



Investing in Human Capital and Professional Development: Report of AYPF Field Trip to Long Beach Unified School District September 28-30, 2008

Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) stands out as a district that strategically invests in human capital and teacher professional development. The district maintains the perspective that improving student achievement rests on building the capacity of teachers to diagnose their students' needs and help them make academic progress. This core belief in the capacity of its teachers guides the district's efforts to recruit, develop, and retain highly effective educators.

Long Beach's track record of raising student achievement, particularly for low-income students and students of color, has earned national recognition. In 2006, all grade levels in LBUSD outperformed other districts in California serving students with similar income levels and demographics. LBUSD is the 2003 national winner of the Broad Prize for Urban Education and is a finalist for the 2008 Broad Prize, to be awarded in October 2008. *Newsweek* magazine named six of Long Beach's high schools to its 2008 list of top U.S. high schools.

Long Beach benefits from particularly strong partnerships with its local institutions of higher education, including California State University Long Beach (CSULB) and the Long Beach City College (LBCC). This collaboration helps to ensure that new teachers are trained in the district's instructional strategies, prepared to work with their diverse population, and introduced to the district philosophy and culture that insiders refer to as the "Long Beach Way." Veteran teachers receive content-focused professional development, along with other continued learning opportunities, to support student achievement. Completing the circular pipeline, a high proportion of LBUSD graduates take advantage of local college access initiatives and attend CSULB and LBCC.

From September 28-30, 2008, AYPF brought a group of 15 federal education policy leaders to Long Beach to learn about the role of human capital and professional development in high school reform. The group had the opportunity to meet with several district leaders, including Christopher Steinhauser, LBUSD Superintendent of Schools, as well as with students, teachers, and school administrators. ([See the trip agenda](#)).

Panel I: LBUSD Overview

Speakers: Christopher Steinhauser, Superintendent of Schools; Robert Tagorda, Special Assistant to the Superintendent; Christine Dominguez, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development; Maggie Webster, Assistant Superintendent of High Schools; Ruth Ashley, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources

Superintendent Steinhauser provided an introduction to his district's demographics and characteristics. As the third largest district in California, with nearly 90,000 students, Long Beach Unified reflects the

state's diversity. Over 50% of students are Hispanic, while 18% are African American, and 16% are white. Approximately a quarter of students are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), and 68% qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The district's mission is "to support the personal and intellectual success of every student, every day." Several speakers mentioned a push for equity across the district's schools, and Steinhauser noted that there are now California Distinguished Schools across all sections of the district, not only in its more affluent eastern sections.

Long Beach's theory of action is one of continuous improvement, with both top-down direction and ideas flowing from the bottom up. For example, the central office implemented a top-down policy requiring all 10th grade students to take the PSAT. Long Beach's initiative to end social promotion constituted a bottom-up effort, however, led by teachers who approached the school board and asked to hold themselves and their students to a higher standard.

Deputy Superintendent Chris Dominguez presented the district's strategic goals, which include: "all students will attain proficiency in the core content areas; ensure staff and student safety; and improve growth and development of the workforce." ([See the district strategic plan](#)). The High School Office has additional, aligned strategic goals, including enrolling and supporting all students in a rigorous sequence of courses that prepare them for postsecondary education, and strengthening rigor, relevance and relationships.

Long Beach has six large, comprehensive high schools, all serving approximately 4,000 students. Following nationally recognized school reform practices, all of these high schools have been divided into Small Learning Communities (SLC) based on subject or career themes. All incoming freshman select one of these academies in which they take their core academic classes, and curriculum is infused with content relevance. The SLCs are at varying levels of development across the different schools.

Robert Tagorda described the Academic and Career Success Initiative (ACSI) which drives the district-wide strategy for improvement. This initiative was unanimously approved by school board in 2007, after it emerged from the efforts of a diverse group of stakeholders, including business and community leaders. The three key elements of the ACSI are early intervention, accountability to high standards, and informed decision-making. ([See a brochure on the ACSI](#)).

In order to support the postsecondary success of all students and draw from the strength of Long Beach's local educational institutions, Superintendent Steinhauser and the Presidents of the CSULB and LBCC signed the Long Beach College Promise in March 2008. This initiative increases college access through combined efforts including a free semester at LBCC for all LBUSD graduates, an admissions policy including a preference for local students at CSULB, and extended parent outreach. ([Read the College Promise](#)).

As Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Ruth Ashley described, Long Beach takes a "grow our own" approach to talent development. Approximately 50% of the district's teachers come from CSULB's teacher education programs, and with a 92% teacher retention rate, recruitment is not a major concern. As many administrators are nearing retirement, Long Beach has sought to enhance its leadership development pipeline. This year they have inaugurated a new Aspiring Principals Program, with 11 new Principal Apprentices shadowing experienced principals for a full year. This program is funded in part by a grant from the Broad Foundation.

Panel II: Institutional Partnerships

Speakers: Christine Dominguez, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development; Pamela Seki, Director of PALMS (Program Assistance for Language Minority Students) and ISR (International Student Registration); Lisa Isbell, Assistant Director, Professional Development; Jean Houck, Dean, College of Education at California State University, Long Beach; Craig Hendricks, Professor at Long Beach City College

Long Beach’s local educational institutions’ strategic partnerships date back to the mid-1990s, when changes in the local economy and demographics highlighted the need for improved education and workforce development. Jean Houck, former Dean of the College of Education at CSULB, described the teacher preparation programs’ alignment with district priorities. CSULB and LBUSD have agreed upon shared standards for new teachers, and general education university courses are aligned with these standards. Student teaching placements increasingly take place in Long Beach schools, and teacher residency programs have grown substantially. CSULB also trains teachers in the predominant model of pedagogy used in Long Beach schools, the Essential Elements of Effective Instruction.

Lisa Isbell described Long Beach’s New Teacher Project, an induction program funded through the state’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program along with Title II and Title III funds. All new teachers are paired with a specially trained coach from the same school, with whom they meet weekly. The induction program also includes summer and year-long professional development opportunities during the first two years of teaching, with the second year focusing on differentiated instruction.

In order to support the achievement of its diverse study body, LBUSD has prioritized the certification of all teachers to work with ELLs. They have developed various pathways for ELL certification, including university certification programs and in-service professional development programs that integrate SDAIE (Specially designed academic instruction in English) strategies into all content areas. This work is funded through Title IIA, Title III, and state programs.

Experienced teachers also take advantage of the partnership with LBCC to deepen their content knowledge. As Craig Hendricks explains, the Teaching American History grant program has allowed college history professors and high school teachers to work together to deliver content in a way that is relevant and aligned with state standards.

Professional Development in Long Beach Unified School District

Speaker: Nader Twal, Small Learning Communities Project Director

Professional development programming at the high school level is driven by three key initiatives: the Academic and Career Success Initiative and High School Goals at the district level, and the School Site WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) Action Plans at each individual school. All educators—including principals—belong to professional learning communities, which promote a team approach to improvement, and Curriculum Institutes provide content-based training for each academic department.

Each school develops an annual professional development calendar, based on its particular WASC Action Plan and school improvement plan, along with the analysis of student data. Each SLC also creates an annual action plan, based on the needs and capacity of its particular teachers. SLC Lead Teacher

Institutes provide an opportunity for leaders from various disciplines to learn multidisciplinary approaches to incorporating the career themes of their particularly academy, and Curriculum Institutes reinforce systemwide standards for subjects such as history.

Key Results Walk-Throughs constitute another way for the high school community to assess their performance and identify areas for improvement in instruction. Participants in each school's semi-annual Walk-Throughs include district office staff, curriculum leaders, principals, teachers, and students, and the experience is followed by a debrief process and planning of subsequent action steps. Twal commented that it took several years for the district to build teacher support for this process, and principal leadership was critical to establishing a climate for analysis and continued learning.

Long Beach has also developed a comprehensive leadership development program for administrators. The Principal Apprentices spend 50 percent of their time shadowing and learning from a veteran principal, and participate in monthly full-day workshops on key strategies for management and instructional leadership. Newly hired principals receive coaching and mentoring, and attend New Administrator Workshops on topics such as evaluation, budgeting, and management strategies. Continuing high school principals have multiple professional development opportunities and are involved in one of four leadership initiatives targeting high school improvement.

Site Visit to Robert A. Millikan High School

Speakers: John Jacobson, Small Learning Community Project Director; Don Keller, Co-Principal; Jeffrey Cornejo, Co-Principal

Millikan High School serves approximately 4,300 students across grades 9-12. Students belong to one of seven small learning communities, and the school has been considered a model in the state for the implementation of SLCs, according to West Ed, an education research organization. Students are required to wear uniforms, and teachers also wear colors that identify them as members of a particular SLC. Millikan is recognized as a national AVID demonstration site¹. Don Keller and Jeffrey Cornejo explained that as co-principals of a large school, they have developed a collaborative partnership with shared responsibility for instruction.

John Jacobson described how Millikan has developed its own vision of the school culture it strives to create, with an emphasis on both academics and essential life skills. The acronym RAMHI stands for the ideal student outcomes: Rigorous Thinkers and Learners, Articulate Communicators, Millikan Team Players, High-Achieving Self-Directed Learners, and Integrators of Technology.

The group had the chance to visit several classrooms, to observe the results of school reform and professional development initiatives. Jacobson and other school leaders helped group members identify changes in instruction, including SLC connections, the RAMHI essential life skills, the Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships Framework and the Essential Elements of Effective Instruction. Teachers are also

¹ AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a nationally recognized program designed to prepare middle- and underachieving students for success at a four-year college. The initiative is embedded in the regular school day and includes interventions designed to teach academic skills and expose students to college.

encouraged to employ the Marcia Tate strategies for engaging the brain², along with AVID learning strategies such as Cornell Note taking and the Socratic Seminar.

A panel of students and teachers further illuminated the results of Millikan’s professional development efforts. Students described how different SLCs offered options for students to find the best fit for their learning style, and they spoke to strong student-teacher relationships. They also noticed that all of their teachers have begun using new instructional techniques like Cornell Notes and Sustained Silent Reading.

“We observed a class in the Millikan High School Business Academy (MBA) that was developing a product (classic cars) to be sold through a virtual online market. The students were learning about marketing their product and their roles in the mock company. The students will ‘sell’ the cars to students at other schools that participate in the online economy, and learn fundamental principles of finance and running a business.”
- Adrienne Fernandes, Congressional Research Service

The school visit demonstrated that students, teachers, and administrators speak a common language and employ common strategies that have been emphasized through professional development programs.

Panel III: Federal and State Policy Impacting Professional Development

Speakers: Christopher Steinhauser, Superintendent of Schools, LBUSD; Christine Dominguez, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development; Robert Williams, Director of Special Projects; Pamela Seki, Director of PALMS (Program Assistance for Language Minority Students).

Long Beach bases its professional development program on the needs and goals for students, instead of letting funding sources drive its decision-making. The grants that best fit each initiative are chosen by mapping the various funding sources and their requirements to all of the types of professional development occurring in the district. As Chris Dominguez explains, the district prioritizes the use of local, state, and federal funds, in that order, and then applies for appropriate foundation grants to fill gaps in funding.

The primary sources of federal funding for professional development in LBUSD have included Title II-A: Preparing Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals, Title I-A’s Staff Development and Program Improvement funds, Title III: Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students, Safe and Drug Free Schools, and Title V: State Grants for Innovative Programs (until the program was eliminated). Restructuring of the central office has brought the management of state and federal grant programs under the department of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, so that the funds could be managed more strategically and aligned with instructional priorities.

Superintendent Steinhauser spoke to the importance of flexibility in the use of funding for professional development. LBUSD has been involved in a pilot project with a school district in Fresno, CA to develop

² Marcia Tate is an educational consultant who has developed a method called *20 Instructional Strategies that Engage the Brain*, which include approaches to reinforcing learning such as humor and music.

reforms that will benefit both districts, and this partnership has allowed both districts to receive waivers that allow them greater flexibility in the use of some state categorical funds. Steinhauser feels that local districts could benefit from much more of this autonomy, and advocates for the expanded use of block grants instead of categorical funds, to improve district efficiency. He suggested that districts be held to high standards of accountability for outcome measures, with the ability to use funding flexibly to meet those goals. He also discussed funding equity issues, and mentioned that Long Beach is funded below the average level in the state, at \$5,700 per pupil.³

While Long Beach has been affected by California's state budget crisis, Steinhauser explained that they have still been able to support their professional development program. The district has had to cut \$90 million from its budget in the last six years, and the central office has shrunk considerably. However, LBUSD's approach to designing and offering most professional development in-house reduces program costs.

"A key to Long Beach's professional development success, especially in a constrained budgetary environment, was the concerted effort to build internal capacity, tapping internal expertise rather than spending lots of professional development money on travel and outside consulting."

-Eric Richmond, Alliance for Excellent Education

Steinhauser addressed California's new policy requiring all students to be tested in algebra by the end of 8th grade by 2011. He had opposed the bill before it was signed, but explained that he will now be able to make it work for the district by interpreting the law strategically. They will not move all 8th graders into Algebra I, as many students lack the foundational math skills needed for that level, but they will comply with the policy by testing all students in the required test. He predicts that 70-80% of students will be able to be moved into algebra in 8th grade.

Pamela Seki described the impact of policy and funding on instruction for English Language Learners. LBUSD's goal is to move ELL students up one level of proficiency each year, and to reclassify them as English proficient as soon as possible. However, the rigidity of Title III impedes their ability to provide ongoing support and monitoring of reclassified students. As soon as students are classified as English proficient, LBUSD loses funds for that student, but the district acknowledges the need for on-going follow-up interventions.

During the discussion session, participants inquired about Long Beach's approach to Special Education. Long Beach has only 7% of students in Special Education, which is lower than most districts. All teachers are required to have one course in Special Education, and Special Education teachers receive tailored professional development training and coaching.

Observation of Professional Development Session on Teaching English Language Learners at Millikan High School

The group had the opportunity to observe an afterschool, school-wide professional development

³ The California average per pupil expenditure is much higher, at \$8,500 in 2005-2006, and the national average is \$9,100.

initiative focused on English Language Learners. Millikan High School serves the district's highest concentration of ELL students, and 2007 test score data demonstrated the need to close the achievement gap for this subgroup. An entire WASC Action Plan goal has been dedicated to increasing the achievement of ELLs, and the school's Instructional Leadership Team decided to make this a priority for school-wide staff development in 2008-2009.

John Jacobson planned this unique professional development training to include differentiated workshops for teachers of different subject areas and levels of leadership, to emphasize effective instructional strategies for working with ELLs. Teacher feedback from past trainings underscored the need for choice and relevance to each teacher's subject area. The AYPF group also had the chance to select a workshop to attend, based on participants' areas of interest. The presenters of the training included lead teachers from Millikan High School, along with educators from other schools in the district. Sample workshop titles included "Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Development Strategies," and "Looking the Importance of ELL Students in the Adequate Yearly Progress Score at Millikan." After this experience, AYPF group members had a debrief session to share their observations and takeaways from the different workshops they attended.

Site Visit to Cabrillo High School

Speakers: Cynthia Terry, Co-Principal; Elio Mendoza, Co-Principal; Rick Lamprecht, Academic and Career Success Initiative Coordinator; Dan Schlesinger, Small Learning Communities Coordinator; Robyn Archer, Facilitator; Alejandro Vega, Principal Apprentice

Cabrillo High School is the district's newest full comprehensive high school, opened in 1996, with a student body of 3,500. Cabrillo sits on 63 acres of land and has the most modern facilities of all LBUSD high schools. The school is located in the historically lower-income western section of Long Beach, and 67 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The school population is 63% Latino, 20% African American, and 8% Filipino.

School leaders described Cabrillo as a "school on the move," referring to its trend of—and emphasis on—improving scores on the schoolwide Academic Performance Index (API).⁴ Rick Lamprecht explained that Cabrillo relies heavily on data in decision-making, and demonstrated the ways in which Cabrillo examines its progress on AYP proficiency targets with different subgroups of students. According to Cynthia Terry, one third of Cabrillo students still need intensive interventions to reach proficiency, and the school is working on creating formative assessment to measure progress in intervention classes.

Cabrillo High School's goals include "writing proficiency within the disciplines, schoolwide AVID implementation," SDAIE/ English Language Development best practices⁵, and Safe and Civil Principles via the SLCs." The school's annual professional development calendar provides a comprehensive picture of how the Superintendent's overall goals, the district's high school goals, Cabrillo's school site goals, and the school's WASC critical areas drive all professional development throughout the year. ([See Cabrillo's professional development calendar](#)). The SLCs at Cabrillo are newer than at Millikan, and still developing

⁴ API predates NCLB and is the cornerstone of California's *Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999*, which created a new academic accountability system for K-12 public education in the state. API measures the academic performance and growth of schools on a variety of standardized measures.

⁵ SDAIE stands for Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, which is a teaching approach that helps teachers to present content from a variety of subjects using techniques that are accessible to intermediate-level ELLs.

a sense of identity. Dan Schlesinger explained that external evaluators from UCLA have helped Cabrillo to evaluate and improve their SLCs.

Co-Principal Elio Mendoza shared his experience with leadership development and the creation of the Male Academy in 2007-2008. As part of the group of principals focused on Climate, Culture and Communication, Mendoza and other leaders sought to develop an intervention program for males of color at risk of dropping out, with the goal of improving their graduation rate. The group embarked upon a year of research of other successful initiatives and data-gathering. The Male Academy was modeled after the examples of the Kenwood Academy in Chicago and the Baltimore High Schools. The program was inaugurated at Cabrillo and Millikan High Schools with a summer mountain retreat in the mountains for youth in the program.

The AYPF visitors had the opportunity to visit several classrooms at Cabrillo High School in small groups. Participants from one small group noted a strong school culture of respect and student engagement. They commented that these accomplishments in improving the school environment have laid a strong foundation for increasing the academic rigor of courses.

The group also had the chance to observe a professional development session on the AVID Cornell Note-taking strategy. This training was offered for all teachers, and was embedded in the school day; teachers received the training during their regular planning period. Group members noted that the teacher that facilitated the training used many effective strategies to engage adult learners, and provided examples of Cornell Notes using material from various subjects, in order to make the training relevant to many disciplines.

Overall Visit Debrief and Takeaways

“The most meaningful lessons learned included the opportunity to see a large urban district put into practice their vision for continuous school improvement through: embedding professional learning into the day-to-day work of teachers; using data to drive all reform efforts, in a way that allows for adjustment and corrections that will best serve students; making a sincere commitment to prepare all students to succeed in postsecondary education; closing the achievement gap by providing intensive intervention to ensure success for all students; and involving the entire community through partnerships and volunteer opportunities.”

-Linda Davin, National Education Association

Participant observations and key takeaways from the field trip included:

Intentional alignment of professional development with school improvement goals: District leaders and school administrators are very explicit about how their professional development offerings are explicitly designed to correspond with strategic goals at the central office, high school office, school site and SLC levels. All levels of educators are involved in ongoing professional development tailored toward their contributions to school improvement.

Effective institutional partnerships offer a circular pipeline and enhance the community’s educational resources: Extensive collaboration between LBSD and the local institutes for higher education is driven primarily by the needs of the school district. Teacher preparation and professional development offered by CSULB and LBCC aims to prepare teachers to raise achievement levels with diverse groups of

students. These high-achieving students will in turn benefit from the college access initiatives of the Long Beach College Promise, filtering into their local community college and university.

Strategic use of funding and realignment of resources: Participants observed that LBUSD leaders demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the requirements of local, state and federal funding sources, and are able to manage funds strategically to achieve their goals.

The importance of a district culture of continuous improvement: Leaders and teachers view school improvement and professional development as long-term processes and constantly set goals for making their teaching more effective and their schools more successful. There is a strong sense of belonging and pride in the “Long Beach Way.”