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Authors

Casar, Miguel
Bishop, Joseph P.
Berry, Barnett

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Top-Down Support For Bottom-Up Change

POMONA'S PATH TO IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS

Miguel Casar
University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies
Center for the Transformation of Schools

Joseph Bishop
University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies
Center for the Transformation of Schools

Barnett Berry
Center for Teaching Quality
University of South Carolina

cts UCLA

transformschools.ucla.edu

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PUSD Timeline

2012

PUSD identified as having "Significant Disproportionality" for "over-identification of African American students for Special Education and related services in the area of emotional disturbance."

After creation of the equity plan, PUSD intentionally shifts the focus "from the negative to the positive"; from significant disproportionality to a broader and strategic pursuit of equity.

Kathrine Morillo-Shone initially appointed as Director for Equity and Significant Disproportionality.

2013

Local Control Funding Formula is signed into law.

2015

With support of the board, the district embarks on a comprehensive process of self-reflection, analysis, and strategic planning, resulting in the Promise of Excellence Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

District's senior leadership, in conversations with Los Angeles County Office of Education, identifies Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a potential strategy.

2016

15 schools are awarded Bronze Recognition by the California PBIS Coalition.

2017

13 schools awarded silver and 5 awarded bronze.

2018

4 17 2 PUSD schools include 4 gold recipients, 17 silver recipients, and 2 bronze recipients.

2019

PUSD is on phase four of implementation.

27 schools with active PBIS teams leading its different phases of implementation.

CONTENTS

1. **Purpose** **1**
2. **Overview** **1**
3. **Methods** **2**
4. **Background - *LCFF in Pomona: From Significant Disproportionality to a Commitment to Equity*** **3**
5. **PBIS, MTSS, and the Path Towards Equity** **6**
   - I. History of PBIS - From Implementation to Innovation 6
   - II. The Development of School Leadership Teams 7
   - III. A Transition towards educating the Whole Child 12
   - IV. PBIS, MTSS, and a Comprehensive Strategy for Equity 13
6. **Impact** **14**
7. **Challenges** **18**
8. **Summary** **19**
9. **Conclusion** **20**
10. **Appendix A: District Profile** **21**

Purpose

This report offers a detailed account of how one California school district, Pomona Unified School District (PUSD), is using the state's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) to drive more equitable and ambitious outcomes for every one of its students. This study focuses on the voices and the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups, highlighting the complexity of both scale and stages of implementation of change in a midsized district.

There are several studies that have begun to look at both the impact of LCFF,[1] the Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP),[2] lessons learned from LCFF,[3] and other important components. Our effort, leveraging the strengths of qualitative research, seeks to take a deeper dive into how school districts across California are responding to the LCFF opportunities. We do so by exploring stories, narratives, and the voices and experiences of those on the ground to deepen our understanding of how educational policy is interpreted, enacted, implemented, negotiated, contested, and ultimately experienced by people.

This case study is the result of multiple visits, interviews, observations, and analyses that occurred during the 2017–2018 school year in an urban district of more than 23,000 students located in Southern California. We seek to inform educators, practitioners, leaders, and policy makers, contributing to understanding of how educational policies along with their guiding principles and intended impact can be more successful.

Overview

In 2013, LCFF was signed into law, marking an important development in the fight for equity in educational funding. Departing from California's long-standing method of resource allocation based on an equal per-pupil revenue, LCFF utilizes a weighted formula to allocate resources to districts. LCFF, in an effort to improve educational outcomes, complements base grant funding with supplemental grants and concentration grants that are based on the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch (i.e., low-income students), English Learners, and foster youth. Additionally, LCFF is designed to provide districts more flexibility and, consequently, possibilities to create transformational work. However, the complexity of implementing system-wide change has presented both challenges and opportunities for districts across the state. Currently, little is known about how LCFF has shifted practices and educational outcomes across the state.

This research is part of a larger set of case studies across the state highlighting the work of six districts, three from Northern California and three from Southern California, that have worked to improve outcomes for students through LCFF.

The goal of this study is to explore "*In what ways has PUSD operationalized equity through LCFF? How have these strategies resulted in improved outcomes for students?*"

To answer this question, this case study illustrates how PUSD, as part of a comprehensive strategy to bring about change, has leveraged **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and teacher-led professional learning** as efforts towards more equitable and responsive schooling for students. Through the stories of stakeholders, we explore how these two initiatives showcase specific ways in which complex educational systems can translate initiatives into action. Additionally, through these two initiatives this case study captures some of the nuances of implementing educational change.

First, the case study begins with a **background** section, which describes the state of PUSD at the time LCFF was signed into law. This section will briefly outline some of the contradictions and complexities in trying to negotiate the intentions of the law (i.e., LCFF) and its implementation in a fiscally complex time. Additionally, the background includes different factors before LCFF that were outlined in a comprehensive strategy for change presented in the *Promise of Excellence Plan*.[4] That plan was based on certain key principles like the alignment of resources based on student needs, trust and collaboration to drive continuous improvement, and PUSD's evidence-based and data-driven decision making.

1 Humphrey, D. C., Koppich, J. E., Lavadenz, M., Marsh, J. A., O'Day, J., Plank, D. N., Stokes, L., & Hall, M. (2017). Paving the way to equity and coherence? The local control funding formula in year 3. Stanford, CA: The Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative.

2 Olsen, L., Armas, E., Lavadenz, M. (2017). A Review of Year 2 LCAPS: A Weak Response to English Learners. Californians Together, The Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University.

3 Koppich, J. E., Humphrey, D. C. (2018). The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF): What Have We Learned After Four Years of Implementation? Policy Analysis for California Education.

4 Pomona Unified School District (2015). The strategic plan: A promise of excellence 2015–2020. Pomona, CA: Author.

Second, the authors explore the implementation of PBIS, highlighting its history in PUSD and three key areas through which PBIS has contributed to a larger strategy for equity:

1. **the development of school leadership teams;**
2. **a shift to educating the whole child; and**
3. **PBIS, Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and a broader strategy for equity.**

Third, the study explores another key initiative tied to LCFF and PUSD's commitment to equitable schooling, **teacher-led professional learning**.

Fourth, the case study concludes with some of the **challenges** PUSD continues to face along with a brief **summary** and **final implications**.

Methods

PUSD was identified by several professional organizations and agencies as a district we should consider for this study. District size and geography were taken into account in selecting PUSD, as one of a set of districts to highlight throughout the state.

The research team reviewed a variety of district-produced documents, including the district's LCAP, its strategic plan, its budget, student outcome data, and a pre-visit survey completed by the district. The research team then conducted a two-day site visit to the district and school sites within PUSD. We interviewed more than 50 stakeholders, including students, teachers, principals, district officials, union representatives, school board trustees, and community members. The research team transcribed and analyzed all interviews and notes and produced an in-depth case study, focused on a particular set of themes related to positive student outcomes for PUSD.

Summary of Interviewees:

Education Stakeholders	Totals (N=53)
Students	10
Principals/Site Administrators	8
Labor Partners	2
Central Office Staff	12
Parents	10
Teachers	11

Background

In trying to understand the role of the LCFF as a catalyst for **PBIS**, **MTSS**, and **teacher-led professional learning**, this study found that these efforts grew out of a complex landscape. Two key underlying factors that initially fueled change in PUSD were (1) receiving a "Significant Disproportionality" label by the state in 2012 and (2) how LCFF was interpreted and implemented as part of a strategy for equity.

From Significant Disproportionality to a Commitment to Equity

In 2012, PUSD was identified as having "Significant Disproportionality" for the "over-identification of African American students for Special Education and related services in the area of emotional disturbance" by the California Department of Education. PUSD was required to set aside $709,220 for comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS).[5] At the time, the district had to make a choice, as stated by Dr. Kathrine Morillo-Shone, Director of Equity and Professional Learning, "between allowing this label to define us and to bring us down, or to re-frame it as an opportunity to begin to do the equity work and to embrace the whole-child approach that we knew was necessary from a long time ago. The choice was clear for us." Dr. Morillo-Shone was initially appointed as the Director for Equity and Significant Disproportionality, a position that has evolved to encompass a broader vision that today connects Equity and Professional Learning; both of which are pivotal for this case study.

When LCFF was signed into law in 2013, PUSD was among many school districts unsure about the law. As explained by Lilia Fuentes, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, "When LCFF came, it was very vague, came with very little directives." The law was passed in the midst of many factors: the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, a new post-No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system, and a challenging district fiscal situation made more challenging by declining enrollment.

Richard Martinez, the district's superintendent, shared, "The law in itself was a good idea. The problem was that as they passed the law, schools began to implement the law, and then the regulations came after the fact. We at the time created a strategy and made decisions, and the struggle became that you've started programs and you're trying to think, how do we meet the regulations that came out years later." The timing of LCFF presented its own challenges, as the district was trying to bounce back from the Great Recession.

> *We were just coming out of the Great Recession and then to bring back programs was tempting, necessary, and we did. Initially we brought back old stuff instead of really taking a look at redesigning what we were doing. It was really trying to stay true…trying to repair what had happened over six years…we'd laid off, I don't know, around six hundred people. At the same time, there was also promise and excitement when it*

5 The Advocacy Institute (March 2016). Maintenance of effort reduction and coordinated early intervening services 2012–2013. Retrieved from http://ideamoneywatch.com/docs/MandatoryCEIS2012-2013.pdf.

> *came to the whole notion of us guiding our future and directing locally. (Richard Martinez, Superintendent)*

LCFF was initially interpreted by many, including PUSD, as a back-to-the-"full funding" days—channeling significant funds to restoring rather than innovating. This mirrored similar trends across the state, where many districts chose investing in specific programs for the populations targeted by LCFF or restoring programs or positions that had been lost during the budget cuts.[6] Additionally, as Stephanie Baker, former Deputy Superintendent, explained, "You had politicians saying that we were going to put districts back to where we were 10, 11, years ago. Well, 10 or 11 years ago we had 10,000 more students than we do now, so you had a push to restore, and on the other hand to innovate and be creative, when the context was entirely different."

As time passed and more explicit guidelines began to emerge from both the state and the county, the conversations among senior leadership at the district level began to change. District leadership began to have what Superintendent Martinez called "powerful and difficult conversations that were infused with a notion of flexibility and empowerment, and yet had an explicit accountability to make sure what we planned supported the groups of students targeted by LCFF."

Decline in Funding

In 2007, a fiscal review conducted by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), found that "once a growing district, Pomona Unified has experienced a significant decline in student enrollment that began in 2003–04."[7] By 2007, in an effort to maintain fiscal solvency, the district had already reduced spending by 30 million dollars. In 2007, the district served a student population of approximately 31,779 in 28 elementary schools, six middle schools, four comprehensive high schools, one continuation school, one community day school and two alternative schools. Since 2007, the student body has continued to shrink (currently at 24,000), compounding an already complicated fiscal context due to educational funding cuts across the state.

Senior leadership, in an effort to maintain a balanced budget despite declining student enrollment, began multiple initiatives to assess and reflect upon their spending. As shared by Stephanie Baker, "It was an opportunity to look at and unpack how we were going about spending money, our awareness of how much money we were spending, and utilized cost analysis tools." She later added that this process "fit perfectly with LCFF, especially as we thought about how we explicitly spent money on certain groups of students like English Learners and special education students."

In 2015, with the support of the board, the district embarked on a comprehensive process of self-reflection, analysis, and strategic planning, resulting in the Promise of Excellence Strategic Plan 2015-2020. Concurrently, PUSD used both the *Smarter School Spending* tools, designed to help districts align resources (people, time, and money) with instructional priorities for improving student achievement,[8] and *Improvement Science*, which has been described as a set of tools to reduce the gap between what is actual and what is possible[9] and the disciplined use of evidence-based methods to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of processes and systems.[10] This process was centered on outcomes for students with a particular focus on students with the highest needs.

Zoila Savaglio, Director of State and Federal Programs, is often quoted by others at the District Office for routinely asking, "How does that action directly increase and/or improve services for English Learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and/or homeless youth?" This question is now seen not only as a powerful driver to how the district thinks about making decisions but also, as explained by Stephanie Baker, as a crucial part of how to create systems alignment around key district goals. While research shows that the allocation of resources to the students with the greatest needs is necessitated to close achievement gaps,[11] isolated programs and packages, if disconnected from

6 Humphrey, D. C., and Koppich, J. E. (October 2014). Toward a Grand Vision: Early Implementation of California's Local Control Funding Formula. San Francisco, CA: J. Koppich & Associates.

7 Dean, B., Haywood, L., Branham, D., & Rosales, M. (March 2007). California Pomona Unified School District fiscal review. Financial Crisis and Management Assistance Team. Pomona, CA: Author.

8 Government Finance Officers Association (2019). Smarter School Spending Schools. Retrieved from: https://smarterschoolspending.org/.

9 Health Foundation (2011). Report: Improvement science. London, UK.

10 Park, S., Hironaka, S., Carver, P., & Nordstrum, L. (2013). Continuous improvement in Education. Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning.

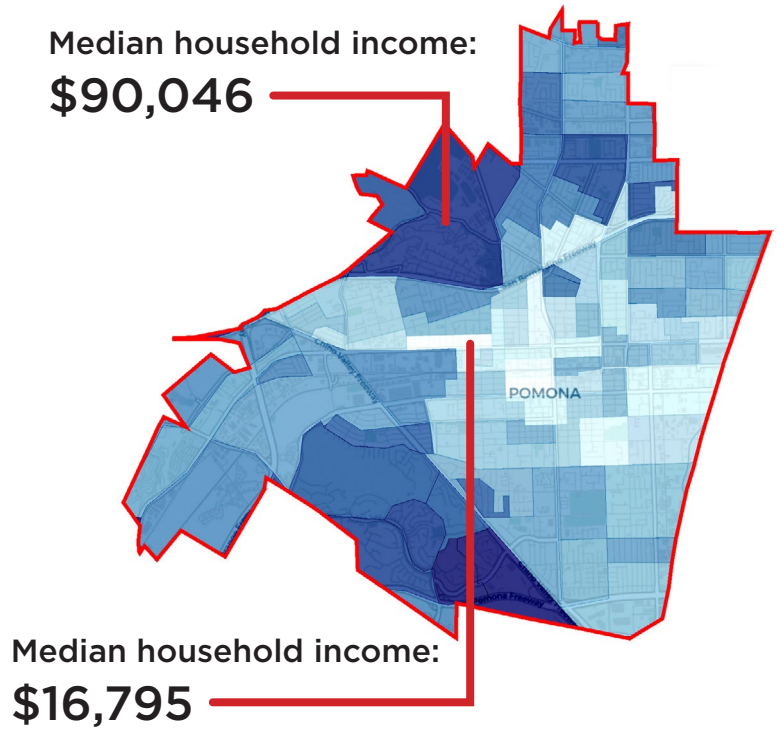
11 Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future. New York: Teachers College Press.

a comprehensive strategy, fail to achieve the necessary results and to close learning gaps. For PUSD, with a long history of "programs and packages," this insight has been crucial in their LCFF implementation. Consequently, when planning for initiatives like **PBIS**[12] and **teacher-led professional learning**,[13,14] district leaders endeavored to ensure that different programs were coherent and worked in alignment towards shared goals.

Lastly, district leadership in PUSD also understood that Pomona was what many often refer to as "a tale of two cities." With seven of PUSD's schools being non-Title 1 and the other 34 being Title 1, PUSD saw in LCFF the flexibility to think more broadly about how to support their students across all 41 schools. Previously, non-Title 1 schools lacked specific funding to support their students with the highest needs. With LCFF, these funds "follow" the populations targeted for support, presenting both possibilities and challenges to non-Title 1 schools.

Figure 1.

A Tale of Two Cities: Income Disparity in PUSD



Source:
http://www.city-data.com/income/income-Pomona-California.html

12 PBIS Implementation Blueprint (2017). Retrieved from: https://www.pbis.org/blueprint/implementation-blueprint

13 Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2013). With an Investment in Collaboration, Teachers Become Nation Builders, 34(3), 4. Journal of Staff Development.

14 Berry, B., & Farris-Berg, K. (2016). Leadership for Teaching and Learning, How Teacher Powered Schools Work and Why They Matter, 8. American Educator. Retrieved from: https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2016/berry_farris-berg

PBIS, MTSS, and the Path Towards Equity

I. A History of PBIS in PUSD from Implementation to Innovation

The history of PBIS in PUSD was not initially tied to LCFF. In its burgeoning stage, there was a shared agreement between district and school leaders on the importance of the social emotional development of students. Additionally, since receiving the label of "significant disproportionality," senior leadership recognized the importance of a comprehensive approach to thinking and planning strategically to close gaps in the district. For years, PUSD had been missing its targets. As Dr. Kathrine Morillo-Shone shared: "Not because the people don't care that we were missing our targets. We had so many resources and people who cared, we focused heavily on academics and content and all of that, but it was not connecting." District efforts were not reflected in their data, both internal and external.

In 2012, after the creation of the equity plan, PUSD intentionally shifted the focus from significant disproportionality to a broader and strategic pursuit of equity. At the same time, as in many districts across California, the world of education was going through significant changes, and shifting priorities often come with multiple "packages" of solutions. The district had tried many in the past, and district leadership knew a piecemeal approach would fail to meet their goals.

An important question at the time, in the words of Morillo-Shore, Director of Equity and Professional Learning, was "How do you redefine culture district-wide without really having it come down as a top-down?" The district, led by the Department of Equity and Professional Learning under the Division of Educational Services in partnership with Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), decided to build a phased approach to PBIS with several key components:

- a clear and explicit commitment to equity as a core driver of PBIS;
- the development of school leadership teams to co-lead the process;
- a focus on stakeholder engagement and buy-in;
- a shift towards a whole-child approach that places Social Emotional Learning as part of everyone's responsibility; and
- a commitment from the district to supporting professional growth and capacity building to ensure fidelity in implementation.

In 2015, the district's senior leadership, in conversations with LACOE, identified PBIS as a potential strategy for

- equitable, safe, and positive learning spaces for students;
- positive school cultures across the district;
- responsive and comprehensive tiered systems of support;
- local and distributed leadership ;
- responsive support systems that are based on the whole child; and
- consistent data systems and teams to gauge progress and monitor the impact of their work.

With these goals in mind, PUSD initiated a phased approach toward a comprehensive district-wide implementation, initially starting with a select number of schools (a number that has grown to 27 total schools). This approach aligned well with the principles of PBIS. However, as senior leadership began developing a strategy, they recognized that profound changes needed to take place for both PBIS and the broader pursuit of equity to be successful.

First, a change was needed in the way PUSD saw itself, its students, and how that was reflected in the culture of schools. As shared by members of the leadership team during a focus group, "In essence it was some way of retrofitting the way we thought about Pomona, because Pomona in some ways has a very negative image of Pomona Unified and a history of not seeing our kids as the assets that they are from the get-go." Second, the district recognized that this shift in thinking not only meant a change in beliefs but also a consequential shift in structures, procedures, practices, and spending. As argued by the district's former Deputy Superintendent Stephanie Baker, "There was a lot of things that needed to be unlearned and relearned as an institution."

Also in 2015, the district underwent a self-review process while developing its Promise of Excellence Strategic Plan 2015-2020. District leadership, in collaboration with multiple outside partners, recognized that while there was a general understanding of the need to educate the **whole child** and to focus on **social and emotional learning** (SEL), it was not reflected in their structures. Additionally, there was no coherent, comprehensive, and strategic approach to do so. In the words of Ashley Hedrick, Program Specialist and head teacher in the PBIS district team: "To really support our students, we knew we needed to bring all that SEL component before we could actually pitch the content (academic); we just did not have a good way to do it." These insights were both a challenge and a key element of buy-in as PUSD began its PBIS journey.

During our visits to PUSD, stakeholders, students, teachers, and school leaders across different sites proudly shared stories of change and success. While PBIS was seen initially as a system for behavior, its impact has spread into academics, culture, instructional practices, relationships with families and the community, teacher leadership, and the operation of schools themselves. Similarly, both supports for students based on needs and assets as well as intentional interventions and supports had been often relegated to special education. This not only prevented supports for all students and more comprehensive strategies but also hindered collaboration and expertise sharing between educators.

PBIS Today

Four years later, PUSD is on phase four of implementation. There are 27 schools with active PBIS teams leading its different phases of implementation. In 2016, 15 schools were awarded Bronze Recognition by the California PBIS Coalition. In 2017, there were 13 Silver Recipients and five Bronze. In 2018, there were four Gold Recipients, 17 Silver Recipients, and two Bronze Recipients. Today, a committed team of district and school PBIS coaches, alongside the leadership of the Department of Equity and Professional Learning, lead the process. All of the coaches are classroom teachers who have been trained by LACOE, collaborate as a professional learning network, lead Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), coach and support their peers, and, as explained by Sarai Costley, Program Administrator of Equity and Professional Learning, "have become a crucial part of this process."

In 2017, during their presentation at the National PBIS conference titled "A journey to systemic change and sustainability," PUSD's PBIS team drew three important parallels to illustrate their journey from the beginning to today:

1. From Implementation to Innovation;
2. From Struggling to Strengthening; and
3. From Fragmentation to Cohesion.

When asked why she believes PBIS worked in PUSD, Morillo-Shone said:

> *We were very fortunate that we grounded our work around equity to begin with. The equity plan was written in 2012; a group of stakeholders used Dr. Edward Fergus' Equity Lens Assessment and worked very closely with Napa County Office of Education, who at the time was in charge of the significant disproportionality.*[15]

15 Fergus, E. (2017). Solving disproportionality and achieving equity: A leader's guide to using data to change hearts and minds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Next, we will focus on three key components that have begun to move PBIS beyond behavior and toward a broader strategy for equity: The Development of School Leadership Teams; A Shift Towards Educating the Whole Child; and PBIS, MTSS, and a broader strategy for equity.

II. The Development of School Leadership Teams

"Getting the 'C' in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Going"

A crucial factor for the success and growth of PBIS in PUSD has been the strategic building, development, and support of school leadership teams. For a long time, a key challenge for PUSD had been to build shared leadership across different stakeholder groups, especially in developing transformational, shared leadership that develops an organization's capacity to innovate.[16] According to Morillo-Shone, "A key challenge for us was how to engage, place trust, and encourage other teachers and stakeholders that are not taking on those leadership roles." Additionally, when educators took leadership roles, they tended to be the same ones. Sarai Costley, Program Administrator of Professional Learning & California State Standards, Equity and Professional Learning, discussed some of the challenges of fostering and building shared leadership:

> *The same folks were tech leads, they were the PBIS leads, they were the ones coming to the curriculum committee, and there is only so much they can do and they were always the same ones. So how do we, as a district, continue to build the capacity of others, to build in that intrinsic motivation that says: Yes, I want to step up and be a part of that work.*

In 2013, during the first discussions about becoming a PBIS district, district leadership, mindful of this challenge, decided to implement a team approach to PBIS. Each school would have a PBIS coach and a select group of teachers, administrator(s), and stakeholders as part of the site PBIS team. As described by district leaders: "These were intentionally put together with a PBIS coach and created a team or a Community of Practice (CoP) with one of our teacher specialists supporting them from the beginning to build capacity and confidence. The goal was that if you get the C within PLCs (Community) functioning, teams begin to believe they can absolutely change the culture of schools."

For many others, time, trust, and support were the most important factors. The PBIS teams, initially funded as part of the response to "significant disproportionality," were given weekly time and space to come together and develop leadership and trust, along with structures, expectations, supports, and data. Susan Newton, PBIS coach at Arroyo Elementary, stated that while she was happy to step forward, "I was initially scared to death… as time progressed, I'm feeling more confident and I feel confident on the team." Roderick Reynoso, PBIS coach at Simons Middle School, found "it was different from instruction, different from what I am used to as a teacher. I am challenged and stretched in ways I have never been stretched before."

The development of teams has also contributed to fostering a collaborative culture in schools. Principal Cristine Goens, referring to teacher teams, explained: "PBIS has really changed teacher collaboration. We all know we've been protective of our practice, both instructional and behavior, and now it is more like saying, 'Hey I'm having issues here; the data is showing up here; let's have that conversation of how we can support each other.'" During the PBIS meetings, educators progressively stopped asking what was wrong with individuals and instead asked, "What can we do?" Principal Cynthia Sanchez, talking about the PBIS team meetings with other principals, argued that "having those meetings for PBIS has also changed accountability. Educators holding each other accountable and supporting each other at the site has been invaluable, because you're preaching to the choir. We're the choir here, and it's always a choir up in front preaching to everyone. When it starts to become community pressure, supportive pressure, that's when movement happens." Consequently, responsibility for leadership has moved beyond the individual leaders and into the relationships and interactions between multiple stakeholders, a shift consistent with distributed leadership models that have been shown to have a profound impact on student learning.[17]

16 Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading Educational Change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. Cambridge Journal of Education, 33(3), 329–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764032000122005

17 Aller, E. W., Irons, E. J., & Carlson, N. L. (2008). Instructional leadership and changing school cultures: Voices of principals. National School Science Journal, 31(2), 4–10. Retrieved February 11, 2010, from http://www.nssa.us/ journals/2009-31-2/2009-31-2-02.htm

Additionally, as explained by Morillo-Shone, strong learning communities and distributed leadership need to recognize that it is okay for schools and educators to be at different places:

> *You see more collaboration, versus before it was "let me shut my door, and leave me alone, and I'm gonna do my thing, you do your thing." Schools and educators are at different places and even then, all sites are intentionally trying to navigate what does strong collaboration look like and sound like for us? And having those internal struggles, site leadership teams, and they're trying to redefine what leadership is, not just the ones appointed by the principals, but really teacher leaders in the real sense of the word. Our role as a district is to support this, not only to expect this.*

Alongside community accountability, distributed leadership, and a supportive environment, Morillo-Shone also points out another key layer to changing practices in PUSD: **Difficult Conversations**. "*Often neglected conversations,* centered on students, on the needs of the whole child, happening at every level, have had implications for everyone's practice." These, while challenging, are becoming common practice, less difficult, and more productive. Paula Richards, at Armstrong Elementary, speaking among her peers at a focus group said, "We all have gotten more comfortable taking instructional risks and talking about where we fail, because we are there to help each other. If one of you falls down, the other's right there to pick you up."

Cristine Goens echoed this thought as she explained how the way her school looks at data has changed. Both the trust that had been built and the sense of accountability towards impact have changed the way educators ask questions of the data: "When it comes to the data, it is about asking some very hard questions and grappling with them together." Responding to a question from the district's head PBIS coach about the relationship between PBIS and equity as a whole, a coach explained, "Just not being afraid to ask those questions, to recognize that race and culture really do matter in this society…talking about it so you can just sort of change the paradigm of things, and I really like that part of the awareness, and looking at the data I think allows that, allows us to just take that road, that track."

"We needed to have hard conversations and to say good intentions are not enough; mediocre can actually create lots of equity gaps."

Superintendent Martinez added, "It sounds counterintuitive, but good intentions were a difficult challenge. We needed to have hard conversations and to say good intentions are not enough; mediocre can actually create lots of equity gaps."

Local School Leadership and Professional Growth

Another key outcome of the *Development of School Leadership Teams* has been their role as an important driver for **localized and relevant professional growth**. An important part of PBIS team meetings is the continuous review of the research, which is often guided by analysis of student data and includes Tier I instruction. Cristina Herrejon-Rutte, Site Specialist at San Antonio Elementary, has found that the biggest impact of PBIS has come in the form of lessons and professional growth. According to the PBIS Implementation Blueprint, the tiered prevention logic conceptualizes three levels of support: **Tier I**, the universal, high quality learning environments necessary for all students and staff across all settings; **Tier II**, the more focused, intensive, and frequent small group-oriented responses; and **Tier III**, the most individualized responses and supports.[18] As shared by Herrejon-Rutte, one of the biggest lessons for staff has been the recognition that Tier II and Tier III are very time consuming for staff. This has triggered an intentional focus on building a robust Tier I for **all** students.

> *In the first couple years we focused on getting Tier I really solid and strong, then being able to move into the Tier II and Tier III supports has made a big differ-*

18 OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (May 2017). *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Implementation Blueprint: Part 2 - Self-Assessment and Action Planning.* Eugene, OR: University of Oregon. Retrieved from www.pbis.org.

> *ence, because now we are seeing the bang for our buck. A better Tier I means we have less students on Tier II and Tier III, and for them we now have smaller groups that need a little more short-term interventions, again, tailored to them.*

The gap between professional development and changes in practice is a common challenge for districts across the country. It is well documented that the majority of teacher professional development does not have measurable effects on student outcomes or teacher practices.[19] Conversely, research shows that when professional development is created around meaningful topics in a collaborative format, a sense of collective efficacy is created; therefore educators are more likely to take risks and try new practices.[20] According to the educators interviewed for this case study, it was precisely these conversations, occuring during the PBIS meetings, that have been useful in encouraging and spreading both innovation and new instructional practices.

Herrejon-Rutte echoed this thought while simultaneously illustrating another important lesson from PUSD: the potential for special education teachers to share knowledge and support teacher growth across schools:

> *Before it was just Special Education that got access to some of these tools. And now, expanding them and changing the mindset of all adults working with students, that if you don't know something then you learn how. And you teach how. And I think that's been really powerful because a lot of the adults that I've worked with in the past, if they didn't know how, they wrote it back off on the student or the family and "that's not my job." But it is our job. And so how do we reach all students? We teach them what the expectation is and how to be successful in their environment. That allows them to be more focused learners, and teachers are actually a lot happier at our school site because as kids are getting what they need, social-emotionally, they're checked in and they're engaged and they're learning.*

Interviews and observations also revealed various examples of instructional innovation. These ranged from locally relevant *professional development* such as Capturing Kids' Hearts,[21] Trauma Informed Teaching,[22] and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy;[23] *PLC structures* with an instructional peer-to-peer focus to support planning, observing lessons, and analyzing data and student work; and *school-wide efforts* to build community, include parents in classrooms and decision-making, and to develop partnerships with their local communities to meet the needs of students and families.

Lacey Lemus, principal at Cortez Mathematics & Science Magnet School, shared, "I find that my teachers' best professional developments actually occur organically, when they discuss what they try, look at their data, and are sharing things that they are loving." Recognizing their potential, other principals have recognized the transformative power of teacher teams, whose work (Lemus says) "keeps getting larger and larger, especially with the transition towards MTSS."

Teacher-Led Professional Learning

Also using the flexibility of LCFF and supported by the department of Equity and Professional Learning, a growing group of teachers are serving in a variety of hybrid and coaching roles as they support their colleagues in the use of PBIS framework, new teacher induction, math modeling, and developing and use of curriculum aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The district office, in a strategic effort to build teacher-led learning and professional growth, has created a total of 41 positions (including both new positions and special assignments for existing positions) where teachers are beginning to serve in multifaceted roles by supporting their colleagues in integrating SEL teaching strategies into the academic core; developing more sophisticated pedagogical approaches to teaching math and science through lesson study and teacher-led, team-based curriculum development; and taking a renewed, and far more collaborative, approach to teacher induction and evaluation.

19 Blank, R. K., De las Alas, N., Smith, C., & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2008). Does teacher professional development have effects on teaching and learning?: Analysis of evaluation findings from programs for mathematics and science teachers in 14 states. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

20 Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. New York: W. H. Freeman.

21 The Flippen Group (2019) Capturing Kids Hearts. https://flippengroup.com/education/capturing-kids-hearts-1/

22 Crosby, S. D. (2015). An ecological perspective on emerging trauma-informed teaching practices. Children & Schools, 37(4), 223-230.

23 Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. Theory Into Practice, 34(3), 159–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849509543675

Additionally, the district has begun to roll out more efforts for teachers to learn from each other and for them to find time to experiment—including a co-teaching model that is being piloted in three elementary schools where two teachers take responsibility for teaching the same students, creating more time for them to both teach and lead. This effort has also been crucial in unfolding and spearheading one of the instructional initiatives envisioned by the Office of Equity and Professional Learning: a blended learning environment initiative where teachers have literally "torn down walls" between classrooms to teach in project-based, flexible seating, student-led, technology-rich environments. Mr. Woods, grandfather at Armstrong Elementary, one of the three elementary schools piloting this initiative, enthusiastically shared:

> *The environment and the teacher element have changed completely. You would never think of nothing like this in our day. Seating, you would always be placed by names. I always sat in the back of the room because my last name is Woods…now all has changed to a free element; you are not studying the same thing at the same time. The child is pretty much independent, studying as they need and motivated by their questions, working together. To me that's a method of learning as I need to learn, instead of a forced type learning atmosphere.*

Krista, a mother of four and a teacher at one of the schools, shared the experience of her son: "My sixth grade son has never liked school, never wanted to come. This year, he enjoys coming. He loves the flexible seating, the technology; they're really connecting with the kids. So, he's really benefited this year." Other parents and students resonated with this idea, mentioning changes in classroom culture; relationships between students; and the teachers' ability to support different students, meeting their needs and leveraging their strengths. Sabrina, who has twins in the same classroom, explained: "Both my children learn at very different paces, different things. One is better in certain subjects and the other is better at others. Here, if I walk in the class, one is working on one subject and the other on another at the opposite side of the class, learning at their own pace. Also, I like the fact that there's two teachers and they have more time to work with each individual and each group." When talking about the changes in culture with other parents, Sabrina jokingly added, "My kids aren't looking for an excuse to stay home anymore."

Students in co-teaching classrooms actively made decisions about their own learning, asking questions and working on teams to independently inquire, research, and solve problems. During our classroom observations, students readily and confidently answered questions that are often hard for third and sixth graders in classrooms across the country. When asked, they happily shared what they were learning, why it was important for them, and how they knew whether they were making progress. Additionally, students were enthused about taking leadership in their own learning, being able "to use technology whenever you want," and to "work together even when we are at home." (The students can take computers home as part of a district program.) Lastly, in an effort to capture impact data to directly inform their teaching, teachers themselves have begun to utilize a wide array of work samples and portfolios, which show demonstrative gains on both cognitive and noncognitive measures often not captured by state achievement tests used on the California Dashboard. This kind of teacher leadership is spreading, where teachers are learning from each other and incubating and executing their own ideas. For example, we learned how teachers, on their own accord with no administrative directive, developed a set of scaffolded lessons so third graders "can already learn to use critical thinking skills with DBQs (Document Based Questions) in science so they can meet the sixth grade academic standards."

"I like the fact that there's two teachers and they have more time to work with each individual and each group… My kids aren't looking for an excuse to stay home anymore."

Teachers also shared clear examples of "learning happens" when they had access to "more authentic collaboration" in school- or cluster-level efforts. A teacher of 18 years teaching in a high collaboration school told us:

> *When you learn from other teachers, and you hear their ideas, and you get to share with one another, I think that's the best way that I learn because I'm not just taking in information from one person, I'm getting ideas that teachers are actually using in their classrooms. So it's not just a "try this strategy," but actually, we have a teacher who's using this strategy…and we are working together, or they're trying this and we're seeing results from it.*

As one Armstrong teacher noted on the influence of the co-teaching model in his or her school, "And as a teacher, it excites the rest of us, because now we have to keep up with them." Principals, especially those who have been supported by the district in new forms of distributed leadership, seemed more comfortable with teachers leading more of the work of school improvement. These principals also embraced teachers leading each other, instead of of relying just on their (the principals') instructional leadership. As one principal from a high achieving, Title I elementary school noted:

> *When it starts to become peer pressure…that's when movement happens. It's when people begin to learn from each other…. But I can say that today I see my staff at that cusp where we've began to just take off, and part of it has been those opportunities to be pulled out of the classroom and be working with the other teachers, which again, without being a Title I school, we would've never had the resources and opportunity to do.*

And a teacher in her school who is serving in an LCFF-funded hybrid role (focusing on the support of the NGSS rollout), pending a new science adoption in the system, told us, "So this job opportunity really attracted me because I'm really interested in building that system of how to give teachers the confidence and telling them it's okay, you don't have to have a curriculum in front of you."

From Implementation to Innovation

Currently in PUSD, the value of shared leadership and the work of teacher teams and teacher leaders in schools along with the support and guidance from the district cannot be overstated. There are 27 PBIS school teams that, with the support of the district, are now beginning to move from **implementation to innovation**.

III. A Shift to Educating the Whole Child

A second theme that surfaced in relationship to both *PBIS* and *Teacher-Led Learning and Professional Growth* was a transition towards educating the whole child. Through multiple stories, stakeholders repeatedly referenced how the meaning of *whole child* was changing in PUSD. While PBIS was focused on the behavior and social and emotional aspects, there has been a progressive shift towards a whole-child approach that incorporates the academic and the social and emotional:

> *The whole mindset has changed; we are now able to have those hard conversations, the big social emotional piece that we have always had to address and never had an intentional and concrete framework to do so here, especially because of the trauma lots of our kids go through, at the same time, that is a big part of the academic experience. (Lilia Fuentes, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services)*

For schools and educators, PBIS has provided a tiered framework that is able to match supports to needs, providing a solid foundation for change.

As Morillo-Shone shared, "It's good because you have enough people in the school that now know how to implement Tier I, to plan strategically around Tier II, the importance of all-means-all, and how to connect the social emotional to the academic." PBIS has highlighted the connection between behavior and social-emotional development and students' ability to access good quality academic instruction. "All means all," a teacher explained:

> *Imagine I am a student with multiple referrals to begin with. It is often assumed that I need intensive support, but I also need to make sure that I have universal access. Typically, what happens is that students who are most challenging seem to go straight up to the top of the triangle and get intensive support, missing out on the rigor of the universal support. So what it means is that it doesn't matter where am I on the pyramid of support, I will also get Tier I. I need it because the school and the district is so centered on being responsive and strategic that it is insulated with support.*

For Krista Green, teacher and PBIS coach at Armstrong Elementary, the biggest shift has been in both teachers and

students being able to take more risks that are beginning to show a tangible impact. At their school, teachers are incorporating flexible seating and one-to-one technology, and have had an increase in different teaching strategies that has gone along with an understanding that students, as whole people, need something different. In her words: "Kids are enjoying it and it's improving their academics, their engagement; and they want to be here." For Mayra, PBIS co-coach at Marshall Middle School, part of the impact comes not only from the fact that students are in class more often, but also that they feel as if they belong and that their needs are being met. In a conversation with other members of the district's PBIS team, she shared:

> *So one of the things we've discussed is every year we meet with our principal and we go over our CAASPP data (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress). And we've noticed that some of our grade levels, they've been moving up in their academics. A lot of our students are in class more often. We noticed that if we are helping them with their behavior, we're teaching them, we're supporting their social-emotional development, then it translates to the classroom. The more that we understand as adults what their needs are and that we provide them with those tools that they need, we've noticed that it's helped them stay in class. They're not having outbursts because they know that they can take a break. They can just ask…they're happy, it changes the whole culture. Then they're allowing other students to learn as well, and we're seeing that too in their scores.*

It is important to remember that it hasn't always been this way. Many of the teachers, coaches, and school leaders described a long process of changing beliefs. Green explained, "Everyone used to teach from more of an equality stand; now we know that we need to give students what they need. Because, really, no one gets what they need if they don't get what they need."

As the principal of one of the district's model schools for PBIS explained: "Strong members of both our PBIS teams and our instructional folks, right now, are not only talking about the academics or the PBIS, we are talking about the whole child." Morillo-Shone reflected: "Where am I now? I like to think of PBIS and equity as a journey. It's not a destination. So it's not about—there's not an end place, you're just always kinda working from where you are. We have moved from calling the equity teacher specialist to do behavior to where we are **all** behavior and academic, so my Teacher Specialist under equity needs to be strong also in academics. That's the goal." However, as clarified by Sarai Costley, Program Administrator for Equity and Professional Learning, "We are not there yet, but we are certainly making intentional efforts and progress."

IV. PBIS, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and a Broader Strategy for Equity

Equity as a journey requires reflection and growth. For district leaders and educators in PUSD, this journey continues with the implementation of an MTSS framework. MTSS is a comprehensive framework designed to provide effective technical assistance for districts and schools that wish to holistically serve every child through the coherent alignment of all their initiatives, supports, and resources.[24] [25]

While PBIS focuses on behavioral intervention, MTSS asks schools and districts to take stock of all their programs and supports (behavioral, academic, and social-emotional) and to evaluate the effectiveness of each resource as well as its' accessibility to students who may need it. In essence, MTSS is a method of organizing, integrating, and streamlining efforts so that every students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs are met in the most inclusive and equitable learning environment possible.

With the initial success of PBIS in PUSD, the move to also adopt MTSS as a district-wide strategy already has collective buy-in spanning from cabinet members to school communities. Superintendent Martinez explained: "Parents would ask, so how come this is at this school and not this? It has created a positive thing for everybody, where parents want to see that across the district. Lately, with MTSS, they keep saying MTSS because that's the language we are using and they see the supports, the strategies, the fidelity, and focus both on social-emotional supports and academics; so now what is working for us is also what they are demanding. This really captures the essence of local control and LCFF."

As a multitiered strategy, PBIS falls under the umbrella of MTSS and acts as a springboard toward a more com-

24 California Department of Education. (2019) *Multi-Tiered System of Support*. https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/

25 Sailor, W. , McCart, A. , and Choi, J.H. (2018) Reconceptualizing Inclusive Education Through Multi-Tiered System of Support. Inclusion: March 2018, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 3-18.

The distinction between equality and equity, along with the collective transition toward thinking of the whole child, has been consequential not only for classroom practices but also for the way every aspect of the district operates.

prehensive framework for supporting students. Leveraging the newly formed leadership teams and the shifts in values and beliefs regarding whole-child support, stakeholders can now take on bigger roles of building capacity, providing technical assistance, and integrating efforts.

The distinction between equality and equity, along with the collective transition toward thinking of the whole child, has been consequential not only for classroom practices but also for the way every aspect of the district operates. While, for many, it has taken time, it has had profound implications for their roles and practices. Among them, the need to know who their students are, which has triggered multiple efforts for more culturally relevant practices.

As explained by Morillo-Shone, "A key component of broadening from PBIS to MTSS and to a broader approach to equity lies in the understanding of our responsibility as a system to educate the whole child, and this means that from social-emotional supports, it is broadened to social-emotional supports, academic supports, and ultimately into pedagogy, curriculum, structure, how we engage with families, everything. After all, we are talking about the whole child."

Impact

In each of the co-teaching classes, there has been a marked improvement in student outcomes, as revealed by the California Dashboard. For example, in 2017–2018 in the sixth grade co-teaching classroom at Armstrong Elementary, 64 percent of their students scored a 3 or 4 in math, although 84 percent of the cohort they taught entered as 1s or 2s from the previous year. At Cortez Elementary, similarly significant improvements were also recorded. Disaggregated data also showed important improvements in addressing gaps between targeted groups of students. A comparison between the 2017–2018 Math and English Language Arts (ELA) Smarter Balanced scores of students in the co-teaching classes and the rest of PUSD classrooms showed clear gains and improvements for African American students, Native American students, special education students, and English Learners. As an example, 50 percent of sixth grade African American students in the co-taught classrooms scored a 3 or 4 in Mathematics in comparison to 20.98 percent in PUSD. For Latinx students in the same sixth grade co-taught classrooms, 69.23 percent scored a 3 or 4 in ELA in comparison to 41.78 percent in the rest of PUSD classrooms.

While talking about her school data with other district PBIS leaders, Goens, principal at Simons Middle School, shared a brief story that illustrates some early indicators of change at her site:

> *The fact that we were at 1,136 (2012–2013) referrals in a year and now we are at 223 (2016–2017). That's a lot less of instructional time missed. We're also seeing our honor roll at over 56 percent of our students, which is bigger than ever. There is clear evidence of academic growth since we've become a PBIS school. Another one of our successes is our school climate report card. We finished 99 percentile for similar schools and 99 percentile for the state. I would say that's kids' perspective about the success that's happening at the site. And I think when you look at those data points and you see how kids are viewing the school, and you hear them say things like "best middle school!" you really, you see it.*

Leading Evidence of Change

The story of Simons Middle School is not unique. Four years after the pilot schools began PBIS implementation, the number of Office Discipline Referrals across PBIS schools has decreased by 48 percent and suspensions have decreased by 61 percent. Office Discipline Referrals decreased from 1,278 in 2014–2015 to 607 in 2017–2018. If we translate this number into its instructional impact, equating every referral to 45 minutes of missed class time, in 2014–2015, students missed 460,000 minutes of learning time (1,278 days). In 2017–2018, referrals were reduced to 5,369, equalling 240,000 minutes (671 instructional days), resulting in an overall increase of 607 days of instructional engagement time (see Figure 2).

Looking at the overall number of suspensions across the district, the district has seen an overall decrease over the past several years (see Figure 3).

Looking at the overall two-year comparison for ELA and Math PUSD data, the overwhelming majority of schools that increased both their ELA (82 percent) and Mathematics (86.7 percent) scores in PUSD were PBIS schools (see Figure 4).

Figure 2. Total District Referrals and Instructional Days Lost to Referrals for 2014–2015 and 2017–2018

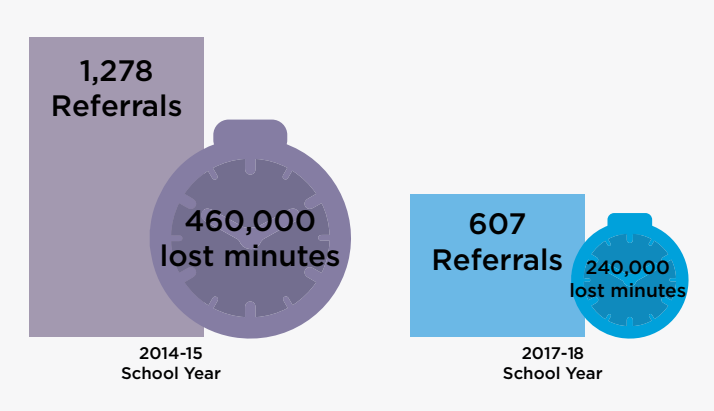


Figure 3. In School vs. Out of School Suspensions

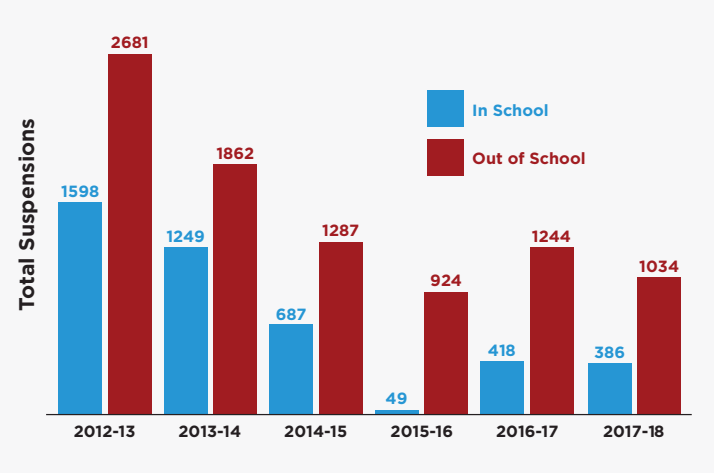
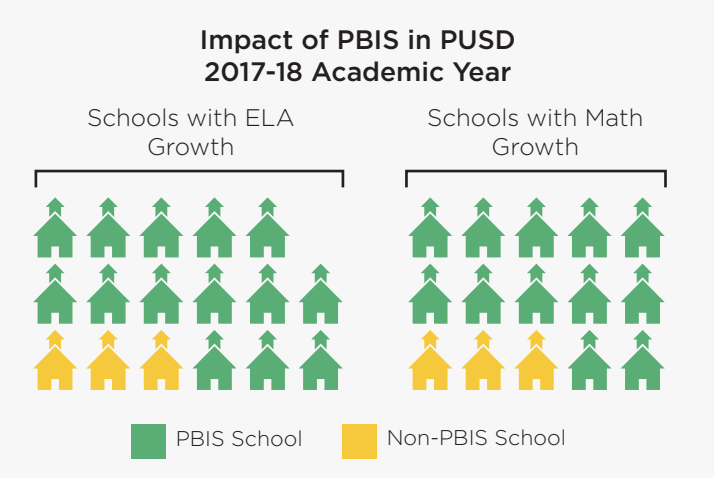


Figure 4. Student Achievement and PBIS

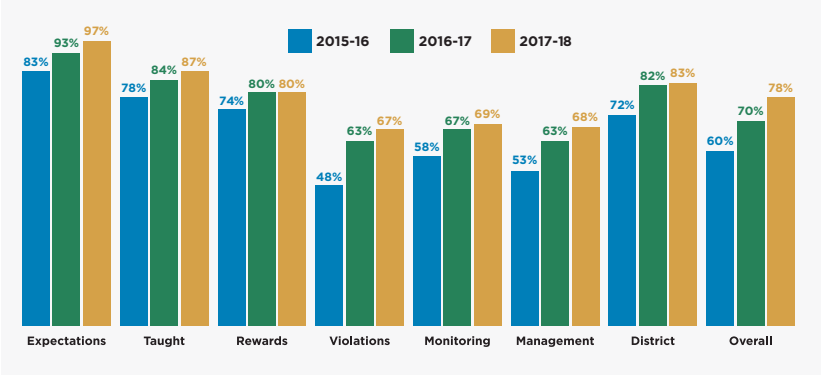


PBIS at the School Site

Across PBIS sites, indicators show clear and significant progress from 2015–2016 (the first year of implementation) to 2017–2018:

- From the SCS, a School Climate Survey designed to gauge PBIS implementation as perceived by students: 78 percent of students at the PBIS feel accepted at school and 66 percent like attending school.
- From the TFI: Of the 27 sites where the PBIS team has completed the Tiered Fidelity Inventory, there has been a 35 percent increase in the overall average from the school year 2015–2016 to the 2017–2018 school year.
- From the SAS: At the 27 PBIS sites that have completed the Self-Assessment Survey, all teachers and staff provided input on PBIS implementation and rated: Expectations 97 percent, Expectations Taught 87 percent, Rewards System 80 percent, Violations 67 percent, Monitoring System 69 percent, Management 68 percent, District Support 83 percent, Overall 78 percent.
- DigiCOACH: 23/23 sites completed the DigiCOACH walkthroughs with four sites rated as Exemplary, 17 sites rated as Evident, and 2 sites rated as Emerging in Implementation.

Figure 5. Self-Assessment Survey (SAS)



School-Site Based PBIS Assessment Tools and Indicators

Once the leadership teams are established, school teams use several assessment tools and surveys for various purposes, which include informing action planning, appraising the status of drivers or elements related to the implementation of Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), and tracking data that speaks to both fidelity of implementation and impact. These self-assessment tools and surveys are consistent across all states, meet the needs not currently duplicated by another survey are reliable, and are evidence based.[1] Additionally, these tools are intended to build systemic capacity for sustainable, culturally and contextually relevant, high-fidelity implementation of multitiered practices and systems of support.[2]

- **School Climate Surveys (SCS)** – a set of multidimensional surveys to measure the perceptions of students around school climate. These surveys are brief, reliable, and valid for assessing perceived school climate among students in grades 3-12.
- **Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)** – a self-assessment tool used to measure the fidelity with which school personnel are applying the core features of SWPBIS at all three tiers.
- **Self-Assessment Survey (SAS)** – an annual assessment designed to gauge staff perception of the implementation status and improvement priorities for school-wide, classroom, nonclassroom and individual student systems. These results are especially important for informing future plans and implementation.
- **DigiCOACH Walkthrogh Data** – digiCOACH is a digital mobile system designed for instructional leaders to conduct classroom walkthroughs and to support the growth of educators through five key areas.[3]

1 PBIS Apps at Educational and Community Supports (n.d.). Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Assessment Surveys. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon. Retrieved from https://www.pbisapps.org/Applications/Pages/PBIS-Assessment-Surveys.aspx#tfi.

2 OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (May 2017). Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Implementation Blueprint: Part 2 - Self-Assessment and Action Planning. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon. Retrieved from www.pbis.org.

3 DigiCOACH (n.d.). Redlands, CA. Retrieved from http://www.digicoach.com/editions/EducationalResearch.pdf

Figure 6. NGSS Co-teaching Model

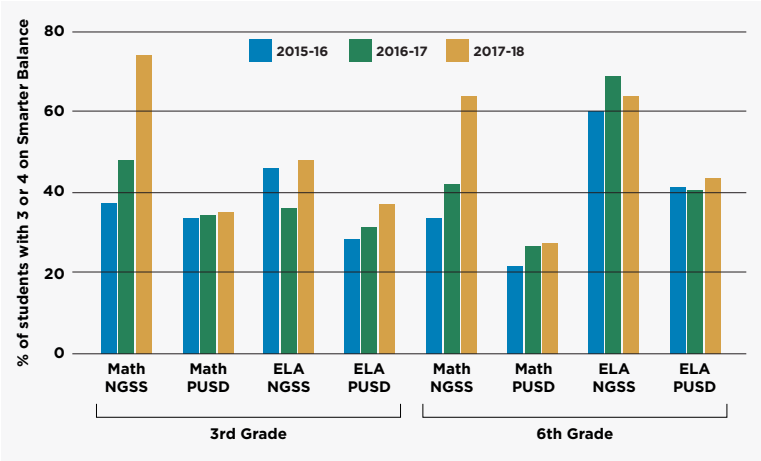
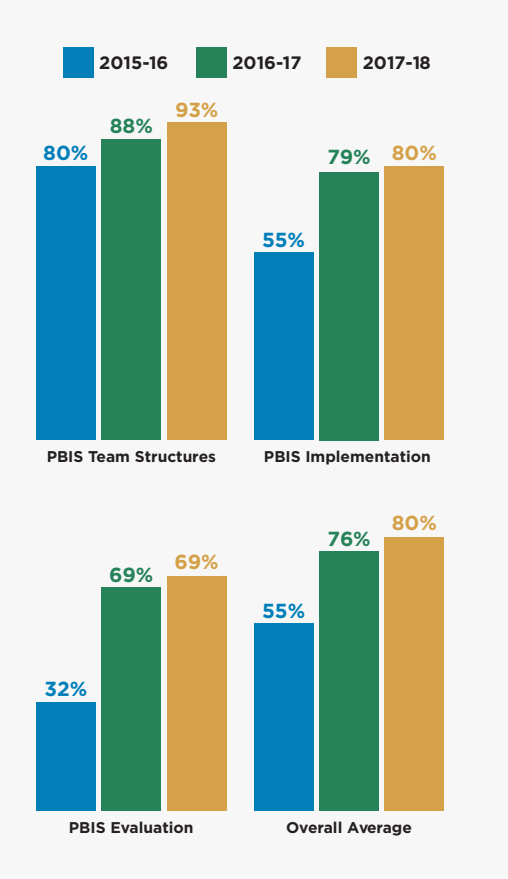


Figure 7. PUSD Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)



Beyond the Data

While impact data has been promising across the district, most of the stories uncovered by this study highlighted the importance of acknowledging two key lessons: the first, that change takes time and the second, that sometimes the most profound and important changes are not fully captured by the traditional measures of impact data.

When presenting and sharing their data (even when it showed clear positive outcomes), many stakeholders and school leaders pointed out that they believed these were "leading indicators," and that the real change is happening in ways not yet captured by current numbers.

Additionally, an ongoing challenge for PUSD heading into the future is capturing impact and being clear and intentional about the ways in which they gather, interpret, and communicate data. Morillo-Shone, while talking about the new California Dashboard and the way it tracks data, explained: "It is interesting what's reported in the dashboard is suspensions and expulsions. We measure that too, and while we have had some progress, we now need to backwards map and think about broader strategies that capture data that is useful to us and that is able to speak to the drivers we need." PBIS has not only emphasized the importance of collecting data but has also created lots of data. In turn, a new challenge is how to use it strategically.

Figure 8.

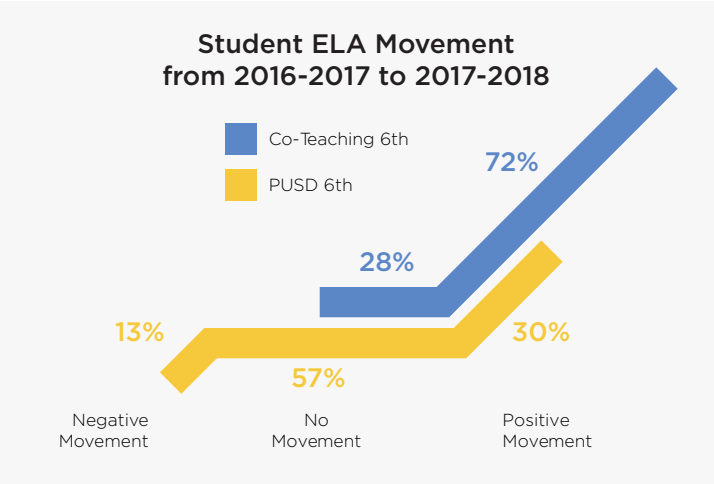
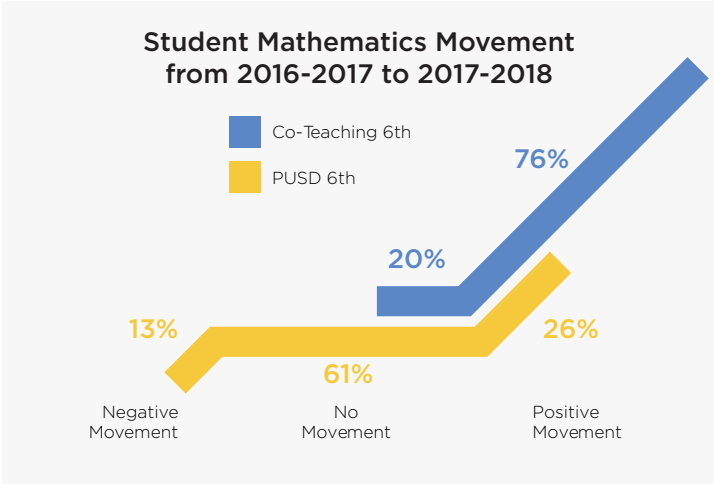


Figure 9.



Challenges

Despite the promise and success of both PBIS and teacher-led professional learning and PUSD's transition toward more equitable schooling, educators are quick to remind themselves that there is much to do. As Costley reminded us, "We are asking the right questions. Now is when the heavy lifting begins."

Sustainability and Innovation

Another key challenge for PUSD will be the sustainability of change and improvement. Green, coach at Armstrong Elementary, explained, "For our site, we had a staff who still remembered what it was like years ago when kids came to school, listened, behaved. When PBIS came, we had many on the fence, waiting for it to go away. Even though students were changing, we needed to be the ones that changed." This sentiment was echoed throughout the district: efforts like PBIS and teacher-led professional learning are often presented as new solutions and are abandoned quickly. This is why, in the words of Morillo-Shone, "We not only have to stick with it and ensure it was led by educators at schools, but we need to move into its implications for bigger systems and towards innovation." With that said, change requires time, especially considering how large a district PUSD is.

During meetings with stakeholders across the district, many recognized that as they look toward change and transformation the key is to continue building momentum and institutionalizing initiatives. Superintendent Martinez explained, "When you want to turn that ship a bit, it sure takes time to start letting go of things that we've done, even though the data may not prove that that's something we should keep. We often keep doing things because it is simply the Pomona way. Other things that might make a lot of sense take time to stick." Additionally—especially in the transition towards MTSS and a comprehensive strategy for equity—while PBIS has provided a springboard, there is a lot of capacity and consistency that is yet to be built around MTSS. Stacy Wilkins, Administrative Director of Innovation and Improvement Officer, explained, "Even though we are moving towards integrity and consistency, we are still at a place where different schools and different people have different understandings, and we need that good foundation, especially for Tier I."

Additionally, as PUSD continues to negotiate change, there is a simultaneous effort to bring equity into decision making. As part of the development of the LCAP, which requires districts to engage their communities to guide decisions across the district, the district recognizes the challenges of trying to bring more voices while at the same time negotiating political will. In the words of the Senior Leadership Team: "It has been the most comprehensive approach to supporting all students that [we] have seen, from schools to budgets to the way leaders across different departments speak about schools and practices."

Summary

A careful examination of the intersection between LCFF, the Promise of Excellence Strategic Plan 2015-2020, and the initiatives kindled out of a complex context offer powerful insights and possibilities for educators across the state. In this case study, both PBIS and teacher-led professional learning serve as two examples—grown out of a district-wide commitment to equity, a stable leadership, and a complex fiscal situation—that highlight powerful ways in which a large, urban district has operationalized equity through LCFF. By building and supporting the work of leadership teams across the district and transitioning to an understanding of the whole child, efforts such as PBIS and teacher-led professional learning have evolved beyond the programmatic approaches that often come and go with education reform. Instead, both have become springboards for larger transformation. Additionally, this study suggests that while quantitative indicators can showcase early signs of impact, deeper cultural change takes time, and understanding the dynamics of change requires us to pay closer attention.

Conclusion

When LCFF was signed into law in 2013, PUSD was already in the midst of change. Triggered partly by a fiscal crisis, increased scrutiny due to receiving the label of "significant disproportionality," and other contextual factors, PUSD's leadership, a team that has led the district collaboratively for more than eight years, had already begun plans to bring about comprehensive change. Using a distributed leadership model, comprehensive and intentional theories of change, deliberative spending, and a commitment to equity, PUSD has been able to utilize LCFF as a lever for system-wide change. Additionally, with the flexibility afforded by the law, they have thought creatively about how to support the needs of students. Although the scope and complexity of change are broader than these two initiatives, both PBIS and teacher-led professional learning showcase innovative ways in which particular programs and structures, supported by LCFF, can work to support a broader and comprehensive process of change.

The world of education seems to be on a constant lookout for silver bullets, easy solutions, or the one way to improve educational outcomes. The story of PUSD calls for a different explanation of change. It teaches us that often the most transformational programs bring about change in a myriad of ways. While the data, test scores, and quantitative indicators of change can be useful tools for teams of educators to gauge impact, these often fail to capture both the nuances and the texture of educational change. As exemplified by both PBIS and teacher-led professional learning, the impact of comprehensive and intentional efforts to bring about change is multidimensional, impacting beliefs, practices, and structures across different levels.

Change is about much more, as Superintendent Martinez explained:

> *Respect, responsibility, results, and relationships. Is it about the almighty test score or more about children connecting with adults and caring adults? We have to believe that students can do and will do. Not lowering the bars but raising the bars and then adjusting your practices so students could surpass that bar. To create spaces where social-emotional learning and relationships and trust as part of that are seen as an explicit avenue towards rigorous instruction.*

Similar thoughts were echoed by many. Stephanie Baker, former Deputy Superintendent, elaborated, "If there was no mandate, we'd still be doing this work. That is at the core of who we say we are."

Appendix A: District Profile

Student Profile[26]

Enrollment in 2017–2018: 23,115 **Low-Income:** 86.7%

English Learners: 29.4% **Foster Youth:** 1.1%

Enrollment[27]

Race and Ethnicity	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	61	38	47	48	52
Asian	1,015	934	868	824	797
Black or African American	1,377	1,227	1,142	1,108	1,057
Filipino	288	313	294	293	282
Hispanic or Latinx	22,217	21,512	21,135	20,827	20,357
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	33	29	40	37	35
None Reported	44	47	44	41	49
Two or More Races	273	250	247	238	260
White	956	961	899	898	852
Total	26,264	25,311	24,716	24,314	23,741

Unduplicated Pupil Count of Free/Reduced-Price Meals, English Learners, and Foster Youth[28]

	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Total	21,719	21,139	20,803	20,350	20,175
Percentage	84.0%	84.9%	85.2%	85.4%	86.3%

Foster Youth Count[29]

	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Total	211	344	329	252	249

Staff

Teachers: 1,843 **Student Teacher Ratio:** 13.4:1

Teachers by Race and Ethnicity[30]

Race and Ethnicity	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	5	4	6	N/A
Asian	36	64	66	85	N/A
Black or African American	151	221	207	212	N/A
Filipino	16	24	25	31	N/A
Hispanic or Latinx	462	664	686	747	N/A

26 This data is based on the Pomona Unified School District report from the California School Dashboard in 2018.
27 http://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Pomona-Unified
28 http://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Pomona-Unified
29 http://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Pomona-Unified
30 http://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Pomona-Unified

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	61	77	71	70	N/A
None Reported	74	122	127	147	N/A
Two or More Races	0	0	0	0	N/A
White	431	553	513	545	N/A
Total	1,235	1,730	1,699	1,843	N/A

Schools

Elementary: 25 **Middle School:** 4 **High:** 5 **Adult Education:** 1

Budget[31]

Total General Fund Budget Expenditures for LCAP Year 2017–2018: $305,380,699

Total Funds Budgeted for Planned Actions/Services to Meet the Goals in the LCAP for LCAP Year 2017–2018: $193,791,248

Total Projected LCFF Revenues for LCAP Year 2017–2018: $245,040,180

General Fund Revenues by Category[32]

Category	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017
Federal	$ 27,624,899	$ 17,794,278	$ 20,148,183	$ 20,424,845	$ 20,440,137
LCFF	140,683,217	185,947,769	203,996,654	227,160,813	236,382,719
Other Local	5,604,215	4,786,350	4,521,909	5,112,835	4,754,763
Other State	62,061,266	30,277,523	26,760,151	41,861,538	29,795,439
Total	235,973,597	238,805,920	255,426,897	294,560,031	291,373,058

31 Figures are based on Pomona Unified School District's Local Control Accountability Plan 2017–2020 Plan Summary.
32 http://www.ed-data.org/district/Los-Angeles/Pomona-Unified

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