Unmet potential: National Board Certified teachers in low-performing schools  >08

Helping districts improve: Q&A with WestEd’s Fred Tempes  >12

WestEd’s SchoolsMovingUp.net: Closing the inspiration gap  >16

What’s New & Useful: WestEd Products & Services  >22
Turning around low-performing schools and districts

>> Policymakers and the public have increased pressure on low-performing schools and districts across the nation. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act and numerous state initiatives, the number of schools and districts identified as low-performing has grown enormously, often outpacing efforts to address their needs.

Over a decade ago, WestEd’s Board of Directors made improving the effectiveness of the nation’s low-performing schools a top priority for our agency — a priority reflecting WestEd’s longstanding commitment to aiding underserved children. This issue of R&D Alert describes resources, strategies, and research findings that offer promise for making a difference in academically troubled schools and districts.

The lead article details emerging lessons on school transformation. Based on the experience of some of WestEd’s most accomplished technical assistance providers, the article shares expertise and practical intervention strategies that can help schools move from low-performing to high-performing.

Many of WestEd’s projects that focus on underperforming schools and districts are part of our Comprehensive School Assistance Program. In a special Q&A feature, the program’s director, Fred Tempes, discusses a recent initiative of the California Comprehensive Center to help develop a process and tools for promoting improvements in districts that have been identified as underperforming.

An article on “Unmet Potential: National Board Certified Teachers in Low-performing Schools” draws on a research study that found teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are underrepresented in schools designated as low-performing. According to the study, when these credentialed professionals do teach in low-performing schools, they often face impediments to making a difference beyond their own classrooms. However, as the article describes, the study did find some positive counter-examples that may point the way to improving the distribution and impact of these highly skilled teachers.

And “WestEd’s SchoolsMovingUp.net: Closing the Inspiration Gap” describes a dynamic and flexible resource targeted to practitioners working to improve low-performing schools and districts across the nation. A multi-faceted website, SchoolsMovingUp.net, has grown steadily in its reach, impact, and value since its launch in 2003. Free of charge, the site connects educators with each other and with the information and tools they need to make a difference.

I encourage you to explore SchoolsMovingUp further online and to continue pursuing the ideas and information in this issue of R&D Alert by using the contact information at the end of each article. We at WestEd hope our resources, research, and expertise will continue to benefit other professionals engaged in the task of rebuilding education systems and increasing their capacity to achieve.

GLEN HARVEY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
H O W T O S U P P O R T
School Transformation
Identifying underachieving schools has become a priority in recent years as federal and state accountability requirements turn the spotlight on poor performers. A growing body of research has illuminated the characteristics of these schools at one end of the spectrum as well as the characteristics of stellar schools at the other end, but much less is known about what specific qualities and strategies enable schools to change from low- to high-performing.

“What’s missing is the kind of how-to knowledge, the practical intervention strategies that people need in order to help schools through the complex process of bringing about real improvement,” says Stanley Chow, WestEd’s director of regional services. “The information is in people’s heads” and not yet formally or succinctly documented.

Three years ago, Chow began capturing the collective knowledge of the WestEd professionals who have provided external technical assistance to nearly 100 low-performing schools and districts since 1999. His goal is to synthesize their findings, share the lessons learned, then evaluate and expand the work in collaboration with other professionals who are helping high-needs schools transform nationwide.

This kind of knowledge and expertise will become crucial in the next few years as states contend with the challenge of supporting thousands of schools identified under the No Child Left Behind Act as persistently failing. Without a way to confirm the craft and skills involved in school transformation, Chow says, the nation will be “woefully unprepared to deal with the scale of the problem.”

Establish credibility and find internal advocates

According to Chow’s analysis, one key to school transformation is for external technical assistance providers to establish close collaborations and trusting relationships with internal advocates for change. The internal advocates can be school-based or may be district personnel,
as WestEd’s technical assistance providers have found that districts can play a significant role in turning around low-performing schools.

When external assistance providers build strong relationships with internal advocates and other influential educators, their teamwork helps the key players sense trouble as it develops, choose appropriate responses, delegate responsibilities, and provide mutual support and encouragement. Working together, these inside/outside partners ensure that recommended practices to improve school performance gain traction and endure.

Huck Fitterer, director of field services for WestEd’s Phoenix office, stresses the impact of such collaborations on the Crane School District in Yuma, Arizona, which serves about 6,000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. During the past four years, WestEd has helped the district post significant gains in student achievement and engagement by ensuring that teachers’ classroom behaviors match the district’s instructional goals.

WestEd staff teamed up with principals and district administrators to conduct classroom observations, discuss their findings, then provide ongoing coaching to teachers. After discussing a lesson during a routine observation, for example, one member of the observation team will substitute in the classroom while another member of the team offers direct feedback to the teacher. Whenever the external assistance team provides such job-embedded professional development, the principals participate. In this manner, they learn what good
instruction looks like so they will know how to assist teachers after the outsiders leave.

“The adults have to start taking responsibility for student achievement at their schools,” Fitterer says. “Once schools start to accept what we call ‘the good, the bad, and the ugly’ and step up to the plate, then you’ll get the tipping point.”

Use data to find the right focus

Too often, according to Chow, service providers design remedies for common educational problems, such as low reading scores or teacher isolation, and schools adopt interventions (or, worse, try to implement multiple reforms simultaneously) without a clear understanding of what changes they may need, or why. In other words, they seek a prescription before studying the disease.

Helping schools find a focus — by selecting strategic and manageable interventions and evaluating the effects on student learning — is key to moving forward. Equally important is helping them maintain focus over time.

Noelle Caskey, a WestEd senior research associate, says external assistance teams routinely go back to schools and ask, “Are you doing what you said you were going to do in the plan? How well are you doing it? And what difference is it making for kids?”

External assistance providers also ensure that educators base their answers on data. When confronted with comprehensive performance data, educators invariably discover something about the school and themselves. Intensive self-analysis, guided by an external assistance team, can help schools develop internal accountability for results — another important factor in school transformation. It’s not enough for schools to simply have access to information about student progress. Educators must learn how to amend their behaviors in response to data, developing effective practices that will support lasting change.

>> Just a few years ago, Malcolm X Academy, a K–5 school in San Francisco Bayview Hunter’s Point, a low-income and predominantly African American neighborhood, was threatened with closure due to San Francisco Unified School District budget pressures. Two consecutive years of being labeled a “state-monitored” school — having fallen short of the state’s annual academic progress targets — also endangered the school.

But thanks to hard work by the school’s students, parents, teachers, and administrators, Malcolm X achieved significant academic growth for two consecutive years and consequently exited the state-monitored list in 2005.

The schoolwide rate of students scoring at “proficient or advanced” in math on the California Standards Test rose from 8 percent in 2003 to 33 percent in 2005. Further, math scores of the school’s African American students increased from 10 percent to 29 percent in the same period. In English language arts, Malcolm X increased the schoolwide rate of students scoring at “proficient or advanced” from 10 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in 2005. And the English language arts scores posted by African American students increased from 7 percent to 16 percent.

The improvements were largely the result of a turnaround process that began in 2002 when Malcolm X Academy partnered with WestEd and its School Assistance and Intervention Team. “I really feel fortunate that we had such a great team from WestEd,” reflects Principal Rosalind Sarah. “[WestEd’s] Noelle Caskey assisted us by looking at the data first, then by outlining how to accomplish the change process ourselves. WestEd empowered our teachers, helped us to define our own direction, and the resulting change was more systemic and sustainable.”

Fred Tempes, Director of WestEd’s Comprehensive School Assistance Program, points out that, in two years’ time, Malcolm X built the structure and processes to maintain academic improvements in the future. “Their exceptional growth is not a fluke,” he says. “Malcolm X Academy put in place a strong model for quality academic instruction.”
Many of the nation’s most skilled teachers tend not to be located where they may be needed the most — in schools designated as low-performing.
A recent study found that teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are poorly distributed among the nation’s most challenging schools. The study suggests some changes to policy and practice that could improve their distribution and help these highly qualified teachers take the lead in raising school performance.

The multi-phased study, “The Impact of National Board Certified Teachers on Low-Performing Schools,” is a cooperative effort of SRI International, WestEd, the Center for Teacher Quality, and J. Koppich & Associates, and was funded by Atlantic Philanthropies.

The study included case studies of schools with National Board Certified teachers and a survey of 1,000 such teachers. The survey was conducted in the six states where almost two-thirds certify accomplished teachers. The goal behind the voluntary certification system is to advance the quality of teaching and learning.

Increasing the number of National Board Certified teachers is not in itself an adequate strategy for turning around low-performing schools.

National Board Certification slow to reach low-performing schools

The study’s research team found it will take strategic policy changes, not just increased financial incentives, to redistribute National Board Certified teachers to more challenging schools — and to encourage those teachers to lead reforms once there.

Certified teachers in low-performing schools

of the 40,000 teachers who have earned National Board Certification are located: California, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an independent organization founded in 1987 to develop professional standards in order to

The survey of National Board Certified teachers found:

- Only 12 percent taught in schools with high percentages (75 percent or more) of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
Sixteen percent of National Board Certified teachers taught in schools where 75 percent or more of the students are minority students.

And only 19 percent taught in low-performing schools, defined as having state test scores in the bottom three deciles for at least two out of three years, from 2000 to 2003.

The researchers suggest some changes to policy and practice to increase the number of National Board Certified teachers in these most challenging schools. One is to offer additional incentives, such as financial bonuses, for employment in low-performing schools. “Create another layer of incentives” to attract very well-qualified teachers to the schools that need them most, says Julia Koppich, one of the study’s principal authors.

However, the study also found that “money by itself is not incentive enough,” notes Ann-Marie Wiese, a WestEd research associate key to several components of the study. Because the certification process is more involved than many administrators and teachers realize, support programs should be developed for teachers seeking certification. The support of peers, especially teachers already certified by the National Board, can help teachers seeking certification to stick with it.

Progress in Los Angeles

The study did reveal at least one site where support for National Board Certification was emphasized and to good effect. Los Angeles Unified School District, where 40 percent of California’s National Board Certified teachers are located, took a “grow your own” approach. National Board support programs in the district were aimed at increasing the capacity of teachers already in low-performing schools to earn National Board Certification. The district and the local teachers’ union jointly created support groups for helping teachers pursue National Board Certification. In addition, state and local funding for peer support groups and financial incentives were fundamental to the effort.

The study found that these efforts paid off. Los Angeles Unified School District has achieved a higher-than-average pass rate for teachers in low-performing schools who pursue National Board Certification. Sixty percent of the district’s National Board Certified teachers are in low-performing schools, and 84 percent in schools with high concentrations of minority students.

Promoting impact in low-performing schools

The study found that increasing the number of National Board Certified teachers is not in itself an adequate strategy for turning around low-performing schools.
Rather, policymakers and school leaders must put in place the right conditions to take advantage of these highly qualified teachers. Even when these teachers are in the most challenging schools, according to the study, they tend to avoid becoming agents of change beyond their own classrooms. National Board Certified teachers report that efforts to improve the schools can be very isolating as they find themselves hampered by ill-informed administrators or skeptical peers.

To increase the likelihood that these highly capable teachers will help improve overall school performance, the study’s researchers say it is important to:

- Help administrators understand what National Board Certification is and how to better use these teachers as leaders by having them mentor colleagues, lead professional development sessions, and serve in other leadership roles. “Principals don’t have a clear conception of what kinds of roles these teachers could take on,” Koppich says.

- Allow National Board Certified teachers to transfer to low-performing schools in groups or cohorts to reduce the sense of isolation and to foster a culture that embraces change.

“Despite 20 years of education reform and 10 years of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the notion that teachers can lead school change is still not widely accepted in schools,” Koppich says.

A positive example in North Carolina

The study did find a strong example of reform driven by National Board Certified teachers in a racially mixed elementary school in rural North Carolina. In this school, where 60 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, administrators and teachers fostered a six-year surge in achievement by implementing a plan that encouraged all teachers to seek National Board Certification.

The turnaround began when a new superintendent appointed a principal to the school who was National Board Certified, and she, in turn, selected a National Board Certified teacher as vice-principal. The new administration encouraged all the teachers to pursue National Board Certification. At the time research for the study was completed, 13 of 25 teachers at the school were certified by the National Board, and another four were in the process of becoming certified.

National Board standards and principles were at the core of the school’s improvement efforts and became the
Two years ago, California identified more than 150 school districts as “in need of improvement” because they failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). These districts are on notice to take action aimed at boosting student achievement. If they continue to fall short of AYP goals by June 2007, the districts will be designated “in need of corrective action,” requiring even more intensive intervention.

WestEd’s California Comprehensive Center is playing an important role helping the state department of education do a better job assisting such districts and schools. WestEd was selected by the U.S. Department of Education to operate the program, one of a nationwide network of 16 regional centers charged with building state capacity to fully implement NCLB, improve student achievement, and close achievement gaps. The California Comprehensive Center is operated by WestEd in partnership with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and School Services of California.

Directing the center is Fred Tempes, who joined WestEd in 1999. As director of WestEd’s Comprehensive School Assistance Program, Tempes oversees the California Comprehensive Center and numerous other WestEd initiatives aimed at turning around low-performing schools and districts. Before coming to WestEd, Tempes led the California Department of Education’s School and District Accountability Division. He also directed the department’s Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Division.

*R&D Alert* recently spoke with Tempes about the California Comprehensive Center’s work.

What is the toughest issue the center is tackling?
I would say the biggest challenge facing California is to help so many schools and districts throughout the state in need of improvement. The Comprehensive Center’s role is to assist the state department of education and other state-level entities, so our challenge is to assist others in developing processes and tools to help meet this need, rather than directly working with the schools and districts we’re trying to impact.

How are you going about this effort?
The Comprehensive Center is helping the California Department of Education put in place a structured process for working with districts that have been
In the area of governance, for instance, the survey describes the policies that need to be in place at the district level to ensure that the district’s vision, mission, and priorities are focused on student achievement. For fiscal operations, the survey spells out the need for a budgeting process that ties the continued funding of a particular program to whether or not it’s helping improve student performance. In the area of parent and community involvement, districts are asked to assess the extent to which teachers and parents participate in decisions affecting school programs.

The survey also lists indicators in each area to determine if the district is meeting each standard at an appropriate level of quality. In a sense, the survey itself acts as an instructional tool for district and school leaders, helping them start thinking about what is working well and what needs to change.

What is involved in the DAIT process?
It begins with a survey — the District Assistance Survey — to identify critical areas of need. The survey informs what the district does for the rest of the process. Over the course of a year, the process requires districts to design a coherent instructional program and to make sure the program is actually in place and is producing results in all schools. There is a strong emphasis on verifying both implementation and student progress. In fact, student progress is monitored monthly. Basically, the process is designed to find the holes in the fabric of a district’s cloak, and then, where there are weaknesses, determine the steps needed to remedy those problems.

Let’s go back to the survey you mentioned: What does it focus on?
The District Assistance Survey is based on standards adopted by the California Board of Education in March 2006, covering seven areas of district operations: governance; alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards; fiscal operations; parent and community involvement; human resources; data systems and achievement monitoring; and professional development.

Who completes the survey?
A team made up of district administrators and a number of specialists from the local county office of education. The county specialists, who have expertise in areas such as finance, curriculum, and human resources, work in coaching relationships with the district administrators. Together, they assess the district’s strengths and weaknesses in each of the seven areas.

What happens once they identify areas of weakness?
Team members complete a “Statement of Critical Need” and rate each need as a low-, medium-, or high-priority item. Team members also come up with designated low-performing to help them find ways to significantly improve student performance. One of the main things we’re doing is helping develop a “District Assistance and Intervention Team” process, or DAIT. The process is currently being piloted in four school districts, and we hope it can be used throughout the state. It is based on research and what we and others have found works from many years of experience with low-performing schools and districts.
a series of recommended action steps and a timeline for each step.

Data analysis is key throughout this process. The needs analysis begins by scrutinizing current student achievement data, particularly as those data relate to a district’s AYP status over the last four years. The data include student participation and proficiency rates in reading and math on the California Standards Test, as well as current samples of student work.

One important aspect of the process is that districts are required to post formative assessment data, by grade level, as well as samples of student work, on the center’s DAIT website. That’s because we want to get people looking at student achievement across a district so there gets to be some notion of how students are doing versus how they should be doing.

How long does the whole DAIT process take?
The process is fairly intensive, in that we expect each of the specialists from the county office of education to spend a week in the district every month over the course of a school year. As they work through the process, team members record their discussion notes, document any changes in policies or procedures that are put in place, and describe how much progress takes place in each of the seven areas in a survey workbook.

What is the status of the pilot, and how confident are you that the process will, indeed, improve student achievement?
The pilot began in September 2006 in four school districts. We’re fairly confident we’ll get good results, largely because we’re following good professional practice. The things we’re asking people to do are the things that good practice and research say they should be doing.

In addition, our partners at AIR have already begun evaluating the process. Their staff members have visited all four school districts, where they’ve sat in on team meetings, interviewed teachers, and studied the survey results. Their goal is to find out how it’s going, what’s helpful in the process, and what’s not. The information they’re gathering is fed back to the Comprehensive Center and to the California Department of Education so we can make appropriate modifications as we go forward.

Do you see any larger implications for this process?
The real issue, as we see it, is scalability — whether we’ve helped design a process that will be able to make a difference in a significant number of the school districts in California that need help in meeting their AYP goals.

And, of course, districts across the country are facing similar challenges, so this is certainly a national issue, and I think there is wide interest in what we’re doing. We’ve already shared information about the process with our neighbors in Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico, and presented the project at the National Conference of Comprehensive Center directors, and we hope to continue learning from others across the country, too.

For more information, visit www.cacompcenter.org or contact Fred Tempes at 916.492.4039 or ftempes@WestEd.org.
The support of peers, especially teachers already certified by the National Board, can help teachers seeking certification to stick with it.

continued from page 11

foundation for professional development and evaluation. The school fostered an atmosphere conducive to change by devoting five hours a week to common planning time, embracing the expectation that teachers would use data to drive instruction, and pursuing state-funded financial incentives.

In 1999, before this process began, only half the school’s students were achieving at grade level. By 2003, 85 percent had met this target, and the school met 20 out of 21 of its Adequate Yearly Progress goals. By 2004—05, the school met all of its Adequate Yearly Progress targets.

The study’s researchers conclude that National Board Certification can play a significant role in school improvement.

But the North Carolina and Los Angeles examples remain exceptions. These examples show that National Board Certification alone is not enough, but must be accompanied by planning and the right policies and practices to make a difference in low-performing schools.

For more information, contact Ann-Marie Wiese at awiese@WestEd.org or Julia Koppich at jkoppich@mac.com. More information on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the certification process is available from www.nbpts.org. “Sharing the Wealth: National Board Certified Teachers and the Students Who Need Them Most” is available through the journal Education Analysis Policy Archives, online at epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n18/v13n18.pdf.
Time may be the most precious resource for teachers and administrators in the nation’s most challenging schools. Under pressure to make big changes and improve student achievement, they rarely have the luxury to sort through new research studies or to find other schools that might offer answers and inspiration.

Experts at WestEd have created SchoolsMovingUp.net, an online community and resources to help educators make these connections more easily.

Targeted to busy administrators who are working to improve achievement in underperforming schools and districts, the SchoolsMovingUp website sorts and summarizes new education research and introduces colleagues around the nation who have found ways to implement effective reforms.

“We want to be a filter for them because they’re so busy and overwhelmed. We want to tell them what’s out there that works, what would be most helpful,” says Heather Mattson Almanzan, project manager for SchoolsMovingUp.

To that end, the site’s Schools on the Move section features profiles of schools that have improved student achievement. For readers in a hurry, a Tips to Go section highlights specific strategies and programs that are easily implemented to assist in school improvement efforts.

“People crave seeing what other schools that are improving are doing,” Mattson Almanzan says. Travel and time limit the amount of face-to-face sharing that can easily take place. SchoolsMovingUp aims to narrow that gap between educators.
From January to October of 2006, SchoolsMovingUp sponsored 13 online events. A total of more than a thousand people or groups participated in these events. Of those who provided feedback:

- 92 percent said the experience was helpful to them.
- 97 percent said they would recommend future online events to someone in the same position.

In some districts, groups of people participate in SchoolsMovingUp online events or access the event archives using large-screen computer displays and speakerphones to create a shared professional development opportunity.

An outside assessment of SchoolsMovingUp was done in 2005 by Rockman Et Al of San Francisco. Its purpose was to consider how and when users access the site, which resources they use, and the perceived usefulness and impact of the resources it offers.

The Rockman study participants on average indicated that they had used six of the site’s resources. They used SchoolsMovingUp offerings:

- to stimulate discussions among their local school stakeholders;
- to help modify or design new programs or models;
- as a basis for staff professional development and for personal development;
- to assist with grant-writing activities; and
- as a resource for graduate coursework.

Survey respondents rated all of the site’s resources as “somewhat” to “very” useful, and all respondents indicated that they had recommended the resources to colleagues and planned to use the resources again in the future.

Site usage statistics show that people are drawn to the site most often by the regular newsletter that registered users receive by email. SchoolsMovingUp
A special section provides articles, tools, services, and selected information from the U.S. Department of Education related to the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Staff members continue to collect feedback from users through an array of quick survey boxes on the site and through more substantial surveys given after each online event. Following one event, for example, a participant wrote, “This was engaging and prompted discussion at our school site that would not have occurred otherwise. A little learning community was created here today.”

Other respondents have described using SchoolsMovingUp resources to meet their professional development needs. “I live in a small, rural community, and it is hard to get this kind of training,” one user wrote. “This was well-presented, gave me some great ideas and resources, and I still have time to get all my work done today!”

Mattson Almanzan says the online surveys and other ongoing data collection aim to keep the site dynamic and able to meet the changing needs of busy administrators.

“Their work is so hard,” she reflects. “We want them to have somewhere to turn for help.”

For more information, visit WestEd.SchoolsMovingUp.net or contact Heather Mattson Almanzan at 510.666.0370 or hmattso@WestEd.org.
“You have to spend much of your time focusing on what goes on in the classroom every day,” says Fitterer. “You have to analyze student achievement results and teachers’ actions. And those two have to correlate.”

WestEd’s technical assistance teams work closely with schools to show staff how to use data to identify strengths and weaknesses, design plans for improvement, and then back up their intentions with action. In the hands of a skilled technical assistance provider, data can help schools address the inconsistencies between their beliefs (for example, believing that all children can learn) and their performance (three-fourths of the school’s minority students remain below grade level).

Follow through on the details

“It is tempting for external technical assistance providers to focus almost exclusively on planning and neglect implementation because they typically have more control over the development of a school plan than over its implementation,” says Chow. “Persistence and vigilance in implementation makes the difference between success and failure of improvement efforts.”

WestEd service providers agree on the necessity of a well-crafted improvement plan, but the best-laid plans should be subject to change. They have found that following through on implementation, including attending to details, is just as critical as choosing the right course in the first place.

“Getting materials in on time, being prepared at workshops, reminding teachers to follow through with promises are examples of details that give the faculty the
Achievement up in Yuma, Arizona, with WestEd’s T4S

Teens in Yuma, Arizona, have prospects for a brighter future thanks to a collaboration between WestEd’s Teach for Success (T4S) program and leaders at the Yuma Union High School District. Notable achievement gains and increased engagement in academic learning have increased students’ prospects for graduating and progressing to college or meaningful employment. District faculty largely credit the improvements to T4S, which helped them standardize their instructional practices and create classroom environments that foster adolescent learning.

Yuma Union is one of eight Yuma County school districts participating in T4S through Yuma Professional Learning and Networking (PLAN). In 2003, several districts — including Yuma Union and the Crane School District — teamed to create a common, cohesive focus on teaching and learning for K-12 students in the region. The Yuma PLAN consortium implemented WestEd’s T4S, which now guides over 1,500 teachers serving nearly 30,000 students across all districts.

According to WestEd project director Huck Fitterer, the success of T4S is exemplified by the shift in faculty attitudes at the Yuma Union High School District. “Like all districts in this border county, Yuma Union has experienced explosive growth in the number of English learners,” he says. “Before T4S, I had the impression that faculty here felt that students were the problem, and therefore the burden was on kids to perform up to standards. If an English learner didn’t perform well, it was her fault for not trying hard enough.” Fitterer adds, “Now, faculty say the burden is on teachers to make sure that their students are learning. In this district, kids no longer have the right to fail.”

Test score gains in mathematics and reading back up this change in attitude. On Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards in these two areas has risen dramatically.

### Yuma Union High School District AIMS Results in Math & Reading (2004–05 School Year)

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<th>Percent at M/E Reading Grade 10</th>
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Achievement up in Yuma, Arizona, with WestEd’s T4S
Developing an Effective School Plan: An Activity-Based Guide to Understanding Your School and Improving Student Outcomes

The inquiry, planning, and implementation process embodied in this school improvement package represents the distillation of what WestEd staff have learned firsthand from their work with diverse schools across the country. Developing an Effective School Plan includes a facilitation guide, activities, interactive tools, and CD-ROM.

Mentoring New Teachers Through Collaborative Coaching: Linking Student and Teacher Learning and Facilitation and Training Guide

Based on research and their extensive work across the country, the authors offer guidance on how mentors can understand the needs of new teachers, build strong relationships with them, and coach them through an ongoing process of improvement. This book and facilitation guide are geared to education leaders who oversee mentor programs and those who provide professional development for mentors.

Moving Leadership Standards Into Everyday Work: Descriptions of Practice

For each of six research-based leadership standards, the descriptions of practice (DOPs) introduced in this publication identify the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are essential to successful school leadership. The DOPs also depict what key aspects of each standard look like in action as an administrator moves from being a tactical manager to a strategic instructional leader whose efforts result in improved student learning.

Authors: Lori Van Houten, Jeanne Miyasaka, & Kim Agullard
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Perhaps the most important task for external assistance providers during implementation is to work themselves out of a job.

message that the larger improvement effort is important,” says Chow.

Perhaps the most important task for external assistance providers during implementation is to work themselves out of a job. Rarely do they have the luxury of working in a school for the full three to five years required for innovations to take root. For this reason, WestEd’s external assistance providers stress the importance of building enough local ownership and capacity for each school to continue making and monitoring its own improvements well after the outside helpers leave.

For more information about emerging lessons on transforming low-performing schools, contact Stanley Chow at 415.615.3120 or schow@WestEd.org.