

Scaling Systemic Equity

From the earliest days of school reform efforts, we have been able to identify individual schools that have demonstrated that the links between race, poverty, and educational outcomes can be and have been broken. The literature abounds with documented portraits of schools that work for all learners. Among many other examples are Karin Chenoweth's books:

- *It's Being Done: Academic Success in Unexpected Schools*
- *How It's Being Done: Urgent Lessons From Unexpected Schools*
- *Getting It Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools*

Sadly, we continue to struggle to generate similarly long lists of school districts that have cracked the code to change outcomes for all learners. Certainly there has been progress, and we can confidently point to a number of school districts that can claim responsibility for significant improvements. However, movement of the needle on scaling systemic approaches necessary to claim victory over the historical failure to educate all students continues to be minimal.

What does systemic equity look like in medium-sized and large school districts? The [Panasonic Foundation](#) believes that school systems that practice systemic equity must do the following:

- Demonstrate a sense of urgency at all levels of the system to do "whatever it takes" for every student to achieve success in school.
- Engage all students in all classrooms in mastering rigorous academic content.
- Maintain a collaborative and productive culture and climate, encouraging all students and adults to "go the extra mile" to improve student outcomes.
- Develop a school board that demonstrates leadership, courage, and the will to govern the district on behalf of the entire community.
- Hold all adults accountable for the improvement of student outcomes.
- Use data effectively to continually assess, report, and guide the improvement of the performance of all students and adults.
- Provide a comprehensive student support system to remove barriers to the academic, social, and emotional success of all students.
- Ensure that every student is being taught by a high-quality teacher and that every school is run by a high-quality principal.
- Engage a variety of local partners in strategic and collaborative efforts to support the academic and social success of all students.

In his book *School Reform From the Inside Out: Policy, Practice, and Performance*, Richard Elmore culls from research and practice "a few initial guiding principles that can be used to design institutional structures and to stimulate practices that result in large-scale improvement." These guiding principles are as follows:

- Maintain a tight instructional focus sustained over time.
- Routinize accountability for practice and performance in face-to-face relationships.

What does systemic equity look like?

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- Reduce isolation and open practice up to direct observation, analysis, and criticism.
- Exercise differential treatment based on performance and capacity, not on volunteerism.
- Devolve increased discretion based on practice and performance — loosen and tighten administrative control based on hard evidence of quality of practice and performance.

This issue of *Strategies* features the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), where the Panasonic Foundation has partnered over the past six years as part of the Panasonic Partnership Program. While the district is beginning to take confident strides toward more equitable student outcomes, there is a long road ahead before one could accurately declare that the links between race, poverty, and educational outcomes have been broken for students attending public schools in San Diego. At the same time, we can learn a great deal from how leaders of this school system have organized and aligned processes, practices, structures, and cultures to advance the work of achieving whole-system educational equity. We can find encouragement in the fact that a system this large can already claim a high level of systemic coherence and alignment around a sharp focus on advancing equity and excellence.◀

— *Larry Leverett, Executive Editor*
Scott Thompson, Editor

About the PANASONIC FOUNDATION

The Panasonic Foundation was established in 1984 by the Panasonic Corporation of North America. It works in long-term partnership with a select number of school districts that serve a large proportion of children in poverty to help them develop the system-level policies, practices, and structures necessary to improve achievement for ALL students: All Means All.

About AASA, THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

The mission of AASA, the School Superintendents Association, is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children.

About the UNIVERSITY COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

The University Council for Educational Administration is a consortium of higher-education institutions committed to advancing the preparation and practice of educational leaders for the benefit of schools and children.

The Panasonic Foundation Partnership Program

In its district partnership program, the Panasonic Foundation assigns pairs of experienced educational consultants to spend several days each month providing on-the-ground, direct assistance as coach, thought partner, meeting facilitator, and confidant. In addition to monthly site visits, Panasonic consultants also provide remote assistance.

Twice a year, the Foundation brings together teams from its partner districts through its Leadership Associates Program. Held over two-and-a-half days, these events include keynote presentations, cross-district learning activities, and substantial time for facilitated off-site team work.

The partnership between the Panasonic Foundation and the San Diego Unified School District is both similar to and distinct from other Panasonic Foundation district partnerships. It's similar in that two Foundation senior consultants visit the district on a monthly basis, and the district sends a team of leaders to each of the Foundation's Leadership Associates Program events. What's different in this partnership is that through external funding from the Sidney E. Frank Foundation, the Panasonic Foundation has been able to engage with [Perry and Associates, Inc.](#) to provide additional assistance to half a dozen district schools.◀

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San Diego Unified School District: Learning to Advance Equity

On June 14, 2016, the San Diego Unified School District's Board of Education spent six hours with district leaders and community members delving into the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), a state-required and state-approved plan that is aligned with the district's own Vision 2020: Quality Schools in Every Neighborhood. LCAP and the day-long board workshop focused on advancing educational equity — "equity being the driver of everything that we're doing; that's the overarching umbrella," according to Superintendent Cindy Marten.

The day was also focused on the learner — not just the students, but school board members, senior district and central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, and everyone "across the system. Everybody's a learner," as Marten pointed out. "We all need growth and development."

San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is again becoming a district to watch and learn from. In the early years of this century, national spotlights — both journalistic and scholarly — were often trained on SDUSD, then under the leadership of former U.S. Attorney Alan Bersin, as Superintendent, and Anthony Alvarado, as Chancellor of Instruction. But Bersin's removal by the school board in 2005 was followed by years of flux, in which the district burned through superintendents like a chain smoker, with two serving less than 18 months each and with retired Navy Rear Admiral Bill Kowba serving as interim on more than one occasion before his appointment as superintendent on June 28, 2010.

Kowba's three-year tenure as superintendent provided needed leadership continuity and attention to finance and operations, as the system contended with hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts. Under Kowba's watch, the financial situation had improved enough that the board was ready to train the district's focus on advancing equity through quality teaching and school leadership. Within 24 hours of the announcement of Kowba's retirement, Marten catapulted from the principal's office of Central Elementary School in San Diego to the superintendent's office. "We were aware of what Cindy Marten had accomplished at Central Elementary under challenging circumstances," says school board member John Lee Evans. "We wanted to bring this to scale."

The city's 1.37 million residents include a broad spectrum in terms of race and class, ranging from retired billionaires to families who struggle from day to day in grinding poverty. The district serves close to 107,000 students, of which about 45 percent are Hispanic, 23.6 percent white, and 8.3 percent African American. The rest of the



student population is a mix of Asian, Filipino, Indochinese, Native American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial. Nearly a quarter of the students are learning English as a second language, and about 60 percent qualify for free or reduced-price meals; 11.6 percent have Individual Education Plans.

Since Marten’s appointment, the district has been accelerating efforts around a core focus on equity. Some encouraging results are coming in. In June 2016 district leaders announced that 91.4 percent of African American students were on track to graduate — just shy of the districtwide average of 92 percent, up from 89.4 percent, the final state-validated rate the year before. At the same time, the number of Hispanic students on track to graduate increased 37.5 percent from August 2015 to May 2016.

Of note, the overall increase in students on track to graduate and the narrowing of achievement gaps are happening at the same time that high school graduation requirements were raised to align with requirements for admission to the state’s public university systems. When these significantly more rigorous course requirements were adopted, some district and community voices raised concerns about the likelihood of an increase in dropouts.

Students meeting or exceeding the standard in English language arts on the Smarter Balanced Assessment rose overall from 2015 to 2016, with gaps slightly narrowing. Those gaps are still significant: the percent of students meeting or exceeding the ELA standard in 2016 was as follows: African American, 38; Hispanic, 41; Asian, 72; white, 77. The percent of economically disadvantaged students meeting or exceeding the ELA standard on the Smarter Balanced Assessment rose from 37 in 2015 to 43 in 2016.

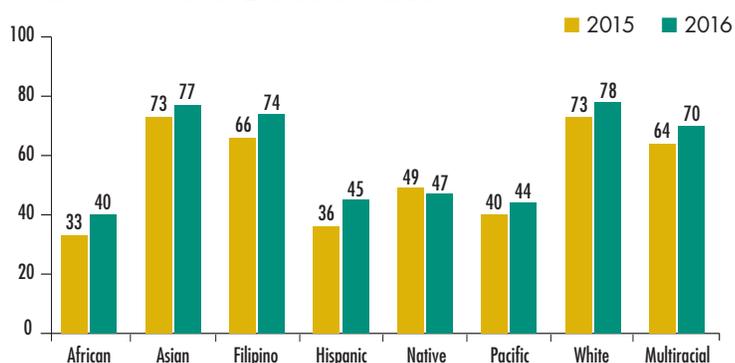
Smarter Balanced results in math show modest progress for each racial or ethnic group from 2015 to 2016. The percent of economically disadvantaged students meeting or exceeding math standards on the Smarter Balanced Assessment rose from 27 in 2015 to 30 in 2016.

While SDUSD’s student performance is second only to San Francisco’s among urban districts in California, district and school leaders in San Diego understand well that the path ahead is steep and rugged. At the same time, important changes in structure, culture, and leadership capacity are paving the way for systemwide narrowing of achievement gaps, while more and more students meet expectations for college and career success.

Student Achievement: Smarter Balanced Assessment Results*

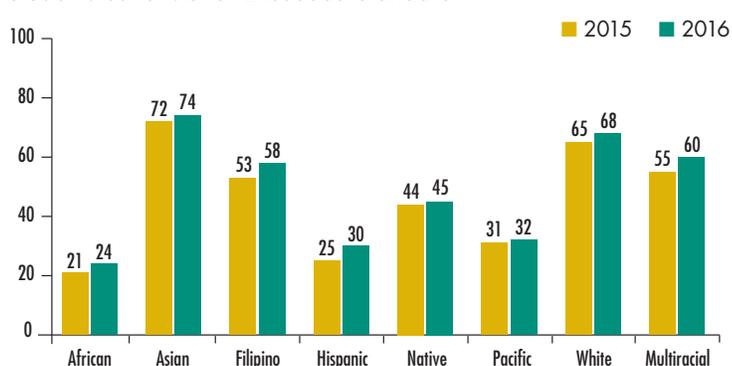
English Language Arts by Racial/Ethnic Groups

Students Who Met or Exceeded Standard



Mathematics by Racial/Ethnic Groups

Students Who Met or Exceeded Standard



*2016 results are based on incomplete data.

Systemic Equity

With funding from the Sidney E. Frank Foundation, a team from the [Panasonic Foundation](#) and [Perry and Associates](#) conducted site visits to SDUSD in early December 2009 and mid-February 2010 to explore a possible partnership between the district and the Panasonic Foundation and Perry and Associates. Given the Foundation's tight focus on achieving equity in public education, most of the dozens of SDUSD employees who were interviewed during the site visits were asked about their understanding of equity and how the district was approaching it.

The team conducting the site visits could not find evidence of a consistent message or district policy on the subject. Even within stakeholder groups — whether board members or teachers — different definitions were offered. Some defined equity according to the allocation of resources; others by student access to high-quality teaching and rigorous curriculum; others by expectations around graduation and other performance measures; others on the basis of teacher quality; others by various barriers to progress, such as the teacher contract; others by where schools are located and whether or not they have grass on their playgrounds.

Progress on developing a focus on systemic equity in SDUSD since that time has been significant. “Systemic equity doesn’t happen by just declaring it,” notes Marten. “It happens by how you organize the system and mind of the organization to work as one.”

According to Marten, the system had previously been bifurcated between academics and business operations, with competing priorities. Each “side of the house” had its chief — Chief Academic Officer and Chief Business Officer, respectively. Marten replaced the CAO and CBO with a single Chief of Staff, Staci Monreal, who, like Marten, was a successful principal of a high-poverty San Diego school. Marten and Monreal established an instructional cabinet, comprising area superintendents with direct influence over schools as direct reports, and executive directors for curriculum and instruction departments. “Making equity the work of the district happens out of that body,” Marten says.

“Integration is a big thing we’ve worked on,” says Area Superintendent Sofia Freire, “to align and calibrate our work and get feedback. We’re developing common language and shaping a common vision.”

There is also an operational cabinet, called the Superintendent’s Strategy Team, and at first glance this could appear to be “the other side of the house,” as in the bifurcated system. Not so. The district focus is on advancing equity through the continuous improvement of teaching, learning, and leadership. The Strategy Team is designed to identify and address systemic barriers to teaching, learning, and leadership. Over time the Strategy Team, including the general counsel and the chiefs of transportation, finance, and other operational functions, was reoriented toward service to schools. A retired principal was hired to work alongside the operations team to develop core values, focus on equity, and design a high-quality delivery system. The operations team participates in all principal institutes and has started to align its work with the district’s learning cycles, equity levers, and stages of implementation.

The system now has a common definition of equity, which revolves around every student getting what he or she requires to be successful in school, when it is required. “When you focus on removing the predictability of success or failure and end inequitable practices, then change is required. Change can be uncomfortable,” says Monreal.

To address that discomfort, as district leaders push for a system that is structured to address the needs of all students, the district has contracted with the National Equity Project (NEP). Monreal says that NEP has worked in partnership with district and school leaders to provide professional development and coaching to develop the culture, conditions, and competencies to interrupt unconscious biases and redesign the system for equity and excellence.



“Systemic equity doesn’t happen by just declaring it.”

Following a listening campaign in the spring of 2015, NEP conducted sessions with the district's school board, instructional cabinet, central office team, and school administrators. Participants in these events received tools, frameworks, readings, and resources aimed at consciousness raising and skill building on such topics as challenging inequities with grace and dignity and without shame or blame, connecting with student identity, understanding how to support a growth mindset, and how to be a "warm demander." Each principal was asked to use data to identify an equity challenge, and instructional cabinet members supported principals in this work.

School Board Governance

The San Diego City Charter (Article VI, Section 66) authorizes the current structure of the Board of Education, comprising five members who are elected at regular municipal primary elections. San Diego is divided into five school board election districts, which means that although members are ultimately elected citywide, they represent their districts. This structure has been in place for over 50 years, and at times it has led to a board that has been politically fractured, with most members much more focused on their elective districts than on the school district as a whole.

In recent years the board has developed a more systemic focus. A factor contributing to this change may have been board members proactively encouraging board candidates and new members to bring a commitment to serve the interests of all students. Even when the board was still relatively fractured in 2009, with many 3-2 votes, members engaged in planning retreats and developed four major policy foci:

- Goals for Student Achievement
- Board-Superintendent Relationship
- Governance Culture
- Operational Expectations

While considerable gaps remained at that time between what was on paper and the actual state of governance culture and board-superintendent relations, the focus on student achievement provided the needed opening for developing a vision that was concerned with "leveling the playing field" for students, ensuring access to a "broad, challenging curriculum," and providing "quality neighborhood schools, so kids would not have to travel an hour or two by bus and so there would be more connection between school and community," according to board member John Lee Evans, who was elected in 2008. This effort became known as Vision 2020.

During the last several years, the board and the superintendent have been aligned and have demonstrated progress around goals for student achievement, board-superintendent relations, governance culture, and operational expectations. Despite occasional challenges, the board and the superintendent have a productive working relationship that is evident in improvements in all areas of district operation.

With generous funding from the Sidney E. Frank Foundation, the Panasonic Foundation, in collaboration with Perry and Associates, entered into partnership with SDUSD in 2010, providing direct assistance to district and school leaders via seasoned educational consultants. A key contributor to keeping the focus on Vision 2020 "as opposed to drawing up a plan and putting it on a shelf," according to Evans, was the work the board did with the Panasonic Foundation, including semi-annual



Strategic Assistance Through External Coaching: The Panasonic Foundation/Perry and Associates Partnership

The Panasonic Foundation/[Perry and Associates](#) (PFPA) partnership with the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is the first attempt by the two organizations that share an equity mission to create a seamless *classroom-to-boardroom* support system. Consultants from the Foundation and P&A have joined together to align, coordinate, and inform their advice and coaching of the SDUSD board, district, and school leaders and to provide examples showing trends across six high-poverty, underachieving schools¹ deeply engaged in implementing district initiatives. The PFPA partnership departs radically from attempts to treat district policy and programming decisions in isolation from the reality of schools most in need of improvement.

Panasonic Foundation consultants work directly with board of trustee members, the superintendent, and her instructional cabinet as thought partners and facilitators in the design of systemwide teaching and learning initiatives. The P&A consultants provide confidential coaching to principals and their leadership teams, and lead professional development for teachers in California's standards-based mathematics and literacy instruction and assessments. The P&A school coaching framework provides a structure that is adjusted annually to accommodate modifications in district inquiry cycles and initiatives. The framework consists of these seven interconnected elements:

- Leadership team development, including instructional leadership teams, professional learning communities, department structures, and grade-level teams;
- College and career readiness culture, including rigorous academic curriculum at all grade levels for all students, as well as family, community, and partner engagement;
- Improvement of mathematics achievement, including improving standards-based classroom instruction, assessments, and systems of support/interventions;
- Improvement of English/language arts achievement, including improving standards-based classroom instruction, assessments, and systems of support/interventions;
- Professional development system, including designing and organizing learning systems;
- Data-based decision making that informs instruction and supports; and
- Language acquisition instruction and programing.

The PFPA coaches meet regularly to confer and share learning. The P&A coaches identify trends across schools that district leaders would find helpful and that can be communicated to them without violating their confidential coaching relationships. The PF coaches share preliminary ideas from district deliberations to consider the impact of decisions on schools. Relationships developed with district and school leaders allow for robust problem-solving conversations that reinforce district directions and their effectiveness as leaders. ◀

— George Perry, Director of Perry and Associates

¹ Two elementary schools, two K–8 schools, one middle school, and one high school

Leadership Associates Program (LAP) institutes. These two-and-a-half-day-long events are gatherings of leaders from all Panasonic Foundation partner districts and include keynote presentations, cross-district learning activities, and a significant amount of facilitated team time away from the district. In developing the strategic plans to accomplish Vision 2020, board members responsible for policy worked with district administrators to hammer out the plans through conversations facilitated by Panasonic Foundation consultants during district visits and at LAP institutes.

Now the school board evaluation of the superintendent is squarely based on the six Vision 2020 goals, and each month the district administration reports to the board and to the public on a Vision 2020 topic. These reports include metrics and updates on program implementation and provide an opportunity for board members to raise questions and make observations.

About Perry and Associates, Inc.

Perry and Associates, Inc. (P&A) is a national consulting firm that acts on its commitment to social justice and equity by assisting city, board, district, school, and teacher leaders to improve the academic achievement and performance of all students. Our approach to change is deliberate: We attack problems at the district and school levels by working side by side with leaders to deliver research-based practices that are driven by data and the successful experiences of others. Our techniques — including confidential coaching and strategy development for district and school leaders — build learning organizations that support school improvement and sustain the ability of schools to improve themselves.

At the district level, we help boards and administrators design strategic directions and plans and create systems that improve student achievement through professional learning and support. At the school level, we concentrate on approaches that strengthen school leadership via on-site staff and curriculum development, including instructional rounds, walkthroughs, looking at student work, action planning, professional learning communities, common assessments, and identification of best practices to improve both student and teacher performance.

In carrying out our work with schools and school systems, we adhere to a set of guiding principles. Some are inherent in our theory of change, while others reflect lessons learned from both scientific research and years of experience in facilitating educational improvement:

- **Promoting equity is at the heart of true educational reform.** It is not enough for student achievement to improve overall. We measure success by the extent to which those students who are traditionally at risk of educational failure meet high standards.
- **For change to be implemented and sustained, it must be systemic.** Change requires a common vision, systemic initiatives, and communication that is top-down and bottom-up — i.e., from boardroom to classroom and from classroom to boardroom. Vertical alignment ensures that everyone in the system understands what is expected and is working toward a common goal.
- **Since no two districts or schools are the same, customization is important.** We do not use a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Our assistance is tailored to local needs and priorities, and one of the first steps in almost all engagements is an in-depth needs assessment to identify the nature of the problem and establish clear direction.
- **Building organizational capacity is the key to ensuring sustainability.** Through long-term, three-to-five-year engagements, we work to build learning organizations that support continuous school improvement and sustain the ability of schools and school systems to grow and develop over time.
- **Since educators value the advice and support of peers, it is critical that technical assistance providers have first-hand experience as well as scientific knowledge of what works.** Our staff and consultants have proven leadership at the district or building level.

For further information, visit our website www.perryandassociatesinc.com or contact us at info@perryandassociatesinc.com ◀

Vision 2020 and LCAP

During the 2013–14 school year, when the California Department of Education began implementing its Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), SDUSD was well positioned to use the LCFF process as a lever for guiding systemic change. The school board had developed Vision 2020 several years before, establishing goals, indicators, and monitoring systems that could be aligned with what the state was now requiring.

The goal of LCFF is to simplify state funding of public school districts and other local education agencies (LEAs). In the old system, each LEA’s funding was based on a unique revenue limit multiplied by daily attendance. Under LCFF, revenue limits and most state categorical programs were eliminated. LCFF calls for the development of funding targets by each LEA based on student characteristics while providing increased local discretion on resource allocation.

The increased flexibility came with new accountability measures, under the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). SDUSD and all California public school districts

are required to submit an LCAP each year, describing how the district intends to use its resources to meet annual goals for all students, with a major focus on students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals, English Language Learners, and foster children. The LCAP is organized in eight categories, but SDUSD has received approval to use the following six goals from its Vision 2020, which have been aligned with state expectations:

1. Closing Achievement Gaps With High Expectations for All
2. Access to a Broad and Challenging Curriculum
3. Quality Leadership, Teaching, and Learning
4. Positive Environment With Equity at the Core
5. Parent and Community Engagement With Highly Regarded Neighborhood Schools
6. Well-orchestrated Districtwide Support Services and Communications

“We saw a real opportunity with the state to say, ‘we have Vision 2020,’” says Evans. “We didn’t want to do a plan for the state to comply with the state. We wanted our plan for what we were going to accomplish” and then aligned it with state requirements.

Multiple strategic and tactical priorities are being implemented under each of the LCAP goals. What follows are just a few key strategies under the first four goals.

LCAP Goal #1: Closing Achievement Gaps With High Expectations for All

One critical obstacle to closing achievement gaps in SDUSD was the performance of students with disabilities. The district put together a team that could take on this challenge when it attended the April 2016 Panasonic Foundation LAP institute in Minneapolis. “A spark happened at LAP,” according to Special Education Director Lorelei Olson. “The LAP event in Minneapolis was our opportunity with the core group of the executive leadership of our district to begin to explore and shift beliefs around serving students with disabilities.”

During this two-and-a-half-day event, core beliefs were put on the table and discussed, and what happened, according to Olson, “was something amazing” — the identification of “equity levers” for this work. The team left Minneapolis with the beginnings of an integrated framework for educating students with disabilities around five priorities: (1) Tier 1/Capacity Building, providing solid instruction for all students that is results-based; (2) Multiple Tiers of Support, so that there are options and supports for struggling students other than being referred for special education; (3) Quality Individual Education Plans, with a shift in focus from compliance to instruction; (4) Leadership Development, to provide meaningful support for principals in having the necessary foundation and professional development to effectively facilitate the IEP process at the schools they are leading; and (5) Parents as Partners, including implementation of [GradNation](#) measures to decrease student dropout rates, with a focus on students with disabilities.

More recently, at the October 2016 LAP institute in New Orleans, the SDUSD leadership team drilled deeper on the area of Multiple Tiers of Support, pursuing the following objectives:

- Engage in an inquiry around how we respond when students aren’t learning.
- Deepen our collective understanding of the need for a robust, integrated Multiple-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).
- Develop and communicate a shared understanding of an integrated MTSS.
- Create belief statements for MTSS to guide our framework.



Olson believes the work around redesigning how the district serves students with disabilities will “transform our system. The key shift and hope and possibility for making this integrated system a reality is we’ve gone from a model of ‘help, fire department, come solve this problem’; and now what’s happening is we’re inviting [teachers and principals] to join our team to challenge inequity and figure this out over time.”

LCAP Goal #2: Access to a Broad and Challenging Curriculum

According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals, a high school’s master schedule provides a window into the “soul of the school”. Large comprehensive high schools, in particular, must organize a host of moving parts, and how that organizing takes shape reveals something of the values and priorities of school leaders.

Traditional high schools have “allowed for unacceptable amounts of casualties,” says Cheryl Hibbeln, Executive Director, Secondary Schools of SDUSD. “I don’t think people set out to say, ‘this many people can’t make it,’ but the decisions we make early on in high school” all but seal the fate of many students. SDUSD is in the process of changing master scheduling across all of its 26 high schools.

In November 2015, high school teams were introduced to 13 Master Schedule expectations, including access to A-G courses — in California, that means a high school course of study that meets requirements for admission in the state’s university system; an alternative bell schedule, ensuring that there are enough periods in the day for all students to meet all A-G requirements, as well as time for opportunities for credit recovery for students who get off track; Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate and college courses; elimination of tracking; ensuring that the needs of English learners and students with disabilities are being addressed; course sequencing in the sciences and in career and technical education.

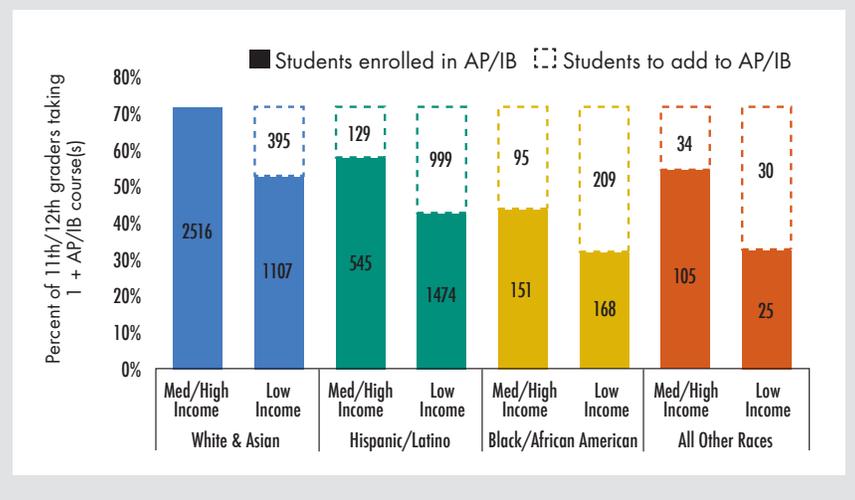
Principals were asked to prioritize the expectations based on what their own data were telling them. For example, if principals believed that their science sequencing was not preparing students for the Next Generation Science Standards, they could choose that as an area of focus. The area superintendent working with principals would then expect to see changes in the master schedule reflecting that focus.

One structural factor that has challenged progress in this area is that while the Office of Secondary Education Support has been working directly with high school principals, the scheduling is often delegated to a vice principal or head counselor. Another challenge,

What Is Required to Increase Access to Rigorous Coursework and Reduce Opportunity Gaps

San Diego School District

2015–2016 11th/12th grade AP/IB participation by race and income
1,891 students to add to AP/IB to achieve program equity



The chart shows that 1,891 students from low-income families and/or from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups would need to participate in Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate (AP/IB) classes to achieve equity with the 70 percent of white or Asian medium/high-income students who take AP/IB classes. In addition, the chart shows that nonparticipating low-income students, regardless of racial/ethnic group, will need the most encouragement and support to participate.

according to Hibbeln, is the compliant school leader who fails to follow through. Going into the 2016–17 school year, she was hoping to see the schedules in as many as seven high schools “significantly changing.”

LCAP Goal #3: Quality Leadership, Teaching, and Learning

The ultimate gauge of progress toward equity is in the quality of learning for all students, including those who have been least well served. Nothing within school systems has been found to have more influence on quality learning than quality teaching. Achieving quality teaching at scale in a system the size of SDUSD has enormous implications for leadership. And all of this also has enormous implications for adult learning.

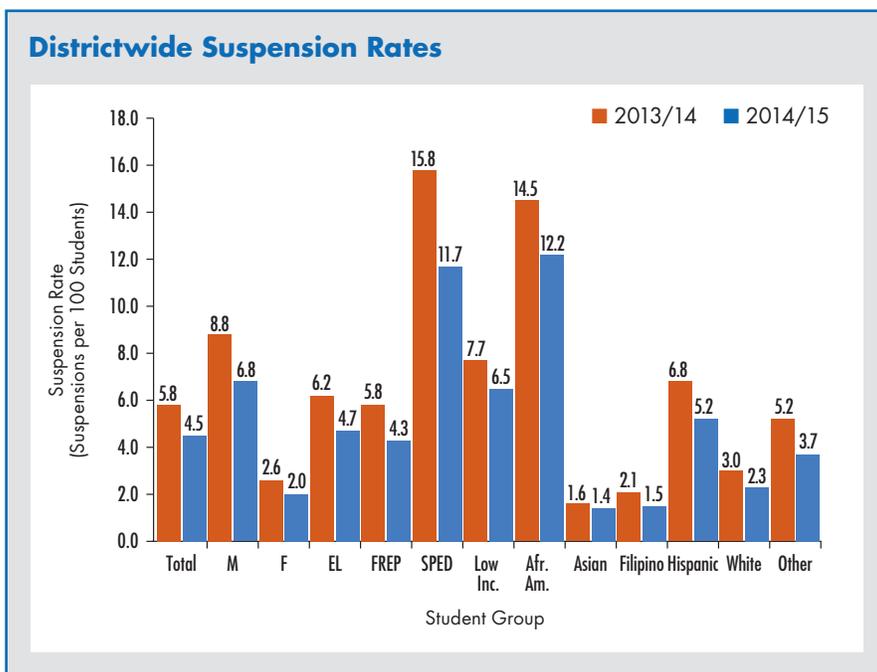
Principal learning in SDUSD is a multi-faceted affair that includes Principal Institutes, principal coaching groups, small-group learning, individual learning, coaching cycles, principal triad study, and area superintendents conducting school walkthroughs with principals. Principals meet four times a year in institutes to engage in new learning on how to be equity leaders. Additionally, they engage in half-day visits to school sites that exemplify quality equity work, including classroom visits and debriefs. Area superintendents select three principals in their area to conduct learning walks in their own three schools, in what the district refers to as triads. These learning walks are conducted without the area superintendent. The idea is for the principals to take what was learned in the institutes and half-day school visits and practice it in a “safe space” on their own.

Mentor Principal Tavga Bustani explains the evolution of the coaching cycle over the past four years. Initially the district had a group of highly trained teachers on assignment to central office, who would visit schools on request. This work was often done in isolation from school leaders and could sometimes involve a single teacher in a school. “We had to reshape their role and redefine what it means to support a school through the lens of capacity building,” reports Bustani. In the second year, the work with schools continued but with a focus on school leaders, who would then work with teachers. Now when area superintendents launch a coaching cycle, it is grounded in data to pinpoint at what level and in what subject areas the coaching will be most effective.

When the six area superintendents come together, they share aspects of the coaching cycle that proved to have the highest impact. “So then we’re calibrated across all six areas,” Bustani explains. “We want to ensure that great things happening in one area are known to others.”

LCAP Goal #4: Positive Environment With Equity at the Core

Another transformation under way in the SDUSD system is in the area of student suspensions and expulsions. The movement in the last couple of years has been from zero-tolerance policies that disproportionately excluded young men of color from schools to introducing and spreading restorative practices. While the disproportionality has been reduced, it has not been eliminated. Overall expulsions decreased about 60 percent in the first year since the policy change, according to Felicia Singleton, Program Manager of Placement



and Appeals. “Restorative practices cannot be mandated, because it’s a philosophy,” says Singleton. “How can I create a culture and environment where I hold students accountable for their actions, but I also support them in a safe learning environment?” The restorative practice approach to issues of discipline requires that students accept responsibility for harm they have caused, but it does so while providing students with a platform and a process for repairing the harm. This work includes the reintegration of students who have been removed from school. In this process both the instigator of an offense and those impacted are included in a “restorative conference.”

Part of the transformation that is under way involves moving from a segmented to a collaborative approach. Other departments, with their distinct knowledge base and insights, are brought in as warranted. For example, if a student is coming before the School Attendance Review Board and that student has an IEP, a representative of the special education office will be involved. “We need each other to make these important decisions,” Singleton explains.

Aiming High

While the hurdles on SDUSD’s road to systemic equity are high, its leaders’ aspirations appear to be higher still. Marten quotes school board member Richard Barrera: “We want to build a system beyond this board and superintendent that outlasts all of us” — a system where students are not constrained by race and class, but all are heading for successful lives and careers.◀

— Scott Thompson, Editor

Panasonic Foundation Announces Retirement of Executive Director Larry Leverett and Transition Plans

After a decade of extraordinary leadership as executive director of the Panasonic Foundation, Dr. Larry Leverett retired at the end of December. A widely respected superintendent (in Englewood and Plainfield, NJ, and most recently in Greenwich, CT), Larry brought to the role his passion and expertise, along with a deep commitment to improving teaching and learning for all students — “all means all.”

During these 10 years, the Panasonic Foundation, through its consulting teams, partnered with 21 districts across the country. The Partnership Program was designed to help school boards, superintendents, unions, other district leadership, and communities work collaboratively to develop district practices and policies aimed at ensuring the success of every student, especially students with the greatest needs. Under Larry’s leadership, the Foundation also established the New Jersey Network of Superintendents. The network has become a highly valued means for peer-sharing of problems and solutions among those holding the most complex positions in education.

We are currently engaged in a search for the Foundation’s next executive director. The [job description](#) reflects the new interest of both the Foundation and Panasonic North America (PNA) in supporting the students and families of Newark, our corporate home. The Foundation will maintain its commitment to current district partnerships and the NJ Network. Thanks to additional generous support from PNA, we will be working with Newark’s schools, teachers, and communities to develop promising approaches.

During the search, Scott Thompson will serve as our interim executive director. Scott has served as our assistant executive director since 1996. His intimate knowledge of our programs and our communities will ensure the continuity of our existing work as well as a smooth transition process. He also brings his interest in helping districts take advantage of new opportunities for personalized learning in a world of continuous change. In addition, Scott will provide important guidance in crafting the company’s volunteer program in Newark.

Divina Gamble and Rosa Morris of Korn Ferry in Washington, D.C., are conducting the search for a new executive director. I invite you to review the [job description](#) and recommend candidates to lead the next chapter of our Foundation’s work. Inquiries can be sent to divina.gamble@kornferry.com and rosa.morris@kornferry.com.

The Foundation’s board of directors extends its deep appreciation to Larry for his decade of dedicated leadership and to Scott for assuming added responsibilities during this critical time. ◀

— Milton Chen, Chair, Panasonic Foundation
Senior Fellow & Executive Director, Emeritus, George Lucas Educational Foundation