: A Career Pathway for High School Students in Mental Health

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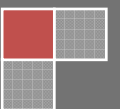
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# Executive Summary

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## Overview

Today's workforce demands are much different from those of four decades ago when a high school diploma was enough to succeed. Current labor force demands as well as the need to prepare for the "21<sup>st</sup> century workforce" emphasize more formal education and technical training. The harsh reality is that our young people are not adequately prepared with the high-level set of skills, both in academic instruction and technical training, to be successful.

Today's workforce is demanding the same set of skills that colleges and universities demand from high school graduates. For example, employers and post-secondary institutions want people who possess the competencies required for success (strong reading, writing, math and communication skills) along with a strong foundation of diverse high quality technical skills relevant to the real-world job market (Simmons, 2001; Carey, 2004). These patterns are evident not only in technical career tracks, but in social service and mental health areas as well, where significant shortages of qualified personnel exist.

Beginning in 2004 and 2005, California was given a unique opportunity to transform its mental health system and to restructure its standards-based education system in grades seven through 12. Large-scale reforms, such as 2004 California Proposition 63 (passed in 2004 and now known as the Mental Health Services Act), aims at increasing funding for new or expanded innovative programs. Along similar lines, career technical education (CCTE) model curriculum standards developed in 2005 seek to prepare students to succeed in school and enter either post-secondary or the workforce in particular career pathways. These two reforms present educators and the mental health industry with both a rare opportunity and a unique challenge.

These developments helped further develop already existing innovative programs. For example, Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHA) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) collaborated to establish the Human Services Academy model in 1998. This marks the first time a nonprofit agency and LAUSD have collaborated on a career academy, with MHA serving as the mental health "industry partner."

The Human Services Academy is a career academy model and can best be characterized as a school-within-a-school with a specific career focus. It aims to create a supportive and personalized learning environment for at-risk students. Currently, there are two Human Services Academies in operation: one at Narbonne High School and a second at Huntington Park High School; combined, they serve more than 800 students in grades 9 through 12 per year. Over the past 10 years, the Human Services Academy model has had great success in motivating students, increasing student academic achievement and inspiring students to attend college.

The Human Services Academy model is deeply grounded in two major frameworks. The first one is the California Partnership Career Academies framework, a school-within-a-school model that promotes a supportive and personalized learning environment and focuses on a particular career theme. The second framework is based on the mental health recovery philosophy and practices, which include four key stages – hope, empowerment, self-responsibility and a meaningful role in life. Thus far, there have been few or no efforts to evaluate or study these programs or the participants in the programs. This need was the basis of the present study.

## **Purpose and Research Questions**

This study examined the role of the Human Services Academy model as a potential training mechanism for educating young people and guiding them toward a career pathway in human services/mental health. The specific questions addressed included: 1) What were the factors that the students rated as important in influencing their decision to join the Academy? 2) What were the students' perceptions of the quality of the Academy? 3) What were the students' perceptions of the amount of encouragement they received to go to college and what were their college attendance rates? 4) With regard to the outcomes of their high school experiences, what was the level of student-reported academic engagement and life satisfaction? 5) What are the relationships of the various components of the elements of the conceptual framework of the Human Services Academy model?

## **Summary of Major Findings**

Using quantitative methodology (e.g., structural equation modeling), these questions were addressed with 276 participants. The results revealed that the students were drawn to the Academy due to its higher education pathway. The students reported that the Academy was a high quality program but they indicated that they could have received more encouragement to go to college. Nevertheless, the students in the Academy had impressive college attendance rates. Results also suggested that the Academy components played a role in influencing students to pursue a career pathway in the human services or mental health field. The students reported high levels of academic engagement and moderate levels of satisfaction with their lives. Finally, path models were consistent with the MHA's Human Services Academy conceptual model.

## **Characteristics of a Quality Academy Model**

These data will be used to refine and further develop the conceptual framework and implementation of the Human Services Academy. Currently, this successful model suggests that a strong academy model must consist of six central features that foster youths' college aspirations and help to make college readily accessible to the average "C" and at-risk youth population.

- Important Feature 1: Strong instructional leadership at all levels with decision-making authority is critical in making effective decisions that lead to funding opportunities and additional instructional resources.
- Important Feature 2: The model needs flexibility to recruit students who are committed to their education and willing to invest effort in their schooling such as: homework completion, class attendance, classroom readiness and demeanor. Recruiting students based on their interest in the Academy increases their sense of community to their peers and teachers. Given the choice to be a member of the Academy model, students are more likely to invest effort in their studies, challenge themselves and their peers, and receive and reciprocate support.
- Important Feature 3: The Academy model must be small in size. A small population of 250 to 300 students allows for greater flexibility to redirect both school and industry partner resources (time, money, staff and space) and quickly meet student remedial needs (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Smaller numbers allow for staff to identify struggling students and design a personal education plan (PEP) with specific academic goals for all students. Using students' PEP, staff is able to assess student progress at key points along the way.
- Important Feature 4: An ability to set high, clear and fair standards for academics and conduct is essential. This gives students responsibility and makes them accountable for their behavior. Incentives are provided to students who demonstrate academic engagement and show positive behavior toward others. On the other hand, students that demonstrate poor behavior and fail to meet certain expectations receive serious consequences, such as removal from the Academy.
- Important Feature 5: The Academy must be able to impact students' personal and social development. It provides students with enriched diverse opportunities during and after school that allow them to form meaningful and professional relationships with fellow students, teachers and mentors. High quality education starts with strong relationships (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Students often voice the strong connection they have with their teacher(s). Teacher involvement and support is critical in helping students develop a sense of purpose in life and career pathway.
- Important Feature 6: The model establishes a college-going culture by increasing students' exposure to colleges and universities prior to graduating from high school. This can be achieved through field trips to college and university campuses and more importantly, one-on-one college and financial aid counseling.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, for the past 10 years, the Human Services Academy framework has shown to be a flexible and successful model in helping students achieve in high school. Much has been done to encourage students to enroll in college and pursue careers in the human services/mental health field.

Yet, in order to create and sustain a competent workforce pipeline, more needs to be done to impact academic and training programs at the post-secondary level. Strong regional partnerships between the mental health industry, secondary and post-secondary institutions are the cornerstone of these efforts. It is imperative to continue to evaluate the model and press forward with exploring diverse opportunities in higher levels of education. For future research it is also imperative that a comparison or non-academy group be included in the study. An increase in students' knowledge, skills and motivation at all levels of their education is crucial to a successful workforce pipeline. In this paper we presented a framework that can serve as a foundation to build on a competency-based recovery approach to workforce development for the mental health field.



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# Introduction and Background

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As educators, consumers and human services practitioners, we cling to a world of hope and promise. The approach to our line of work is that of an optimist often relishing new opportunities and the challenges of creating a continuum system of care—a system of care that will improve the lives of people who historically have been underserved by the current structure. But we also live in the “here and now” world of budget cuts, shortages of well trained human services workers, inequality, and mediocre efforts to transform and reform a broken system. In our efforts to improve people’s quality of life, we recognize that proposing change to a massive structure (i.e., education or mental health system) is the easy part, but implementing and sustaining change is the very difficult part. Research has shown that in times when efforts and pressure to change are intense, large-scale reform tends to achieve quick results and in many cases reach a level of maturity and stability where people can enjoy their successes. However, when people achieve success, they tend to become complacent and in the habit of engaging in “business as usual” practices. For example, Margaret Wheatley (1997) maintains that people have a tendency to cling to old habits or to what has worked in the past. When efforts to transform a system are exhausted and pressure for change subsides, convincing and motivating skeptical people to engage and persist in the hard work of innovation and sustainment is extremely difficult (Hargraves & Fink, 2006, p.1). What we are describing here is a reform lifecycle and, amid all the legislation to transform large systems, people and organizations have a hard time assimilating and accommodating to change.

Beginning in 2004 and 2005, California was given a unique opportunity to transform its mental health system and to restructure its standards-based education system in grades seven through 12. Large-scale reforms, such as the 2004 California Proposition 63 (passed in 2004 and now known as the Mental Health Services Act, aims at increasing funding for new or expanded innovative programs based on the recovery model. Along similar lines, the career technical education (CCTE) model curriculum standards developed in 2005 seek to prepare students to succeed in school and enter either post-secondary or the workforce in a particular career pathway. These two reforms present educators and the mental health industry with both a rare opportunity and a unique challenge.

## *The Opportunity*

The opportunity comes from the MHSA’s call for an expansion of educational programs that address the shortages of mental health workers. The following terms emerged from the Act that give emphasis to the need for a well trained mental health workforce:

1. “Involvement and Capacity” refers to the expansion of the post-secondary education sector in order to meet the needs of the mental health workforce shortages.
2. “Establishment of Regional Partnerships” refers to regional collaborative among the mental health system and the educational system to expand outreach to multicultural communities and increase the diversity of the mental health workforce.
3. “Recruitment Strategies” refers to increasing the prevalence of mental health occupations in high school career development programs by increasing the number of human services academies.

At the same time that MHSA's policy was becoming known in California, the California career technical education (CCTE) model curriculum standards were also emerging as a reform effort to improve students' advancement into post-secondary and strengthen the workforce of 15 industry sectors. The CCTE standards focus on three major areas:

1. "Seamless Transition" refers to collaborative partnerships between secondary, post-secondary and industry sectors to minimize the transition gaps from one educational institution to another and increase the entry to the workforce.
2. "Essential Employability Skills" refers to linking academic content standards with industry capabilities and equipping students with the most current and relevant industry sets of skills.
3. "Standards Alignment" refers to the combination of academic content standards and industry career technical education standards.

The opportunity comes from the CCTE model's public service sector and its human services pathway standards. Table 1 shows the Human Services Pathway standards that were created by the industry in order to help prepare high school students for entry-level positions at private or non-profit human services agencies. These two reform efforts represent a rare opportunity and structure for educators and the human services/mental health industry to work in partnership to build on and strengthen the human service workforce pipeline.

Table 1: Career Technical Education Human Services Pathway Standards

<b>Human Services Pathway Standards</b>	
<p><b><u>Industry Sector Standard 1:</u></b> Students understand the history of human services in America and the role of the demand for human services professionals.</p>	<p>1.1 Analyze the origin of human services in America, the types of problems addressed, and the nature of services provided. 1.2 Understand the different roles played by human service professionals now and throughout American history.</p>
<p><b><u>Industry Sector Standard 2:</u></b> Students understand the basic attitudes and skills needed to be a successful human service worker, including linking problem-solving methods to desired outcomes.</p>	<p>2.1 Understand the need for such characteristics in the human service worker as flexibility, patience, tolerance, persistence, emotional control, humor, discretion and confidentiality, empathy and compassion, and self-awareness and ways in which to enhance those characteristics. 2.2 Understand the level of crisis at which human services employees should seek professional assistance in solving the problem. 2.3 Understand when and how to use problem-solving techniques, such as brainstorming and mediation, and understand how to link the methodology to the desired outcome.</p>
<p><b><u>Industry Sector Standard 3:</u></b> Students develop the specific, effective communication skills essential for working in the human service field.</p>	<p>3.1 Understand how to engage people in conversation by using active listening skills, empathy, compassion, and self-awareness. 3.2 Understand the concepts of objectivity, subjectivity, collaboration, delayed gratification, and tolerance of frustration in dealing with others.</p>
<p><b><u>Industry Sector Standard 4:</u></b> Students understand various common cultures and the importance of providing culturally competent human services.</p>	<p>4.1 Understand the importance of cross-cultural sensitivity and appreciation of cultural differences in work with children, families, and communities from varying backgrounds. 4.2 Know how to train others to be culturally sensitive when working with people from diverse backgrounds. 4.3 Know and appreciate cultural differences in this society, understanding the fundamental benefits of cultural diversity as well as the challenges.</p>
<p><b><u>Industry Sector Standard 5:</u></b> Students know the basic principles of research, gathering data, entering the data, and interpreting the results.</p>	<p>5.1 Understand basic research methods and skills, including formulating a hypothesis and identifying important variables. 5.2 Know the major methodologies for conducting literature searches on the Internet. 5.3 Understand the fundamentals of constructing a survey to collect and analyze data, including the basic mathematics involved.</p>
<p><b><u>Industry Sector Standard 6:</u></b> Students understand various leadership styles and accountability in human services.</p>	<p>6.1 Analyze various leadership styles in terms of accountability and commitment to others. 6.2 Understand basic leadership styles and approaches and distinguish between leadership and management. 6.3 Understand how leaders in the public and private sectors influence human service policy. 6.4 Understand how and why accountability mechanisms protect people receiving human services.</p>
<p><b><u>Industry Sector Standard 7:</u></b> Students understand the basic elements of administration of a human services agency, including recordkeeping and fundraising.</p>	<p>7.1 Understand the fundamentals of funding and fundraising for a human services agency. 7.2 Understand the various ways in which human services agencies are funded as well as sources for and approaches to fundraising. 7.3 Understand the key aspects of administration, evaluation, reporting, and maintenance of records in a human services agency.</p>

Source: California Department of Education (2005); Loera and Stone (2003)

## *The Challenge*

Few people will argue with the idea that having a strong business presence on a school campus will have a positive impact on student learning and lead to exposure to a career pathway. Adequate regional partnerships, between the educational and industry sectors, have always been one of the greatest challenges for establishing partnerships (Stern, Raby, & Dayton, 1992). A strong educational and industry partnership is not only central to continuous change, innovation and improvement, and best (evidence-based) practices, but it is also crucial in developing a well trained workforce (Bragg & Mills, 2005, p. 172). Acknowledging the importance of adequate funding, the major challenge for both educators and the mental health industry, comes from MHSA's and CTE's emphasis to establish regional partnerships of virtue and authenticity.

A strong collaboration with an industry partner works to balance a youth's education by combining the classroom instruction with real-life work experience while expanding their post-secondary educational and career interests. Maximizing work-based learning opportunities, especially after school hours, can lead to broadening a youth's outlook on post-secondary, work, and life (Yohalem et al, 2006, p. 118). Research has documented that industry/business partners/community-based organizations that offer out-of-school opportunities give relevance and credibility to an integrated curriculum that leads to a career pathway (Castellano, Stringfield, & Stone, 2003; Stone, 2005; Stoll, 2007). Bragg and Mills, (2005) supports this claim in that they believe that the industry partner is essential to a successful academic program and in motivating students toward a specific career pathway. A strong partnership among the academic and industry sectors can also be a strong prevention and early intervention predictor. As mentioned earlier, work-based learning opportunities support academic learning, engage youth in work that is relevant allow youth to make solid connections with professional and industry standards, and keep youths from dropping out.

## *Problem Statement*

Today's workforce demands are much different from four decades ago when a high school diploma was enough to access the workforce. Since the early 1970's, educators have lectured students about "preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce," emphasizing its demand of more formal education and technical training. That workforce is here now and the harsh reality is that our young people are not adequately prepared with the high-level set of skills, both in academic instruction and technical training, to be successful in a challenging and demanding workforce. Today's workforce is demanding the same set of skills that colleges and universities demand from high school graduates. For example, employers and post-secondary institutions want people that possess the competencies required for success (strong reading, writing, math and communication skills) along with a strong foundation of diverse high quality technical skills relevant to the real-world job market (Simmons, 2001; Carey, 2004).

This lack of preparation at the high school level may contribute to the shortage of bilingual and bicultural human service/mental health workers. A post-secondary education, a requirement for most human services/mental health jobs, will remain out of reach for many minority youth without a strong set of academic skills combined with adequate exposure to the

field (Midgley & Cohen, 2007). Therefore, the educational sector and human services/mental health industry sector share a common community need.

Human services and mental health agencies are central to a healthy community for the low-income families who rely on the nonprofit/public sector for services. Individuals' well-being is hurt by the shortage of bilingual and bicultural human service/mental health workers, a problem compounded by changing community conditions and public policies. In 2002, California was described by the California Department of Mental Health's Task Force as being in the midst of a "significant human resources crisis." California's mental health system was and continues to face a serious shortage of mental health workers. McRee and her colleagues (McRee et al. 2003) support the mental health workforce shortage notion in their report "The Mental Health Workforce: Who's Meeting California's Needs?" They state that in 2000, there were 6.8 psychiatrists per 100,000 people in California. They go on to indicate that of these psychiatrists, a small percent (5%) were Latino and African American. There is little doubt that a gap between the need and availability of mental health services continues to widen and the demand for mental health workers in California will continue to increase significantly (McRee et al. 2003). Another useful report, released in 2001 by the California Department of Health Services, puts the crisis in perspective when it indicated that more than four million Californians "may be at serious risk of distress, pain, disability, and death associated with mental disorders." Clearly, the lack of mental health/human services workers represents a major barrier in the unmet need for mental health services in California.

This paper examines the role of the Human Services Academy model as a potential training mechanism for educating young people and guiding them toward a career pathway in human services/mental health. Specifically, it focuses on high school students' experiences as members of the Human Services Academy. The central assumption is that students enrolled in this Academy are more engaged in their academics and more likely to pursue a career path in human services or mental health. We consider the following five main research questions.

### *Research Questions*

1. What were the factors that the students rated as important in influencing their decision to join the Academy?
2. What were the students' perceptions of the quality of the Academy?
3. What were the students' perceptions of the amount of encouragement they received to go to college and what were their college attendance rates?
4. With regard to the outcomes of their high school experiences, what was the level of student-reported academic engagement and life satisfaction?
5. What are the relationships of the various components of the elements of the conceptual framework of the Human Services Academy model?

# Theoretical Framework

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The Human Services Academy model, founded by Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHA), is deeply grounded in two major frameworks, the California Partnership Career Academies framework and the Recovery framework.

## *The California Partnership Academies Framework*

The Human Services Academy model is grounded in the California Partnership “Career Academies” structure attributable to California State Legislature SB 605, passed in 1987 and SB 44, passed in 1993. Based on this framework, a high school career academy is organized as a school-within-a-school with a specific focus on a particular career theme. Another critical component is the integration of academic core curriculum with career technical education curriculum. The overarching idea is to bring together a team of dedicated teachers to work collectively toward creating a learning environment that positively impacts the learning and motivation of a cohort of students. It is this collaborative effort from a team of teachers and a cohort of students that promotes and advances the overall goals of the program and makes up its unique structure. Much earlier literature on career academies indicated that this model was the new direction in transforming and restructuring large urban high schools into smaller schools and addressing the high student dropout rates (Stern, Raby, & Dayton, 1992; Kemple & Snipes, 2000). Moreover, the career academy model had five specific characteristics that made it very appealing:

1. It operated as a “school-within-a-school” program with a team of committed teachers.
2. It emphasized a particular career path and combined classroom instruction with real-life work experience.
3. It required industry or employer partners to assist the teaching team in guiding the program.
4. It required that classes be kept small in size in order to build student to student and student to teacher relationships.
5. It allowed for additional state funding streams (i.e. California Partnership Academies grants).

For the past two decades, the career academy structure has become the most popular movement toward reforming secondary education. Much of the research done on career academies in California have shown that students’ attendance, grade point averages, and graduation rates do improve (Stern, Raby, & Dayton, 1992, 2000; Kemple & Snipes, 2000; Stern, Wu, Dayton & Maul, 2005; Aness, 2008). This body of work has also found that career academies keep students in school. Recent research has even shown that graduates of career academies are more likely to graduate from college and earn more money than their non-academy counterparts (Kemple, 2008).

## *The Mental Health Recovery Framework*

The philosophy and practices of the four stages of the mental health recovery framework are embedded in the curriculum structure of the Human Services Academy model. In his book,

“A Road to Recovery,” psychiatrist Mark Ragins, M.D., presents his concept that recovery has four stages – hope, empowerment, self-responsibility and a meaningful role in life.

Stage 1: Hope. Recovery begins with a positive vision of the future. Hope is most motivating when it takes form as a real, reasonable image of what life can look like. Individuals need to see possibilities – getting a job, earning a diploma, having an apartment – before they can make changes and take steps forward.

Stage 2: Empowerment. To move ahead, individuals need a sense of their capabilities. Hope needs to be focused on what they can do for themselves. To be empowered, they need access to information and the opportunity to make their own choices. Individuals choose the types of services they want using a “menu” of options.

Stage 3: Self-Responsibility. As individuals move toward recovery, they realize they need to be responsible for their own lives. This comes with trying new things, learning from mistakes and trying again. Individuals are encouraged to take risks, such as living independently, applying for a job, enrolling in college or asking someone out on a date.

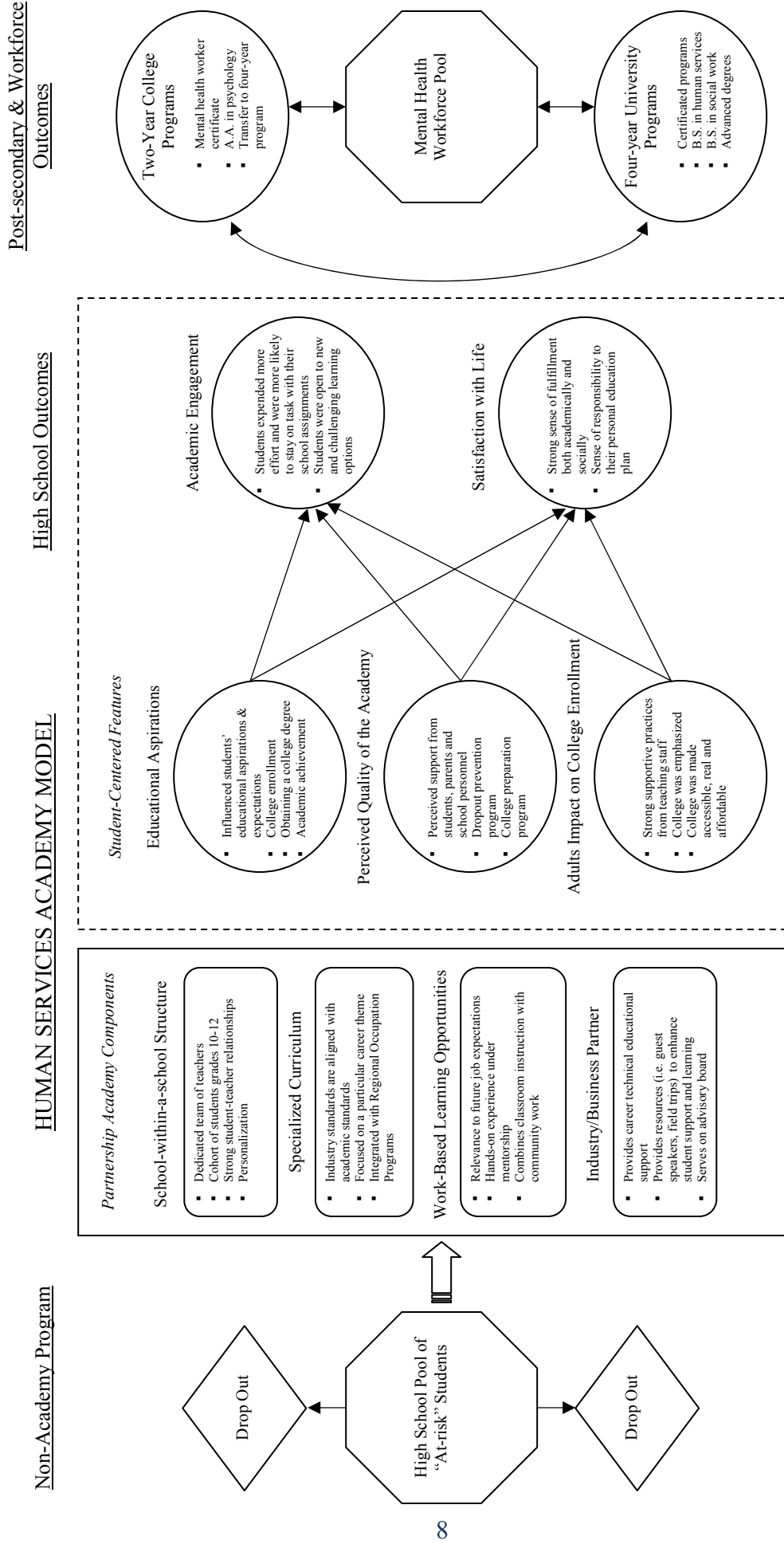
Stage 4: A Meaningful Role in Life. To recover, individuals must have a purpose in their lives separate from their illness. They need to apply newly-acquired traits such as hopefulness, confidence and self-responsibility to “normal” roles such as employee, neighbor, graduate and volunteer. Meaningful roles help people with mental illness “get a life.”

There is consensus among California mental health practitioners that the current mental health system must be transformed and, that there is a need to build a mental health/human services workforce that is capable of implementing services to consumers and their families within a recovery framework. Mental health professionals have also recognized that evidenced-based curricula at all levels of education that promotes the philosophy and practices of recovery, is essential in training a highly skilled workforce. Therefore, incorporating a “recovery education” module consisting of the four stages of recovery into the academy’s curriculum is vital in order to provide relevant and current training in mental health.

The combination of these two frameworks – the California Partnership Academies structure and the Recovery framework – resulted in three key Student-Centered Features: 1) enhancing and aligning students’ academic and career aspirations with their expectations; 2) creating a sense of belonging and support through academic and personal counseling; and 3) establishing the importance of strong relationships between students and teachers and extending that to success in post-secondary education. In the Academies, MHA maintains that these features have a positive impact on students’ academic engagement and life satisfaction. Figure 1 shows the MHA’s Human Services Academy model. These variables are described in detail later on in the evaluation portion of this paper.



**Figure 1: MHA's Framework of the Human Services Academy Model**



# The Origin of the Human Services Academy Model

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On February 4, 1998, the first Human Services Academy model opened its doors at Narbonne High School and in March, 2000 the second academy opened at Huntington Park High School. The collaboration between Mental Health America of Los Angeles, then known as Mental Health Association of Greater Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) back in 1997 made it possible to implement a career academy.

The idea to design the first high school career academy that would attract young people to human services came to us with three caveats. First, if the administration, primarily the school principal, was not fully committed to working with the industry sector, the academy would not survive. Having strong leadership at the top was a major concern because we needed to build a strong academic culture and establish commitment toward a shared vision of a pipeline model. Having strong leadership in an administrator meant openness for change and innovation toward building a culture of learning that would continue to exist even after that administrator was gone (Schlechty, 1991). Second, if the school chosen already had other academy-type programs, then there would be competition for students, conflict between school values and industry values, tension in allocation of school resources, and limited support from the administration. Third, if the Human Services Academy was to be successful in serving a diverse group of underserved students and in building a strong educational and workforce pipeline, MHA had to consider the following: student demographics, local nonprofit and public agencies to serve as worksites for students, and the proximity of the Academy to a community college and California state university. After acknowledging these prerequisites, MHA and LAUSD agreed to open a career academy in one of four Harbor region high schools: Narbonne, Banning, Carson, or San Pedro.

In 1997, when a team at MHA began exploring its future school site for the first Human Services Academy, the first step was to visit and interview the administration of the four high schools. MHA's goal was to identify the school with an administrator that was willing to commit to a long-term partnership and who demonstrated readiness to engage with the mental health community. The administrator of Narbonne High School emerged as that partner for MHA's workforce endeavors. Here were the important elements that played a role in MHA's decision to select Narbonne High:

1. Narbonne High School was designed to serve a large disabled student population in the Harbor region and it led to several assumptions from MHA. First, students from the general population are aware and empathetic toward people with a disability. In other words, there was already a growing acceptance toward "differentness" among the general student population and MHA wanted to build on that, as empathy fosters a sense of likeness (Corrigan, 2004). Second, this school context allowed MHA to recruit and involve students with disabilities in shaping the academy and its diversity.
2. Narbonne High School was on a traditional or single track and had a smaller student body compared to the other schools. A small school became a critical factor because MHA wanted small student cohorts linked to a small team of teachers in order to establish

meaningful relationships. Large student cohorts meant less intimacy and less sense of community. Also, being traditional meant that the team of teachers could work during the summer aligning their curriculum to mental health industry standards. Research suggests that students reach higher levels of academic achievement in a smaller school environment mainly because they are able to build a strong relationship with a caring teacher (Certo et al. 2003; Cotton, 2001; Gregory, 2000). According to Simmons (2001), providing students with the opportunity to interact with adults (role model teachers), improves student learning and achievement. In other words, positive relationships with a teacher, a worksite mentor or a guidance counselor increases students educational and career aspirations and enhances students' academic engagement.

3. The administration at Narbonne was enthusiastic and supportive to the idea of starting up the first career academy on their campus. Being the only career academy on campus became crucial because it meant that MHA did not have to compete for "C" average students, for school resources or for administrative support. It also meant autonomy in decision-making in critical areas such as curriculum, schedule of classes, teacher and student recruitment, and common planning time. Programs that have autonomy tend to produce quality results and maintain a unique learning culture that engages people (Duke & Trautvetter, 2001).

However, there was one major hurdle that MHA needed to jump over before doing business with the school. That hurdle was LEARN or the School Leadership Council, which functioned as a decision-making body for the school. The LEARN group consisted of students, parents, teachers, administrators, classified staff and community members. The Academy concept needed to be voted on and approved by this committee before MHA was allowed on campus.

In our first presentation to the LEARN group, we expressed our desire to open an academy that would benefit students, teachers and the overall school. We described our proposed academy as a start-up project designed to target average "C" students and to engage them in a human services career path. We also emphasized that the academy would be staffed with a team of five existing core academic teachers who would work closely with students to improve their academics and get them ready for college. MHA also made a commitment to serve as the industry partner and to provide students with paid work-based learning opportunities and train the team of teachers on integrating basic areas of mental health into their academic curricula. In our business, there is a common statement or a mantra that is uttered repeatedly by those who oppose housing near their neighborhoods for people with a mental illness: "NIMBY – Not in My Backyard." This statement resonated at the end of our presentation. Not only was our proposal unenthusiastically received by the group, but the school counselor physically got up and shouted: "Who do you think you are coming in to our school wanting to psychoanalyze our students, not in our school you're not!" Sound familiar? Although we never proposed analyzing anyone, the result was a split vote. It was clear that the LEARN group was not fully in favor of having MHA on their campus. Eventually, with the full support of the principal, our proposal passed by one vote.

This story contains an important implication: In order to organize and motivate people toward setting and achieving goals that lead to building capacity to get things done, the planning

work must be done in collaboration and not in isolation (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 143; Clark & Estes, 2002, p. 91). In order to avoid conflict, all stakeholders must be involved in decision-making as early as possible in the planning process. Moreover, establishing strong partnerships and sharing decision-making among stakeholders will lead to a successful program.

With this in mind, MHA and Narbonne school administrators moved forward with the following five core objectives in establishing the Human Services Academy model:

1. To place fifteen 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in jobs at local nonprofit or public human service agencies, where they would work four hours a day, four days a week, for 20 weeks.
2. To pair each student with a mentor at the work site.
3. To conduct a weekly work-based learning support class that would cover college preparation and career planning and address students' experiences in working at a human service agency.
4. To select and train four high school teachers who would become the core faculty for the Human Services Academy.
5. To develop a curriculum for the Academy core classes of English, social studies, Spanish, and human services.

Perhaps the strongest point to be made on behalf of the uniqueness of this model—is the industry's efforts to recruit educational partners and its determination to shape the future mental health workforce. This idea of an industry sector seeking and initiating a discussion with the secondary and post-secondary sectors, in the effort to create a seamless educational and human services workforce pipeline, is unusual. Traditionally, it is the academic sector that seeks out an industry or business partner with the hope that the industry partner will also financially support their program. From the beginning, MHA believed that its workforce investment depended on strong partnerships with the secondary and post-secondary sectors. An industry partner contributes to the development of an academy program by: 1) helping to develop curriculum that is relevant to industry standards; 2) identifying experiential work-based learning opportunities; 3) providing in-kind support; 4) providing guest lecturers to share personal and professional experiences with students; and 5) assisting in the alignment of career technical education curriculum and academic curriculum. Richard Van Horn, president of Mental Health America of Los Angeles, and a strong advocate for industry involvement in shaping the future workforce for mental health, states that the industry partner needs to be willing and able to dedicate staff and resources to complete elements of an academy program, via term-time work, career counseling, college entrance counseling, family relationships and motivation (R. Van Horn, personal communication, July 24, 2007). Curriculum development can benefit if the industry partner is helping a team of teachers target specific learning goals and skill requirements. Motivational issues in career direction are reinforced if the course of academic programs is adjusted to highlight the history and development of the specific career path. The industry partner can often be an effective mediator between the local campuses and parent institutions, districts or systems, to develop the political will to try new approaches (R. Van Horn, 2007). Table 2 also shows the specific set of responsibilities for each group in establishing and operating a career academy recommended by the school district's Office of Career Development.

Table 2: Stakeholders' Responsibilities in Creating a Career Academy

<b>Responsibilities</b>		
<b>Industry Partner</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Office of Career Development</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact the Office of Career Development to initiate a request to establish an academy.</li> <li>2. Submit proposed curriculum to the Office of Career Development for District approval.</li> <li>3. Establish and maintain appropriate industry advisory bodies to assure that the development of the academy instructional program remains reflective of the chosen industry focus.</li> <li>4. Identify work-based learning opportunities in the selected career field for students.</li> <li>5. Identify work-based mentors.</li> <li>6. Arrange for the training of work-based mentors.</li> <li>7. Provide staff development for academy teachers in the career focus area of the academy.</li> <li>8. Provide classroom technical support as requested by academy teachers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Request school-wide training in the establishment of career academies.</li> <li>2. Select teachers who apply to participate in academy programs; do not assign the teachers without their involvement.</li> <li>3. Assign teachers whose subject fields represent academic and career preparation classes related to the area of academy concentration.</li> <li>4. Develop an internal structure to support an academy (e.g., school-within-a-school).</li> <li>5. Create counseling and programming structures that will support an academy effort.</li> <li>6. Prepare master schedules to facilitate common planning periods for academy teachers to enable them to integrate academic and career preparation classroom activities and assignments.</li> <li>7. Schedule classes so that students can, if necessary, be block-scheduled among the academy classes.</li> <li>8. Develop a sequence of classes and out-of-school experiences that begin in grade 9 and extend to grade 14 or beyond.</li> <li>9. Prepare an implementation plan to ensure that the academy is accessible to all students who show an interest, so the academy is sustainable with adequate enrollment to maintain a rigorous instructional focus.</li> <li>10. Commit local school resources to ensure program success.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve proposed academy structure.</li> <li>2. Provide school-wide training in the establishment of career academies.</li> <li>3. Work with the sponsoring industry or agency and school to develop curriculum and curriculum enhancements, mentor training guides, and mentor training schedules.</li> <li>4. Review and submit for adoption to the Division of Instruction specialized curricula.</li> <li>5. Conduct mentor training.</li> <li>6. Coordinate work-based learning enrollment in cooperation with the sponsoring agency or industry.</li> <li>7. Assist schools in budget preparation related to academy designs.</li> <li>8. Coordinate agency or industry-sponsored academy staff development.</li> <li>9. Monitor academy development.</li> <li>10. Provide technical assistance as requested.</li> <li>11. Ensure compliance with state and federal laws.</li> <li>12. Initiate reports to the Board of Education as appropriate and originate all District correspondence regarding academy development.</li> <li>13. Make available a list of technical staff who have experience or have been trained in academy implementation and can provide technical assistance to schools.</li> </ol>

Source: Division of Instruction, Career Academies – Bulletin No. 30, LAUSD (1998)

### *Target Student Population and Recruitment*

Mental Health America, the industry partner, took a unique approach in recruiting the first small cohort of students. The idea was to start small and work toward establishing a strong reputation. At first, the program coordinator went to designated classrooms making presentations to all eleventh-grade English and social studies classes. After each presentation, all interested students were invited to complete an application packet and participate in an interview. However, this approach did not prove to be an effective recruitment method. As a result, the program coordinator randomly approached students during nutrition and lunch asking which students on campus were the most popular. The names of three students, two males and one female, consistently came up. One of the students, the most popular of the three, was successfully recruited and with the first popular student on board, the other two joined. What was unique about this approach was that these three popular students became the ambassadors of the Academy and helped to recruit more than 200 students the following year. With these three student ambassadors, the Human Services Academy developed a strong reputation for not only being a “cool” program but also for its high academic standards. From that point on, the Academy had no trouble recruiting students. Moreover, this approach to recruitment resulted in three distinctive student populations. Here are brief descriptions of each target student population:

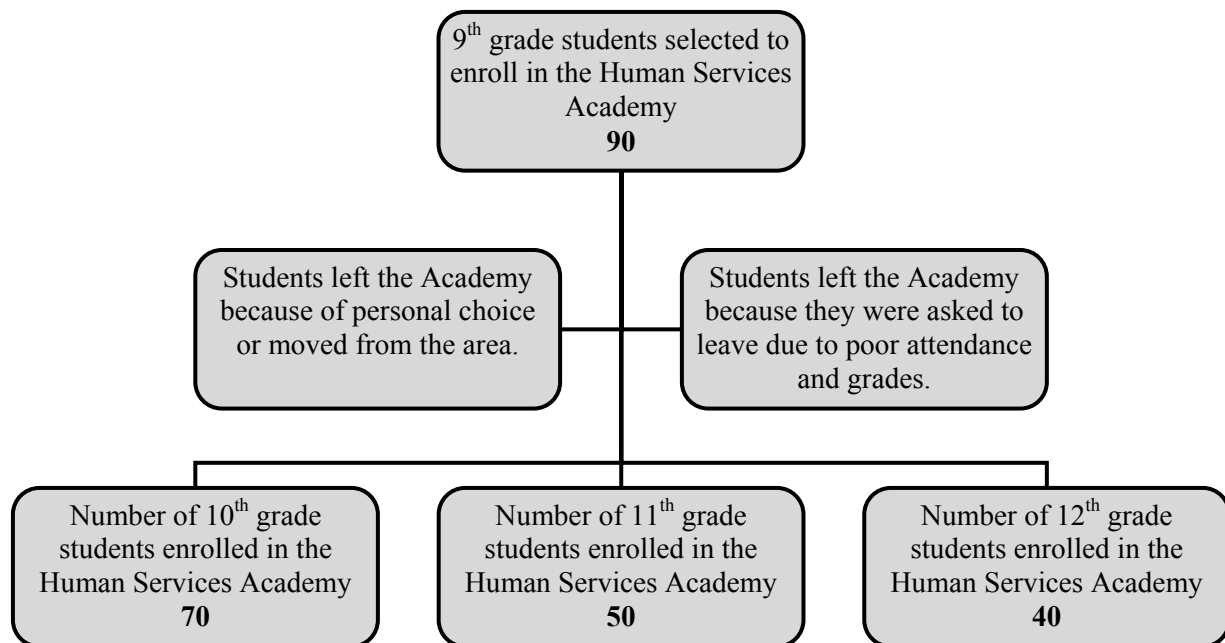
1. The “low-aspiration” students (students with a 1.80 grade point average) had not yet shown excitement or a desire to achieve in school and think about college. Moreover, this student population traditionally lacks positive family and community role models.
2. The “poor-direction” students (students with a 2.00 grade point average) have been thinking about going to college, but have never been given proper guidance or been academically monitored to ensure an enriched pathway into college. Most of these students are the first in their family to not only graduate from high school but also to attend college.
3. The “lack-of-program” students (students with a 2.50 to above a 3.00 grade point average) have been interested in college and looking to pursue a career in human services/mental health. Unfortunately, most of these students do not have access to a program and/or group of adults to assist them with decision-making on pursuing the right career path the right post-secondary institution.

### *The Cost of Starting a Human Services Academy*

This section offers guidance on the cost of establishing an Academy based on the Human Services Academy model. The development of an academy consists of start-up and sustaining phases. Start-up is divided into planning and implementation steps. Planning is a year-long process designed to give the high school administration and selected Academy teachers time to plan their Academy and culminates, with an “Introduction to Human Services” career technical education course taught during the spring semester. The budget for this start-up planning year for a single academy is \$125,000. The annual budget to sustain an academy, after the planning year, is approximately \$250,000. See Appendix A for a more detailed planning phase with specific tasks and funding breakdown.

By design, an ideal fully implemented Human Services Academy model should serve 250 students in grades 9 to 12, (about 90 freshmen, 70 sophomores, 50 juniors and 40 seniors). Stern and Wing (2004) point out the importance of student mobility and its potential impact on the Academy. For example, they claim that students who leave the Academy are less likely to graduate from high school. Figure 2 illustrates the enrollment numbers of an ideal group of students in an Academy model and some common reasons for removing students from the Academy. For an academy model to be effective in providing an intimate environment that supports student learning, a typical student population should be between 200 to 400 students (Wasley & Lear, 2001; Noguera, 2002). A student population of 500 to 800 is not conducive to student learning (Wasley & Lear). MHA’s underlying principle for keeping student numbers small is to ensure that the model can be replicable at an economical cost and yet maintain a meaningful personalized and engaging environment.

Figure 2: Enrollment numbers of an ideal group of students in an Academy Model



The strategy in keeping the Academy model small in structure was to increase students’ sense of belonging, increase students’ educational and career aspirations, and increase students’ academic engagement and achievement. For example, Sánchez et al. (2005) indicated that providing students with a sense of community enhances their overall well-being. Four elements are salient in defining a sense of community or belonging: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Clearly, a program with a small student population has a greater capacity to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of each student. A program that is too large in size will isolate students and contribute to their academic failure (Simmons, 2001). Along the same lines, a typical core group of Academy staff consists of six high school teachers (three English, two social studies and one science) and one non-academic instructor from the industry.

# Methodology

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Mental Health America of Los Angeles conducted an evaluation to examine the effectiveness of the Human Services Academy model in preparing students for post-secondary education and the mental health workforce. Data were collected via surveys from students in the Human Services Academy and from students' college applications and students' work-based learning timesheets. The five main research questions addressed in this evaluation were:

1) What were the factors that the students rated as important in influencing their decision to join the Academy? 2) What were the students' perceptions of the quality of the Academy? 3) What were the students' perceptions of the amount of encouragement they received to go to college and what were their college attendance rates? 4) With regard to the outcomes of their high school experiences, what was the level of student-reported academic engagement and life satisfaction? 5) What are the relationships of the various components of the elements of the conceptual framework of the Human Services Academy model?

## *Participants*

The sample for this evaluation included 267 current students and alumni from Narbonne High School ( $n = 152$ ) and Huntington Park High School ( $n = 115$ ). At the time the survey was administered (December 2005), the students were either currently enrolled in the Human Services Academy or were recent alumni of the program. The sample ranged in age from 14 through 24 years ( $M = 17.33$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ). A detailed description of the sample is shown in Table 3. The sample was over two-thirds female and the majority of the sample were juniors or seniors in high school when they completed the survey. In addition, the sample from Narbonne High School was predominately Latino and African American and the sample from Huntington Park High School was almost entirely Latino. The mothers and fathers of the students from Narbonne High School had achieved higher education levels than the parents of the students from Huntington Park High School. Nevertheless, the majority of the students in both high schools reported that their parents did not have a college education.

## *Academy Profiles*

*Narbonne High School.* Is a large urban public school in the City of Harbor City in Los Angeles County in California. During the 2007-08 school year, it served 3,435 students. According to the 2000 census, the city had a total population of 35,303. The ethnic makeup of the area is 32 percent White, 10 percent African American, one percent Native American, nine percent Asian, one percent Pacific Islander, 17 percent from other ethnicities, and 30 percent of the population are Hispanic or Latino. This data clearly indicates a diverse community. The median income was \$47,249, and 79 percent of the adults had at least a high school diploma.

*Huntington Park High School.* Is a large urban public school in the City of Huntington Park in Los Angeles County in California. During the 2007-08 school year, it served 4,240 students. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Report (2000), the city's total population was 61,348 and of that total, 58,636 or 96 percent were Latino. Of which, 44,948 or 73 percent were of Mexican descent. This data is important because it indicates that the majority of the students



from this community have limited contact with non-Latino groups. The per capita income for the community was \$28,941, and 43 percent of the adults had less than a ninth grade education.

Table 3: Academy Sample Description

	<i>Narbonne High School (n = 152)</i>	<i>Huntington Park High School (n = 115)</i>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	28.9% (n = 44)	32.2% (n = 37)
Female	71.1% (n = 108)	67.8% (n = 78)
<b>Class Standing</b>		
Junior	31.6% (n = 48)	69.6% (n = 80)
Senior	50.7% (n = 77)	19.1% (n = 22)
Alumni	17.8% (n = 27)	11.3% (n = 13)
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Latino	62.5% (n = 95)	97.4% (n = 112)
African-American	21.7% (n = 33)	0.9% (n = 1)
Asian	7.9% (n = 12)	0.9% (n = 1)
Other	7.9% (n = 12)	0.9% (n = 1)
<b>Mother's Education</b>		
Elementary/Jr. High	27.6% (n = 42)	50.4% (n = 58)
High School	29.6% (n = 45)	32.2% (n = 37)
College <sup>a</sup>	42.8% (n = 65)	17.4% (n = 20)
<b>Father's Education</b>		
Elementary/Jr. High	31.6% (n = 48)	47.8% (n = 55)
High School	33.6% (n = 51)	35.7% (n = 41)
College <sup>a</sup>	34.9% (n = 53)	16.5% (n = 19)

Note. <sup>a</sup>College category includes the responses “some college,” “college graduate,” and “graduate school.”

### Measures

The survey instrument titled “The High School Academy Experience Survey” was designed to elicit descriptive data from five main measures:

*Educational Aspirations.* Students’ aspirations and expectations were examined as the factors that influenced students’ decision to join the Human Services Academy. This measure was adopted and modified from the Completion, Persistence, Transfer and Success of Kamehameha Students (CP-TASKS; Hagendorn et al. 2003). The students rated the importance of the factors on a 7 point scale (1 = *very unimportant* to 7 = *very important*). The four items were academic reasons for joining the program and we re-conceptualized them as the students’ Academic Aspirations for later analyses.

*Perceived Quality of the Academy.* The items for this measure were adopted and modified from the Completion, Persistence, Transfer and Success of Kamehameha Students (CP-TASKS; Hagendorn et al. 2003). This measure was composed of four items rated on a 4 point scale (1 = *a poor program* to 4 = *an excellent program*) that assessed the students’ perceptions of the quality of the Academy. The items asked students: “What did a) you, b) your parents, c) your teachers, and d) others think about the Academy?”

*Adults Impact on College Enrollment.* Items for this measure were also adopted and modified from the Completion, Persistence, Transfer and Success of Kamehameha Students (CP-TASKS; Hagendorn et al. 2003). Seven items were rated on a 5 point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The students were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements: “My academy a) teachers, b) guidance counselor, and c) coordinator encouraged me to go to college?”

*Academic Engagement.* Items for this measure were derived from the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory motivation subscale (Weinstein, Schulte, & Cascallar, 1983). Five items were extracted from the subscale assessing the students’ academic engagement. The students rated whether statements (e.g., “Even when study materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish.”) indicating high levels of academic engagement were typical of themselves on a 1 (*not at all typical of me*) to 5 (*very much typical of me*) scale.

*Satisfaction with Life.* Students’ personal and social growth was assessed as to their level of fulfillment and accomplishments, thus assessing their positioning in life. The five items from the subscale were adopted and modified from the Completion, Persistence, Transfer and Success of Kamehameha Students (CP-TASKS; Hagendorn et al. 2003). The students rated the five items (e.g., “The conditions of my life are excellent.”) on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

In addition, the students were asked “What type of job do you expect to be working in ten years?” This was a free response item and we coded the students’ responses into the five most frequently occurring categories (i.e., Health and Human Services, Education, Business/Finance, Arts/Media/Entertainment, and Other/Undecided).

### *Procedures*

This evaluation is part of a larger pipeline project developed in collaboration with other high schools, a community college and an urban university. As previously mentioned, the sample consisted of students that were either currently enrolled in the Human Services Academy or were recent alumni of the program. The students that completed the survey instrument may not be representative of the full population of students in the Human Services Academy.

Students currently enrolled in the program were recruited through three classroom visits. First, the investigator visited all Academy English classes to introduce the study, pass out invitation letters, in Spanish and English, and to encourage participation. All students were asked to take this letter home, share it with their parents, and ask for permission to participate. All students that returned to school the next day with a signed letter were then given a parent consent form requesting parents to sign and granting permission to use their child’s survey data and school records. This was the second visit. A third visit consisted of collecting all signed parent consent forms and passing out student assent forms to those students whose parents granted permission. All students were instructed that although their parents gave permission for them to participate, they could still choose not to participate. Once students signed and turned in an assent form, they were given the survey to complete.

Alumni were recruited via mail. Alumni were mailed a packet that consisted of a letter introducing them to the study, survey, and consent form granting permission to use their survey data and other previous school records. Overall, 50% of the surveys were completed and returned.

Descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, and frequencies), based on the survey data, were calculated using SPSS 16.0. In addition, we utilized structural equation modeling (SEM; Loehlin, 2004) to investigate the association between the Student-Centered Features (i.e., *Educational Aspirations*, *Perceived Quality of the Academy*, *Adults Impact on College Enrollment*) and the students' high school outcomes (i.e., *Academic Engagement*, *Satisfaction with Life*). The results of the SEM analyses are presented for the entire sample (as opposed to separately for the two school sites). Multiple-group analyses (i.e., analyses that allow for the comparison of the path coefficients between the two school sites) showed that the regression weights between the Student-Centered Features and the high school outcomes did not differ significantly across the two school sites.

SEM allows researchers to test whether the data they have collected provides support for hypothesized models. The model of interest in the current study was that the Student-Centered Features predicted the students' high school outcomes. The individual survey items displayed in Tables 4 – 8 were the indicators of the latent variables utilized in the path models in the current analyses. The latent variables represent the constructs, such as Academic Engagement, in the hypothesized models. Latent variables used in SEM have the benefit of being free of the measurement error that typically occurs with survey research.

We implemented a maximum likelihood estimation procedure that has been shown to be robust to violations of normality and that allowed us to utilize all 267 students in the path models even though data was missing for a small number of items (Bentler & Chou, 1987). The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic, the  $\chi^2/df$ , the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to evaluate the models  $\chi^2/df$  values below 3.0, CFI values above .95, and RMSEA values below .08 are indicative of acceptable model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Carmines & McIver, 1981; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Values in these ranges indicate that the hypothesized path models are consistent with the survey data that was collected. In addition, we used the  $\chi^2$  statistic to assess the significance of the paths between the Student-Centered Features and the high school outcomes. A significant path means that a given Student-Centered Feature is an accurate predictor of one of the high school outcomes.

# Results

*Educational Aspirations.* The students’ responses to the items asking about which factors influenced their decision to join the Academy are shown in Table 4. A factor analysis showed that the four items displayed in the top section of the table “hung together” as one factor. We included these four items in our latent variable model. The three items displayed in the bottom section of Table 4 did not “hang together” with the other items and were not included in the latent variable model. In general, the academic reasons (e.g., “To learn more about college and universities.”) for joining the academy were rated highly. Students were drawn to the Academy because it was focused on a higher education pathway and it offered specialized curriculum that fit their career aspirations. In contrast, the students’ desire for paid work and their parents’ influence were not rated highly. The average ratings for these two items ranged from “not sure” to just over “slightly important.” The means were largely consistent across the two high schools. Finally, it can be concluded that the reputation of the Academy played an important role in influencing the students’ decisions to join the Academy. The students were more likely to value other students’ opinions of the Academy and this reinforces the notion that students are a critical resource in building a good reputation, recruitment, and ensuring sustainability of a program.

Table 4: The Students’ Educational Aspirations and Factors Influencing the Students’ Decision to Join the Academy

	<i>Narbonne Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Huntington Park Mean (SD)</i>
<b>Items Included in the Latent Variable Models</b>		
1. The Academy graduates went to colleges and universities.	5.66 (1.61)	6.01 (1.41)
2. The Academy offered an educational program of special interest to me.	5.95 (1.21)	6.31 (0.99)
3. I wanted to get a college degree.	6.30 (1.23)	6.56 (0.93)
4. To learn more about colleges and universities.	6.24 (1.13)	6.60 (0.94)
<b>Items Not Included in the Latent Variable Models</b>		
1. My parents wanted me to join.	4.24 (1.99)	4.46 (1.87)
2. The Academy had a good reputation.	5.59 (1.46)	6.03 (1.24)
3. I wanted paid work.	4.79 (2.05)	5.20 (1.81)

*Note.* The items are scored on 7 point scale (1 = *very unimportant* to 7 = *very important*).

*Perceived Quality of the Academy.* The students’ responses to the items assessing the Perceived Quality of the Academy are displayed in Table 5. The results revealed the students indicating that they, their parents, and their teachers had positive feelings about the quality of the Academy. The students at both schools reported, on average, that they, their parents, and their teachers thought the Academy was “a good program” to “an excellent program.”

Table 5: Perceived Quality of the Academy

	<i>Narbonne Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Huntington Park Mean (SD)</i>
<b>What did _____ think about the Academy?</b>		
1. You	3.57 (0.59)	3.57 (0.58)
2. Your parents	3.56 (0.64)	3.50 (0.63)
3. Your teachers	3.79 (0.47)	3.77 (0.55)
4. Others	2.94 (0.81)	2.77 (0.82)

*Note.* The items are scored on 4 point scale (1 = a poor program to 4 = an excellent program).

*Adults Impact on College Enrollment.* As shown in Table 6, the students showed moderate agreement with the three statements regarding their receipt of encouragement to go to college. At both schools, the students indicated that, on average, they “somewhat agreed” to “agreed” with the three statements. These results suggest that staff for the Academy may need to place a greater emphasis on encouraging the Academy’s students to attend college.

Table 6: Adults Impact on College Enrollment

	<i>Narbonne Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Huntington Park Mean (SD)</i>
1. My Academy teachers encouraged me to go to college.	3.53 (0.77)	3.57 (0.74)
2. My Academy coordinator encouraged me to go to college.	3.36 (0.99)	3.29 (0.93)
3. My Academy guidance counselor encouraged me to go to college.	3.41 (0.97)	3.54 (0.72)

*Note.* The items are scored on 5 point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Also, Figures 3 and 4 provide graphic representation of student college enrollment rates for the two academies’ first ten years of operation. From 1999 to 2008, 570 high school seniors graduated from the Academy at Narbonne High School showing a ten-year post-secondary enrollment rate of 91 percent. Sixty-five percent attended a community college and 18 percent attended a California state university. For Huntington Park High School, 356 students graduated between 2001 and 2008. Of these graduates, 56 percent attended a community college and 21 percent attended a California state university. Combined, the two academies have a post-secondary enrollment rate of 90 percent. A recent report from the California Postsecondary Education Commission (2007) stated that state and national data show that 59 percent of high school graduates enroll at four-year universities and community colleges. We measure student post-secondary enrollment beyond a simple interest form. Successful post-secondary enrollment is measured by students completing a college, university, or other form of post-secondary application, college coursework while in high school, a student identification number for students attending a community college, and that students attended their first college class.

Figure 3: College Enrollment Choice by Academy Graduates from Narbonne High School

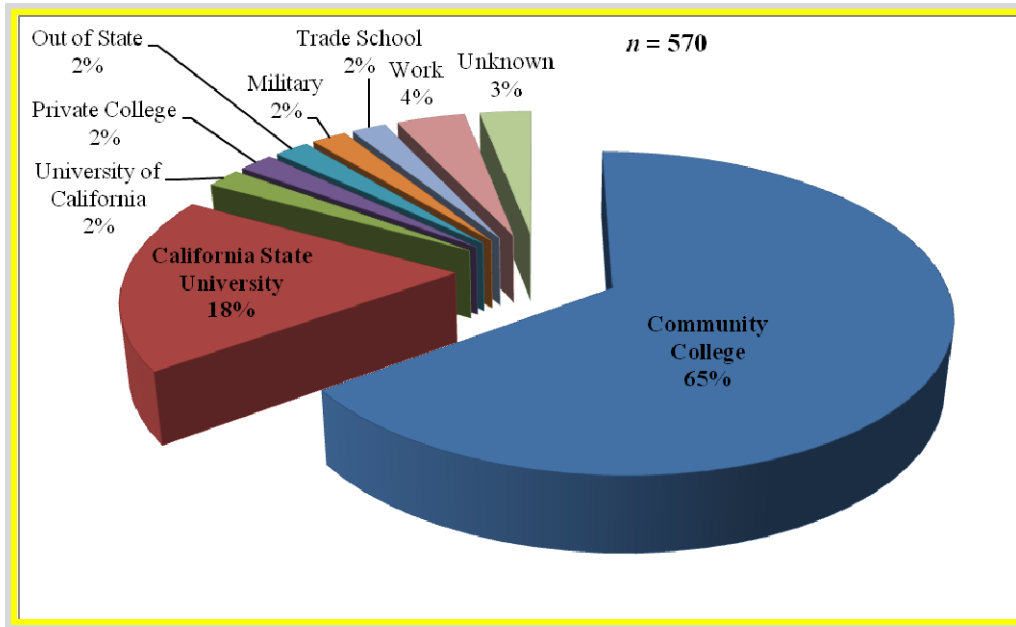
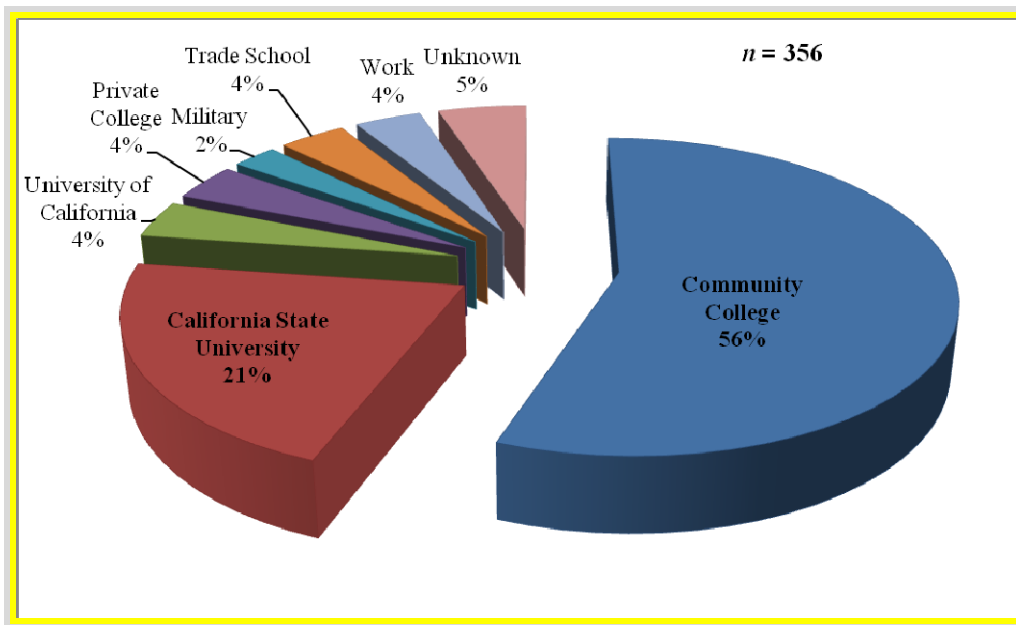


Figure 4: College Enrollment Choice by Academy Graduates from Huntington Park High School



*Academic Engagement.* The students’ responses to the academic engagement items are shown in Table 7 and were very similar across the two schools. The average student reported that the statements indicating high levels of academic engagement were “fairly typical” of themselves. Overall, these results indicate that the Academy’s students reported moderately high levels of academic engagement.

Table 7: Academic Engagement

	<i>Narbonne Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Huntington Park Mean (SD)</i>
1. I am up-to-date on my class assignments.	4.03 (0.75)	3.90 (0.61)
2. Even when study materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish.	3.78 (0.87)	3.77 (0.85)
3. I come to class prepared.	4.19 (0.81)	4.23 (0.71)
4. I work hard to get a good grade, even when I don’t like a course.	4.10 (0.86)	4.03 (0.71)
5. I set high standards for myself in school.	4.00 (0.92)	3.93 (0.76)
6. I read textbooks assigned for my classes.	3.64 (1.08)	3.63 (0.95)

*Note.* The items are scored on a 5 point scale (1 = *not at all typical of me* to 5 = *very much typical of me*).

*Satisfaction with Life.* The means and standard deviations for the Satisfaction with Life items are shown in Table 8. Consistent with the other subscales, the means were similar across the two schools. The means indicate that the students, on average, reported “slightly agreeing” to “slightly disagreeing” with the statements about their general satisfaction with their lives. Overall, the students did not report being highly satisfied with their lives.

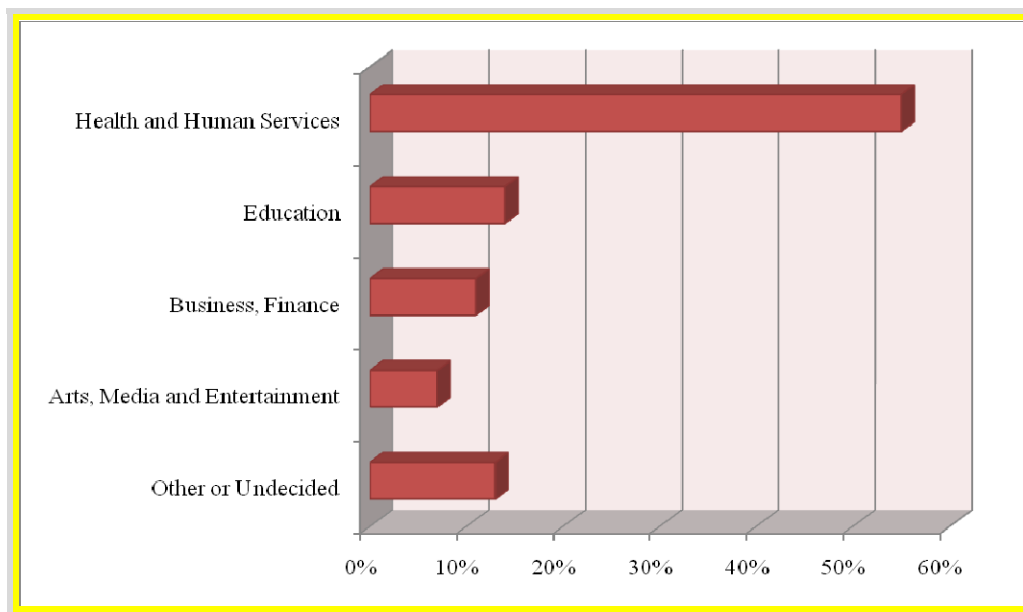
Table 8: Satisfaction with Life

	<i>Narbonne Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Huntington Park Mean (SD)</i>
1. In most ways my life is close to ideal.	4.43 (1.39)	4.39 (1.29)
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.	4.36 (1.40)	4.11 (1.44)
3. I am satisfied with my life.	4.58 (1.42)	4.51 (1.35)
4. So far, I have gotten the more important things I want in life.	4.35 (1.57)	4.26 (1.48)
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	3.71 (1.88)	3.21 (1.94)

*Note.* The items are scored on 7 point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

*Future Career Decisions.* The majority of students (78.9% from Narbonne and 82.6% from Huntington Park) indicated that the Academy “played a role in their future career decision.” Additionally, the students responded to a free response item asking what type of job they expected to be working in ten years. The results were very similar across schools and the percentages are aggregated across schools. Figure 5 presents Academy students’ future career aspirations. Approximately 55 percent of the student sample indicated an interest in pursuing a career in the health and human services field, which includes mental health careers. Careers such as psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, and doctors were among the most popular of this industry sector.

Figure 5: The type of job Academy students expect to be working in 10 years



In addition, 81 percent of students indicated interest in a short-term post-secondary 18-unit Mental Health Worker certificate program at a community college. Because a large percentage of Academy students attend community college and due to their interest in a mental health certificated program, MHA and its partner Cerritos College launched their first 18-unit Mental Health Worker certificate program in the fall of 2006. This program emerged as an extension of the Human Services Academy model and currently consists of four Recovery-based courses that were developed by staff at MHA and two psychology courses from Cerritos College. This led to a third partner in California State University, Dominguez Hills to complete the pipeline at a four-year university with a specialized recovery certificate in combination with a Bachelor’s degree.

Academy students participate in a semester-long “Introduction to Human Services” course, which includes work-based learning, the core of the Academy’s career development. During the first three weeks of the course, students attend class daily to learn skills such as communication and listening techniques, problem solving, cross-cultural sensitivity and principles of psychosocial rehabilitation. Once placed at their jobs, students attend class once a week and work four afternoons a week under the guidance of a worksite mentor, who teaches



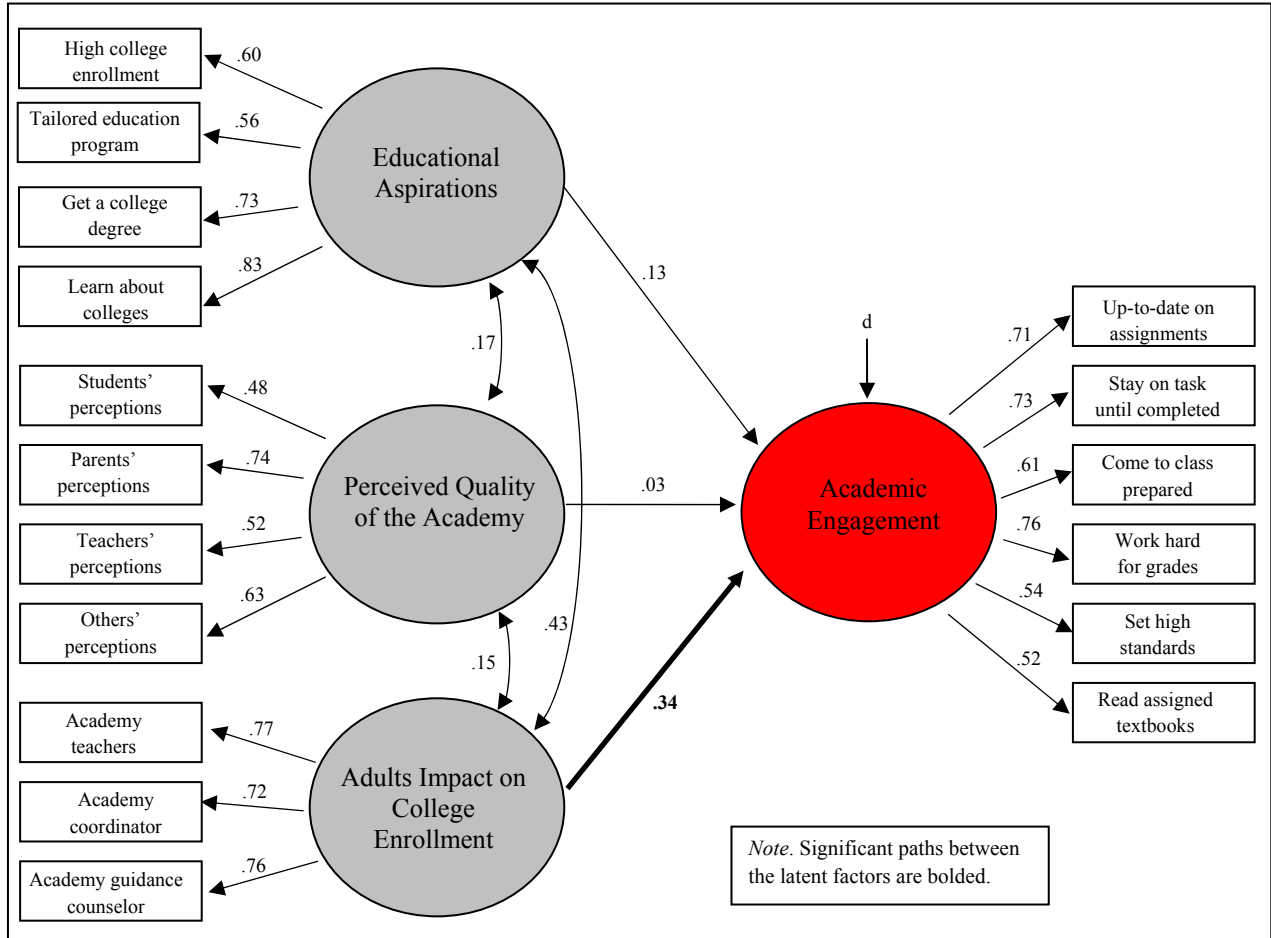
them about job requirements and shares work experiences. This component of the Academy combines class work with community work experience. Its purpose is to expose students to professional human services workplaces, teach them helping skills and let them perform these skills while providing a service to nonprofit and public agencies. Worksites reflect a growing emphasis on youth helping youth at local Boys & Girls' Clubs and nursing homes. It is also important to note that since the program began in February 1998, a total of 724 students, 423 from Narbonne and 301 from Huntington Park, have had work-based learning jobs in the community. In ten years, combined, students have provided a total 105,364.9 hours of work and service, which is the equivalent of 53 full-time human services employees.

### *Path Model Predicting Academic Engagement*

We first tested a path model with the Student-Centered Features predicting the students' Academic Engagement (see Figure 6). The indicators for each latent variable were the survey items that comprised each construct. We specified covariances between the three predictor factors. Additionally, we specified regression paths from the three predictor factors to the Academic Engagement factor.

The path model showed an acceptable model fit,  $\chi^2(113, n = 267) = 188.77, p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.67$ , RMSEA = .05, CFI = .94. The standardized parameter estimates are shown in Figure 6. To test whether the Student-Centered Features significantly predicted the Academic Engagement factor, the regression paths leading to the engagement factor were constrained to be equal to zero. This procedure revealed that the regression path from the Adults Impact on College Enrollment factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 15.91, 1 df, p < .001$ ) was significant. However, the effect of the Educational Aspirations factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 2.32, 1 df, ns$ ) and the effect of the Perceived Quality of the Academy factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.20, 1 df, ns$ ) were not significant. The results indicate that, after accounting for the effects of the other factors, only the Adults Impact on College Enrollment factor was a significant predictor of the students' Academic Engagement. Consistent with MHA's framework of the Human Services Academy, the students that received more encouragement to go to college reported higher levels of academic engagement.

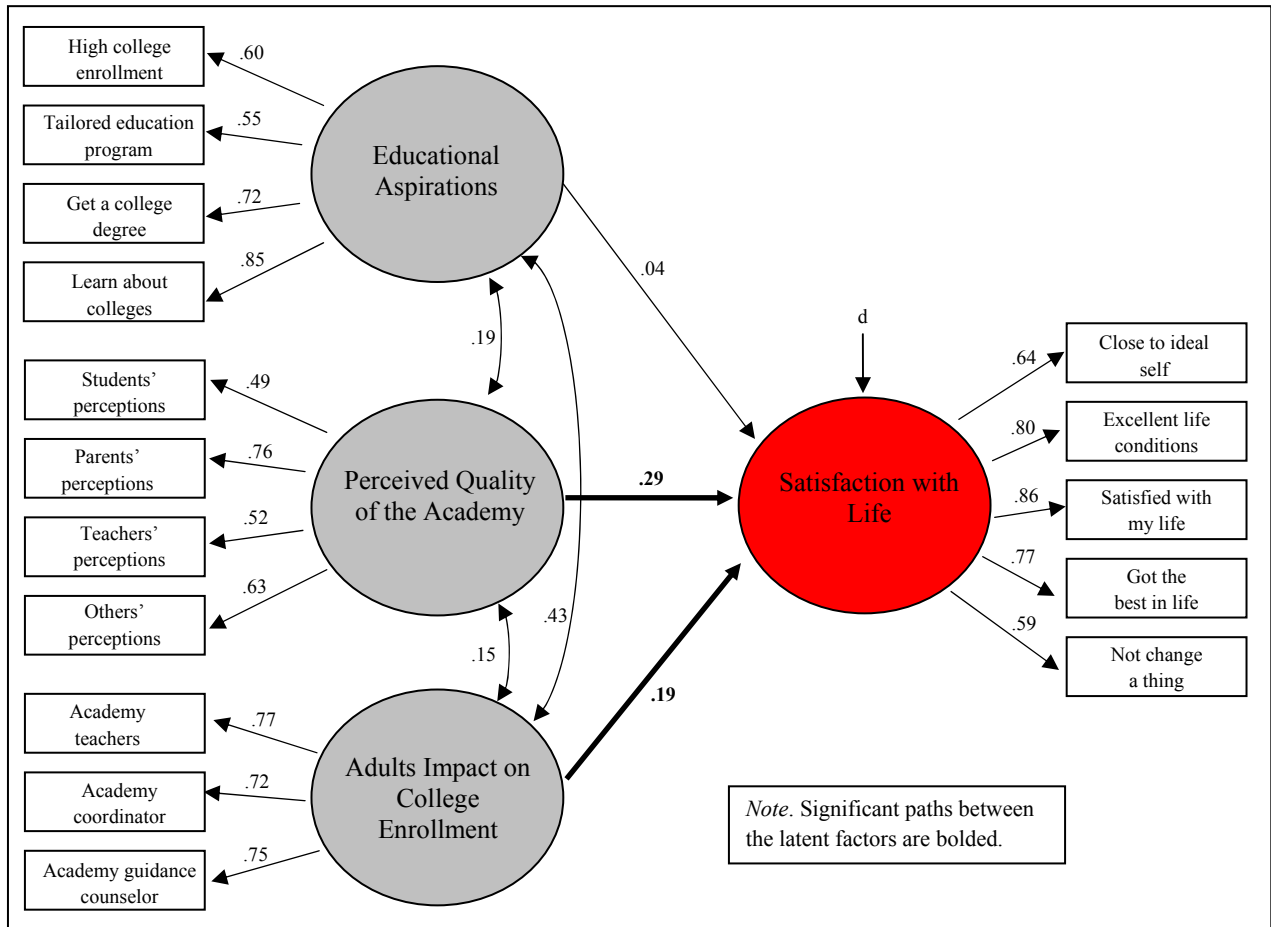
Figure 6: Path Model with the Student-Centered Features Predicting Academic Engagement



*Path Model Predicting Satisfaction with Life*

The second path model (see Figure 7) that we tested utilized the Student-Centered Features as predictors of the students' Satisfaction with Life. This model was identical to the first path model with the exception that the factor representing the students' Satisfaction with Life was used in place of the Academic Engagement factor.

Figure 7: Path Model with the Student-Centered Features Predicting Satisfaction with Life



The path model showed an acceptable model fit,  $\chi^2 (98, n = 267) = 183.57, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.87, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .94$ . The standardized parameter estimates are shown in Figure 7. Individually constraining the regression paths to the Satisfaction with Life factor to be equal to zero revealed that the effect of the Adults Impact on College Enrollment factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 13.46, 1 df, p < .001$ ) and the Perceived Quality of the Academy factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.28, 1 df, p < .05$ ) were significant predictors of the students' Satisfaction with Life. However, the regression path from the Educational Aspirations factor ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.29, 1 df, ns$ ) to the Satisfaction with Life factor was non-significant. These results show that, after statistically controlling for the effects of the other predictors, the Adults Impact on College Enrollment factor and the Perceived Quality of the Academy factor were significant predictors of the students' Satisfaction with Life. The results from the second path model were also consistent with MHA's framework of the Human Services

Academy. The students that perceived the Academy to be a better program and the students that received more encouragement to go to college were generally more satisfied with their lives.

The means, standard deviations, and alphas for the subscales used in the SEM analyses are shown in Table 9. The subscale means were formed by averaging the items in each factor. All of the subscales showed adequate to good reliability. The students from Huntington Park High School reported significantly higher levels of educational aspirations than the students

Table 9: Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for the Subscales

Subscale	Number of Items	$\alpha$	<i>Narbonne</i> ( <i>n</i> = 152)		<i>Huntington Park</i> ( <i>n</i> = 115)		<i>t</i>
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Educational Aspirations	4	.76	6.04	1.00	6.37	0.81	-2.93**
Perceived Quality of Academy	4	.68	3.48	0.45	3.40	0.44	1.40
Adults Impact on College Enrollment	3	.79	3.43	0.78	3.46	0.66	-0.33
Satisfaction with Life	5	.84	4.28	1.22	4.09	1.17	1.26
Academic Engagement	6	.80	3.96	0.65	3.92	0.51	0.51

from Narbonne High School. The difference between the two schools, however, was small. The two schools' means on the four other subscales did not differ significantly.

# Discussion and Conclusion

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The opportunity to meet the needs of mental health consumers and underserved youth has never been more important and urgent nor has the challenge ever been more difficult. Examining the impact of the Mental Health Services Act and the California Career Technical Education (CCTE) on the future of a human services workforce needs to be a priority for both the career technical education and mental health sectors. The academic and the mental health sectors share a unique opportunity to create an effective education and workforce pipeline that will connect young people to a promising career pathway. They also have the opportunity to produce well trained mental health/human services professionals that focus on the recovery of people with severe and persistent mental illness.

The results from the current evaluation provided insight into the lives of the students in the Human Services Academies at Narbonne High School and Huntington Park High School. The findings from the evaluation also revealed support for the viability of the Human Services Academy framework. In general, the evaluation revealed only small differences across the two Academy sites and our discussion of the results deals with the sample as a whole.

We first sought to determine what factors influenced the students' decisions to join the Academy. The majority of the highly rated reasons for joining the Academy were academic in nature and related to the Academy's higher education pathway. For example, students reported that their goal of earning a college degree and their desire to learn more about college were important factors that influenced their decision to join the Academy. The reputation of the Academy was also rated as an important factor that influenced the participants' decision to take part in the Academy. Students are more likely to value their peers' opinions of the Academy. In contrast to the more highly rated items, the students did not indicate that their parents and their desire for paid work played an important role in influencing their choice to enroll in the Academy. These findings indicate that the Academy should continue to stress the academic aspects of the program when recruiting students. The knowledge gained from these findings show the significance of peer to peer influence (i.e., student ambassadors). It also points out that efforts devoted to forming meaningful relationships via field trips or interactive activities seem to be very important to students.

We were additionally interested in the students' perceptions of the quality of the Academy. The results from the analysis of the items in the Perceived Quality of the Academy factor revealed that the students felt the Academy was a high quality program. Sixty-one percent of the students reported that the Academy was "an excellent program." In addition, the students reported that their parents and teachers felt the Academy was a high quality program. Even though the students rated the quality of the Academy as generally high, our future research should inquire about the quality of more specific aspects of the Academy as well as ask about ways to improve the Academy.

The findings related to the Academy students' college enrollment was somewhat mixed. On average, the students in the Academy reported that they "somewhat agreed" to "agreed" to the statements regarding whether their Academy teachers, coordinator, and guidance counselor

encouraged them to go to college. These findings seem to indicate that the Academy may want to provide the students with more support related to the college application process. One potential explanation is that students expect their academy teachers to spend some class time talking about college and sharing their college experiences.

On the other hand, the graduates of the Academies at Narbonne High School and Huntington Park High School had impressive college attendance rates. This finding can be attributed to the strength, tenacity, and commitment of the industry partner to provide knowledgeable staff to assist students with completing their college and financial aid applications and preparing for college entrance exams. Overall, the two academies showed a post-secondary enrollment rate of 90 percent. Of which, 62 percent of the graduates attended community college, 19 percent attended a school in the California State University system, three percent attended a school in the University of California system, three percent attended a private college, and three percent enrolled in vocational post-secondary institutions. It remains unclear, however, what percentage of the students graduated from the colleges and universities they attended or what percentage of the students who attended community college were able to transfer to a four-year institution. Furthermore, we do not currently have data on the college enrollment rates of students that left the Academy during their freshman and sophomore years and it is possible that they attended college at much lower rates compared to students that remained in the Academy through the twelfth grade. It is important to mention that students left the Academy for one of two reasons. One, students left the Academy because they moved to another community and had to attend another school. Two, students left the Academy because they were asked to leave due to lack of motivation in their schoolwork. These college enrollment results seem to indicate that the Academy and its partners may want to explore certificated programs related to mental health at the community college and California state university level in order to monitor student's progress and ensure that they graduate from college and successfully enter the mental health workforce.

We were particularly interested in two outcomes of the Academy students' high school experiences – their academic achievement and satisfaction with their lives. Much past research has highlighted the importance of academic engagement. Academic engagement has consistently been shown to correlate with academic achievement and can predict high school completion rates (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). The present results revealed that, on average, the students reported that behaviors, such as “coming to class prepared” and “working hard to get good grades” were “fairly typical” of themselves. However, it should be noted that many of the students who were less academically engaged may have left the program prior to completing the survey or were still in the Academy and did not choose to complete the survey. Nevertheless, there was a fairly large contingent of Academy students whose self-reports indicated they were academically engaged. On the whole, the students reported only moderate satisfaction with their lives. This finding is not particularly surprising given that adolescence can be a difficult and transitional period for many individuals. Furthermore, most of the adolescents in the Academy had to deal with the added difficulties of residing in low socioeconomic homes.

Another outcome that we were interested in was whether the Academy played a role in influencing the students' career decisions. The results showed that approximately 80 percent of the students surveyed indicated that the Academy “played a role in their future career decisions.” This finding is not unexpected given that students were exposed to the industry through work-

based learning opportunities. Furthermore, mental health industry competencies were integrated into their core academic courses and students completed a semester-long career technical education course titled “Introduction to Human Services.”

The path models predicting the Academic Engagement and Satisfaction with Life factors provided support for the hypothetical framework of the Academy. The first path model showed that receiving higher levels of encouragement to go to college predicted higher levels of academic engagement. The second path model revealed that perceiving the Academy to be a better program as well as receiving more encouragement to go to college were associated with students reporting higher satisfaction with their lives. These results, while suggestive in nature, do indicate that the hypothetical framework of the Academy, with the Student-Centered Features leading to the High School Outcomes is a viable model. Our framework extends the research on career academies by providing empirical support for Student-Centered Features as well as our ongoing work with youth and workforce development. The linkages among the sections of the framework highlight the key components that impact students’ experiences and behaviors throughout their education. Our framework clearly shows that when role models (i.e., teachers, counselors, worksite mentors, etc.) are engaged more directly in encouraging and supporting students’ educational and career choices, they will have a greater impact on the lives of young people. Finally, results suggest that our framework has the potential to contribute to enhancing at-risk students’ academic engagement and life satisfaction as well as linking students to promising careers in mental health.

#### *Six Features of a Quality “Human Services Academy” Model*

A Human Services Academy model that is grounded in the California Partnership Academy “school-within-a-school” framework and is able to function in an autonomous environment will produce quality students. The term “autonomy” is defined as the authority of a team to make decisions in all critical components of a program—budget, curriculum, students, staff, and any day to day operations (Cotton, 2001). “When small schools were granted enough autonomy to bring their ideas to fruition, they were more invested in the school and its students...Ensuring that they [teachers] have the opportunity to bring their ideas to fruition is an important incentive to encourage teachers to undertake renewal and improved accountability within the system” (Wasley et al. as cited in Cotton, 2001, p. 21). Staff running an effective academy model must be able to recruit students and teachers that demonstrate commitment to academic learning and career technical education. According to Mental Health America, a strong academy model must possess six central features that foster youths’ college aspirations and help to make college readily accessible to the average and at-risk youth population.

Important Feature 1: Strong instructional leadership at all levels with decision-making authority is critical in making effective decisions that lead to funding opportunities and additional instructional resources.

Important Feature 2: The model needs flexibility to recruit students who are committed to their education and willing to invest effort in their schooling such as: homework completion, class attendance, classroom readiness and demeanor. Recruiting students based on their interest in the Academy increases their sense of community to their peers and teachers. Given the choice

to be a member of the Academy model, students are more likely to invest effort in their studies, challenge themselves and their peers, and receive and reciprocate support.

Important Feature 3: The Academy model must be small in size. A small population of 250 to 300 students allows for greater flexibility to redirect both school and industry partner resources (time, money, staff and space) and quickly meet student remedial needs (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Smaller numbers allow for staff to identify struggling students and design a personal education plan (PEP) with specific academic goals for all students. Using students' PEP, staff is able to assess student progress at key points along the way.

Important Feature 4: An ability to set high, clear and fair standards for academics and conduct is essential. This gives students responsibility and makes them accountable for their behavior. Incentives are provided to students who demonstrate academic engagement and show positive behavior toward others. On the other hand, students that demonstrate poor behavior and fail to meet certain expectations receive serious consequences, such as removal from the Academy.

Important Feature 5: The Ability to impact students' personal and social development. It provides students with enriched diverse opportunities during and after school that allow them to form meaningful and professional relationships with fellow students, teachers and mentors. High quality education starts with strong relationships (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Students often voice the strong connection they have with their teacher(s). Teacher involvement and support is critical in helping students develop a sense of purpose in life and a career pathway.

Important Feature 6: The model establishes a college-going culture by increasing students' exposure to colleges and universities prior to graduating from high school. This can be achieved through field trips to college and university campuses and more importantly, one-on-one college and financial aid counseling.

### *Limitations*

The current study has several limitations. The study relied heavily on self-report data, which could be potentially biased. It is important to mention that the data from this report is restricted to the two Human Services Academies currently operating in southern California. Additionally, many of the items required the students to retrospectively report their feelings at the beginning of the Academy. Finally, there was no control group to compare with the students who were taking part in the Academy. This study lays the foundation for a future longitudinal study that could include one or more comparison groups.

### *Educational Implications*

Earlier, we emphasized that an academy with a small student population is key to a successful model. In the same way, other elements emerged as critical components to an academy program. Moreover, any deficiency in these areas could potentially lead to major program complications. Recently, many large school districts converted their large high schools into "Small Learning Communities," or SLC's, but most did not employ a California Partnership



Academy framework. As a result, based on the voices of students and teachers, the following represents five major obstacles that can undermine a program's autonomy or authority and freedom to make decisions.

1. When core Academy teachers have little or no say on which students and, in some cases, teachers can join the Academy.
2. When students and teachers that are not meeting program expectations cannot be removed from the program, it ends up hurting student and teacher moral.
3. When a core group of teachers do not have common planning time to meet, integrate curriculum and plan student-centered activities, that course work lacks consistency and continuity.
4. When students' class schedules do not reflect the California Partnership Academy framework (e.g., purity of classes, the correct number of academic and technical courses sequence).
5. When the industry partner is limited in its capacity to influence curriculum and establish a seamless pathway into post-secondary and human services field.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, for the past 10 years, the Human Services Academy framework has shown to be a resilient and successful model in helping students achieve in high school. Much has been done to encourage students to enroll in college and pursue careers in the human services/mental health field.

Yet, in order to create and sustain a competent workforce pipeline, more needs to be done to impact academic and training programs at the post-secondary level. Strong regional partnerships between the mental health industry, secondary and post-secondary institutions are the cornerstone of these efforts. It is imperative to continue to evaluate the model and press forward with exploring diverse opportunities in higher levels of education. For future research it is also imperative that a comparison or non-academy group be included in the study. An increase in students' knowledge, skills and motivation at all levels of their education is crucial to a successful workforce pipeline. In this paper we presented a framework that can serve as a foundation to build on a competency-based recovery approach to workforce development for the mental health field.

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# Appendix A

## The Cost of Starting a Human Services Academy

Mental Health Industry Sponsor	Planning Tasks
<p>Partnership Identification and Structure (\$10,000): This component, which is the core of the planning period, sets up the working relationship between the mental health sponsor and school.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and approach school district/high school</li> <li>2. Set up policies and procedures for working relationship</li> <li>3. Introduce the program to counselors, faculty and parents</li> <li>4. Recruit and select teachers</li> <li>5. Establish teacher training/professional development program</li> <li>6. Collaborate on the student selection and recruitment process</li> <li>7. Present curriculum for industry course (“Introduction to Human Services”) for necessary school site/district review and approval</li> <li>8. Pursue other funding, including through the California Partnership Academy program</li> </ol>
<p>On-Site Academy Coordination (\$60,000): This provides for the industry sponsor’s day-to-day involvement in planning and launching the Academy and will give the sponsor a strong presence on campus and a strong partnership with the high school.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arrange for and attend training by the academy training and consulting team in starting and operating an Academy</li> <li>2. Become skilled in the “Introduction to Human Services” course standards and outline</li> <li>3. Participate in student recruitment/screening (classroom presentations, interviews)</li> <li>4. Participate in teacher selection and training</li> <li>5. Recruit industry and education representatives for Advisory Committee</li> <li>6. Identify and coordinate work-based learning placements at community helping organizations</li> <li>7. Obtain any needed certificate to be a career-related course instruction (ROC/P)</li> <li>8. Teach “Introduction to Human Services” course</li> <li>9. Coordinate with consulting group in the evaluation</li> </ol>
<p>Immersion Training/Travel (\$6,000): This covers travel costs to allow the sponsor’s lead staff and Academy teachers to participate in a “Academy immersion training”.</p>	<p><b><i>NONE</i></b></p>
<p>Operating Expenses (\$9,000): This is toward costs the sponsor incurs during the planning phase, such as phone, printing, postage, mileage and rent.</p>	<p><b><i>NONE</i></b></p>

<b>School District/High School</b>	<b>Planning Tasks</b>
<p>Curriculum Alignment Workshops (\$10,000): Coordinated by the mental health industry sponsor and conducted by the Academy training and consulting team, these intensive workshops are held over four to five days throughout the planning year. Mental health industry and education partners will align academic subject curriculum to career technical education standards (California Department of Education human services pathway). Funds are stipends for teachers and consulting expenses.</p>	<p>The purpose of the workshops is to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review curricula used by Human Services Academy models</li> <li>2. Develop an understanding of the human service pathway standards</li> <li>3. Draft a restructured curriculum that reflects emerging industry needs</li> </ol>
<p>Professional Development (\$15,000): Throughout the year, the core group of new Academy teachers will work together to define their Academy and develop “helping-focused” curricula and lesson plans.</p>	<p>This budget item allows for teacher training periods and release time to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue work on curricula and lesson plans that meet career technical education standards</li> <li>2. Identify opportunities for team teaching to approach specific mental health and/or helping related topics from multiple subject areas</li> <li>3. Develop integrated lesson plans</li> <li>4. Participate in “Academy immersion training”</li> </ol>
<p>Instructional Materials (\$8,000): These funds would be used for extra educational materials, such as novels or other classroom tools, which will emphasize “helping skills” and enhance the industry-infused curricula of English, social studies, sciences and career technical courses.</p>	<p><i><b>NONE</b></i></p>
<p>Guest Speakers and Site Visits (\$2,000): This would cover the costs for Academy core teachers to tour mental health and other human service programs and for mental health recovery professionals, consumers and families to provide expertise.</p>	<p><i><b>NONE</b></i></p>
<p>Guidance Counseling/Recruitment of Academy Students (\$5,000): Another key member of the Academy team is a designated school counselor.</p>	<p>The counselor’s extra responsibilities will include to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attend the Academy immersion</li> <li>2. Arrange for block scheduling of Academy courses</li> <li>3. Participate in recruitment and selection of students (includes the production of materials)</li> <li>4. Agree to produce more frequent progress reports on Academy students</li> <li>5. Learn about the evaluation instruments and data collection process</li> </ol>

Prepared by Julia Scalise, Mental Health America (2006).