

CALIFORNIA “BEST PRACTICES” STUDY

SUMMER 2004

CASE STUDY:

O.B. WHALEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*Evergreen Elementary School District
San Jose, CA*

*Presented by the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative in association with
National Center for Education Accountability and Just for the Kids - California*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CALIFORNIA BEST PRACTICES STUDY - AN INTRODUCTION.....	2
SELECTION CRITERIA	2
DATA ABOUT WHALEY.....	4
DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS	7
SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS	7
FINDINGS.....	8
CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC GOALS	9
STAFF SELECTION, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING	12
INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS, PRACTICES AND ARRANGEMENTS	15
MONITORING: COMPILATION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF DATA.....	16
RECOGNITION, INTERVENTION AND ADJUSTMENTS	18
FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES.....	19
CONCLUSION	19

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.”

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?

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

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.jftk-ca.org/bp-methodology or
www.basrc.org

One of our ten high performing case study sites was O.B. Whaley Elementary School, which is part of the Evergreen Elementary

School District (EESD), just north of San Jose in Santa Clara, California.

DATA ABOUT WHALEY

Student Profile

Student Enrollment: 783²
Free/Reduced Price School Lunch Percentage: 65%
English Language Learner Percentage: 63%
District Characterization: Large City

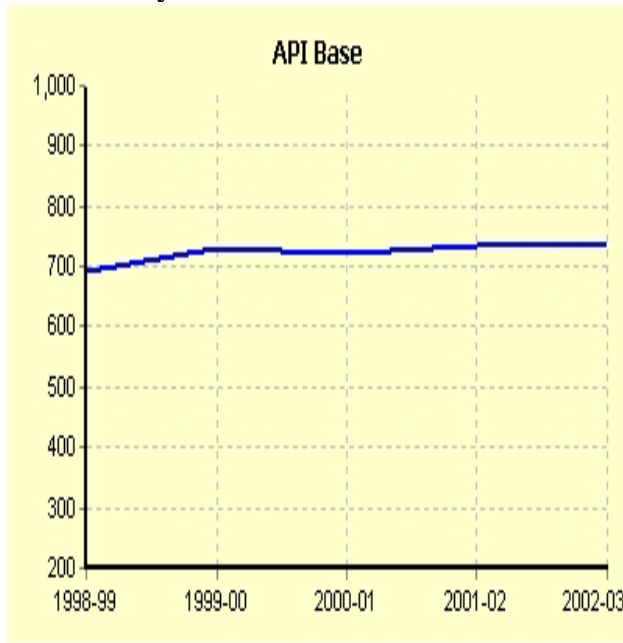
Whaley is a high-performing, high-poverty, and designated as a Schoolwide Title I School³. Despite the many and varied challenges that its students face, Whaley has shown impressive academic gains in recent years.

- In 2004, Whaley was recognized as a “California Distinguished School,” receiving the highest possible selection score of 8
- O.B. Whaley was also recognized as a Title I Achieving School for the first time for 2004.
- The school has an average Academic Performance Index (API) score of 777 and a Similar School Rank of 10 out of 10.

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/rt/> for more information on Schoolwide Title I Schools.

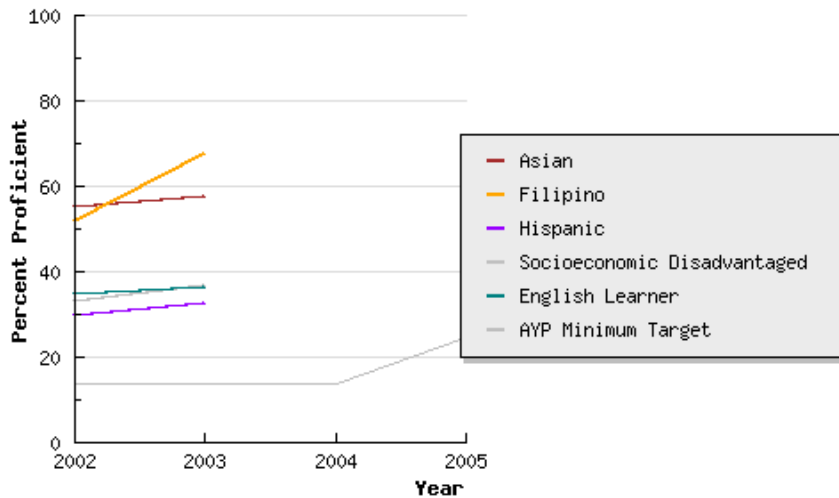
O.B Whaley API Data 1998-2003



Ed Data, Education Data Partner www.ed-data.k12.ca.us

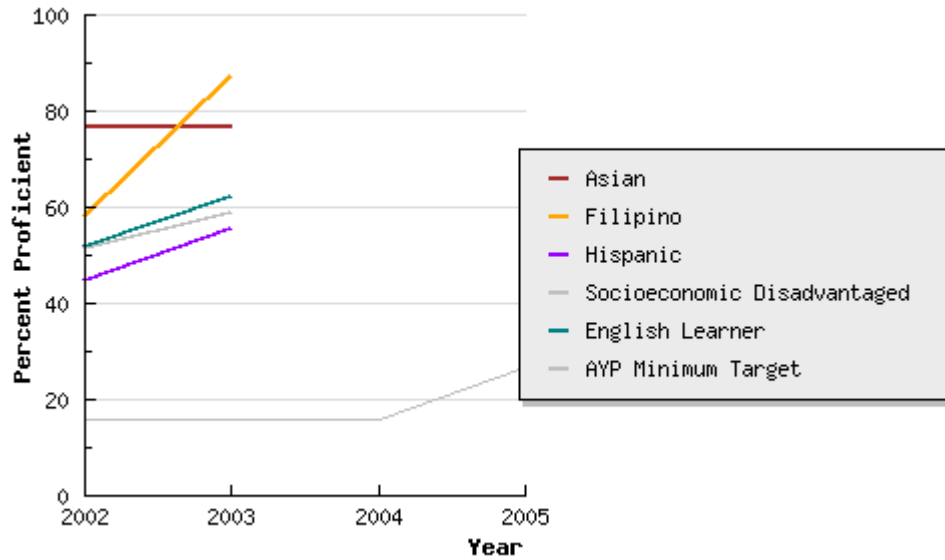
These graphs track the rate of O.B. Whaley student improvement in Language Arts and Math disaggregated by subgroups

Language Arts 2002-2003 California Standard Test (CST) by Subgroup for O.B. Whaley Elementary



www.jftk-ca.org

Math Arts 2002-2003 California Standard Test (CST) by Subgroup for O.B. Whaley Elementary

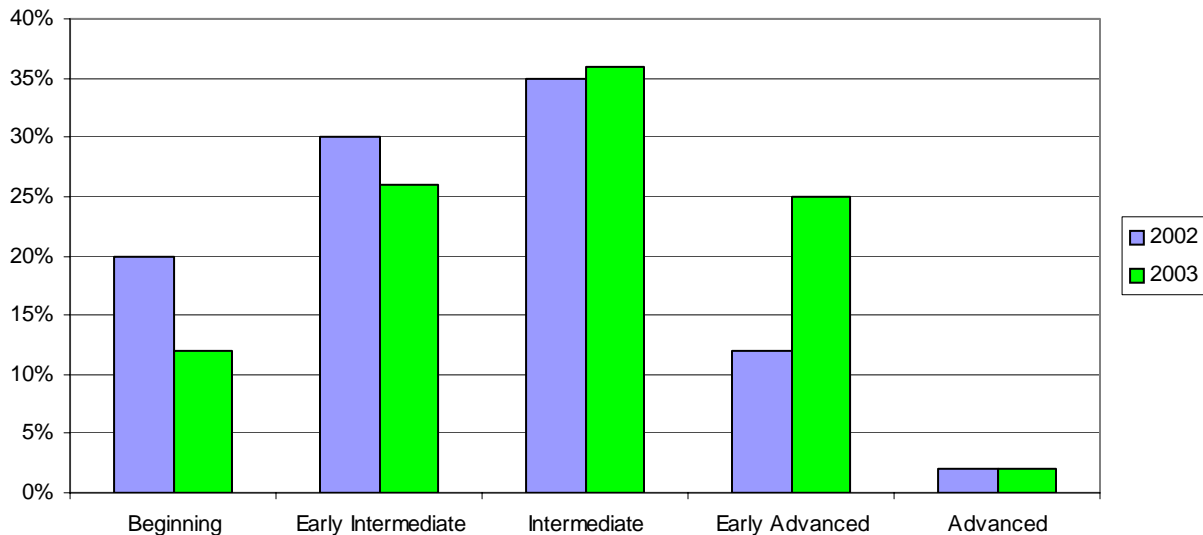


www.jftk-ca.org

English Language Learners also made strong gains between 2002 and 2003, as demonstrated by a decreasing percent of students performing in the “Beginning” and “Early Intermediate” categories on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), with a corresponding increasing percent of students performing in “Intermediate” and “Early Advanced” categories.

2002-2003 CELDT Results for O.B. Whaley

California English Language Development Test



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

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Evergreen in Santa Clara County serves approximately 12,600 students in 17 schools. Twenty-nine percent of EESD's students qualify for free/reduced-price school lunch and 31 percent are English Language Learners. The primary languages spoken at home among ELL students are Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Punjabi and Cantonese. Evergreen is one of the many districts in California in which the in-district disparities of incomes are significant. The district leadership has confronted the huge income inequality publicly as well as in its policies. For example, Evergreen will not allow for individual schools to fundraise beyond a certain level without also giving a portion back to the district for redistribution. The district leadership will argue for this policy publicly.

O.B. Whaley is one of the many schools that benefits from the district's commitment to support its Title 1 schools.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

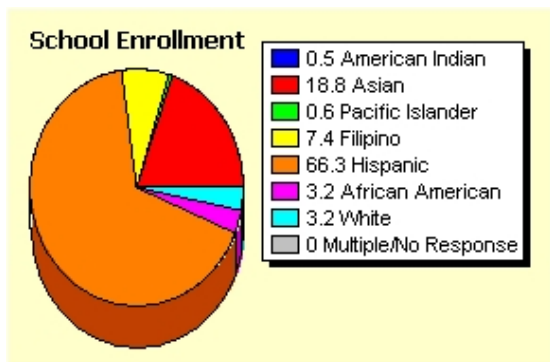
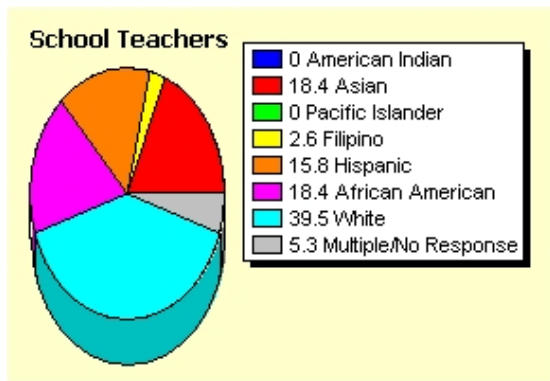
Whaley Elementary, a Title I school, serves a significantly more diverse and higher risk population than other schools in the district.

In a community that has evolved from suburban to urban, Whaley represents a large immigrant population with diverse needs. Sixty five percent of Whaley's 783 students qualify for free/reduced-price school lunch; 63 percent are English Language Learners; and 34 percent of parents have not graduated from high school. There is also a 21 percent school mobility rate⁴ in contrast to the State's average of 18 percent. About 75 percent of the families speak one of 20 languages other

⁴ The mobility rate is the percentage of students who entered this school for the first time during the 2002-2003 school year.

than English at home, with Spanish and Vietnamese the most prevalent. The principal has worked with some success to recruit and retain a diverse staff to match the student population the school serves. At Whaley, 39 percent of the faculty is white, compared to the State average of 74 percent.

Whaley’s current principal has been at the school since 2000. “When I got the position at Whaley, my colleagues were calling me with condolences... they didn’t believe me when I said I really wanted to come...but I felt a connection to the school because of the population. I started school not speaking English, and I know what that’s like.” Whaley is situated in the “hub of the community” – few students are bused in, which enables the school to establish closer ties to the surrounding community.



Ed Data, Education data Partner www.ed-data.k12.ca.us

FINDINGS

O.B. Whaley exhibits a combination of practices, strategies and attitudes that this study found to be distinctively characteristic of high-performing schools when compared to demographically similar yet average performing sites. In the suite of practices that this study found to be particularly well-developed at O.B. Whaley and/or within EESD are the following:

District

1. The district adopts state standards.
2. The district, with input from schools, sets explicit, measurable teaching and learning goals based on improvements in student performance and aligned to the standards.
3. Data analysis guides everyday practices.
4. Districts provide research-based programs, practices and arrangements focused on areas of identified need, linked to professional development and evaluation.
5. Districts provide pacing guides; ongoing benchmark assessments and unit tests to ensure all students across classrooms and schools have access to the same material.

School

1. School leaders with input from teachers embrace state and district-adopted standards.
2. School leaders lead school staff to set explicit, measurable goals that are based on data and aligned to district goals.
3. Data analysis guides everyday practices.
4. School leaders provide research-based programs, practices and arrangements linked to professional development

and evaluation, and focused on areas of identified need.

5. School leaders and teachers implement and supplement, standards-aligned curriculum, pacing guides and assessments.
6. School leaders monitor teacher performance, both formally and informally, using district-adopted evaluation tools and classroom observation that reflect shared understandings about the school's expectations for classroom practice.
7. School leaders hold teachers accountable to help their students reach clearly articulated goals through regular meetings reviewing student data and other learning resources.

Classroom

1. Teachers use state and district standards in everyday discourse with students and colleagues.
2. Teachers set explicit, measurable goals for themselves and with their students.
3. Data analysis guides everyday practice.
4. Teachers build their lessons on research-based programs, practices and arrangements, and tailor them to identified need.
5. Teachers rely on standards aligned curriculum and pacing guides to help ensure that all students meet standards; School leaders also support teachers to differentiate instruction within this framework.
6. Teachers monitor student performance, formally and/or informally at regular intervals.
7. Teachers hold students accountable and support students to reach goals through regular meetings reviewing their own work and other learning resources.

Whaley's motto is "Education is our business; excellence is our goal." The school's goals are determined by the leadership team and are closely aligned with district goals. Following the district's lead, Whaley has made the state standards the focus of their work. The vice principal says, "There are quite a few students who can express the standards to you, which means you are really getting through to them." A tour of the classrooms demonstrates how the school incorporates standards into school life. Classrooms display student work juxtaposed with a printed sign of the standard it meets, a practice that reminds students and teachers of the importance of incorporating standards into their daily lessons and work, and serves to communicate standards to parents during open houses.

Although the school generally regards the State standards as sufficiently rigorous, the school sets its own written objectives for student performance; within those, it sets higher benchmarks where it deems necessary. (The school judges what is "necessary" by asking if meeting a benchmark will ensure that the student is set up for success in meeting the next grade level benchmarks.) For example, state standards do not require kindergarteners to be able to write their own names, but Whaley incorporates this goal into their own objectives. It's important if the students are to succeed in first grade, the principal reasons. Not only do the principal and teachers know the goals, but students do as well. In the words of one teacher, "Kids learn their goals [for literacy] and they know why we work toward them. We set the standard so that all kids will become strong writers." The principal emphasizes that making AYP and API are distinct goals and neither are negotiable.

Mathematics

Goal: All students regardless of gender, ethnicity, language or economic status will demonstrate their knowledge of California Math Content Standards as measured on the STAR CST Math and district performance assessments.

Objective: During the 2003-04 school year, Hispanic, ELL, and socio-economically disadvantaged students will improve their Math achievement by 5 percent on district assessments (K-1), Noyce (grades 3 and 5) and STAR CST Math (grades 2-5).

Language Arts

Goal: All students regardless of gender, ethnicity, language or economic status will demonstrate their knowledge of California English Language Arts Content Standards as measured on the STAR, district and site data.

Objective: During the 2003-04 school year, all students will improve their achievement by 5 percent on the CST ELA (grades 2-5), district writing assessments (grades 1-2) and STAR Writing (grade 4).

In addition to the above academic goals, the Whaley Plan includes a safe school action plan, which was formulated based on the results of a survey given to teachers, parents and students on school climate and environment.

Goal development process at the school-, grade- and classroom- level

At the site-level, the entire staff begins the year by reviewing student data from the previous year and formulating goals for the current year. Early parent-teacher-student conferences are a critical part of including all parties in the goal-setting process in which individual learning plans are established for each student.

Teachers review and revisit Whaley’s written academic goals when they meet in grade-level teams during which time they examine the progress of individual children as well as patterns within grades. “For instance, one challenge that teachers noticed students faced was the jump from third to fourth grade. The Whaley team sought to address this problem through meetings between third and fourth grade teachers. The teachers agreed that third grade teachers needed to teach beyond the third grade standards and incorporate some fourth grade material into their instruction; otherwise, the leap from third to fourth grade benchmarks would be too difficult for students to achieve.

At the classroom-level, teachers do not feel that all students enter well prepared for the work that will be expected of them in that grade. This is especially true of incoming transfer students whose parents are sometimes shocked with the poor grades their children receive at Whaley in contrast with previous schools. In such cases, teachers communicate with parents about the standards and the work that is expected from students at Whaley. Whaley teachers believe that veteran Whaley students are more likely to be prepared for the next grade than new students who transfer in from other schools. Teachers feel that students generally leave their classroom with the skills necessary for the next grade level. They credit this success in part to “lots of goal-setting with students and taking time to talk with them about [the goals].”

In goal-setting and other internal processes, Whaley emphasizes the importance of holding students accountable for their own learning. “We try to get the kids to establish goals for themselves,” explains the principal. She continues, “In the spirit of healthy competition, we want the kids to really set high goals for themselves and reach certain benchmarks.”

The school has formally instituted a number of practices to ensure that students are actually able to achieve the goals that have been set and thus obtain the knowledge and skills they need for the next grade level, as well as for later academic success. For instance:

- Each grading period, the principal reviews report cards with great care, makes notes about children she's worried about, and meets with teachers to follow up.
- Student assessment at Whaley is in the form of a rubric, eliminating letter grades. At planning meetings, a professional dialogue is encouraged to reach a consensus on standards for each of the five performing levels.
- Three times a year, teachers meet to calibrate writing samples by pulling out agreed upon anchor papers that can serve as an example for teachers to score against. This practice aims to ensure that teachers are jointly setting the bar appropriately to measure progress against benchmarks.
- In 2004, Whaley developed a school-wide policy for homework, which serves to hold children, teachers and parents equally accountable. To generate the policy, Whaley's team used Marzano's research findings (*What Works in Classroom Instruction* by Marzano, Gaddy and Dean, 2000) on goal-setting in which the author proposed a policy of homework as a "springboard for the dialogue."⁵ To enable participation by parents not proficient in English, Whaley's principal, who is fluent in Spanish, translated the homework policy.

⁵ Six other schools in this study, Harbison and Kimball in National School District, and Garfield, Roosevelt, Signal Hill and Hudson, also drew from this same book by Marzano et al. Also in their cases, the book proved a useful resource in guiding strategic planning.

- The principal communicates closely with the middle school into which Whaley feeds. Whaley's principal previously served as assistant principal at that middle school, which strengthens the interactions. When students move on to middle school, Whaley teachers create placement cards to identify students who need additional support and to elaborate on students' specific needs. Come spring, during the annual student orientation the 5th grade teacher will meet with his/her 6th grade colleague at the neighboring middle school.

Curriculum Development

The district's instructional department develops standards and curriculum through a representative group of teachers, staff and administrators across the district. The district first aligns its standards tightly to the State standards, but exceeds State standards when it feels necessary. The curriculum committee then meets to review potential curriculum and textbooks.

One of the ways that the principal grooms and selects new leadership is through the curriculum piloting process. She notes that some Whaley teachers actively pursue the opportunity to be pilot teachers, and she believes that if she focuses her attention only on those teachers, it would be easy to "overlook those who would have potential to become really good leaders." To avoid this potential pitfall, the principal encourages both soft-spoken and outspoken teachers to take on leadership positions, including serving as piloting teachers.

Curriculum Alignment

Whaley focuses most heavily on incorporating the State standards for Language Arts and Math into instruction, and places less emphasis on other subject standards. This keeps the school focused on

specific and distinct goals. The principal explains that emphasizing all standards equally would be a “broad and unattainable” goal and she says, “I can’t do that to my teachers.” In devising lesson plans, teachers are asked to make note of the standards that align with the content they will be teaching. Teachers submit lesson plans to the principal weekly.

Whaley’s principal notes the importance of using shared language around teaching and learning. She believes that if standards were not present in a common dialogue at Whaley, it would be more challenging to incorporate them into school life. She defines curriculum as “the materials that support the standards.”

STAFF SELECTION, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Principal Selection. Principals in EESD are selected through an informal process. When a position opens up, an external candidate is not necessarily interviewed. The district might advertise or appoint an internal candidate to the position. For instance, Whaley’s principal was appointed to her current position after she indicated an interest in the position to the superintendent. “I think the district really strives to connect people that are good matches for the community,” comments Whaley’s principal. When deciding to place her at Whaley, she believes the superintendent considered her experience with the Latino community, including her fluency in Spanish, experience with English Language Learners, and her BCLAD credential. Most principals selected have prior experience in the district.

Whaley’s principal encourages the development and promotion of internal candidates. “When I have my planning conference and evaluation meetings with teachers, I always talk about ‘where do you want to be in five years?’ If I see that

someone has exceptional leadership skills, I really promote leadership opportunities for them.” In writing the recent Distinguished School application, the principal assembled a team that included mainly teachers who were earning or already had their administrative training. She thought the self-evaluation against that rubric would be good professional development for potential future administrators.

Teacher Selection. Teachers can apply for a position in many ways: by downloading an application from the district website, attending recruiting fairs through the county office, or attending district open houses and job fairs. Teacher selection also relies on relationships with local universities such as San Jose State University (SJSU). O.B. Whaley has been part of a school university partnership with SJSU. The benefits are mutual. Whaley teachers serve as faculty associates at SJSU.

Principals can also recruit teachers directly. Whaley’s teacher selection process includes inviting the candidate to the school site and having him/her meet with the other teachers at the same grade level. One kindergarten teacher confirms that when Whaley was looking for an additional kindergarten teacher, she was very involved in selecting the teacher.

The principal says, “We’re not as pretty a school on the outside compared with other schools. I want people to know where they’re coming and to see who we are. I talk about our demographics, our population, student needs and what I expect as a principal, that all my teachers participate in extended day instruction voluntarily. I need people who will go the extra mile.” She compares her teachers’ dedication to that of Peace Corps volunteers.

Whaley’s principal believes that the teacher population should reflect, to some extent, the student population because “people need role models.” Whaley’s Hispanic/Latino student population exceeds the comparative percentage of Hispanic/Latino teachers, thus she would like to hire more Hispanic/Latino teachers. The principal emphasizes that while hiring teachers who are representative of the student population is important; her primary concern is finding the best possible teacher, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Teacher Retention. Whaley’s principal explains, “You will retain teachers if they feel that their input is valued and that they are in a supportive and collaborative environment.” The principal wishes she could pay her teachers more, but says it’s not an option that the district will allow. There are some smaller financial incentives, including college loan forgiveness programs for teachers who work at Title 1 schools. The principal says, “The reality is that very few of them do it for the monetary incentive. They do it for the personal rewards they get through their kids.”

Professional Development and Capacity Building

The district does not yet have an extensive professional development program in place for its principals. This year, in line with general budget cuts, the limited funding that used to be available for the principal training budget, was cut. Monthly meetings cover topics such as projections, staffing categorical programs and support providers. In describing the district’s professional development for principals, Whaley’s principal says, “That’s probably an area in which we could do better. Quite honestly, there isn’t a lot of time to devote to it...I remember my years at Cadwallader with BASRC. I had so much access to professional development. I really feel like I grew as a principal. Sometimes I

have this fear of getting stagnant. You have to stay on the cutting edge.”

The general consensus at the school is that the district does a good job of providing professional development opportunities for teachers, starting with their induction. After teachers are hired, they attend a summertime institute sponsored by the district in which standards, curriculum, the “discipline with dignity program,” and other relevant district-wide topics are introduced. They are assigned a district-trained off-site support provider. “We take care of our new teachers and give them support because that is part of what keeps people here.”

All teachers have a minimum day on Thursdays, which allows them to participate in the district-sponsored work groups which occur five Thursday afternoons throughout the year. Workgroups provide additional opportunities for teachers to collaborate, and are led by a facilitator who is paid by the district office. Topics are sometimes developed by the district and sometimes by the individual school. This year, Whaley’s teachers have been focusing on writing through the *Step Up to Writing* program. Whaley’s principal occasionally attends the workshops.

Teachers report that both the district and principal are flexible in meeting their needs, and they are comfortable initiating conversations with administrators about their own training needs and being critical of past trainings that need improvement.

The California Reading and Literature Project (CRLP)

The California Reading & Literature Project's Pre-K-12 RESULTS program is a research-based, teacher-designed, professional development program built around the

observation and analysis of student reading achievement. By CRLP design, in RESULTS Academies, CRLP teacher-leaders show teachers how to:

- Set goals based on the California Language Arts Content Standards;
- Assess students' reading skills so that teachers will know which students have and have not met grade-level standards;
- Work in school-site teams in order to look at assessment data and pool resources to meet the common goal of having all students reach the standards;
- Use the most effective research-based instructional strategies in their daily instruction.

Staff development should be a continuous process, according to the principal. The general approach to professional development at Whaley is for teachers to first share research-based strategies, apply them to instruction, and then reflect with colleagues upon successes and failures. Reading and writing have become school-wide focal points for professional development at Whaley. The writing focus grew from a concern with results from first and second grade writing assessments. In order to train teachers to analyze data around Language Arts, a skill that the principal felt was critical, Whaley in 2000-2001 paid for a cadre of teachers to go through the RESULTS Leadership Institute.⁶

Horizontal and Vertical Collaboration.

Communication is critical to the school's success, and the principal cites agendas, staff handbooks, newsletters to families, final evaluation forms, weekly staff bulletins and

regular team meetings as evidence of the many different ways that Whaley communicates effectively, both internally and externally. To further bolster communication, Fourth and Fifth grade teachers often plan together and have articulation discussions as part of the looping process in which they participate.

Grade level planning meetings are scheduled approximately every two weeks to address focal areas. Teachers often create the agenda, which is evaluated by the principal to ensure it allows for a high-caliber professional dialogue. To maximize time, less-important discussion items are banned from the meetings and instead disseminated via weekly bulletins. Classroom visits are encouraged as a form of staff development and teachers often take a full or half day per year to observe instruction in other schools' classrooms.

Induction and mentoring programs. Staff mentors have a significant role at Whaley, especially in the training program offered through the New Teacher Institute. Mentors receive a stipend from the district and have been trained as peer coaches in the context of the state's BTSA program. Lead teachers and mentors also serve a mentoring role to other teachers. In order to prevent lead teacher selection from becoming a "popularity contest," Whaley's principal individually selects teachers that she feels have credibility with the staff, who are good teachers and who will be people that others would follow. The principal respects the decisions made in collaboration with the lead teacher group, which meets weekly, and she has never had a complaint about the individuals she selects as lead teachers. When the principal arrived at Whaley, the lead teachers were called "Department Chairs" and they perceived the work they were delegated as undesirable. The principal knew she had to begin by

⁶ In this study, the following schools also took advantage of RESULTS training over a sustained period of time. Each of these sites sustained the focus on RESULTS over five or more years. Each asked all staff to complete the three day training to build skill in collaborative data analysis; Moscone, San Francisco; Harbison and Kimball in National; Encinita in Rosemead.

transforming this traditional role into something respected and valued. She started by renaming it, but the process she has established has gone much deeper. The principal encourages lead teachers to delegate responsibility and incorporate others' help in recording meeting discussions and more. Mentoring now defines the Whaley culture up and down the system, including a mentoring program for children.

School-university relationships are also utilized for staff development. Some teachers and faculty are associated with San Jose State University (SJSU) through which they mentor teachers in training and receive training on peer coaching. Lead teachers serve as mentors to their colleagues and frequently perform in-services for their grade level. Mentoring process also includes the mentoring of future teachers who attend a local high school with a teacher academy.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS, PRACTICES AND ARRANGEMENTS

Selection and creation of programs and materials. After a district committee pilots potential texts, the district selects instructional material for the school. Teachers explain that Whaley's principal is good at ensuring there is representation from all grades on the committee, and that the piloting process is valuable specifically because a diverse array of the school population is represented. "Even the students felt they got to participate in what text was being used and selected," explains a teacher.

The principal explains that "we're getting to a place that as we align the curriculum to the standards, we are seeing a better result in terms of student performance and learning." Teachers feel that the state accountability system has changed instructional practices, but they point out that they had always felt

accountable for how children learned. "The state just reinforces what we do," explains a teacher.

Instructional strategies. Teachers cite assessment as a critical guide for their instructional practices. New teachers find that their teaching practice changes each year, and that they must be open to modifications.

In citing evidence of high-quality instruction, a leader teacher explains, "This is an assessment-based district." The district uses research-based practices rather than "faddish trends," even if it may create more work for the teachers. The whole staff works together to make sure the students are getting what they need by assessing students frequently and regularly and adjusting instruction according to the findings. To ensure vertical articulation and alignment, Whaley conducts a school-wide writing sample three times a year. One 3rd grade teacher says that some students are barely writing a sentence in the fall, and by the spring, they are already writing a paragraph.

Instructional Arrangements. The school schedule guides teachers. They know that they are all teaching Language Arts when school starts in the morning, and the school has a policy for how much instruction time is spent in core content areas. As one teacher leader explains, "Teachers are aware of the exact amount of minutes for each area, but it's hard to adhere to [certain timing] because we have to teach what the children need."

- Whaley relies upon many different student groupings, depending on subject area, grade level, and skill level. Children are grouped based upon results of CAT/6 and other tests, through which teachers identify which children to target for additional support. The process of determining groupings and classes is

challenging because test results constantly change, creating the need to re-assign students frequently

MONITORING: COMPILATION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF DATA

Monitoring of students. Teachers at Whaley are constantly evaluating their students' progress. Progress reports are done as a staff at the beginning of the year. Subsequently, individual teachers are required to complete reports every five weeks, although some teachers do them more often. Report cards provide teachers a chance to reflect upon student progress and whether or not grades match with student performance on standardized assessments. One teacher says, "If they don't match, you have to ask yourself what is happening. You ask yourself questions all the time. I do progress reports every three weeks and notify parents when their children are not doing well. The ...ranking really helps keep us on our toes in terms of kids who are falling below the mark." The principal and the faculty assess students by breaking the scores down to quintiles, to be optimally aligned with the State ranking system, and appropriately fine-grained.

Monitoring of teachers. Whaley conducts tenured teacher evaluation every other year and non-tenured/probation teacher evaluations every year. The evaluation process includes a planning conference, an observation and a follow-up conference with the principal. During the planning conference, the teacher and principal examine data from last year's and this year's class. The principal asks teachers what they thought worked and didn't work in their teaching, and how well they think they met the "California Standards for the Teaching Profession." The second meeting is the formal evaluation, in which the principal uses the "classroom observation"

sheet found in the school protocol notebook to evaluate teachers. The principal says she is "brutally honest" when doing evaluations and notes that she has given poor evaluations to tenured teachers. Student data is used to help evaluate their classroom programs. The focus is on data the principal collects aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

Whaley's principal considers it a distinct strength of Whaley that its teachers embrace data analysis and have developed the skills to use it effectively. She explains, "I have teachers who love to play with data. They'll bring me a class list and it's color-coded... It is not a chore. They really look at it as a visual way of sorting children...the teachers get excited about seeing the growth in the kids." She credits the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) for her own understanding of how to use data effectively. She acknowledges that she is in sensitive territory when she encourages teachers to learn which kids are, for instance, eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and then target those students who are at greater risk for underperforming, but she is proud that her staff is open to talking about successes and failures. "You have to be able to have a dialogue that is collaborative and not accusatory." She says the most important data is that which informs practitioners which kids are not achieving the standards and their particular needs so teachers can devise appropriate interventions.

Collaboration sets the context for data usage at Whaley. In the context of collaboration, there is opportunity to acknowledge each other's work and challenge each other to grow. According to the principal, "You have to schedule time for the teachers to talk about the results, because without time to reflect, how can data be used in a meaningful way? You need to have a culture where teachers

aren't afraid to say 'my students are bombing in spelling' and ask other teachers for advice."

The teachers corroborate the principal's statements about the great extent to which the data has been used to target teaching and learning at the school. One teacher says, "As I became more experienced and flexible in grouping across the curriculum, I didn't know how I'd be able to group my students without using data. I never thought it was possible, but I have first graders who understand their data perfectly well. They know exactly what group they're in; they know exactly what they have to do to get to the next level... and they really push themselves. The more you make them aware of what they are doing, the more motivated they become." Another teacher explains, "I think for me it's that the data is no longer meaningless... In the upper grades, even the kids get into their own data and they could tell you where they are. They can tell you where their strengths and weaknesses are. To see them start to internalize the data and use it themselves, I think, is a powerful tool." A third teacher adds, "not only do they know the data, but they also know the standards because the standards are posted in the room. They know what is expected of them by the completion of the year." Certain grades have their own standards booklet where students can mark off when they have learned a standard.

Formative Assessments. At the beginning of the year, teachers look at test scores from previous years and disaggregate data in quintiles. Based on this analysis, teachers adjust their classroom instruction and homework assignments to reinforce what is taught in the lessons.

It is clear that teachers have a sophisticated knowledge of various assessments. For instance, teachers say that the California

Standards Test is fairly comprehensive. They say that the CAT/6 is "easier for the children" and does not in fact capture all of the standards. Teachers feel that alignment of the state assessments with standards has a positive effect on students' achievement.

Additional benchmarks are developed through a committee process, and appropriate assessment materials are purchased by the district. Much assessment is uniform across the district. For instance, the school uses a math assessment guide in third and fifth grades. Teachers are required (by the school) to do reading and writing samples three times a year and report scores to the leadership team teacher, though some teachers do these assessments more often. There are also other math and reading performance assessments. Every grade level team develops an assessment matrix in alignment with the trimester system. The rubric covers informal (ongoing daily in classrooms) and formal (agreed-upon) assessments. Teachers seek to maintain validity and consistency in the grading process by regularly scoring each other's papers on school-wide writing tests.

Not all data comes from tests. The school used data about preschool attendance rates of entering kindergarten students, which showed that *only five of 120 kindergarten students had attended preschool*, to select children for a pre-kindergarten summer school program. Whaley also used this information to set its own benchmarks for kindergarten that are higher than the State-mandated ones, and to make a decision to limit the "fluff" in kindergarten and focus on academics.

Data management tools and software

The district tracks data on student mobility as well as participation in the migrant program, GATE and ELD. With SASI (School Administrative Student Information System), the district-wide student information system,

they plan to add data on students' home languages and history in the district, and expand mobility information. Classroom teachers do not yet have extensive access to SASI, though this is the district's ultimate goal. Right now, teachers can only see attendance records on SASI

In 2003-04 the district was not able to provide disaggregate student data by race or ethnicity, so Whaley did it themselves. The school tracks its own Hispanic/Latino children. Whaley also has its own system to track students' reading progress. Teachers can pull their class list from any school computer and get student progress on accelerated reading. In conversations about data, the principal frequently references the school's assessment binder, which is a useful tool for teachers.

RECOGNITION, INTERVENTION AND ADJUSTMENTS

Recognition. At Whaley, school-wide programs tied to student achievement include the perfect attendance award, student of the week and month, spirit assemblies, and individual classroom awards. Student of the week and month awards are given for good citizenship in addition to academic performance and academic improvement.

Whaley has recently created a specific emphasis on character education in their school community. They have implemented the "six pillars of character," which addresses important character traits. Each month there is a new focus topic around good citizenship and the topics have included trustworthiness, caring and responsibility. Teachers devote 30 minutes to discussing the monthly topic and teaching relevant vocabulary. At the annual autumn primary focus assembly, Whaley has incorporated character education, but they feel it was only at a superficial level in past years and this year they plan to incorporate it

more thoroughly. Teachers believe that a school-wide focus on character "pays off" and results in fewer student referrals to the principal's office for poor behavior.

Student Intervention. Whaley is distinctly aware of the inequities that can result when students enter kindergarten less prepared than their classmates, so its assessment and intervention programs start in kindergarten. Children who have not attended pre-school automatically qualify for a month-long "pre-kinder" summer school class, which helps prepare them for school, both socially and academically. Although "pre-kinder" funding was cut for most schools in the district, Whaley managed its budget to retain its program, which it feels is a critical early intervention strategy.

Whaley believes that kindergarten is the place to set goals for parent involvement, so parents are strongly encouraged to attend two workshops during the "pre-kinder" class, during which time they receive support to help their children get prepared. Those workshops involve discussing the structure of the school day, what the children will be expected to do every day, and how parents can help if they do not speak English fluently. Families are given a kit that helps prepare them to have a child in school. Other student interventions tied to student achievement include pre-reading classes from 8 to 8:30 a.m. where teachers support students who need intensive instruction.

Whaley also has a mentoring program for children which engage all staff members - even including custodians to be mentors for students that need extra help. The goal of the program is "to build resiliency within children by having a caring adult in their life." General fund monies and donations pay for fun activities, such as pizza lunches, between students and mentors.

Intervention strategies vary from year-to-year due to budget fluctuations and how effective they have been. The principal allocates resources, which are funded through Title I, school improvement plan (SIP), and intervention funds from the State.

Teacher Intervention. The principal acknowledges that, like most schools, Whaley has a combination of excellent, good, and teachers who are not yet at standard. Whaley works with teachers by providing them support to improve their practice, including grade-level collaboration, mentoring for new teachers, informal group planning, and the regular district professional development. When teachers do not show improvement, they must participate in the Peer Assessment review (PAR) program. PAR focuses on improving teaching and student learning by assisting permanent teachers who want to improve their subject matter knowledge, pedagogy, or both. The assistance teachers receive is confidential, and no anecdotal records of the assistance they receive are kept by anyone. Participation is completely voluntary, and teachers may request or terminate assistance whenever they wish.

Last year, Whaley let a teacher go for poor performance. The principal, while confident that the teacher was not effective, admits that the process was extremely hard. It demanded a great amount of her administrative time, especially complying with the legal requirements, which ultimately reduced the time she was able to spend with students and the teachers

FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Core beliefs. Critical to Whaley’s success is teachers’ attitudes and core beliefs about the effect they can have on their students’ lives.

Teachers emphasize that while they cannot control what happens in students’ lives out of the classroom, they can control the experience within the classroom.

School as community. One Whaley teacher explains that she stresses to children that the school is their home away from home, as it is hers. The school wants students to consider school a safe place and forget about bad things that might happen outside of school. Teachers feel it is important for them to empathize with the children. This does not mean feeling sorry for them, but instead, appreciating their unique challenges and celebrating their successes. As a teacher notes, “Kids are very aware of whether you are on their side.”

Parent Involvement. Whaley has chosen to administer a survey in which parents give input about the school. This survey is an opportunity for a narrative beyond the typical basic information, and responses help teachers shape activities and instruction. The approach of “parent as client” is taken seriously at Whaley.

Challenges. The principal says that Whaley’s “high-achieving culture” demands a high level of effort to maintain. The high mobility rate is a key challenge to improving and maintaining student performance. The principal likens Whaley to a revolving door, but stresses that the minute the students arrive, the team focuses on how they can help the students achieve.

CONCLUSION

Whaley Elementary is an outstanding example of a Schoolwide Title I school that is beating the odds. Themes at Whaley are the idea that demographics are not an excuse for low student achievement and that adults throughout the system should hold themselves

as well as students accountable. Teachers set high expectations but, critically, provide the learning opportunities students must have to meet those expectations. As a result, the school has narrowed the achievement gap among many traditionally lower-performing groups. Whaley has a Similar School Rank of 10, and in March 2004 was designated a California Distinguished School.

to take on various leadership responsibilities within the school is an important aspect of continuing to increase student achievement at the school. The principal uses the curriculum piloting process and other strategies to select and groom new leadership.

Salient practices that serve to distinguish Whaley include:

- An environment of collaboration pervades the organization. It is evident in the extensive and creative use of various media to enhance communication in schedules that include, regular time is for collaboration and frequent classroom visits by teachers.
- Mentoring defines the Whaley culture up and down the system. Mentoring for new teachers is supported by the district through the New Teachers Institute; by the school through lead teachers; and for students through the student-staff mentoring program which is designed to promote resiliency in children by supporting caring relationships with adults in the school community.
- The accountability loop holds teachers, parents and students all responsible for student achievement. For example, parent-teacher-student conferences include all parties in the goal-setting process, and students and families are required to sign homework agreements.
- The use of data is embraced at all levels, the classroom, the school and the district. Teachers are trained extensively in the use of data to improve instruction and they are engaged in an ongoing learning process to continue to learn how to be more effective.
- The development of future leaders is taken seriously. The principal and teachers alike say that preparing teachers