

“They Are All Our Kids”

Examining Resources for Supporting the CalSTAT Leadership Site Models

February 2007

Acknowledgements

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Individual site resource profiles for each of the Leadership Sites are available on the CalSTAT website, www.calstat.org.

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Examining Resources for Supporting the CalSTAT Leadership Site Models

Introduction

This paper reports on the experiences of CalSTAT's Leadership Sites regarding the resources required to plan, implement and operate their collaboration, literacy or behavior models. For the purposes of this study we used an expansive definition of the term "resources." By resources we mean not only dollars and cents but also staffing levels, the use of time for instruction and collaboration, and sources of expertise, guidance and support. Specifically, we asked Leadership Sites about the following aspects of their models:

- What types of activities and costs were involved in planning and developing their model?
- What are the resource requirements for the ongoing operation of their model, including new costs and the redirection or reallocation of existing resources?
- What are the sources of any additional resources that may have been required?
- Has the implementation of their model led to reduced program costs?
- Did they receive any external support for the planning, development or operation of their model?

We also asked the Leadership Sites two non-resource related questions:

- What factors do they believe contributed to the success of their model?
- What next steps were contemplated to complete or improve their model?

The study involved interviews with 16 of the 17 Leadership Sites conducted during the fall of 2006. The Leadership Sites represent schools and school districts in contexts ranging from small, rural settings to large, suburban or semi-urban communities. The school districts represented in the study range in size from fewer than 500 to nearly 60,000 students. The sites consist of one elementary school, 10 middle or junior high schools, one high school, and four districts. One of the "district" sites, the Point Arena Schools, consists of two districts, the Arena Union Elementary School District and the Point Arena Joint Union High School District. These two districts are under common administration, meaning that they share a single school board and central administration and are treated as a single district for the purposes of this study. Thirteen of the sites have implemented collaboration models, two literacy models and one a behavior model. Table 1 presents programmatic and demographic information for each of the Leadership Sites included in this study. This study serves as a supplement to the Leadership Site

Emerging Models analysis completed in December of 2006,¹ which provides more detailed information about the design of the various models. More information about resources for individual sites may be found in the site School Resources Profiles also available on the CalSTAT Leadership Site website.

Table 1
Participating Leadership Site Information*

Leadership Site	Model	Enrollment	Free/Reduced Lunch	Special Education	ELL
<i>School Sites</i>					
Atascadero Junior High School	Collaboration	711	24%	9%	5%
Big Bear Middle School	Collaboration	534	34%	10%	8%
Iron Horse Middle School	Collaboration	961	2%	9%	5%
Marine View Middle School	Literacy	931	20%	8%	20%
McKinleyville Middle School	Collaboration	403	38%	12%	0.2%
Mesa Verde Middle School	Behavior	1,380	8%	3%	28%
Pine Hollow Middle School	Collaboration	760	19%	12%	7%
Richmond Elementary School**	Collaboration	437	53%	25%	6%
Rincon Middle School	Collaboration	1,473	41%	9%	23%
Sanger High School	Collaboration	2,224	72%	6%	17%
Valley View Middle School	Collaboration	792	15%	12%	5%
Vista View Middle School	Literacy	884	50%	12%	19%
<i>School District Sites</i>					
Elk Grove Unified School District	Collaboration	60,735	39%	9%	18%
Hesperia Unified School District	Collaboration	20,267	55%	8%	18%
Paradise Unified School District	Collaboration	5,209	43%	11%	1%
Point Arena Schools***	Collaboration	470	69%	15%	31%

*Student data are for the 2005-06 school year.

**Includes students enrolled in a district-wide Special Day Class (SDC) program located in the school.

***Consists of the Arena Union Elementary School District and the Point Arena Joint Union High School District.

This study found that in a majority of the sites few or no additional resources were required for either planning or ongoing operations of the models. Specifically:

- Almost without exception Leadership Sites adopted their new approaches to serving students by significantly changing their instructional philosophy and the ways in which instructional staff and school time were configured. Most of the sites have few discretionary revenues with which to pay for new costs.

¹ The report “*They Are All Our Kids:*” *CalSTAT Leadership Sites Emerging Models and Practice in 2006* is available on the CalSTAT Leadership Site webpage at <http://www.calstat.org/leadershipSites/index.html>.

- In most cases much of the time involved in planning for the new model was conducted outside of the normal school day by school and/or district staff without compensation. In some cases teachers and other school staff continue to consult and collaborate together without pay outside of the regular school day.
- Much of the planning undertaken by the sites was conducted in-house by school or central office staff. Outside consultants or other experts were rarely brought in to advise or direct the planning process.
- Professional development has played an important role in the implementation of the new models. However, a number of the sites indicated that more funding for professional development would be helpful.
- While sites implementing collaboration models generally believe that they are serving more students, both with and without Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), more effectively, they have not found that they are saving money by adopting a model.
- Strong school- and district-level leadership and support, along with a professional culture for helping all students learn among instructional staff are key factors in successfully implementing a collaborative approach.
- The models discussed in this report continue to be works in progress. Each of the participating sites indicated that improvements or refinements of their models were under way or planned for the future.

The following sections provide an overview of the methodology used in conducting the study and summarize the common themes that emerged from an analysis of the information collected from interviews with staff from 16 of the CalSTAT Leadership Sites. These are organized under the following sections: Planning and Development, Ongoing Program Support, Factors Contributing to Success, and Next Steps.

Method

Telephone interviews were conducted with the Leadership Site contact person for each of the 16 sites involved in the study. A two-page questionnaire was sent to each site contact prior to their interview to assist them in preparing for their interview. When necessary, follow-up emails were exchanged to resolve questions or provide clarifications. Draft reports based on the information collected through the interviews were sent out to the site contacts for their review.

Planning and Development

The Leadership Sites most often undertook the process of investigating alternative approaches to supporting struggling students in response to the demands of accountability and high-stakes testing and the sense that they could better serve all of their students.

Many of the schools faced rising special education caseloads and costs and sanctions for failing to meet accountability benchmarks. A number of sites were simultaneously dealing with budget reductions due to declining enrollment.

The planning process was typically driven by the leadership of a small number of individuals, such as the school principal, teacher leaders, the district superintendent, or the district's special education director. However, broad participation by staff was a hallmark of the planning process in most sites. Because most of the sites had few discretionary resources for supporting their planning process, much of it was conducted in-house, relying on the experience and expertise of school and district staff. The following presents the resource-related elements of the planning process that emerged from interviews with the Leadership Sites.

Staff Time for Planning. In nearly all cases a team of district or school staff, consisting of administrators, general and special education teachers, and other staff, were formed to brainstorm ideas, develop the model design and help to obtain buy-in from other staff. The amount of time a team dedicated to the process varied from site to site. In some cases teams met monthly over the course of a school year. In others they may have met more frequently over a shorter period of time. Regardless of the team's timeframe, a substantial amount of this time was provided without pay by the team members. In only a few instances were team members compensated for their time outside of their regular work day or year, such as stipends paid to teachers for meeting during the summer. Most often, planning meetings were held before or after school, or occasionally on weekends. When necessary, schools would also hire substitutes to provide release time for teachers to participate in planning activities during the school day.

Site Visits. The most common strategy for accessing external expertise was through visits to school sites or districts with similar models already in place. About half of the Leadership Sites sent planning teams to visit one or more model sites. Where possible, teams would visit sites within easy driving distance to reduce travel costs. But finding an appropriate site close by was not always possible, particularly for the more rural, geographically isolated sites. In these cases the costs of airfare and hotels significantly raised the cost of the site visit. In one instance, the school's principal personally paid the travel costs of the entire team out of their own pocket.

Consultants/Trainers. Few of the sites brought in outside expertise to help with the development of their model. In most cases the sites relied on the experience and expertise of their own staff and what they had learned from their site visits. Several of the sites had become aware of CalSTAT and sent team members to one or more Leadership Institutes. One district contracted with a staff person from the district they had visited to assist with the planning and implementation of their new model. Several sites also received support and guidance from their Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), ranging from providing expertise on programs, interventions and regulations to issuing small planning grants. In one case, a SELPA staff person facilitated a district's planning meetings and served as a resource.

Other Planning Resources. Several of the school sites received extensive planning support from their district's central office staff, particularly the special education administrator. These staff served as a resource for programmatic expertise, for other sources of information (in two cases the district's special education director led a school site to CalSTAT), and on the implications of special education regulations for collaboration. Staff also took advantage of conferences or workshops on collaboration or intervention strategies.

Ongoing Program Support

As the *They Are All Our Kids: Emerging Models and Practice 2006* report illustrates, prior to adopting a new model the Leadership Sites' programs for serving struggling students typically consisted of pull-out programs or special day classes for students with IEPs that frequently did not share the general education curriculum at the school. Few interventions were available for students without IEPs who were not meeting standards. Little collaboration occurred among teachers, particularly between general and special education teachers. In adopting collaborative models these sites made often radical changes in their approach to serving struggling students. The role of teachers, particularly special education teachers, became more consultative and collaborative. School schedules were reworked to integrate an array of intervention classes to serve all students in need and to provide time for collaboration among the staff. In many cases new approaches were devised for assessing students' skill levels and using data to individualize and guide instruction. Targeted professional development in intervention and collaboration strategies was also necessary.

Few additional resources were available to these sites to aid in the implementation of their new models. Only one of the 16 sites included in this study receives per pupil operating revenues that are in excess of the state average.² About half of the sites are not eligible for federal Title I funds, an important source of discretionary funding. As a result, the sites had to rely on redirecting the ways in which they used current staff and other resources to make the new approaches a reality. The following presents a summary of the patterns of resource use and augmentation that emerged from an analysis of the 16 sites in terms of staff assignment, instructional and intervention time, collaboration time, and program support.

Staff Assignment. In most of the sites the new model called for greater collaboration among teachers, especially between general and special education teachers. As a result, the structure of special education teachers' work day was changed dramatically to more effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities. At these sites students in Resource Specialist Programs (RSP), and in some cases students in Special Day Classes (SDC), were mainstreamed to a greater extent, with some schools adopting full immersion models. Rather than being served in pull-out programs or separate classrooms, these students received instruction in the regular curriculum in blended general education classrooms. Additional support was provided to the general classroom

² Based on school district financial data reported by the California Department of Education for the 2004-05 school year, the most recent available.

teacher through several different strategies. In some classrooms general and special education teachers taught as a team, allowing for smaller class sizes, ability grouping or small group instruction for part of the period. In other classrooms special education teachers served as consultants to assist the general classroom teacher in making modifications or accommodations. In still other settings the general classroom teacher was assisted by one or more special education paraprofessionals.

[Teachers with a special education credential may only teach reading to special education students. However, there are a variety of credentialing options that would be appropriate for reading intervention teachers. These options include a multiple subject credential, a single subject English credential, a general elementary credential, a standard elementary credential, a reading specialist credential or a reading certificate. School districts may contact the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing for information about other teaching assignment options.

In addition to the appropriate credential, teachers need to demonstrate subject matter competence for NCLB. Middle/secondary teachers who were issued a credential prior to July 1, 2002 and are considered “not new to the profession” can use the (HOUSSE) process. For many reading intervention teachers, the HOUSSE option will allow them to demonstrate NCLB compliance in reading. The HOUSSE process would give credit for years of teaching reading, any college course work in reading or related subjects, and for the reading intervention staff development, including the training, the follow-up activities, portfolio work, and also for observations.

Teachers who are "new to the profession" (issued a credential on or after July 1, 2002), do not have the option of the HOUSSE, but can demonstrate subject matter competence in reading through course work options, including a major, major equivalent (32 units), advanced degree, or advanced certification. The reading certificate or reading specialist credential can be considered advanced certification for verifying NCLB subject matter competence in reading.

Title 5 regulations (Section 6100) allow a local educational agency to designate a course as elementary, middle, or high school. If a reading intervention course is designated as elementary, the teacher would use the elementary teacher options for verifying NCLB subject matter competence. Discussions are ongoing regarding verification of subject matter competence by examination, and clarification will be included in future postings of the NCLB Teacher Requirements Frequently Asked Questions.

For more information, please see the California Department of Education’s NCLB Teacher Requirements Resource Guide at www.cde.ca.gov/nclb/sr/tq/

In many cases a continuum of interventions was provided for those students who needed more time or more individualized help than was available in the general classroom. These interventions were typically available to both students with and without IEPs and consisted of additional instructional time for pre-teaching or re-teaching concepts or providing small group or one-on-one tutoring. These interventions were often staffed by special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Depending on the site, these interventions could include intervention classes that were part of the master schedule, after-school programs, and depending on the degree to which special education students were mainstreamed, traditional pull-out and SDC classes.

The typical school day for a RSP or SDC teacher in one of these sites often consisted of one or more periods of the following:

- Team teaching, consulting or collaborating in other ways with general classroom teachers in blended classrooms.
- Teaching intervention classes, often focused on reading or math, for any students who have fallen behind regardless of special education status.
- Teaching in RSP pull-out or SDC classrooms.
- Administering assessments and managing special education caseloads.
- Common planning time with other special education teachers or with partnering general education teachers.

While Mesa Verde Middle School's behavioral support model is unique among the CalSTAT Leadership Sites, it too involved a rethinking about the roles of key school staff. When budget cuts cost the school an assistant principal and a counselor, the 1,400 student school no longer had a sufficient number of student support staff to accommodate the number of behavior referrals being generated under their traditional behavior management model. The school's psychologist proposed an alternative positive behavioral support model that eliminated the traditional office referral. Under the new model, five administrators are on call each day to respond to behavior problems in the classrooms. A teacher needing assistance places what is referred to as a "Behavior Support Call" and an administrator responds within 10 minutes to deal with the behavior issue immediately in the hall outside the classroom. The student's parents are also contacted at that time and in most cases the student is returned to the classroom. The administrators also teach an intervention class, called Success Club, for the highest risk students and train new teachers in the behavior support model.

Extra Time for Instruction and Intervention. As special education students are mainstreamed in general education classes for more periods each day new strategies must be employed to provide them with the support they need to be successful. The Leadership Sites have been creative in adjusting their schedules to provide additional

time for interventions, ranging from more instructional time in the regular curriculum to more intensive intervention programs. Some of the strategies used by the sites include:

- Extended blocks of instructional time in the core literacy or math curriculum. This time is often configured as an add-on to the regular class time. For example, a school may offer a daily 40 minute language arts class with a second 40 minute period immediately following for those students who need extra help.
- More intensive intervention classes featuring smaller class sizes and supplemental intervention curricula. These classes are often scheduled in place of an elective class. They frequently are staffed by a special education teacher and one or more paraprofessionals so that students may receive instruction in leveled groups or one-on-one. Depending on the achievement level of the students, these classes may provide additional instruction in the core curriculum, work with students using more intensive intervention programs, work with an alternative curriculum, or some combination of the three.
- Extended day programs offered before or after school. These programs generally offer one or more hours of intervention time 3-4 days per week. They are typically staffed by a combination of general and special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The focus of the extended day programs may include some combination of extra help in the school's core curriculum, work with more intensive intervention programs, study skills, or homework help. Unlike the first two strategies, extended day programs require additional resources to pay for teacher and paraprofessional time, materials and supplies, and in some cases food. Schools or districts have used various funding sources to support their extended day programs, including Title I, 21st Century Community Learning Center grants, and Prop 49 funds.
- About half of the schools utilize a learning center concept for providing interventions, or in some cases acceleration, for their students. The centers are staffed throughout the school day, or in some cases after school, by general or special education teachers or paraprofessionals. They typically offer additional instruction to individuals or small groups in the core subject areas or help with developing individual study skills. Several of the schools employ a part-time learning center coordinator to manage the center's staffing and align interventions with student needs and state standards.
- Traditional pull-out or Special Day Classes. Even schools with the most extensive inclusion models continue to provide more intensive, targeted support to students with more severe disabilities for all or part of the day.

Regardless of how schools structure their extra instructional time, the common approach that runs through all of their programs is to provide instruction to most, if not all, students in the core curriculum and offer additional intervention time and support to those students with learning difficulties. The intervention classes tend to offer smaller class sizes and

are frequently staffed to make individualized and leveled small group instruction possible for part of the day. Schools have found the resources required to do this by reassigning their special education staff, or in some schools, by slightly raising class sizes in their general education classrooms. Only a handful of the schools had sufficient discretionary funds, such as Title I, to reallocate for staffing their intervention model.

Time for Staff Collaboration. Most sites struggle to provide adequate time for collaboration for their instructional staff. Just over half of the sites provide regularly scheduled daily or weekly common planning time (in two sites some teachers have both as members of different teams). The remaining sites rely on an assortment of strategies for providing teachers with release time, some that are dependent on support from their district's administration. These include:

- Most schools receive 3-5 late start or early release days throughout the year for collaboration.
- Several schools dedicate a portion of their regular weekly or monthly staff meetings to collaboration activities.
- Several schools run weekly or monthly elective courses, such as library, technology lab or fine arts, to release teachers from one or more grade levels for collaboration time.
- About a third of the schools rely on informal, and often unpaid, time such as before or after school or during lunch, for collaboration.

Examples of how schools have found creative approaches to providing more collaboration time include:

- The staff of one school generates one hour of weekly collaboration time by electing to increase the length of their instructional day by 15 minutes per day for four days to allow for one-hour of early release on the fifth day.
- Another school uses its Title I dollars to pay for two substitute teachers to run a school-wide fine arts program two days a month. The school's classroom teachers are released by grade level to review assessment data and plan with the principal, counselor and student support teachers.

Professional Development. All of the sites included in this study viewed professional development as an indispensable element in the successful implementation of their models. However, several interviewees noted that a lack of funds limited their ability to get the training their staffs needed. Both schools and districts redirected a portion of their existing professional development funds to support the training required for their models. To minimize training costs most sites employ a "train the trainer" model where one or two staff attend external training sessions and then return to train the school's staff in-house. Much of the sites' professional development focused on their intervention

programs (most often in literacy or math), student behavior and collaboration techniques. The sources of professional development most often mentioned by the sites included:

- District provided or funded professional development, often through the district’s curriculum and instruction department.
- Training offered through the local county office of education or SELPA.
- School-based Title I, school improvement or site council funds.
- The CalSTAT Leadership Site grant awards. Most of the sites listed their CalSTAT grant as their primary source of funding for model-related professional development, especially for training in effective collaboration techniques. Several sites expressed concern over how they would continue funding this training once their grants expired. The sites also noted the importance of the Leadership Institutes and the peer networking available through their participation in CalSTAT as valuable sources of knowledge and expertise.

Other Support. All of the sites drew on multiple sources of support for the development and implementation of their models. They redirected existing resources to new uses, applied for grant funding and looked to support from outside agencies such as their county offices of education and SELPAs. School sites also received various forms of support from their districts, including technical assistance, professional development, time for collaboration, more powerful data systems, and the purchase of intervention programs.

Program Cost Savings

The overwhelmingly perspective from the sites was that their approaches were initiated as a means to better serve more students rather than to save money. The word that came up over and over again in the interviews was “effectiveness.” By this they meant that their models represented a strategy for helping more students, both with and without IEPs, improve their academic achievement in the core curriculum. The consensus among the Leadership Sites is that their collaboration models have not led to overall program savings. In fact, few of the interviewees had previously thought of their models in terms of saving money.

The reason implementation of these models has resulted in little or no savings is due to the maintenance of school staffing levels despite declining special education caseloads. The central strategy underlying the models is the reassignment of special education teaching staff from working primarily with students with IEPs in separate settings to supporting all students through teaming in blended classrooms and through more individualized instruction in intervention classes and learning center settings. If special education positions are reduced in response to declining caseloads, schools may not have sufficient staff to support all struggling students in an inclusion environment.

Interviewees at several of the sites noted that implementation of their model would not have been possible without assurances from their district administration that special education staff would not be cut even if special education referrals and caseloads decreased. Ultimately, none of these models would be possible without the passage of AB 602 in 1997, which changed the way special education services in California were funded. Prior to AB 602 special education was funded through a program-based formula, where funding was based on reimbursement of certain eligible program costs, such as special education staff, materials and supplemental services. Under the new formula SELPAs receive funding based on the total number of ADA in the districts served. This change in the funding formula effectively severed the link between the number of special education students served and funding levels.

The sites with collaboration or literacy models have realized substantial decreases in their special education caseloads, in some cases in excess of 50% over a 5-10 year period. A common theme among the sites is that although staffing costs have not decreased, their special education staff are spending significantly less time on testing and administration, allowing them to commit more time to direct instruction.

The one exception is Mesa Verde Middle School, whose behavioral model was implemented in response to budget cuts that resulted in the loss of an assistant principal and counselor. The school adopted its model incorporating rapid response “Behavior Support Calls,” parent consultations and academic interventions to effectively manage discipline with significantly fewer resources.

Factors Contributing to Success

A variety of factors were noted by the interviewees when asked to what they would attribute their success in developing and maintaining their model. The most cited attributes included:

- Strong leadership at the district and school levels. Specifically, they noted the leadership’s role in establishing a clear vision, supporting teachers in taking risks and trying new approaches, and accommodating the varying needs of schools.
- A professional culture among teaching staffs to “do what it takes” to help all students succeed.
- A strong focus and commitment to continuously improving their school’s performance.
- A comprehensive planning process appropriate to the culture of the site. In some cases this may take the form of a “top-down” process driven by the superintendent or principal, in others a “bottom-up” process directed by teachers.

Next Steps

All of the sites viewed their models as works in progress, requiring continuous refinement and augmentation. No one was completely satisfied with the performance of their model. Middle school collaboration sites were particularly concerned about expanding their model to the high school level so that their students would continue to have the opportunity to learn in an inclusion environment. Other commonly expressed improvements include:

- Improving their use of assessment data for placing students in interventions and guiding instruction.
- Providing more individualized interventions.
- For inclusion sites, expanding inclusion opportunities for SDC students.
- Better serving ELL students through the model.
- Extending their model to other district schools.
- Finding more time for instruction, collaboration and reflection.