

CALIFORNIA “BEST PRACTICES” STUDY

SUMMER 2004

CASE STUDY:

GARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*Long Beach Unified School District
Long Beach, CA*

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**CALIFORNIA BEST PRACTICES
STUDY - AN INTRODUCTION**

The California Best Practices Study is being conducted by the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) in collaboration with the National Center for Education Accountability (NCEA) and Just for the Kids-California (JFTK-CA). The study offers a data-informed portrait of a group of high-performing schools and districts that serve a high proportion of students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL)¹. The portraits are derived from in-depth research analysis of evidence gathered from both high-performing and average-performing schools and districts in California.

The study seeks to identify strategies that are common in high performing schools that serve a high proportion of students who qualify for FRPL. These strategies may be useful in similar schools and districts across the state and the nation. District, school, and classroom level strategies that we found to characterize high-performers are summarized as findings at the beginning of each case study. This summary aims to guide the reader to the particular practices that are distinctive. Of course, schools are complex systems, and particular practices and strategies often depend on others, so readers are encouraged to read these case studies as portraits of high-performing systems rather than as a list of disconnected “best practices.”

¹ Eligibility for the federally-funded free and reduced price lunch program is used by the education system as a proxy measure for poverty.

The two complementary questions guiding this study are:

- What are the strategies found at high-performing schools and districts that appear to foster high performance?
- What is the context for these strategies?

Following the NCEA framework, this study will examine the following key strands in an effort to understand how they may contribute to these schools’ success:

- Curriculum and Academic Goals
- Staff Selection, Leadership and Capacity Building
- Instructional Programs, Practices and Arrangements
- Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis and Use of Data
- Recognition, Intervention and Adjustment
- Factors Influencing Educational Practices

The study is projected to span three years and will profile ten high performers and five average performers annually, targeting elementary schools in 2003-04 and covering middle and high schools between 2004-05 and 2005-06. A California Best Practices Framework which summarizes cross-cutting themes will be posted on the BASRC website: www.basrc.org.

The California study focuses on several issues in addition to those identified in the NCEA Framework. These are:

- Support to English Language Learners
- Support to African American Students

- Instructional coherence
- Sustainability of the educational reform efforts underway

Findings on these additional issues will be reported over the span of the three-year study.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The research methodology for site selection outlined here was designed by NCEA/JFTK-CA. The following process and criteria were used to select high-performing elementary schools for this study. To begin, a profile code was assigned to each district based on demographic information. This code took into account three demographic variables:

1. Free and Reduced School Lunch Program (FRSL) enrollment percentages
2. Limited English Proficient (LEP) enrollment percentages
3. Ethnic Minority Group enrollment percentages

District performance was then analyzed using the most recent year of data available (spring 2003 test results). Grade level and subject area performance statistics in language arts and mathematics were used to determine district-wide scores in each of 6 “areas” (elementary math, elementary reading, middle school math, middle school reading, high school math, high school reading). These scores represent the total percent of California Standards Tests taken in either language arts or mathematics in that area that were scored either “Proficient” or “Advanced.”

Single regression analysis of this overall score at each area against the FRSL

percentage was then run for all 6 levels. The residuals from these regressions (the amount above or below expected performance at that level) were then used to determine the statewide 75th percentile score in each area. A district with a score above the 75th percentile score was determined as “high performing” in that area. A district that was high performing in at least 3 areas (out of the 6 maximum areas) was termed “high performing for the purposes of this study..

Eight of the ten high performing schools visited were chosen from this pool of districts. The remaining 2 schools were selected from districts that fell short of being identified as high performing districts. All ten schools identified were deemed high performing based upon the following criteria:

- The school had to have met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- The school’s weighted averages -- for both Language Arts and Mathematics across all grades -- had to be among the best compared to demographically similar schools with respect to the overall percent of students meeting the benchmark (percent reaching proficient or above) in each subject.
- The schools selected had to indicate consistent high performance over two years of data, and could not show significant declines in any separate grade, year or subject of the analysis.
- In addition, each individual grade, subject and year group had to have at least 11 or more tested students.

Primary Center and K-1 and K-2 schools were eliminated from the dataset.

When selecting average performers, the main criterion used was that they had an overall rank (weighted average of all grades) in each subject of 45th to 55th percentile when compared to all demographically similar schools. In addition, each individual grade, subject and year group had to have at least 11 or more tested students. As with the high-performing list, all Primary Centers or K-1 and K-2 schools were eliminated from the dataset.

For a full description of the research methodology used for site selection please refer to: www.basrc.org

One of our ten high performing case study sites was Garfield Elementary School, which is part of the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) located in Southern California.

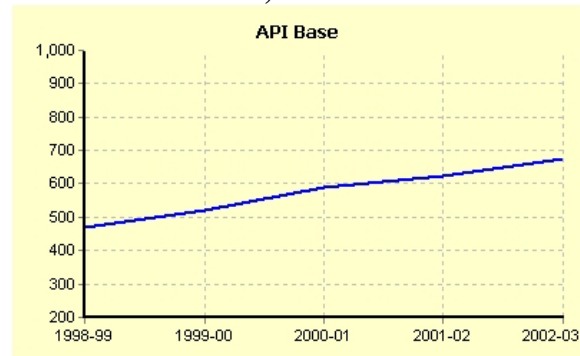
DATA ABOUT GARFIELD

School Profile
Student Enrollment: 1,182 ²
Free/Reduced-price School Lunch: 93%
English Language Learner: 60%
District Characterization: Large City

James A. Garfield Elementary is a high-performing school. Garfield receives Title I schoolwide funds³. Between 1998 and 2003, this school has shown steady

and significant growth in its Academic Performance Index (API) scores.

Garfield API Data, 1998 – 2003



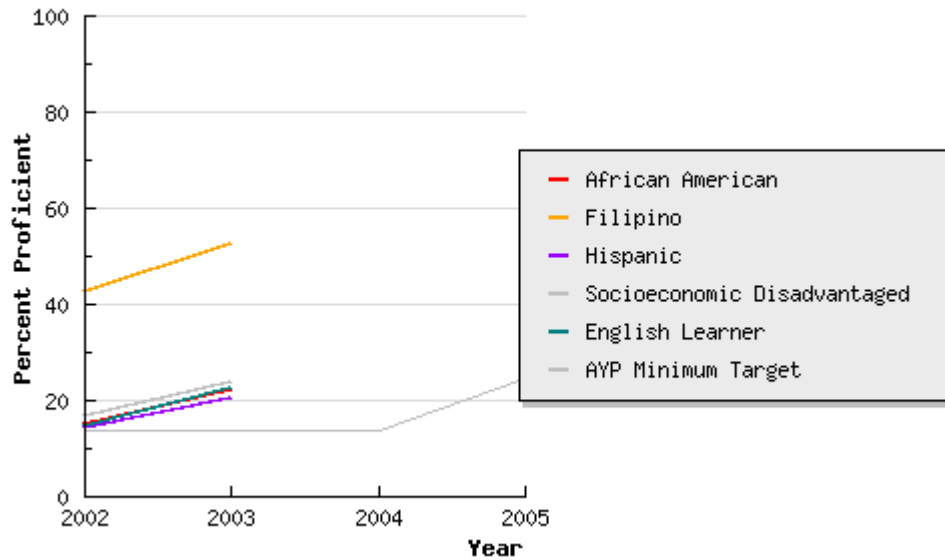
California Department of Education: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us

² Unless otherwise referenced, all quantitative data in this study is drawn from the California Department of Education website: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us

³ See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/> for more information on Title I Schools.

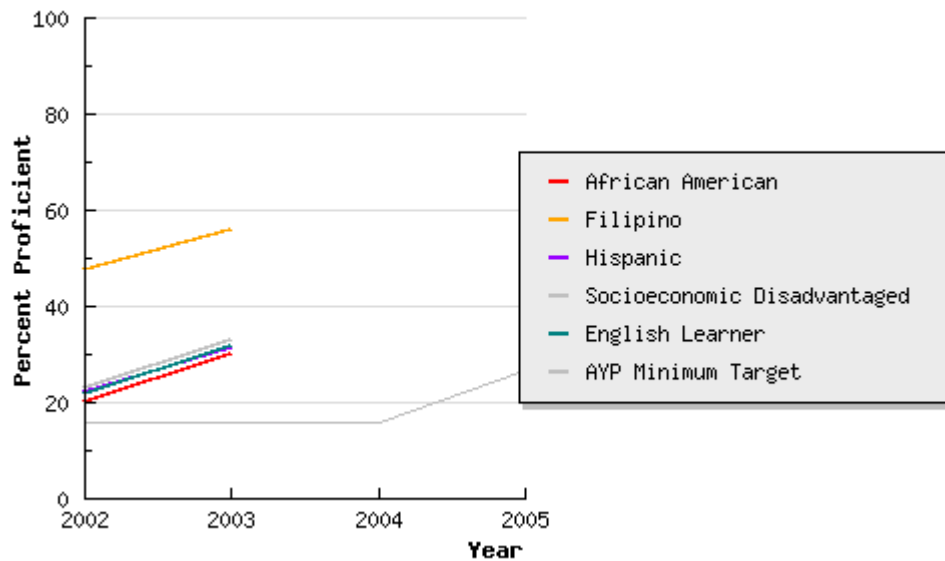
These graphs track the rate of student improvement disaggregated by subgroups.

Language Arts Subgroup Performance Summary 2003 California Standard Test (CST)
Results for Garfield Elementary



www.jftk-ca.org

Math Subgroup Performance Summary 2003 California Standard Test (CST) Results for
Garfield Elementary



www.jftk-ca.org

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is located at the south end of Los Angeles County in southern California. It is a large and rapidly-growing district serving approximately 97,200 students across 95 schools. According to the 2000 Census, Long Beach was ranked the most diverse city in the country. This diversity is reflected in the demographics of its schools.

LBUSD's student body consists of 48 percent Hispanic/Latinos, 19 percent African Americans, 17 percent whites, 10 percent Asian Americans, 3 percent Filipino, and 2 percent Pacific Islander. Sixty-five percent of all students in the district are eligible for free/reduced-price lunch; over 36 percent are English Language Learners; and 1.5 percent are summer migrant students. In light of its academic accomplishments, Long Beach Unified received the prestigious 2003 Broad Prize for Urban Education. Garfield is one of 60 elementary schools in the district.

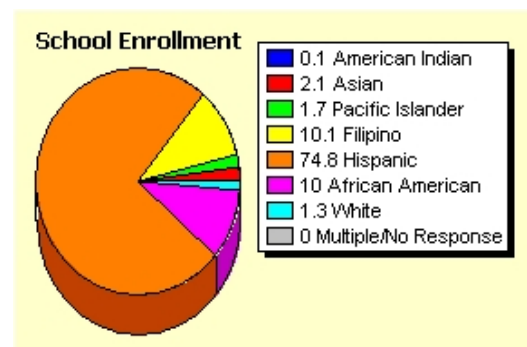
SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

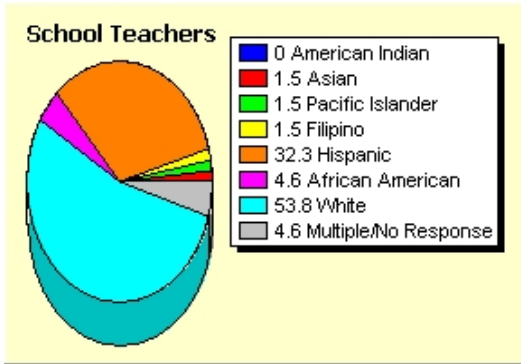
Garfield Elementary is tucked away in a quiet residential neighborhood on the west side of Long Beach. The school serves 1,200 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. One of the first elementary schools in Long Beach, Garfield's history dates back to 1915. As noted above, just under 100 percent of Garfield's students qualify for free/reduced-price lunch, far more than the state average of 49 percent. English

Language Learners make up almost sixty percent of the student body, more than twice the state average of 26 percent. Only 40 percent of the students' parents are high school graduates, again much higher than the state average of 23 percent.

Garfield ranks among the top 10 percent of like schools in the state and over the past years its scores have been on the rise. In 2002, Garfield ranked 7 on the state comparable list in API scores. In 2003, Garfield API scores increased by fifty points to reach 674, putting the school at an 8 of 10 compared to other schools with similar demographic profiles.

While Garfield has a clear majority of Latino/Hispanic students, the ethnic makeup of its teachers is quite different but still more diverse than the state average. Fifty-four percent of the faculty is white in contrast to the state average of 74 percent and 32 percent are Hispanic/Latino versus 14 percent statewide.





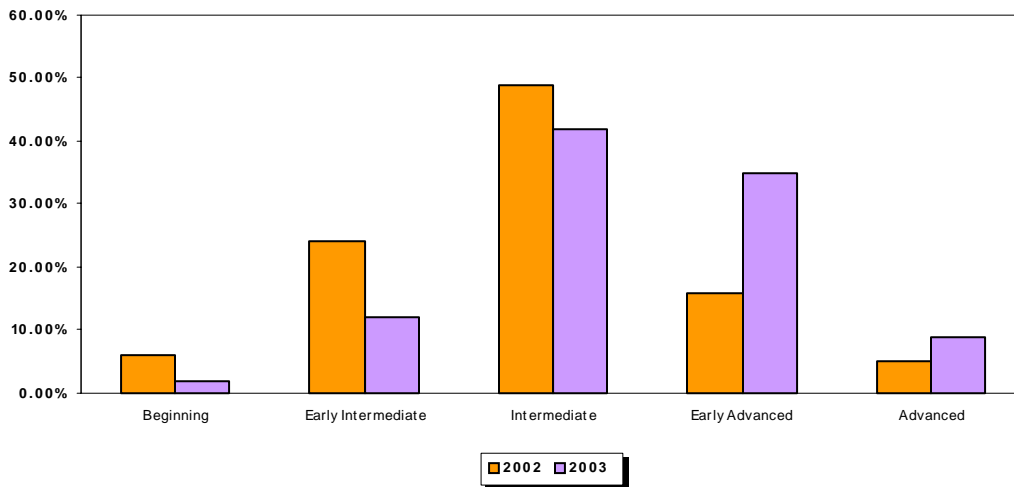
California Department of Education: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us

The number of English Language Learners who scored proficient in Language Arts rose from 14 percent in

2002 to 22 percent in 2003 and the number that scored a 4 (Early Advanced) or 5 (Advanced) on the fifth-grade CELDT more than doubled from 23 percent to 67 percent. In third-grade Language Arts, Garfield topped the achievement levels of the top 10 comparable schools in the state. Garfield's overall CELDT scores significantly improved between the years 2002-2003 with students scoring Early Advanced almost doubling.

California English Language Development Test results (CELDT)

California English Language Development Test Results



California, department of Education, DataQuest, <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/Celdt>

SNAPSHOT OF GARFIELD

Goal setting tied to intensive professional development around student work has been a priority for Garfield. The principal attributes her school's success primarily to this focus. During the last five years, starting in 1999, Garfield students (including all sub-groups) have exceeded the state growth target set forth for them. The principal, staff and faculty have also worked diligently to meet or exceed their own achievement goals developed in collaboration with the district. Most of the instructional programs are chosen and developed by the district, and the principal credits this arrangement for giving her and the teachers more time to concentrate on quality instruction and differentiating teaching to meet the needs of all their students.

“Differentiation should become an integral part of curriculum and instruction – not an addition to the core curriculum or something special to be saved for a particular unit or assignment,” says the principal.

Another reform, not often in the spotlight but quite critical, at the forefront at Garfield is the use of categorical and special program funds. This focus is particularly important in a large urban school like Garfield. LBUSD allocates the funds to schools. Principals manage the funds often in collaboration with a “program facilitator,” who has received district training or has independently acquired skills in budget management. According to the principal, “We truly believe that

creating classrooms where teaching is excellent does not demand large sums of money. Yet, in a large urban school, where there are multiple demands on teacher time and emotional energy, [these] additional funds allow us to be flexible, to reward teacher efforts creatively and to provide teachers with what they need to get the job done in their classrooms. She adds: “In a school that serves almost 1,200 students, there are intense academic needs that require interventions beyond what one classroom teacher can be expected to provide. It is not just the funding itself but the strategic and connected use of supplemental funds that makes a difference at Garfield.”

The school's academic program emphasizes literacy and math. Another constant is direct explicit instruction, in basic skills as well as in higher level thinking skills. Students who need additional support are provided after-school tutoring, and students who are accelerated in their learning participate in a differentiated instructional program, EXCEL.

Although programs are school-wide, each teacher is charged to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of every student. Teachers are supported by a professional community in doing this work. The Garfield Academic Reporting Calendar allows for Grade-level Release Days. During these days, teachers meet in grade level teams to analyze data assess and plan interventions.

The Grade Level Release Days are critical. Worksheets built by the Program Specialist offer structured protocols by

which teachers can probe the data to learn from successes, confront challenges and make new plans.⁴ A record of the planning sheets filled out in these sessions is submitted to school leadership.

Garfield leaders will acknowledge that collaboration alone is not enough. To this end, Garfield has created its own *Garfield Academy of Professional Development*. Many such workshops are mandatory, and targeted extra sessions are offered to new teachers.

One key focus is to keep the support of faculty and students aligned and flexible. A committee consisting of the vice principal, program facilitator, program specialist and a counselor has been established to provide this extra, targeted support. This forum nurtures a spirit of collegiality, says the principal. But teachers do not get support only from the leaders. Grade-level release time, book study groups, whole staff meetings, student work protocols meetings, and all the sessions offered by and for colleagues through the Garfield Academy nurture support and growth.

Teachers and administrators model and observe each other in a range of settings. For example, on a regular basis, Specialists will join the principal, program facilitator and one or two teacher colleagues to conduct “mini visitations” to teacher classrooms. One teacher will take the class while the teacher observed will step out to do a “mini-debrief” with the visiting team.

⁴ For more detail on “Making Connections” sessions, see below.

They will also engage in one-on-one support. It is not uncommon to see a teacher meeting with his/her specialist in a “mini conference.”

“And finally, the task is, ‘align, align align.’” the principal concludes. “Once you have everything in place, you have to make sure that all the pieces of the system are constantly aligning so they can inform and reinforce each other.” As the principal concludes, “Everyone involved in the instruction process has a role to play, and everyone is expected to produce results.”

To sum up its own work, the school has identified five key aspects:

- **School Culture:** The school’s spirit as a professional learning community;⁵
- **Academic Reporting:** Structures at grade level release time for a carefully facilitated program called “Making Connections”;
- **Professional Development:** Comprised of Student Work Protocol meetings, Book Study Groups and the sessions offered through the Garfield Academy;
- **Supervision and Evaluation:** Including traditional instructional feedback and action research feedback; and
- **Intervention:** Involving in-depth reflection on “successes and refinements” regarding intervention.

⁵ Long Beach Unified School Site Information presented for the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative Best Practices Institute, James Garfield Elementary School, J. Baker & T. Brown, p. 1.

FINDINGS

Garfield exhibits a combination of practices, strategies and attitudes that this study found to be distinctively characteristic of high-performing schools. In the suite of practices that this study found to be particularly well developed at Garfield and/or within LBUSD are the following:

District:

1. The district, with input from schools, sets explicit, measurable teaching and learning goals based on improvement in student performance that include goals for grade, subject and student population subgroups.
2. District leaders and staff are part of a learning community that provides multiple ways for teachers and administrators to develop the skills to ensure that all students receive high quality instruction.
3. The district provides a user-friendly district-wide set of assessments that includes formative, diagnostic, and progress-monitoring assessments that together reflect the standards and the adopted curriculum.
4. The district pursues semi formal or formal school/district/university partnerships.

School:

1. School leaders support the creation of a learning community that encourages professional development that is focused on helping teachers to improve their instructional practices in ways that respond to student knowledge and skill needs.

2. School leaders lead school staff to set explicit measurable goals that are based on data and aligned to district goals.
3. School leaders ensure that teachers implement standards-aligned curriculum and use pacing guides to help ensure that all students meet standards.
4. School leaders make an utmost effort to ensure safety of its students.
5. Resource allocation is determined based on student achievement, not on last year's budget.

Classroom:

1. Teachers rely on standards aligned curriculum and pacing guides to help ensure students meet standards; within this framework teachers differentiate instruction.
2. Teachers meet regularly with colleagues to learn how to improve teaching and learning using research-based resources provided by the district as well as additional resources they sought out to improve student achievement.
3. Teachers participate in a data-based learning community that supports them to grow professionally.

CURRICULUM/ACADEMIC GOALS

Goals at Garfield are set to reflect state and district standards. As at the district level, the pressing question for the school is how does this fit in? "How can

our kids meet these standards?” The principal believes that the standards are not too rigorous, “especially if you approach them in the context of goal setting.” The school has identified a team of “curriculum leaders”—the principal, the vice principal, the program specialist, and six teacher specialists—who meet regularly to review data and intervention data in particular in light of the school’s goals in order to translate goals into strategies. This “study-group” also formulates long term goals such as the school’s four year plan (see tool). All of the teacher specialists taught at the school previously. These specialists are categorically funded and selected by the principal. The specialist teachers provide in-class assistance to teachers in helping students reach their goals.

There is a great deal of interaction between these leaders and classroom teachers during the goal-setting process, which takes place at the beginning of each academic year. According to the curriculum leaders, goals should be articulated and realistic. Garfield leadership and faculty have invested heavily in “getting it right” when it comes to designing assessments that measure how well they are doing at meeting their goals. Two strategies of note are simple and low cost but, by teacher report, powerful: *The Practice Prompt* and the *Curricular Thoughts* in the weekly Staff Bulletin.

Weekly “Staff Bulletins” include “curricular thoughts” which “frontload,” in the principal’s words, the material that will be covered in the upcoming professional development sessions and clarify how the material fits into the

larger plan to build teachers’ knowledge and skill to better support the students. The Bulletins encourage the reader to use the professional development materials they have read together in order to sharpen the questions they bring to their analysis of student work in the upcoming faculty meeting.

“What is the student response going to be? What do I want students to show so I will know they have learned this? Last week, we read about a Lesson Study in relation to the design, implementation and outcomes of developed lessons. With those elements in mind, this week we continue the conversation through an article that highlights the impact of well-designed lessons on continuous student improvement. Different than lesson planning, lesson study focuses on what students are expected to learn rather than on what teachers plan to teach [Richardson, 2004]. The idea of looking at evidence in student work is not new to us! In fact, this is an area that we will be spending more time on in the coming months through our Student Work Protocols and analysis of Grade Level Release meetings. As we move toward the end of the reporting period, continue to ask yourself about the evidence that you have that tells you about students’ response to your lessons. Please take a moment to read the attached article by Jean Richardson”⁶.

A note at the bottom of the same memo: “While the article touches upon several areas that we have not explored in depth,

⁶ Joan Richardson, Lesson Study: Teachers learn how to improve instruction, National Staff Development Council, February/March 2004, pp. 2-3.

the collaborative culture at Garfield is ready and able to handle the process of learning more about the basic tenets of Lesson Study.”

After this “curricular thought” follows the “Academic Reporting Update” with data that needs to be collected, by when, and to whom it should be reported. In sum, the otherwise dry reminder to hand in student data reports is in this way cast in the light of what we want to learn from that data.

Beginning, middle, and end of year *benchmark assessments* – A tool for assessing academic progress - have been established by grade level. Results are submitted as part of the Academic Reporting at Garfield. Results are discussed as one component of the regular Grade Level Release Session time.

As noted above, when it comes time to review the data together in grade level “Making Connections” meetings, key questions asked about the data collected might include the following:

- What observations can you make about your data?
- What correlations do you see between the *Open Court* assessment and your [district-set] benchmark data?
- Name three students who have shown the most growth on benchmarks. What has most contributed to their growth?
 - Student Names
 - What contributed to their growth?

- Name the three students who are struggling the most.
- From what you know or have heard today, what will you try?
 - Student Names
 - Strategies to Try

Carefully structured “Grade Level Release Reflections” on what the individual teacher learned from this whole process and what he/she still has questions about are submitted to the principal at the end of such a session.

Some of the most critical steps identified at the last Grade Level Release sessions are presented below:

All Students Will:

- Participate in the California Reads Home Reading Club that requires nightly reading as organized by the Program Facilitator.
- All fourth and fifth grade classrooms will have reduced class size three days per week through use of specialists who provide direct instruction in writing on a class rotation.

All Teachers Will:

- Discuss effective teaching strategies in Literacy, Math and English Language Development during one grade level meeting per month
- Participate in Student Work Analysis Protocols based on a review of written work as a way of measuring English language development

All English Language Learners Will:

- Be provided with instruction that addresses the needs of English

Language Learners during Open Court literacy instructional time

- Be placed in a program of Intensive Structured English if assessed at a beginning level
- Be placed in an additional intensive literacy/ELD group with a specialist if assessed at a beginning level and are a third, fourth or fifth grader

Gifted and Talented Students Will:

- Receive instruction at a pace appropriate for each particular class, which may include a greater emphasis on complex concepts including logic, statistics and probability
- Receive support for differentiated instruction in Math through the GATE office's Math Coach.

Parents Will:

- Be invited to attend workshops focused on assisting their children with reading comprehension and math strategies.
- Reinforce the practice of Math Facts and Math homework at home, including vacation homework.

STAFF SELECTION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Leadership development is important in LBUSD. The district recruits administrators from within the system and encourages them to pursue their own academic studies in areas tied to district and school goals. Jill Baker, who is in her sixth year as Principal, came up quickly through the ranks as a teacher and vice principal before taking the helm at Garfield. Once a principal, she was

encouraged to conduct her doctoral research on a district program.

Teachers are recruited from all over the country; however, a majority of them are trained at California State University at Long Beach (CSULB). CSULB is also one of the biggest sources of Garfield's aides, most of whom are hired as full-time teachers upon completion of their degree. Garfield also receives support from interns. Garfield and other LBUSD schools profit from the structure set up by the district for teacher interns from local universities. Long Beach has pre-intern and intern programs for newly hired teachers who lack full teaching credentials. These individuals must sign a contract with the district stating when they will complete the credentialing process. They receive targeted support toward certification through internship programs.

The CSULB SERVE⁷ program introduces its undergraduates into a teaching career at LBUSD. SERVE volunteers offer extra support in the classrooms. The principal believes that SERVE volunteers and teacher aides from the University will make ideal teachers. "As volunteers and aides, they get exposed to the rigor and challenge of teaching at a Title I school, and that makes our task as recruiters very easy."

The school and district take the concept of "life long learning" seriously. The Garfield principal initiated *Action Research* as an alternative evaluation

⁷ Service Experiences for Revitalizing Education (SERVE) is a service-learning program for undergraduates interested in urban education at Cal State Long Beach. It was designed by then Superintendent Carl Cohn and Assistant Superintendent Randolph Ward in 2002 to strengthen teacher recruitment. The aim of the program is to give undergraduates a chance to spend time in urban classrooms before they decided to enter the teacher education program.

method for veteran teachers. It allows teachers to conduct research on a topic that interests them and is tied to school and district goals. Once the research is completed, the teacher presents it during the monthly staff meetings. One teacher in 2003-2004 finished an action research study on “*Using Guided Reading during the Open Court workshop time.*” The topic is of interest to the teacher and it also advanced school and district knowledge in an area in which they knew there was a need to deepen their understanding. In this fashion, evaluation and professional development for the individual and the system were linked.

Most teachers have categorically-funded aides in their classrooms. Some have argued that aides are a weak intervention and an imprudent investment of scarce resources. However, LBUSD has made a strategic decision to invest heavily in professional development for aides. The data suggests that these additional adults offer essential added value. On any given day in a second-grade classroom, the room might be full of action and motion as children move from work group to work group and adults move from one support station to another. Between the interns from LBUSD and neighboring universities in teacher training, the undergraduate SERVE students from LBUSD as well as the district aides, the number of adults helping can be quite striking. Managing all this requires skills but when done well, this continuous motion is like a ballet. Each person knows where he or she is and what their next move is.

In order to recruit effective teachers, the principal uses Haberman screening test,

which objectively measures candidates’ ability to teach at-risk students.

Haberman Screening Test

Called “The Star Teacher Interview,” the instrument yields a 95% accuracy rate in predicting which teachers will stay and succeed and which ones will fail or quit. High success rates result from the ability of the scenario-based interview to give a clear picture of the candidate's beliefs about teaching *at risk* youth, and to predict how a candidate will behave on the job. Which ones will be able to handle the stress? The discipline? The unmotivated students? Those who learn differently?

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS, PRACTICES AND ARRANGEMENTS

All instructional programs are determined and selected by the district. Each teacher has leeway to choose supplemental materials, based on specific needs of the students.

The textbook adoption process at LBUSD is designed to run across a 21-month timeline (from January of one year to September of the following year). During that time, an Adoption Committee comprised primarily of teachers, but open to parents and other interested community members, works with a scoring rubric to identify each text’s strengths and weaknesses as the

resource to best meet the needs of the student population in the district. The rubric helps establish criteria. The Adoption Committee makes a recommendation to the Committee of Review (a committee made up of administrative representatives) by December of that year. Thanks to this process, once adopted, a list of the text's strengths and weaknesses are on file to help guide implementation and professional development.⁸ In addition, the percent of match to the standards is noted. As apparent from the structure outlined here, the district is visibly conscious of teacher buy-in

Garfield follows a district-mandated program for teachers called "Essential Elements of Effective Instruction" (EEEI). Elements of EEEI are as follows:

- Principles of learning
- Task analysis
- Set objectives and provide feedback
- Monitor the progress of the learning and adjust the teaching
- Lesson design
- Active participation
- Classroom management
- Strategies by which to make private knowledge public

Each year, Garfield focuses on one element of EEEI on which to focus. For a number of years it was "Active Participation." "If the kids aren't participating, they aren't learning. So we knew we had to focus there," says the principal. In 2003-04 the focus was on monitoring. Administrator/colleague teams conduct "Non-Evaluation Walk

Throughs". Everyone knows when these will happen and that the team will focus on implementation of the EEEI focus strand and monitoring the progress of the learning. At the end of the lesson, one teacher takes the class so the others and the teacher observed can step outside to do a mini-debrief. (See tool).

This year, the district chose to focus on strengthening its ELL program and has built a supplementary set of materials for English Language Learners. The materials are aligned with the *Open Court* text which is mandated by the district, Garfield took further steps to adjust to the needs of its students, with consent from the district. When year-end data (2002-2003) revealed that many students lacked proficiency in fluency, the school incorporated "Readers Theatre" and other supplementary fluency materials to enhance teacher resources in that area.⁹ The school also chose, with district consent, to maintain Guided Reading "the Long Beach Way" at grade levels during the *Open Court* workshop time. Building on its years of experience using Guided Reading as a structure for small group learning and differentiated attention, Garfield teachers and faculty at other Long Beach schools that employ Guided Reading strategies spend time at the beginning of the year teaching students to engage in self-directed reading. Appropriate texts are used in order to ensure that the workshop time dedicated to Guided Reading does not devolve into time of outcome-free activity but provides students with the structures to engage in

⁸ Open Court for Roosevelt

⁹ Readers Theater offers structured opportunities for students to read 'in character' and in unison, creating a theater for the onlooker and participants.

purposeful and challenging reading work.

Math and Language Arts lessons are differentiated to meet the needs of English Language Learners but not only focused on them. The principal is quick to acknowledge that some of their lowest performers are “English only” students. When disaggregated by ethnicity, as noted in the graph above displaying student achievement by subgroup, there is a measurable gap between the achievement of African American students and white students in the district and in the school, but at the school level, African American students (who number fewer than 15 percent) actually perform commensurate with the Latino/Hispanic population. An enduring effort at the school -- as at the district -- level is to close the gap that exists between ethnic groups. In light of this commitment, the school has taken conscious steps to ensure that all students, not just those whose home language is not English, receive intensive language support . The school has determined to provide English Language Development to *every* student, “because they all need that support,” as the principal puts it.

The district provides Garfield with a pacing guide that assists teachers enormously in lesson planning and differentiated instruction. Through this guide, the teachers are aware of what is being taught at the same grade level at others schools in the district.

The process by which the district has adopted instructional materials and pacing guides spans one-and-a-half years (see “Overview Textbook Adoption

Process”). It is constructed carefully so that the teachers who will be using the texts are key parts of the process.

A critical first step in instructional materials selection involves assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of a text under review (see too, “Evaluation Form”). Thanks to this assessment by teachers, school leaders and district administrators involved in the process, any text that has been adopted is already accompanied by a summary of that text’s strengths and weaknesses. So, when Long Beach chose *Open Court*, it already knew that support for English Language Learners was an area that left room for improvement

In addition, the district prepared to provide professional development and additional tools to monitor implementation (see “Textbook Adoption Support”). One particularly innovative act on the part of the district was to train librarians in how they can support teachers’ implementation of the *Open Court* “Inquiry” section (see “How Librarians Can Support *Open Court* Inquiry”) for grades 4 and 5.

Support on curriculum mapping is provided through the district’s *Open Court* Recommended Pacing Guide, 2002-03 (see tool by same title). An “Outline of Content and Recommended Time Allotment” chart accompanies the Pacing Guide. This chart indicates which standard is addressed in the *Open Court* text, which aligns to the text and measures progress towards the standards, and which are the key vocabulary and recommended aids.

Everything is organized around recommended time allotments

Finally, key in this process is the initial and then ongoing activity of “Unpacking a Standard” (see tool under same title). For example when unpacking the standard for Grade 8, Reading Standard 2.4, the teacher or teacher and student are asked to think through the required skills, the skills presumed, the objectives for the requisite skills and the simple way to measure whether the student has that skill.

**MONITORING: COMPILATION,
ANALYSIS AND USE OF DATA**

Use of data is rigorous, frequent and extensive at Garfield. The principal gives high marks to the software program provided by the district, as it helps her monitor student data from major benchmarks down to weekly assessments. This data is promptly disseminated to the faculty, especially if it indicates the need for an academic intervention. All teachers may attend a seminar that will assist them in accessing, reading and translating the data. The program disaggregates student data, which helps draw comparisons between student groups and like schools.

At the beginning of each academic year, the principal presides over the initial *Academic Reporting Staff Meeting*. The meeting plays a strategic role in linking the teacher, school and district goals. The larger purpose of the meeting is to align the key aims of the community. Specifically, the purpose of this meeting is to:

- Collect and use data to drive classroom and school decisions about teaching and intervening
- Show evidence of students meeting state standards in major subject areas:
 1. “Along the way” data
 2. End of year data
- Monitor student progress at the individual level and group level

Analysis of the schools’ data showed a great need for calibration in writing. Grades level teams agree on the specific writing task and will jointly score the outcome. At the October meeting they focused on students’ reading data. At the December meeting they focused on students’ writing data. Teachers submit their Assessment Planning Sheets and Class Overviews and Analysis Sheets to the administration for feedback and accountability.

The school sponsors “Garfield Writing Day” once a year to gauge student progress on an on-demand writing task. Each grade level has a separate prompt for students. Teachers review those writings in grade level meetings. As noted, monitoring student progress is recognized as key to success at Garfield and the district; however, the principal firmly believes that just looking at data within the school, even in groups with colleagues during Grade Level Release Days, is not enough. “It’s critical to know how your data compares to that of other like schools...we look at it in the context of `comparisons`”, she notes. The school receives district and statewide comparison data of like schools from the district.

**RECOGNITION, INTERVENTION
AND ADJUSTMENT**

Recognition

Student motivation is seen as critical at Garfield. According to the principal, “Excellence *and* failure are recognized immediately at Garfield.” This fact holds in regard to academic as well as social behavior. The vice principal devotes attention to both intervention and recognition concerning social behavior. The program facilitator focuses on students meeting academic challenges. Where a student confronts both, the two work together. By vice principal report, at every moment of the week, month or year, there are students being recognized and celebrated for positive behavior.

Students are selected weekly from each classroom to be the “Star of the Week.” Each teacher chooses one student to be the “Citizen of the Month.” These students are presented with a certificate and enjoy a breakfast with their teacher and parents. As reinforcement for using good communication and conflict resolution skills, fifth-grade students have been trained as Conflict Managers by Garfield School Counselors. As Conflict Managers, students help others to solve their playgroup problems through discussion facilitated by the Managers. Weekly awards, determined by teachers, are presented for exemplary behavior.

The vice principal remarked, “The more recognition programs we have, the better. The idea is to reward as many students as possible. Such activities usually result in a high level of connectedness between individual

students and the teacher.” The vice principal has pursued this strategy aggressively. For example, a group of seventeen 5th grade students that appeared particularly at risk were given special attention by the vice principal. As members of a formal “Lunch Bunch,” every Wednesday they had lunch with the vice principal. Soon they were taking on special tasks and by year’s end, instead of being perennial discipline problems, the “Lunch Bunch” students were the ones entrusted with handing out the test booklets and making welcoming announcements at school assemblies.

Intervention

Students receiving interventions take pre-tests and post-tests in the area where they struggle most. That data is input into the database and the student’s Student Study Team portfolio. (See tool). Students’ data is tracked to monitor interventions received and their outcomes. (See tool). Interventions may occur during the school day, before or after school, on Saturdays or during summer school.

The intervention staff works together to monitor the results of their work. At the end of the year they hold a “Classroom Think Tank” to discuss the lessons learned from the year. (See tool). They also review how students should be placed the following year.

Retention

The school has its own benchmarks that track student performance and quickly identifies students who need to enroll in inter-session or summer school. Their goal is for students to receive enough

intervention, early enough that students can avoid being retained.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING
EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES**

Parents

Collaboration is regarded as integral to success at Garfield. As the principal attests, when the school, the district, and the parents work as a team toward a common goal, the task becomes that much easier. However, getting the parents involved requires both persistence and patience. Garfield is currently working very hard to improve parent involvement. First and foremost, there is an open door policy at the school. The parents are welcome to discuss any issue pertaining to their child's learning. By teacher report, the entire staff is vigilant about this open door policy. Every teacher at Garfield is given the responsibility to stay in touch with parents and meet with them at least twice a year. The aides are a big help in this regard. On certain days, aides spend the entire day making phone calls to parents.

The administration is particularly proud of its "Parent Ambassador"¹⁰ and "EIA/LEP Community Worker" staff mentioned above. The Parent Ambassador has focused on the participation of African American parents. She offers a Parent Course and provides a regular "Heritage Breakfast."

Other important ways that parents are involved are through the School Site

¹⁰ Garfield maintains the Parent Ambassador position that was originally funded through the Parents as Learning Partners component of the Annenberg Project.

Council and the English Learner Advisory Committee. All meetings with parents are conducted in English and Spanish with support of the half-time ELEP Community Worker, a Latina parent who translates and co-facilitates. The school sponsors "Spoken English" classes for parents who are learning English, Mondays and Wednesdays. Four times a year, the school holds Math and Literacy night seminars for parents, which are very well attended according to the vice principal.

Despite all of this, parent participation is still a challenge.

Resources

As noted above, supplemental funds are used to leverage school reform efforts. Currently, Garfield receives additional funds through the district office from the following programs: Title I, EIA/LEP, School Improvement, State Lottery, Medi-Cal, and ELL funds for upper-grade learners.

Creative use of funds at Garfield is well connected to all other reform efforts. Categorical program funds largely pay for personnel (five literacy specialists, a part-time math facts coach, college aides, a program facilitator, a program specialist, a part-time community worker, and a part-time parent ambassador) and "time" along with a plethora of supplementary materials and experiences. Categorical funds also pay to release teachers for multiple purposes including collaborative grade-level release sessions, EEEI coaching sessions, teacher and specialist collaboration, observation of peers and targeted planning sessions. The principal

states, “Teachers at Garfield have what they need in their classrooms to meet their needs. If there is a need for anything that a teacher thinks will enhance their ability to do their job, I find the money for it.”

Knowing the spending parameters for each of the resources allocated to the school creates even more efficiency. The principal credits the program facilitator, who has worked at Garfield for more than ten years, with meticulous management of the categorical program funds, allowing for on-the-spot discussions about availability of funds for targeted assistance to fund a new idea.

The principal uses data to prioritize school spending. “If we have a particular grade level where data suggests a specific need, we apply support and monitor the efficacy of the support. This past year, we had a large number of fourth graders who began the school year not proficient in their math facts. According to new district criteria, these students would be retained if they did not meet the criteria prior to the end of the year. Students were pulled into a lab two days a week, with a person who was dedicated to working with them on their math facts. She engaged students in creative methods of memorizing their facts and assisted students in the use of the Quarter Mile Math computer program (also purchased with categorical funds) for practice. With fewer than ten students (out of an initial group of 210) at risk of retention in June, the data suggests that the intervention was efficacious.”

Strategic use of supplemental funds also includes the following:

- *Intervention classrooms*, where students who have been retained at grades 1, 3 and 5 are allocated
- *Collaborative work time* (as above)
- *Tutoring of teachers’ own students*, or students familiar to teachers at their grade level, supplemental to regular school day.
- *Professional books* for book study groups.
- *Planning time* for study group facilitators.
- *Reflective meetings* with members of the administrative team and intervention teachers.
- *EXCEL Team planning sessions*
- *Academic field trips* for all
- New teacher observations of veteran teachers.

CONCLUSION

Garfield is notable in several ways. They maintain a vibrant culture of collaborative professional development and teamwork supported by close alliance among the district, principal, teachers and students. Effective prioritization of funds is evident and contributes to the school’s ability to continually meet its academic goals and to support the large number of students needing some form of intervention. Holding all teachers accountable for student achievement and supporting teachers to achieve these goals is a priority for Garfield. Last but not least, professional development for teachers

ensures not only retention but also growth among leaders, teachers and students.

High expectations, clear goals, extensive use of data, strategic differentiated instruction, adherence to standards, and an earnest effort by the administrators and teachers to work as a team have been the most instrumental factors that best explain Garfield academic success.