lessons learned year one record

Project Name: NeXt Generation High School Transformation: GMS Support Year One – SY 06-07

Product/Process: Consulting Support: A Time for Reflection

PROCESS: As part of reflective practice to enhance service delivery and client outcomes, GMS prepared and conducted interviews that focused specifically on GMS' performance as it related to moving the district's efforts forward. We used a "lessons learned record" with specific questions that was sent to district staff, principals, and SC/TA representatives along with a list of proposed year two tasks. This task list is embedded in this report, with highlights where respondents wanted emphasis.

The tool was used to hold reflective conversations, not as a specific scoring instrument, except in the overall summary field. The goal was to identify areas where GMS provided exemplary service – thus impacting individuals', schools', and district success, and to identify areas where there were shortfalls in expectations. What follows is a summary of the conversations and the specific rankings. Specific accomplishments during year one are attached as part of Appendix A.

This report was concluded in May 2007, prior to the June "New Year's Eve" Leadership meetings. The Appendix was compiled in July 2007.

ASSESSMENT COMMENTS

❍ District-level Support

  ❍ GMS gave outstanding support in the following areas: Well organized, always, worked fast, and included all stake holders. Areas where you worked well: High School Support Team (HSST), Guidance, ESE, Curriculum, Issues Identification, Issues resolution, Facilitation support, Consistent and focused support.

  ❍ Accomplishments, at least at a basic level, of all goals, stretched and added new efforts, completed – substantively, the overall design and implementation framework. Created a palatable culture shift of shared planning and shared work. Brought accountability to the initiative—coming here every other week keeps us on our toes. Strong interpersonal skills of all GMS team members established trust and credibility. You're constantly looking ahead/planning ahead and warning of possible unanticipated outcomes. You provide data from other places "where it's working" and practical tools. Having the personalized assistance of "our" rep at each of the high schools is critical. Continually trying to get people to understand all the pieces in the "big picture."

○ Needed increased support in the following areas: High School Support Team, District-wide 9th grade and Advisory teams. (Principals: Sometimes there should have been more direction from GMS. We'd still like to visit other school sites – this didn't happen. More should be documented in writing up front and afterwards.) Maintaining a focus on fewer things—sometimes the work got scattered because it was too much (for us) to take on at once (e.g., roles of team leaders/dept. heads and peer review teams). Our staff is really stretched thinly across K-12; sometimes other priorities had to be taken care of. Schools really wanted much more "hands on" with scheduling—literally the logistics of designing for purity. Advisory program is tenuous, so facilitating that would be great. Recommend: fewer, shorter memos as follow up—heard lots of comments/jokes about the lengthy "epistles."

○ Comments/Recommendations: We need all the players at the table for HSST and a tight/focused agenda. We need to increase video conference capabilities and usage to maximize time on task. Consider changing or streamlining the structure of the HSST and the monthly principal meetings. We have so many "bosses." We would benefit from understanding a clear chain of command for our district staff – who is the "go to" person. We need to ensure more middle school involvement and understanding in our work and us in theirs. We need to make better use of our NeXt Gen teachers. Before we go into next year create and document the expectations for common planning. Help us to stabilize and "grow" the SLC in each school. Not sure we have selected the "right" career themes yet. Need to do constant checks on fidelity to curriculum and outcomes—students achieving Gold Seal, finishing programs of study etc. Need to take on SCTI – needs a connection with the rest of the district. The two new tech high schools are going to need support. Not sure how you can keep up the intensity of service here!

○ School-Based Support

○ Outstanding support in the following areas: established, trust and became part of the team; and GMS modeled this at the district level. The responsiveness of GMS identified consultant – only a phone call away; not having support limited to only a prescribed time but with regular phone calls and emails; access and knowledge of consultants, getting issues identified and resolved, having a strategic plan and following it, facilitation of the overall work. The regular nudging kept schools focused. We accomplished, at least at the base level, every objective we set or the district set for us -- and more. Activated support in areas where we needed it. There was a powerful culture shift in shared planning and responsibility.

○ Needed increased support in the following areas: the calendar of visits wasn't always laid out from some schools' perspectives. Scheduling support was less than anticipated and the district-level support and program didn't easily support school-based work. The ninth grade advisory and transition work should have started sooner with more clear and written documentation of expectations. These were good conversations but the real work may still need to be done. More communication was needed about timing, what comes when, and about how some of the district-level committees were running (fold this into HSST). There is an overwhelming amount of information and communication – try to parse this out. The facilitation is good, but sometimes we need more than facilitation we need to be told what to do and

sometimes we needed increased content expertise. More should be documented in writing up front and afterwards. We need also to include students and families in the process – this hasn't happened yet.

○ Comments/Recommendations: We need more direction and understanding of where we have autonomy and where we don't. Next year some schools ant to get to student led conferences and student lead IEPs. We (schools) need to make better use of our NeXt Gen teachers. Our time with the GMS consultants needs to stay the same next year (two schools), increase because we want to go deep with PLC in SLC (2 schools). GMS used our time well – having them in place is a time saver for a principal. We would benefit from a measured plan that we could then work through the HSST and through the school year (GMS suggests this be an outgrowth of the School-based leaders' retreat, the district leadership retreat, and individual school meetings this summer). GMS needed to/needs to connect with the whole faculty, not a small group.

○ Quotable Quotes:

- ○ GMS helped us negotiate the system and served as both mediator and catalyst
- ○ It (the successes of this year) wouldn't have happened without GMS
- ○ GMS brought things together with a singular focus. This had to come from someone from the outside – in a non-threatening, collegial way that kept the focus but also gave us the needed push.
- ○ You guys are a wonderful support in a very challenging work which makes me question myself on a regular basis. I feel good about reflecting ideas with you and your professional staff. In my estimation, you are more than consultants; you are colleagues, confidants, and friends.
- ○ Our voice is being heard and being heard as credible because of GMS' support
- ○ GMS let us go and then veered us back when we needed it
- ○ You were on our side and helped move the whole district forward.
- ○ Guidance and ESE frequently don't make the agenda, you made it happen this year
- ○ We've moved more this year than in the past six
- ○ The almost every other day, or daily, communication helped us a lot.
- ○ You send too many emails! All the emails help keep us focused – they are clear and concise.
- ○ I didn't necessarily like all the nudging and reminders – it was annoying, but, yes, when I reviewed our action plan from the beginning of the year I was surprised and pleased that we actually accomplished it all.
- ○ Many of the pieces that we likely would not have addressed so quickly left to our own devices were not only facilitates and supported by GMS, but were brought to the forefront.
- ○ I've worked in a number of schools and at the school and district level with many consultants. The experience with GMS is simply the best consulting support I have experienced.
- ○ You set the bar high, walked with us, and helped us internalize the goal. It's been an overwhelming year.
- ○ Your support is especially important as we are in the middle of true implementation and there are LOTS of areas that continue to need support (purity, scheduling, curriculum, ESE, CTE
- ○ You need to move in and stay for the duration!

Focus Area	Low --------High				
	1	2	3	4	5
Customer Satisfaction					4.54
Technical Success					4.28
Quality Product					4.32
Project On Time			3.57		
Project Within Budget*					5.0
Project Objectives Met					4.19
Importance of support to move forward project					4.80

SUMMARY

Ratings reflect 4 principals, 2 AP (Booker), Directors of C&I, ESE, Guidance, and CTE, and the Executive Director for High Schools

Raters' comment: Reflects multiple initiatives and reactive planning

GMS expanded tasks and also came in significantly under budget

Raters' comment: Reflects multiple initiatives and reactive planning

GMS REFLECTION:

GMS agrees with each of the comments and ratings – both supportive and those that ask for more support.

- ❍ We acknowledge that the major areas where we could have excelled further were around the 9th grade transition and advisory programs. We think our proposed earlier start on this work, as well as more direction would have helped. In addition, it would have served the district better to have these teams joined at the start rather than towards the end of the process. It may have been better to "impose" the GMS developed curriculum with rubrics than simply provide it as a resource. In addition, the district needs deep study on this as there are at least three models being implemented. We have our Advisory trainer on deck for the week of August 6-10 if the district can identify supports for teachers and if teachers are available to work. Ongoing coaching in this area is planned throughout SY 07-08.
- ❍ We also agree that the scheduling issues were more daunting than anticipated and complicated by our scheduler taking another position. The approach to identify and build capacity within the district was a partial "fix" through meetings at the district and school levels and review of scheduling practices. This did not seem to meet the school's needs, especially in light of the antiquated scheduling system in use, the budget implications, and the need for increased CTE offerings. As late as May, schools were still in need of support and discussion. Scheduling remains a critical piece for improved practice.
- ❍ We agree, too, that assumptions were made about aspects of advisory or scheduling, or implementation that would have benefited from specific written documentation.
- ❍ We would add a lack of significant attention to developments at SCTI to our list of GMS shortfalls.

○ We believe that we should have also been more directive, at times, about what should occur/what would be important to happen between meetings and visits.

○ A goal for next year *must* be to increase the charting out, monitoring, and supporting work that occurs between GMS visits, building on the significant capacity of the district, and ensuring increased ownership for *continuous improvement* in each office, school, and classroom.

The GMS team is especially proud of the following:

○ At the district and school levels, with all that was accomplished, while "the plane was still flying" and after an intense two years in the media the large scale shift in high school design took place with no negative publicity, no SC/TA concerns, no negativity. This points to the creation of a culture shift, school ownership, capacity building, and a respectful process of implementation.

○ Particular highlights include:
  o The completion of the SLC designs at each high school – including theme, majors/minor areas of interest, basic transition and advisory planning, staffing, guidance alignment, AP alignment, the refinement/creation of SLC coordinator positions, and a focus on leadership
  o Start of year retreat for all (district and school leadership)
  o End of year two day meetings to celebrate and plan
  o Preserving and respect unique aspects of each campus wile setting a district standard of practice
  o Creating a common language to discuss issues and identify SLC
  o Supporting and creating a culture shift to a collaborative system focused on *continuous improvement*
  o Development of the tools to support redesign and leadership
  o The conversations and commitments around a Guidance model –that expanded, at the close of the school year to include all five high schools, based on momentum, listening, and support to make it happen
  o A redesign of the entire process for serving ESE students
  o Ensuring that CTE and ESE built a working relationship that included planning and professional development
  o Increased communication through FAQs and web updates
  o Establishment of baseline data through the SLC assessment and NeXt Generation Surveys
  o Connections, communications, and working relations with SC/TA
  o Increasing the levels of involvement in high school redesign by all stakeholders
  o Building the momentum for a strategic approach to continuous improvement.
  o Ensuring the CTE professional development and rebuilds were center on the radar and action was taken
  o Uncovering, exploring, addressing, and brining to closure an array of policies and practices
  o Placing a need for a strategic professional development plan for SY 2007-08 on the radar
  o Placing a need for a strategic approach to partnerships for SY 2007-08 on the radar
  o Keeping track of recommendations, loose ends, and needs to build into a cohesive plan of support
  o We came in under budget and over on service delivery.

The "Quotable Quotes," offered above from the schools and district staff on our practice, are humbling. The district, school, and union staffs have been remarkable to work with. ***There is a story here about collaboration and practice and how to move a system.***

There was one, sometimes repeated, concern that too much was in play at one time and that the enormity of the involvements – curriculum, CTE, ESE, district-wide committees, guidance, and evaluation all being in the mix -- made the work overwhelming. Indeed, we got much more on the plate than we imagined in year one. Rather, however, than this being looked on as a negative we believe (and the research would support) that the depth of conversations, hard work, and results point to a district wide shift in practice where everyone realizes they are a piece of the *continuous improvement* puzzle. It is when an organization is "restless for change" that it makes the big gains. We believe we saw that in year one of this proposal work. No one department wanted to wait, or felt they could wait, be part of the process.

In our own commitment to reflective practice we always question our value, our performance, and our accountability. The reflections here inspire us to continue our own commitment to continuous improvement and to supporting the district in theirs. The long list of "Year Two Tasks" sets the tone for ongoing work. Departments, schools, and the individuals that make them up continue restless to improve, as do we.

Respectfully submitted - Grace Sammon, President, June 07, 2007

APPENDIX A

Creating NeXt Generation High Schools Through Small Learning Communities	
Report to the Board	August 7, 2007

Work Areas	Progress – Status – Next Steps
I. **Design and Data**	**A. SLC Designed as Career-Focused Communities** ☐ In keeping with State guidelines and Sarasota's data, and in coordination with CTE and Curriculum and Instruction, each school identified the number and types of SLC that best meet their student numbers, resources, and labor market needs (these are in addition to PBD, IB, and VPA) ☐ Common language agreed upon ☐ Overall design elements and outcomes agreed to and posted on the web ☐ All students able to participate in all aspects of the school, take courses outside of their SLC, earn CTE certifications, AP, and Dual Enrollment ☐ Ninth grade elements in place for '07 – '08 ☐ Tenth through twelfth grade elements planning '07 – '08 (e.g. completed course sequencing, work-based learning, refinement of advisory) ☐ SLC grant of over $7M applied for/notification by 10/01/07 **B. Student Choice** ☐ All '07 incoming 9th graders will be placed in SLC by choice, with a major area of interest ☐ Agreement that all 10-12 students will be placed in SLC ☐ Utilization of CHOICES as a tool for SLC selection ☐ CDROM communication video to support selection done ☐ Programs of Study describe SLC **C. Majors/Minors Areas of Interest and Integrated Majors** ☐ Each school has designated majors, minors, and at least one integrated majors ☐ Each SLC has opportunities for multiple graduation options (Gold Seal, Bright Futures) ☐ Scheduling allows for students to complete multiple major areas of interest **D. Teacher Placement** ☐ Agreement that teachers would have an opportunity to select their SLC based on qualifications, interest, and needs of the school ☐ Teacher survey conducted seeking teacher input ☐ Teacher meetings held to explain and engage them in the design ☐ Teacher Externships being planned for Summer '08 **E. Flexible Block Scheduling** ☐ Commitment reached that each school will utilize a flexible block (defined by no straight 4x4 and no straight multi-period days) ☐ Purity for 9th grade students and teachers at 90% and for 10th graders at 60% is a first year goal ☐ Several district scheduling sessions held to identify and address concerns; share the capacity that AS 400 does have; augment programming where possible ☐ Monitoring of scheduling ☐ Purity agreement revised to reflect multiple ways of assessment

	F. Assistant Principals (AP) as Instructional Leaders ☐ Each school has identified a lead AP to head an SLC ☐ Based on numbers some AP will lead two SLC ☐ Roles and responsibilities developed for each school ☐ Regular training for APs planned for '07-'08 **G. SLC Coordinators/Leaders** ☐ SLC Coordinators are identified for each SLC ☐ Roles and responsibilities for SLC Coordinators/Leaders identified ☐ Ongoing training and support throughout '07-'08 **H. Data Driven** ☐ SLC with CTE Assessment Conducted ☐ NeXt Generation Survey was conducted ☐ CHOICES utilized for placement ☐ ESE student placement data is being gathered ☐ FCAT scores available for baseline ☐ Classroom Walk Throughs begin ☐ Capacity for progress monitoring improved through SCPT, SRI, FORF ☐ Advisory surveys are developed and ready for fall and spring
II. Personalization	**A. Advisory** ☐ Each school agreed to a 30 min/week advisory for freshman ☐ Each school realized that scheduling this separately would be a challenge so agreed to advisory for all students ☐ Two schools also delivering a "freshman seminar-like" experience through Applied Communication or Critical Thinking ☐ District-wide advisory committee started in January with group and school site meetings - committee/team consists of AP, counselor, teacher from each school and district staff ☐ Advisory curriculum, rubrics provided electronically to all schools ☐ Each school developed their own advisory design Advisory assessments have been designed ☐ GMS Advisory support staff on site full week of 8/6 and during school year **B. Guidance Redesign** ☐ Agreement that guidance counselors would either be assigned by SLC or aligned to an SLC ☐ All schools move to SLC assignment by May '07 ☐ Agreement that Guidance will take the school-based lead on Advisory ☐ District-wide guidance meetings identified needs, concerns, areas for professional development ☐ Staffing design per referendum allows for smallest counselor: student ratio ☐ Roles and responsibilities defined ☐ Guidance Chair and District-wide meetings being redesigned for increased communication and capacity building for new roles **C. 9th Grade Transition** ☐ Transition programs being developed at each school for implementation ☐ Refinement of programs for implementation by summer of 2008

III. Creating a Climate for Success	**A. Collaborative Planning** ⊡ Scheduling common planning time – as set in the purity agreement – for SLC core teachers is taking shape in most high schools and others continue to work towards it. All schools will identify all areas for possible collaboration and full SLC will meet at least quarterly ⊡ Initial sessions at District's Leadership Institute began a common dialogue about supports and expectations ⊡ Follow-up work planned for July '07 ⊡ Coaching and training identified as needed for fall ⊡ Collaborative planning document will set parameters for school planning **B. Curriculum and Instructional Rigor** ⊡ There is an understanding that rigor needs to be defined and ensured ⊡ Training planned for administrators in CWT at regular principal meeting ⊡ Every course has been aligned to an SLC ⊡ Singletons have been mostly eliminated ⊡ 30 Hour professional development will be focused on instruction and SLC design ⊡ Specific courses or programs set for review (Journalism, VPA, Advisory, Critical Thinking, Applied Communication) ⊡ Course sequences will be complete by summer '08 ⊡ Expand the opportunities for all students to engage in AP and Dual Enrollment classes **C. ESE students will be better served in 2007-08** ⊡ ESE placed at the fore of school redesign efforts ⊡ Individual and multiple meetings were held at each school ⊡ ESE Plans are beginning to improve quality of service delivery with fewer students isolated from parts of the high school experience and curriculum ⊡ Planning meeting continue and data is being collected ⊡ ESE will be included in the 30 hour professional development planning for SLC **D. District Support** ⊡ HS Support Team met in retreat and bi-weekly, principals now part of the process ⊡ Curriculum Department met and exceeded all demands for support regarding SLC course alignment, Programs of Study ⊡ IT created support meetings, new codes, and individual coaching for scheduling; also deciphered data for surveys ⊡ Guidance embraced a new design and is pushing their own delivery design ⊡ ESE has revamped their service delivery model ⊡ Data and Evaluation helped create the NeXt Generation survey ⊡ District staff met at school sites (scheduling, guidance, curriculum, CTE, ESE) on multiple occasions ⊡ Curriculum and PD Departments identified and activated funds for high school staff working meetings and trainings ⊡ CTE director, new position, massive project of redesigning high schools; redesigns created ⊡ Curriculum and PD served as co-facilitators of working meetings ⊡ Strategic PD strategy needs identified and planning underway **E. Communication** ⊡ High School Support Team, Guidance District meetings, and school-based meetings all focused on next Generation redesign ⊡ CD Rom communicated to all families new high school design

	▣ Three community meetings communicated high school redesign (2 @ each high school, one area community forum) ▣ Short list of FAQs developed and released in February ▣ Complete list of FAQs developed and posted on the web ▣ HS Support Team Retreat, District-wide committees and the year-end high schools' planning meetings created opportunities for communication and sharing or practices
IV. **CTE**	▣ Reported on by Ms. Morrow
V. **Next Steps**	▣ Stay data-driven, focus on all students, target those in most need of supports for success ▣ Ensure that the work in progress – and the next steps noted above – are benchmarked, completed, and assessed ▣ Utilize Collaborative Planning time as the engine to improve professional practice and focus on student achievement ▣ Build School Improvement Plans to focus student achievement during this transition period. ▣ Build expertise of SLC Leadership positions ▣ Provide training opportunities to ensure effective SLC implementation ▣ Support collaborative planning processes ▣ Refine scheduling process/timelines to support earlier scheduling of students ▣ Develop a strategic plan for Business and Community Partnerships per SLC ▣ Monitor and evaluate all design elements to include purity, advisory and collaborative planning