

California Center for Effective Schools

Connections for Success

A project of UCSB's
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education

Summer 2002

Effective Schools Continues Progress in Oxnard

Advances continue to accrue in the Oxnard School district due to the efforts of faculty and staff in those schools and the direction provided by the UCSB Center for Effective Schools, funded in part by UC Outreach. The work of the Center has been embraced by ten elementary schools all of which are committed to increasing student achievement. This school reform effort is founded on seven principles that have been derived from extensive research and empirical investigations. By focusing on such tenets as high expectations of student performance, frequent monitoring of student progress, and a strong collaboration between home and school, the Center hopes to develop a positive culture within the schools: a culture with high aspirations and a focus on learning.

Superintendent Richard Duarte and other district leaders are committed to this process and have created a climate that provides teachers the opportunity to collaborate on teaching strategies, instructional standards, and other projects aimed at raising the bar of achievement. Crucial in the process of effecting change is the allotment of one of the most precious resources: time. "Guest teachers" have been brought in to present lessons to students while teachers meet in grade level groups to develop curriculum maps, examine student work, and explore strategies to improve instruction.

Recognizing that school leadership is an essential element in school reform, the Oxnard principals, learning directors and key district administrators together with staff from UCSB designed and implemented a leadership academy to support the work of the overall project from the administrator's perspective. This effort culminated in a four-day summer institute which focused on identifying precepts



and strategies for instructional leadership, creating the time to focus on that role, and aligning school and district practice to support the principals in their role for instructional leaders.

As a kick-off to the new school year, the Center for Effective Schools hosted its third annual Leadership Team Retreat on August 22 and 23. District Principals and Learning Directors, along with other key personnel, attended this two-day workshop at the Casa Serena

Hotel in Oxnard. The retreat included important vision statements by Mr. Richard Duarte, superintendent of Oxnard Schools, and Dr. Janet Chrispeels, Executive Director for the Center of Effective Schools. Dr. Raye Adkins and Mr. Felipe Vargas presented a workshop entitled "Framework for Understanding Poverty". Teachers and administrators learned new techniques for assessing student work and building a community of learners. Ultimately, each leadership team was provided with the time and some useful tools to assist in the work of developing their own individual improvement plan for their school.

This program began in April of 2000 when the collaboration between UCSB and the Oxnard School District was approved by the Oxnard Board of Education. Since then, schools involved intensively in the project achieved an average two-year gain of 59 points on the Academic Performance Index. This gain is twice that of non-participating elementary schools in the district. More important than these scores, however, is the growing sense among teachers that collaboration with their colleagues enables them to improve student learning and that the overall project goal of preparing under-served students for college can be achieved.

Questions for Administrators and Teachers to Ponder

1. When it comes to the improvement your school has made, of what are you most proud?
2. What are some of the things you did last year to meet the challenge of improving student achievement?
3. What is leadership?
4. What roles do teacher-leaders serve?
5. How can schools establish high expectations for teachers and students?
6. Does your school discipline program support learning?
7. How can you communicate the value of learning?
8. What kinds of programs encourage students to learn?
9. How should you serve as an advocate for students?
10. How can you acknowledge the achievements of others?



Leadership Academy Complements Effective Schools

Whether or not you are involved in school reform, one aspect of school improvement that everyone agrees with is the importance of principal leadership. Research indicates over and over again the direct correlation between strong instructional leadership and improved student achievement. Instructional Leadership is one of the correlates of Effective Schools.

The California Center for Effective Schools and the Oxnard School District have completed a full year of twice-monthly principal and learning director (vice-principal) professional development sessions which have focused around themes of improving reading comprehension, walk-through observations, teacher evaluation as a tool for professional growth and a culminating four-day institute on time and stress management.



As the Leadership Academy enters into its second year, multiple sessions are planned around themes that are central to the work of principals and which are based on identified district priorities and the new California Professional Standards for Administrators.

Don't Wait, Facilitate!

Albert Einstein once said, "I never teach my pupils, I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn."

To facilitate is "to free from difficulties or obstacles," "to make easy or easier," or "to carry out a set of functions or activities before, during and after a meeting to help the group achieve its own objectives."

One of the best ways to ensure an effective faculty meeting, leadership team meeting, grade level or departmental meeting is to have a neutral facilitator who runs the meeting process. The facilitator frees everyone else to focus on the content, while he or she works the agenda, keeps the group focused, and attends to group maintenance. Great facilitators build on group energy and support head and heart creativity. They build trust, forge community, and generate empowerment. Everyone feels involved and each person's ideas and talents are appreciated.

Good facilitators empower members of the group by strengthening people's sense of self, increasing their confidence that they are taken seriously by others as beings with a history, an identity worthy of respect, and needs that must be addressed.

Facilitators need not agree with individuals or approve of their actions. They need only make it clear through their eye contact, gestures, body posture and tone of voice that they are eager to understand the situation as the individual understands it, that the facilitator will not reject them for their views, and that the facilitator recognizes in them significant resources of their own for responding to conflict and problems. Listening well is an important skill used by facilitators to communicate this understanding and attitude.

A well facilitated meeting opens the door to a shift in thinking and allows participants to self-manage and be creative, and helps them accomplish the results that they want. Knowing how to facilitate is a core competency of leadership in all organizations.

Hilltop School Continues Improvement Process

“Vision with Action” is taking Hilltop Elementary School to new heights, thanks to the dedication and work of Principal Robin Lamoureux and her entire faculty. Guiding Hilltop in this work for the past year has been the California Center for Effective Schools under the direction of Dr. Janet Chrispeels and Lynn Wallace.

Hilltop administration, leadership team, and teachers have been discussing, working, reorganizing, learning, and leading with the Effective Schools Process as they evaluate and make changes in their school committee structure, format of faculty meetings, and purpose of grade level meetings. Principal Lamoureux, says, “All that we’re doing at Hilltop is focused on increased student learning and achievement.”

Hilltop’s dedication to improved achievement is paying off as their standardized test scores improved in reading, math, and writing this past year and teachers have expressed a renewed enthusiasm for teaching and appreciation for the staff development and leadership training brought to them by the California Center for Effective Schools.



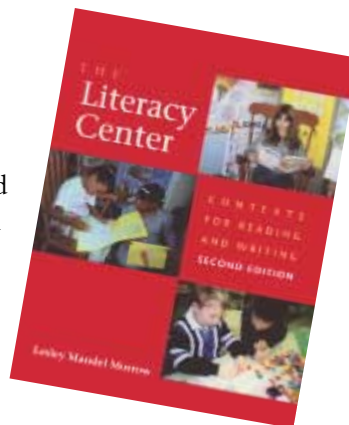
According to California Center for Effective School’s director, Lynn Wallace, “The students at Hilltop Elementary are the big winners and that is what matters most.” Wallace adds, “I can’t say enough about the commitment of Robin and her staff as they continue their school improvement process. They have taken the vision for their school and are putting it into action. We are learning from one another, and that’s a major goal of collaboration.”

Book Briefs

The Literacy Center (Second Edition)
by Lesley Madel Morrow.

The *Literacy Center* is a practical, theoretically sound guidance for language arts teachers from pre-K through grade 5 who want help setting up literacy-rich classrooms that support guided reading or other small-group teaching.

This new edition of *The Literacy Center* provides meaningful activities that extend small-group instruction in both comprehension and word study. Clear suggestions for each center, together with charts, diagrams, black-line masters and photographs, help implement a “real” work place for young learners. Supported by the author’s extensive research in motivation theory and exemplary instruction, here are sound ideas that engage students collaboratively and independently. You can spend time teaching small groups of students, attending to their individual needs, all the while knowing the rest of your class will be independently engaged in real learning.



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New Web Site

The California
Center for
Effective Schools

is up and running at

http://

effectiveschools.

education.ucsb.edu

Check us out!

Effective School Correlates

Effective Schools provides a framework for reform based on seven guiding principles, or correlates, derived from empirical investigations and case studies of school success.

- ☞ A safe and orderly environment for learning
- ☞ A clearly stated mission focused on learning
- ☞ Instructional leadership
- ☞ Uncompromising commitment to high expectations
- ☞ Frequent monitoring of student progress
- ☞ Coherent classroom opportunities to learn
- ☞ Strong home-school collaboration and communication

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Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades by Debbie Miller

If you have ever wondered how to teach comprehension strategies to primary-age children, you'll want to read this new book by Debbie Miller.

Imagine a primary-grade classroom where all the children are engaged and motivated; where simultaneously words are sounded out and connections are made between the books of their choice and the experiences of their lives. In *Reading with Meaning*, Debbie Miller focuses on how best to teach children strategies for comprehending text. She leads the reader through the course of a year where her students learn to become thoughtful, independent, and strategic readers.

Reading with Meaning shows you how to bring your imagined classroom to life. You will emerge with new tools for teaching comprehension strategies and a firm appreciation that a classroom can also be nurturing and joyful.

Second Language Learners by Stephen Cary

Stephen Cary helps K-6 teachers and administrators bring second language learners at all level of English language proficiency into the core curriculum. He evaluates instructional models, outline the basic ideas of how language is best acquired, and provides a wide range of idea, techniques, and activities for building language and ensuring academic success for all students.

With plenty of charts, visuals, and student samples as text support, *Second Language Learners* shows you that comprehensible, engaging instruction means second language learners acquire more content and more language.

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Get in touch!

For further information about the California Center for Effective Schools and how you can help support it, please contact:

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