

**CALIFORNIA “BEST PRACTICES” STUDY**

**SUMMER 2004**

**CASE STUDY:**

**ROOSEVELT 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)<sup>1</sup>. 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?

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](http://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.

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

## 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 75<sup>th</sup> percentile score in each area. A district with a score above the 75<sup>th</sup> 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 45<sup>th</sup> to 55<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.jftk-ca.org/bp-methodology) or  
[www.basrc.org](http://www.basrc.org).

One of our ten high performing case study sites was Roosevelt Elementary School in Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) located in Long Beach, California.

#### DATA ABOUT ROOSEVELT

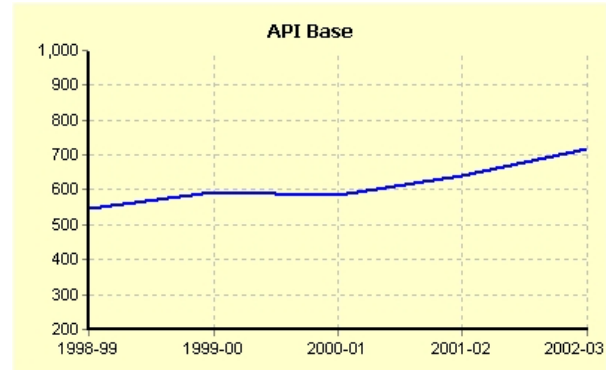
##### **School Profile**

Student Enrollment: 1,123<sup>2</sup>  
Free/Reduced School Lunch Percentage: 98%  
English Language Learner Percentage: 72%  
District Characterization: Large City

Roosevelt is a Schoolwide Title I School<sup>3</sup>. Despite the many and varied challenges that its students face, Roosevelt Elementary has shown impressive academic gains in recent years.

Roosevelt has shown significant gains in Academic Performance Index (API) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) over the last three years. The school's 2003 API reflects a 136-point improvement for this period, while the school's gains in AYP were the greatest in the elementary school portion of LBUSD.

#### **Roosevelt API Data 1998-2003**



Ed Data, Education Data Partnership [www.ed-data.k12.ca.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us)

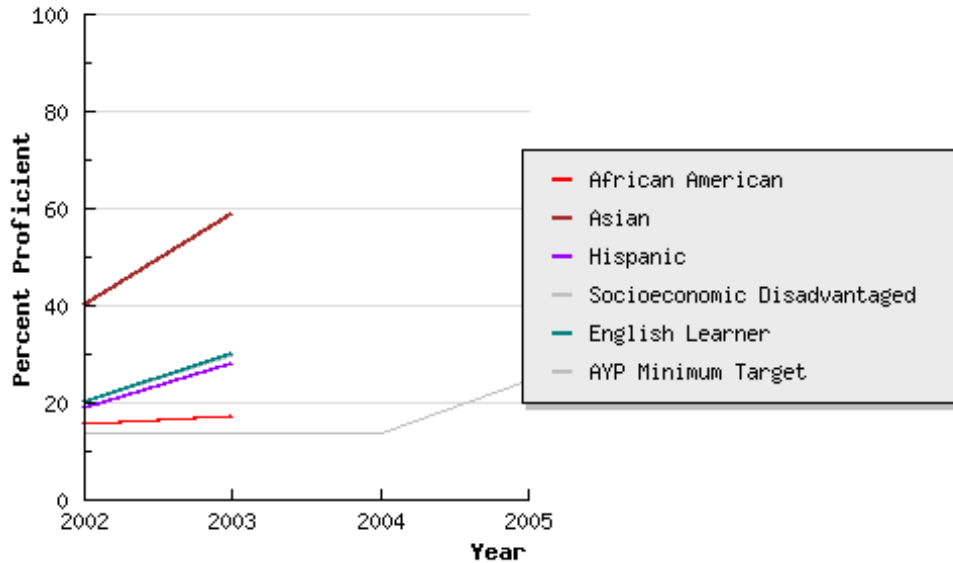
These gains were experienced overall; however, it should be noted that the lower achieving subgroups that also happen to be the majority of the students, primarily Hispanic/Latino and English Language Learners, are improving at a similar rate. They are especially making significant gains in Math. (Refer to the CST graphs on p.5.)

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise referenced, all quantitative data in this study is drawn from the California Department of Education website: [www.ed-data.k12.ca.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us)

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

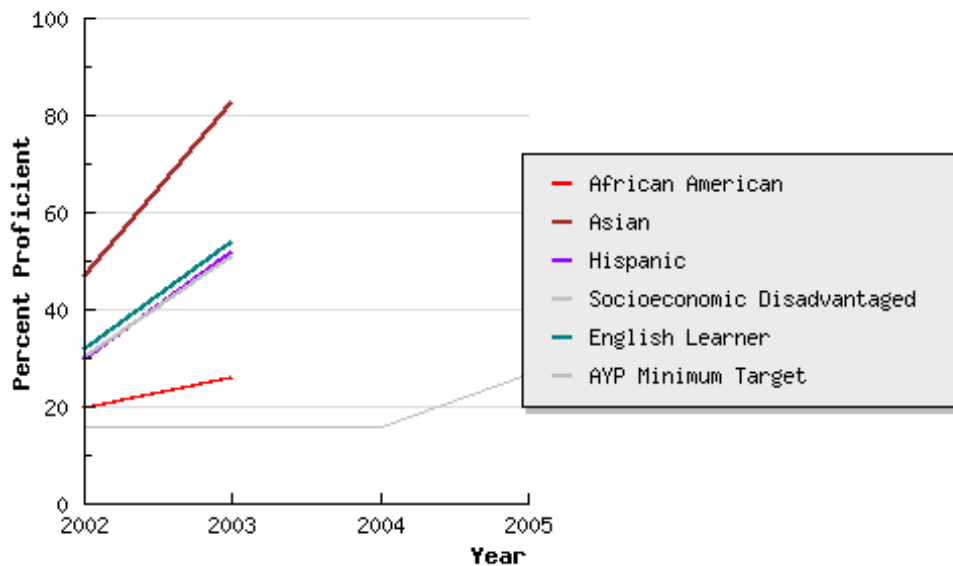
**These graphs track the rate of Roosevelt student improvement in Language Arts and Math disaggregated by subgroups.**

Language Arts 2002-2003 California Standard Test (CST) Performance Summary by Subgroup



[www.jftk-ca.org](http://www.jftk-ca.org)

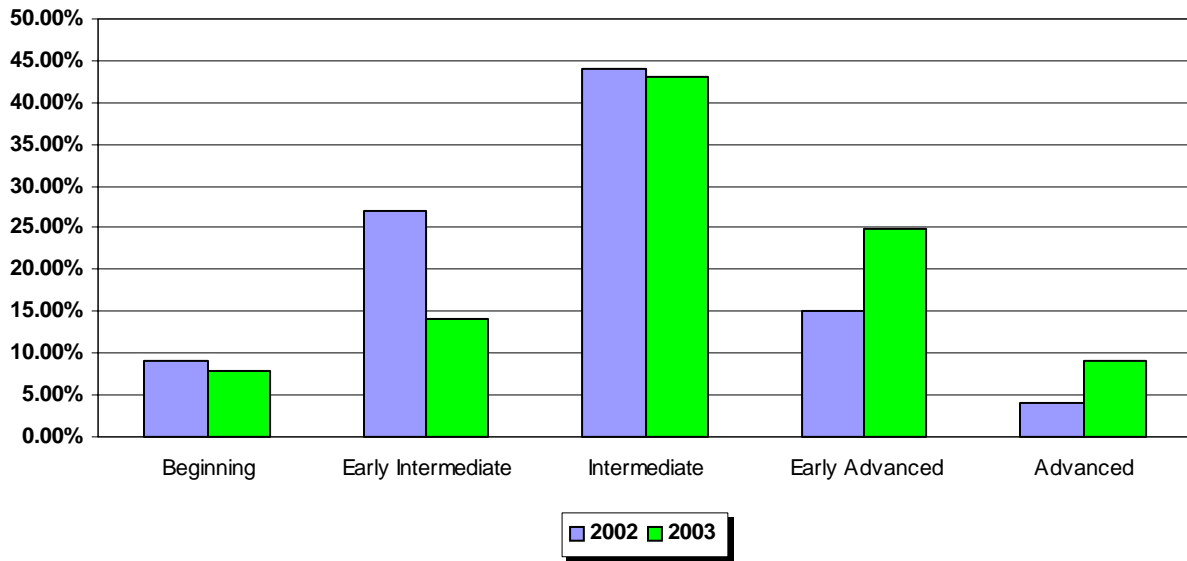
Math 2002-2003 California Standard Test (CST) Performance Summary by Subgroup



[www.jftk-ca.org](http://www.jftk-ca.org)

*2002-2003 CELDT Results for Roosevelt*

**California English Language Development Test Results**



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

English Language Learners at Roosevelt have also made significant improvements in a short time period. The percentage of students who have tested as Early Advanced and Advanced have significantly increased from 2002 to 2003 and students at the Beginning and Early Intermediate Level have significantly decreased.

**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 45 percent Hispanic/Latinos, 1 percent African Americans, 17 percent whites and 16 percent Asians. Sixty-five percent of all students in the

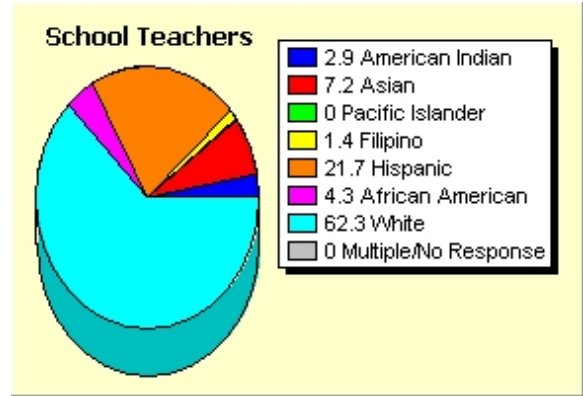
Sixty five percent of students in the district are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch; over 36 percent are English Language Learners; and 1.5 percent are summer migrant students. In light of its academic accomplishments, Long Beach Unified received the prestigious 2003 Broad Prize for Urban Education. Roosevelt is one of 60 elementary schools in the district

**SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS**

Roosevelt Elementary is a year-round school which serves a high poverty population and receives Title I funds. Unlike many Title I schools, Roosevelt is also in a crime-ridden neighborhood. “Lock down is an activity we practice at the beginning of the school year, so that if [violence] ever happens, we will be only minimally disturbed in our teaching and learning,” notes the principal.

Roosevelt represents a large immigrant population with diverse needs. Ninety eight percent of Roosevelt’s 1,123 students qualify for Free/Reduced-price School Lunch, twice the state average of 49 percent. Seventy two percent of students are English Language Learners compared to the state average of 26 percent.

The student population is 82 percent Hispanic/Latino, 10 percent African American, and 6 percent Asian. The majority of the teacher population, however, is white with 62 percent and Latino/Hispanic making up 22 percent. While this distribution does not reflect the student population, they do have more Latino/Hispanic teachers than the state average of 14 percent.

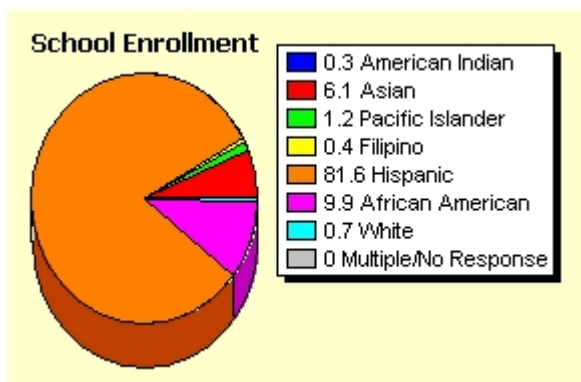


**SNAPSHOT**

Urgency is one word to describe the reform efforts undertaken by Roosevelt Elementary. In 1999, the State accountability system had ranked the school near the *bottom* of the 60 elementary schools in Long Beach. In the 2000-2001 school year, Roosevelt’s new principal initiated this reform effort. Her first order of business was analysis of where Roosevelt stood. “There was an urgent reason to turn the mirror on ourselves,” The principal made it abundantly clear to her staff that solutions had to be quick, creative, and most importantly, data-based. She also began with a focus on the physical plant and school climate. “In this kind of a neighborhood, it is essential to send a message to kids that the school is a different kind of place. It has to be safe, clean, and orderly.”

But clean and safe wasn’t enough. “My goal is to be a 10 out of 10 school” (referring to decile 10 and similar schools ranking of 10) the school leader stated. That focus became embodied in the school’s reform culture. Recalls the principal: “It was not test scores, but our students’ need to be proficient, that mandated action.” The school accelerated the process of improving instruction through:

- Frequent data collection and analysis



California Department of Education, Ed-Data [www.ed-dat.k12.ca.us](http://www.ed-dat.k12.ca.us)

- Targeted professional development
- Structures and support for teachers to work together in teams on learning and using more effective teaching practices
- Regular visits to classrooms by a principal who had been the district’s literacy specialist for years.
- A focus on the students as the ones primarily responsible for their own learning.

In the first two years, many teachers opted to leave. But these new practices become the hallmark of success for Roosevelt.

## FINDINGS

Roosevelt 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 Roosevelt and/or within LBUSD are the following:

### **District:**

1. The district adopts state standards.
2. District leaders set up structures and supports for developing leadership among district and school staff.
3. District provides research-based programs, practices and arrangements.
4. District provides a user-friendly district-wide set of assessments that includes formative and diagnostic, and progress-monitoring assessments, which together reflect the standards and the adopted curriculum.
5. The district pursues semi formal or formal school/district/university partnerships.

### **School:**

1. School leaders and teachers use district-adopted standards to inform planning lessons, evaluating teacher practice, and assessing students.
2. School leaders follow structures provided by district to recruit high quality staff.
3. School leaders set up structures for developing leadership among teachers and other staff at the school.
4. School leaders (and district staff) provide teachers and staff professional development opportunities that enable them to learn new teaching strategies, apply those new approaches and then collaboratively refine them to help more students meet standards.
5. Schools provide research-based programs, practices and arrangements linked to professional development and evaluation, and focused on areas of identified need.
6. School leaders and teachers implement standards-aligned curriculum and use pacing guides to help ensure that all students meet standards; School leaders also support teachers to differentiate instruction within this framework.
7. School leaders monitor teacher performance, both formally and informally, using district-adopted evaluation tools and classroom observation tools that reflect shared understandings about the school’s expectations for classroom practice.
8. School staffs use and supplement the district assessments to provide teachers with useful information on students progress.
9. School leaders provide a menu of intervention programs equipping

- teachers to adjust to meet student needs.
10. School staff and students display and recognize high quality student work in classroom, school and community in ways to carry the message that not some but all students will learn to reach benchmark.
  11. Cross-training of certain staff for leadership positions has enabled the school to function normally in case the principal is on an extended leave. The school is not reliant on the principal for its day to day workings.
7. Teachers monitor student performance, formally and/or informally at regular intervals.
  8. Teachers provide necessary support to students (often in collaboration with colleagues, school and district expert staff and parents) so they can continually track their students receiving intervention towards redesignation.
  9. The best-qualified professional offers the tested intervention for optimal quality support.

#### CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC GOALS

#### **Classroom:**

1. Teachers use and refine tools offered by school leaders and district to refine practice.
2. Teachers share tested strategies with colleagues, school and district leaders.
3. 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 that they sought out to improve student achievement.
4. Teachers participate in a learning community that encourages creative new ways to grow professionally; it is peer alike but also offers structured times for teachers to learn from and teach school and district staff.
5. Teachers use resources available to them to differentiate instructional practices in ways that accelerate the learning of underperforming students and groups of students.
6. Teachers build their lessons on research-based programs, practices and arrangements, and tailor them to identified need.

In Language Arts, as in all its fellow Long Beach elementary schools, the school has adopted the *Open Court* reading series. As a result of the adoption, neither standards nor the adoption of standards-based text are the school's worry. "The District worries about standards," says the principal. "We worry about pedagogy." Long Beach has for many years used a modified version of the Madeleine Hunter approach to lesson planning, which they call Essential Elements of Effective Instruction (EEEE). The key elements of EEEI are posted in every classroom, and the principal makes sure the key features of this approach are observed. "Having a common framework for instruction gives the teachers a common vocabulary and approach. This makes teacher collaboration time much more effective."

Although many in California argue for "faithful implementation" of a curriculum like *Open Court*, Roosevelt has emerged as a District leader by modeling both high-quality school-wide implementation of *Open Court* and also by supplementing it to better meet the needs of all their students. At Roosevelt, such modifications are collective, not individual, activities. "We've agreed as a

whole staff on the changes we need to make”, reports the principal, and the teachers agree. Specifically, Roosevelt teachers have come to appreciate *Open Court’s* very structured approach to teaching phonics and decoding. In fact, the staff at Roosevelt believes that their students need a similarly structured approach to teaching comprehension as well. They’ve adopted a strategy called “Thinking Maps<sup>4</sup>” – eight visual representations of thinking and they use these to teach comprehension strategies. Teachers report that these maps provide the students (especially ELL students) visual representations of thinking that help them learn. There is huge teacher buy-in to this work, and as a result, in every classroom, visitors will observe the use of the same set of visual organizers, tools that help all students use conceptual schema that help them compare and contrast two things, talk about cause and effect, or differentiate parts from the whole.

Teachers support the strategy. According to one 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, “Not only does it help us share more ideas and develop a common language for effective teaching, but also we see standards within these Maps.” In addition, the Thinking Maps help ELL students and others who may be more visually inclined. “For these children, the Thinking Maps also help offer useful differentiation,” notes the principal, as students can “show what they know” using only a map instead of writing answers which requires knowledge of spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary. The principle behind these adaptations is that the teachers should not let the text “dictate the terms of instruction,” as the principal puts it.

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<sup>4</sup> More on Thinking Maps under Instructional Programs, Practices and Arrangements

Following are the school goals.. These goals do not change from year to year.

- Every child reading on grade level as determined by the benchmark book.
- Every child writing to proficiency on the District rubrics
- Every child computing to proficiency as per the District- established goals
- Every child completing the end of course exam with 80 percent accuracy
- Every child attaining proficiency in English language skills as based on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT)

The clarity of the goals and strategies offers an intimacy. “Although we are large, we think of ourselves as small,” remarked the principal

#### STAFF SELECTION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

As do other school sites, Roosevelt profits from the powerful teacher recruitment pipeline built through the Long Beach Education Partnership between the District and California State University Long Beach, from which the District recruits 80 percent of its teaching corps. However, the principal of Roosevelt does not rely solely on the district but instead sees teacher recruitment as a personal challenge. Faced with huge teacher turnover (about 25% per year in her first two years at the school), this was a necessity. She makes a proactive effort to recruit promising young teachers to come to Roosevelt, and the school now has a reputation as a challenging but supportive environment for committed young teachers.

When looking for new teachers, the principal sorts for candidates who start with their own actions, not with the out-of-school conditions

impacting the child. “I don’t expect new teachers to have a profound knowledge about their teaching. I look for optimism and positive energy,” she explains. Once a teacher is on board, she will offer all that it takes to help them succeed. “As Michael Fullan pointed out, you need to apply pressure and support.”

In order to recruit effective teachers, the principal uses the 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?

To ensure support and the right modicum of pressure, teacher collaboration time is seen as key at Roosevelt as at other LBUSD schools. This feature along with the availability of cutting edge professional development offered by the district and school is recognized as a factor that contributes significantly to the development and retention of well-qualified teachers at Roosevelt. “I always feel we’re on the cutting edge of the latest method,” says one teacher. “We’ve got more staff development than any place,” volunteers another. “I feel challenged,” concludes a third. A distinctive Roosevelt contribution to strengthen collaboration is Thursday Teaming Time (TTT). TTT is perhaps the most important professional

development opportunity at the school. Every Thursday, teachers are provided with an opportunity to leave their classrooms for one hour so they can observe another teacher. “It’s amazing how much we can learn by observing other teachers,” reflects one 4th grade teacher.

Roosevelt teachers also benefit from district professional development. New teachers at LBUSD receive three years of mentoring, training and support (one year more than is required under the State-mandated BTSA program). That training focuses on the District’s core pedagogical structure, EEEI and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), which both emphasize effective math and literacy strategies.

Additionally, all teachers receive paid training for the implementation of *Open Court* as part of the Reading First grant. During the year, numerous training opportunities are provided based on student needs phrased as recommendations from the staff and the principal. Among the most notable are the available refresher courses on Essential Element of Effective Instruction (EEEI), effective comprehension strategies and training at Columbia University in the Writing Project<sup>5</sup>.

#### **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS, PRACTICES AND ARRANGEMENTS**

The textbook adoption process at LBUSD is designed to run across a 21-month timeline (from January of one year to September of the year following). During that time, an Adoption Committee comprised primarily of teachers, but open to parents and other

<sup>5</sup> Presented by the Teachers College at Columbia University, New York. The seminar explores methods for teaching students to be good writers.

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 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.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the percent of match to the standards is noted. As apparent from the structure outlined here, the district is always conscious of teacher buy-in. The principal is adamant that in any adopted text, the key is the strategy, not the particular story.

Assessment is considered to be essential to effective instruction. The school conducts assessments school-wide every six weeks. According to one 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, "such a high frequency of assessments is the best way to utilize *Open Court*." Teachers at Roosevelt then use this data to inform individualized adaptation of their teaching during Open Court "workshop time". Teachers' ability to differentiate instruction in this way is necessary for a school with such a high number of English Language Learners. It's critical that we learn to use Workshop Time right, notes the principal. "What we worry about is that, if not done right, workshop time can become a three-ring circus or just another generation of Centers. And the problem with Centers as we used to do them was that they didn't involve enough academic work or enhance and review literacy skills. *Open Court* Workshop Time can also fall apart if teachers lack the necessary training on how to teach students to work independently.. So we've invested in making sure that our

teachers have the skills they need to use *Open Court* workshop time well.

At Roosevelt, a designated set of weeks at the beginning of the year is dedicated to teaching students how to work independently and problem solve without the teacher during Workshop Time, "if you really want to differentiate, you cannot do it alone. You have to engage the student in taking initiative in identifying how he/she best learns," notes one teacher. In this spirit, Roosevelt students keep a record of their progress and performance on tests including Math Facts and *Open Court* data. "It is absolutely important to get the kids to talk about their performance and have them learn from their mistakes," comments a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher.

Thanks to the principal's deep content knowledge, she can help teachers identify what students know and what they are ready to learn next. "One important thing to realize is that you have to teach one objective at a time," she notes. "*Open Court* doesn't always help teachers break lessons down to that level. In the comprehensive section of *Open Court* there may be as many as two to three objectives per page of the text. But teachers have to teach one objective at a time. This is where I can help teachers use *Open Court* well. I do a lot of modeling with my teachers to show them how." "When the principal comes into my class during a walkthrough and steps forward and asks: 'Can I jump in?' I don't mind. Afterwards, she'll turn to me and say: 'I didn't like one part of what I did there [and this is why]' 'What did you learn from watching me do it?'" The focus of the questions is on students: "can a student decode? Can a reader decode but not understand particular vocabulary words? Can a reader decode and understand individual words, but not comprehend? "You need to

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<sup>6</sup> Open Court for Roosevelt

scaffold your teaching and the student’s learning depending on where they fall out in this process,” notes the principal.

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.

The district provides Walkthroughs guidelines. (See tool). The focus of Walkthroughs at Roosevelt includes the entire classroom environment as well. “What’s in the environment has to be about instruction,” notes the principal. The principal, who completed her doctoral work on the resources in the classroom, how they were arranged and their correlations with SAT9 test scores) has set policy that everything on the Roosevelt classroom walls has to serve as “text” or “teaching tool.” This means that it all has to be data for and by the students. And so, when one walks into a Roosevelt classroom, one is welcomed by walls rich with student work. But there are also resources for students that range from student-designed Rubrics to data charts where students keep track of their own progress towards proficiency in Math Facts, Reading Benchmarks, to the Thinking Maps®. If asked about the work on the wall, students will step forward to explain why the class put that item up there, what it teaches them, and what it might teach the visitor.

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

Roosevelt qualified as a Reading First school and, as such, has been able to adopt the six-week cycle of assessment required by Reading First schools. They use the six-week assessment to test progress towards the established goals. Assessments are shared publicly among all teachers. In the words of the principal, “Data is data, neither good nor bad; it just is. If you are going to collect it, you have to change; if you don’t want to change, then don’t collect the data.” (A corollary to this is: you have to collect data!) Once data becomes available, the wheels of goal setting are set into motion. All students at Roosevelt are expected to meet the state and district content standards. Use of data is extensive and widespread. As the principal explains, “Data drives our instruction.”

The staff collaborates at least once a week to analyze disaggregated data from state, district, and classroom assessments and to celebrate strengths and determine next steps. Each September, staff and parents spend many hours reviewing the disaggregated data from the California Standards Test, CAT6, and district assessments in reading, math, and writing. Subgroup analysis includes English Language Learners, gender, ethnicity and Special Ed. Students. Results of the STAR, CAT6, and CELDT are mailed to every parent. The school strongly encourages parents to discuss and clarify all test/data information with school personnel. Interpreters are present for all such meetings.

Additionally, teachers collect data each month in math concepts, basic math facts, decoding, reading comprehension and writing. They track this data via district online programs accessible from computers in their

classrooms. Teachers are especially conscious of the development skills of their English Language Learners and at-risk students. They work collaboratively in grade-level meetings three times a month to analyze data to determine necessary instructional changes. Their meetings are documented on a “Data Reflections” form that was created at the school. (See tool). Generally, upon the availability of the data, the following questions/policy implications are addressed:

- What does the evidence (data) tell us is/is not working?
- Who is/is not making gains?
- In what specific standards have students met/not met proficiency?
- Have we set the level of proficiency high enough?
- What research is available that would direct our instructional practices?
- What support/materials/training do we need?

Teacher evaluation at Roosevelt is usually referred to as “Supporting Your Teacher as Decision Maker”. There are two methods of teacher evaluation: Traditional and Alternative. Under the Traditional process, as per the Teacher Contract, teachers:

- Write their own goals based on goals of the school
- Conference with the administrator to discuss and finalize goals
- Agree on one date when the administrator comes to their classroom and scripts all they say and do
- Meet with the administrator to discuss what was seen. The administrator makes recommendations for improvement.
- Get a classroom visit (without warning) from the administrator 2-3 times a year

- Meet with the administrator at the end of the year to receive final evaluation. (See tool).

As noted above, for the Alternative process, teachers can opt to be videotaped. All teachers have opted for the Alternative process, for which they:

- Write their own goals based on school goals.
- Get videotaped by the principal or the vice principal on specified dates. They review the videotape directly after the lesson. The camera is directed at the students.
- Watch the video and listen to their teaching and at the same time observing closely how students are responding. This strategy keeps the focus on what students are learning, not just what the teacher is teaching.
- Meet with the principal or the vice principal to discuss the tape. They complete the instructional evaluation form together.
- Repeat the process throughout the year.
- Write the final evaluation in collaboration with the principal or the vice principal.

“And that kind of challenge is good,” notes one veteran teacher. “A strong leader is somebody pushing you. Even when you think they’ve gotten every ounce of blood out of you...you’re never bored here.”

#### RECOGNITION, INTERVENTION AND ADJUSTMENT

Student achievement in any aspect, academic or good behavior, is promptly recognized and rewarded at Roosevelt. The end of the year academic awards ceremony is the most noteworthy recognition of academic achievement. Students exhibiting outstanding academic performance and marked

improvement are rewarded during this assembly, which is also attended by parents. Citizenship awards, recognizing good behavior traits such as punctuality, on-time homework, etc., are acknowledged once a week. The goal is for most students, if not all, to be recognized in some capacity. Hence the school uses Blue Slips. These are given to students during recess times and are tied to Character Education. The Blue Slip rewards the following character traits:

- Caring
- Civic Virtue and Citizenship
- Justice and Fairness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Trustworthiness

Once they collect ten slips, a gift certificate is awarded. The principal delegates the responsibility for Blue Slips to the vice principal, so she can stay true to her commitment to focus all her energy on teaching and learning.

Intervening when students need help is also important. A student exhibiting consistent academic deficiency and/or displaying behavior problems is classified as at-risk. Intervention strategies begin with classroom teachers, but if these interventions don’t improve the academic performance or student behavior, then the teacher meets with peers during her/his grade level meeting to discuss possible other interventions. These are implemented in the classroom for several weeks. If the problem(s) persists, then the student is referred to the Student Study Team (SST). The members of the SST review student work, assessments, attendance records, behavior interventions and observations. They collaborate with the family (including the student, when appropriate) to formulate a school-wide

intervention plan. This may include working with a Title I specialist and/or assignment to a counseling group. The site maintains movable work-boards (6 foot bulletin boards that have not been mounted on a wall), with a card for each at-risk student to monitor the interventions/support services they receive and to provide a constant visual reminder of who is most in need of the school's safety net. The SST team reviews student progress every six weeks. Pertinent data is revisited. If a student has not made the expected growth/change, an in-depth plan is created, including testing for possible special education placement or referral to outside counseling such as family services. Another layer of support for at-risk students includes four on-site specialists: 2 English Language Arts, 1 Math, and 1 English Language Development. These are highly skilled teachers who work with small groups of the most at-risk students, identified from the work-boards, for 30-60 minutes per day. They use the core text to preview concepts to be taught in the classroom. These specialists collaborate with classroom teachers during the grade-level meetings.

Roosevelt also benefits from its year-round schedule which provides additional instruction time for at-risk students during off-track time (intersession). Identified students are required to attend intersession three of the four weeks during their vacation, for five hours per day. This serves as students' equivalent of summer school.

Interventions for struggling teachers are at least as important at Roosevelt as those for struggling students. There are on-site specialists such as mentors and coaches to support these teachers. BTSA coaches are "very important" according to one 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher. She adds "these coaches help a great

deal in getting the new teachers acclimated to a school with so many students from high-poverty households." Above all, collaboration is considered as the most effective tool in assisting struggling teachers. The school culture defines collaboration as more of a support system than an intrusion.

#### FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

The staff at Roosevelt believes that the first and best teachers of their students are the parents. There are certain responsibilities, however, that the school must fulfill to ensure that the parents can play that role effectively. In order to build a strong link between home and school, parents are invited to attend training in math, literacy development, ways to help their children with school and homework, parenting skills, and other topics of parent interest. A specialist paid by Title I coordinates these programs. Parent volunteers contribute hundreds of hours assisting in classrooms. Parents and Teachers for a Better Education (PTBA) serve as the liaison between home and school. The School Site Council (SSC), which consists of parents and staff, meets regularly to make decisions, provide input, and discuss the school's program and budgetary matters.

The school has established partnerships with neighborhood businesses such as Smart and Final, Von's Market, Verizon Wireless, and Tommy's Burger, which actively provide financial and incentive support to the school.

The relationship between the teachers and the principal is candid and trusting. The principal believes in a zero-tolerance attitude for ineffective teachers. During her first year at the school, she recommended to the Board of Education the release of two classroom

teachers who, according to her, were not proficient teachers. She delegates a great deal of responsibility to teachers, which exempts her from micro-managing. “Everyone in this school is absolutely clear about their roles and expectations. Such is the culture of our school that when I go on a vacation from school for a few weeks, I am hardly missed,” says the principal.

## CONCLUSION

It has become commonplace for school reformers to say that “change takes time.” But in 2001, Roosevelt Elementary School was just one point away on its state test scores from being put on the state’s Immediate Intervention/Under-performing Schools Program (II/USP) list. Three years later, its Academic Performance Index soared to 716, a dramatic 136-point improvement. In 2003, the school made the largest gain (in API) among elementary and middle schools in the district. The gains in Adequate Yearly Progress were equally impressive. Roosevelt made the greatest AYP gain of the sixty elementary schools in the LBUSD. The school became a California Distinguished School in 2004.

This turnaround reflects a combination of high expectations for students and teachers alike, and a consistent focus on collecting and using data to make adjustments. Data is collected frequently, in consistent fashion, and analyzed among teams of teachers who then draw on rich professional development and to define increasingly effective ways to respond to the information students’ share through their data. The emphasis on good instruction and on strategic and collaborative adjustments of the curriculum is notable at Roosevelt.

Accountability is also a theme at Roosevelt. There is no tolerance for mediocrity as far as instruction is concerned. Teachers receive tremendous support that comes in multiple forms: opportunities to collaborate; structured and ongoing professional development; and personalized coaching from both specialists and a very knowledgeable principal.

The principal sums up her mantra for achieving success at Roosevelt Elementary School: Explicit expectations; apply pressure; provide support; let the data do the talking.