



Struggling Schools, Promising Solutions

Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools and What Can Be Done for the Students Who Attend Them

A Report by Innovate Public Schools November 2014

More than 15,000 students in Silicon Valley are currently attending schools that have been persistently low-performing for years. Innovate Public Schools looked at the last five years of school test scores – 2008 through 2013 – for the 700 public schools in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and identified 28 persistently low-performing schools. These schools:

- Get low numbers of their students to grade-level proficiency in reading, math and science,
- Did not significantly improve from 2008-2013, and
- Are not doing well compared to schools serving similar student populations.

This report is a call to action for the community to work together toward immediate and lasting solutions for students attending our region's lowest-performing schools.

Persistently Lowest-Performing Schools in Silicon Valley Ordered by district and alphabetically

County	School & District
Elementary and K-8 Schools	
Santa Clara	Daniel Lairon College Preparatory Academy Franklin-McKinley Elementary
Santa Clara	McKinley Elementary Franklin-McKinley Elementary
Santa Clara	Santee Elementary Franklin-McKinley Elementary
Santa Clara	P. A. Walsh Elementary Morgan Hill Unified
Santa Clara	Mt. Pleasant Elementary Mt. Pleasant Elementary
San Mateo	Linda Mar Educational Center Pacifica
San Mateo	Belle Haven Elementary Ravenswood City Elementary
San Mateo	Fair Oaks Elementary Redwood City Elementary
San Mateo	Garfield Elementary Redwood City Elementary
San Mateo	Hawes Elementary Redwood City Elementary
San Mateo	Hoover Elementary Redwood City Elementary
San Mateo	John Gill Elementary Redwood City Elementary
San Mateo	Selby Lane Elementary Redwood City Elementary
Santa Clara	Empire Gardens Elementary San Jose Unified
Santa Clara	Gardner Elementary San Jose Unified
Santa Clara	Horace Mann Elementary San Jose Unified
Santa Clara	Selma Olinder Elementary San Jose Unified
San Mateo	Horral Elementary San Mateo-Foster City
Santa Clara	Scott Lane Elementary Santa Clara Unified
Middle Schools	
San Mateo	Ronald McNair Academy Ravenswood City Elementary
San Mateo	Cesar Chavez Ravenswood City Elementary
Santa Clara	Lee Mathson Middle Alum Rock Union Elementary
Santa Clara	Sylvandale Middle Franklin-McKinley Elementary
Santa Clara	Herbert Hoover Middle San Jose Unified
Santa Clara	Columbia Middle Sunnyvale
High Schools	
Santa Clara	James Lick High East Side Union High
Santa Clara	William C. Overfelt High East Side Union High
K-12 Schools	
Santa Clara	Escuela Popular Accelerated Family Learning (Charter) East Side Union High

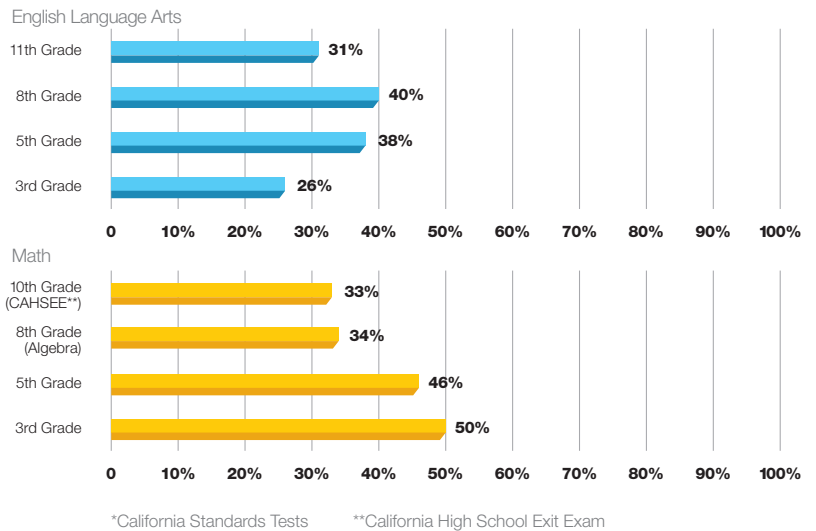
Key Report Findings

Students at the lowest-performing schools are falling so far behind that it will become increasingly difficult for them to catch up.

Less than a third of students at these schools read at grade level by the third grade. Only 40 percent were at grade level as they headed from eighth grade to high school. In the 11th grade, when students consider their college or career options, only 31 percent of students in the two high schools and the one K-12 school identified in this report were reading at grade level. This has been going on for many years—the results at these schools have hardly changed since 2009.

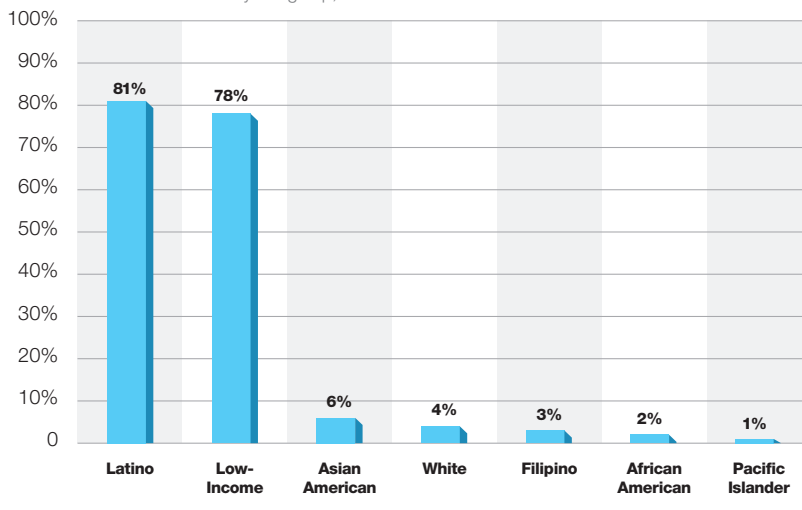
Most Students in Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools are Falling Behind in Major Subjects

Percent of Students At or Above Proficient on the 2013 CST*



Who Attends Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools?

Percent of Students by Subgroup, 2013-14



This problem is disproportionately hurting Latino and low-income students.

Of the 15,985 students who attend these 28 lowest-performing schools, 78 percent are from low-income families, 81 percent are Latino, and 50 percent are English learners (EL). We need to dispel the myth that if a school serves many high-need students, it will have low academic performance. Many schools across California prove that it is absolutely possible to serve a student population that is majority high-need (low-income or EL) and get a high percentage of them proficient.

Schools that are “beating the odds” show us we should set the bar far higher for both schools and students.

This report identified 122 schools in California that are beating the odds for low-income students – serving a majority of high-need students and achieving high levels of performance. These include five schools in Silicon Valley that have sustained that performance for three out of five years. Another eight schools in this region met that high bar for one or both of the two most recent years.

Five Schools in Silicon Valley are Consistently Beating the Odds for High-Need Students

Schools listed* below meet beating-the-odds criteria for three out of five years and serve student populations that have 55 percent or more low-income students or 55 percent or more English learners

County	District	School	Years Meeting High-Performing Criteria	API 2013	API Low-Income Students 2013	API English Learners 2013	Percent Low-Income 2012-13	Percent English Learners 2012-13
Santa Clara	Alum Rock Union Elementary	KIPP Heartwood Academy (Charter)	5	922	922	868	86%	18%
Santa Clara	East Side Union High	KIPP San Jose Collegiate (Charter)	4	875	870	753	70%	13%
Santa Clara	Santa Clara County Office of Education	Rocketship Mateo Sheedy (Charter)	4	851	843	837	85%	67%
Santa Clara	Alum Rock Union Elementary	Millard McCollam Elementary	3	883	890	889	79%	37%
San Mateo	Ravenswood City Elementary	Aspire East Palo Alto (Charter)	3	822	816	803	92%	52%

Eight Other Rising Stars that Are Beating the Odds for High-Need Students

Schools listed* below meet beating-the-odds criteria in one of the two most recent years, 2011-12 and 2012-13, and serve student populations that have 55 percent or more low-income students or 55 percent or more English learners

County	District	School	Years Meeting High-Performing Criteria	API 2013	API Low-Income Students 2013	API English Learners 2013	Percent Low-Income 2012-13	Percent English Learners 2012-13
Santa Clara	Gilroy Unified	Gilroy Prep (Charter)	2	942	941	948	60%	56%
Santa Clara	Santa Clara County Office of Education	Rocketship Brilliant Minds (Charter)	1	893	888	876	86%	65%
Santa Clara	Franklin-McKinley Elementary	Cornerstone Preparatory (Charter)	1	929	915	927	70%	60%
Santa Clara	Franklin-McKinley Elementary	Voices College-Bound Language Academy (Charter)	1	898	894	889	69%	48%
Santa Clara	Alum Rock Union Elementary	James McEntee Academy	1	846	849	839	92%	29%
San Mateo	South San Francisco Unified	Martin Elementary	1	812	805	802	86%	73%
Santa Clara	Franklin-McKinley Elementary	Rocketship Mosaic Elementary (Charter)	1	838	833	836	86%	66%
Santa Clara	Alum Rock Union Elementary	Learning in an Urban Community with High Achievement (L.U.C.H.A.)	1	820	818	817	82%	56%

*Ordered by performance level on the school achievement index

Examples from across the country show dramatic improvement of low-performing schools is possible and what it takes to do it.

Over the past 10 years, researchers and educators have learned about what it takes to effectively turn around schools. There are many different approaches to turning around a school. Each approach has to be the right one for that community. This is a short summary of what we can learn from the research and examples from other communities across the country.

Turnaround: What Works

No matter what approach you take, there are several essential elements that successful turnaround efforts have in common:

A strong culture with high expectations for students & staff

The principal and all of the teachers must believe that all children can achieve at high levels. They must not only believe in the students, but also believe in their own *ability* and *responsibility* to get all students on grade level and on the path to college.

The right team – the very best principals and teachers

The schools with the greatest need should have the very best principals and teachers. You need to get a team in place who will do whatever it takes to meet the needs of the students.

The flexibility to do what's right for kids – control over hiring/firing, curriculum and the school day

Once you've got the right team in place, it's the district's job to make sure the principals and teachers have the autonomy to focus on the most important aspect of the school: excellent, rigorous teaching. That often means removing barriers like outdated work rules and bureaucracy that stand in the way of putting the needs of children first.

The smart use of data

At high-performing schools, teachers have data about what each student has mastered and what they are struggling to learn, and they're using that data to make decisions on a daily basis about who and what to focus on. Teachers are constantly tracking whether what they're doing is working. They have clear strategies to move students forward and, especially, catch up those who are struggling.

What Doesn't Work

We can learn just as much from failed efforts as from successful ones. These are two clear lessons from other communities.

- Don't close a low-performing school without having a high-quality school for those displaced students.
- If current principals and teachers are let go in a turnaround effort, they must be replaced with very effective staff.

Where It's Worked in Silicon Valley

Many districts across the country have dramatically improved their lowest-performing schools.

You can find many different examples and more information at

WWW.INNOVATESCHOOLS.ORG/TURNAROUND.

Spotlight on Alum Rock School District

In 2000, parent leaders with People Acting in Community Together (PACT) started organizing to push for better schools in Alum Rock in East San Jose, which was one of the lowest-performing school districts in Silicon Valley. Now Alum Rock is home to some of the highest-performing schools for high-need students in the region, and its district-wide API has increased the most out of all districts in Santa Clara County – 135 API points since 2004. This is thanks to multiple initiatives, including:

“It gave everyone in those schools a new way of looking at schooling children. Sometimes drastic change is important—some of the teachers did not come back. Those teachers that did not come back actually became better teachers, only some of them, in other sites... But the focus here was around building the right team.”

— **Hilaria Bauer, Alum Rock School District Superintendent**

Starting New District Schools

PACT parents' initial efforts were focused on the creation of “new, small, autonomous” district schools, and they succeeded in achieving the creation of three schools - L.U.C.H.A., Renaissance, and Adelante. L.U.C.H.A. had some of the top API scores for English learners and low-income students, and Renaissance and Adelante were second and third in the entire region for Latino algebra scores in Innovate's 2013 “Broken Promises” report.

Approving High-Quality Charter Schools

As of 2014, there are nine charter schools located in Alum Rock, including KIPP Heartwood, one of the highest-performing middle schools in the region.

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

In 2006, Lester W. Shields Elementary School was required by both state and federal law to implement major changes due to its long-time low performance. The district closed the school, then designed and opened two new smaller schools: Anthony P. Russo Academy and James McEntee. With the same students, the same building, but with new principals who had a clear plan and vision, improved curriculum and a majority of new teachers, these two schools saw significant growth in academic performance in their first years of operation. Both Russo and McEntee have sustained their academic performance levels till 2012-13, with McEntee being among the top-performing schools in the region and the state for the high-need student population they serve.

What can parents do?

1. **Know how schools are performing.**

Information on how your school is performing academically can be confusing, but there are a few key things to know. Are students reading and doing math at grade level, particularly in important grade levels like grade 3, 6, 8, and 11?

- Visit our website to learn more about how schools in this region are doing and sign up to receive the latest updates and reports at **WWW.INNOVATESCHOOLS.ORG.**

- You can also find information on your particular school at **WWW.GREATSCHOOLS.ORG.**

2. **Demand high-quality schools for all students.**

Every single year of school is critical – even one bad year can make it difficult for students to catch up. The path to college starts in elementary school - all students deserve a chance to reach their full potential and be prepared for success in our competitive 21st century economy.

That's why we must take action to make sure all students are receiving a high-quality education. Ask your superintendent and school board members about their plans to improve local schools and make sure those plans are based on what the research shows works.

3. **Spread the word!**

Tell your friends and family about this report and why you're passionate about improving local public schools. Talk to school and community leaders and ask them to support high-quality schools.

About Innovate Public Schools

Innovate Public Schools is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to build the parent and community demand for world-class public schools, and to accelerate the growth of these schools, particularly for low-income students and students of color. We publish easy-to-understand school quality data and research that highlights both problems and solutions, and we build the capacity of parents, community leaders and educators to innovate and act together to create world-class public schools.

Read the full report at:

WWW.INNOVATESCHOOLS.ORG/TURNAROUND