

Oakland Unified School District Case Study ASCEND



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This case study is one of six conducted for the report, *Oakland Unified School District: New Small Schools Initiative Evaluation*. The report and case studies can be downloaded from <http://www.srnleads.org/resources/publications/ousd/ousd.html>.

This study was conducted by the School Redesign Network at Stanford University.

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The School Redesign Network at Stanford University engages in research and development to support districts and schools that are equitable and enable all students to master the knowledge and skills needed for success in college, careers, and citizenship.

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Oakland Unified School District operates with the goals of universal college and workplace readiness, quality public schools in every neighborhood, clean and safe learning environments, service excellence across the district, and equitable outcomes for all students.

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Introduction

The ASCEND case study illustrates the power of grassroots community organizing to spur the development of a new small school. This case study follows ASCEND’s development over time as a school serving students from kindergarten through eighth grade, and shows how the school has refined its original design to strengthen its instructional program. The case also highlights the advantages of “co-owning” schools with local communities, and the critical roles played by school and district leadership to support strong academic functioning.

Section One of the case study describes ASCEND’s academic trajectory and development story, highlighting the school’s high level of academic productivity and Academic Performance Index (API)¹ scores that consistently outpace similar neighborhood schools. The section discusses how the school’s design has benefitted from stable leadership transitions between two highly capable principals, an instructional system that integrates project-based learning with standards-based curricula, and a staffing pattern that balances new and experienced teachers.

Section Two of the case study describes four critical attributes of a school’s academic functioning: the school learning climate, instructional program, professional capacity, and parent and community relations. By discussing these four attributes and the district policy supports that contributed to their development, the case study is designed to inform, improve, and strengthen understanding and connections between Oakland Unified School District’s (OUSD) central office and local schools.

ASCEND’s positive learning climate reflects its focus on small class size and key personalization strategies such as

looping, which allows teachers to work with a group of students over multiple years. These personalization strategies have also supported the school’s instructional program, which uses the Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound model in service of project- and community-based learning. While ASCEND has adapted its instructional program to better meet current accountability demands, it has held tight to its core vision of active student learners who are engaged in solving real-world problems, and to its commitment to integrating the arts (visual arts, music, drama, poetry, and spoken word) across the curriculum.

Teachers’ professional capacity at ASCEND has been strengthened by supporting teacher collaboration and inquiry using student work and other data demonstrating what students have learned. Other capacity-builders include ASCEND’s principal (who serves as a key instructional leader at the school), its Network Executive Officer (NExO) and Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) coach. Over time, school leaders have also refined the hiring process to attract better “fits” among new hires and to steeply reduce the school’s teacher turnover rate.

Community leadership and organizing helped launch the school, and ASCEND

continues to enjoy strong parent and community support. Parents are a welcome and an everyday presence at the school, and they are supported by an

active Family Resource Center that serves as a communication and distribution hub for multiple social and educational services.

Section One: ASCEND's Academic Trajectory and Development Story

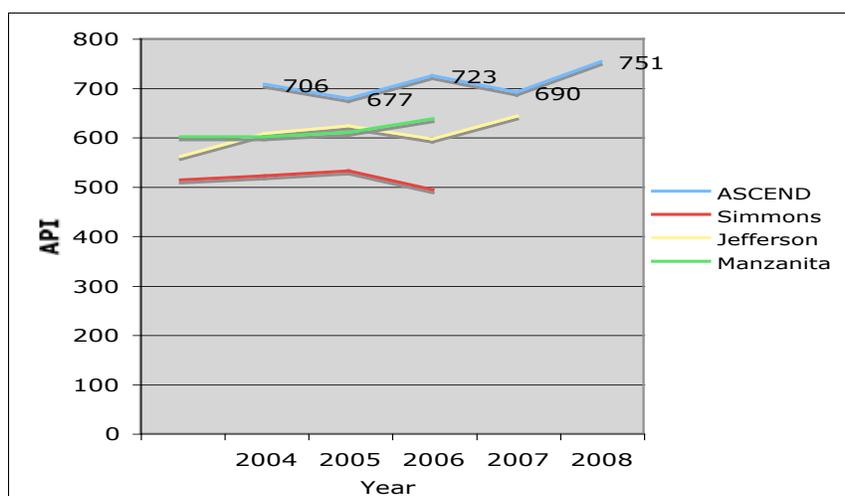
ASCEND — which stands for A School Cultivating Excellence, Nurturing Diversity — opened in 2001 as one of the first new small schools opened under the New Small Autonomous Schools district policy passed by the Oakland Board of Education in 2000. A K-8 school, ASCEND has experienced academic progress in multiple areas since its inception. For example, a 2007 evaluation by Strategic Measurement & Evaluation Associates Inc. and the Stanford School Redesign Network's current re-analysis of the data have both found that over a 4-year period (2003-07), ASCEND's students consistently exceeded their expected performance (based on student demographics and prior achievement) on the math and English language arts (ELA) portions of the California Standards Tests (CSTs).²

The gains are particularly notable in middle school mathematics, where students exceeded expected performance almost 60% of the time and never scored below their expected performance. Middle school ELA scores show a similar trend, with the upper grades accelerating performance 33% of the time, and at a minimum, meeting the expected performance every year. Results were more mixed in the lower grades (there were two instances of grades that scored below the expected level, and two instances of accelerated performance in both ELA and math). Scores for grades 6-8 may provide a more accurate picture of academic performance at ASCEND because these grade levels have been the most stable over time. ASCEND has taught sixth, seventh, and eighth graders every year for the past four years, while alternating between K, 2, 4 and 1, 3, 5 every year until 2006-07,³ due to classroom

space limitations at its former old school building. This model allowed sixth grade teachers to teach the same grades each year, while seventh and eighth grade language arts, social studies, and math teachers looped, a practice ASCEND continues today. Teachers in grades K-5 alternated each year with the following loop: K-1, 2-3, 4-5. Despite the years with alternating grade levels, the overall academic trajectory at the school is unquestionably positive.

ASCEND's API scores tell a similar story. While scores have fluctuated over the past 4 years, they are consistently higher than Calvin Simmons Middle School and Manzanita and Jefferson Elementary Schools, the schools that ASCEND's students would have most likely attended if ASCEND had never opened (see Figure 1, page 3). Although ASCEND's statewide API rank decreased from a 4 in 2006

FIGURE 1: COMPARISON OF SCHOOL'S API SCORES



* Source: <http://api.cde.ca.gov/>

to a 2 in 2007, the school has improved its California similar school ranking over time, moving from a 2 in 2005 to a 5 in 2006 and 2007.⁴

Perhaps more important than test score gains, ASCEND's students tend to have positive academic outcomes after leaving ASCEND. A former ASCEND middle school teacher who is conducting research to track her graduates found that 35 of 44 students who graduated from ASCEND in 2004 completed high school in Oakland by 2008. Moreover, all the students who graduated have plans to attend college. Many were accepted to 4-year colleges, although some of those students have opted to go to community college for financial reasons.⁵

The positive achievement gains that ASCEND students experience was borne out of the concerted organizing efforts of a committed parent, Emma Paulino, and then-Manzanita Elementary teacher, Larissa Adam, who partnered with Oakland Community Organizations (OCO). After committing to start a small school, Adam invited Hae-Sin Kim, whom she knew from

Teach for America and who was then a middle school assistant principal in Oakland, to join their design team as an administrator. She also invited another Manzanita teacher, Hattie Saunders, to join them. Kim agreed to serve as the start-up principal for 3 to 4 years, and Adam agreed that she would take over as the principal afterwards. The core design team was joined by four other parents. Once they formed their design team, they had a month to submit their first proposal. Adam and Paulino recall, "We met every single night for a month to put together a proposal."

The ASCEND design team, along with 13 others, submitted proposals; 7 were called back for interviews. ASCEND's design team was one of 5 teams notified in January 2001 that it could open a new school the following fall. The ASCEND design team spent the rest of the school year and summer working with a coach from BayCES, a school reform organization focused on new small schools, to develop plans for the new school. Although the design team had proposed the new school to relieve overcrowding at Manzanita Elementary — which had

921 students in 2000-01 — it was told by the district when the school was approved that it would also need to draw students from Jefferson Elementary, another overcrowded school serving 1,010 students that same year. Both large elementary schools were operating as year-round, multi-track schools.⁶ As a result of the district request to include Jefferson, the design team engaged a Jefferson teacher and Jefferson parents in the design process, as well as Manzanita parents.

The parents and educators on the design team shared the philosophy regarding the type of school they wanted. Manzanita parents and teachers had witnessed parents being treated poorly in the office. Adam recalls, “We had all experienced at Manzanita parents being yelled at in the office, denigrated and totally disrespected in the office. We were trying to create the anti-Manzanita.” They sought to create a school where parents were partners in the education of children, and where there was frequent communication among parents, staff, and students. According to Adam:

We envisioned a school that is incredibly welcoming. We wanted parents to feel that this was their school, and that they could visit the office or any classroom at any time when they wanted to support their child. We wanted a school that wasn't just a phone call here or there.

Teachers also wanted a close relationship with parents, so they could best support their students.

The design team parents also wanted to address the low expectations that they felt

the previous schools had for their children. Many parents had experiences similar to those described by Paulino, and wanted the new school to be different. Adam explains:

They had experiences where they'd been told for years that their kid was doing fine because the standards were really low, and then they find out, “Wow, no, my kid is not doing fine, my kid is several grade levels below where they should be and I've been lied to all this time.” That came up over and over.

The ASCEND design team also had an instructional vision that was part of the founding philosophy. This philosophy stressed depth over breadth, a love of learning that would be fostered by using a range of strategies, culturally relevant instruction, and instruction guided by teacher inquiry. Adam summarizes their founding vision:

Kids needed to develop a love of learning. We could do that by using instructional strategies that help kids develop skills in an authentic context, through investigation, through texts that were meaningful to their lives... Decisions about instructional strategies needed to be based on our own inquiry into what works for our kids. We would constantly need to be revising our strategies based on the data we got back.

To realize this vision, the design team recognized that teachers needed to use multiple strategies, not just constructivist techniques, where students are actively participating in building knowledge, or direct instruction, where students receive knowledge delivered by the teacher. Instead, teachers would utilize a mix of both con-

structivist and direct instruction approaches, because different students learn differently and because both are useful. After visiting Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound schools in New York and being impressed with the quality of students' work, team members decided to use Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound to help them realize their instructional vision.⁷

While developing its vision, the design team also was busy staffing the new school. Kim, Adam, and several parents interviewed all prospective teachers and watched them teach demonstration lessons. The design team had full autonomy over hiring. It ended up hiring three teachers from Manzanita (including Adam and Saunders), one teacher from Jefferson, and other teachers from inside and outside of Oakland. The experience of the teachers hired ranged from 3 to 23 years. Adam recalls, "I think what made our team quite strong is that we were not starting out with a bunch of people who had only been teaching for a few years."

However, the hiring process was not all smooth sailing. The inexperience of the design team members, coupled with a lack of clarity around the competencies needed by teachers to be successful in this type of school, resulted in some poor hiring choices. Adam recalls that they believed that if teachers shared their philosophy and were willing to work hard, that would be sufficient. In a few cases this was not enough. According to Adam, they had a few teachers who were "far less effective than we needed them to be," and ASCEND had a 30% turnover rate in the early years.

ASCEND opened its doors in August 2001 in the old Dewey Alternative School building in the Fruitvale neighborhood. These

facilities presented ASCEND with some unique challenges. The school was located underneath the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) train tracks, so consequently, teachers had to learn to automatically pause instruction as BART trains passed overhead every 4 to 10 minutes. Students were taught in classrooms in the main building and in the lower level of the dilapidated, two-story portable classrooms on campus (the upper level was deemed unsafe). When the school opened, students had a small patch of blacktop for play, but no playground equipment.

In 2005, after much negotiation and environmental clean-up, OUSD purchased the land adjacent to the old facility and built a new building for ASCEND that spanned the old and new site and included outdoor play space and gardens. Not only did the new facility improve the overall experience for students at the school, it also played an important role in supporting ASCEND's vision for its instructional program.

When ASCEND opened in 2001, it enrolled 160 students in grades K, 2, 4, and 6. Since the school was committed to looping,⁸ the school began with every other grade level, and teachers advanced one grade with their students. So the following year, in 2002, the teachers taught grades 1, 3, 5, and 7, and kept the same group of students. In addition, the school added a new sixth grade in year 2. School leaders felt it was important to include middle school grades from the beginning because, "We saw an incredible need in our community for a quality middle school," explains Adam. ASCEND intended to add a grade level each year, but the school's lack of classroom space in the first 4 years prevented it from doing this in a systematic manner. In its third year, ASCEND kept its existing students and added kindergarten.⁹ ASCEND

was allowed to keep its growth slow, one grade per year, to help preserve its school culture — an important goal for OCO organizers and the design team. The graduating eighth graders in 2008 came to ASCEND in second grade. Several of these students recall that their parents wanted them to attend ASCEND because there was “better learning here” and our “old school was terrible, with fights all the time.” By 2008, ASCEND served 332 students.

In addition to adding new grades each year and upgrading its facilities, there have been several other changes at ASCEND since its founding. The first is a change in leadership, and the second is a shift in the population of the students that ASCEND serves. The planned leadership transition to Adam as principal took place after year 3 rather than year 4, as was originally planned, when ASCEND’s founding principal, Kim, assumed leadership of the newly created OUSD New School Development Group “incubator” in fall 2004.

In the three years before Adam became principal, Kim mentored her, teaching her many administrative functions such as managing the school budget. Adam was also in charge of the school whenever Kim was off campus. Adam’s transition into the role of principal was readily accepted by district personnel, a tribute to the many ways in which Kim’s political savvy and experience in OUSD smoothed the way for ASCEND: “It seemed like whatever Kim says was going to happen, happened,” recalls Adam.

Demographic changes at ASCEND resulted from a change in district policy. When ASCEND was founded, it conducted its own lottery to intentionally create a racially diverse student population. While most

of the students came from the surrounding Fruitvale community of East Oakland, some came from a wider geographical area that enabled the school to serve a more diverse population. Over time, ASCEND has become mostly Latino, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Change in Demographics at ASCEND

	Asian	Latino	African American
2001-02	21%	62%	16%
2007-08	10%	75%	10%

The trend is continuing at a dramatic pace. In 2007-08, 93% of incoming kindergarteners were Latino, compared to 80% of second graders. The demographic change has a snowball effect, suggested ASCEND’s BayCES coach. As non-Latino parents come to visit ASCEND and see that almost every kindergartener is Latino, they may think that “it is not the school for them.” Adam views the homogeneity of the students as detrimental for a number of reasons:

When you have one African American student or one Asian student in kindergarten, it is extremely isolating for those kids and those families. It is also negative for the Latino kids because there is not as much exposure for those different cultures. Part of what we want to do is to bridge the cultural divide among the families in this area. We’ve done a lot of work around that with our parents and it is very fruitful work. It becomes harder and harder to do when you have smaller and smaller numbers of parents who are African American and Asian.

The concentration of Latino students has also proved challenging for ASCEND's academic goals, because that is the population with whom it has had the least success over the years. Teachers are working to identify effective strategies to support the students, which can be particularly hard in the early elementary years, because the majority of ASCEND's Latino students are English language learners (ELLs). According to the Adam, in 2007-08, in one kindergarten classroom, 100% of students were ELLs, and in the other kindergarten classroom, 85% were

ELLs. She notes that one of the challenges associated with this situation is that there are "fewer fluent [English] speakers who can serve as language models."

Like most new small schools, ASCEND experienced a shifting environment and was forced to adapt its original vision to meet the realities of implementation. Although there were many changes made along the way, the school has held tight to its core vision of high expectations for students and treating parents as key stakeholders in the instruction of the students.



Photos: Courtesy of ASCEND school

Section Two: Organizational Supports

SCHOOL LEARNING CLIMATE

ASCEND was founded on a commitment to create a safe and caring learning environment by ensuring that the adults on campus know all students well. One eighth grade student said, “We are like a huge family,” and another added, “Yeah, everybody is comfortable with each other.”

The primary way ASCEND achieves high levels of personalization is by having teachers “loop” with their students for 2 years in most grades. In grades K-5, students have one teacher who loops with them for 2 years. In grade 6, students have two core teachers — one who teaches humanities (ELA and Social Studies) and the other who teaches math and science. These teachers do not loop, but students spend much of their day with them. In grades 7 and 8, students have three core teachers — a humanities teacher, a math teacher, and a science teacher — who loop with them for 2 years. As a result of looping, teachers know their students and families well, and do not have to start the second year getting to know their students or establishing norms of behavior in their classrooms.

In the middle school years, ASCEND further personalizes students’ experiences through its advisory program. However, advisory has been changed in recent years to meet the pressing academic needs of the middle school students. Previously, advisory groups met three times per week; however, starting in the 2006-07 school year, advisory time was scaled back to allocate more time to support the many ASCEND students who were struggling academically. This change was sparked by ASCEND’s move into Program Improvement (PI)¹⁰ status. Advisory, now called

Townhall, meets once a week by grade level. The whole grade level (44-48 students) meets together to do community-building activities, discuss current events, and convey school information. The students are accustomed to certain protocols for activities. For example, during one advisory period, the eighth graders discussed what they were excited and sad about as they prepared to leave ASCEND. They were asked to talk in dyads, a form of listening to each other in pairs. Students reviewed the protocol of sitting face-to-face, knee-to-knee, to take turns listening, and to remember that what was discussed was confidential.

ASCEND students also get to know each other through their exposition of student learning (Expo) and arts performances. Expo is held twice a year on a Saturday, and showcases the interdisciplinary projects at each grade level, with students serving as docents and guides for hundreds of parents, siblings, and other visitors. It is also common for one class of students to share its work with other classes. Students also have buddy reading once a week in which students in higher grades read with students in a lower grade.

As will be described in more detail in the next section, a core component of the ASCEND curriculum has been creating opportunities for students to learn about and be change agents in the world around them.

This creates a culture where, according to one of the art teachers, “We give our students a voice. They are empowered to use that voice.”

ASCEND staff share a commitment to knowing and caring for their students. As one teacher explains:

We really hold onto our students and raise them together. We are not quick to kick them out. We really try to hold onto them and work with them at their level. The size of our classes and the size of our school and the commitment of our staff is really helpful in doing that. The teachers know their families and their background. It is so important. It is empowering for the students. The older students take that role and take care of [the younger students], it keeps them innocent.

Middle school students are aware of the level of personalization and how that differentiates ASCEND from other schools. An eighth grader explains, “We get more attention” at ASCEND than students do at other schools. The students also comment that their teachers call home frequently to share how the students are doing. They add that although sometimes it feels like their teachers “know too much about them,” they feel that they would be doing far worse in school if they did not go to ASCEND. Students comment that one teacher, in particular, makes them stay after school or stay in at lunch if they do not finish their work. By holding students accountable for their work and maintaining open lines of communication among teachers and families, ASCEND has developed an academically oriented learning climate.

Graduating eighth graders met with a former ASCEND middle school teacher (the one conducting research on her graduates) to discuss their high school options and which high schools were best suited to each student’s particular interests and future plans. Through a combination of personalization and high expectations for students, ASCEND has developed an academic learning climate rooted in all stakeholders working together to provide students with the supports they need to be successful.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

ASCEND was founded with a clear instructional vision and built on a commitment to using the Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound model and arts integration. According to the BayCES coach who has been with ASCEND since its first year, “In the early years of ASCEND, we did a lot of that visioning; there are a lot of maps of best practices.”

The ASCEND design team picked Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound as the instructional model because it is grounded in ideas that promote students to ask questions and discover the answers for themselves. Founding principal Kim was quoted in an *Edutopia* article stating:

The assumption in a lot of schools today is that ideas have already been formed and what you need to do is learn them and regurgitate them,” says Kim. “What [most schools] don’t teach is, ‘How do you form your own ideas? How do you create your own knowledge? How do you merge your own ideas and the ideas that are already out there to create even more powerful ideas?’” says Kim. “That’s the piece that expeditionary learning really helps with.”¹¹

Initially, students were involved in determining the focus of their expeditions. Each expedition shared common characteristics: student-led inquiry, connection to community through community service and interactions with community members, and interdisciplinary curriculum that included the arts.

In the first few years, as one of the first of five new small schools in OUSD, ASCEND had tremendous curricular flexibility to create a school built around a shared instructional vision. Over time, the school has experienced less flexibility, in some part because of district policy, but in large part because of changes in the state and national policy context, with increasing emphasis on teaching the state learning standards and increasingly high-stakes testing around those standards. As this context has changed, ASCEND has had to recalibrate its instructional vision to both sustain its commitment to expeditionary learning and to meet the standards-based instructional requirement. As a result, in contrast to the semester-long, in-depth, interdisciplinary expeditions that were the core component of ASCEND's curriculum in its first few years, ASCEND has switched to shorter, less interdisciplinary, mini-expeditions in grades 4-8. Teachers found that the history and science standards in grades 4-8 were too numerous and too specific to address comprehensively through semester-long exhibitions. According to the BayCES coach:

From the beginning, the standards were not so important. The prominence of the standards and bringing up the CST has put a pressure on everybody, but has put a pressure on the middle school because there are so many standards they have to

cover. That exacerbates the stress. It impacted the expectations. The kind of expeditions they did in the beginning, they can't do now because there are so many standards to cover.

A second way that middle school exhibitions have changed over the years is the extent to which they focus on students as vehicles of social change. This is in part due to a change in middle school teachers and in part due to the focus of the principal. In the early years, the middle school teachers led students in investigations of issues in their community. For example, at the onset of the Iraq war, one middle school humanities teacher led a semester-long project focused on the subject. Students connected with Iraqi student pen pals through the internet, studied the reasons given for the war, listened to and spoke with guest speakers on a weekly basis, and wrote, directed, and acted in a play about the impact of war on families. Students even marched down Market Street in San Francisco holding up pictures of their pen pals and playing the sounds of war over a loudspeaker. According to an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

The day was sunny and the students thoughtful as they contemplated the unknown fates of classroom pen pals such as 17-year-old Rafif, who attends an all-girls school in Baghdad.

"She supports the U.S. civilians but disagrees with our government," said Andria Langford, 12, who last heard from Rafif by e-mail two days before the bombs first fell. "I'm praying for her. She might be dead. It's scary."

[The teacher] said the class had talked about how varying views “are OK.” At the same time, she said, the anti-war message is important. “As a teacher, we emphasize conflict resolution,” she said. “There’s never a good reason to fight.”¹²

Although the march was somewhat controversial, Kim supported the middle school teacher, noting that their school was founded on a mission of peaceful resolution of conflict, and for that reason, as educators in the school, they could not support the war.

The middle school teacher, although no longer at ASCEND, heard from one former student that he felt, “In seventh grade there was a meaning and a purpose for him to be alive,” because of the type of relevant expeditions they did. This teacher reflects that, “In the world of East Oakland, there are so few options for how to have a voice and impact your world,” and expressed that students need an education that inspires as well as meets standards.

That same year, the science and math teacher did an expedition on HIV/AIDS in the community, and students visited the homes of HIV-positive patients and made a film about HIV. The former middle school teacher reported that those early middle school students commented on how empowered they felt to be able to teach adults in their lives about important subjects.

The current middle school teachers and principal support mini-expeditions, which address ELA and history standards or ELA and science standards. These mini-expeditions are less connected to current and community-based issues than the earlier expeditions were. In 2008, the seventh grade humanities class did a mini-exhibi-

tion consisting of a digital portfolio on the Abolitionist Movement, which included a biographical sketch of an abolitionist. In eighth grade science, students studied the planets and turned the art room into a scale model of the solar system, and the students took other classes on tours through the room. According to one teacher, “The test scores went up on the solar system. They would walk you through; you would ask lots of questions; the tour guide was so informed.” The new model of mini-exhibitions is more closely aligned to the grade-level standards and thus more likely to influence test scores. However, the mini-exhibitions may not help students see themselves as having control over their lives and community, which ultimately may have a larger impact on their lifelong success.

ASCEND has also held a longstanding commitment to integrate the arts into the core content areas, not as ways for students to simply illustrate their learning, but as an essential entry point to learning, and as a way for students to demonstrate their learning. According to one teacher, “Some kids are motivated by the arts, some kids might not have another way to shine; it may increase their learning affect.” An eighth grader reinforces this perspective, saying, “Everyone has their own way of learning, and art is one of them.” According to the principal, parents support the arts program. “They like that we are trying to serve the whole child. We are pushing academic progress, but also giving them arts instruction that makes them more well-rounded individuals.”

ASCEND has made a commitment to the arts since its first year by funding one to three art teachers each year. Currently, ASCEND has the equivalent of 2.8 art teachers on staff, including visual arts and music

teachers. In 2008-09 the arts teachers were funded primarily through Title I¹³ funds. The art teachers work with classroom teachers to co-design and teach integrated expeditions (units), as well as provide students with arts instruction to develop their skills in the arts. Classroom and arts teachers meet weekly to co-plan the expeditions that they co-teach. For example, for a seventh-grade exhibition on monarch butterflies, the students built cages and made a lot of observational drawings of the stages of the monarch's growth from larva to butterfly. The students kept journals of the butterflies' growth and made a paper maché butterfly. According to an art teacher, "The art is another modality of soaking things in, because so many of our students are visual learners. The more time they can see something or get another window into how to understand something [the better]." The principal believes that "arts integration helps maintain motivation for students that would otherwise consider dropping out, and those kids who learn differently have a way to access learning through a different route."

ASCEND has successfully merged Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound and arts integration by ensuring that each expedition has an integrated arts component, and by and developing two public Expositions of Student Learning (Expos) each year. ASCEND's Expos are different from those at many schools because they emphasize the learning process rather than an end product. For example, fourth-grade students studied four Native American tribes from different geographical regions in California. Their work from their last Expo is posted on the wall. Their guiding question was: "What impact did the environment have on native Californians and what impact did native Californians have on their environment? What ways did the environment affect their culture?" Underneath the guiding

questions, the California learning standards addressed by the project are posted in English and Spanish. Posted on the wall are all the components of their expedition, which included: reading non-fiction, interactive reading of texts, in-class shared writing, summarizing key information from reading, writing many drafts, peer editing, and making music. The final product was a chart of art and writing created by the students in each class who studied each tribe. The chart lists the names of the four tribes, with different categories of information including environment, crafts, food, clothing, homes, and family. Two essays are posted for each category for each tribe. There are also photos of students making music and doing a dance representative of the landforms where the Native Californians lived, and learning the music of the tribes they studied. Student reflections on their learning of art and music are posted as well. One student wrote:

We learned the notes on the instruments we played: the flute, the xylophone, and the bass drums. It was kind of hard to learn the flute because we had not played it in a long time.... I really enjoyed it. It made me respect the Native Americans more. Another thing is that it is beautiful that they thought of the clouds as women giving birth.

In addition to the Expos, middle school students articulate their learning through hour-long, student-led conferences, during which students share their work and discuss with their parents and teachers the extent to which it is grade-level work. According to their BayCES coach, these student-led conferences help students "understand themselves as learners. That is a huge emphasis here. That is something that our

graduates would say has helped them in high school.”

Another important piece of the instructional program at ASCEND focuses on catching students before they fall behind. In 2004-05, the teachers spent considerable time on differentiation—teaching to meet the different learning needs of their students—in their professional development inquiry. In 2007-08, teachers focused on strategies that worked with students whose test scores showed that they were stuck in high basic (a mid-level test score range just below grade level proficiency) and who were not moving into proficient categories. For kindergarteners and first graders, ASCEND uses a reading program designed to catch students before they become struggling readers. In addition, students who qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch (about 84%) are also eligible for an after-school tutoring program.

In order to provide their many struggling middle school students with math and language arts intervention, ASCEND has cut back advisory from every day to once a week. The intervention class is a 40-minute “zero” period class (before school) three days a week. On the fourth day, these students have PE, and on the fifth day, they have Town Hall (advisory). Although the classes are during “zero” period, they are a mandatory part of the regular school day. Students who are below grade level in one subject take intervention class in that subject; students who are below grade level in both subjects take math intervention during zero period, and receive ELA intervention through the after-school program. The intervention classes are small, with 10-12 students in each, and are organized based on students’ levels of proficiency. Enrollment in these classes is flexible, so students

can change classes depending on need, or, based on frequent teacher assessments, they can transition out of the program. Those students who do not need intervention take an enrichment arts course during this time. Adam intentionally teaches the lowest performing math group, because she personally wants to ensure their success. She works with her students to help them understand math concepts as well as mechanics. The following is an example of one of her lessons:

The students had a problem that had mixed numbers, fractions and decimals. They had to order them from the smallest to the largest number. They were looking at the numbers .8 and .65. Adam asked them why .8 was bigger than .65. She asked, “Isn’t 65 bigger than 8?” How did they know? How could they prove that? They also looked at the numbers .4 and .5, which they had converted from fractions.

The students said you could add a zero in the hundred’s place to see which was bigger. Adam asked them if adding a zero would change the value: “Isn’t 40 bigger than 4?” She asked them to turn to a neighbor and discuss.

At every point she stopped to check for understanding. She used Popsicle sticks to call on students to ensure that all students were called on. In addition, every time a student explained something, Adam asked for a show of hands (thumbs up, down, or side-ways) to see if students agreed, disagreed, or didn’t understand.

After the students had completed the problem as a group and she had an

opportunity to check for understanding with all the students, she had them write what they then knew about solving this type of a problem.

Most students wrote right away. One who did not was asked to do so by Adam. It was a small group; there was no hiding. Adam circulated and read students' writing. She commented, "I see several of you writing the steps you would take to do this type of problem."

ASCEND believes that this new model reaches the students who most need the extra instruction and support. At the end of last year, teachers looked at the data and found that those students who had math and ELA intervention gained more than those who did not, and the lowest performing students gained the most.

In 2008, the district gave ASCEND the option of applying for curricular flexibility in exchange for improving learning outcomes for students. Although staff members wish that they had been given more time to complete the application and resented it initially, they found the process tremendously helpful in giving more coherence and clarity to their instructional vision. As one elementary level teacher explained:

Having to apply for curricular flexibility this year initially seemed frustrating, but it ended up enlightening a lot of things for us.... Because we have autonomy, there is not as much cohesiveness in terms of what we really value of teaching strategies and philosophy. It ended up being really valuable, even though the time crunch was a perfect example of how the district does things.

Beyond the need for cohesion among elementary teachers, completing the application also was helpful for middle school humanities teachers, who, according to the BayCES coach, "really had to examine their practice." ASCEND's Network Executive Officer agrees that developing consistency is the school's next area for growth. He explains that they have "an amazingly reflective staff; one of the best I've seen. Now it is, how do they build their consistency of practice from grade to grade."

In its curricular flexibility application, ASCEND asked for exemption from the district benchmark assessments, which it found to be of poor quality. Although the school is still required to use the mid-year district benchmark assessment, it now also uses the Tungsten System, created by Edison Schools,¹⁵ which is a formative assessment.¹⁶ ASCEND used it for the first time in 2007-08, upon examining the data over the summer decided to continue using it. The data revealed that there was a 90% correlation between proficiency on the Tungsten Assessment and proficiency on the CST. Where there was not a correlation (10%), it was because the Tungsten Assessment was more rigorous than the CST.

Although shifts in state accountability policies have forced ASCEND to change components of its instructional program, the core elements remain. Students take active roles in the learning process, and teachers closely monitor student progress and intervene as quickly as possible to help improve student outcomes. The district's Use Your Voice¹⁷ survey data reflect ASCEND's instructional approach. In 2006-07, 91% of ASCEND students reported that their teachers use different ways to help them learn.

PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

ASCEND has built the professional capacity of staff by developing its ability to hire strong teachers, through shared collaboration time and inquiry-driven professional development, and through an ongoing coaching relationship with BayCES. Much of this is possible because of the relative stability and expertise of important professional development leaders. For example, ASCEND has benefited from the stable leadership transition from Kim to Adam as principal, and by having the same BayCES coach since the end of its first year.

ASCEND initially struggled to identify and hire strong teachers and has refined its hiring process over the last 4 years. School leaders have created probing interview questions, developed clarity on what they were looking for, and “got pickier,” according to the principal. In addition, as a more established new small school, the teachers who are attracted to ASCEND are looking for curricular flexibility, rich professional development and collaboration with other teachers, and a close relationship with students and families. As a result of a better fit of teacher applicants, ASCEND has been able to dramatically reduce teacher turnover to only about one teacher out of 15 each year over the last few years. According to one elementary teacher, there is a “very high level of satisfaction among staff.”

ASCEND has also invested its resources by supporting new teachers through a 3-5 day new teacher induction with professional development prior to the all-staff retreat. In this induction, they focus on exemplars of past expeditions, and identify the standards that need to be a part of each expedition. Beyond the new teacher induction, ASCEND builds teachers’ capacity to create

powerful expeditions by holding consultancies¹⁸ on expeditions once a month during their professional development time. Furthermore, since the arts are integrated in expeditions, the art teachers play a crucial role, through team teaching and formal and informal collaboration, in building a teacher’s capacity to develop strong expeditions.

In general, ASCEND develops teacher expertise through collaboration time and professional development time. Teachers at ASCEND get more preparation time than their union contract requires. Teachers at each grade level have a shared prep time every day and they are expected to spend about 2 hours a week collaborating. However, how they structure their time is up to them. According to one elementary teacher, “If you are at the beginning of an expedition, you are meeting every day. If it is the beginning report cards, you are probably not meeting.” If team members face challenges with each other or with working productively, then the BayCES coach may join their collaboration time to help them use their time effectively. Teachers also make the time to collaborate with artists, sometimes during a shared planning period, or before or after school, or during lunch.

Strong grade-level collaboration is a hallmark of ASCEND in grades 1-5, but poses more of a challenge at the middle school level because of its small size. In seventh and eighth grades, there is just one math and one science teacher and two humanities teachers. According to the principal, there is a “high degree of collaboration around social and emotional issues [of the students],” but there is little instructional collaboration. To remedy this situation, ASCEND has considered partnering with other schools, like Urban Promise Academy (UPA) or Lighthouse Community Char-

ter School. The principal also encourages middle school teachers to get involved with district-level professional development. The humanities teachers have benefited most from their involvement with district initiatives on collaborative scoring of assessments and alternative assessments for social studies.

In addition to grade-level collaboration, teachers meet weekly for 2 hours of professional development/collaboration time. The time is spent building community, doing consultancies on expeditions, and engaging in clustered grade-level group inquiry. Each grade-level cluster conducts an inquiry project for the year. Grade-level clusters usually span a couple of years. The goal of the inquiry project is to help the “cusp students,” those on the cusp of proficiency, to achieve mastery. The teachers pick their topics, work together to answer a series of inquiry questions on the topic, and share them with their colleagues at the end of the year. Inquiry questions include: What was the cause of the problem? What assumptions or hunches did you have about the problem? What was your theory of action? What data or evidence did you see, and what are your findings?

Because the teachers serve such a large span of grade levels and often work primarily with teachers who teach similar grade levels, opportunities to build community across all teachers is particularly valued by the ASCEND staff. According to one teacher, the goal is also to connect community-building activities to instruction:

Community builders — that is a constant work in progress for us to make those a rich, meaningful experience that can support instruction. How can we build this community,

build accountability, build the trust? It is something that we are working on consciously.

However, despite some community-building activities, middle school teachers feel some isolation from each other and the rest of the staff. At the writing of this case study, ASCEND plans to hold separate professional development for the middle school teachers and the elementary teachers for the 2008-9 school year, which will be tailored more to the instructional needs of the staff at each level.

Beyond the time spent in professional development and in shared planning, teachers’ professional capacity is built through their interactions with the principal. As one of the founding teachers of ASCEND, the principal sets a “high expectation for good teaching and collaboration,” according to one teacher. As a founding member of the school, the principal is the primary conveyer of the instructional vision. She sets the standard through her observations of teachers. One teacher explains:

If Larissa [Adam] comes to observe you, you know by the level of questions that she asks. She is constantly pushing teachers to think differently, to think of, okay, what if that didn’t work, what else could you try? Larissa is a huge factor in setting the expectation.

ASCEND’s Network Executive Officer also praised Adam’s work as an instructional leader. He describes Adam as one of the school’s greatest assets, and noted that she is a “very personable, organized, action-oriented person, understands standards and data very well, can lead PD [professional development], but really helps them lead

the cycle of inquiry and model reflection, through her own personal characteristics and values and actions.”

Responding to the challenges of the principalship, Adam suggested that the job is overly burdened with paperwork: “It is a constant battle to be an instructional leader.” At the same time, Adam appreciates the efforts the district has made to streamline required paperwork and hopes that the district can increasingly make the submission of paperwork electronic so that a principal can track the documents as they travel through the various departments for signatures. Currently, it is difficult to find out where paperwork is, and it often gets lost, requiring the principal to have to submit it all over again. However, she understands that some of this hassle is due to the underfunding of education, which has caused important cuts to administrative positions in many central office departments.

A key central office support for ASCEND has been the school’s Network Executive Officer (NExO). “My NExO is supportive,” Adam explains. After having four NExO’s in 4 years who varied in the level of support they offered, ASCEND’s current NExO has been a stable and positive force for the school. The NExO holds twice monthly network meetings: One meeting a month rotates between his different schools, where all of the principals gather together to examine each other’s instructional focus and provide that principal with feedback on their observations. The other is a joint meeting with two of the four elementary networks, and they break into small groups based on their instructional focus and share their practice with each other. In addition, the NExO provides individual instructional coaching to each school.

ASCEND teachers also set the standards for each other by example. Teachers comment that they learn from each other through conversation and observing each other’s classrooms. Expos are a prime opportunity for teachers to get a sense of the standards as well. According to one teacher, “Teachers are inspired by each other, too. At Expo and seeing each other’s expeditions, that is where teachers are saying, ‘Oh, that is what they are doing.’”

Professional capacity is also built at ASCEND through shared leadership. ASCEND has several vehicles for shared leadership. An advisory team of teachers works with the principal and BayCES coach to make decisions about the school, be a sounding board for the principal, and plan professional development. The advisory team is representative of the teaching staff, in that there are elementary grades, middle school grades, and art teachers on it. When big decisions have to be made, they also either survey or speak with all teachers, so everyone’s voice is represented in the final decision. As one member says, “We are very transparent, we are not top secret.” The advisory team looks at the budget, plans retreats, works on the site-based plan, helps shape professional development, and addresses staff concerns.

In addition, the advisory team and the principal meet with the NExO every 5-6 weeks when he comes to visit ASCEND. When he comes, the NExO meets with the network English learner coach, the middle school English learner coach, the advisory team, the BayCES coach, and the principal, and they identify a narrow instructional focus to examine for the year. At each visit, they first examine the inputs since his last visit — for example, what kind of professional development and reflection

activities the staff has engaged in. Then they walk through the classrooms doing observations of just their narrow focus. Finally, as he explains, “We come back together and we talk about the strengths and weaknesses that we saw. Then I write those things down in a letter to the staff to really try to make things substantial.” This process has been tremendously helpful to ASCEND. Adam believes it has been excellent professional development for the advisory team and a support to her as well. As a result of his walkthrough practice and ASCEND’s commitment to inquiry-based professional development, the NExO feels confident in the growth of professional capacity:

ASCEND is a real success point, from teacher practice.... I have seen them grow, the amount of interaction students have in the classroom, pair share, small group instruction, the times the teacher is leading different engagement strategies that they have focused on in their professional development. I have seen a real rise in that K-8. It has been remarkable.

In addition to the advisory team, individual teachers take on specific leadership roles and share in the governance of their school, including managing assessments, serving as liaisons between the after-school and daytime programs, serving on the school site council with parents, and serving as union representatives.

Shared governance at ASCEND also includes parents. Parents serve on the school site council, where they conduct data analysis of CST and California English Language Development Test¹⁹

test results and attendance data throughout the year. They also approve the budget and monitor programs. There is also a parent advisory group of 12-30 parents who advise the principal as she leads the school.

The ASCEND staff has had mixed results with the quality of instructional support it has received from the district. For example, while middle school teachers benefited from professional development they received through the Bay Area Writing Project (supported by the district), ASCEND staff feel that other district support staff represents a “range of skill levels.” The ASCEND staff do not always perceive a benefit from these visits, which can feel like compliance checks to ensure staff follows district mandates rather than supportive problem-solving. In addition, because district Instructional Services staff are so busy, they often cancel visits for which teachers have prepared. Rather than infrequent visits, which makes it difficult for instructional support staff to get to know the school, ASCEND’s teachers suggested longer-term relationships with highly capable district staff.

One district policy that has been tremendously supportive to ASCEND is Results-Based Budgeting (RBB).²⁰ The principal and the advisory team work together to determine the school’s budget priorities. Adam is such a fan that she says, “I love it. It is such a crucial tool for increasing student achievement. It would be a nightmare if we didn’t have it. I don’t know if I’d be willing to be principal anymore.” For example, ASCEND uses RBB to realize its first priority of reduced class sizes in fourth through eighth grades to help to “realize our mission of closing the achievement gap,” explains Adam. “It enables teachers to develop closer relationships with students and families.”

PARENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

As noted in the introduction, ASCEND was founded by a parent, Emma Paulino, and then teacher, now principal, Adam. Parents played a key role on the design team and in the hiring process and fundamentally in designing the school. One of the core founding missions of the design team was to create a school that was a partnership between parents, teachers, and students, where parents were always welcome. “My dream was that parents were part of the kids’ education and they were a part of the school,” says Paulino. “That whenever a parent went to the school, they would feel that they were part of it and that they were listened to by the teachers, the staff, and the principal.”²¹

One of the ways that ASCEND began to rebuild the trust between parents and the school was by developing in-depth parent-teacher conferences. ASCEND worked to develop honest interactions through in-depth, one-hour parent conferences for each child. During the conferences, students shared their work, and teachers, students, and parents discussed whether the student was doing grade-level work. School leaders believed that by making the curriculum more transparent, they could begin to rebuild trust between the parents and the school.

Paulino’s involvement at ASCEND was so transformative for her that she transitioned from volunteering to support ASCEND to working as a full-time parent organizer for Oakland Community Organizations (OCO). In the early years, Paulino worked to recruit and train parents for leadership positions. As Paulino became an increasingly successful organizer for OCO, she has had less time to work with

ASCEND. While this is beneficial for others, it has cost ASCEND. According to Adam, “We lost a lot of momentum that we built up with the parent leadership.” Part of the lost momentum also has to do with the school not having to fight for its existence anymore. According to one staff member, “Parents have it good here — we have a great building, good teachers, and a safe school. There is a certain level of complacency that develops, not as much to fight for anymore.” Paulino agrees with Adam, adding that “parents think this is over.”

Despite the school’s success, Adam and Paulino believe that ASCEND needs parent-organizing support as much now as ever, because they always have new parents and new issues arise. Paulino says, “The battle is to sustain small schools, particularly when there is staff turnover, to maintain vision and mission.” Paulino added that the large number of small schools in the district have stretched OCO’s ability to mobilize parents in leadership positions.

Although leadership development has waned, ASCEND has had tremendous success building its Family Resource Center for parents. This center is staffed by three family coordinators and a director of after-school programs. The three family coordinators are each intentionally representative of the major ethnic groups on campus: Latino, African American, and Mien. And despite Paulino being spread thin, the Family Resource Center works closely with Paulino and OCO. As one family coordinator explains, “She is the bomb. Without Emma, we would be kind of lost. She is the stone. She has meetings with Oakland Police Department about safety, gang violence. We go to support Emma. All parents feel connected to Emma’s work.”

ASCEND's Family Resource Center provides many valuable supports and resources to ASCEND families, many of whom face substantial financial struggles. The center has served as a model for other centers around the county. Locating the Family Resource Center in the heart of the school building also helps bring families into the school and helps them feel comfortable. It is not uncommon to see parents and their young children in the halls in the early morning, talking with each other and using the space.

The Family Resource Center is funded by Title I resources as well as Oakland Leaf, which receives funding from a federal 21st Century grant and the Oakland Small Schools Foundation. The services it provides include providing families access to many essential resources. For example, once a month, in partnership with a local social service agency, the Family Resource Center organizes clothes donations. Weekly, in partnership with a local church, it hosts a food bank that serves about 62 families; each family can pick six items a week, including vegetables, juice, milk, bread and meat. The center also refers students and families to La Clinica la Raza, a longtime neighborhood clinic, for mental and physical health services.

In addition, the Family Resource Center offers classes to parents, including English as a Second Language, computer skills, and cooking classes. It also helps parents find jobs, create resumes, and set up e-mail accounts. Once a week, one of the coordinators goes to a county office to get job listings for parents. The family coordinators also personalize their support for parents. For example, one family coordinator goes to the Department of Motor Vehicles, the court, and the immigration office with

parents. One family had a child in juvenile hall, and the family coordinator went to all the hearings with him for 3 weeks. She explains, "It does not stay between these four walls, we go out to make sure families are getting the help they need." The Family Resource Center, hosts breakfast in the morning for families, which helps the coordinators get to know the families and their needs. In addition, the family coordinators work closely with the principal and teachers. "We are the first stop for teachers," one explains. The Family Resource Center does not coordinate any services with the district, and it is not clear whether the district provides any services that might supplement what is already provided.

Related to the Family Resource Center, the family center staff also run the after-school program, which provides academic and enrichment activities to many students during the extended hours, usually serving about half of the students at ASCEND. They begin each year by providing families with an orientation to the after-school program in conjunction with ASCEND's orientation to the school as a whole. The after-school program offers homework help during the first hour and enrichment in the second hour. Enrichment activities include sports, dance, art, theater arts, and boxing. The after-school program partners with many agencies to provide this wide array of classes. The agencies include the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA), Destiny Arts, East Oakland Boxing, the YMCA, and Girls Inc.

In addition to all of the services provided to families, ASCEND has sustained a high level of parent engagement. Parents are thrilled to have a welcoming small school environment for their children, and show up in throngs for student expositions of

their work (Expo). It is not uncommon for many family members to attend Expos to see what the children have learned. Since the beginning, parents have felt ownership at ASCEND and have provided food at all important events, such as Expo and school meetings. It is common for almost all the parents to attend parent conferences. Parents volunteer in classrooms and after school, and serve on important leadership committees. Families' satisfaction with ASCEND has also led to extended families sending their children to the school. As one teacher explains, "We have 7 to 8 kids, all from the same family — cousins, aunts, and uncles."

Adam is committed to maintaining the welcoming and inclusive culture, both by modeling it herself as well as committing time in the new teacher induction training. During the new teacher induction, parent leaders come and speak with teachers about the nature of parent participation at ASCEND and the ways they are involved. Because ASCEND has an explicit commitment to parent engagement, it also tends to attract teachers who share that commitment. However, Adam also makes it a point to be extremely responsive to parent complaints. She explains, "If there is a complaint from a parent that they don't feel welcome by a teacher, I handle it right away. That is a non-negotiable."

Finally, Adam models positive and engaging interactions with parents. She is often found in the center of campus in the morning greeting families. She is fluent in Spanish and, according to a family coordinator, "The principal knows every kid's name and every parent's name. She is very outgoing. She has an open door

policy. She is the best. The school is like your house." The wide range of ways that ASCEND embraces families is reflected in the 2006-07 district Use Your Voice Survey. Of parent respondents, 91% felt that ASCEND is a supportive and caring environment, compared to a district average for elementary schools of 84% and a district average for middle schools of 74%.

Adam feels that ASCEND's greatest accomplishment is delivering quality instruction to all students. Adam is grateful that ASCEND has been able to hold on to its instructional vision as much as it has. "There is so much pressure to teach to the test, we've done it without throwing away the arts. We've tried to harness the arts to help kids master the standards," she explains. She notes that the teachers are constantly reflecting on their teaching and their effectiveness in meeting students' needs. She appreciates their unwavering commitment, stating, "There is not one teacher that I wonder if they are on board with our philosophy." Largely in part to the stable leadership provided by Ms. Kim, Ms. Adam, Ms. Paulino and the BayCES coach, ASCEND has been able to overcome many obstacle that threatened the implementation of the design team's vision.

ASCEND has been able to overcome many obstacles that threatened the implementation of the design team's vision. Although certain elements have changed over the years, the core ideas remain the same. ASCEND illustrates the success that can be achieved when the implementation of a well-thought-out instructional vision is guided by high-capacity leaders who remain in place over time.

Endnotes

1. The API is a single number, ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1000, that reflects a school's performance level, based on the results of statewide testing. The state has set 800 as the API target for all schools in order to measure the academic performance and growth of schools. The information that forms the basis for calculating the API comes from the results of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program and the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). The API is calculated by converting a student's performance on statewide assessments across multiple content areas into points on the API scale. These points are then averaged across all students and all tests. The result is the API 2007-08 Academic Performance Index Reports Information Guide prepared by the California Department of Education. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/api/>
2. Strategic Measurement & Evaluation Associates, Inc. (2007). *An Evaluation of the Oakland Small Schools Initiative*. Author.
3. OUSD New School Development Group summary matrix.
4. API ranks are provided in the Base API reports. Schools are ranked in ten categories of equal size, called deciles, from 10 (highest) to 1 (lowest). A school's statewide rank compares its API to the APIs of all other schools statewide of the same type (elementary, middle, or high school). A school's similar schools rank compares its API to the APIs of 100 other schools of the same type that serve students of similar demographics.
5. The research is ongoing, so the teacher does not have exact numbers of students attending 4-year and community colleges.
6. In a year-round multi-track school, students are divided into four tracks with only three tracks attending the school at any one time.
7. Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound (ELOB) is an approach to education that centers on learning expeditions. It is experiential and project-based, involving students in original research — with experts — to create high-quality products for audiences beyond the classroom. See <http://www.elschools.org/>
8. Looping means that the same students remains with their teacher for 2 or more years, then the teacher “loops” back to the lowest grade he or she teaches and starts the multi-year cycle again with a new group of students.
9. OUSD New School Development Group summary matrix.
10. All schools and local educational agencies that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the California Standards Tests (CSTs) are identified for Program Improvement under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The goal of NCLB is to have 100 percent of students proficient in reading and mathematics by the year 2014. AYP is the gain that must be made each year in reading and mathematics proficiency towards the 2014 goal. AYP also requires 95 percent student participation.
11. Furger, R. (2003, November 5). The little school that did: Reinvigorating education in East Oakland. *Edutopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2008, from <http://www.edutopia.org/little-school-that-did>.
12. Asimov, N. (2003, March 28). War in the classroom — teachers' lesson plans vary from peace activism to 'triangulation.' *San Francisco Chronicle*. Retrieved June 6, 2008, from http://www.axisofevildoers.com/cache/2003/2003.03.28_2005064011.html.

13. This program provides financial assistance to local education agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are currently allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state.
14. Edison Schools, Inc., is a for-profit education management organization for public schools in the United States and the United Kingdom. It was founded in 1992 as The Edison Project.
15. Formative, meaning that results can be used to inform teaching practice.
16. In January 2006, Oakland Unified School District created the Use Your Voice Survey initiative to serve as a public, formal vehicle for all school stakeholders to share their experiences and shape the future of their schools. Surveys have been administered in 2006 and 2007, and will continue each year to give voices to students, parents, teachers, staff, and community members. District leadership will continue to use the survey results as a key driver of improvement in Oakland public schools. <http://webportal.ousd.k12.ca.us/WebItem.aspx?WebItemID=210>. (The results of the 2007-08 surveys are not yet publicly available.)
17. Consultancies are a protocol for examining teacher practice and student work developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools. The protocol involves a teacher bringing a problem to the table and receiving feedback and assistance through consulting with a group of fellow teachers.
18. Three purposes for the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) are specified in state law (see Education Code Section 60810 (d)(1-3)), including: 1) identify pupils as limited English proficient, 2) determine the level of English language proficiency (ELP) who are limited English proficient, and 3) assess the progress of limited English proficient students in acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English.” Overall scores range from Advanced (5), Early Advanced (4), Intermediate (3), Early Intermediate (2), and Beginning (1) <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/celdtfaq.asp>
19. Results-Based Budgeting is a site-based funding formula that “distributes dollars to the schools on a per-pupil basis, rather than allocating it in staff positions, programs, or other resources.” University of California, Berkeley, Haas School of Business. (2007). *Results-Based Budgeting: The challenge of autonomy*. (The Education Leadership Case Competition). Berkeley, CA: Author.
20. Furger, R. (2003, November 5). The Little school that did: Reinvigorating education in East Oakland. *Edutopia*. Retrieved May 8, 2008, from <http://www.edutopia.org/little-school-that-did>.

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