This appendix discusses in more detail the concepts relating to the core components of the design.

Organization and governance refer to the authority relations among the various parties in the school. An example of changing governance arrangements is reorganizing the decisionmaking processes for budgets and staffing to include teachers and other school employees and parents. Giving authority to the school site has received a great deal of attention in the education community. According to Murphy (1992) the central focus on governance restructuring stems from a belief that change must reside with those who are closest to the learners (see also Bryk et al., 1998a; Smith, Scoll, and Link, 1996). NAS and many of the designs strongly share this belief.

The professional life of teachers refers to the roles and relationships in which the teachers participate during the school day. In effect, when referring to restructuring schools, particularly those in poor, urban areas, this involves overhauling the conditions under which teachers work by changing their responsibilities and tasks and by developing a more professional culture in schools (Newmann et al., 1996; Murphy, 1992; Sykes, 1990; Wise, 1989). In contrast to teachers working in isolation without contact with their colleagues (see Louis and Miles, 1990; Lortie, 1970), design teams aim to build a collaborative environment for teachers. Thus, it is important to understand the extent to which teachers collaborate and engage in activities together such as professional development, common planning time, and critiquing each other’s instruction.
Each of the designs aims to bring all students to high standards, even though each may differ in the process to attain this goal. To monitor whether designs are making progress toward this end, critical indicators might include the degree to which: (a) student assessments are explicitly linked to academic standards, (b) teachers make performance expectations explicit to students, and (c) the curriculum and performance standards are consistent and coherent across grade levels.

Most of the designs are concerned with shaping student experiences within classrooms to further their academic achievement growth. NAS designs embrace alternative instructional strategies that involve different relationships between teachers and students and between students and subject matter. Yet, again, each design differs somewhat in the specific nature of these activities. Conventional classrooms are often characterized as teachers talking at students and filling their heads with knowledge, with students responding with the correct answers at appropriate times (see Gamoran et al., 1995; Sizer, 1984; Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). In contrast, design teams tend to emphasize alternative instructional practices such as students working in small groups, using manipulatives, engaging in student-led discussions, or working on projects that span a long period of time (e.g., a marking period or semester).

The design teams also address a particular set of instructional strategies revolving around student grouping arrangements. How students are grouped for instruction and the effects of this on student achievement are subjects of heated debate among educators and researchers (see Slavin, 1987, 1990; Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Oakes, Gamoran, and Page, 1992; Hallinan, 1994; Oakes, 1994). Yet, most researchers agree that alternatives to inflexible grouping arrangements are worth further exploration. Thus, the NAS designs have experimented with such alternative student groupings. For example, students within an EL or CON design may have the same teacher for a couple years. RW emphasizes flexible uses of grouping by organizing students according to their achievement levels in reading for part of the day and mixing achievement levels for other subjects. These groupings are assessed every eight weeks or so to see if students would be better served by being placed in a different group. In short, each of the designs is sensitive to the issue of ability
grouping and is working with schools to group students in more effective ways.

Conventional wisdom suggests that the parent-child relationship and parent involvement in the child's education are critical components of school success. The NAS designs have embraced this issue as well. Several of the designs aim to have individuals or teams within the schools serve as resources to students and families to help integrate the provision of social services to them (e.g., AT and RW). Other designs emphasize students applying their learning in ways that directly benefit the community (e.g., AC, EL, and NARE). Of course, each design desires that parents and community members be involved in positive ways in the educational program.