

Excerpt from

**LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE**

*Every Student, Every Day:
Responding to the Needs of All Learners*

Spring 2004

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Section II. Every Child, Every Day: A Description of High School Reform in Long Beach

High School Reform Goals and Indicators

The work of reforming secondary schools has crystallized into the following four goals and indicators which are guiding the high school initiative. Each goal is accompanied by a more specific set of indicators that will be used to measure the progress of the high school initiative.

Goal 1: Increase achievement of all students in the academic content areas.

Indicators of Success:

- Meet or exceed NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – Annual Measurable Objectives growth targets
- Meet or exceed Academic Performance Index (API) growth targets
- Increase the number of students passing California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) on the first attempt in 10th grade
- Increase number of students scoring proficient on district End of Course (EOC) exams.
- Improve high school graduation rates.
- Increase the number of students meeting the University of California/California State University A-G requirements
- Increase the number of students enrolled in higher level courses (i.e. accelerated, honors, and AP courses)

Goal 2: Close the achievement gap by accelerating the learning of the lowest performing students (more specifically low SES, African-American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, English Language Learner and Special Education students).

Indicators of Success:

- Meet or exceed NCLB AYP growth targets with specific subgroups
- Meet or exceed California API growth targets with specific subgroups
- Increase the number of low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students passing CAHSEE in grade 10
- Reduce the number of students requiring reading intervention courses (i.e. reading two or more years below grade levels)
- Reduce the numbers of 10th-12th grade students needing math intervention courses (i.e. courses prior to Algebra 1)
- Increase the numbers of low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students completing three years of mathematics to include algebra, geometry and either intermediate algebra (algebra 2) or statistics

- Increase the high school graduation rates of 9th grade transitional students (T-9)
- Increase the numbers of low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students enrolled in the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) elective courses
- Increase the numbers of low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students scoring proficient on End of Course exams
- Increase the high school graduation rates for low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students
- Increase the numbers of low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students who meet A-G requirements
- Increase the numbers of historically under-served students enrolled in “higher level courses” (i.e. accelerated, honors, and AP courses)
- Increase the numbers of low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students who take college entrance tests such as PSAT, SAT, ACT, and ELM and EPT assessments and scoring at national or local averages
- Reduce the numbers of low SES, African-American, Hispanic, English Language Learner and Special Education students who score Far Below Basic and Below Basic on California Standards Tests

Goal 3: Create a culture and climate among students and staff that supports improved achievement.

Indicators of Success:

- Increase regular collaboration time for teachers in their Professional Learning Communities¹ to discuss lessons, student work, assessment results, and plans for instructional improvement
- Increase the number of students belonging to small learning communities or have regular contact with at least one adult on campus
- Increase student-reported levels of security, feelings of respect for other students and faculty, and increased academic aspirations on Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) surveys
- Improve student attendance (both entire day and period attendance)
- Decrease the amount of referrals and suspensions
- Eliminate racial violence on campus
- Implement comprehensive, ongoing programs to assist students in understanding how to treat one another with civility

¹ Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Hold a shared purpose about the focus of their work; engage in collaborative activity around their work; take collective responsibility for their work and the results that emerge (Newman & Wehlage (1995)) and focus on continuous improvement and measurable results (Dufour & Eaker).

- Provide increase student/counselor contact
- Ensure counselor-created four-year learning plans for all students
- Increase tutorial attendance of below grade level students
- Reduced drop-out rates
- Improve grade cohort retention (i.e. reduced number of credit-deficit students)
- Increase high school graduation rates
- Increase parental participation in school outreach programs
- Increase parental satisfaction as measured by WASC and/or Baldrige Continuous Improvement surveys

Goal 4: Build high school capacity to design, implement and sustain reform and improvement efforts.

Indicators of Success:

- Increase and embed structures for continued professional learning for principals to improve and sustain reform – principal institutes, time for PLC work, walk-throughs, site-based leadership team retreats, administrative team meetings, PLC institutes
- Empower teacher leaders – department heads, Small Learning Communities lead teachers, PLCs, coaches – to examine critical instructional issues as evidenced by student data to meet the needs of all students
- Increase the use of walk-throughs to implement standards-based instruction
- Strengthen the focus on examining student work for instructional planning and improving
- Ensure that assistant principals assume more instructional leadership as evidenced by their participation in program planning, teacher evaluation, technical assistance to the school level PLCs, and key results walk-throughs
- Increase the consistency of practices and policies across all high schools
- Increase central office and curriculum leader support for high schools
- Implement continuous improvement models at school sites and across high schools and district

Reform Strategies: 2002-Present

LBUSD uses the following five strategies in the development of high school reform efforts. These strategies are refined and adjusted as needed and provide the basis for the next phase of the initiative.

Strategy 1: High School Principal Leadership Development

Beginning in June 2002, high schools began the work of creating on-going structures for developing and improving the professional learning of principals. Focus Groups, professional learning communities, semiannual Principal Institutes and high school walk-throughs all provide forums for principals to deepen their understanding and ability

to use student achievement data to drive reform efforts while building principal leadership capacity.

Principal focus groups guide leadership activities. Two professional learning groups, also called Focus Groups, meet monthly. Focus Groups analyze research on best practices to: (1) Develop site specific professional development action plans to guide faculty instructional improvement based on the district-wide goals for high schools and student achievement data, and (2) identify a system of data collection that provides indicators of growth that measure the work of our high school reform efforts focused on raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps. In 2003-04, groups are participating in three intensive Panasonic Foundation Leadership Institutes to deepen their knowledge of national school reforms and build collegiality and consistency across schools.

Policy and practice: Literacy and Numeracy committees. The Focus Groups recommended the establishment of *two ad hoc policy committees* to address curricular issues. Principals, district curriculum leaders, school departments heads and teacher coaches created a Literacy committee to deepen understanding of literacy strategies that support student achievement and to align district-wide policies and practices. Similarly, principals and the district math curriculum leader established a Numeracy committee to close the achievement gap of students in high school math, particularly Algebra 1. These committees are charged with guiding and shaping district policy and practices of these two focal areas of instruction and curriculum.

Key results walk-throughs. The purpose of the key results walk-throughs is to strengthen the dialogue among district support staff, school leaders, and teachers about ways to improve student achievement, including the school's efforts and progress over time and the central office's support to the schools. These walk-throughs are conducted for a half-day at each of the six comprehensive high schools three times a year. The walk-through teams include the assistant superintendent for high schools, curriculum leaders, the school's administrative staff, department heads, teacher coaches and teachers.

- An essential component of the walk-through process involves developing systems for communicating feedback from walk-through teams to campus faculties. With this information, sites make decisions about how to use feedback to shape departmental or whole faculty professional development.

Principals' meetings and walk-throughs address annual priority theme. The assistant superintendent of high schools leads monthly principal meetings to consider and address reform and operational issues. Professional development for principals is also a regular feature of the principal meetings and there is an annual theme for professional development activities. For example, in 2002-03, every three months the assistant superintendent of high schools, all principals, curriculum leaders, central office staff and the schools' assistant principals participated in walk-throughs that focused on

specific *literacy strategies* introduced by curriculum leaders across content areas. In 2003-04, distributed leadership and capacity building through the use of Professional Learning Communities are the professional development foci and in 2004-05 the focus will be on differentiated instruction (See Strategy 3 below). These walk-throughs deepen the understanding of participants and ways to monitor and support teachers in their use.

Strategy 2: School Level Professional Learning Communities --Development of Distributed Leadership

In spring 2003, a team of high school principals attended a national leadership institute around the topic of creating the will and the structures to change high schools. At this session principals had the opportunity to listen and learn from Dr. Andy Hargreaves about the structure and purpose of professional learning communities (PLCs) as a reform strategy. As a result, principals decided to embark on learning more about how PLCs contribute to improving student achievement. In May 2003, the principals planned the first of four leadership institutes for their 15-18 person leadership teams. In fall 2003, and again in January 2004, the district convened institutes led by Dr. Hargreaves and principals on developing professional learning communities at each high school. Between sessions, each school's professional learning community developed an action plan for their work in addressing one or more high school reform goals.

The Action Plan is a key element of the school and district reform. It provides a coordinated method for each school site to determine how it will address the goals of the high school reform. The Professional Learning Communities at each site use the plan to reflect and guide progress. Not all high schools are at the same point on the reform continuum.

Strategy 3: Redesign of Professional Development in Literacy and Mathematics

Closing the achievement gap in literacy. Since the mid-1990s, the district has made concerted efforts to better use student achievement data to identify academic needs and to map and implement intensive interventions to increase student success.

- LBUSD developed multi-level benchmark assessments tied to standards to assist teachers in gauging students' progress in mastering academic content. Using data from these local assessments, the district developed *accelerated reading interventions* for students two or more years below grade level, scaffolding of contents and development of academic vocabulary in the content courses. Improvements in student achievement in literacy are clear. Students in the Reading Developments classes in 9th and 10th grades have shown significant improvement on the state standards tests over one academic year:
- Using the methodology of the state Academic Performance Index, the district calculated student gains to measure student progress in Reading

- Development to produce an “Evaluation API.” The state API and the Evaluation API use the same scale, 200 – 900, and measure gains in proficiency levels on the California Standards Tests².
- The average Evaluation API across all high schools and courses serving the students functioning two or more years below grade level was 80 API points.³ The modal high school state API growth in 2003 was 30-50 points.

Closing the achievement gap in mathematics. The district also has developed intervention strategies for students who are two or more years below grade level in math. Refining and expanding these strategies is the task of the Numeracy Committee and principal Focus Groups. Vertical conversations between high schools and middle schools on algebra continue to facilitate the consistent placement of students in appropriate level course across the district. Math curriculum coaches, department chairs and principals support classroom teachers in improving instructional practices to increase the level of student engagement in all math courses and in the most effective use of extended time (e.g. block schedules).

Closing the achievement gap in special education -- The district’s Strategies for Success model has been implemented over the last year in order to insure that Special education students have access to rigorous curriculum. Special Education students receiving resource services (RSP) are scheduled into regular content area courses and enrolled in an additional RSP support class. This RSP course provides daily direct study skills instruction, learning strategies that students will use to complete assignments in academic classes and support from the teacher in achieving in the general education classes.

Ensuring English proficiency for English Language Learners. The district provides intensified instruction, tutorials, instructional materials and educational technology to English language learners increase language proficiency and improve their achievement in core academic subjects. English language learners at the beginning and intermediate levels of language proficiency receive academic content instruction interventions to accelerate their progress in learning English and meeting content area standards. Advanced proficient students and their parents meet with school personnel to ensure they are fulfilling high school graduation requirements and to explore post-secondary education opportunities.

Infusing academic and technical standards into high school course outlines. The district’s administrator for career technical education works with high school teachers and the district curriculum office to embed academic and technical standards into career oriented courses. Increasing the rigor of career and technical oriented courses is a

² While the state API is a “cohort-cohort” comparison referring to different students in the same grade level from one year to the next, our “Program Evaluation API” measures the pre-post gains of the **same students** after a year’s instruction in reading interventions.

³ While the Evaluation API is calculated using the same students rather than year to year comparisons of the same grade level, 80 points growth is both statistically (beyond what would be expected by chance fluctuations in scores) and practically (more than .3 standard deviations greater) significant.

necessary step to getting these courses recognized by institutions of higher education as meeting college preparatory requirements.

Addressing the challenges of diversity and the need for individual attention and connection. Every high school is charged with developing a diversity-training program for students, teachers, staff administrators and parents. The district has a longstanding relationship with the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) to provide both on-campus and offsite diversity and tolerance training. These efforts are critical to creating and maintaining a culture of learning, high expectations, and personal responsibility at every high school. As high school enrollment continues to increase, the need for proactively ensuring that every student has a personal connection to at least one adult on campus is clear. Counselors, schools within schools, smaller learning communities, diversity training and character education programs, play growing roles in meeting this challenge.

Service Learning Initiative. Service Learning is a hand-on, experiential, authentic learning experience. Beginning with the Class of 2007, all students in the district must complete 40 hours of Service Learning/Community Service to fulfill the high school graduation requirement. Service learning has been found to be an excellent motivator of character development and research shows that effective service learning provides the key experiences that lead to resiliency and helps youth develop social responsibility. It provides students with exposure to career possibilities and real life connections – seeing the application of what’s studied in school to the “real world.”

Strategy 4: Using Data to Drive Instructional Decision Making

Early identification of students in danger of not passing the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). One legacy of the *America’s Choice* program is LBUSD’s system of identifying students in danger of not passing CAHSEE.⁴ One of the most systemic efforts in helping high school teachers use data for instructional decisions was the district’s implementation of a practice high school exit examination (referred to as “Mock CAHSEE”) for all 9th and 10th grade students in the district.

- The district developed the Mock CAHSEE using state-released test items and a set of diagnostic reports on individual student for classroom teachers. Each fall, students take a practice exit exam and receive a detailed skills analysis *two weeks later*. Teachers and students use these results to identify areas needing remediation and to provide appropriate instructional and tutorial opportunities.

K-16 seamless education data collaborative. LBUSD, Long Beach City College and California State University, Long Beach have created a K-16 data file. This file is used to track LBUSD graduates through the higher education system and to evaluate the effectiveness of K-12 preparations. (The partners plan to expand to include Pre-K).

⁴ See the proposed Evaluation Plan.

Evaluation of high school courses and programs. Pre-post test studies of student performance are conducted yearly for high school mathematics and English-Language Arts courses and intervention programs⁵. These studies are used to identify what works and what needs improvement.

- Based on results of the Reading Development evaluation in 2001-2002, the district discontinued one computer-based reading intervention.
- A more positive example is the evaluation of AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). Students served by AVID had significantly higher English-Language Arts and Mathematics pass rates than those not having access to the program. As a result of the evaluation, the district will expand the program and include an increased number of students across all high schools.

Implementation of Baldrige continuous improvement process. In 2000, LBUSD began using Baldrige business strategies to improve student achievement and overall district performance. With support from the Broad Foundation, the Baldrige strategies have been implemented in 18 central office departments and 12 school sites⁶. One high school is implementing the Baldrige data driven continuous improvement process for school level decision making. As part of the next phase of high school reform, all high schools will implement continuous improvement models.

Strategy 5: Increasing Parent Engagement

Involving parents in students' experiences and expectations is critical and especially challenging for parents of high school students. The advent of the California High School Exit Exam brought added urgency to the need for clear and ongoing communications with parents. To provide information on changing state and local graduation requirements and to advise and inform parents and students of opportunities for postsecondary education, the district holds a series of parent forums and workshops.

- **High School Parent Forums** with the Assistant Superintendent of High Schools and Superintendent of Schools – held at various sites around the district, to answer questions and update parents on district-wide initiatives and issues.
- **Parent Workshops** on particular programs and initiatives including AP Workshops, PSAT Workshops, Understanding Student Progress Reports – How to communicate with teachers, counselors and administrators.
- **On-line access to student grades.** This initiative started at one high school and has been so successful that it is being implemented for all high schools. Parents can access their child's course grades on-line.
- **Career Education – Course offerings and sequencing.** The district is expanding its capacity to assist parents and students in career planning. Parents

⁵ See the proposed Evaluation Plan.

⁶ *Excellence in Education Through the Baldrige Journey*, Report to the Broad Foundation, Long Beach Unified School District, July 2003

and student will be able to search the district's website to find specific career path courses and sequences that are offered at each high school.