

# Strategies

FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS ON DISTRICT-LEVEL CHANGE

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in cooperation with the  
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## Taking on the “All Means All” Challenge

Nearly everyone working in a school or a district office regularly sees these words on a plaque or in a mission statement: “All children can learn” or “We are committed to the success of *all* children.” Yet, across the nation, a serious disconnect separates rhetoric from reality, with too many children performing far below standards and many districts failing to close the gap between words and deeds.

Will historians who look back on this time conclude that many of the efforts around standards and accountability simply created more sophisticated means for perpetuating inequities among students, or will they see a reform that once and for *all* made major strides toward closing the achievement gap? The answer remains to be demonstrated, and it may well depend on the vigor with which schools and school systems take on what we’re calling in this issue of *Strategies* the “All Means All” challenge.

Dennis Doyle, the assistant superintendent of instructional services and support in Chula Vista Elementary School District in Califor-

nia, compares standards-based reform to high jumping: “If all you’ve done is raise the bar, then you are just sorting kids. Some kids don’t have shoes, and the cinders hurt their feet. Some kids are still crawling and will need help to get up and running. Some are crippled

 **Turning rhetoric into reality will require developing and implementing concentrated efforts on multiple fronts.**

and will need a trampoline. Our job is to help *all* kids to get over the bar.”

The job is, in fact, unprecedented. The “high standards for all” movement is aiming for something this nation has thus far not achieved: systems of public education that prepare all students across the socioeconomic spectrum for college-level work by the time they graduate from high school.

Turning rhetoric into reality will require developing and implementing concentrated efforts on multiple fronts, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Preschool and other early interventions
- Expanded time and intensive support for persistently low-performing students
- District or state intervention in persistently low-performing schools
- Intensive, ongoing, high-quality professional development for teachers and principals to raise

the quality of instruction and instructional leadership

- Reallocation of district resources, so that students who are most in need actually receive necessary supports
- Using assessments to diagnose students’ needs and improve instructional practice (In reading, for example, it’s important to know whether a student needs concentrated help on decoding or comprehension or both.)
- Gathering multiple forms of data to inform school-level and district-level decision making and program implementation
- Family support and health services
- Parent involvement and family literacy

The challenge, however, cannot be met through isolated programs; it requires a systemic response. Tackling it will require fundamental changes in the poli-

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cies, roles, practices, finances, culture, and structure of the school system. The truth of the matter is that the systems of education we have inherited from past generations were never designed to enable all students to achieve at high levels. On the contrary, they grew into sorting and tracking machines—hardwired *against* “All Means All.” That is, they were structured, whether intentionally or not, to perpetuate inequities that exist in the wider society within which



### The systems of education

**we have inherited ... grew into sorting and tracking machines—hardwired against “All Means All.”**

school systems operate. This fact is perhaps most glaringly evident in the allocation of instructional resources, including the most critical of human resources in education—teachers.

It is a nearly universal pattern in our systems of public education that the best prepared and most experienced teachers are teaching the most advantaged students and that the least prepared and least experienced teachers are assigned to disadvantaged students in lower-performing schools. The reasons for this phenomenon are complex, ranging from explicit and implicit incentives and disincentives that influence choices affecting the lives and careers of teachers, to contractual issues between district administrators and union officials, to parental

pressures on elected school board members, to accountability systems that publicly sanction, and essentially stigmatize, low-performing schools.

The dimensions of the “All Means All” challenge are such that we can only begin to explore them in this issue of *Strategies*. It is our intent to devote future issues to further mapping and exploration of these challenges and to highlight districts that are blazing trails toward an entirely new destination for public education: a system in which ALL children are performing to high standards.

### In This Issue

In the following pages we explore the efforts of three districts to close the achievement gap:

- **San Diego City Schools**, where Superintendent Alan Bersin has teamed with Chancellor of Instruction Anthony Alvarado in the creation and early implementation of a Blueprint for Student Success, which, among other things, concentrates resources, such as full-time literacy coaches, at low-performing schools.
- **Chula Vista Elementary School District**, just south of San Diego, which is using data to help target educational, social, and medical resources where the need for them is most urgent.
- **Broward County Public Schools** in south Florida, the fifth-largest school district in the United States, which has developed a program of intensive intervention for its lowest-performing schools. ◀

— Scott Thompson, Editor

## About the PANASONIC FOUNDATION

The Panasonic Foundation was established in 1984 by the Matsushita Electric Corporation of America. It provides direct technical assistance in long-term partnership with a select number of school districts to help bring about systemic, school-based, whole-school reform.

## About the AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

The mission of the American Association of School Administrators, the organization of school system leaders, is to support and assist these and other education leaders to achieve the highest quality education for all learners through personal, professional, organizational, and leadership development and advocacy for public education.

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# San Diego, CA:

## A High-Risk Sprint

Superintendent: Alan Bersin  
District Size: 143,000 students

### Abstract

Many district leaders find themselves between the horns of a dilemma: increased public pressure to end social promotion on the one hand, and mountains of research documenting the adverse effects of retention on the other. San Diego's Blueprint for Student Success in a Standards-Based System is a policy and practice framework for systematically eliminating this dilemma. The Blueprint, to quote from its introduction, "offers a more proactive approach to the problem by focusing district financial and human resources on instruction through a carefully articulated series of prevention, intervention, and retention strategies. This comprehensive plan serves as a blueprint for changing the organizational structure of district schools and the entire system to support teaching and learning for all students."

Although the Blueprint is still in the early stages of implementation, the number of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the state standardized tests has been steadily climbing. But the pace at which the challenge is being tackled, with little time for building teacher and parent ownership, is exhausting for teachers and principals, and the risks are high: the teachers union and the district are in conflict; teacher and principal morale is being severely tested; the

community includes its share of skeptics; and the board has been deeply divided in its support of the administration, as it was in selecting the district's first "nontraditional" superintendent.

### Background

San Diego is a city of extremes. Housing prices are soaring in some parts of the city, and the waterfront, convention center, and entertainment districts attract lively crowds. But the other side of San Diego, the side tourists rarely see, is mired in poverty. Immigrants from Mexico, Asia, and elsewhere, coming with limited English skills, populate the barrios and the inner city. Schools in these neighborhoods have chronically high dropout rates.

Districtwide about 13 percent of students drop out of high school. About 60 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches, and some schools have 100 percent poverty enrollment. More than two-thirds of the students are children of color, and fewer than half of the district's students read and do math at national norms for their grade levels. Only 38 percent of those who graduate meet the California State University System's standards of admission.

Three years ago the school board brought in Alan Bersin, a former U.S. attorney and "border czar" for the Southwest region, as superintendent. Soon thereafter, Bersin persuaded Anthony Alvarado, then superintendent of Community School District 2 in New York City, to join his administration as chancellor of instruction. Since then, the two have formed a strong partnership, with Bersin managing business, operations, community

relations, and school board relations, while giving Alvarado the needed political cover to lead the effort to transform teaching and learning across the system.

Alvarado was attractive to Bersin because of the national reputation he had earned in District 2 for raising the performance levels of students in poverty. Like San Diego, District 2 is highly diverse; it includes Manhattan's wealthiest and poorest neighborhoods and has poverty rates approaching those in San Diego. Alvarado developed a support model that infused a steady stream of resources into the coaching of teachers on improving literacy instruction and into the development of principals as instructional leaders. It was an article of faith for Alvarado that the prerequisite for good learning would be strong teaching and instructional leadership, and he has placed this conviction at the core of San Diego's current initiatives.

Bersin brought a reputation of his own to the job—as a tough prosecutor and as a man of integrity and action. Through the exercise of his considerable political skills—and building on the groundwork laid by school board members, union leaders, and others—Bersin persuaded 78 percent of San Diego voters to pony up \$1.5 billion for a renovation bond referendum only four months after assuming the post. In consultation with Alvarado, he reorganized and trimmed the central office, greatly reduced the number of teacher aides funded through categorical dollars, and realigned budgets to support his goals of making literacy and math instruc-

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tion the centerpiece of district instructional improvement, which is outlined in the Blueprint for Student Success, first implemented in the 2000–01 school year.

## The Blueprint

The key concepts behind the Blueprint are the improvement of student performance and the ending of social promotion through a system of *prevention* and *intervention* strategies and a unique approach to *retention*. Retained students receive intensive support to get back on track.

Investment in the Blueprint is massive for a district of San Diego's size: \$62 million in the first year and another \$33 million in the second. The expectation is that the district will have spent a total of more than \$250 million on the Blueprint after three years. (The district's overall budget for 1999–2000 was over \$1,049,000,000.) Supporters say the plan is a necessary full-scale assault on problems that until now have proven intractable. Detractors, including the teachers union, say it is too much, too fast, without any input from the teachers who are supposed to carry it out. Robin Whitlow, executive director of the San Diego Education Association, says she fears the plan will bankrupt the system. She also argues that the Blueprint takes all creativity out of teaching, a claim that the district administration disputes.

### Prevention

The Blueprint prevention strategies include a well-defined curriculum, content standards, high-quality materials, an extensive ongoing professional development system, and strong instructional leadership. The focus is on providing teachers and principals with high-caliber instructional skills and on providing students with high-quality instruction, curriculum frame-

works, and materials, as well as regular assessments to determine if they are learning what is taught.

**Upgrading teacher skills.** Every school has a peer coach/staff developer who works throughout the day coaching and observing teachers on literacy instruction. Focus Elementary Schools—those with the highest concentrations of low-performing students—get an extra coach. The peer coaches

**Supporters say the plan is a necessary full-scale assault on problems that until now have proven intractable.**

receive their own training in literacy and math instruction once a week from district central office staff and, occasionally, outside consultants.

The peer coaches, who work an additional month a year, are given a broad knowledge base. Their primary responsibility is to help teachers embed the professional development they receive into the context of their jobs. Peer coaches plan and implement staff development, provide classroom support and coaching assistance to classroom teachers, provide demonstration lessons, and assist in the development of methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the site's efforts to improve reading proficiency.

Summer and intersession institutes are offered to teachers of literacy and mathematics. Participating teachers are paid for their attendance or may waive payment and receive course credit toward salary advancement.

A demonstration classroom, with an attached teacher observation area, was established at an elementary site in 2000–01, followed by the addition of a demo classroom at a high school in 2001–02.

**Improving principals' instructional knowledge.** Principals in

every school are expected to be instructional leaders, and they are regularly coached by district-level instructional leaders. The district employs nine instructional leaders, each of whom carries a caseload of either 25 K–8 schools or about 10 high schools. In turn, principals are expected to spend two hours each day in classrooms coaching teachers. The district-level instructional leaders visit the principals' schools three or four times a year to help principals with strategies for coaching teachers. Principals also participate in monthly full-day K–12 conferences as well as half-day sessions by grade level.

Leadership programs for current, new, and aspiring principals are offered by the district in collaboration with the University of San Diego, San Diego State University, and other organizations through the Educational Leadership Development Academy. Program offerings include internships and an administrative credential program (first tier) for aspiring site leaders, residencies and an administrative credential program (second tier) for vice principals, a mentorship program in which principals coach their peers, and ongoing professional development for all principals and their supervising instructional leaders.

**Preventing student failure.** For students, the prevention phase is based primarily on providing them with improved instruction and enhanced classroom materials. Curriculum frameworks for the district have been standardized and focused on literacy and mathematics. Each school also receives \$5,000 per classroom for supplementary instructional materials.

A number of district elementary schools have volunteered to begin using a "mathematics team teacher" strategy in 2001–02. The strategy is designed to provide upper-elementary students with a stronger background in mathemat-

ics in preparation for rigorous middle-level coursework.

An important aspect of the literacy framework at the middle level concerns developing the ability to read and understand a variety of texts. All students entering a middle or junior high school (6th or 7th graders) are placed in a two-period genre studies class. The class is taught in a reading and writing workshop format using a wide variety of materials at a range of reading levels, including nonfiction text selections covering social studies and science topics. Students also have the opportunity to read and write memoirs, poetry, short stories, historical fiction, and other genres.

At the secondary level, the district is looking to redesign the role of department chairs by focusing on provision of additional instructional support for teachers. Newly established positions—site literacy and mathematics administrators—will lead instruction in their respective curriculum areas and evaluate teaching practices as designees of the principal. Literacy administrators will also work with the peer coach/staff developers to provide ongoing coaching and support to teachers on site, for example, by conducting demonstration lessons and providing opportunities for teachers to visit each other's classrooms.

### *Intervention*

For students who need the attention, as indicated by low performance in the classroom and on tests, a variety of intervention strategies are available, including the following:

- Before- or after-school programs in literacy for elementary school students performing below or significantly below grade level
- Junior First Grade Academy during intersession or summer school for students who do not meet the established performance levels in reading during kindergarten

- Six-week summer programs for students in grades 1 through 3 initially, and later for others
- Six weeks of intersession classes in year-round schools

The district has additional interventions for schools by level. One of the most intensive interventions is the Focus Elementary School. These are schools where a majority of the students perform at the lowest level on the California state assessment. In 2000–01, eight schools were designated Focus Schools, and two more



### **At the secondary level,**

### **the district is looking to redesign the role of department chairs by focusing on provision of additional instructional support for teachers.**

will be added in 2001–02. (A number of other schools where a majority of students performed only slightly better also received special interventions, though not as intensively as Focus Schools.)

Focus Schools receive intensive professional development for principals and teachers, more instructional resources than other schools, and a full-time certificated parent academic liaison who is responsible for increasing parents' involvement in their children's education. Focus School resources include the following:

- \$8,000 per classroom at designated grade levels for instructional materials
- An extended school year of 24 additional days, with students working with the same teacher all year
- An additional full-time peer coach/staff developer
- Year-long training for parents so they can support their children in literacy building, math, and organizational study skills

- A preschool program for four-year-olds at most Focus Schools

At middle and junior high school, students who are reading below grade level attend a two-period genre studies class with a lower student-teacher ratio than their peers who are at or above grade level. Also available for middle school students achieving below grade level are the following resources:

- One-hour math courses with reduced class size
- Extended-day programs
- Summer programs for those below grade level when entering 6th or 7th grade or when leaving 8th grade
- Intersession classes for year-round schools

High school interventions for students who are performing below grade level include the following:

- Two-period genre studies class and one intensive period of algebra; and for those significantly behind, a three-period genre studies class and one period of algebra
- Intensive summer school (Summer Bridging Program) for students in math and literacy at the conclusion of 8th grade

### *Retention*

Retention takes place for those students who, in spite of prevention and intervention strategies, continue to perform below standard. These students are retained at an early grade in their school level rather than at an exit grade. The grades designated for retention are 1st and 6th/7th, although students may be retained at any grade if they are performing significantly below grade level. There is no retention at 9th grade, but the Blueprint includes a program of support for entering 9th graders.

A large body of research suggests that traditional approaches to retention—putting students through

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## King School

In many urban districts, educators would write off King Elementary School. Student poverty is 99.9 percent—probably 100 percent except for a bookkeeping fluke. About 85 percent of the students are Hispanic, and 13 percent are African American. Almost 75 percent speak English as a second language. Despite the best efforts of the staff in recent years, King, a persistently low-performing school, was designated a Focus School when the Blueprint took effect.

Two years ago, Stacy Jones came to the school as principal. She was serious about making change and let her staff know she meant business. “I did lose a lot of staff members last year,” she says. “I made it clear it would not be easy; it would be stimulating, but it would take a little extra effort.”

As a Focus School, King has two peer coach/staff developers, a principal intern, three math specialists, a parent liaison, and a plan to improve instruction. The effort began last year with 10 Saturday workshops for teachers on literacy instruction. It continued throughout the year with daily coaching of teachers, an extended school year, and one and a half hours a day for professional development in literacy in the 4th and 5th grades.

The 4th and 5th grade teachers conduct action research, discuss common problems, tape their teaching techniques, and read professional journals. A demonstration teaching room has been built on the campus so that teachers can observe a master teacher in action.

Students are making progress, and the word is getting out. Perhaps for the first time in the school’s history, teachers are competing to get into it.

Many of those at King say the changes, although stressful, have given them a new lease on life.

Fifth grade teacher Bill Lane says, “The peer coaching is awesome. It’s great to have someone who can help you out.”

Adds Kathy Ford, a peer coach/staff developer, “We know something incredible is happening here. Visitors come and tell us it’s not the same school.”

Jones says there is already some evidence that the investment is paying off. Last year the school gained 70-plus points on the state assessment. Beyond the tests, though, she says students are engaged in their schoolwork and the morale of teachers is improved. “A lot of them said they had forgotten what teaching was like. Now they’re a happy staff. Are they 100 percent happy? No. The expectations from me are high, and they know that.”

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the same academic experiences for a second time—tend to have negative consequences that far outweigh potential benefits. In contrast, San Diego’s strategy places retained students in “accelerated classes” that are not a repetition of the previous year’s curriculum. The accelerated instructional program includes focused interventions.

Retention at the 1st grade level includes accelerated classes with additional materials, and increased teaching and learning time. First grade accelerated classes consist of 20 students, with up to 10 retained students and 10 (or more) first-time 1st graders. Class content focuses on literacy, taught for three or four hours in the morning, and mathematics, taught for 75 minutes in the afternoon.

Support for retained middle-level students includes literacy and

mathematics blocks, additional materials, extended learning time, and professional development opportunities for teachers. Reading classes also receive the support of accelerated literacy resource teachers.

### Results

It is still early in the endeavor, but test scores in the district are beginning to improve. Over the past three years, 4,587 students have moved into the highest quartile on the SAT-9 reading test, and 3,130 students have moved out of the lowest quartile. In math over the last three years, the highest quartile has increased by 6,980 students, and the lowest quartile has decreased by 4,174 students.

The percent of San Diego students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on SAT-9 reading in grades 2 through 11 is higher than the state average (47 percent in San Diego compared with 44 per cent

statewide) and higher than any other large urban district in California (ranging from 26 percent in Oakland to 46 percent in San Francisco). Almost 5,000 more students, including many who are not yet fluent in English, were tested in San Diego in 2001 than in previous years.

Some teachers say they are beginning to feel good about the quality of their work. “I see a big difference in the amount of English spoken here,” says Veronika Lopez-Mendez, a 2nd grade biliteracy teacher at Balboa Elementary. “We are now getting tremendous funding through the Blueprint, and we continuously get opportunities for training. We are becoming a learning community.” At King Elementary, another Focus School, Francisco Ciriza, a 4th and 5th grade teacher, says he is beginning to feel like he is having an impact after nine years of teaching at the school. “Last year my heart wasn’t here, and it was a

struggle,” he says. “Now I know what I have to do in the morning. I have a lot more purpose.”

## Challenges Ahead

The pace and scale of the Blueprint are the source of both national interest and internal dissent. Detractors wonder if the district can afford the plan, if its employees can survive the pressure, and if the public will continue to support the goals in the face of increased pressure on students.

One immediate problem facing Bersin and Alvarado is the level of strife with the teachers union. Before their arrival, the union in San Diego was well on its way to becoming a collaborative partner with the administration. But it didn't take long for that relationship to unravel and an ongoing exchange of rhetorical projectiles to be launched. Today, the two sides continue to have biweekly meetings, but the communication by all accounts is hostile or perfunctory. “I've worked in probably 200 school districts and hope I never see anything like this again,” Whitlow, of the San Diego Education Association, says. “We are the exclusive bargaining agent, but we are not partners in the process. It's not the bargaining that upsets us, it's the [unilateral] implementation of the curriculum and strategies that teachers have no participation in.”

Bersin readily admits that the bedrock issue may be whether consensus is critical, or if it is possible to forge ahead without it in the beginning—with the expectation that change in instructional practice and in student results will bring about a change in attitude. “The consensus building has traditionally been by way of agreements among adults, and these have tended to drive an agenda focused on children away from the table and concerns about quality away from the system.” Alvarado adds, “I am now clear there is nothing we could have done

differently with [the union]. We have two points of view, and those things are so far apart that it's hard to believe they could have been bridged.”

It is also unclear how much support the district can count on from the community. In May, the district mailed 1,500 letters marked “Urgent” to the parents of 6th and 7th graders, alerting them that their children might require accelerated literacy and math classes as retained students. An estimated 500 1st graders also were facing retention. As student retentions continue, will parents and advocacy groups balk?



**“Only when the organization is at risk do you have the opportunity to make it a real-world situation.”**

Finances present another obstacle. Alvarado says that when the administration first proposed the Blueprint to the board, one member characterized it as “a \$100 million pipedream.” Today, \$96 million later, the district is getting close to the figure quoted by the skeptical board member. Some of the supporting funds have been reallocated from Title I, which initially caused concern and legal challenges—hurdles the district was able to overcome. Bersin says other funds have come from savings through efficiencies, including the 20 percent reduction in the size of the central office. But the district still anticipates shortfalls in the face of a recession in California's economy, and Bersin hopes foundations, philanthropies, and other private sources will make up some of the difference in order to maintain the momentum of reform.

On top of these obstacles, the district is confronting practical issues about how much it can push its employees. Sylvia Gonzalez, principal of Balboa Elementary

School, a Focus School, is taking care of the social service needs of her students and their families while trying to improve the instructional practice of her teachers. As she walks visitors through her building, she shows them a private shower stall and a cabinet full of second-hand clothing and new underwear for the new immigrant and homeless families who arrive at her school asking to enroll their children. Gonzalez says attending to the needs of families in poverty and an overworked staff require her to regularly work 12 hours or more a day, plus frequent Saturdays and Sundays. On top of that, she must face intensifying pressure from the district to improve instruction and student performance.

“I share with my teachers the struggles I go through,” she says. “I tell them I am only two steps ahead of them. I try to be very honest with them about my fears, my struggles, what I am trying to do, and my focus.” Nevertheless, she remains positive in her outlook. “This year my slogan is, ‘Just do it.’”

Gonzalez and the other principals in the district receive their coaching from the district-level instructional leaders. They helped write the Blueprint and are committed to it, but the district's instructional leaders say they are working under unprecedented workloads. Kimiko Fukuda, a longtime administrator who retired after her recent stint as an instructional leader, expressed concerns about the job before leaving the district. “The pace at which we're going ... the sense of urgency is positive, but can we keep it up?” Another instructional leader, Jack Fleck, adds, “It's intense and stress producing. It's the first time in my career that I've faced that much intensity in what I do and how I do it.”

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# Chula Vista, CA:

## 8 A System of Student-Centered Schools

Superintendent: Libia Gil  
District Size: 24,000 Students

### Abstract

Chula Vista, the largest K–6 district in California, has taken significant steps to ensure that students come to school emotionally and physically prepared to learn. An array of social services is delivered to students and their families through an integrated system that leverages district resources with community assets. Although state standards and curriculum frameworks are non-negotiable across the district, the system is nevertheless highly decentralized to promote decision making based on student needs and performance and supported by a nascent student information system.

### Background

The 103-square-mile elementary school district is sandwiched between San Diego and the Mexican border. One-third of its 24,000 students are English language learners, and 49 percent qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Despite steady increases in recent years, more than 40 percent of the district's students are not meeting standards as measured by a combination of state norm-referenced tests and an array of assessments established through a consensus-building process across the district.

With such extensive language needs and with all the problems

that come with poverty—including malnutrition and family instability—district officials became convinced in the mid-1990s that student needs had to be addressed holistically. They began thinking about the district as the locus for social services that addressed students' medical and emotional needs, as well as the vocational needs of their parents. At the same time, it became apparent that the district would be unable to meet the enormous academic challenges facing students in a traditional school day and year.

But Superintendent Libia Gil, who felt that the district was losing children every day, found that most of the community did not share her sense of urgency when she arrived there in 1993. "Part of what I inherited was a strong sense of self-satisfaction," says Gil. "Some people said this is a good district you are coming to, and there is no reason for change."

Given this prevailing attitude, Gil's first task was to create what she called "a sense of disequilibrium," a dissatisfaction with the status quo. To do this, she challenged the community and staff to examine their needs, issues, and priorities. With help from an outside consultant, the district held 18 focus groups with students, parents, teachers, principals, senior citizens, school board members, business and community leaders, and others. The results of these conversations were used to formulate written statements articulating the shared vision, values, and strategic goals of the school system.

The district also published annual school profiles that captured on a single sheet a rich array of data relating to student achievement, attendance, socioeconomic indica-

tors, and the like. "The new practice of publishing and sharing information was a startling shift for most of our schools," Gil says. The profiles introduced the schools to the value of having data for strategic decision making—clarifying for school leaders where their resources were most needed.

Beginning in 1996, the district expanded its inquiry process by hiring Harris Interactive to conduct the first of what became biennial surveys of students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and community members. These surveys helped the district and the schools keep their ears to the ground on issues of importance to constituents. Among other things, teachers graded their schools on school atmosphere, career development opportunities, principal supervision, and overall satisfaction; students graded their teachers, equipment and facilities, the school bus, food service, and school safety.

### Meeting the Challenge

The district's efforts at engagement and feedback helped push the staff and the community off dead center into a growing recognition of the urgency and magnitude of the challenges the district faces if it hopes to prepare all students for life and work in the 21st century.

### School as Center

The strategic goals that emerged from the focus groups included "Collaboration: With the school as the center, the entire community will become full partners in education, responsible for each child's success." The concept of "school as center" represented a significant departure from the top-down struc-



ture of the district's recent history. Dennis Doyle, assistant superintendent for instructional services and support, likens the task to "disassembling the old industrial model—the one best way—and trying to create a new model from the ground up."


The new model balances district-level, standards-based accountability against school-level autonomy in such areas as school philosophy, instructional practice, governance, and decision making. In most districts, the effort to push authority for key decisions out to the schools is known as "site-based decision making," but what emerged in Chula Vista was the notion that decisions should be based on the needs of students, and so the strategy is called "student-based decision making."

To facilitate local decision making, the district needed to redesign its central office. A curriculum management audit was conducted, and the result informed efforts to dismantle the central office, reducing redundant jobs and eliminating others that could best be handled at schools or more effectively through technology. Today, the administrative budget amounts to less than 5 percent of the annual budget. According to Jim Groth, a past president and executive board member of Chula Vista Educators, this dismantling included the loss of nationally known curriculum specialists who had been part of the district team.

Shifting responsibilities and resources from the central office to the school building gave principals the opportunity to tailor the school program to the academic needs of their students, including those living in poverty. The message, Doyle says, was for principals to meet the districtwide academic expectations, but to do so with freedom to meet the unique needs of the particular students in each given school.

One manifestation of this new philosophy was the exploration of whole-school reform models. Four schools adopted the Accelerated Schools model, three the Comer model, and two the microsociety model; one developed a home-grown standards-based model, and another chose to focus on Direct Instruction/Corrective Reading. Five schools are working with the Ball Foundation to develop a new model based on the foundation's principles of productivity.

Five schools also decided to become district-sponsored charters, including an Edison school. These schools are still affiliated with the

 **Today, the administrative budget amounts to less than 5 percent of the annual budget.**

district, but they have no obligation to use its services, they are free to operate without most of the strictures of state or district policy, and their teachers can choose not to affiliate with the union (as was the case in Chula Vista). Doyle looks at these as research and development schools that "create markets for reform and challenge complacency."

One example of the systemwide impact of the move to charter schools centers on the issue of teacher seniority. Before the opening of the district's first charter school, historical practice gave significant powers to teachers with seniority. In effect, the most experienced teachers could go to whichever schools they chose. But the founders of the first school to seek a charter in the district did not believe unity of purpose could be established without investing teachers at the school with a key role in the recruiting and retaining of fellow teachers.

As the district's efforts at decentralization, supported by a focus on

data, expanded, more schools followed suit in seeking freedom from the rule of seniority. Ultimately, the district administration and the board had to battle with the union, and only with a ruling from the Public Employee Relations Board that favored the district were they able to unilaterally implement the new policy.

Now, the school principal, in conjunction with a team of teachers and parents, has authority to select new teachers. This has meant that experienced teachers are more evenly distributed throughout the system. Lowell Billings, the assistant superintendent for business services and support, says this change has had "the single greatest impact" on schools and student learning. But Groth of the teachers union counters that a "nontransfer system" has been created that no longer values teacher experience.

*Data-Driven Decision Making*

Chula Vista is meeting student needs by basing its instructional intervention decisions on data, rather than on impression. "Up until now, we've allowed ourselves the luxury of saying it looks good," Doyle says. Now the district can use multivariate analyses to determine which instructional strategies are working for students.

The one-year-old student information system was built with the capacity to include information on student demographics; results of the Harris Interactive survey by school on parent, teacher, and student satisfaction on a range of issues from academics to school safety; student attendance and mobility rates; percentage of students meeting standards using multiple assessments; and student scores in reading and math on various measures, which can be broken out by demographic groups.

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Having such data allows principals and teachers at each school to follow the performance of students and to prescribe measures to help those at risk of failing. School personnel receive training on how to gather and interpret the data, especially when analyzing longitudinal data by cohort groupings.

The data are stored on a central server, and each school has access. The data are rich and can help decision makers identify trends within particular student cohorts and focus resources on the improvement of performance. Schools are encouraged to use the data creatively in annual presentations they each make to the school board on progress in achieving strategic goals. The aim is for all schools to become so adept that they will use the data to guide budget decisions, site council decisions, and classroom instructional priorities.

### *Family Resource Centers*

A range of student and family social service needs is addressed through Family Resource Centers established on-site at four of the poorest district schools. The resource centers are mini social service agencies designed to treat students holistically. They take seriously the growing belief that schools must be the focal point for a variety of services often available to students and their families but usually inconveniently located in disparate sites around the community.

Chula Vista's resource centers provide families with one-stop shopping for the following services:

- Even Start family literacy training
- Americorps tutoring for reading and pullout class work
- California Healthy Families medical insurance for the near poor
- Welfare-to-work programs for parents

- Job search assistance for parents, including coaching on how to write a resumé and conduct an interview
- Student counseling and behavior intervention services
- After-school programs
- Juvenile probation officers
- Child protective services social workers

On staff at the resource centers are *promotoras*—parents who make house calls, give presentations in classrooms and at shopping malls,



### **One of the district's more innovative health initiatives is its mobile pediatric clinic.**

or appear at social clubs to give parents information on such health-related issues as asthma, lead-paint poisoning, and dental care.

An additional critical service, especially for families in poverty, is access to a publicly funded preschool program. In Chula Vista, one pattern that the data revealed was the fact that preschools tended to be located in areas where schools had space available in empty classrooms. These areas, however, are least accessible to children and families with the most pressing needs. Preschools have now been built where data showed the need was greatest, so that every school with a Family Resource Center also has a preschool. Some other schools have them as well.

### *Mobile Pediatric Clinic*

One of the more innovative health initiatives undertaken by the district is its mobile pediatric clinic, a health facility on wheels that makes the rounds to district schools. The clinic was designed to address two related issues: high absenteeism among Chula Vista's poorer and often uninsured students, and overuse of emergency rooms by children in the city's health facilities.

Many students in the district have no health insurance coverage, so when they need medical attention they sometimes end up going to hospital emergency rooms, which are required to treat them. But the emergency room visits were disrupting attendance and were not the best form of treatment for the children. Two of the city's major medical centers teamed up with the school district to get the mobile pediatric clinic bus rolling to schools with high absentee rates.

After only one year of operation, the results are impressive: the percentage of pediatric visits to emergency rooms has dropped considerably; schools that are part of the program are seeing reductions in absenteeism, and all of these schools are seeing increases in student achievement.

### *Extended Time*

To address the needs of students who are not reaching standards, Chula Vista has taken several measures to extend the school day and year. Most schools are on a year-round calendar or have extended school calendars that begin earlier in the year and end later.

After-school activities also are available to extend learning opportunities. The STRETCH program (Safe Time for Recreation, Enrichment, and Tutoring for Children) is available at eight schools with the greatest academic needs.

"We rank-ordered our schools on the basis of free and reduced-price lunch, from wealthiest to poorest," says Nancy Kerwin, director of the district's early intervention department. "We partnered with the city on STRETCH. We target those students who don't meet multiple measures of proficiency."

The city and the district split the cost of the program evenly. At-risk students receive 15 hours of additional instruction each week in

STRETCH reading and literacy programs. Instructors are city employees, often college students working part-time, and they receive training in tutoring from the American Center for Learning. Another after-school program, DASH (Dynamic After School Hours), is primarily a recreational program offered at 12 schools.

### *Professional Development*

In addition to a standard array of professional development options available through released time, schools have access to data and dollars needed for designing or adopting professional development activities that are tailored to the needs of their particular students and teachers.

At Loma Verde School, a Comer school, the data revealed a need to strengthen writing across all grade levels, and so this has become one of the school's professional development priorities. Twelve members of the school's staff have also received "Comer training" at Yale University.

Systemwide, the district offers professional development for principals and associate principals through a year-round leadership learning institute supported by the Ball Foundation. The institute is designed to respond to participants' most pressing needs.

Through a program called CHAT (Chula Assistance Team), which the district developed in collaboration with union leadership, Chula Vista gives a select group of master teachers leave from the classroom to coach younger teachers and those who need assistance.

### *Standards for Principals*

Principals in Chula Vista are evaluated by both the superintendent and a group of peers. These evaluations may include classroom observations, analysis of student work, and formal interviews with key staff

and parent leaders. The principals are expected to perform according to standards, which they helped to create, and which describe instructional strategies, staff supervision, hiring and leadership practices, forming communities with parents and students, school culture, and other measures.

Under a pilot, principals who perform well have been eligible for incentive bonuses. Performance is defined through addressing the principal standards, student assessment results, peer and self-evaluation, and cabinet evaluation.

Gil sent shock waves through the school community when she began requiring principals who did not measure up to return to classrooms. Chula Vista Educators president Gina Boyd says that they did measure up but failed to toe the district line politically.

### **Results**

The district is making steady progress in meeting standards on multiple measures. In 1997–98, 44 percent of students met standards for combined language arts and math measures. The following year that figure rose to 49 percent, in 1999–2000 to 54 percent, and in 2000–01 to 57 percent. Growth has been most dramatic in the lowest-performing schools.

The district and the board continue to have an unproductive relationship with the leadership of the local teachers union. Union president Boyd says the administration has given teachers little voice in school-based management decisions, has provided few instructional resources to schools with high poverty levels, and allows teachers only 30 minutes of preparation time a day. She says the administration has aggressively sought to blunt the reach of the union and went out of its way to counsel teachers in charter schools not to join the union, leav-

ing them with the misimpression that they would have the same due process rights whether or not they were union affiliated. "Essentially they have no due process or just cause," she says. "Young teachers don't know what they've given up, and most of the teachers in the charter schools are young."

Yet teacher satisfaction ratings are high. In 1999–2000, the Harris Interactive Survey showed teachers ranking the district at a level equal to or higher than the highest marks ever recorded by the district on overall customer satisfaction measures. About 92 percent gave the district an A or B grade in career development opportunities, and 91 percent gave high marks on school atmosphere and principal/direct supervision.

Student satisfaction ratings are also high in the Harris poll, having risen from 7.8 to 8.3 on a 10-point scale between 1996 and 1999. In 1999–2000, students gave the district high marks on teacher satisfaction, overall satisfaction, and equipment and facilities.

A high level of collaboration with the community helps the district leverage its resources for poverty students. The health community and corporate givers have worked closely with the district to make the mobile pediatric unit a reality. The city has combined resources with the district to support STRETCH and Even Start programs. And other organizations such as the YMCA have helped the city with its extended-day programs.

In sum, the district's focus on supporting students in poverty through collaboration with other organizations, decentralization of the school bureaucracy, extended-day and extended-year programming, and recognition of the value of treating students and their families holistically is beginning to pay dividends in improved student performance in all schools. ◀

# Broward County, FL:

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## Raising the Floor

Superintendent: Frank Till  
District Size: 250,000

### Abstract

Florida's get-tough accountability system has put pressure on districts around the state to improve student performance, especially in chronically low-performing schools. Broward County, the fifth-largest district in the nation and one of the fastest growing, has responded with a plan that sends support teams of curriculum and instruction specialists to schools that have performed poorly on assessments, including the statewide Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Last year, six teams of curriculum specialists at the elementary level and four teams at the secondary level regularly visited so-called Upward Bound schools, schools that are low performing according to state assessments, and worked closely with classroom teachers on improving instruction. The plan worked well enough so that in the current year it is being expanded, although it will also be reshaped to have a deeper impact on schools.

### Background

Broward County, which encompasses Ft. Lauderdale and 30 smaller cities, continues to be one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. For a number of years, the school district has been growing at a rate of 10,000 students a year. About 7,000 are foreign born, coming primarily from the Caribbean, Latin

America, East Asia, Russia, and various European countries. Overall, students in the district represent 152 countries and speak 52 languages.

From his office in a high-rise building in downtown Ft. Lauderdale, Superintendent Frank Till has a bird's-eye view of the city. To the east, he can see high-priced beachfront condominiums; to the south, he can see open spaces targeted for development. To the north and west are the high-poverty neighborhoods populated mainly by African Americans, Haitians, and new immigrants.

About two years ago, Florida Governor Jeb Bush unveiled the A+ Plan for Education, a program that attaches consequences and rewards to schools' performances on the FCAT. If a school does poorly, it can be put on probation. If the school receives an F, students at the school become eligible for vouchers to attend private school.

In the 1998–99 school year—the first year the test was administered to 4th, 5th, 8th, and 10th grade students—6 of Broward County's 205 schools and 1 charter school received F grades; in 1999–2000, no schools received failing grades, but 44 received Ds. The majority of the low-performing schools were serving Hispanic, Haitian, and African American students.

The accountability system created external pressure for a districtwide improvement plan. Also present were internal pressures: a new superintendent with a mission of excellence; rapid growth, which also added 1,500 new teachers a year; and district commitment to the Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence (SCOPE), an

integrated management system similar to the Baldrige Criteria.

### Meeting the Challenge

Broward responded with a plan to create 10 instructional support teams in its four administrative areas. The mission was to offer support and to model new instructional techniques in schools that scored D or below on the FCAT or that fell from a score of A to C. Each area had at least two teams—an elementary team and a secondary team—and those with the most need had three. Team members were curriculum specialists in language arts and math from the district's Office of Curriculum and Instruction. The director in each of the four areas also worked with the teams.

Between November and February last year, the teams were in schools three to four days a week. Generally that meant that each school saw an instructional team every three or four weeks, depending on need.

Diane Carr, executive director of core curriculum and a team leader, says the first step for each team was to do a needs assessment in the schools they visited. They interviewed principals and assistant principals about their schools' perceived weaknesses and strengths, and then developed an intervention plan. Some schools took the lead and drafted their own intervention strategies that were then monitored by the instructional teams; others followed the team's lead.

In some schools, the teams conducted regular workshops on a variety of instructional topics. They also modeled instructional strategies. In many schools, the teams worked closely with the reading

coaches, with an eye toward improving literacy instruction.

Although strategies varied from one school to the next, usually the teams did the following:

- Designed workshops and other activities to improve teachers' knowledge of district standards and instructional strategies for helping students to meet them
- Assisted teachers with classroom management issues
- Observed teachers in classrooms and provided feedback
- Helped teachers and building leaders use assessment data to understand students' weaknesses

These activities were not necessarily new for the curriculum specialists. Before there were Upward Bound schools and before the state had an A+ program, teams of curriculum specialists were already going into low-performing schools or schools with new principals to conduct observations and offer suggestions. The primary differences were the frequency and intensity of visits. Each team had a much larger caseload and fewer members. Also, because the visits were now more frequent, team members say it was easier for them to build trust with teachers.

Team activities also were more systematic. Members were asked to keep careful records of their visits and to put the files on a collective database so that the information could be shared across teams.

Interviews with team leaders reveal that their experiences ranged widely. Some felt they were very effective. "I think it was one of the most successful years we have had," says Lynne Naylor, a district-level elementary reading specialist. "Working directly with teachers was much better than just observing them." Some team members reveled in the opportunity to form one-on-one relationships with teachers and building leaders.

The amount of work that team members had to do varied with each school. Some schools required extensive assistance, whereas others, such as Lauderhill Middle Community School, were self-starters. At Lauderhill, the building leaders developed an extensive plan of their own to improve student learning, including implementing motivational reading programs, building



### **Some team members reveled in the opportunity to form one-on-one relationships with teachers and building leaders.**

effective testing strategies, using various computer programs, establishing math clubs, and setting aside blocks of time for writing. Teachers received assistance on how to analyze school test data, how to teach curriculum across content areas, and how to manage daily feedback on student reading progress through a computer-based program called Accelerated Reader.

Interviews with team leaders unearthed problems. They consistently observed that even though their workload was more manageable than in the past, there were still too many teachers who needed help and too little time to accomplish what was necessary. Schools also were not universally welcoming. "We had a varied reception from the administrators and teachers, from cool to receptive," says Carol Halka, an elementary math curriculum specialist. "The cool made us work harder. But even one of the cooler schools sent us a beautiful note afterwards."

The intervention during the first year was too short and too late. Some schools received their first visit in November, and some were not visited until early December. Consequently, team members did not regard the intervention as a

long-term strategy. "We probably need an ongoing, long-term coaching model rather than a quick fix," says Judy Jordan, a secondary math specialist. "We have grave needs in math in middle and high schools; we have classrooms where permanent substitutes are teaching." She also noted that secondary math teachers' mastery of the content is as much of a problem as using the right instructional strategies—another reason for a long-term approach.

Interventions also were not mandatory. If a school decided to opt out of the assistance from instructional teams, it could—and some did. Although this reaction was not widespread, it meant the district was confronted with the possibility of spotty implementation down the road.

### **Improvement Process**

Broward County has committed itself to an improvement process based on the Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence. As a data-driven assessment vehicle, SCOPE includes strategic planning and information analysis, two ingredients that appear to drive much of the district's thinking and planning. In terms of the Upward Bound schools, both came into play.

As the instructional teams reported back and recorded their experiences on the shared data file, the Office of Strategic Planning and Organization began to evaluate the results to determine how to improve the process. The office also had access to three surveys on the interventions. One was conducted by the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, which supplied the personnel for the instructional teams; another was conducted by the area director of the district's North Region, who surveyed the schools in that region; and the Office of Strategic Planning

## Northside Elementary

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One of the first four schools built in Broward County and the oldest still in operation is Northside Elementary in Fort Lauderdale. It is a 74-year-old Spanish Colonial structure that sits in the heart of what the school parents call "Little Haiti Fort Lauderdale." In its day, it was a proud place; now it is a refuge for about 650 students and their families.

Michaëlle Pope, the school's principal for the last two years, says that the library archives have pictures of students and their families arriving on horseback the day of the school's opening. Today more than 90 percent of the students are Haitian, and two-thirds have limited English proficiency. All are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. The school has wrought iron gates in front, security cameras that record all comings and goings, and some facilities problems attributable to age.

The needs of Northside's students are, as one might expect,

intense. "Parents have high illiteracy rates," Pope explains. "Many kids come in not exposed to print." For the third straight year, the school scored a D on the FCAT.

Pope has made a commitment to improving literacy by purchasing books that students can take home, meeting with parents and exposing them to literacy programs, and buying resource materials for language and vocabulary development.

The instructional support team working with the school included teachers with multicultural backgrounds and with training in English as a Second Language. Eight of the school's 44 teachers were paired up with members of the team for intensive support. The support team looked at sample work, observed the teachers in the classroom, and then began offering specific teaching strategies to improve literacy and math instruction.

Members of the instructional support team met with teachers every two weeks. Between those meetings, they would correspond with the teachers to follow up on their progress and answer questions about

practice. On some of the visits they taught and planned with teachers.

Pope and members of the school's instructional leadership team—including the assistant principal, the reading coach, a Title I resource coordinator, an ESL resource teacher, a guidance counselor, and others—played important roles in channeling information back and forth between the support team and the teachers. They also did much of the follow-up work between visits.

Pope says that in some cases very good relationships developed among the teachers and the trainers. But the work was difficult, and there was not enough time—only two months—to significantly improve practice. In the end, she believes that the work made a significant difference for four of the eight teachers who were targeted.

"This was our first attempt to organize support, and for a first attempt it was very worthwhile," she says. In the future, she hopes the support will start earlier, last longer, and that the team will become better integrated into the daily operations of the school. ◀

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and Organization conducted its own survey.

As a result of the findings, the district is considering the following changes:

- **A focus on school leadership teams, not individual teachers.** Superintendent Till believes the interventions did not build schoolwide capacity. In addition, most people recognize that the intervention teams will never have the resources to reach all the teachers who need to be reached. To resolve this, the teams will focus on the leadership teams in each school—including such people as the principal, the

vice principal, and the reading coach—instead of individual teachers. The aim will be to build school capacity for continuous self-improvement.

- **An earlier start.** Most agree that the interventions should begin earlier. Till pushed his administration for a strategic initiative by June 1, 2001, so that the district could plan its implementation over the summer and have plans in place at the beginning of this school year.

- **A longer run.** The consensus among most is that the interventions also need to run longer. The district is considering interventions that begin in March, one month after the FCATs are

administered, and continue until the following year's FCATs.

- **Customized plans.** In the current year, the district will place more of an emphasis on tailoring interventions specifically to each school's problems. In the surveys, some complained about "cookie-cutter" approaches. The assessments will be more directly aligned with the needs assessment of each school.

- **Coordination across central office departments.** The Upward Bound interventions were coordinated primarily through the Office of Curriculum and Instruction. But often a school's problems went beyond curriculum and instruction issues. In some

cases, for example, instruction might be suffering because of personnel shortages or a scarcity of instructional materials. To make approaches more systemic, responsibility for Upward Bound is shifting to the district’s senior management team—a group of about 20 individuals who report directly to the superintendent, including such people as the human resources director, the comptroller, the director of support services, and the four area superintendents.

■ **Two models for intervention.**

The district is considering two models for intervention: one for schools not making progress and the other for schools that are. If schools fail to progress, the district’s senior management will determine a prescription for improvement, which may include reconstitution. In the second model, school leadership will have more autonomy to devise solutions through local needs assessments.

■ **Clearer lines of responsibility.**

In the first year of interventions, it was sometimes unclear who would be responsible for what. For example, a budget analysis was prescribed for all Upward Bound schools, but it was unclear who was supposed to do the analysis—the principals or the district’s budget department. Strategic planning across central office departments may help resolve such problems.

Although the Upward Bound program addresses low-performing schools, the district also has low-performing students in high-performing schools. The state requires schools to address students who score in the bottom quartile on the FCAT. Schools address these students in their school improvement plans either through more attention or retention. In addition, any student

significantly below grade level must have an academic improvement plan.

Like many other districts, Broward is turning to summer school as the means for helping students who are performing below grade level and whose scores are in the lowest quartile on the FCAT. In 1999–2000, summer school enrolled 74,000 students, 84 percent of whom finished the program satisfactorily.

The summer school schedule for the 2000–01 school year was 50 percent shorter than in past years—three weeks for high school and 20 days for elementary and middle school. Because the sessions were shorter, they had to be more intense. The stakes were also higher. Students had to perform at or above the 25th percentile on the Stanford Diagnostic test or they would be retained.

Earlean Smiley, deputy superintendent for curriculum and instruction/student support, says the summer school curriculum this past summer was totally prescriptive for reading and math benchmarks and was very scripted. “We decided that if we could develop a rich curriculum with best practices and a frame of how to teach reading in every day’s lesson,” she explains, “we could also use this as a training ground for teachers during the summer. In 20 days we could create a different instructor.” Up to 5,000 teachers taught summer school.

For some years the district has had in place a sophisticated infrastructure for the delivery of professional development for teachers and administrators. Much of the work is organized around the district’s 24 innovation zones, which are K–12 groupings of schools based on high school feeder patterns.

**Streamlining the System**

Looking ahead, Smiley says, “Our greatest challenge will be clearing our plate. We are [organizationally] layered and layered. We need to

realign and make adjustments. Everything is up for negotiation.”

To accomplish all that’s needed, Till has instilled a mindset of challenging the status quo. “Today I got a strategic plan with a lot of existing programs in it,” he says. “I asked, ‘Are these the programs that will get us to where we need to go?’ and they said, ‘No, this is just what we have in place.’ So that’s just maintaining the status quo.”

Till has turned the catchphrase “organized abandonment” into district policy, insisting that any barrier to school improvement that is not imperative must be abandoned. He underscores the point by wearing a button that says “No barrier.”

“To improve, we will say we know you can’t work harder; you need to stop doing things that aren’t working,” he says. “Through data we have to be able to say what works and what doesn’t. So it’s okay to say that something doesn’t improve results, but it’s not okay to repeat it. The ‘No barrier’ button means that if someone tells you ‘no,’ you need to ask what the barrier is, how it impacts the student, whose barrier it is, why it exists, and what needs to be done to remove it.”

When discussing student assistance, Smiley continually brings the conversation back to what adults, not students, can do. “The greatest challenge is, How do you coach adults to improve classroom performance?” she says. To help teachers and administrators concentrate more on instruction than on management, Smiley has taken steps to reduce or eliminate the annoyances that get in the way. For example, she decided to reduce the number of memos that central office sends to principals—from 12 memos a day, when she first assumed her position a year ago, to about 3 a week.

The district also has knocked out training that occurs during the

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Bersin and Alvarado recognize the demands they are putting on district employees but believe it is an inevitable consequence of change. Bersin hopes that, as people become more comfortable and efficient at their jobs, the pace will become more manageable. "The cycle changes," he points out. "It starts with a sprint,

and the strides get longer as people build this approach into their professional lives."

For his part, Alvarado believes that a system has to push itself to the limit before it can achieve sustainable change. Whether that's possible on the scale of the San Diego experiment is still an open question, he acknowledges. "I don't know what the real answer is, but I

know there has to be real tension on the issue and you have to engage it with a seriousness that puts the organization in some ways at risk. Only when the organization is at risk do you have the opportunity to make it a real-world situation. People learn to solve problems quickly, the way real-world people do, which is a foreign concept to us as a profession and an institution." ◀

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day, except for released time, because it conflicts with shortages of teachers and substitutes. In the future, all training will occur during evenings, weekends, and the summer.

## Results

The Upward Bound program is still in its infancy, but it is clear that test results are improving. In 1999–2000, no school scored an F. Out of 210

schools in the county, 83 improved at least one grade level, with 29 schools jumping two grades and 5 moving up three grades. Fifty-two schools received an A grade, including 49 that were new to the A list, 27 that rose from a C, and the 5 that moved up three grades.

The latest test results from the 2000–01 school year show that progress continues. Overall, the district had 23 fewer D schools this year than last. Broward earned 61

A's—9 more than last year. Three schools jumped three grade levels, increasing from D to A, and 25 schools increased their grade by two levels. Thirty schools moved up by one grade level.

Till says it is his goal for Broward to be a model for change in public education in Florida. "In 20 years, we will either be successful or not, and the success of the state will depend on that." ◀

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