



POSITIVE OUTLIERS SERIES

Long Beach Unified School District

Positive Outliers Case Study

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Executive Summary

Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) has been nationally recognized as a consistently high-functioning district for more than 2 decades. The district educates approximately 72,200 students, from preschool to high school, in its 86 schools. Almost 90% are students of color, with 57% Latino/a and 12% African American, while 65% are from economically disadvantaged families and 15% are English learners.

LBUSD is one of seven districts studied by researchers at the Learning Policy Institute in a mixed-methods study that sought to learn from positive outlier districts in which African American, Latino/a, and White students did better than predicted on California's math and English language arts tests from 2015 through 2017, after accounting for differences in socioeconomic status. This in-depth case study describes the critical practices and policies within LBUSD that have promoted student learning, especially among students of color, in the context of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the deeper learning they seek to foster.

Through an analysis of interview, documentary, and observational evidence, this case study describes key factors that enabled student success in LBUSD:

- 1. Supporting alignment:** LBUSD took a new approach to accountability, creating systemwide cohesion by setting clear expectations, providing comprehensive supports, and fostering collaboration and continuous improvement. LBUSD's expectations are clear and justified, tailored and supportive, calibrated across the district, and data-driven. Guided by a mission to advance equity, the district implemented a "tight-loose" approach to monitor schools' progress toward districtwide, evidence-based goals while encouraging schools to determine locally relevant focus areas.

LBUSD's "Five Understandings" form the foundation of the district's approach to instruction, professional development, staff collaboration, and accountability, and are evidence of the success of the district's effort to communicate a cohesive, districtwide vision for teaching and learning. The Collaborative Inquiry Visit, a peer observation system, offers opportunities for teacher, school, and district leaders to observe the goals and strategies of other schools, offer feedback, and bring learning back to other sites. In essence, the district's system of accountability is designed not to punish schools for poor performance, but to build the collective efficacy of the district by creating a culture that allows staff to learn together.

- 2. Investing in the people:** LBUSD invested in its people to build systemwide capacity and stability. The district's hiring practices, professional development opportunities, culture of collaboration, and funding decisions have helped LBUSD ensure students have access to talented educators and prepared principals.

LBUSD's stable workforce sees many in district leadership rise through the ranks of teachers, teacher leaders, and school leaders. Indeed, many of the district's educators noted they were former LBUSD students and graduates of Long Beach colleges, with which the district maintains strong partnerships in its efforts to build a pool of well-prepared teacher candidates. Ongoing, CCSS-aligned professional development with a high level of coherence not only supports student growth, it helps the district retain quality teachers.

While LBUSD invests significant time and resources to hire teachers with the disposition to teach students with diverse strengths and needs, one continuing challenge has been to diversify LBUSD's teacher workforce; until this is resolved, many students will not have the opportunity to be taught by teachers of color.

- 3. Developing new attitudes and practices to support deeper learning for all:** LBUSD implemented systems that developed deeper learning practices and led instructional shifts that supported student achievement. In response to California's adoption of CCSS, the district made a long-term investment in building an infrastructure that set a districtwide instructional vision, created systems and tools, and provided ongoing support and training for schools. LBUSD helped teachers embrace an instructional approach that focused on problem-solving and student collaboration.

This new attitude meant that teachers were able to reach more students by allowing multiple paths for success while also adopting higher expectations for all students, not just those in advanced classes. In mathematics, for example, LBUSD's approach is task-driven and student-centered. Teachers work together to develop and refine lessons that are challenging and engaging. The district also implemented Linked Learning systemwide to offer applied learning opportunities focused on preparing students for postsecondary education and career paths and introduced an initiative focused on English learners.

- 4. Focusing on social and emotional learning:** LBUSD recognized the importance of supporting students' nonacademic needs by implementing policies and initiatives to better support students' social and emotional development. The district's approach was designed to help students feel more comfortable in their schools and classrooms and better prepare them to learn by emphasizing skills, such as the ability to collaborate or make responsible decisions; mindsets, such as thinking positively about how to handle challenges; and effective habits, such as coming to class prepared. Key efforts to support students include using student and staff survey data to understand how best to support students' well-being, districtwide professional development around growth mindset, and Safe and Civil Schools staff development. As schools learned more about the value of social and emotional competencies and realized that they were falling short of meeting students' needs, they began establishing schoolwide goals for social and emotional development. LBUSD also began to strategically engage families and the community to support student learning.

Although most Long Beach students still do not achieve proficiency on the state's standardized tests, LBUSD's recent track record suggests that the district's educators and leaders have been successful in supporting more rigorous instruction under the CCSS, which were implemented in 2010.

LBUSD's aligned, sustained, and collective focus on teaching and learning has helped Long Beach students, particularly students of color, make strides in academic growth. Key to this work has been the creation of a research-based, CCSS-aligned framework for instruction, systems and supports to offer students greater access to deeper learning instruction, investment in people, and a focus on social and emotional learning. Districtwide buy-in on the LBUSD approach to instruction and accountability also contributed to LBUSD's success. Other important efforts include careful hiring of educators and quality professional development, collaborative systems and supports for educators and students, a focus on data, and thoughtful community engagement. All in all, student success in LBUSD was attributed to the district's evidence-based planning, thoughtful implementation, and comprehensive systems of support.

Introduction

Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is a leader in the state of California in supporting student achievement, especially for students of color and students from low-income families. From 2015 to 2017, LBUSD's African American, Latino/a, and White students consistently outperformed students in other districts with similar economic backgrounds on California's new state assessment.¹ (See Appendix A.) Moreover, the district's students tend to graduate at higher rates and drop out of school at lower rates than the average California student.² (See Appendix A.) Although most Long Beach students still do not achieve proficiency on the state's standardized tests, LBUSD's recent track record suggests that the district's educators and leaders have been successful in supporting more rigorous instruction under California's Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which were implemented in 2010.

To identify the practices that have led to higher student achievement in LBUSD, we conducted in-depth interviews with the district's leaders, staff, and educators; reviewed documents, videos, and other artifacts from the district; and analyzed student achievement data. Based on our analysis, we found evidence that the recent student achievement gains in Long Beach stem from the district's intentional approach to aligning support for improvement while de-emphasizing sanctions; investing in collaborative professional development aligned to California's new academic standards; focusing on deeper learning; and supporting social and emotional learning.

Case Study Road Map

This case study is part of a larger mixed-methods study, which includes a quantitative analysis that identified positive outlier districts such as LBUSD in which African American, Latino/a, and White students did better than predicted on California's mathematics and English language arts tests from 2015 through 2017, even after accounting for differences in socioeconomic status.³ The case study is also part of a series of seven individual case studies of positive outlier districts, as well as a cross-case study that examines trends across all seven districts.⁴ More information about the methods for this case study of LBUSD is included in Appendix B.

We begin the LBUSD case study by describing the district context, including its demographic composition, long-standing partnerships, and student outcomes. Next, we describe the methodology used to conduct this case study. In the Findings section, we detail four primary themes—summarized below—that may explain the district's above-average student performance: (1) supporting alignment as a new approach to accountability, (2) investing in the people, (3) developing new attitudes and practices to support deeper learning for all, and (4) focusing on social and emotional learning.

Supporting alignment: A new approach to accountability

LBUSD has made extensive efforts to build systemwide cohesion by setting clear expectations, providing comprehensive supports, and creating the conditions for collaboration and continuous improvement. This section describes how the Long Beach school district has articulated its use of a moral imperative of equity to guide its efforts. The district has several systems for monitoring schools' progress toward districtwide goals on an ongoing basis. For example, it has developed evidence-based goals and expectations related to instruction and student outcomes but encourages

schools to determine focus areas based on their contexts. The district also provides data systems that help school leaders tailor their goals and strategies to student needs, and principal supervisors support ongoing progress with frequent school walk-throughs closely focused on each school's areas of focus. In addition, the Collaborative Inquiry Visit—a peer observation system—is conducted three times a year at each school and offers an opportunity for teacher, school, and district leaders to observe the goals and strategies of other schools, offer feedback, and bring learning back to other sites. In essence, the district's system of accountability is designed not to punish schools for poor performance, but to build the collective efficacy of the district through learning.

Investing in the people

LBUSD invests in its workforce to build districtwide capacity and stability. District staff frequently remarked that LBUSD has an unusually stable workforce of teachers and leaders, with many in district leadership rising through the ranks of teachers, teacher leaders, and school leaders. Indeed, many of the district's educators noted they were former LBUSD students and graduates of Long Beach colleges. The district's partnerships with local colleges help build a pool of fully prepared teacher candidates. In addition, LBUSD invests significant time and resources to hire teachers with the disposition to teach students with diverse strengths and needs, as well as to assign teachers where they are needed. The district offers extensive professional development once teachers enter the district. With the adoption of CCSS, the district committed to supporting teachers and school leaders in learning together to transition to the new standards. Systemwide collaborative learning—among teachers, between teachers and school leaders, and among district staff—seeks to ensure all LBUSD staff are coordinating their efforts to improve student outcomes.

Developing deeper learning practices

In response to California's implementation of CCSS, LBUSD has implemented systems to lead instructional shifts that support student achievement. The new state standards require key shifts in teaching and learning and what has become known as “deeper learning,” designed to help students become self-directed learners and master academic content through critical thinking, solving complex problems, collaboration, and effective communication. The district developed its “Five Understandings,” or Five U's, an instructional framework for every school, subject, and grade that is aligned to the instructional shifts required by CCSS. The Five U's are high-quality instruction (U1), complex texts (U2), collaborative conversations (U3), formative assessment (U4), and collaborative planning (U5). The district's professional development on the Five U's helped to shift attitudes about teaching and learning across the district, with the result that teachers and school leaders now emphasize the importance of student collaboration and student-centered learning. Further, teachers have raised the rigor in the classroom in response to more rigorous standards. The district leverages its systems so staff can learn together to support this instructional transition. The math lesson study system, for example, helps teachers hone their skills in planning and teaching student-centered math lessons. Teachers develop lesson plans together, observe each other trying the lesson in their classrooms, and refine their lessons. LBUSD has also instituted systems to increase student access to more advanced course taking, such as Advanced Placement and gifted and talented education. The district continues to have areas for growth in this regard. For example, despite its decadelong commitment to providing Linked Learning, an instructional approach that embeds work-based learning into core academic content, high-quality Linked Learning programs are less accessible to students of color.

Focusing on social and emotional learning

LBUSD has implemented several policies and initiatives to better support students' social and emotional development because teachers and school leaders recognize the importance of supporting students' nonacademic needs. In particular, the district uses survey data to understand students' well-being; offers districtwide professional development on growth mindset; and makes use of Safe and Civil Schools staff development, a system for improving school climate and culture. The district also increasingly engages the community, including parents and businesses.

District Context

The district educates approximately 72,200 students, from preschool to high school, in its 86 public schools. (See Table 1.) Almost 90% of LBUSD students are students of color, with 57% Latino/a and 12% African American, while 65% of students are from economically disadvantaged families and 15% are English learners. The district is the largest employer in the city, with 12,000 full-time and part-time employees.

Table 1
LBUSD Demographic Data

District Data	
Number of students	72,200
Total employees	12,000
Number of k-5 schools	46
Number of 6-8 and k-8 schools	25
Number of 9-12 schools	15
Student Demographics	
Latino/a or Hispanic	57%
African American	12%
White	12%
Asian American	7%
Filipino	3%
Pacific Islander	1%
Native American/Alaska Native	0.2%
English learners	15%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	65%

Data sources: Long Beach Unified School District. (n.d.). About—Long Beach Unified School District. <http://www.lbschools.net/district/> (accessed 05/01/19); Long Beach Unified School District. (n.d.). School finder. <http://www.lbschools.net/Schools/finder.cfm> (accessed 05/21/19).

LBUSD has been recognized as a consistently high-functioning district for more than 2 decades.⁵ With only two superintendents since 1992, the district has had a reputation for prioritizing instruction over competing demands, cultivating a high-quality and stable educator workforce, developing high-leverage partnerships, and making data-driven decisions.⁶ Although many of the systems, structures, and values discussed in this study are long-standing, what is new, in many cases, is how district leaders have mobilized them to meet the needs of a changing education landscape with the more rigorous academic demands of CCSS.

The district has engaged in many partnerships to support its diverse student body. Beginning in 2010, it began collaborating with other large urban California school districts to learn how to better implement CCSS and to improve the training of teachers and administrators. This group became known as the California Office to Reform Education, or “CORE Districts,” and today includes eight large urban school districts from across the state whose 56,700 educators teach more than 1 million students. These districts have created a school accountability and improvement system that includes data on student “academic growth, high school readiness, student social-emotional skills and school culture and climate, along with traditional measures of test scores, graduation rates, and absenteeism.”⁷

The district also works closely with nearby institutions of postsecondary education to ensure it prepares its students to meet the demands of college. For example, California State University–Long Beach, Long Beach City College, and LBUSD have worked together to create better articulation between pre-kindergarten through postgraduate school for students. To formalize this arrangement, Long Beach’s educational institutions and the city of Long Beach established the “Long Beach College Promise” in 2008, which was among the first college promise initiatives in the state.⁸ The educational organizations in the Promise provide guidance and continuous support to students from pre-k through college. Since the implementation of this partnership, students have entered college better prepared to meet the demands of postsecondary studies.⁹ Cal State Long Beach also guarantees admission to all LBUSD graduates who complete the minimum college preparatory or community college transfer requirements.

Curriculum and instruction are at the core of the district’s student success. Ultimately, the efforts described in this study are done in the service of providing quality teaching and learning for every student, according to our findings. In recent years, that has meant improving instructional practices in order to follow the new academic standards. Throughout our interviews, Long Beach district staff noted their focus on aligning curriculum and instruction with CCSS demands and how that has led to significant changes in classroom practice to support student learning.

Student outcomes

The district’s performance on state tests between 2015 and 2017 showed strong results for its three largest racial and ethnic subgroups. Based on our analysis of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), African American, Latino/a, and White LBUSD students performed better than would be predicted based on the district’s socioeconomic characteristics.¹⁰ In addition, African American, Latino/a, White, and economically disadvantaged LBUSD students were more likely to meet or exceed grade and subject standards on CAASPP, have higher average scores, and have higher year-over-year test score growth than their peers across the state. (See Appendix A for complete data tables.)

LBUSD students also graduated at higher rates. The 5-year graduation rate in LBUSD in 2015 was 82% for Latino/a students, 83% for African American students, and 90% for White students, all exceeding the state averages of 80%, 72%, and 89%, respectively. Graduation rates for African American students in the district were especially high compared to state averages. Both 4- and 5-year graduation rates for African American students in 2014 and 2015 were approximately 10 percentage points higher in LBUSD than in the state as a whole, with the 4-year rate around 76% and 5-year rate 83% in LBUSD, compared to 68% and 71%, respectively, statewide.¹¹

Although student academic achievement is the primary outcome of interest in this study, we also found that in recent years LBUSD has developed a strong focus on measuring indicators of students' social and emotional learning. The evidence suggests that the district's use of these data has encouraged school leaders to set goals and implement strategies to improve social and emotional learning for students. (See "Focusing on Social and Emotional Learning" on page 46.)

Findings

Supporting Alignment: A New Approach to Accountability

LBUSD has heavily invested in implementing CCSS and other supports for schools and students, including development of its curriculum and instruction, integration of social and emotional learning, and investments in its people. Those investments come with the expectation that staff will make progress toward implementing the district’s vision with fidelity. However, unlike some accountability systems—which are often characterized by rigid scoring systems, sanctions for those who fail to meet the mark, and shaming of poor performance—LBUSD has developed a new approach to accountability. The district has created systems of alignment that set up schools and staff for success in the following ways:

- **Expectations are clear and justified:** Teachers, school leaders, and district leaders understand what they are expected to do and why. These expectations are evidence-based and rooted in improving student learning.
- **Expectations are tailored and supported:** School staff have agency in choosing their annual goals, although they must be aligned to district goals and based on student needs and the school context. The district provides several ongoing systems of support that help schools make progress toward their goals throughout the school year.
- **Expectations are calibrated across the district:** District staff learn together, building networks of support and a common language about district expectations.
- **Expectations are data-driven:** LBUSD has a data system that allows school staff to identify student needs, monitor progress, and adjust practice throughout the school year.

Taken together, the district’s alignment system builds the collective efficacy of the district, allowing schools to better serve their students. Those schools with the greatest need receive critical supports from the district’s central office and from other schools to improve student learning.

Clear and Justified Expectations—The Long Beach Unified “Why”

In Long Beach, having a shared vision and approach to teaching and learning is an important value. Most people we spoke to talked about an idea Superintendent Chris Steinhauser espouses, that the district has a moral imperative to close achievement gaps. According to Deputy Superintendent of Schools Jill Baker, Steinhauser stood before “the management team at the beginning of the year and [put] the challenge out to crush the achievement gap by 50%.”

District staff agreed that they have a moral imperative to change their practice to improve outcomes for students. The way one specialist from the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development (OCIPD) describes the district’s efforts to transition to CCSS is similar to what we heard from teachers, principals, and leaders across the district:

I think there was a “why” that drove everything, which was the moral imperative of equity. Every kid has to graduate college and career ready. Period. That’s why we’re doing this. So what does that look like? Well, we try to capture some of that in the

[Five] U's.... And then, "What does that mean for my practice?" is the part that we're unpacking now. We can't just have this lofty goal, put pins in it, and then walk away. There's some implication for my practice.

The district has rallied around its common "why" by providing intensive systems for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers to work toward their common goals together.

The Five Understandings

The district's Five Understandings, or Five U's, were born out of a desire to have a common philosophy for teaching and learning in the age of CCSS. These Understandings form the foundation of the district's approach to instruction, professional development, and accountability. They were mentioned by every person we spoke to—teachers, school leaders, and district administrators. It was clear that the district's effort to communicate a cohesive, districtwide vision for teaching and learning was successful. This section (1) introduces the district's Five U's, (2) discusses the process that led to their development, and (3) explains the impact the Understandings have had on student learning.

The first four Understandings are related to instructional practice, and the fifth is related to staff collaboration. While the Five U's are detailed in nature, everyone we spoke to referred to them by their number (e.g., "U1") or with brief key terms (e.g., "high-quality instruction"). The district's rollout of these Understandings has significant implications for student learning. (See Table 2 on page 8.) They encourage more rigorous instruction aligned with CCSS, through the development of students' deeper learning skills—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and the ability to apply complex content knowledge to new contexts.

Table 2
Long Beach Unified School District Five Understandings

Five U's	Commonly referred to as...	District description	Implications for student learning
U1	High-quality instruction	A thorough understanding of standards provides a foundation for high-quality differentiated instruction that results in all students meeting college and career readiness expectations through the Linked Learning* approach.	The rigorous Common Core State Standards form the foundation of high-quality instruction. Students have opportunities to learn through applied and job-embedded approaches, such as Linked Learning.
U2	Complex texts	Providing all learners with cognitively demanding tasks and complex texts with the goal of making meaning is essential for students to build conceptual understanding of content and transfer their learning to new contexts.	Students develop critical thinking skills as they make meaning of complex texts and engage in problem-solving as they apply their learning to new contexts.
U3	Collaborative conversations	Orchestrating opportunities for technical and academic discourse including collaborative conversations allows students to develop a deeper understanding of content and support a point of view in varied contexts.	Students develop collaboration skills and apply complex content knowledge to new contexts.
U4	Formative assessment	The strategic planning and consistent use of formative assessment strategies allow teachers and students to collect evidence about where students are and to determine immediate next steps.	Based on Dylan Wiliam's <i>Embedded Formative Assessment</i> , teachers assess student learning through a variety of student-centered activities: discussion, individualized feedback, partner and group projects, and student self-assessment.
U5	Collaborative planning	Effective instructional teams promote a collective culture of efficacy leading to a focus on improving common instructional practice resulting in increased student achievement.	Teachers experience and practice working in the kinds of collaborative learning environments they are expected to facilitate for students.

* The Linked Learning approach integrates academic content with career-technical education and work-based learning around industry-sector themes. Linked Learning. (n.d.). About Linked Learning. <https://www.linkedlearning.org/about/>.

Source: Long Beach Unified School District. (2018). *LBUSD Understandings Continuum 2018*. Long Beach, CA: Author. <http://www.lbschools.net/Asset/Files/Curriculum/Understandings-Continuum.pdf> (accessed 09/13/18).

When CCSS implementation began in LBUSD, principal supervisors and curriculum leaders started meeting to develop key implementation systems and resources, including the Five U's. Although the OCIPD has been an in-house resource for curriculum and professional development since the mid-1990s, the team's new challenge was to help interpret CCSS and develop tools and resources to implement them successfully. The monthly collaborative meetings between principal supervisors and curriculum leaders focused on developing new systems for CCSS implementation, including Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs), professional development, and more. We discuss OCIPD in the "Developing Deeper Learning Practices" section.

One OCIPD specialist recalled that the initial idea for developing the Five U's came about when the OCIPD team and principal supervisors were preparing for an ILT professional development session. ILTs included the principal and several teachers who work together to drive instructional improvement. She reflected that a goal of the ILT was to get "all the right people in the room" but that they also needed to mobilize school staff around a common message:

We have the people in the right room, but how do we create a common message? We knew we had to have some goals. We also had concurrently done a lot of work with backwards mapping. We used the backwards mapping template, which starts with understandings and essential questions—what we want people to know and do. That's how we came up with that idea of Understandings.

Another OCIPD specialist remembered that the impetus for the Five U's was closely linked to the shift in standards and other work the district had done related to defining college and career readiness with its graduate profile:

It was an evolution of what we believed around our craft of instruction that was necessitated by the real radical changes that the Common Core standards brought. It was a coming together at a really critical time of the new standards, the graduate profile, and some new learning we've done around the *Understanding by Design* process.

The Five U's have evolved in other ways over the years. The document originally only covered four instructional understandings; the fifth, related to staff collaboration, was added later. An OCIPD specialist recalled some of those changes:

We actually started with a document that was looking just at literacy instruction and realized after that first year that we're really talking about more than literacy instruction in these Understandings. For the 3 past years, the document has changed each time. I think we're at a place where we feel that we're stable with the first four Understandings that revolved around instruction and the fifth Understanding around collaboration and high-quality planning.

In addition, the district has created the Understandings Continuum, "a resource for planning high-quality instruction" aligned to the Five U's.¹² (See Appendix C.) Similar to a rubric, the Continuum breaks down each Understanding into two or three main competencies and provides examples of what teacher or team practice would look like at step 1, 2, or 3 of that competency. The document is clearly labeled to emphasize that it is a reflection tool rather an evaluation tool or an exhaustive list of instructional practices. This reflects a common ethos in the district that tools are provided for support and improvement, not to punish staff.

The OCIPD and principal supervisors developed and revised the Five U's and the Understandings Continuum based on extensive research. To focus on instructional practices that would yield the greatest benefits to students, the district looked to research done by John Hattie. His book, *Visible Learning for Teachers*, synthesizes 15 years of research to calculate the relative impact of different instructional practices.¹³ Brian Moskovitz, LBUSD's Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools, explained the connection between Hattie's research and the Five U's:

The OCIPD and principal supervisors developed and revised the Five U's and the Understandings Continuum based on extensive research.

John Hattie and his team have analyzed thousands of other research studies, involving millions of kids around the world, school systems around the world, and identified which practices in schools seem to have the greatest impact on student achievement and student growth. There are these practices that have greater effect sizes than others. Through that we have our Understandings Continuum, which we believe to be foundational practices that came from research. They weren't just developed out of thin air.

The OCIPD also drew on research by Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher on literacy instruction.¹⁴ Fisher and Frey have written on a gradual release of responsibility instructional framework based on the idea that "learning occurs through interactions with others" that are planned intentionally. The framework emphasizes the importance of collaborative learning.

A third influential work was Dylan Wiliam's *Embedded Formative Assessment*,¹⁵ which describes how teachers can assess student learning throughout a lesson and adjust instruction in response: They might develop instructional strategies that elicit evidence of learning, provide strategic feedback, or help students use each other as resources. Wiliam's research informed Understanding 4, which is that teachers will provide ongoing formative assessment that is embedded into lessons and units, in addition to more formal benchmark assessments that students participate in periodically.

The OCIPD staff were careful to mention that they are thoughtful about how they introduce and use new research:

We're very deliberate and strategic in that it's not the flavor of the day here. We're very careful. When we first started looking at Fisher and Frey's work, it was held at this level for a while. We didn't want to just throw it out like salt and pepper, and then 6 months later we're going to throw something else out to the field. We really [immersed] ourselves and vetted against our work.

LBUSD teachers and leaders appreciated the support they received, both with CCSS and with the Five U's. Claire Alvarez, the principal of Garfield Elementary School, described the introduction of what was then the Four Understandings:

I think what was really helpful was when they framed the pedagogy and the Four U's, because we were talking content standards and pedagogy side by side. When the Four U's came out, it was this anchor to understand standards and assessment [and ask] "How does this all work together?"

The district continues to conduct research for improving the Five U's, recently investigating how to better serve the needs of African American students in particular. Beginning in the 2016–17 school year, the district conducted interviews of African American students, including those who were performing academically at high levels and those in need of greater support, to understand if there was more the district could do to support them. They found that the African American high school graduates they interviewed had something in common: having had a warm and demanding teacher. An OCIPD specialist explained that, based on what they learned, “We felt that the warm, demanding teacher relationship was so important that it could be embedded in the first five and on its own. And so that’s why you’ll see this U6 developing.”

U6 will offer guidelines for how teachers can be both warm and demanding of students: That is, how can they help students feel cared for, supported, and academically challenged? The district’s Five U’s, coupled with extensive professional development, have led to a districtwide turn to deeper-learning instructional practices that improve student learning (for more on deeper learning, see “Developing Deeper Learning Practices” on page 33). The district continues to return to the Five U’s to ensure it has a framework in place that can guide improved learning for all students. As we detail in this case study, the Five U’s are a touchstone for the alignment of instruction, professional development, and investments at every level of LBUSD.

The “tight-loose” approach to systemwide alignment

In LBUSD, district administrators took a “tight-loose” approach to systemwide alignment. This means that the district communicates a set of systemwide expectations, premised on broad principles, that school leaders can meet in ways they believe will best serve their students, based on their school data. The district’s focus was on monitoring and facilitating focused growth and improvement, rather than on sanctioning underperforming schools. District leaders worked closely together to ensure that the approaches school leaders took aligned with the district’s shared vision. Deputy Superintendent Baker described the system they have had in place for 5 years to do that:

We have something called Implementation Steering. It is a monthly strategy and planning meeting [comprising] about 23 people, half of whom are curriculum leaders and half of whom are principal supervisors or [other district leaders]. When we meet on a monthly basis, we’re sharing perspectives on what’s happening in the field. So [we have] coaches who go out and are coaching teachers; principal supervisors who are out walking classrooms and assessing instruction from that perspective; Pamela [Seki, Assistant Superintendent of OCIPD] and myself, who are working really at a strategy level. That’s where we have built a lot of work around this shared vision.

In addition to developing a vision for the district, LBUSD leaders provided several supports to ensure teachers and school administrators have the tools necessary to see that vision through. (For a summary of the district’s professional development systems, see “Overview of LBUSD’s Key Professional Learning Strategies” on page 26.) Importantly, many of these systems could be used in punitive or evaluative ways, but in Long Beach that was not the case. In an observation of a Collaborative Inquiry Visit, we found that teachers and school leaders were transparent about their school’s areas of need when it came to instructional practice. We heard school leaders and district leadership have frank discussions about next steps to improve instruction and saw teachers from

outside schools having animated conversations about what they saw in other teachers' classrooms. LBUSD has created a culture of support and collaboration that fosters working together to identify challenges in reaching shared goals.

The following features of the district's alignment approach appear to contribute to LBUSD's collegial culture:

- **The district held principals to clear and attainable goals they set for themselves:** Principals had agency in determining a main focus for the year, based on their students' needs and aligned to the district's goals and the Five U's. The feedback principals received was focused on a set of clear goals the principals themselves set, rather than a laundry list of criteria. As a result, school leaders could focus professional development, resources, and time on specific areas, allowing schools to make significant progress on efforts to improve student learning.
- **Supervisors offered feedback, not scores:** Principal supervisors offered clear and specific feedback that was directly related to the principal's goals and that drew on the district's common language developed through professional development. Supervisors focused on supporting continuous improvement, not assigning principals scores. Principals took the same approach to supporting teachers. This provided clear, concrete actions school leaders could take to improve their practice to better support students.
- **The district offered support, not sanctions:** Schools that experienced challenges reaching their goals received additional support, including coaches based at their sites, parent coordinators, on-site professional development, and more. As a result, schools had the resources they needed to support student learning.

Assistant Superintendent Moskovitz described what this process looked like for the elementary schools he supervises and how it provided a structure for support with flexibility across schools. It began with a large group meeting of school leaders at the beginning of the year, during which district staff laid out the goal-setting task and school leaders had the opportunity to work together to articulate their goal for the year:

At the beginning of each year, we ask our principals with their Instructional Leadership Teams and their whole staff of teachers and other staff members to identify some goals that are aligned to the district LCAP [Local Control and Accountability Plan] goals and aligned to our elementary office goals. So they're all mapped on to that.

After they've identified growth goals for their students based on data and so forth, we ask them to identify a theory of action. It's essentially, "If we implement these instructional practices, then we will get these results." We really help coach the principal around the implementation of those practices. What is your professional development that you're providing? How are you following up on that professional development in the classroom to ensure that the teachers are implementing the practices with fidelity? [Are you] giving feedback to teachers in order to move that learning forward? Ultimately, is it impacting student achievement?

Having said that, each site is going to have a slightly different theory of action, a slightly different focus. Then the data collection tool that we're using to monitor progress is going to vary at each site. We have a variety of different tools that we utilize in order to measure progress over time at a site.

The goal-setting process at the beginning of the year provided a basis for all the principal supervisor visits that occurred throughout the year. According to Moskovitz, at least one school walk-through each month was focused on teaching and learning, while a second focused on operations or other issues. During the monthly visit focused on teaching and learning:

The goal-setting process at the beginning of the year provided a basis for all the principal supervisor visits that occurred throughout the year.

We'll spend 10 minutes talking about recent professional development that the principal has provided. "What would that look like in the classroom? What are your teachers expecting? What are you expecting of your teachers as a result of that?" And then, "Let's go in and look for that."

Then we'll spend an hour and a half walking classrooms, stepping out, and [asking], "What did you see? What kind of feedback would you leave if you were talking with this teacher? How would you coach them?"

Kim Weber, a principal supervisor, offered an example of a walk-through she conducted alongside a principal of a school that is focused on supporting English learners:

Today when we walked, we looked specifically at formative assessment techniques, and did they have clear learning intentions. Were they eliciting student responses that they could then give feedback to, that moves learning forward? Were students using each other as resources and then owning their own learning? So we used those five standards from Dylan Wiliam's work [*Embedding Formative Assessment*].

[The principal] specifically looked for the staff's implementation of the strategies that [she has] done PD [professional development] around over the last year and a couple months. And we chart together [using] a data collection tool, and then we come back and we debrief and talk about the strengths. Then she will go to her staff meeting now and share with them what we observed and what the trends were and what possible next steps are.

Principal supervisors and school leaders were able to draw on a common language to have professional conversations tied directly to what the district believes will improve student learning. These conversations, rooted in on-the-ground practice and instructional theory, resulted in a set of concrete next steps designed to move schools in the right direction and better support students. Developing this support approach has been a work in progress. Jay Camerino, Assistant Superintendent of Middle and K-8 Schools, explained that when the Five U's were first introduced, district leaders used them like a rubric to evaluate performance, but they soon shifted their approach:

I think the challenge is calibration. We went around with this rubric. You would give it a 2, I would give it a 3, and someone else would give it a 4. That calibration piece we discovered to be kind of a challenge. Then we said we were just going to give them more feedback rather than giving them a score because people just relied on trying to get 2s and 3s [and] that didn't help.

Principal supervisors had received training from the McGrath Succeed with True-Speak program, which offers communication skills for providing useful feedback. Through this program, supervisors learned to acknowledge school successes and frame next steps positively. According to Camerino:

It's really our coaching, saying, "Hey, I appreciate you, that you've done X. Here's the impact of it. But why don't you try...?" or "You know, maybe work on this."

These kinds of professional conversations have contributed to a districtwide culture of continuous improvement that is tailored to the needs of each school site.

The power of learning together

LBUSD staff learned together, and school leaders and teachers learned as teams. The district offered professional development for principals across the district and for teachers within and across subject areas. This approach allowed for calibration of the district's expectations and instructional frameworks and a cross-pollination of ideas. The Five U's, for example, meant the same thing to everyone in the district, and school leaders learned from each other how instructional strategies aligned to the Five U's have worked in a variety of contexts. This stance extended to district staff, who made it a priority to be learning and working together, according to Assistant Superintendent Camerino:

I make it a high priority that we're always in the room together. We're learning together. We're delivering the PD together. And, even if it's something to deal with math, ELA folks are there, history people are involved, and so are the science folks.

Christopher Lund, Assistant Superintendent of Research, Planning, and Evaluation, explained how ILTs—teams of school leaders and teacher leaders at each school site (see the definition in "Overview of LBUSD's Key Professional Learning Strategies" on page 26)—receive ongoing professional development together two to three times each year. He described this model as consistent with the district's commitment to what education writer Michael Fullan calls "principal as lead learner":

It's part of our system: recognizing that our principals are learners as well and they're expected to be learners. But they're also expected to lead around that work. They're expected to guide this work. PD doesn't occur when you're not in the room. It occurs when you're in the room and you sit with your teachers and you learn with them together. And yes, you'll facilitate that work at your school sites as well. That's kind of an expectation within our system.

Principals also had opportunities to learn together with the district's curriculum specialists through monthly principal meetings. Deputy Superintendent Baker described how those meetings have been more intentionally focused on student learning. For the last few years, the district has been

orienting the principal meetings with a much more intense focus around teaching and learning and student data. What that looks like is really maximizing this partnership between the schools' offices, my office, and the [grade] level offices with the curriculum office. So, the math curriculum team, coming into the principals' meetings and really delving into the content of math, the construct of math, mathematical teaching

practices. And then building a whole professional development plan around what that looks like, for a principal and assistant principal, to go back into a building and supervise math effectively. I think [there's been] an increase in that kind of learning for administrators.

By learning together, LBUSD worked to leverage the expertise of curriculum specialists, school leaders, and district staff to improve instructional practices in classrooms.

Supporting data-driven decision-making

A key feature of the district's tight-loose approach to alignment was that school leaders could focus on goals they believe will best meet their students' needs. To do that well, LBUSD provided hands-on training with the data system it developed so that school leaders could make decisions informed by real-time data about student outcomes. The district launched the data system, known as LROIX (pronounced EL-roy), more than a decade ago but has recently worked to make it more comprehensive and user-friendly. In addition to offering reports on a host of indicators, such as attendance records, CORE survey data that measures social and emotional learning and school climate and culture, test scores, discipline incidents, and other typical measures, the site includes a suite of data tailored to the needs of high schools, including student grades, AP data, SAT data, PSAT data, graduation status data, on-track-for-graduation data, college attendance data, benchmark assessments, and data on whether students are on track to meet the state's requirements to be minimally eligible for admission into California public universities. Assistant Superintendent Lund explained that in 2010 the district changed its data system to include climate, culture, and social-emotional measures, making it "much more relevant to high schools than ever before."

LROIX includes a suite of data tailored to the needs of high schools, including student grades, AP data, SAT data, PSAT data, graduation status data, on-track-for-graduation data, college attendance data, benchmark assessments, and data on whether students are on track to meet the state's requirements to be minimally eligible for admission into California public universities.

Data-driven decision-making has long been a staple in LBUSD.¹⁶ In past years, the district's Office of Research, Planning, and Evaluation was responsible for providing schools with customized data reports, but according to Lund, the district has made the system more accessible to teachers, school leaders, and parents. Since 2016–17, teachers and principals have been able to generate reports that feature the data that most interests them. According to Lund, the office "shifted from being the supplier of data based on request to really being a builder of systems that teachers and staff could use." That meant school staff could monitor data more closely and develop responses to trends quickly. Lund said he has facilitated several professional development sessions with school leaders and teachers to equip them with the skills to use LROIX effectively.

Putting data in the hands of schools made it a tool for improvement rather than just a district evaluation tool. Lund explained that the district's culture supports a nonpunitive approach to using data:

The culture of our system [is] a culture of continuous improvement, a culture of use of data, a culture of trust and professionalism around that use of data. Data is not used as a means of punishing staff [or a] means of demeaning staff. It's really used as a means of shining the light on areas of concern and setting up systems of improvement around that.

Data grounded the professional conversations and decisions of district staff. When ILTs, composed of school leaders and teacher leaders, met to create goals for the year, they drew on school data. When principal supervisors conducted monthly walk-throughs of school sites, they discussed data in relation to the school's goals for the year. When schools hosted leaders and teachers from other schools during their annual Collaborative Inquiry Visits, they provided an in-depth overview of the school's data trends to contextualize what visitors would observe. The OCIPD, for example, helped grade-level teams conduct structured unit plans that included monitoring of student data. Teams kept track of how student proficiency on benchmark exams aligned to their current unit of study and CCSS. They identified groups of students who have been traditionally underserved by public education, such as African American students and English learners, and monitored their proficiency rates. The first component of the plan was a unit study that included examining the standards, analyzing previous student work and assessments, and identifying learning-target outcomes and teaching tasks for the upcoming unit. Educators checked in on student progress midway through the unit, then analyzed student work and reflected on the unit toward the end. Student data were used in frequent and structured ways, allowing teachers to plan purposefully to meet student needs.

In addition to driving strategic planning and decision-making, schools used LROIX creatively to respond to student needs. Lund explained that staff look at daily attendance and grades data to intervene with students quickly:

Now you could actually see who was failing in relation to their attendance and who was failing in relation to their discipline and who was failing in relation to prior historical grades. Now we pull in daily grades, so you can intervene on who is failing before they get a final fail. Before, it was only when course history posted. You're trying to fix something after the fact versus, "This child is failing now. How can we intervene now?"

The teachers we spoke to emphasized the importance of using data to support students. One high school teacher described how subject-matter departments rely on student data to plan interventions. In this school, teachers identified baseline data for students receiving a tutoring intervention in order to track their progress over time. Teachers evaluated the efficacy of the intervention based on those data and, the high school teacher noted, "if the data [don't] improve, then that system is not working and we have to look at changing it."

LBUSD used data to inform big-picture planning, but also to intervene at the right moment and prevent student needs from escaping the notice of their educators. The district's focus on using data for continuous improvement and intervention allowed school leaders to provide what students needed to improve achievement.

Spotlight: The Collaborative Inquiry Visit

The Collaborative Inquiry Visit (CIV) is a signature practice in LBUSD that weaves together the threads that help support student learning. Implemented systemwide in 2014–15, these visits bring district leaders, school leaders, and teachers into the classrooms of their peers at a hosting school site to support school improvement with a focus on teaching and learning. The CIV is simultaneously professional development and a district alignment tool. Teachers, principals, and district leaders learn side by side and across school sites, dig into what the Five U’s look like in practice, and serve as resources to each other. At the same time, district leaders monitor the school’s progress over time to offer feedback. By the end of the visit, school leaders have a set of next steps to improve instructional practices and student learning. Each school’s budget includes funding for substitute teachers so that Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) teachers can participate, but for some schools in need of more support, the district chips in funds to allow a larger team of teachers to see what other schools are doing.

A CIV at one LBUSD school site, Harte Elementary School, illustrated these features. During the second of three CIV sessions Harte would host in 2017–18, a group of about 25 educators met to learn about the school’s instructional goals for the year, help to assess the school’s progress, and offer feedback. The group of educators included Harte’s principal, assistant principal, and a teacher from each grade level. ILTs (principals and teachers) from Garfield Elementary and Herrera Elementary also attended, in addition to Deputy Superintendent Baker and Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools Moskovitz.

In the early years of CIV implementation, the district matched schools based partly on demographic similarity, so Garfield, Harte, and Herrera elementary schools might have been CIV partners because most of their students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals or because they served large populations of English learners. But in 2017–18, the district grouped eight to 12 schools with similar goals. From there, school leaders self-selected into groups of three to four schools that could work together for the year.

In 2016–17, Harte focused on a literacy goal related to close reading for deeper understanding of texts. In 2017–18, Lisa Worsham, a first-year principal and a former k–12 literacy program manager, developed a theory of action related to U4 and with an emphasis on math. This Understanding focuses on formative assessment and is anchored to Dylan Wiliam’s *Embedded Formative Assessment*. Garfield and Herrera schools also focused on math in 2017–18.

The Harte Elementary theory of action for 2017–18 was that embedding Dylan Wiliam’s five strategies for formative assessment into instruction would narrow the achievement gap for English learners. Those strategies were (1) planning lessons collaboratively with clear learning goals and success criteria, (2) designing activities that elicit evidence of learning, (3) providing effective feedback, (4) facilitating student-to-student interaction, and (5) encouraging students to take ownership of their learning.

According to Worsham, “If you think about something you taught, and kids really learned it, I guarantee all five strategies are embedded.”

Worsham briefed CIV participants about the school’s journey related to instructional practice and the systems in place to embed formative assessment into teacher practice for 2017–18. Using data, she described how the school’s previous literacy focus impacted student achievement and informed

goals for the current year. She previewed the lesson plan structure teachers would be using and asked CIV observers to look for evidence that formative assessment strategies were being used and to note questions about their use. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1
Harte Elementary Collaborative Inquiry Visit Observation Sheet

Theory of Action: *If teachers collaboratively plan lessons with clear learning goals and success criteria, design activities to elicit evidence of learning, provide effective feedback, facilitate student to student interaction, and encourage students to take ownership of their learning, then student achievement will increase and the achievement gap for ELLs will narrow.*

Grade Level:	Content:	
Formative Assessment Strategy	Observed Evidence	Questions/Wonderings
1. Learning Goals/Success Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the learning goals/success criteria? • How was the goal/success criteria shared with students? 		
2. Elicit Evidence of Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the task align to the goal/success criteria? • What evidence of learning is the teacher collecting? • How is it being collected? 		
3. Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What feedback is being provided? • What do students do with the feedback? 		
4. Students Acting as Resources for One Another <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are students working together? • What are students saying to each other? 		
5. Students Acting as Owners of their Own Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are students monitoring their own learning? 		

Source: Provided by Principal Lisa Worsham.

Ultimately, Worsham hoped to build greater instructional consistency across the school. “It’s important that at this school, we have common pedagogy. This is a journey. Today is really a baseline for us,” she said. Over the course of the day, every classroom in the school would be visited by at least one group of CIV observers who would provide that observational baseline data and support her efforts to guide the faculty in a conversation that would improve practice.

In small groups, the CIV observers spent about 10 minutes in each classroom they visited, taking notes about the teachers’ use of formative assessment strategies. Between visits, the groups met in hallways to discuss what they saw. Worsham seemed at ease working in a group with her principal supervisor and the district’s deputy superintendent. She was candid about what she saw in classrooms, how instruction reflected her goals for the school, and what she might try when instruction fell short.

After visiting one classroom, Worsham and her supervisor, Assistant Superintendent Moskovitz, agreed that the instructor needed support with identifying evidence of student learning and providing inquiry-based feedback to push authentic learning forward. Worsham noted that the teacher's feedback "was about how to do the task, not about what they were learning." Moskovitz agreed and added, "I have heard teachers be more intentional about feedback, and questioning rather than telling." He helped Worsham think about how she could lead her staff in a conversation about their practice through a series of prompts, rather than listing a set of predetermined next steps. This exemplifies how LBUSD leadership modeled an inquiry approach for school leaders, with the goal that they would then model the approach with their teachers. Ultimately, the district wants teachers to use an inquiry approach in the classroom to help students develop critical thinking skills.

Once the CIV observers completed their classroom visits, they reconvened to identify patterns they had noticed during their observations. Worsham led a discussion on "stars and wishes," or what they saw that positively reflected the school's theory of action and what staff could continue working on. Observers said they saw evidence of teacher collaboration and of students taking ownership of their learning. One group shared that they wondered how teachers might anticipate mistakes and misconceptions and thereby be better prepared to offer meaningful feedback. The question this group posed was related to math coaching they had received at their school, suggesting that the CIV process provided an opportunity for professional development to spread across schools in the system. Educators at a school with a math coach could share advice, based on their learning, with educators who had not had that experience.

Harte educators were also able to learn from the district leaders in attendance, who were able to share strategies they had seen work in schools throughout the district. Baker and Moskovitz described a tool math coaches had introduced in other schools that could be used at Harte, a "task monitoring chart." This tool is used in LBUSD schools that participate in Math in Common professional learning. It helps teachers monitor student strategies, misconceptions, and learning needs in the moment, so that teachers can strategically make small groups, reteach, or offer targeted feedback. By connecting Harte educators' instructional needs to tools and strategies working well at other schools, district leaders demonstrated that their role in the CIV was supportive rather than evaluative. When one teacher suggested that it would have been intimidating to be teaching in one of the classrooms visited by district leaders, Baker replied, "We're learners, too. This is not about judgment. It's about trying to connect the dots between schools and within schools."

At the end of the day, Moskovitz and Worsham, as well as Harte's assistant principal, discussed with the Garfield and Herrera principals what they would be taking back to their schools from the CIV. Garfield's principal, Claire Alvarez, mentioned the value of observing teachers work with the Five U's, since Garfield had been focused on the first three U's. Because school teams can decide for themselves which of the Five U's to focus on each year, the CIV is an opportunity to take on the challenge of focusing on a different Understanding in the future.

Moskovitz challenged Harte's leadership team to redefine what feedback is—that it is planned in advance and moves student learning forward—and encouraged them to consider how the Harte ILT could help teachers see this kind of feedback in action and connect it to their ongoing professional development.

Investing in the People

“Every student deserves a great teacher, not by chance but by design.”¹⁷ These words reflect LBUSD’s approach to all its educators and staff. Pamela Seki, Assistant Superintendent of OCIPD, described how LBUSD leaders have taken this quote “to heart” and pushed the district to consider questions such as, “How do we begin to design great teachers? What support can we provide them? What PD can we provide them?” As a result, LBUSD has adopted several structures and initiatives to support the preparation and growth of its teachers and leaders. In this section, we explore how the district’s hiring practices, professional development opportunities, culture of collaboration, and funding decisions helped LBUSD ensure that students had access to talented educators and prepared principals.

Hiring, assignment, and retention

LBUSD’s approach to hiring, assigning, and retaining educators and leaders was in place before the shift to CCSS and was created to support quality teaching and learning. Because district leaders understand that teachers are the most important in-school contributors to student success, they dedicate considerable resources to ensuring all LBUSD students have an effective teacher. According to data from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, just 32 of the district’s approximately 3,320 teachers were without full credentials in 2016–17, which represents one of the lowest percentages of uncertified teachers among urban districts in the state.¹⁸ In addition, just 16 of its teachers were assigned in areas for which they were not qualified to teach.¹⁹ The district leaders have committed to several hiring, assignment, and retention strategies that may explain how they have been able to ensure that highly trained and supported educators promote student achievement.

Just 32 of the district’s approximately 3,320 teachers were without full credentials in 2016–17, which represents one of the lowest percentages of uncertified teachers among urban districts in the state.

Partnership with Cal State Long Beach and Long Beach City College

The district has a partnership with Cal State Long Beach and Long Beach City College to improve college readiness, graduation rates, and postsecondary attainment. This partnership has created a pipeline of new teachers. Postsecondary faculty and district educators collaborate to develop the coursework, fieldwork, and professional development for current and future LBUSD teachers. But the partnership begins earlier—LBUSD graduates can attend Long Beach City College tuition-free their first year, and they are guaranteed admission to Cal State Long Beach if they meet the state’s college entrance requirements. This partnership is one reason graduates of Cal State Long Beach made up approximately 70% of the district’s new teachers, according to a report from 2016.²⁰ Moskovitz described how this decades-long partnership has supported the district’s success:

It’s just a nice symbiotic relationship that we have with Cal State Long Beach [and] even Long Beach [City] College, for that matter, with our Long Beach Promise that supports all of that. Many of our students will stay within the city. They will go to

Long Beach City College. They will go to Cal State Long Beach. They'll get their teacher credential, and they're back in our system. [It] creates a nice synergy over time that has gone on now for 50 plus years.

Ruth Ashley, the Deputy Superintendent of Education Services, oversees staffing and shared that:

[LBUSD has] a relationship with Cal State Long Beach where their student teachers are placed here. We have a very big pool of candidates from Cal State Long Beach, and we try to interview all of those candidates, though of course we still accept applications from throughout the nation. But we do have that great partnership with Cal State Long Beach, which we're really grateful for.

Ashley went on to describe how the close relationship between the district and Cal State Long Beach has improved the college's instruction of future teachers:

There's also been a strong articulation of Cal State Long Beach instructors who have also served as teachers and curriculum leaders for Long Beach Unified. It's our own teachers teaching our future teachers and current teachers within their induction program, so there's always been that strong alignment.

LBUSD teachers echoed the value of having district teachers serve as educators of prospective teachers at Cal State Long Beach. For example, one LBUSD graduate with 15 years of experience as a district high school teacher explained:

All of my professors in my credential program [at Cal State Long Beach] were teachers or curriculum leaders [in LBUSD]. So when I graduated, I came in, and I was like, "I know all this stuff" because that's exactly what they were teaching at the college. It all kind of works together.

Many of the teachers and district staff we spoke to remarked on the small-town feel that results from cultivating its teacher workforce from within Long Beach. Many LBUSD students grow up in the district, attend Cal State Long Beach, become LBUSD teachers, and send their own children to the district's schools. Some told stories about having deep, multigenerational connections to the district, and thus to each other. During one professional development session we observed, for example, one teacher realized that her colleague's father had been the principal of her elementary school. Stories like this were not uncommon.

Hiring criteria

LBUSD created systems designed to select teachers, school leaders, and district leaders who are committed to supporting all students—and competent in doing so. Ashley explained:

First and foremost, we value [the applicant's] character and we want to make sure that we vet our teachers centrally before we send them out to the school sites. Our protocols for interviews are really to ... dig deeper into their character as a teacher, as an educator. And we value the teacher who will say, "You can put me at any school," because the city of Long Beach is so diverse, ... the district is so diverse, ... and we have affluent areas and we've got those that are in the lower socioeconomic ends, but we prefer the teacher who has that attitude that they can teach at any school.

Another district administrator described how the district has refined its selection process for teachers and administrators by working with the Haberman Educational Foundation in the last few years. The Haberman interview approach is based on years of research “derived from what the best teachers believe their job will and should be.”²¹ The questions in the interview are especially aimed at assessing teachers’ persistence and attitudes toward teaching students of all backgrounds and levels, among other things.

As in many districts across the state, the 2008 recession and its aftermath led to tight budgets and hiring freezes in LBUSD. Even when the district was not hiring, LBUSD identified areas in which it could improve, which included continuing to develop its workforce to better meet the needs of students. Deputy Superintendent Baker described the situation:

In the last several years, we’ve been in much less of a hiring stage. I think our overall focus has been continuing to develop the workforce that we have. I’d say the last year and a half, we’ve been really happy to be able to hire.

Stability

LBUSD works to retain teachers and leaders to help support student achievement. The district’s stability starts at the top: Chris Steinhauser has served as superintendent for more than 15 years. The prior superintendent, Carl Cohn, served for 10 years. In contrast, one national study estimated that about 60% of superintendents have 5 or fewer years of experience in their current position.²² Other studies suggest that superintendent longevity is associated with better student achievement.²³ Both Cohn and Steinhauser had long histories in the district before becoming superintendent, and Steinhauser’s tenure as Cohn’s deputy superintendent helped ensure continuity when he transitioned to the top role.²⁴ Moskowitz noted that the district’s school board has also been a stable part of the district’s leadership team:

We have an incredibly stable leadership team. It’s unheard of to have a district with two superintendents in 28 years. That’s totally unheard of. Our board is incredibly stable, incredibly supportive of our work. Rarely will they step down.

One way this stability in district leadership translates to an improved education for students is that the superintendent and school board have learned to work together collaboratively. Moskowitz described this collaborative work and communication:

[The school board] will bring [any issues] up with the superintendent. They’ll bring [any issues] up potentially with one of us in assistant superintendent–level positions. They are very understanding of their role inciting policy and then letting the people that they hire, the superintendent and his staff, actually do the work. I think those are things that underpin all of what we do, all that we’ve accomplished.

The district also has high rates of teachers and principals who remain in the district and in their positions for much longer than national averages.²⁵ This is important because both principal²⁶ and teacher turnover²⁷ are associated with lower gains in student achievement. Ashley shared the retention rates of teachers in the district:

Ninety-two percent of our new hires are still in the district after 5 years. And 92% of our principals are former Long Beach teachers. So, people stay. And when we do have people who need to leave because they are moving or something is going on in their

life they always want to say, “Can I take a leave of absence? ... I don’t want to give up on Long Beach. There may be a point when I come back.” It’s a hard thing because it does become family here.

One of the major reasons that teachers and principals said they stay in the district is because of the support they receive to continue to grow as professionals. The district has a Teacher Quality and Retention Office focused on supporting and keeping teachers. Kimberly Dalton, the director of this office, described the importance of continuing to develop LBUSD educators:

When we did our new teacher survey years ago and when we were hiring so many [new teachers], year after year, the number one reason why they said they would stay is because of the professional development.

As described throughout this case study, LBUSD provided ongoing professional development opportunities to teachers and school leaders throughout their careers. This helped them continue to grow and allowed them to see how they might advance in the district if they wanted to assume a leadership role, such as roles in teacher leadership, coaching, or school leadership. Moreover, ongoing professional development helped educators develop networks of practitioners with whom they could collaborate and from whom they could learn. Along with LBUSD’s several other efforts to encourage educators and staff to remain in the district, opportunities for professional development created consistency in how the district and schools supported student growth. While most districts provide ongoing PD to staff, the level of coherence of PD to LBUSD’s mission and goals ensured that LBUSD’s development was meaningful and supported a sense of collective efficacy among educators.

Compensation was not mentioned as a tool for recruitment or retention, but it is worth noting that LBUSD offers a competitive salary that starts at more than \$58,000 for a first-year, fully certified teacher and can exceed \$100,000 for its most veteran teachers.²⁸ Salaries in most districts that border Long Beach begin at \$50,000–\$55,000 and top out at about \$100,000.²⁹ In the largest bordering district, Los Angeles Unified School District, salaries begin at \$50,000 and range up to \$88,000.³⁰ As higher salary ranges are associated with higher retention rates,³¹ the competitive salary scale in LBUSD may also contribute to staff stability in the district.

Hiring challenge

A continued challenge is to diversify LBUSD’s teacher workforce. In the most recent year of publicly available data (2016–17), approximately 56% of LBUSD teachers were White, 20% Hispanic or Latino/a, 7% African American, and 7% representing other ethnicities.³² These demographics are similar to overall teacher racial and ethnic demographics in the state and mean that many students will not have the opportunity to be taught by teachers of color.³³ To begin to address this challenge, Long Beach created education career pathways for high school students, enabling them to explore teaching careers. A district administrator explained LBUSD’s current efforts:

One of the things that we’re thinking about right now ... is how to build up our education-oriented student pathways in the high schools, because our schools are beautifully diverse. If we could get students who might be interested in education, if we start there, [we could] keep them in our city [and] bring them to provide service in their own community. It’s one of the ways that we’re thinking about diversifying our teaching force that then would pay off for our administrative workforce, too.

Teacher diversity in LBUSD is important for several reasons. First, some research suggests that students taught by teachers of the same racial or ethnic background experience greater gains in achievement.³⁴ Second, the underrepresentation of teachers of color in the district suggests that the district's pathway into teaching prevents certain racial and ethnic subgroups from pursuing a career in education. Having diverse role models in childhood can also help to prevent implicit bias toward other racial and ethnic groups in adulthood and prepare students for work and life in an increasingly diverse and global society.³⁵ Moreover, as the district administrator described, attracting a diverse teaching workforce should ultimately contribute to more diverse leadership. Having leaders who represent diverse perspectives is more likely to result in improved outcomes for students and families in the district.

Professional development

LBUSD has focused on professional development for many years, but shifting to CCSS helped to strengthen existing development and motivated the creation of new approaches. While the details of LBUSD's extensive professional development structures are discussed throughout the case study, in this section, we provide an overview of these efforts.

To support the educational shifts required by CCSS, the district began its professional development efforts early and gradually. In 2011–12, the district dedicated professional learning time toward developing shared knowledge about CCSS and creating a plan for how the district would transition to these new standards. The following year, educators learned about the specific instructional shifts that CCSS demanded. The district began adopting CCSS in 2013–14 and fully implemented it in 2014–15, during the first year the Smarter Balanced Assessment was offered. LBUSD's 2017–18 Local Control and Accountability Plan described the integrated professional learning support that the district provided to educators:

LBUSD had a comprehensive system of support for teachers to enhance Common Core implementation, expand student success, and close the achievement gap.... This infrastructure included curriculum leaders, coaches, trainers, Teachers on Special Assignment, and other academic staff.... Teachers received professional development, curriculum support, instructional resources, and opportunities to collaborate on student assessments, data analyses, and research-based best practices.

Educators we interviewed confirmed that the district's approach to professional learning in the past several years has helped them improve their instruction. For example, an elementary school teacher shared:

Professional development, whether it was on campus ... or whether it was at [the district's Teacher Resource Center], we're given the support on multiple levels. It wasn't something where, "This is what you're expected to do and then that's it. Go figure it out." It was like, "We're going to do this together." I think that was the part where teachers felt comfortable. It was like, "We're in this boat together to achieve something greater."

The district also provides support to educators during the first 2 years of their career in LBUSD. Since 1998, the state of California has required that all newly certified teachers participate in an induction program—the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program—during their first 2 years of teaching. All districts were once required to offer these programs, but since 2009, they have had the option to reallocate their funding to other uses.³⁶ While some districts still offer BTSA programs, many have pared down or eliminated them.

Long Beach has maintained its BTSA program, in which newly credentialed teachers receive a minimum of 4 hours of support each month for 2 years through district coaching and support.

Indeed, some new teachers in the state spend their own money to attend a BTSA program with an external provider. Long Beach has maintained its BTSA program, in which newly credentialed teachers receive a minimum of 4 hours of support each month for 2 years through district coaching and support, as required by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. BTSA provides training on “pedagogy, instructional tools, and working with diverse student populations, especially English learners and students with disabilities.”³⁷ As part of the program, BTSA participants observe teachers; reflect on how to engage students, particularly English learners, in collaborative conversations; and work on lesson plans that address the varying needs of all students.³⁸ Director of Teacher Quality and Retention Ashley shared how the induction program encourages teachers to stay in the district by providing valuable training and an opportunity to develop connections with other new teachers:

The connections are never-ending ... and our induction program is excellent, and they’re building relationships in those programs with other new educators and with their induction coaches. They have a solid foundation when they start. [They get] a lot of support, and I think that just keeps them here.

The district also provides professional learning opportunities to its educators—teachers as well as school and district leaders—throughout their careers. These opportunities have increasingly focused on understanding and analyzing data to help educators interpret data so they can identify students in need of specific kinds of support, as well as areas in which they need to strengthen learning for all students. As noted above, while the district’s data collection system has been in place for over 10 years, recent updates have allowed teachers to more easily access and make sense of data, including test scores, indicators of social and emotional well-being from the CORE survey, and discipline reports. In 2017–18, a major data-related goal of district training was helping educators use the updated LROIX system, including through a “Data Day,” described by one teacher:

Every school on that day was doing the same exact thing of looking at the data. And it wasn’t required, but we had 100, 120 teachers there. Of course, we got paid for it, but I think most teachers were like, “This is really helpful. Now I know how to access the system, and I know how to accurately look at it and pull off reports for my individual classroom needs.”

We describe LBUSD’s strategies to train teachers on the use of data throughout the case study, and we summarize some of the key professional learning opportunities that have supported improved instruction and student learning below.

Overview of LBUSD’s Key Professional Learning Strategies

1. **Curriculum Specialists:** A team of curriculum specialists creates curricular materials, co-teaches lessons with teachers to model instructional strategies, guides staff discussions about content and standards, and facilitates several other professional learning strategies. (See “Inside the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development” on page 44 for a more detailed description.)
2. **Instructional Leadership Teams:** A principal and at least two or three teachers from each school attend district-level professional learning sessions together two to three times a year. They get training from the district, which they are expected to bring back to their schools to help facilitate school improvements. (See “Collaborative training” on page 29 for a more detailed description.)
3. **Collaborative Inquiry Visits:** Each school is in a network with approximately three other schools. Teachers and administrators from the schools visit each other’s schools to give each other feedback in the areas they are working on. This also provides an opportunity for educators to learn about practices they might implement in their own schools. (See “Spotlight: The Collaborative Inquiry Visit” on page 17 for a more detailed description.)
4. **Unit Lesson Study:** District instructional coaches work with teams of teachers at a school site to take a “deep dive” into what students should know under the CCSS and then plan a lesson together, teach the lesson while watching each other, and review outcome data from the lesson to determine how to improve upon it. This helps teachers practice the steps necessary to collaborate together and also gives them a better understanding of the standards and instructional practices needed to support student learning. The unit lesson study was piloted in 2016–17 at 22 schools and implemented across the district the following year. (See “The math lesson study” on page 36 for a more detailed description.)
5. **Principal Meetings:** Principals attend district meetings focused on teaching, learning, and student data, especially as they relate to supporting the instructional shifts required under the CCSS. Principal meetings had existed in the district for several years, but they became more focused on teaching and learning after 2014–15. (See “The power of learning together” on page 14 for a more detailed description.)
6. **ObserveMe:** Teachers use an online application to indicate when they would like other educators to come to their classrooms to observe them and provide feedback. This process helps educators see practices that they might want to replicate and also provides valuable feedback for teachers that helps them continue to learn and grow. This platform was implemented in some schools in the district in 2016–17.
7. **MyPD:** The district compiled instructional resources and videos of teachers from across the district who were delivering lessons on different topics and addressing different standards. This convenient video platform provides personalized, self-paced courses for teachers and helps educators see what effective teaching and learning looks like in LBUSD classrooms. MyPD was implemented in 2016–17.
8. **Staff Meetings:** LBUSD’s philosophy is that every meeting is professional development. School leaders are encouraged to make sure that every whole-school, grade-level, or department meeting is dedicated to helping teachers meet the school’s goals, rather than focusing on administrative or logistical issues.

Culture of collaboration

A culture of collaboration made LBUSD's work around investing in its people possible. The district has several strategies for creating this culture. Perhaps most importantly, collaboration is included in the Five U's, making it a key district priority. The district also provides resources and training to facilitate teacher collaboration, and professional development is designed for school leaders and teachers to learn together; district staff work together to design and implement initiatives.

Understandings Continuum: U5

As discussed earlier, a key way the district created a common approach to teaching and learning was through U5 of its Understandings Continuum. One of the most recently added Understandings, U5 focuses on creating a culture of collaboration for both student and educator learning. Specifically, U5 states that:

Effective instructional teams promote a collective culture of efficacy leading to a focus on improving common instructional practice resulting in increased student achievement.

U5 encourages educators to:

- engage in collaboration;
- engage in data analysis, problem solving, and reflection; and
- develop a shared belief that, through collective action, student outcomes will be positively influenced.

To foster this culture of collaboration, U5 provides guidance to educators about the key processes and structures needed to foster cooperation and teamwork. For example, LBUSD suggests that teams first establish “a collaborative compact (norms, roles, etc.) focusing on building relationships that encourage honesty, respect, vulnerability, and trust,” as well as using “data and relevant research to initiate collegial discussions” around areas such as “closing the achievement gap.”³⁹ This helps educators recognize that they must take deliberate actions to support collaborative practices, as opposed to just expecting that collaboration will spontaneously occur within their schools.

Teacher collaboration

In addition to establishing guidance around collaboration through U5, the district provides resources and trainings on best practices for collaboration. Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools Moskovitz described how LBUSD approaches teacher collaboration:

Collective teacher efficacy is the idea that we're going to bring teams of teachers together to analyze data, set goals, plan instruction, observe one another teach, co-teach in some cases, [then give] feedback [and] analyze.

Peter Davis, the Assistant Superintendent of High Schools, explained that the district has provided schools with autonomy to set aside funding to support collaboration time:

Money [has] been put aside so [educators] can collaborate together, and money [has been] put aside [so that teachers can] go look at somebody else's classroom and see what they're doing, and all the practices that go with [collaboration].... If you're going to go to somebody else's classroom, you've got to ... prepare them for how to do that and what to look for.

Schools used their funding to establish several types of opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Deputy Superintendent Baker noted that schools provided time for collaboration and described the types of activities teachers engaged in during this time:

In places where we've seen schools create incredibly cooperative systems (through conference periods, release time, prep [days] that include shared time), that's where we see a lot of [improvement of] results on behalf of students. They use their data. They embrace planning, [analyze] their data, [and predict] what difficulties are going to be in a unit or a lesson. And it pays off.

Principals and teachers confirmed that they have found these collaborative practices both helpful and encouraging because they felt better supported in their work. An elementary school principal, a 20-year district veteran, explained:

We need to define as a team what [effective teaching and learning] looks like. Let's go and walk in each other's rooms. That was a shift. Teachers really felt like, "They're not going to tell us what to do. They're going to help us figure this out."

Our conversations with teachers confirmed that the district's investments in providing collaboration time have improved their instructional practices, including helping them to better understand how to meet the higher expectations of new state academic standards. One teacher described how she and her colleagues spent their time together:

Teachers' collaboration time is spent on the real work of what you taught this week. How did you teach it? How did your students get that cycle going? That's the feeling of "Now we're finally practicing this," where it's been years of "Read about the pedagogy, look at the standards, learn this." ... After all of these shifts, I think this year we're in full practice of using the resources to teach the standards.

Evidence from our observations also illustrates how teachers work together. One school had a dedicated room for teachers to collaborate. The school's instructional goals were posted on the walls of the room along with motivational quotes. One grade-level goal, for example, indicated that 90% of 2nd-grade students "will achieve at/above grade level on reading benchmarks." Next to that was a midyear 2nd-grade ELA analysis, summarizing the strengths and challenges in meeting these goals. Strengths included "inspire readers with high interest read-alouds," and weaknesses were "length of text [can be] intimidating, need to build stamina" and "return to text for evidence, proving answers." A large "celebration quilt" filled one corner of the room, with a quote by Henry Ford: "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." The quilt included statements documenting major successes for the teachers, such as "Because of Team [School Name], 40% of 3rd-graders met or exceeded on SBAC [Smarter Balanced Assessment

Consortium], an increase of 6% which was the highest grade-level increase.” This physical space for teachers to collaborate helps teachers hold each other accountable for meeting student needs and provides resources for educators to succeed in doing so.

Collaborative training

The district has shifted to an emphasis on training teachers and school leaders together in ILTs, rather than having separate meetings. LBUSD leadership saw this move as a critical step toward ensuring teachers and principals are on the same page about the work needed to deliver more rigorous instruction under CCSS. Deputy Superintendent Baker described the rationale for providing joint training:

“We moved from having parallel training for teachers on one road and administrators on another road to finding more opportunities to bring these two groups, as teams from their sites, together.”

We moved from having parallel training for teachers on one road and administrators on another road to finding more opportunities to bring these two groups, as teams from their sites, together. And have opportunities for them not only to receive training together, but also then to develop the change methodology together in the room. So when they go back to their school site, they’re not having to tell one another, “Here’s what I learned. Here’s what *I* learned. Oh, how do we put it together?” We have facilitated a transition to Instructional Leadership Team training, which has, I think, been huge.

A district instructional coach explained the importance of having principals and teachers attend district-level trainings together:

Having teachers be there when their principal is learning with them has made a big difference. Because traditionally there’s probably always been principal meetings, and I suspect it’s been information driven. And that information goes every which way depending on the leadership style of the individual. But I would say now nobody can hide. Everyone is hearing the same information at the same time. It’s really changed the relationship among the teachers and their leader, instead of learning in a silo over here and then just telling my staff something you need to know. It’s been really good.

Another district administrator described the value of providing principals with professional learning opportunities alongside their teachers: “You have to help the principals understand what to look for in a classroom and how to know whether it’s the right thing or not.” Because the teachers and principals experienced the same district guidance around teaching and learning expectations, teachers and principals were invested in the same work and better understood how to work together to ensure that their efforts lead to improved student outcomes.

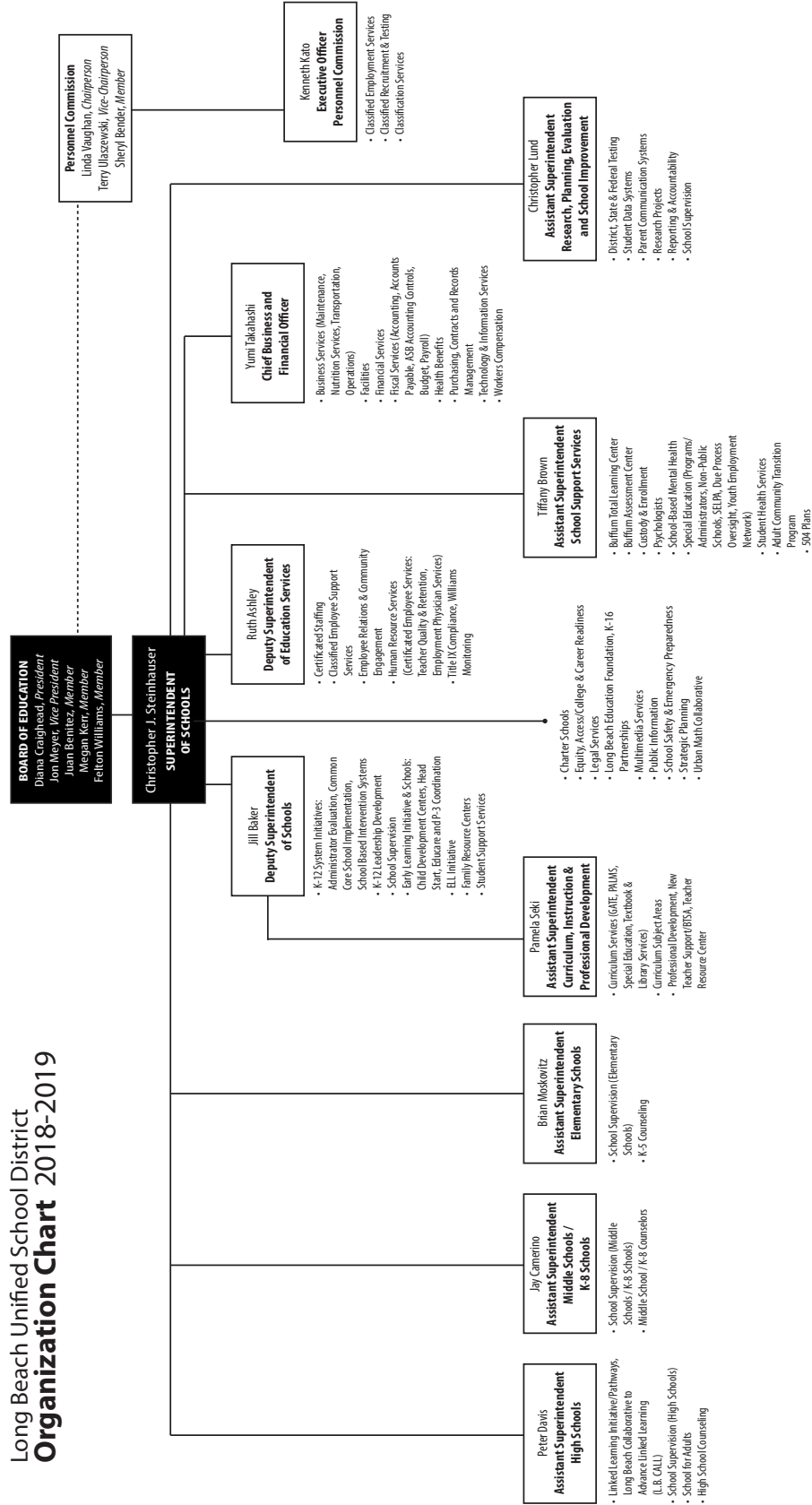
District-level collaboration

District-level staff collaborated to ensure they coordinated their support of students and educators. LBUSD’s district leadership included six assistant superintendents and two deputy superintendents. (See LBUSD’s organization chart in Figure 2.)

Figure 2

Long Beach Unified School District Organization Chart 2018-19

Long Beach Unified School District Organization Chart 2018-2019



Revised: September 2018

Source: Long Beach Unified School District. (2018). http://www.lbschools.net/Asset/files/District/LBUSD_Organizational_Chart.pdf (accessed 06/24/19).

Each assistant superintendent represented a different aspect of schooling: high schools; elementary schools; curriculum, instruction, and professional development; student support services (e.g., psychological and health services); and research and school improvement (e.g., district, state, and federal testing). District-level leaders spent considerable time together to ensure that each of their efforts are synergistic and complement other work occurring throughout the district. Assistant Superintendent of Research, Planning, and Evaluation Lund explained:

I would say one thing that's unique about Long Beach is we don't have what I would call that traditional siloed effect that you find in other districts. There's a high level of co-interdependency, if you will, across departments within our system. We communicate. We sit in a lot of meetings together. There [are] multiple opportunities to embrace and own the work collectively. I think that makes a big difference when the work doesn't just say, "Oh well, that's research work," or "That's the leveled office work," or "That's just [Office of Curriculum] work." There [are] always opportunities to see how we can connect and integrate that work into all of our work so that it feels like it's all moving in the same direction.

Not only did district administrators collaborate with each other, but they also collaborated with principals and teachers so that LBUSD's educators were supported to meet students' needs. For example, the district's instructional coaches have increasingly spent more time at school sites since the implementation of CCSS. One instructional coach described:

It's opened up that pipeline now that I get a lot more emails from these teachers. We have a much stronger relationship. We've established very strong relationships with the teachers. We're very clear that we're not evaluative. We're there to support you and move instruction toward student performance being raised.

To connect the district's work to schools, the district's instructional coaches provided support to schools and teachers who might have been struggling to meet students' needs. These coaches assisted teachers who wanted to improve their practice. One instructional coach described the "open-door" relationship she has with the teachers she works with:

[Teachers are] emailing me, calling me [and asking], "Can you stop by?" I was just asked to do a 1-hour [session] today, where I just sat with the whole grade level. We go out on demand. And we have particular sites now that we're really just kind of entrenched in now. And that's been really fun.

Another instructional coach described how she used co-teaching to support a struggling teacher:

I was co-teaching with a teacher last week and we preplanned a lesson. [She said], "It's really gonna be hard. They never can do this. It's impossible." And I said, "Let's give it a go." By the end of that 30-minute lesson, they had all done it. And she said, "So you have a secret sauce." I said "No. This was a really good lesson. I had no secret sauce. These kids rose to the occasion."

Instructional coaches are strategic about collaborating with each other to support teacher learning and instruction. One coach explained that instructional coaches who specialize in specific content areas—grade-level, subject-area, special education, or English learners—"work in tandem ... to support our curriculum,... to support our PD, to support the conversations with teachers." This

helps create a common language among district-level coaches about how to best support LBUSD's diverse range of learners. A limitation to this strategy, however, could be that it does not prioritize meeting unique student needs. In our interviews, we did not hear about specific strategies tailored to support English learners and students with special needs with meeting the demands of new standards. The district has since developed a special initiative to support English learners (see "Supports for English learners" on page 41).

Funding

LBUSD has dedicated significant financial resources to ensuring all students have access to great teachers. Assistant Superintendent of OCIPD Seki said:

In Long Beach, we are quite fortunate to prioritize professional development in terms of our financial support for personal development, as well as time allocation and really using professional development as a lever to grow our teachers.

As in most districts, however, securing funding is a continuous challenge in LBUSD. In order to prepare educators to meet the rigorous demands under CCSS, the district used funding from philanthropic foundations and the state that it can push directly to schools to support students experiencing homelessness, those who are from low-income families, foster children, and English learners. Examples include the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, federal Perkins funding, and State Career Technical Education grants. These funds allow all LBUSD teachers to collaborate and participate in face-to-face professional development. "For a system as large as ours, that's pretty incredible," said one district administrator.

Assistant Superintendent Moskovitz described the value of a 5-year, \$7.5 million philanthropic grant the district received for professional development:

Because we saw that there was going to be a pretty dramatic shift, especially in mathematics and the way we teach mathematics, the district went out and applied for and received a pretty sizeable grant that is expiring at the end of this year: the Bechtel Math Grant ... in the millions of dollars. That funded ... every teacher in elementary schools, [and] middle schools as well, to receive face-to-face training three or four times a year on shifts in math practice.

The district also provided additional funding and targeted support to educators in schools in which students face the biggest challenges. A district administrator explained: "Our board and our superintendent have provided a lot of funding that goes directly to sites for sites to determine the best way to implement support for students." The administrator went on to explain how the state's allocation of funding supports LBUSD students with the greatest needs:

Much of the money that comes into our district from the state comes because of our students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, for students who are homeless, foster, [English learners], and some other students. We receive many millions of dollars specifically geared for those students. Most of that money goes directly out to the sites. The teachers, Instructional Leadership Teams, [and] school site council, they look at data, analyze the needs of teachers, analyze the needs of students ... and have implemented a variety of things. There might be a teacher on special

assignment who does some small-group pull-out type work. It could be additional counseling time to support student attendance [or] to support some behavior types of things. At 33 of our lowest-performing schools, our board and superintendent have provided three literacy teachers, from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

The district's goal is to allocate funding to help improve all of its teachers' practices, especially for teachers who serve students with the greatest needs. "We really prioritize collaboration, planning, and getting better together, and being learners together," said Seki.

Developing Deeper Learning Practices

Statewide implementation of CCSS has demanded new attitudes and approaches to teaching and learning. New math standards, for example, emphasize the importance of conceptual understanding and state that to be considered mathematically proficient, students must be able to: justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, respond to the arguments of others, generalize their understanding to apply math to everyday problems, and "interpret their mathematical results in the context of the situation and reflect on whether the results make sense."⁴⁰ New English language arts standards call for greater engagement with complex texts that enables students to form well-considered arguments supported with text evidence and prepares them for college- and career-level reading.⁴¹ Essentially, the standards require instruction that helps students master complex content by developing their deeper learning skills—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. Rather than learn through rote memorization or by mastering discrete skills, students have opportunities to construct knowledge by grappling with authentic problems in a productive community of practice.

LBUSD has implemented systems and initiatives to lead the instructional shifts that support student achievement in the district. The district began by making the case for a new approach to teaching and learning that changed attitudes about what classrooms should look like across the district. Examples of this approach at LBUSD include supporting more rigorous instruction, a math lesson study protocol that exemplifies the characteristics of deeper learning, and systems to prepare students for college and careers.

To ensure all schools in the district were able to implement these shifts with fidelity, the district invested in an infrastructure that set a districtwide instructional vision, created systems and tools, and provided ongoing support and training for schools. The OCIPD and principal supervisors played a central role in developing the district's instructional philosophy and the tools to implement it systemwide. This section describes the instructional shifts that have been driving academic achievement for students of color and the systems and structures that have supported these shifts.

Shifting attitudes about teaching and learning

It's more the kids guide the teaching rather than us [being] the keeper of all the knowledge.... Let's see what the kids already can do, and then we base our teaching off of that.

Many LBUSD teachers we spoke to echoed the sentiment of this district teacher who said that the state’s new academic standards helped them think differently about their role in the classroom. LBUSD helped teachers connect to the experiences and interests of students and embrace a problem-solving approach that included student collaboration. This new attitude meant that teachers were able to reach more students by allowing multiple paths for success.

LBUSD helped teachers connect to the experiences and interests of students and embrace a problem-solving approach that included student collaboration. This new attitude meant that teachers were able to reach more students by allowing multiple paths for success.

As with other Long Beach schools, Jordan High School benefited from the district’s CCSS implementation strategy. Jordan is a large, comprehensive high school in North Long Beach with over 3,000 students. The school has established four outcomes expected of all graduates. They should be: (1) lifelong learners, (2) critical thinkers and problem-solvers, (3) proficient communicators, and (4) responsible members of society. Nearly 90% of Jordan students are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, 72% are Latina/o, 17% are African American, and 20% are English learners.⁴²

One Jordan teacher described how her teaching has changed over the years, from teacher-focused to student-focused:

You’re not just up there trying to deliver. Early on in our careers, we were like, “Well, I’m the teacher and you’re the student and here’s what you’re going to get. I’m going to crack your head open and pour the information in.” [Now], the majority of teachers in this district are not afraid to open up and be there as partners with their kids instead of being the “sage on the stage” just barking information out at them.

Several Long Beach teachers discussed the way the district’s CCSS strategy has influenced attitudes about teaching and learning over the past few years. In the past, teachers might have emphasized one right way of approaching a problem or task and discouraged mistakes. Now, according to one teacher, “It’s the complete opposite. There [are] multiple entry points to everything we do [and] the mistakes are embraced.”

This new approach encourages teachers to recognize that students have a variety of learning needs, and according to one principal, to use “several activities in making sure [they reach their learning targets].” The approach also led to new expectations about what a productive classroom might look like. One teacher explained that today LBUSD classrooms have more collaboration:

I know when I first started teaching ... the expectation was kids are sitting quietly. When your principal came in, they [would] value the kids sitting quietly and listening.... Now it’s the complete opposite. Now we want to hear productive talking and that collaboration and really learning from one another. That’s a very big change for the better. Especially when we’re talking about English language learners and just giving them the opportunity to talk and think.

Teachers and school leaders were mindful that their new teaching and learning approach could help them to attend to the various learning needs of students. In LBUSD, these strategies are expected in all schools, including those, such as Jordan, that serve primarily students of color in low-income communities.

Raising the expectations for learning in the classroom

Interviews raised a common theme, that, in addition to shifting attitudes about the roles teachers and students play in the classroom, implementation of CCSS has led to higher expectations for teaching and learning. A Garfield Elementary teacher explained that having more challenging standards led the district to hold higher expectations for all students, not just those in advanced classes:

The standards are more rigorous. They're more challenging. I think what we might have reserved for Excel or GATE [gifted and talented education] trainings is now [for] all kids and then we're thinking about how all kids can do this even if they may have limited proficiency in English. They can still have access to the higher-level, rigorous Common Core standards with different scaffolding, different ways to engage with the target.

A Jordan English teacher describes the way classroom activities have shifted to meet the heightened demands of CCSS by including more student collaboration, communication, and critical thinking:

We got new textbooks last year for English. If you look at the questions that my 9th-graders are supposed to answer, they're really tough and they require a lot of extremely deep thinking. It really requires them to build on each other's ideas as opposed to having one person who knows the answer, and that's very different from what they've been doing. So, having practice in how to talk to each other and how to build on what other people have said. Not just listening and they say, "OK, my idea." But kind of putting those puzzle pieces together. It's very essential for what we're doing in English.

This kind of rich classroom learning was designed to support greater student achievement in LBUSD. Still, building deeper learning practices is an ongoing effort as the district works to help teachers not only talk about teaching differently, but to think about and plan instruction differently, says Assistant Superintendent of High Schools Davis:

When you talk about classroom collaboration, it's taking it [from] the level of low-end collaboration: "We're working and talking together. We could have done whatever we're doing by ourselves..." But now we're talking about it as, "We're actually collaborating. We're solving together. If you don't do what you're supposed to do, if I don't do what I'm supposed to do, we're not going to get this done." So we truly have to learn from each other. We truly have to rely on each other to get the work done. What that means for the teacher is, you have to plan differently.

Our interviews and observations suggest that, in LBUSD, building teacher capacity for leading rigorous instruction is a continuous process. The previous quotation, for example, shows how the district is expecting deeper teacher understanding of what it means to lead collaborative learning experiences.

The math lesson study

Since 2013, LBUSD has made a concerted effort to support teachers and school leaders for the instructional shifts in mathematics required by CCSS. The district worked to develop teachers' skills to guide mathematics learning that is tied to rich tasks and student-centered problem-solving. According to Moskovitz, when the district shifted to using CCSS, it needed a new approach to mathematics:

For years, we had what we called MAP2D.... It was very much a direct instruction model. The teacher would teach for 10 or 15 minutes and would give students a problem or a few problems. Students would work independently and then as a team to solve those. Then the individual kids would come up and kind of teach the class.... It was very structured.... With some of the shifts within the new state standards over the last couple of years, especially within mathematics ... we've identified a real need to have to be more task driven, problem-solving-driven, [and] student-centered.

This kind of student-centered learning did not necessarily look the same across the district, according to Lund. Schools had the discretion to choose which instructional practices they believed would meet their students' needs, as long as they also attended to the Five U's. He said:

There are multiple pathways to success, and it's using certain processes, some high-leverage team actions, that actually produce those results. If you want to say that your work in math was successful because you pursued mathematical reasoning and problem-solving as a focus of your work, or you pursued CGI, cognitively guided instruction, as part of your work, or you pursued Math Talks and collaborative conversations as part of your work, it doesn't matter which one you chose. But whatever it is, you do it well, and you embed certain professional development practices into the work you do, and you implement certain high-leverage team actions to actually make that work happen.

As previously discussed, LBUSD has a "tight-loose" approach to districtwide alignment. The district values school-level decision-making as schools look to improve instructional practices and offers a framework for what those practices might entail and how they can be implemented effectively. At the same time, the district has invested in building a repertoire of practices that schools can draw upon. For example, for the past several years the district worked to build the district's capacity to use deeper learning practices for math instruction. That effort began in 2013 when LBUSD was one of 10 California districts that received funding for math professional development through the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation Math in Common grant. The grant, designed to support districts as they transitioned to CCSS, allowed the district to send every elementary school teacher to in-person trainings on shifts in math practice three to four times a year over 3 years.

As the district entered the final year of that grant, the OCIPD team created resources and professional development to build on the Math in Common training and link the theoretical shifts to classroom practice. During the 2016–17 school year, the office piloted a math lesson study protocol at 22 district schools.

The math lesson study protocol, based on the Japanese lesson study model, has four primary components:

1. OCIPD coaches, who are embedded at school sites, bring together a grade-level team of teachers at their school site to plan a mathematics lesson together based on standards, assessments, and anticipated student strategies.
2. The same day, the coach models the lesson while the teachers observe and make note of how the students are learning with the lesson they planned together.
3. The coach and teachers reconvene to modify the lesson based on what they observed.
4. In the afternoon, the teachers go to their own rooms in pairs to teach the same lesson again.

This professional development format is different from years past. According to Moskowitz:

Seven, 8 years ago, [curriculum specialists] would go out to sites. They'd work one-on-one with teachers. They'd leave, and there really wasn't an improvement in the teaching because it was an isolated practice. The teacher didn't have any real internal accountability. Now we bring teams of teachers together to plan together with the coach. When the coach leaves, the principal is there to bring these teams of teachers [together] and get them in each other's rooms, require them to give each other feedback, and support each other.

Now it's just kind of caught fire because the teachers see the value in it.... Anytime you bring people in each other's rooms, it's that initial nervousness about "I don't want anyone else to see my teaching. This makes me feel uncomfortable." Once you get past that, which happens pretty quickly, you just develop this sense of camaraderie, this sense of togetherness around the work. That shared commitment to the work ... builds collective efficacy.

This approach to offering on-site professional development to entire school communities built whole-school capacity and accountability for implementing new methods. Furthermore, teachers invested in each other's success in a supportive, professional environment. Students likely benefit from evidence-based teaching and learning approaches implemented with relative consistency across their courses and grades. Moskowitz explained that, in addition to building collective efficacy, teachers learn to develop lessons that are different from past instruction:

The lessons are much more about a task.... It's focusing in on preparing students to take a task that's challenging, that's rigorous, that they're gonna have to work with one another in some cases to find the solution.

By pairing ongoing, meaningful whole-school professional development with a rigorous instructional approach, the district focused on systemwide transformation of mathematics teaching and learning. The goal was to ensure students were better prepared to work together and use mathematical reasoning to solve challenging problems. The district intentionally began this pilot at schools it identified as its lowest-performing. According to Moskowitz, many of those sites were no longer among the district's lowest-performing schools as of 2017–18, and some of the schools that received lesson study coaching, such as McKinley Elementary School, had “doubled their growth.”

The district planned to eventually provide professional development in this kind of mathematics instruction to all elementary teachers, beginning with those schools that have been identified as having the greatest need.

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Preparing for college and career

By developing applied learning opportunities focused on preparing students for postsecondary education and career paths, LBUSD aimed to boost student investment in learning and help make sure they got rigorous college- and career-ready instruction. This investment in deeper learning might help explain the above-average academic performance of Long Beach students.

As of 2018, LBUSD schools had partnered with 1,300 nearby businesses; this history of working with local businesses to support student academic achievement has helped expand access to long-term professional opportunities. The district's business partnerships have gone beyond traditional tutoring roles. For example, in 2009, a collective of about 70 LBUSD curriculum leaders, administrators, postsecondary partners, and representatives of local business began to develop a graduate profile meant to define the qualities with which Long Beach students should graduate to be prepared for college and career. According to an OCIPD specialist, the collective “organized [these qualities] around the 15 industry sectors that California identified as high-need, high-wage.” The collective then aligned these industry skills to state standards. The OCIPD specialist described how the collective worked together to identify and prioritize the skills included in the graduate profile:

Different groups had to rate the foundation standards, in terms of which ones were the most important for high schoolers to master before they graduate, because there was no way we were going to [be able to] teach all those on top of our content standards.... The vision was, those would get integrated into the academic content. Universally across the district, every course outline would be rewritten.

Through this process, the district came to realize that the skills that businesses and postsecondary partners were looking for in recent graduates were at odds with the ones the district thought they should be providing. According to an OCIPD specialist:

[LBUSD] educators were very much like, “We want the kids to get these really discrete, technical [skills] in writing and reading.” [Businesses were] like, “We’ll teach them that. Just get us someone that knows how to be on time, knows how to be respectful, how to communicate, how to collaborate. We’ll take care of the rest.”

From there, the collective led a series of conversations to build consensus on five competencies. All course outlines were rewritten to incorporate those goals, and then the board adopted performance indicators tied to those five competencies.

At the same time, LBUSD was selected to be one of nine California districts to pilot Linked Learning pathways with funding from the James Irvine Foundation.⁴³ Linked Learning is an approach to learning that integrates academics, career and technical education, and real-world experience. At LBUSD, Linked Learning was tied to the college and career goals the district developed. Linked Learning pathways were designed to build career exposure and skills in local industry. In Long Beach, every school from elementary to high school developed college and career goals for students, and all high schools designed Linked Learning pathways. These pathways provided coursework around a specific industry, such as engineering, health sciences, or architecture. At the high school level, educators in every content area designed curricula that connect to work-based learning projects related to career pathways. The goal of the pathways is to interest students in exploring a given career so they can see how their learning connects to skills needed in the real world. Business partners’ support for college and career learning included providing guest speakers who encourage students to learn more about specific industries and support for the district’s Linked Learning pathways.⁴⁴ For example, students developed professional skills through job shadowing, apprenticeships, and internships, all occurring in partnership between LBUSD and local businesses.

There were logistical challenges to making sure teachers were prepared to teach their content areas in new ways. Assistant Superintendent of Middle and K–8 Schools Camerino noted the tension between content department systems and pathway systems:

The math department says, “Here’s your scope and sequence. Here are the assessments we’re going to take.” The pathway works as, “We’re going to move around the scope and sequence because we’re going to tie it into whatever pathway we are in.” And now I’m a teacher and ... I’m at my department meeting.... We all want to share, but we can’t because everyone’s at a different [place].... Even designing the master schedule is huge because, do the teachers go to their [department or pathway]?

LBUSD has developed creative solutions to its challenges. For example, the district pursued grants to fund a staff position for coordinating work-based experiences for students. Davis explained:

I have [staff] who are paid through grants. So we have work-based learning experiences for our students. I have a [staff member] who’s in charge of that. She’s in classrooms and schools setting up the work-based learning experiences and then making sure the kids are ready for them.

At Jordan High School, teachers used specialized equipment to offer virtual career experiences. A Jordan teacher described their Nepris system:

Nepris is a system ... for our CTE courses. We can have industry leaders get piped directly into the classroom.... You can set up a time, and then that industry leader will give a talk.... It could be [for] 40 schools. You can get a live feed of that industry leader, and then the kids can have a reflective chat with that person. If you have the setup in your room and you have a microphone, the kids can actually ask that leader questions.

As of 2017–18, the district’s Linked Learning pathways were still an area of growth, especially with regard to providing high-quality programs for students of color. Not all LBUSD career pathways were certified by independent accrediting organizations, meaning that some did not meet the criteria required to fully prepare students for their chosen industry. One district administrator wondered if providing high-quality Linked Learning pathways was truly a district priority. He said:

For me, it’s a sense of urgency. If we look at pathways certification like we look at our SBAC [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium] scores, why do we still have kids of color in these pathways that are uncertified? If you look at the pathways that are successful, are there kids of color that are succeeding in there? The gaps are in these pathways ... that aren’t certified. I hate to say the words “dumping ground,” but it’s just where kids are left. And our most successful pathways ... do have kids of color. But if you made the connection [between] pathways that aren’t certified and how many kids of color are in there, that would be telling. And to me, that’s just not right.

The district’s focus on school data may help LBUSD do the additional work it must do to provide high-quality Linked Learning pathways for students of color. Deputy Superintendent Baker noted that in quarterly check-ins with high school leaders, educators are expected to use LROIX to provide an analysis of grades and outcomes associated with each of their Linked Learning pathways. Ongoing analysis and accountability for this data could be a step toward improving the quality of pathways that serve students of color. Linked Learning pathways are one piece of a college- and career-readiness strategy for k–12 students. Although the district has made strides in building the systems and partnerships to support a districtwide approach to preparing students for postsecondary success, more students would benefit from these continued improvements.

Expanding access to advanced curricula

In addition to offering more in-depth and college- and career-focused curricula and instruction for all students, LBUSD began working to expand access to advanced curricula before the transition to CCSS. Beginning around 2013, for example, the district began to encourage more 8th-graders to take algebra. According to Deputy Superintendent Baker, district leaders analyzed student placement in the subject and “realized that there was a lot of handpicking and choosing for not necessarily the right reason.... And it definitely did not represent the diversity of our students.” As a result, the district’s research office began to use assessment data to create lists of students who achieved above a predetermined cut-score and who “with the right support, should be in.” The district might have passed over these students with the previous placement process. From there, the district monitored course enrollment at each school to ensure enough accelerated math courses were offered and that the students the district identified were taking those courses.

Likewise, the district expanded student access to AP courses through similar data-monitoring strategies. Baker emphasized that the district did not want to risk having “an individual counselor who doesn’t have a belief system that matches up to the district’s” as the gatekeeper for these courses. To that end, the district reviewed student scores on the PSAT to suggest AP courses students might not otherwise have considered taking. The district paid for all 8th-, 9th-, and 10th-graders to take the PSAT, which is a valuable practice test for the SAT and provides a common metric across the district for identifying students for AP courses. Furthermore, the district dedicated nearly \$1 million of its funding to cover most of the costs of AP exams, each of which cost nearly \$100 each time a student took them. LBUSD students paid \$5 per exam, with the opportunity for an unlimited number of retakes. In 2016, the district reported an 82.4% increase in AP course enrollments over 4 years.⁴⁵

The district also began offering gifted and talented education or Excel classes for students in grades 3 to 5. Students were identified using a cognitive exam, but other measures were also used to identify additional students for these classes.

LBUSD made explicit efforts to provide students of color and students from low-income families access to coursework they had traditionally been excluded from. By creating more inclusive and flexible screening tools, and lowering barriers to entry (such as cost), the district created greater opportunities for students.

Supports for English learners

The LBUSD instructional philosophy largely centers on meeting the needs of all students by providing rigorous curricula, high-quality teachers, and differentiated instruction. Although the district has historically provided some targeted supports to meet the needs of English learners, this had not appeared to be a prominent focus in the district until more recent years.

As of 2017–18, the district provided dual immersion programs in five elementary schools and one middle school. The programs, designed for native English speakers and native Spanish speakers, have helped students develop literacy skills in both languages. The district has also provided English learners in mainstreamed classrooms with instructional aides who “[reinforce] instruction to individual or small groups of students.”⁴⁶ In addition, LBUSD provided extended-day intervention instruction for English learners, “differentiated by a continuum of performance levels.”⁴⁷

During the 2017–18 school year, LBUSD principal supervisors and curriculum leaders decided to take a more proactive approach to supporting the needs of English learners. The district hired the education nonprofit WestEd to support the development of an improved English learner focus. As a result, the district launched its English Learner Initiative in August 2018, created to focus on persistent academic gaps for English learners, their disproportionate participation in intervention classes and special education, and their greater likelihood of being retained in elementary school. The goals of the initiative are to:

- improve the use of evidence-based instructional practices;
- boost student performance on standardized tests;
- increase student participation in AP courses;
- ensure students complete California public university eligibility requirements⁴⁸; and
- reclassify more students out of English learner status.

The district aims to accomplish these goals by: (1) using student data to select and evaluate interventions; (2) incorporating an English learner focus into the Understandings Continuum; (3) building teacher and leader capacity through WestEd English Learner Leadership Institutes, including internal training capacity; and (4) identifying structural barriers to student access and equity through course sequence studies, student survey analysis, and other investigations. The district has articulated key paradigm shifts to improve instruction for English learners. Instead of teaching English Language Development (ELD) through discrete, grammar-focused skills using simplified texts, the district added curricular materials and instructional approaches that integrate ELD instruction into English language arts through complex texts and activities.

Based on the goals of the initiative, the district's approach is consistent with its overall approach to student success: using data to drive decisions, adhering to a systemwide vision for student learning, and building educator capacity to implement new practices. With English learners representing nearly 20% of LBUSD students, the initiative is an important step forward.

Strategies for leading instructional transformation

To implement the instructional shifts associated with CCSS and with gains in achievement for LBUSD students, and students of color in particular, the district intentionally developed systemwide policies to support every school. When the California State Board of Education adopted CCSS in 2010,⁴⁹ LBUSD began the process of preparing teachers and leaders for the significant shifts in curriculum and instruction that the new standards demanded. District leaders worked hand in hand to create a common language and philosophy about the new expectations. Assistant Superintendent of OCIPD Seki described the district's collaborative approach to addressing the change in standards this way:

I think there's an intentional interdepartmental and interoffice coordination before the deployment of any major initiative. I think we recognize that we operate less like a system and more like an organism. You've seen the little amoeba under a microscope; you prick one part, everything moves. I think we understand how interconnected we are and that we can't move if we don't move together. We have a k-12 implementation steering committee that is multilevel and multidepartmental that makes broad curriculum decisions for the district and is informed by the field. I think that group has been tasked with the development of a coherent teaching and learning framework that organizes all of our work around common criteria for, "What does it mean to be a teacher in LBUSD—regardless of content area, regardless of grade level?" We can all talk about the same thing in a similar way regardless of context. I think that's a pretty big deal.

District leadership made the intentional choice to roll out the implementation of CCSS with step-by-step professional development. First, the district outlined the shifts between the previous California standards and CCSS. Then, they introduced the district's instructional philosophy, the Five Understandings. Finally, the district introduced new curricular materials. The district took all these steps before requiring that teachers implement the standards and instructional practices.

Kim Weber, now an instructional director and principal supervisor, was an LBUSD elementary school principal when the district began CCSS professional development. She describes attending professional development modules the district created to develop a consistent message for students, staff, and parents about the changes to expect:

Back 5 or 6 years ago, we started with modules. We as principals were given training around what it was and then we rolled out the shifts in math and the shifts in [English language arts] and were given these modules of PD that we can then take to our staff. Anybody who was in the district during that time got the exact same message across the system, so that it didn't matter if you were in an Eastside, Westside, Downtown or North Long Beach school. You were getting the same message as a teacher, which, I think, helps us address all students and all subgroups.

According to several teachers and district leaders, consistent communication during the rollout was essential to developing a common understanding of new expectations, but challenges still arose. Deputy Superintendent Baker described the difficulty of changing practices that have been ingrained over time:

I think a major challenge has been, when you teach using the same textbooks and materials for a number of years, there's less need for really intentional planning. I think, because teachers were comfortable in their methodology and their materials, that has reared its head a bit. "Wow, this takes a lot of planning!" It also takes a lot of planning with colleagues.

Assistant Superintendent Lund echoed that sentiment but explained how the district was successful in helping teachers replace old practices with new ones:

The barriers with any new initiative could be, perhaps, just abandoning prior practice. So when we first started rolling out Common Core, we really had, "Here's what you should be doing, and here's what you need to stop. Here's the ineffective practice that needs to kind of fade away." So, not just layering on new practices and asking you to do more and more and more. Calling that out, making that part of the transition, giving people several years to kind of let go of some of those practices early on versus waiting until the last minute to introduce new standards, introduce new tasks.

Beginning in the 2017–18 school year, the district fully adopted CCSS-aligned curricular materials, such as the McGraw-Hill *Wonders* English language arts textbooks. Because of the district's step-by-step, intentional rollout of new instructional shifts in the years prior, teachers reported being well prepared to use the new materials while continuing to employ the types of instructional strategies they had already developed. The district's methodical approach to CCSS implementation led to instructional transformation across the district. Here, we discuss the key role the OCIPD played in the district's effort to lead that change.

The district's methodical approach to CCSS implementation led to instructional transformation across the district.

Inside the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

The district's Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development (OCIPD) has been at the forefront of LBUSD efforts to implement CCSS. The OCIPD conducts research to inform the district's instructional philosophy, develops curricular materials, and offers a bevy of professional development services. Unlike other departments, many of which are located in the central office, the OCIPD is housed at the Teacher Resource Center (TRC) to be accessible to teachers. In the evenings, the TRC parking lot is packed with educators' cars as they attend workshops and other activities.

According to Seki, the TRC has been a district fixture since at least the 1980s, when the site was an adult school that offered English language courses. Today it serves as home base for OCIPD instructional coaches and as the hub for the district's professional development.

With a staff of about 60, the OCIPD has curriculum specialists in all major teaching areas: mathematics, science, English language arts, English Language Development, history/social studies, health education, library, technology, career technical education, arts, music, world languages, and physical education. In addition, the office has specialists who support district programs, including Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID, a college readiness program), gifted and talented education, special education, and teacher induction. These specialists are typically Teachers on Special Assignment.

The OCIPD team offers several supports to the district, and specialists play multiple roles. Curriculum specialists develop materials in partnership with teachers, conduct research on best practices, facilitate professional development workshops, model lessons in teacher classrooms, and more. Specialists draw on research to inform their professional development to reach staff in multiple ways. One OCIPD specialist described how research on formative assessment contributed to the development of videos for teachers to learn how to create and use more-effective measures of student learning:

In our office, k-5, we own formative assessment. We read both Dylan Wiliam books. We went to his conferences, we unpacked that, we identif[ied] teacher leaders to go on that journey with us. We created numerous formative assessment videos in those teachers' classrooms, just with their kids, and put it on myPD⁵⁰ as a way for other teachers to interact and see that.

One OCIPD specialist described how specialists weave together CCSS and the Five U's to lead professional development that helps teachers learn how to integrate new instructional practices into their teaching:

We're out and deployed to do PD and work ... hand in hand with teachers. Having those Understandings be the common language for us really shifted what our PD looks like. For instance, we always started with the standards that you want so that we can inform our instruction. So then, how are we going to formatively assess? Then we're going into U3. What's going to be the opportunity for them to talk about this writing? And there's U2. Any time I was doing a training, those U's were guiding the instructional practices that teachers should be putting into place to actually know where they were taking students.

High school teachers confirmed that OCIPD helped them integrate CCSS into their teaching. One of these teachers described some of the professional development led by OCIPD specialists:

This will be our second year with the textbook [that the district adopted since implementing CCSS], so there's a lot to unpack and a lot to figure out. Just as an example ... in the pacing guide in the textbook, it says, start this text in one day, finish it in one day. And really, it's more like a week. We've been having a lot of support in "How can we better prepare the students for this activity and still cover all of the standards?" That's been a huge thing the district's really been helping us with.

Another high school teacher described the benefit of having curriculum specialists work together on CCSS across subject areas:

We used to go to a history curriculum department meeting. Half of it would be delivering history curriculum, but the other half would be supporting Common Core. So when we would go in, we would know what the other subjects were looking for and how we could support that.

The OCIPD professional development strategy, which includes support across multiple domains—such as content areas, special education, English Language Development, and CCSS implementation—creates a coherent understanding of the standards, how they can be met, and how teachers can work together to support their students holistically, rather than in a piecemeal fashion. For example, curriculum specialists worked together across curricular areas to support students. One specialist described how content specialists worked with the curriculum specialist who led special education:

When we hold professional development, special education teachers are part of that professional development, not separate. Oftentimes our special education curriculum leader comes right along with us at PD to offer that other lens about modifications and adaptations of our core ELA program or core content [for students in special education].

The teachers we spoke to also appreciated that the professional development they receive from specialists is tailored to meet their needs. One high school teacher described how PD shifted focus as teachers became more familiar with the curriculum:

Last year we had full-day pull-outs where we would go and just unpack one unit. This year [OCIPD specialists] have stepped back in more of a supportive role. We've reached out as a department and said, "Hey, we're having trouble with this." We've had some collaboration during conference periods where we'll have all the 9th-grade teachers get together and say, "Okay, what are you doing? What worked for you? What did you have to skip? What did you focus on? How did that work for your students?" And that's been really helpful.

The OCIPD made this kind of professional development available to teachers and school leaders alike, helping reinforce the common language the district developed related to the Understandings and CCSS. This approach has led teachers and leaders to implement OCIPD strategies in schools and classrooms.

Site-based professional development

Since 2016, the office has taken a new approach of basing specialists at particular schools. This allows specialists to maintain a consistent presence at the schools in which they are most needed, cutting down on the need for teachers and school leaders to travel to professional development opportunities at the TRC during the school day or having a curriculum specialist provide one-off coaching visits. As a result, specialists can develop long-term professional development plans, offer a host of coaching services, and provide informal support as needed. One specialist described how the change could impact schools:

It's very exciting and invigorating, from my perspective. We're now housed at particular sites. I'm at two sites, and I'm there all day, 2 days a week. It has allowed me to not only make connections with the principal, but beyond that I'm making connections with the teachers. I'm supporting grades 4 and 5. For a whole week, I just observe the students. So now I know those kids.

According to another OCIPD specialist, the supportive approach OCIPD specialists use helps them develop relationships with teachers at the schools at which they are based:

We're very clear that we're not evaluative. We're there to support you and move instruction toward student performance being raised. We do have a very open door, and teachers feel very comfortable.

District staff said OCIPD-led professional development related to the Five U's has changed the way teachers and leaders think about instruction, leading to the implementation of deeper learning practices across the district.

Focusing on Social and Emotional Learning

LBUSD has implemented policies and initiatives to support students' social and emotional learning, which emphasizes skills, such as the ability to collaborate or make responsible decisions; mindsets, such as thinking positively about how to handle challenges; and effective habits, such as coming to class prepared. This approach is designed to help students feel more comfortable in their schools and classrooms and help better prepare them to learn. Multiple teachers and administrators emphasized the importance of supporting students beyond just their academic needs. For example, a teacher at Jordan High School, said:

You have to have a pretty safe environment in your classroom to begin with. One of the things that Long Beach teachers excel at is creating this type of environment where kids feel comfortable.... [I]f you don't have a safe environment and [students] don't feel comfortable talking to begin with, they're not going to be open. And that's the first nut to crack right there,... making sure you have a safe environment.

To develop safe and supportive learning environments, Long Beach established several initiatives. The key efforts that have supported students since the implementation of CCSS include using CORE survey data to understand how to best support students' well-being, districtwide professional development around growth mindset, and Safe and Civil Schools staff development. LBUSD has also

begun to more strategically engage families and the community to support student learning. In this section, we describe each of these efforts and how they have contributed to student success in the district, especially for students of color.

CORE survey data

LBUSD's participation in the California Office to Reform Education (CORE), a network of eight California districts that partnered in 2013 to develop a holistic school improvement and accountability system, has resulted in the district using survey data created by the network to inform its increased emphasis on social and emotional learning. Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools Moskovitz described the survey and explained how it pushed schools to consider more than just student academic needs:

[The CORE survey] surveys students, staff, and parents around a series of 50 to 70 questions that [ask] things about social and emotional learning, about self-management, student self-efficacy, safety. Early on that was kind of that first opportunity to take a look at that survey and its initial stages and identify areas [in which], as a district, we saw some needs for our students.

Students in grades 5–12, parents, and school staff take the CORE survey. The survey focuses on two areas:

1. Social and emotional learning, such as self-management, growth mindset, self-efficacy, and social awareness; and
2. School culture and climate, which includes questions about the support students receive for their academic learning, whether people (i.e., students, parents, and staff) feel a sense of belonging and connection to their school, whether rules and expectations about student and adult behavior are clear and fair, and the extent to which people feel safe in the school.⁵¹

An independent study found that student responses to these questions predict academic and nonacademic outcomes, including proficiency on math tests, graduation rates, and suspension rates.⁵² Accordingly, the study found that student responses to these questions can be an important predictor of school improvement.⁵³

During the initial implementation of the CORE survey in 2014–15, the district did not attach any kind of accountability processes to the results. Instead, the district encouraged educators to use the survey results to better understand the various attributes and competencies of social and emotional learning. Lund explained:

We introduced [social and emotional learning] through our surveys. Introducing teachers and parents and principals to social-emotional learning and what was being measured, what does “growth mindset” mean, what does “self-efficacy” mean, what is “self-management,” what is “social awareness.” And we did a lot of building of awareness and sharing of resources, never telling them that they needed to do anything with this.

As schools learned more about the value of social and emotional competencies and realized that they were falling short of meeting students' needs based on the CORE survey data, they began establishing schoolwide goals for students' social and emotional development. Lund described this gradual realization and emphasis throughout the district:

All of a sudden when we started sharing results around these [social and emotional] measures, lo and behold, schools started setting goals around these measures. We didn't ask [schools] to set a goal on social-emotional learning, but [they] certainly could. Early on, roughly 20 of our schools set goals around social-emotional learning. Last year, it was 39. This year, it was 54. So, we have 54 schools that have set goals around social-emotional learning without really any district initiative to do so. This was just them analyzing data, determining areas of need, and determining a course of action.

The growing emphasis on social and emotional learning may be due to a combination of factors: the availability of the data and the extensive opportunities for cross-site learning that the district provides. As previously discussed, school leaders and Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) have several opportunities throughout the year to share their goals and learn together. In one school, we saw teachers collaborating and developing a shared understanding about what social and emotional learning entails. They created guidance that hangs on the walls of the rooms in which they collaborate and plan together. The guidance had "social and emotional learning" at the center of a circle, with the outer ring of the circle displaying the key social and emotional competencies they aim to instill in their students:

- Self-management: Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals
- Self-awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and challenges
- Responsible decision-making: Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior
- Relationship skills: Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict
- Social awareness: Showing understanding and empathy for others

LBUSD strategically implemented the CORE survey and use of its data in a way that helped educators learn to better address more than just student academic needs. It took several years to educate district teachers, principals, and staff about social and emotional learning, including measures of this type of learning. This approach promoted open and honest dialogue about how educators could best address these competencies.

LBUSD leaders noted that they did not include the results from the CORE survey in their accountability system because they worried that educators would be more likely to view social and emotional learning as a compliance exercise, reducing the chance that they would take ownership of and interest in the work. Instead, LBUSD intentionally supported learning to help educators address

students' social and emotional development. In the end, our interviews and observations suggest that providing educators with data and professional support drove their internal motivation to do something about areas in which students needed more support.

Growth mindset

The CORE survey data raised LBSD educators' awareness about growth mindset and the need to provide professional development that would shift the views of students and educators on teaching and learning. This greater awareness about growth mindset helped LBSD educators raise their expectations of students. Growth mindset is "the understanding that abilities and intelligence can be developed," as opposed to being fixed.⁵⁴ Research has found that students who embrace this mindset learn to perceive "effort as necessary for success, embrace challenges, learn from criticism, and persist in the face of setbacks," an understanding that can contribute to their long-term success.⁵⁵

After the 2014–15 school year, school and district administrators noticed that students did not score well on the CORE survey's "growth mindset" questions. Assistant Superintendent Moskovitz described the challenge:

[Growth mindset] was very low on the initial CORE surveys. Students didn't think they could learn if they hadn't learned it previously, [that] if they weren't innately smart they'd never be able to do well.

Upon identifying this issue, district administrators reviewed the work of John Hattie to identify how best to foster a growth mindset among students. Hattie synthesized over 800 meta-studies of more than 80 million students to identify what works best for supporting students' achievement.⁵⁶ Moskovitz explained the value of Hattie's findings:

Hattie's research says that where growth mindset is actually most impactful is when teachers have it. I have seen a greater growth mindset in our teachers while they're teaching about growth mindset to students. I think this maybe had a greater impact on overall student growth mindset and overall students just believing that they can because teachers believe they can.

The district initially worked with its ILTs to raise awareness among educators about growth mindset. As described earlier in this case study, ILTs bring together a principal and two or three teachers from each school to district-level professional learning sessions two to three times a year. Assistant Superintendent of Middle and K–8 Schools Camerino explained how the ILT served as the primary channel on growth mindset:

We would train [the ILT] on how to go back and lead their schools with different [strategies]. We went heavily into the growth mindset as an ILT. That kick-started all of that work there. As we [went] to school sites, we went to staff meetings and we [could] see exactly what we did being presented at the staff meetings with all the teachers. And so everyone was really familiar with growth mindset items. And students would say that they felt like it helped them with their growth mindset.

The ILT training allowed school leaders to decide how best to work with their educators and staff to help foster awareness and practices around growth mindset. In one school we visited, teachers had created a key for distinguishing between a growth and a fixed mindset, which hung in their professional collaboration room. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3
Growth Versus Fixed Mindset Educator Key

What is your mindset?	
Growth mindset	Fixed mindset
<p>I think like this...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can learn anything I want to • When I'm frustrated, I persevere • I want to challenge myself • When I fail, I learn • Tell me I try hard • If you succeed, I'm inspired • My effort and attitude determine everything • I am confident I can do anything 	<p>I think like this...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm either good at it or I'm not • When I'm frustrated, I give up • I do not like to be challenged • When I fail, I'm no good • Tell me I'm smart • If you succeed, I feel threatened • My abilities determine everything • If I can't win or be the best, then I quit

Source: Artifact from authors' visit to LBUSD classroom, November 2017.

Every teacher we spoke with described the value of their professional learning around growth mindset. An elementary school teacher shared that her school had been celebrating growth mindset as the “character value of the month.” A high school teacher shared the influence that learning about growth mindset has had on the students in her classroom:

We have this saying in my class, of the power of “yet.” We’re not there *yet*. I can’t do it *yet*. Whenever someone [says], “This is too hard, I don’t get it,” ... then everyone goes, “YET!”

Safe and Civil Schools

LBUSD’s professional development using Safe and Civil Schools has strengthened the culture and climate within the district through restorative-justice practices and response-to-intervention systems. Safe and Civil Schools is a nonprofit organization that provides professional development support to k–12 educators to help them develop positive behavior management strategies schoolwide and in classrooms.⁵⁷

Long Beach first adopted the Safe and Civil Schools approach districtwide during the 2015–16 school year. Previously, however, all district schools had adopted a response-to-intervention system, which establishes a series of interventions and strategies for teachers and school leaders to better support students, including helping those struggling for behavioral, academic, emotional, or other reasons. In addition, several LBUSD schools had been using Safe and Civil Schools since 2003

and had experienced positive results that spurred districtwide adoption. Assistant Superintendent of High Schools Davis described the district’s motivation for encouraging educators to develop behavior management strategies using the Safe and Civil Schools approach:

We’ve been working with Safe and Civil strategies to help change the climate and culture of the classrooms. When you start getting people to change their mindset about the way the schools should be, then we change their mindset about the students they’re dealing with.

Several teachers described the value of the professional development they have received to support students’ social and emotional development. For example, a teacher in an elementary school serving a student population that is more than 75% Latino/a, with 90% of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals, explained:

By us even having the opportunity of going to a PD and showing teachers that our kids do have trauma and we needed to recognize that in the classroom, it was just a different approach in how to teach our students. To me, it wasn’t just about, okay, teaching, teaching, teaching, but also recognizing that these kids are having these issues as well. How am I going to make sure that I close that gap even if they have those social-emotional needs?

Other teachers described how these trainings helped them focus on the quality of interactions with their students. One English teacher, working in a high school serving nearly 90% African American and Hispanic students and 80% eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals, described a framework she used for assessing the quality of her interactions with students: the “ratio of positive interactions.” According to the ratio, teachers should have at least three positive interactions with students for every negative interaction. This teacher said she learned the framework from a fellow teacher who used it when visiting her classroom to provide feedback:

[There was] one student that I was having corrective interactions with a lot. And [the visiting teacher said], “Hey, what’s up with that?” And I’m like, “I don’t know. I don’t know.” And so it was pretty eye-opening for me. Yeah, I’m a positive person, but how did that student walk out of my room that day? Corrective is corrective whether it’s done with a smile or not.

Teachers shared how they have seen positive outcomes in their students as a result of their increased awareness of students’ social and emotional needs and how to support them. One teacher described how her awareness of supporting students socially and emotionally has allowed her to support her students in developing “calmness and peacefulness” while in school, which helps them focus on their schoolwork.

Community engagement

LBUSD and its schools are increasingly engaging the community, including parents and businesses, to support students’ academic, social, and emotional development. Among efforts to better understand how to support students are parent forums the superintendent convenes to encourage parents to share what they and their children need from their school. The forums are video recorded and shared online. Parent group meetings are part of this effort as well. For example, approximately 120 parents of English learners meet monthly. The district helps the parent groups

find and invite guests to discuss areas of interest, such as how to support their children’s learning. The superintendent frequently attends the meetings, allowing him to respond directly to concerns, such as a request for before- and after-school small-group tutoring for English learners. In response to the request, the superintendent reserved funding for tutoring. The superintendent also meets with groups of students—no teachers, parents, principals, or others are present—to help the district ensure its efforts meet the needs of students.

Schools appeared to have followed the district’s lead in increasing their presence in the community and working with families. An LBUSD high school teacher stated:

There’s been a big push to get [the high school] to have a bigger presence in the community.... A couple of years ago, we started with the seniors who had gotten accepted to colleges, the banners on the poles up and down Atlantic Avenue, just to get a little bit of excitement going.

Five years ago, an organization called the J-Town Community was started to help foster the relationship between alumni community members and the school. They’ll hold cleanups ... and they’ll do fundraising. They actually give two scholarships now at our senior awards night, a few hundred dollars each to help students in their college endeavors.

These efforts to engage communities appeared to be improving the culture and climate within LBUSD schools; however, community outreach is an area for growth across the district and likely not a core driver of student achievement in the past few years.

Claire Alvarez, Garfield Elementary’s principal, described the challenges of doing community outreach with limited funding:

Back in 2015–16, we had a lot of money when it came to Title I and to LCFF [Local Control Funding Formula]. And so that money was allocated for quite a few supplemental positions, and those were support positions that were to help students and help the school run effectively. Throughout the last few years, our money has decreased slightly, and we’ve figured out other ways to cover what we were doing in the past. We’ve gone from having quite a few staff members to having a few staff members that are supplemental positions. The big ones that we continue to have [are] our school community workers. We have two, and they work very closely with our parents and the community to make sure that everyone is informed about what we are doing, and help our teachers and our staff with the bilingual parents for those of us that are not bilingual.

Conclusion

Long Beach students, and students of color in particular, have made strides in academic achievement.⁵⁸ The district and school interviews, documents, and observations show that schools can make a difference for kids through an aligned, sustained, and collective focus on teaching and learning. LBUSD has done this in a few ways: by creating a research-based framework for instructional practice that is aligned to CCSS and has high expectations for students, by investing in people, and by developing collaborative systems and supports for implementation that focus on social and emotional learning.

The district created an instructional framework—the Five Understandings—that guides all professional development, distribution of resources, and assessment of school and staff progress. This framework helped the district adopt an instructional philosophy aligned with the principles of deeper learning. Development and implementation of the Five U's required years of research, a step-by-step rollout, and ongoing revision and refinement. Curricular shifts that improve learning for students of color were possible, but they took time, significant investment, and a commitment to stay the course.

The district also recognized that people matter, and it has invested in careful hiring and high-quality professional development to build the capacity of the district as a whole. This has paid off, not only when, for example, teachers have the skills to improve their students' learning, but also when those teachers stay in the district and pass on their expertise to their colleagues as peers, teacher leaders, curriculum specialists, or school leaders. Alongside a stable district leadership actively committed to improving instruction and educational equity, the district's investments in staff return to students manifold.

To ensure that the district's investments in people and in instructional guidance were implemented with fidelity and continue to improve, LBUSD created systems and supports. Leaders saw the district's emphasis on collaborating and using data to track progress as key to its success in this regard. By working across the district, every teacher, school leader, and district leader worked to build the learning and successes of the entire district. This collaborative stance allowed staff to take ownership of their work; the district to set a clear vision; and school staff to work together, analyzing their student data, to make it their own.

Finally, the district used CORE survey data to inform its work with students. The data showed that the district could benefit from a focus on social and emotional learning and on growth mindsets in particular. This led LBUSD schools to add instruction that incorporates social and emotional learning and growth mindsets and to partner with the nonprofit Safe and Civil Schools. Family and community outreach also became part of this district work. Moving forward, district leaders indicated that more work is planned for social and emotional learning.

While district staff celebrated their successes, they also noted future plans to continue districtwide improvement efforts. In Long Beach, student success was not happenstance; it was planned thoughtfully and collaboratively, invested in, and supported.

Appendix A: LBUSD's Achievement and Climate Data

Table A1
CAASPP Test Results

Demographic	Residual	Proficient and Above in District (%)	Proficient and Above in California (%)
2014-15			
Math All Students	0.063	30	34
Math Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	22	21
Math African American	0.132	17	16
Math Latino/a	0.081	22	21
Math White	0.103	56	49
ELA All Students	0.038	42	44
ELA Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	32	31
ELA African American	0.072	31	28
ELA Latino/a	0.039	33	32
ELA White	0.083	68	61
2015-16			
Math All Students	0.041	34	37
Math Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	26	23
Math African American	0.114	20	18
Math Latino/a	0.076	27	24
Math White	0.047	60	53
ELA All Students	0.056	45	49
ELA Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	36	35
ELA African American	0.099	33	31
ELA Latino/a	0.058	37	37
ELA White	0.078	71	64
2016-17			
Math All Students	0.140	39	38
Math Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	31	25
Math African American	0.183	23	19
Math Latino/a	0.171	32	25
Math White	0.156	64	53
ELA All Students	0.112	48	49
ELA Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	40	36
ELA African American	0.132	34	31
ELA Latino/a	0.120	40	37
ELA White	0.165	75	64

Notes: "Residual" represents the difference, measured in standard deviations, between the actual average performance of a district's students in a given racial/ethnic group and the predicted performance of the district's students in the given group based on the socioeconomic status of each group's families in the district. The residual for economically disadvantaged students was not calculated. "Proficient and Above" represents the percentage of students in a given group who met or exceeded the grade and subject standards on CAASPP, averaged across grades.

Source: LPI analysis of data from California Department of Education. (n.d.). California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) results. <https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/> (accessed 08/24/18).

Table A2
Four-Year Graduation Rates, 2017

Demographic	Rate in LBUSD	Rate in California
African American	86%	73%
Latino/a	84%	80%
White	88%	87%
All Students	86%	83%

Data source: California Department of Education. (n.d.). DataQuest. <https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

Table A3
Suspension Rates, 2016–17

Demographic	Rate in LBUSD	Rate in California
African American	8.4%	9.8%
Latino/a	3.1%	3.7%
White	1.8%	3.2%
All Students	3.5%	3.6%

Data source: California Department of Education. (n.d.). DataQuest. <https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

Appendix B: Methods

This individual case study of Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is part of a larger, three-part, mixed-methods study that includes a quantitative analysis of district performance in California,⁵⁹ six additional individual case studies of positive outlier districts conducted from fall 2017 through winter 2018,⁶⁰ and a cross-case study that synthesizes findings from all seven individual cases.⁶¹

Site Selection

Results from a multivariate, quantitative study of positive outlier districts in California identified districts eligible for the individual case studies. As described more fully in a separate report,⁶² the quantitative study used a statistical regression model for predicting and measuring student achievement to identify positive outlier districts in which scores on CAASPP were greater than predicted for African American, Latino/a, and White student groups from 2015 to 2017. For each racial/ethnic group, the model accounted for indicators of family socioeconomic status, including household income, parent education, family structure, and parent employment, all of which are factors that are beyond the district's control and that typically influence student performance. We used the size of the residual scores (the difference between the predicted and actual scores for each group) as the measure of performance for each district. This analysis both identified positive outlier districts and examined predictors of achievement at the district level.

In the second part of the project, we selected a demographically and geographically diverse set of seven districts from among the positive outliers in which we conducted individual case studies to examine the factors associated with their strong outcomes. To select districts for these individual case studies, we began with the group of districts that we had identified by our quantitative study in which African American, Latino/a, and White students consistently achieved at higher-than-predicted rates from 2015 to 2017 in both English language arts and mathematics. This reduced the sample to districts in which there were at least 200 African American and/or Latino/a students and at least 200 White students, to ensure adequate sample sizes and stability of the predictor variables.⁶³ Then we considered additional criteria—graduation rates, suspension rates, and relative rank on English language arts and mathematics test score residuals from the regression analyses both overall and for African American, Latino/a, and White groups individually. These criteria helped ensure that we selected districts that had positive outcomes on additional measures. We also intentionally selected districts that offered different levels of urbanicity, were from different geographic regions, and were of different sizes.

Data Collection Methods

The overarching research question for this case study was:

In LBUSD, what factors may account for the success of all students in the district and for that of students of color in particular?

We used a case study approach to address this question. Case studies allow researchers to investigate real-life phenomena in context, generating understandings of a phenomenon and its interplay with its environment.⁶⁴ A two-person research team was assigned to the district. We used

a multi-method research design, with data from a range of sources, including documents, district data, and interviews with a range of personnel at the district and school levels. We examined the following aspects of district and school operations:

- approaches to instruction and instructional improvement;
- approaches to curriculum and assessment;
- strategies for hiring, developing, and retaining staff;
- supports for school climate or social and emotional learning;
- supports for students with additional learning or out-of-school needs;
- provision of wraparound services;
- outreach to families and communities; and
- approaches to continuous improvement, including uses of data to focus efforts.

The research team conducted a screening phone call with senior district leaders to gain an initial understanding of factors that districts identified as relevant to their success in supporting student achievement, to learn important background information, and to generate an initial list of potential sites and interviewees.

We also reviewed data and documents prior to on-site field research. Among the sources were documents created by schools and the district in the last 3 school years, including the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan for 2017–20, teacher and principal professional development documents, district organizational charts, district-level guidance, and the district's website.

During 2-day site visits in fall 2017, researchers conducted 30- to 60-minute interviews at district central offices and school sites with district leaders, principals, coaches, teachers, and other staff and community members. The research team identified potential sites for school-level interviews through discussions with district offices. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to identify interviewees. In other words, researchers selected and interviewed several participants based on their positions and responsibilities and then asked those participants to recommend others well placed to speak to instructional strategies, change processes, and other factors supporting greater-than-predicted outcomes for African American, Latino/a, and White students in the district. In addition, researchers sought to visit schools serving students of color and those from low-income backgrounds and to interview staff who could speak to programs supporting achievement and increased equity in the district.

Interviews with district administrators and senior staff focused on strategies, steps, and tools they were using to shift instruction to the in-depth learning required under CCSS, to support teacher and administrator learning, to use data to monitor and support school progress, to meet student needs, to engage the community, and to allocate resources to support their improvement efforts. Interviewers also asked district leaders about challenges to this work and how they overcame these challenges. We tailored the interview protocol based on the role of the interviewee and their tenure in the district. This differentiation ensured that some questions could be explored in more depth with respondents who were most likely to hold relevant and reliable knowledge on the topic of discussion. Each interview was audio recorded for transcription purposes if the respondent gave consent.

Analysis

Case study analysis addressed themes identified from the literature and those that arose from the research data. These themes included human capital issues, resources, instruction, curriculum, professional learning, social and emotional learning, data and accountability, culture, parents and community, schedules, and organization. The research team triangulated findings across multiple data sources and sought both confirmatory and disconfirmatory evidence to develop illustrations of the key factors that emerged as well grounded from the evidence. Each case study draft was reviewed internally by two members of the research team, checked by a district leader for accuracy, and revised based on feedback by two expert peer reviewers.

Appendix C: LBUSD Understandings Continuum, 2018



Understandings Continuum 2018

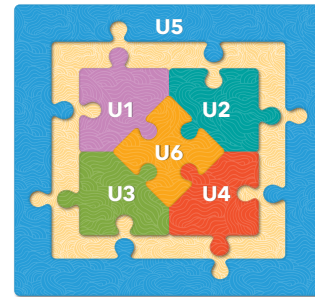
Since the transition to the Common Core Standards, the LBUSD Understandings have been used to describe effective classroom practices and elements of pedagogy desired across all LBUSD classrooms. The *Understandings Continuum* is a tool that helps further define these Understandings. While it is not a tool that captures every classroom practice in an LBUSD teacher's toolkit, it is an overarching vision of what we want classroom instruction to look like across our schools.

In their first iteration, the Understandings were presented in an evidence guide format, engaging teachers and leaders in the process of describing both continuing and new methodologies for helping students to meet the standards. As LBUSD teachers' and leaders' knowledge of high quality classroom practices and pedagogy

increased, there was a need for the Understandings to evolve. The current Understandings reflect knowledge that is worth understanding: enduring, at the heart of instruction, cause reflection and promote engagement for all who interact with learning and teaching.

The 2018 *Understandings Continuum* is intended to provide teachers and leaders with a resource for planning high quality instruction, helping them to integrate key teacher practices as part of daily instruction, build collective efficacy, promote caring relationships with students and to inspire reflection throughout the instructional process. Specifically, it provides a starting point and outlines a progression of the implementation of these key practices. This *Continuum* was developed with teachers and leaders, for teachers and leaders.

Acknowledgements: Building upon prior versions, the 2018 LBUSD Understandings Continuum was developed under the direction and leadership of Dr. Jill Baker, Deputy Superintendent of Schools and Pamela Saki, Assistant Superintendent - Office of Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development. Development teams included staff from the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, the Deputy Superintendent's Office, Office of the Assistant Superintendent - Elementary Schools, Middle & K-8 Schools, High Schools and Research who were instrumental in ensuring that the Continuum reflects our commitment to continuous improvement anchored in research and the incorporation of the voices of our teachers, leaders and students.



What the Continuum is...

- ◆ a planning and reflection tool
- ◆ a tool for use across content areas
- ◆ a source for informing feedback and professional development
- ◆ a tool to engage students in thinking about themselves as learners (as age appropriate)

What the Continuum is not...

- ◆ a checklist
- ◆ an exhaustive list of effective instructional practice
- ◆ a tool for evaluating each Understanding in isolation
- ◆ an evaluation document



A thorough understanding of standards provides a foundation for high quality differentiated instruction that results in all students meeting college and career readiness expectations through the Linked Learning approach.

Teacher Practice: Delivers standards aligned instruction

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Aligns instruction to the grade level/course content standards ◆ Aligns the learning goal/intention and success criteria to the level of rigor indicated by the standards ◆ Supports literacy development by including reading, writing, speaking and listening with content instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Supports content using ELD Standards and Literacy Standards ◆ Sequences lessons to build the knowledge and skills necessary that lead to key understandings ◆ Facilitates learning by using essential or guiding questions and/or prompts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Targets a set of content standards integrated with ELD and Literacy Standards ◆ Establishes relevance by helping all students make connections in order to access the critical content

Teacher Practice: Differentiates instruction for ALL learners

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pre-assesses students to determine readiness and/or interest ◆ Adjusts content, process, product or affect/learning environment by allowing student choice or using flexible grouping ◆ Uses district-adopted and other appropriate resources for scaffolds and extensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Incorporates information from various types of assessments (academic and social-emotional) ◆ Monitors and responds to students in the moment by providing individualized scaffolds or extensions ◆ Utilizes collaboratively developed strategies and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Integrates learner profile (academic and social-emotional) to provide, ongoing differentiation of content, process, product, and/or affect/learning environment ◆ Implements individualized supports and interventions co-developed with colleagues reflective of student needs and input

Teacher Practice: Integrates career awareness (K - 5), career exploration (6 - 8), or career preparation (9 - 12)

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides students with opportunities to apply academics to authentic real-world contexts ◆ Makes explicit connections across disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Uses outside professionals and resources to enhance academic learning and ground that learning in a real-world context ◆ Explicitly teaches and integrates critical employability skills identified by industry (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, innovation, adaptability) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Integrates standards-based, complex and extended projects, or problem-based learning (K-8) aligned to the Pathway theme (9-12) ◆ Uses student learning outcomes to design short-term and long-term assignments that are aligned to appropriate career fields



Providing all learners with cognitively demanding tasks and complex text with the goal of making meaning is essential in order for students to build conceptual understanding of content and transfer their learning to new contexts.

Teacher Practice: Provides cognitively demanding tasks and complex texts for all learners

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides engaging, inquiry-based learning opportunities that require problem solving, reasoning and/or argumentation ◆ Anticipates content or processes that may cause students to struggle and provides support for a range of learners without removing the challenge 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides students with opportunities to use their own reasoning, strategies and methods for engaging with texts or tasks ◆ Adapts tasks to provide appropriate challenge for a range of learners by using scaffolds or increasing the intellectual rigor 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides inquiry-based learning opportunities that require exploration into the core ideas of a discipline or problems authentic to the real world ◆ Encourages students to generate questions and tasks worthy of inquiry ◆ Requires students to use appropriate discipline-specific methodology
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Teacher Practice: Builds conceptual understanding

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Supports and honors students' home language and prior knowledge in making connections from home and/or community to academic learning at school ◆ Links new content, procedures, and skills to larger, more enduring concepts ◆ Asks students to explain their thinking and justify their reasoning 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Anticipates and utilizes questions, cues, and/or prompts to support students as they deepen their understanding ◆ Provides opportunities for students to evaluate and revise thinking at different points in the learning, including discussions about mistakes, misconceptions, and struggles 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Engages students in the development, analysis, and evaluation of multiple pathways and solutions to address unclear problems or questions ◆ Provides opportunities for students to critique the reasoning and counter-arguments of others
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Teacher Practice: Provides time and opportunity for students to transfer learning to new contexts

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Selects tasks that are relevant to students and require independent application of new knowledge and skills to novel situations or new real-world contexts (not simply recognition or recall) 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides on-going opportunities for students to transfer their learning between disciplines to a real-world problem 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Requires the strategic use of academic understanding, knowledge, and skills along with good judgment, self regulation, and persistence ◆ Encourages students to use metacognition to analyze problems or contexts in order to select and revise solutions
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Orchestrating opportunities for technical and academic discourse including collaborative conversations allows students to develop a deeper understanding of content and support a point of view in varied contexts.

Teacher Practice: Creates a collaborative classroom culture where all student voices are valued

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides a safe place for ALL students to share their ideas ◆ Establishes norms, structures and routines ◆ Provides engaging questions and tasks ◆ Engages students in team building activities 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Groups students strategically to allow for equitable and accountable discourse ◆ Constructs questions and discussion prompts worthy of collaboration ◆ Provides appropriate linguistic support 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Helps students value discourse as a way to learn ◆ Integrates student led discourse daily and authentically to support learning ◆ Encourages students to adjust communication to address varied contexts/audience
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Teacher Practice: Provides opportunities for students to communicate ideas and support a point of view

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Uses discourse to support standards and lesson purpose ◆ Builds content knowledge and prepares students for discourse ◆ Provides opportunities for students to share, clarify, and paraphrase ideas 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Aligns the length and frequency of the discourse to the purpose and context of the lesson ◆ Provides opportunities for students to elaborate using examples, evidence, and reasoning to logically ground or strengthen complex ideas 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides opportunities to critique the evidence and reasoning of others ◆ Provides opportunities for argumentation or discourse with multiple perspectives ◆ Uses available technology to enhance collaboration
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Teacher Practice: Listens carefully to determine students' conceptual understanding of content

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Checks for participation of ALL students ◆ Elicits evidence of application of conversational skills (e.g., turn-taking, asking for clarification, body language) ◆ Keeps students on topic 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Elicits evidence of student learning of content and understanding of complex concepts and thinking skills ◆ Identifies and selects student responses for whole group sharing 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Elicits evidence of multiple perspectives, points of view and connections ◆ Sequences responses strategically for small or whole group discussion
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The strategic planning and consistent use of formative assessment strategies allow teachers and students to collect evidence about where students are and to determine immediate next steps.

Teacher Practice: Clarifies and shares learning intentions and success criteria

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes clear learning intentions and success criteria Shares learning intentions and success criteria with students 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains how learning intentions fit within the learning progression Refers to learning intentions and success criteria throughout the lesson 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discusses quality work with students Provides students with samples of quality work Co-constructs success criteria with students
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Teacher Practice: Elicits evidence of student learning

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns tasks, discussions, and activities to the learning intention and success criteria Provides think time after posing questions to allow all students an opportunity to respond Uses a variety of techniques (beyond raised hands) to elicit evidence of learning throughout the lesson 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipates and prepares responses for possible student outcomes Elicits evidence aligned to the learning intention and success criteria Gathers evidence of what every student understands at strategic points during instruction 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks questions that make evidence of student learning more visible Provides students opportunities to peer and self-assess throughout the lesson Uses available technology to elicit evidence of student learning in real time
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Teacher Practice: Acts on evidence to move learning forward

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides specific feedback related to the learning intention and success criteria Provides feedback during the learning Provides time in class to act on the feedback 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides feedback that causes student thinking Limits corrective feedback to what students can act on Provides students opportunities to look at anonymous work and comment on it 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides students opportunities to give feedback to one another - both positive comments and suggestions Provides students opportunities to self-assess using success criteria
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Effective instructional teams (any team that meets regularly for the purpose of learning together to increase student achievement) embody a culture of collective efficacy leading to a focus on improving common instructional practice resulting in increased student achievement for all.

Team Practice: Establishes the conditions for collaborative learning teams

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes a collaborative compact focusing on building relationships that encourage honesty, respect, vulnerability, and trust Initiates collegial discussions using site data and/or relevant research Tests a variety of collaborative protocols and/or structures to help move the learning forward 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adheres to a collaborative compact while sharing student evidence, interpreting results, discussing ideas, and revising action plans with colleagues Engages in collegial discussion grounded in data and research to promote actionable change Uses adopted collaborative protocols and structures consistently 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advances collaborative growth by problem-solving, acknowledging conflict, appreciating members' expertise, admitting challenges, and seeking help from others Schedules regular opportunities for collegial discussion to reflect and move instructional practices across the school Adapts collaborative protocols and structures to support instructional decision-making
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Team Practice: Engages in cycles of team learning (analyze data, develop shared goals, learn, implement, reflect)

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzes one form of data to create a learning goal for both students and teachers that somewhat aligns to site and/or district priorities Acquires new knowledge or skills tied to the learning goal, with varied levels of participation from team members Experiments with new knowledge and skills through planning of instruction and assessment for own classroom Reflects on initial attempts to incorporate new knowledge and skills to identify further learning needed to reach goals 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to use multiple forms of student data to develop learning goals for both students and teachers that align to site and district priorities Practices, individually and collaboratively, new knowledge and skills that are tied to learning goals, with all team members taking some part in the learning process Shares individual plans for instruction and assessment based on new knowledge and skills; invites support and feedback to refine new practices Reflects on both successful practices and/or further learning needs aligned to goals, using one or more pieces of evidence 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses multiple forms of student data to analyze trends and prioritizes common learning goals for students, as well as personalized learning goals for teachers, all aligned to site and district priorities Implements, both individually and collaboratively, the learning of new knowledge and skills, tied directly to learning goals Co-constructs plans for common instruction and assessment based on implementation of acquired learnings; provides support and feedback regularly Monitors and adjusts implementation, using several forms of evidence, to advance to the next stage of the learning cycle or revisit previous stages, with successful practices being scaled school-wide and beyond
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Team Practice: Develops a shared belief that through collective action, student outcomes will be positively influenced

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops an interest in others' successes through vicarious experiences (e.g. site visits, watching video, networking, or professional reading) generating expectations of achieving similar results Attempts new instructional practices, building a greater sense of self-efficacy, with each incremental success Makes purposeful instructional decisions to ensure that all students in the individual teacher's classroom are successful Engages in emerging conversations with colleagues around identified goals and/or gaps in student achievement 	<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fosters a supportive team dynamic by routinely sharing instructional materials, methods, and ideas to replicate success Broadens the notion that collective teacher action (knowledge, skills, effort) directly impacts student achievement Develops and commits to instructional decisions with team(s) to support teaching and learning for all students 	<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases interdependence around common priorities, transparency of practice, and the co-construction of curriculum as a result of continued success Attributes student success to collective team actions propelling the expectation that continued gains are attainable Embodies the belief that the collective responsibility for the success of all students lies with the team and, therefore, all members are accountable
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Cultivating a classroom atmosphere, where teachers deliberately balance caring relationships with high expectations and supports for student success, provides a foundation for a safe learning environment that values diversity, trust, and respectful communication.

Foundational Belief(s) - All students and communities come with cultural and linguistic assets, and deserve to be treated with dignity, fairness, respect, and unconditional positive regard. In a warm-demanding learning environment, every student matters and needs to feel that they do. All students can learn and achieve at high levels, and we have a responsibility for their success. Confronting our own bias is important work for us to do if we are to truly set high expectations for all students.

Teacher Practice: Establishes a classroom climate of warm, caring relationships

Step 1

- ◆ Uses a process to get to know individual students, to build personal connections so students feel welcomed and included.
- ◆ Shows empathy and unconditional positive regard.
- ◆ Recognizes student growth and effort.
- ◆ Is present and approachable to students.

Step 2

- ◆ Demonstrates care and concern for students' lives outside of the classroom.
- ◆ Keeps commitments to students, maintaining appropriate confidentiality, and practicing fairness to build trust.
- ◆ Protects students' self-esteem and dignity.

Step 3

- ◆ Addresses students' needs flexibly and with sensitivity, based on the situation.
- ◆ Uses engagement strategies to make learning meaningful, and to help students connect with the teacher and each other.
- ◆ Ensures that the learning environment enhances learning and reflects student diversity.

Teacher Practice: Sets high expectations and provides necessary supports for student success

Step 1

- ◆ Communicates clearly to all students that learning is a non-negotiable expectation.
- ◆ Insists that all students participate and make attempts to engage in the learning.
- ◆ Encourages student effort and a growth mindset.
- ◆ Provides help when students are struggling.
- ◆ Informs parents/guardians when students are struggling.

Step 2

- ◆ Shares ownership of and takes personal responsibility for student outcomes.
- ◆ Remains accessible, available, and responsive to help students during and outside of class.
- ◆ Expects success from every student, and offers differentiated support to help all students achieve.
- ◆ Provides resources to parents/guardians to support their children at home.

Step 3

- ◆ Implements a variety of learning experiences to help diverse learners attain concepts.
- ◆ Provides actionable feedback and opportunities for students to revise and resubmit work to demonstrate growth toward mastery.
- ◆ Develops and implements systems of prevention, intervention, and extension to ensure that all students achieve.
- ◆ Creates opportunities for parents/guardians and/or the community to support student learning.

Teacher Practice: Creates a safe learning environment that values diversity, trust, and respectful communication

Step 1

- ◆ Acknowledges one's own cultural lens and understands its impact on instruction and student learning.
- ◆ Establishes, communicates, and implements clear and inclusive classroom norms and management system.
- ◆ Learns about the socio-cultural and linguistic assets that guide the values, beliefs, and behaviors of students, parents, and the community.
- ◆ Teaches personal coping skills, self-regulation, and self-reflection strategies to support students' emotional well-being.

Step 2

- ◆ Engages in regular peer and/or self-reflection to examine and address personal cultural bias.
- ◆ Co-constructs and implements classroom norms with students.
- ◆ Applies understanding of students' socio-cultural and linguistic assets, so as to better select instructional activities.
- ◆ Models and facilitates effective conflict resolution, self-regulation, and self-reflection skills with students.

Step 3

- ◆ Anticipates potential cultural bias in instruction and plans for student diversity.
- ◆ Revisits and revises classroom norms with students to build shared ownership and responsibility for learning environment.
- ◆ Contextualizes or connects content to students' socio-cultural and linguistic assets.
- ◆ Creates meaningful opportunities for students to self-reflect and collaboratively resolve conflicts as a learning community.

Source: Long Beach Unified School District. (2018). *LBUSD Understandings Continuum 2018*. Long Beach, CA: Author. <http://www.lbschools.net/Asset/Files/Curriculum/Understandings-Continuum.pdf> (accessed 09/13/18).

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