

**National Center for
Educational
Accountability**

national sponsor of Just r the Kids

Just for the Kids – California

High School Study, 2004-05

Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies,
Los Angeles Unified School District

For more information: Contact Janet Spence, Director of Communications: National Center for Educational Accountability - 4030-2 W. Braker Lane; Austin, Texas 78759; phone: 800.762.4645 or 512.232.0770; fax: 512.232.0777; jspence@mail.utexas.edu or jspence@just4kids.org.

NCEA and Just for the Kids: NCEA is a collaboration of The University of Texas at Austin, Education Commission of the States and Just for the Kids. NCEA's mission is to *inform, inspire* and *improve* learning through the effective use of school and student data and the identification and replication of best practices found in high-performing districts, schools and classrooms. NCEA is the national sponsor of *Just for the Kids School Improvement Tools and Services* which present complex data in a way that is fair, actionable and available for all members of our public school communities. NCEA works in partnership with a growing number of *Just for the Kids* state affiliate partners, currently in more than twenty states.

Funding for this project: 2004-2005 NCEA state best practice studies have been made possible in part by a matching grant from The Broad Foundation, much acclaimed for their work in urban education as sponsors of the Broad Prize for Urban Education. Studies include elementary, middle and high school best practices in twenty states, and often involve teaming with state research partners to conduct site-based interviews and observations.

The National Center for Educational Accountability is a 501(c)3 nonprofit educational research organization (EIN 01-0577238). Sponsoring organizations include Just for the Kids, The University of Texas at Austin and the Education Commission of the States. The copied material is being shared for educational benefits.

DISCLAIMER: It is the view of NCEA that any materials collected as evidence of best practice during site investigations of high performing districts, schools and classrooms are being copied and shared under the Fair Use Statute of 17 USC Section 107 of the Federal Copyright Law. Upon receipt by NCEA of proper notification by any party with copyright authority of a work requesting that NCEA cease publication of that work, NCEA will comply swiftly and completely to any such request.

TRADEMARK NOTICES: **Just for the Kids** ® Is a registered mark of the National Center for Educational Accountability. This mark can and should be used only as expressly authorized by NCEA.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS: Copyright National Center for Educational Accountability 2005. All Rights Reserved. Any unauthorized use or reproduction of the materials contained in this report, without written consent from NCEA is strictly prohibited.

CALIFORNIA BEST PRACTICES STUDY

SUMMER 2005

SHERMAN OAKS CENTER FOR ENRICHED
STUDIES

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, LOCAL DISTRICT 1

*Presented by Springboard Schools under contract with
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND JUST FOR THE KIDS - CALIFORNIA*

California Best Practices Study

Springboard Schools is conducting the California Best Practices Study under contract with the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) and Just for the Kids-California (JFTK-CA). Spanning three years (2004-2006), this research initiative spotlights effective practices of elementary schools (Year 1), high schools (Year 2) and middle schools (Year 3) that show high levels of student achievement, with particular focus on high achievement among their English learners, ethnic minorities and students living in poverty. The study also includes a comparison group of “average performers.”

The following high school case study is the product of the second year of research during 2004-2005. High schools across the nation are in need of improvement, and this year more than ever is an important time for change. The California Department of Education put the spotlight on improving high schools with the State Superintendent’s High Performing High School Initiative. In addition, recent research points to the importance of compiling a richer portrait of “best practices” to guide practitioners’ work.

While most agree that high school reform is urgently needed, the path to reform is uncertain. School and district leaders are often frustrated by competing waves of reforms, and high schools in particular have found themselves pulled in contradictory directions.

The California Best Practices Study is responding by documenting in an accessible format the work of real schools getting better-than-expected results. The case studies are intended to provide rich descriptions that teachers, administrators, and those working alongside them can use.

The case studies identify strategies that may be useful in similar schools and districts across the state and the nation. Each case study includes promising strategies at the district, school, and classroom level as well as tools actually in use in high-performing school settings. Of course, schools are complex systems, and particular practices and strategies often depend on others, so readers are encouraged to think of these case studies as portraits of high-performing *systems* rather than as a list of disconnected “best practices.”

Two complementary questions have guided this study:

- *What school and district strategies appear to foster high performance?*
- *What is the context for these strategies and how do they work together to contribute to high performance?*

Following the NCEA framework, this study examines best practices in several key areas:

- 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

A California Best Practice Framework, which summarizes cross-cutting themes from high performing schools and districts, is posted under “Best Practices” on the Just for the Kids-California website at www.jftk-ca.org.

In addition to those identified in the NCEA Framework, this study focuses on the following areas:

- Support to English language learners
- Support to students of color
- Student preparedness for college and career

Selection Criteria

The selection process for schools in both the high and average performance categories provides important background for this case study. This section includes an outline of the selection criteria established by NCEA/JF'TK-CA used for this study. Anyone interested in more technical information about selection should visit the Springboard Schools website.

California high schools were identified as high performing through an analysis of their performance on the California Standards Test (CST) and the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)¹, a state exam that California public high school students, beginning with the class of 2006, must pass in order to graduate. Three years of performance data were used in the analysis of CST Language Arts performance and two years of data were used from Mathematics performance, while two years of data were available for the analysis of English and Mathematics Exit Exams.

The percentage of students scoring “proficient” or higher on the CST was used to calculate each school’s performance rank. Performance ranks, which had to be at the 50th percentile or higher, were calculated for each tested grade, subject and year. Overall performance rank, which had to be at the 66.6th percentile or higher, was calculated by aggregating individual performance ranks across one tested subject. Schools could be designated as high performing in a specific

subject or overall across all tested subjects. Each school selected also met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets in 2003 and 2004. AYP is the annual target for improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year, according to the federal [No Child Left Behind Act \(NCLB\)](#). As such, it is a measure of progress toward the goal of all students meeting state academic standards.

Three factors were used to compare a school’s performance relative to its demographically similar peers:

1. Free- and Reduced-Price Lunch Program (FRLP) enrollment percentages,
2. English language learner (ELL) enrollment percentages, and
3. Ethnic minority group enrollment percentages.

Selected schools had to meet or exceed the California average enrollment of either Hispanic/Latino students or African American students and meet or exceed the State average in both the percentage of students from low-income families and the percentage of students classified as English language learners.

In addition, high performing schools in this study had to meet one of the following criteria:

1. Achievement distribution among enrollment in “good courses” is above statewide median for all 4 courses in 2 of the last 3 years;
2. Percentage of graduates meeting A-G requirements, which is the set of 15 one-year college prep courses high school students must take to be eligible to enter either the California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) systems, is above

¹ More detailed explanations of California education terminology can be found at <http://www.edsource.org/glo.cfm>

- expectations when controlling for poverty in 2002 and 2003; or
3. Percentage of students reaching “proficient” or above on CA Standards Tests in math is above expectations when controlling for poverty in 2 of the last 3 years.

The selection process for “average performers” included the same measures, with lower expectations for performance. Overall performance rank for these schools was between the 40th and 55th percentiles, and Adequate Yearly Progress was not considered. For additional information on the selection process, please go to www.just4kids.org

Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies: A Case Study

State Characteristics

Student Enrollment:	6,298,413
Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage	49%
English Language Learner Percentage:	25%
Percentage of Parents who did not complete Completed High School:	21 ² %
Percentage of Parents Completed College and Above:	31%
Percentage of Teachers w/ Full Credentials:	89%
Average Number of Years Teaching:	13
Average Class Size	27

² California State has parental education data on 59% of the students enrolled in grades K-12. Twenty-one percent refers to the state average of parents who did not complete high school for students enrolled in grades K-12.

District Characteristics

Student Enrollment.....	747,009
Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage.....	77%
English Language Learner Percentage.....	44%
District Characterization.....	large city

As the nation's second largest district, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) serves over 747,000 students in grades K-12. The district covers 704 square miles and all or part of 29 cities, including the City of Los Angeles. LAUSD is composed of 693 schools. Of the 693 schools, 63 serve grades 9-12 and 7 serve grades K-12.

Seventy-seven percent of the students in the district are eligible for the Free- or Reduced-price Lunch Program, compared to the state average of 49 percent. Forty-four percent of the students in the district are identified as English Language Learners, compared to the state average of 25 percent.

There are just over 37,617 full time teachers at Los Angeles Unified, of which 75 percent are fully credentialed, compared to the state

average of 89 percent. Average class size in LA Unified is 27 students, which is the same as the state. The teacher-pupil ratio is 1:21, which is also the same as the state average.

District Enrollment 2004

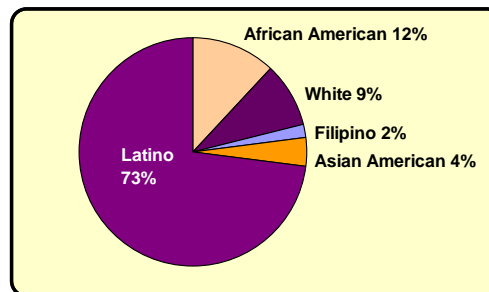


Fig. 1: LAUSD District Student Enrollment Percentages by Race/Ethnicity. ³

School Characteristics

Student Enrollment	1780
Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage...	41%
English Language Learner Percentage...	11%
Percentage of Parents who did not	

³ Unless otherwise referenced, all quantitative data in this study is drawn from the California Department of Education website: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us.

Complete High School	7%
Percentage of Parents Completed College/Above.	59%
Percentage of Teachers w/ Full Credentials	80%
Average Number of Years Teaching	14
Average Class Size	31

With 1,780 students, Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies (SOCES) is the largest magnet school in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The school, which currently serves students in grades 4-12, was created as part of the Voluntary Integration Program and serves, by court order, a student population that is 40 percent white and 60 percent students of other ethnic/racial backgrounds.

In addition to racial balance criteria, acceptance to SOCES is based on a point system that includes whether the student has a sibling attending the school, whether they are on a magnet waitlist for another school, whether their neighborhood school is overcrowded and whether their resident school is designated as predominately Hispanic, Asian, Black, or other or not. The student body is 40 percent white, 35 percent Latino, 12 percent Asian American, nine percent African American, three percent Filipino and one percent “other.”

School Enrollment 2004

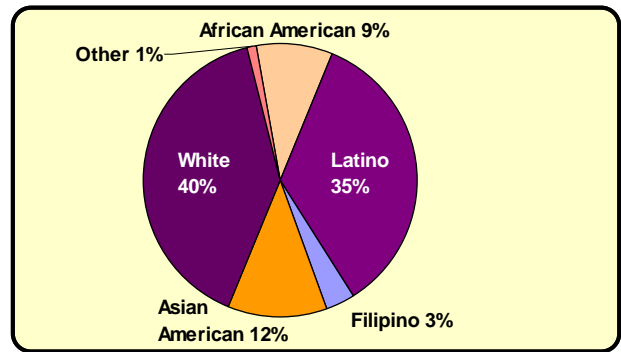


Fig. 2: Sherman Oaks Student Enrollment Percentages by Race/Ethnicity.

Eleven percent of the school’s students are English Language Learners, less than half the state average of 25 percent. Forty one percent of the school’s students participate in the Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Program, which is below both the district average of 51 percent and the state average of 49 percent.

The school’s teacher-student ratio is 1:27, compared to district and state averages of 21 students per teacher. The average class at SOCES has 31 students, a class size that is higher than the state average and just slightly higher than the district average of 27. Eighty percent of the school’s 70 teachers are fully credentialed, compared to the district average of 75 percent and state average of 89 percent.

Why SOCES?

The test scores from SOCES show evidence of strong achievement with significant gains over the last several years, particularly from 2002-03. Their record of success was recognized recently when the school received the California Distinguished School Award in 2005. To be selected schools must meet a variety of eligibility criteria, including designated federal and state accountability measures.

Furthermore, SOCES also made the Newsweek list of top 500 public high schools in 2000. Newsweek measures the number of Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate tests taken by all students at a school divided by the number of graduating seniors.

On the CST, all student subgroups far exceeded the percent proficient targets required for the school to meet Annual Yearly Progress, or AYP, targets. From 2002 to 2004, SOCES's Latino population has seen an increase of over 10 points in the percent of students scoring at proficient. From 2002 to 2003, the African American and Asian American populations also saw increases of over 10 percentage points on the Language Arts portion of the CST. The percent proficient has increased for nearly all students, but a gap remains between the lowest and highest performing subgroups.

CST Language Arts 2002-04

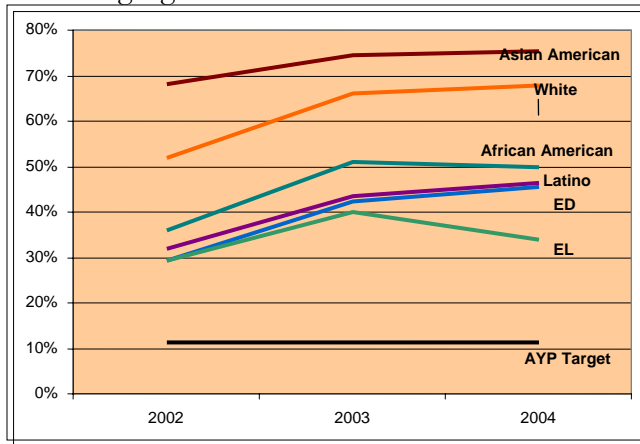


Fig. 4 2002-2004 Sherman Oaks Language Arts CST Proficiency by Subgroup. Data referenced is from <http://www.jftk-ca.org>.

CST Math 2002-04

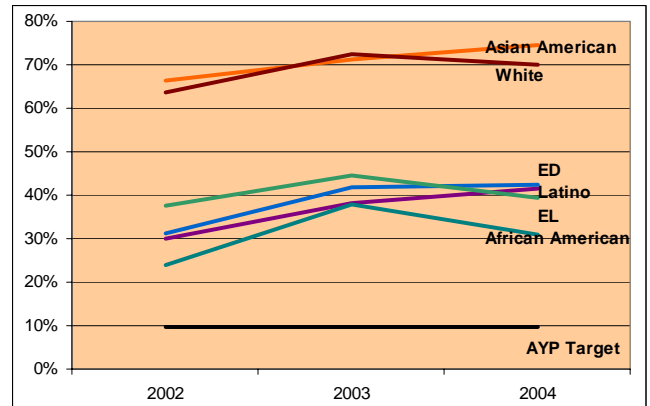


Fig. 5 2002-2004 Sherman Oaks Math CST Proficiency by Subgroup. Data referenced is from <http://www.jftk-ca.org>.

Ninety-seven percent of students pass the CAHSEE, compared to the state average of 75 percent. In addition, every subgroup at SOCES significantly outperforms the state and district scores. Of note are the significant gains made by all subgroups but particularly the EL and African American students on the math section of the CAHSEE from the 2002-03 to 2003-04 school year.

CAHSEE Language Arts 2002-03 & 2003-04

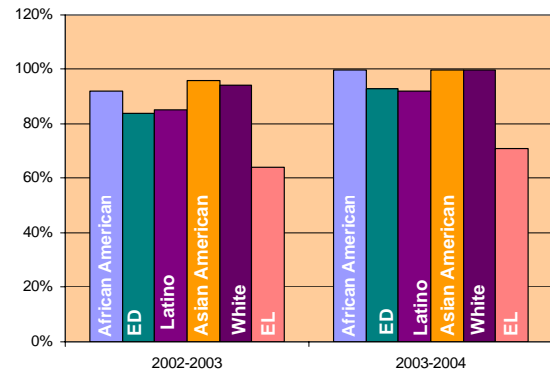


Fig. 6 Percentage of Sherman Oaks Students Passing CAHSEE, Language Arts.

CAHSEE Math 2002-03 & 2003-04

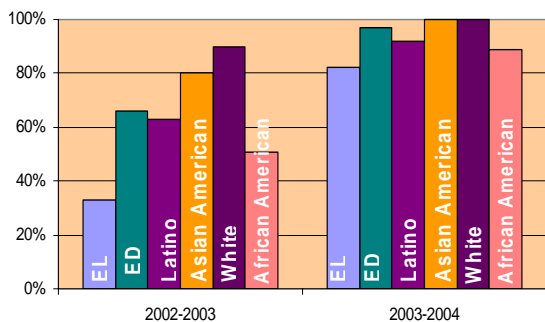


Fig. 7 Percentage of Sherman Oaks Students Passing CAHSEE, Math.

While students at SOCES are, by all accounts, performing above the state average, their performance is most impressive when the school is compared to peers with similar demographics. The two figures below show the school's performance relative to schools that share similar student demographics. For each grade and subject listed, the bar on the left shows SOCES performance and the bar on the right shows the average of the top 10 comparable schools in the state.

The school's proficiency rates in language arts and math exceed those of comparable schools. Particularly impressive are the achievements in Geometry. SOCES is over 4 times more likely to get students to proficient and above than their peers and 10 times less likely to have students at below basic. SOCES is similarly outperforming their peers in Algebra I and II.

Multi-Grade Language Math Comparisons 2004

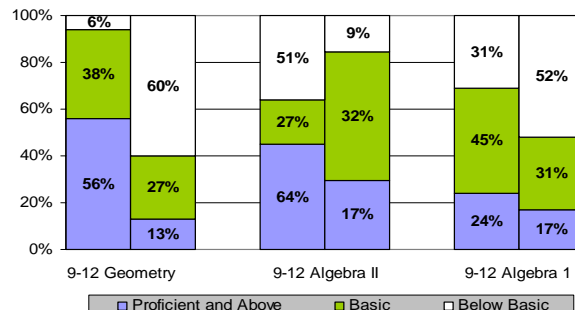


Fig. 8: Multi-Grade Results for Sherman Oaks and Top 10 Comparable Schools, 2004, Language Arts Data referenced is from on <http://www.jftk-ca.org>.

Multi-Grade Language Arts Comparisons 2004

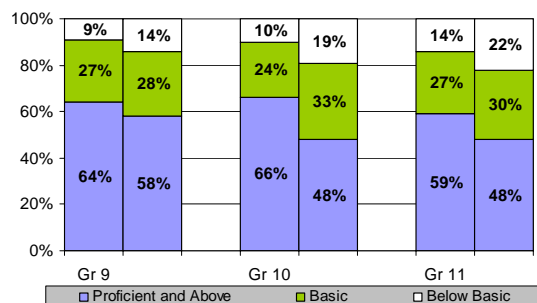


Fig. 9: Multi-Grade Results for Sherman Oaks and Top 10 Comparable Schools, 2004, Math Data referenced is from on <http://www.jftk-ca.org>.

Findings

SOCES 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. The following practices were found in this study to be particularly well developed at SOCES.

Teachers and administrators stress collective inquiry into student work to continuously strengthen teaching and ensure each student not only reaches or exceeds proficiency but also exhibits critical thinking skills, self-reliance, and good citizenship. To achieve those ends, SOCES has concentrated on all

faculty and leadership engaging in continuous, rigorous collective reflection. Moreover, school leaders support teachers to improve their practice, especially to better meet the needs of underperforming groups of students. School leaders play a critical role in organizing the structures that support teacher learning and set a culture and expectation of excellence that permeates from the teachers to the students.

Curriculum and Academic Goals

School community members at every level share both a common vision of success and a set of key strategies for closing the achievement gap and improving student achievement overall.

In contrast to an often-typical top-down relationship between district and school, the principal and superintendent at SOCES and LAUSD seem to enjoy a collaborative and mutually supportive relationship. The principal said, “Our Superintendent, Roy Romer, has already said that the strength and knowledge of how to make a great school is already within us.” Principal Weinberg indicates that the district provides support for new initiatives and ideas that are generated at the school level.

In setting curriculum and academic goals, collaboration extends beyond the school’s formal leadership, and the principal has actively recruited the support of other administrators, teachers and students. Interviewers found that both teachers and students talked about a pervasive “culture of excellence.” The school’s success was consistently attributed to this culture of high standards. This common vision is more than a catchy motto – it drives a set of instructional practices that rely on high expectations. When asked why the school is doing so well, one teacher explained, “One of the things is the culture: all kids can learn and it’s not just a

trite thing; it’s not just a mantra, it’s in our blood; regardless of color, gender; all kids can learn and learn at high levels.”

An example of how these high expectations are manifested in the culture of the school is that the principal has placed signs around the school that have a graphic of a target board with the AYP number they are aiming for along with the school mission:

SHERMAN OAKS CENTER FOR ENRICHED STUDIES believes that:

- All students want to learn.*
- All students can learn.*
- All students can achieve.*
- All students will learn if encouraged and supported.*
- All students want to better themselves.*

Teachers share curriculum and collaborate regularly; achieving improvement goals is seen as a collective, cooperative activity, and time and resources are allocated to support it.

Another explanation for why this culture of excellence has taken such strong root is that many current teachers have attended or have children that attend SOCES. It is also common that many of the students stay from 4-12th grade, creating a familial environment. As a result, there is a high level of commitment to the goals and ideals of the school. One teacher said, “I put in extra hours after school—whatever it takes. It is a lot of work. The same kids I have in 11th grade, I had in 8th.” Because of this, there is a high level of commitment and personalization.

As a result, teachers regularly share curriculum and collaborate. There is a level of familiarity and informality that makes collaboration time seem like a natural part of the teaching process and not a directive. It is common for teachers to meet during lunch and schedule

time to discuss students or curriculum. More formally structured time is also a norm, with department and staff meetings centered on improvement goals, supplemental curriculum and teaching standards.

The setting of goals extends beyond teachers, students and the administration. SOCES also tries to involve the parents in the process and help them become active in their student's education. This reinforces the culture of collaboration and flow of information. The school has an Education Planning sheet that is given to the students, and they have to return it with their signature as well as that of their parents. A section of this contract includes what is expected from the parents as well as what is expected from the student. This helps in creating a learning community that extends beyond the school and includes all stakeholders.

Staff selection, Leadership and Capacity-Building

District staff provides access to internal and external resources and supports for sites to make data-based adjustments to their programs and practices.

The district mandates professional development, and the school administration sees this as a necessity and takes advantage of the opportunity to use professional development to the fullest extent and tailor it to fit the school.

Another contribution by the district was to provide the school with a testing coordinator. Many school administrators and teachers mentioned this as a successful strategy. According to one department chair, "We had the best testing coordinator you could ever happen to have. Part of our ability to assess and comprehend data is because of the testing coordinator."

Another district contribution is to require that every new administrator, assistant principal or principal enroll in an Administrative Academy, a two-year program that covers everything from budget to special education. Each participant is also required every year to get at least 12 hours of additional training, which can be satisfied through the professional development available at the school.

School leaders provide access to both internal and external resources to support teachers at their site. Professional development is aligned with district supports and goals, but flexible enough to meet site-specific teacher needs.

The support that teachers feel at SOCES comes across in nearly every interview. This might explain the very little staff turnover at SOCES. This has not always been the case, however. When the principal first started five years ago, he lost 50 percent of the staff after the first year. He then, in his words, replaced them with "young, energetic sponges." This has led to a staff with a strong, common vision and commitment that was guided from the start by the principal. As one teacher said, "There are only three reasons people leave here: they retire, they get promoted or they die."

Many teachers also mentioned the fact that there have only been three principals since the founding of the school in 1978 and identified this as another key to the school's success. This consistency has created a culture in which the principal and school leaders look to develop leadership from within the existing ranks of teachers. The principal strongly supports teachers to take on increasing responsibility and a wide variety of roles. The result is that even when teachers gain additional training the result is a further commitment to the school.

The principal further supports teachers by being a strong proponent of both internal and

external professional development. Examples of internal professional development include observations and visitations from instructional experts, common planning time for departments, forums for sharing information gathered from conferences and workshops and curriculum development.

School leadership believes teachers should have time scheduled for informal collaboration and to share strategies, sample lessons, and other resources with colleagues. As mentioned earlier, teachers will often do this informally at lunch or in staff meetings—there is a culture of sharing across departments and grades. As one teacher said, there is “a lot of cross-department sharing; it is a belief that good techniques can apply to any grade.”

Formal professional development includes off site visitations, attendance at conferences, workshops, institutes and visiting consultants. To avoid a low-impact smorgasbord approach, the principal often organizes professional development around particular themes including curriculum, technology, and alternative assessment. An effort is made to link all of this to student needs.

Teachers also meet regularly with colleagues to learn how to improve teaching and learning.

Teachers are aware of the access they have to professional development and seem quick to take advantage of the variety of opportunities. One of the department chairs mentioned the Learn program as a particularly effective example of professional development that led to a restructuring of the relationship between teachers and administrators. “They sent us to Palm Springs for three weeks, and we trained on collaboration and best practices. We learned to collaborate. There was always a wall between teachers and administrators—we needed to collaborate instead of having an adversarial relationship.”

A manifestation of school leader support is that teachers inform instruction and are able to leverage the resources from the school. There are math meetings once a month with the chairperson of the math department and the two co-chairs. At these math meetings, they share sample CST problems as practice for the test. Teachers are thus able to look at school specific issues and make adjustments accordingly.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

District leaders provide curriculum guides to ensure all students in classrooms and schools have access to the same material.

LAUSD also provides instructional support services and guides. They include sample lessons and planning guides, sample assessment items and blueprints, model mathematics classroom goals and effective practices descriptors. Additionally, when instructional guides are provided, coupled with training in the beginning of the year, the district will give further guidance and give out power standards and key standards. Power standards refer to the standards that are considered pivotal, whereas key standards are derived from the CST and questions from the CAHSEE.

It is understood that textbooks may not always address a standard, and supporting materials are necessary. The district is a strong proponent of teaching “out of the box.” For example, teachers are encouraged to provide materials and strategies that enrich the regular math curriculum. Although, there is strong support for standards alignment through regular in-district principals meetings and in-district subject matter meetings. In those meetings, leaders focus on building and helping implement standards-aligned curricula across the disciplines.

The school offers a variety of support systems and interventions that aim to provide differentiated instruction for accelerated and below benchmark learners. Teachers are expected to provide these in-classroom supports to ensure that all students can access curriculum in AP and A-G courses without watering down course content.

There are several unique instructional arrangements to SOCES that many of the teachers and administrators discussed as critical in explaining the success of the school. SOCES uses a block schedule. Several teachers found that there was less wasted time with the advent of the block schedule. With a 50-minute or 1 hour period, 5-10 minutes would be lost to start up; the block period allows for more in-depth instruction time.

Because SOCES is what they call a “span school,” meaning that it covers grades 4-12, there are many opportunities for preparation from middle to high school. Teachers are always directing lessons toward the expectations of the high school level. One department chair said there is an “automatic articulation between 5-6 grades—this gives the kids a sense of calm. It is one of the reasons that seventy percent of kids stay at SOCES.”

Another instructional arrangement that has been widely successful in offering support in preparing average-performing students for college eligibility is the AVID program. In all the student interviews, AVID was mentioned as a key tool in helping students achieve at a high level. Students also reported that they were offered the intensive support they needed to achieve in the rigorous courses offered at SOCES. The school has been able to move underachieving students into accelerated classes without compromising the course content.

AVID

(Advancement via Individual Determination)

AVID as a program works to build academic and study skills in order to facilitate student achievement and expose students to challenging course material. The program targets “average” students, with GPA’s over 2.0 (slightly higher at some schools), for a rigorous college prep curriculum. In order for students to enter AVID, schools invite qualified students to apply. The application to AVID varies by school, all serving the purpose of screening for students who will take the program and challenging coursework of honors and AP courses seriously. Students take an AVID course as an elective, in which they are taught study skills such as Cornell notes and critical reading, and organizational skills to help them succeed in the challenging courses.

The collaborative approach taken by AVID is particularly well suited to the culture of the school. Students at SOCES volunteer to be tutors for their fellow students and they discussed, in interviews, how this challenged them and helped them learn from one another.

There is a heavily collaborative process at the school level in choosing curriculum and deciding on instructional arrangements; this ensures that teachers are addressing the particular needs of their students. Teachers often have cross curriculum meetings: English teachers will meet with history teachers, music teachers with art teachers, with the goal of ensuring that the curriculum feels integrated to students. As a result, all subjects share a common framework and structure, yet within that, teachers are able to differentiate instruction and select the most effective instructional approach for their students and their subject matter.

In deciding course materials at SOCES, the district offers possible selections, and then a school committee makes final decisions based on the sample copies. To conduct that selection, participants agree on a body of indicators. In reaching that consensus, they draw from a range of studies, particularly

those conducted by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning, such as the QUASAR project, focused on how teachers learn new strategies for math instruction focused on the teachers' and students' cognitive learning processes and effort based learning. The selection rationale is described as follows by one of the math teachers, "What was the best format for the kids? Most were too heavy on pictures; the book chosen for Algebra II was considered quite rigorous. But that is what we teach here." One can see the integration between school goals and curriculum.

SOCES teachers also emphasize critical thinking as part of a cross curriculum, cross grade instructional practice. This school uses the Lauren Resnick model of higher-level thinking, Cornell note taking, and innovative lesson planning with the block schedule to meet this objective.

The Lauren Resnick model of higher-level thinking involves complexity, uncertainty and non-algorithmic solutions. One EL teacher described the application of the theory as follows: "When a kid answers a question—we leave it open ended so the kids can go their own way. Do not just give them a piece of paper and say 'answer it.' This process remains throughout high school."

Cornell note taking starts in the fourth grade and continues throughout high school. It originated from the AVID program, then was presented in a staff meeting and adopted by the school. One teacher said that it teaches students self-reliance, "tells the students to look in their notes—not be reliant on the teacher." In this way, students are analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating the lesson taught and not waiting for the distillation.

At SOCES the teacher is given time to collaborate formally and informally through regular staff meetings, cross department meetings and department meetings, but they

are also given the opportunity to innovate within the common pacing or curriculum guides and assessments. Within the standards, there is still the possibility to have individuality in teaching. Some have pointed to block scheduling as the catalyst for comprehensive, innovative, yet standards-based instruction. One department chair said, "We emphasize critical thinking—we have time to do it. Block schedule allows you to do that. I have done a lot of kinetic type of things. I had a map painted on the floor—we use it a lot for special events. There is a cartoonist that comes out from the daily news. During the last mayor's election, we had candidates come, and the candidates spoke to the kids, and we voted. One of my responsibilities is to make sure our kids are good citizens."

As the principal indicated, teaching standards does not necessarily mean having no personal expression. "Young teachers brought core knowledge but they understood it had to be about addressing standards, looking at blueprints; at the department meetings they fight like crazy over these standards."

The heavy emphasis on lessons and assignments that employ critical thinking makes it possible to have students that are self-monitoring and independent. As one advanced placement teacher said, "[it] gets to the point where students can assess their own work—'do more for the 4,' and so encouraging students to work towards a four in the AP exam. Once the kids have reference points for whatever grade they are shooting for then having a rubric is often not necessary." The instructional arrangement of SOCES is in many ways tied to the school's goals of creating independent, critical thinkers and civically minded students without precluding addressing standards.

Monitoring: Gathering, Analysis and Use of Data

School leadership use and supplement the district-wide assessment system to provide teachers with useful information about student progress relative to standards.

SOCES has a testing coordinator that has helped them comprehend and assess data. Test scores are disaggregated which allows departments to see student strengths and weaknesses. Departments can then devise alternative methods of instruction for areas that have been identified as needing improvement. For example, data from Geometry showed student difficulty with area and volume. So the following year, students were asked to build their own polyhedrons to gain a deeper understanding of the concept rather than the formula. According to a math teacher, “You can look at grade level and demographics and then look ahead at what needs to be done. It (this process of reflection) makes sure you cover areas that were skated over in the prior year.”

Though many high schools no longer use the Program Quality Review Process, SOCES uses an enhanced version of the process that comes to them from the Achievement Council. This process supports the use of best practices by fostering teacher inquiry teams and peer observations. The objectives of the Enhanced Program Quality Review are to familiarize everyone with how to observe for standards-based instruction, establish baseline data for clear expectation indicators, and provide an opportunity to discuss data findings.

Teachers supplement the state, district and school assessments with their own assessments that help them to ensure frequent review of their students' performance. Teachers also send out mid-semester progress

reports to parents to ensure that parents have a role in monitoring student performance. Teachers train students to assess their own work through rubrics. The students then know what they need to do to earn a high grade. The students have reference points for their target grade and can self-monitor. Any failing students are coached by a staff member who provides support for the student to succeed on the test.

Recognition, Intervention and Adjustment

The district has formal and informal systems in place to recognize school, teacher and student progress toward individual goals as well as toward district goals.

The district takes an interest in recognizing the achievements that SOCES has made and has taken particular note of increases in scores on the state accountability measures. As noted before, the district is proud of the successes of the school and views the relationship as an opportunity to learn and recognize the distinctive record of accomplishment.

School leaders have systems in place to recognize staff and students' progress toward individual learning goals as well as toward school and district goals.

Many teachers at SOCES point to a system of informal intervention and adjustment. For instance, with struggling teachers the layout of the campus and the low rate of teacher turnover make for a nurturing environment. As a matter of course, more tenured teachers, by one veteran's report, take the new teachers out to lunch to trouble shoot and support or share a lesson plans. The higher and lower grades, as well as subject areas are scattered around the campus. This results in a high degree of interaction with students and teachers outside of their direct influence. According to one teacher, “We hired a new teacher here and I always asked if she needed

anything. That's a very common feature. The support system is here. I won't go up to someone and say are you the math teacher? I already know them." There is an indication that there is frequent communication and a sense of familiarity with neighboring teachers, whether or not they share departments or even grade levels.

The principal started a more formal process for recognizing and intervening with struggling teachers. "Teacher learning walks" are designed for teachers who have students not meeting standards to go observe other teachers and determine what changes should be implemented in their own classrooms. After the learning walk, the principal sets up a "clinical observation" where the principal will meet, prior to the observation, with the struggling teacher and formulate a plan regarding the classroom observation. A collaborative meeting is held afterwards to discuss notes, areas for improvement and successful strategies. However, this is not meant only to be a punitive process but also examine and observe effective teaching skills. It also helps to make private teaching public, as one teacher said, "If I'm going to be doing this brand new lesson, you can come in and watch it; and we can talk about it; and if they are having problem they know we are there."

Both formal and informal structures are in place to recognize teachers' progress toward meeting the learning goals of their students and make sure that they have the guidance and support needed to make improvements where necessary.

With regard to recognizing student achievements and goals, there are several programs. Recognition programs for students include the "Gold Card" where students who are doing satisfactorily or exceptionally in work habits and cooperation along with their grade (have a C average and nothing below a D) receive a reward, usually in the form of a movie or a special lunch. The Gold Card is used to recognize more than academic

abilities. In the words of one teacher, "Although a student may not be 'gifted,' he/she has the ability to be blessed with gifts such as sincerity, honesty, altruism and patriotism."

SOCES also has a "star" system—when a student decides on their college and is accepted, they make and decorate their own star with their name and college. The star is then hung on the wall outside the college office. It is a form of recognition but also serves as a model for younger students. Both of these programs offer important ways of noticing not just individual academic school achievements but also a student's own future and personal goals.

Teachers share and integrate intervention strategies into instruction in order to provide support to all students. As noted earlier, teachers at SOCES are proponents of collaboration and sharing of instructional strategies and curriculum goals. Interventions with struggling students are no exception.

SOCES has a peer mediation program called the Heart Program. Teachers ask student volunteers to lead this program. One teacher refers to them the "unsung heroes" of the school because they are not the students that would typically become involved in this activity. They tend to be the quiet, more introverted students. This is an effort by teachers to get the whole school community involved instead of isolating struggling students.

Academic and personal student intervention also includes an "Adopt a Student" program where faculty and staff establish a relationship with a student that is struggling either academically or socially. Again, this reinforces the familial environment that is an overarching feature of the school.

Conclusion

In closing, SOCES is a case of a site where the leadership structure is constructed around teams which creates a strong sense of community. In this distributive reciprocal leadership model, staff members have many opportunities to lead. Leadership teams are structured around department/subject area, and focus area teams. The principal invites staff to take on leadership roles and supports them in those roles by organizing and offering staff leadership development opportunities

focused on data, standards, articulation and personalization.

Planned professional development activities begin with collaborative, school-wide analysis of student achievement data. Teams discuss strengths and weaknesses of their collective delivery of the curricula.

Teachers are encouraged to use each other as resources. Collaboration time is designed as a learning environment for teachers to engage in reflection on their teaching practice.