Innovate
Public Schools

Struggling Schools, **Promising Solutions**

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

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"Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled, and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental…

The freedom to learn…has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn, the right to have examined in our schools not only what we believe but what we do not believe; not only what our leaders say, but what the leaders of other groups and nations, and the leaders of other centuries have said. We must insist upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is, and what its greater minds have thought it to be."

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Freedom to Learn* (1949)

Foreword & Acknowledgements

We are in a period of very rapid change in technology, work, and schooling. Perhaps now more than ever, we are preparing our children today for a future that few of us can even imagine. In addition to reading, writing, and math, we know our children need to learn many other skills if they are to be prepared to thrive, have good choices, and succeed in our ever more competitive economy.

Innovate Public Schools is a nonprofit organization focused on making sure that low-income students and students of color in the Bay Area receive an excellent education that will prepare them for success in life. 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.

Our first report, "Broken Promises: The Children Left Behind in Silicon Valley Schools," looked at academic performance across Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. We spotlighted many of the top schools and districts in the region for these traditionally underserved groups of students. We also listed the schools and districts that were particularly low-performing, based on the most recent year of state data.

This report takes it a step further, with a two-part focus: 1) the public schools in our region that have been persistently underperforming for many years, and 2) solutions for the students attending these schools. Low-performing schools exist in all parts of the country, and many districts, states, charter organizations, and others have risen to the challenge of turning around schools in our region and nationwide. This is a good time to look back and learn from those turnaround efforts—both successful and not—and to apply those lessons as quickly as possible. We also describe some of the key elements in high-performing schools in our region serving primarily low-income students and English learners.

For the past 15 years, the California Standards Tests (CST) and the Academic Performance Index (API) have been the foundation of our state's system for measuring school performance. Educators, administrators, parents and the broader education community have used this system to understand how schools are faring in preparing students on California's standards in core subjects, including reading, math, science and the social sciences. While the CST and the API are certainly not perfect measures of a school's academic performance, they have been the best publicly available data that we have had across public schools.

We are currently transitioning from this system to a better one, centered on the new Common Core State Standards. So before the CST and the API are forgotten, we want to take a look back at how schools performed under what were considered rigorous standards for a long period of time. Which schools, districts, and charter organizations were successful at getting their students to read and do math at grade level, particularly low-income children and children of color? And which schools, districts, and charters were not able to do this, after more than a decade of trying?

"Now is the time to rally community resources, attention, and real solutions for the children in these persistently low-performing schools."

With the transition to the Common Core, California is shifting to a new assessment that raises the bar on what and how students learn, including higher-order thinking skills that will better prepare students for success in college and their chosen career. Schools will be expected to prepare all of their students to understand a much more rigorous curriculum. So we should be particularly concerned about schools that have been low-performing under the old system, because the Common Core is more difficult. To make this transition successfully, teachers will have to change how they teach and district administrators will have to change how they lead. For the schools that never figured out how to prepare most of their students for the California Standards Test, they are likely to find the new state tests much more challenging.

Given that sobering reality, now is the time to rally community resources, attention, and real solutions for the children in these persistently low-performing schools. What awaits these children –our children– who drop out or who graduate high school but are still unable to understand what they're reading and unable to do algebra? What does it say about us, when the solutions are clear, but we don't have the will to implement them?

I want to acknowledge a few organizations and individuals who helped make this report possible. Special thanks to Tom Zazueta and his fantastic team at HyperRelevance, who provided pro bono the outstanding design for this report. Thanks also to Joanne Jacobs, our extraordinary editor; Melissa Arellanes, a talented partner in the analytics behind this piece; and to the whole team at Innovate, who helped improve this report from beginning to end.

Making sure that all students have access to world-class schools obviously won't be easy. But this Valley is known for solving problems that others thought impossible. We can do it, and our children deserve nothing less.

Matt Hammer, Executive Director
Innovate Public Schools

Twenty-eight Schools, 15,985 Students

Silicon Valley is creating the future. But many of the Valley's students have little chance of earning a college degree, much less a seat on the Google bus. These students are behind on the first day of school: Most are the children of low-income immigrant parents with little formal education. Many aren't fluent in English.

In the "Broken Promises" report and in this report, we highlight schools that are succeeding with disadvantaged students. It can be done.

But it's exceptionally difficult. This report focuses on low-performing schools that aren't getting most of their students to grade level across subjects and aren't improving, or are improving slowly. The 28 schools identified in this report have scored at the bottom for three out of the last five years on the Academic Performance Index (API), have not significantly improved in the past five years, and underperform when compared to schools serving similar students.

Of course, these are not the only schools that are struggling. Many other schools barely missed making this list, and many others are doing well for some students and not well for others, particularly low-income students. The students in those schools also need our attention and concern.

Of the 15,985 students who attend these 28 lowest-performing schools, 78 percent are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 81 percent are Latino, and 50 percent are English learners (EL). A small percentage of these students read or do math at grade level when they enter the next level of schooling. Unless we can find a better way to educate our neediest students, they will not have access to college and skilled jobs that can earn them a livable wage when they grow up.

This report is a call to parents, educators, decision-makers, business leaders, and the general public: Let's look at what's working here and around the country to help students in low-performing schools. In this report and on our website, we'll share research on promising approaches, as well as turnaround efforts that have faltered.

We need to do whatever it takes to ensure these students have access to a strong education that prepares them to be educated, employable, responsible adults. Not every student will earn a bachelor's degree. But they all deserve a chance. We expect all of the key stakeholders, not only parents, to act with the same urgency they would if their own children attended one of the persistently lowest-performing schools in our region.

The College & Career Track Starts in Elementary School

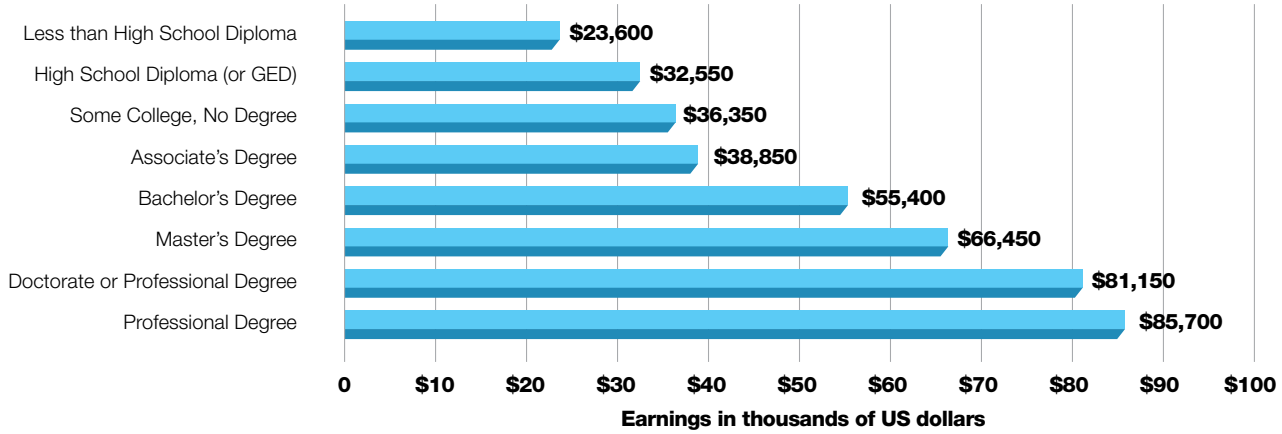
The path to college and career starts early. Many studies have found that third grade math and reading scores predict academic success.[i] This grade is a critical transition point, because students must move from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Instead of reading primers, they're expected to understand more complex science and history texts.[ii] Third graders whose reading and math skills are below grade level are four times more likely to become high school dropouts.[iii]

Each school year is important, but it is crucial to take a close look at the middle and terminal grades (e.g., fifth grade at the end of elementary school and eighth grade at the end of middle school). Sixth graders who fail mathematics or reading courses, attend school less than 80 percent of the time, or received an unsatisfactory grade in a core course have just a 10 to 20 percent chance of graduating high school on time.[iv] The trends are similar for ninth graders.[v] The transitions from elementary to middle school and middle to high school can be difficult. Students may be tracked into a path that will limit their high school choices and thus their option to attend and complete college.

In our 21st century economy, high school dropouts tend to work for minimum wage, if they work at all. Even high school graduates struggle to earn enough to support a family. Especially in Silicon Valley, where housing costs are high, young people will need postsecondary job training or higher education to make a living. The connection between years of education and earnings is clear—with higher levels of education come significantly higher incomes.

Figure 1 **Median Annual Earnings of Adults**

(Full-time Workers, Age 25 and over, 2013 projected)



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Modified: December 19, 2013

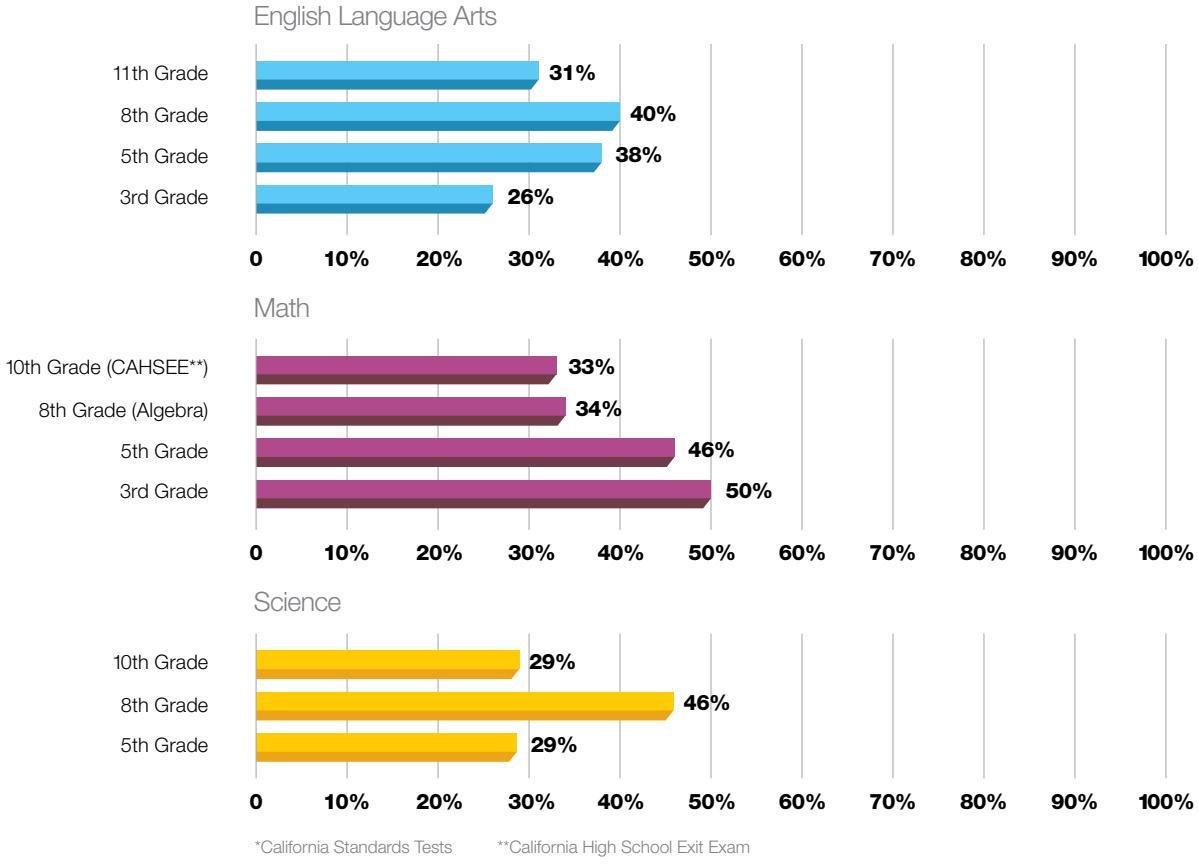
Off Track

Of the 15,985 students attending the 28 lowest-performing schools in Silicon Valley, the majority are below grade level in reading, math and/or science. As shown in FIGURE 2, only a little over a quarter of students at these schools read at grade level by the third grade. At each of the critical transition years shown in the figures below, these schools are not preparing the majority of students for what's coming next. Only 40 percent moved from eighth grade to high school at or above grade level. By 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. Many students that have not achieved grade level proficiency enroll in community colleges, where they're placed in remedial courses. However, few remedial students go on to earn an academic or vocational credential.[vi] Most never pass a college-level course.[vii] They are too far behind to catch up. Most who start behind get stuck behind, becoming low-skilled, low-paid, frequently laid-off workers.

This unfortunate reality is true for math and science as well. Across both subjects, the majority of students in these 28 schools did not perform at grade level in 2012-13. In a region with the most lucrative technical jobs in the country, these students will leave high school without the math and science skills needed to pursue job training or education in any technical field.

Figure 2 **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*



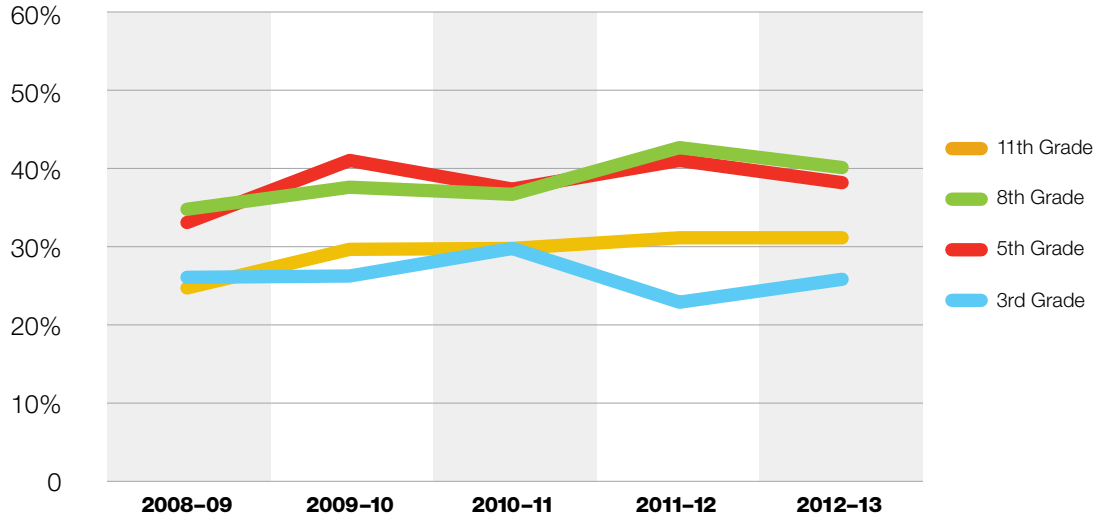
*California Standards Tests **California High School Exit Exam

Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools Have Been Underpreparing Most of their Students for a Long Time

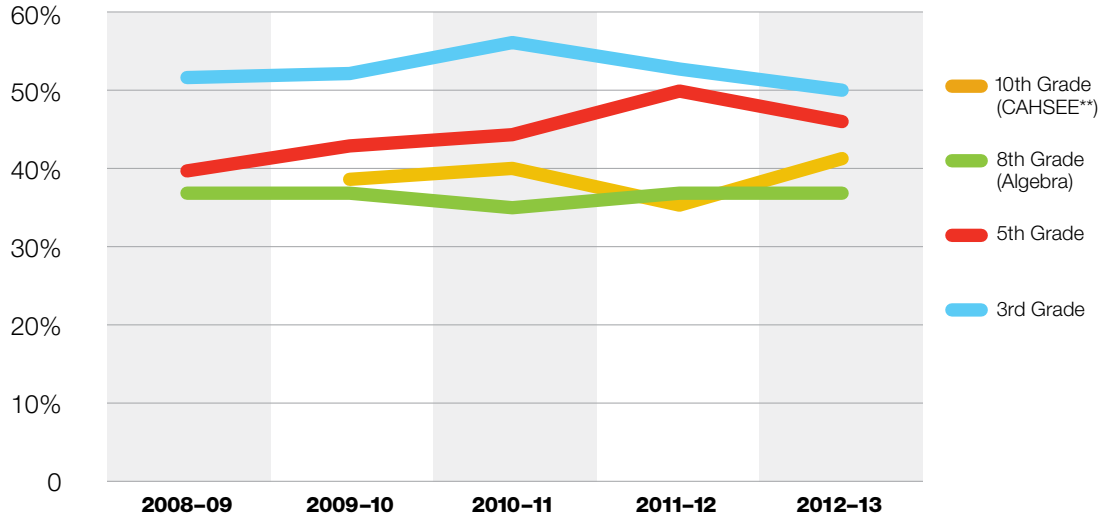
Not only were these schools underperforming in 2012-13 (the last school year with CST data), they have been struggling in all core subjects since the 2008-09 school year. As shown in the figures below, these schools have made little to no improvement over the past five years in the number of students they're able to educate to grade level in reading and math.

Figure 3 **Most Students are Left Behind Year After Year in Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools**

Percent of Students At or Above Proficient, 2008-09 to 2012-13 CST*, English Language Arts



Percent of Students At or Above Proficient, 2008-09 to 2012-13 CST*, Math



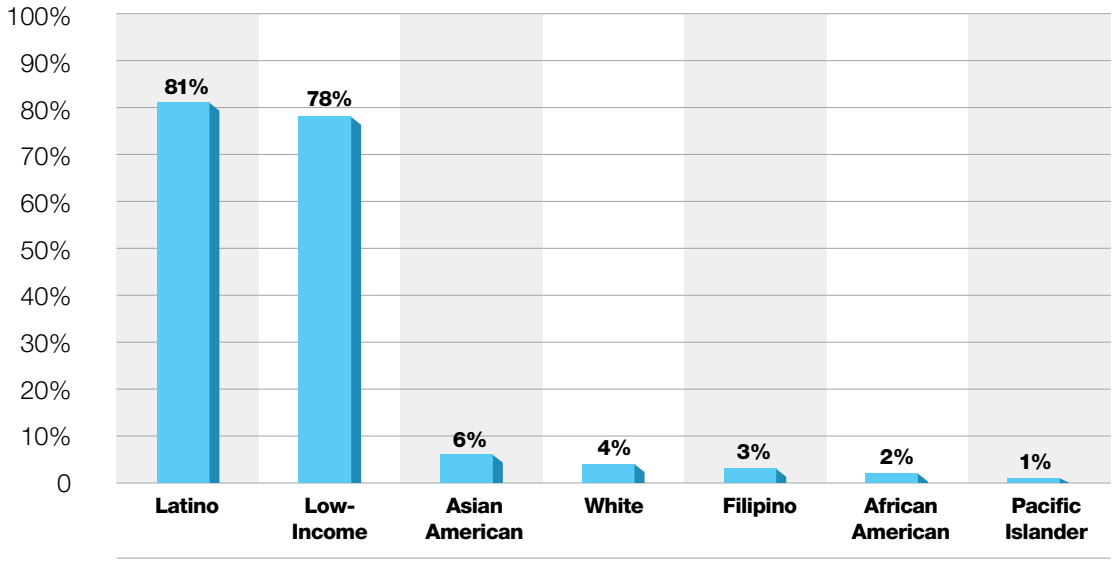
*California Standards Tests
**California High School Exit Exam - 2008-09 are not included due to changes in exam scale.

Almost All Students Attending the Lowest-Performing Schools in Silicon Valley are Low-Income and Latino

Most of these 28 lowest-performing schools are located in high-poverty communities that are predominantly Latino. This isn't only happening here in Silicon Valley: low-performing schools tend to be located in disadvantaged areas across the state and country. Consequently, many people will argue that "demographics is destiny." That argument blames students and their parents for low achievement, and it ignores the reality that there are many schools across the state that educate their Latino, low-income and other disadvantaged students at a high level. Of course it is challenging work to create very high-performing schools, but many beacons of excellence in our region and throughout the state show us what can and should be done for all students.

Figure 4 **Who Attends Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools?**

Percent of Students by Subgroup, 2013-14



Some Silicon Valley Schools Beat the Odds

Thirteen schools are showing it is possible in our region. Over the five years included in our analysis (2008-09 to 2012-13), five schools clearly beat the odds by educating their high-need population at a high level for three out of the five years (see the textbox below for a description of beating-the-odds analysis). An additional eight schools also meet these criteria for one or both years, in the two most recent years for which data are available (2011-12 and 2012-13). Though only four traditional public schools and nine charter schools in our region meet these criteria, around the state there are 122 of these high-need schools that beat the odds in 2012-13, including 72 traditional public schools and 50 charter schools (see full list on the website). There are also many other schools in the Valley that don't serve as many high-need students in the Valley but that are also beating the odds for the specific group of students they serve. These are listed on our website.

Defining High-Need, High-Performing Schools

Many people do not believe that all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can achieve at high levels. In order to show that it can be done and sustained, we used the School Achievement Index (SAI) developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to identify schools that serve many low-income students and have been performing substantially above predicted performance given their student population (see **METHODOLOGY** for a full description of the SAI). This analytical approach, typically called beating-the-odds analysis by researchers, identifies schools that have been dramatically overperforming taking into account the specific population of students they serve. Many researchers use this approach to identify schools that have standout results for the particular students they serve.

Defining high-need

Schools that serve students in areas with high levels of poverty and with limited or no proficiency in English face significant challenges that typically require more resources, particularly effective approaches in all aspects of instruction and operations at a school, and very dedicated and experienced staff to get it right. The high-need schools in our area are those that meet California's threshold for concentration funding under the Local Control Funding Formula. These schools must have 55 percent or more of students qualify for reduced price meals, or 55 percent or more of students identified as English learners.

Defining high-performing

The schools showcased must be performing significantly above predicted (two standard deviations above on the SAI) for more than three out of the five years of analysis. This means they have been consistently beating the odds for their specific student population for sustained periods of time. Schools identified as high-performing through this approach have roughly 70 percent or more of their students at grade level in both reading and math—with some of these schools even achieving 100 percent proficiency at various grade levels. The schools highlighted in **FIGURES 5 AND 6** are those that have been overperforming for three or more years, and the rising stars are getting close, by being high-performing in 2011-12 or 2012-13, the last years of CST data.

Figure 5

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%

Figure 6

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

Identifying Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools

At some Silicon Valley schools, large numbers of students from low-income backgrounds and students learning English are reaching proficiency in reading, writing, math and science; and are thus on track to college. This section focuses on schools that are not making this happen for many of their students.

Our approach to identifying the lowest-performing schools takes into account several ways of looking at school performance in order to generate a robust measure (for more details on our approach, please see the full METHODOLOGY on page 30). Included below are high-level descriptions of the approach.

1. **Absolute performance: Are students at grade level in core subjects (English language arts and math)?**

   The primary school performance measure in California is the API. We start with looking at performance on the API over five years (2008-09 to 2012-13) to identify the schools that have been performing in the bottom 10 percent for three or more years in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. The schools that are identified as being in the bottom 10 percent are included in the list of lowest-performing schools in the Valley, unless they are significantly improving or they are doing well when compared to schools serving similar students statewide (see steps 2 and 3 below).

2. **Improvement: Is the school significantly improving?**

   The majority of California schools have been improving on the API over time as schools and districts have implemented the California standards. Our goal was to identify those schools that have shown notable gains that would rapidly move them from low performance toward the state goal of an 800 API. In order to establish a threshold for significant growth, we looked at schools with API gains at the 75th percentile over the five years in our analysis (i.e. schools that are growing faster than 75 percent of schools throughout the state). This translates to an API gain of 59 points or more from 2008-09 to 2012-13.

   *Those schools that have demonstrated significant growth over five years–more than 59 points from 2008-09 to 2012-13–**are not identified as lowest performing in our report, even if they met the criteria for low absolute performance in #1 above**.*

3. **Comparative performance: How is the school performing considering the unique population it serves?**

   Students enter school at different levels of preparation and with different challenges – whether they are living in poverty, learning English, or have special learning needs. In order to account for this, we used a comparative perspective on school performance developed by the American Institutes for Research called the School Achievement Index (SAI). This approach enables us to identify schools that are performing above or below their expected performance level in comparison to schools serving similar students across the state.

   Schools that are performing above predicted performance (one standard deviation above predicted performance) in three out of five years ***are not identified as lowest performing in our report, even if they met the criteria for low absolute performance in #1 above.*** *For a more detailed explanation about the SAI, see the* METHODOLOGY *on page 30*.

Based on this methodology, 28 of the traditional public and charter schools in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties are identified as persistently lowest-performing from 2008-09 to 2012-13. As seen in FIGURE 7, 19 elementary schools, six middle schools, two high schools, and one K-12 are identified.

As the Local Control Funding Formula established, equality is not the same as equity. Schools serving high-need populations need greater attention and resources. This report is a snapshot of a very serious problem with our region's education system—that many students from disadvantaged background are being left behind. The question is what we will do about it. These schools need more resources, the best principals and teachers, and effective approaches to dramatically and urgently improve. The following section outlines solutions and lessons learned from our region and around the country on how to run excellent schools and turn around underperforming ones.

Figure 7

Persistently Lowest-Performing Schools in Silicon Valley

Ordered by district and alphabetically

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

Call to Action

This report is a call to action to parents, educators, decision-makers, business leaders, and the general public to work toward immediate and lasting solutions for students attending our region's lowest-performing schools. All students deserve a chance to reach their full potential, pursue higher education, or qualify for a skilled job that pays a living wage. Our intent is not to cast blame, but rather to rally around the schools that need the most help. There are approaches, backed by research, that schools can use to improve dramatically the educational and life trajectories of their students.

The schools that are struggling here in Silicon Valley do not face a unique challenge. Many districts and charter school operators have tried to turn around low-performing schools over long periods of time, some of the most prominent examples starting in Chicago in 1997. We can learn from their successes and failures.

Signs of Hope

Since 2009, federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) have provided as much as $2 million per school annually over three years to improve low-performing schools. Though the results for the SIG program nationally are still being studied and have produced mixed results, promising outcomes for many California SIG participants and some successful school turnaround efforts from around the country show it can be done.[viii]

This report draws from SIG research and from analyses of many turnaround efforts that predate SIG or operate without federal funding. See our list of resources on our website (WWW.INNOVATESCHOOLS.ORG/TURNAROUND) for more information on a larger set of turnaround examples than those included in this report.

The following sections focus on what is known about the elements that make for successful turnaround models. While we believe educators and the community can benefit from learning about these approaches, we are not suggesting these approaches will work in every community. Any effort to improve a school must be grounded in the context of that specific school community. Below you'll find:

- **What does it take to turn around persistently low-performing schools?**
- **Places where it's worked.**
- **Hard lessons—when it hasn't worked.**
- **The district also must change.**

What We Know About the Four School Improvement Grant (SIG) Turnaround Models

We've learned a great deal of lessons about school turnaround from SIG—both from some successful examples and from very clear failures. Below are basic descriptions of the four SIG models and a high-level summary of the research on each model.

Transformation

The least disruptive model of the four, "transformation" requires that districts replace the principal of the school and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, institute comprehensive instructional reforms, increase learning time, create community-oriented schools, and provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

Seventy-four percent of SIG recipients nationally chose this approach.

Given this model allows for a number of different strategies, there is no prior evaluation evidence on the effectiveness or initiatives with these particular design features, though there are some anecdotal examples of successful transformation schools.

Turnaround

Requires that districts replace the principal of the school, rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff, and grant the new principal sufficient operational flexibility to implement a comprehensive approach to improving student outcomes (e.g., allow the school to make decisions typically made at the district level in areas such as hiring and firing, length of the school day and budget).

Under this approach, districts and charters are given the opportunity to make dramatic changes to a school's culture and performance by significantly changing the people that are present at the school and providing the new team with significant operational autonomies. This approach attempts to impact the largest drivers of student achievement in school: the quality of teachers and the school leaders.

Twenty percent of schools that participated in SIG adopted this approach nationwide, including two schools in Ravenswood School District.

Limited research exists on the specific effectiveness of this model, but there are several examples of success, as well as some research on urban districts and schools that implemented this approach. A non-representative 2012 survey conducted by the Council of Great City Schools of 19 urban school districts with a total of 106 schools in SIG found that most (14 of 19) districts believed it was an effective approach to improving their school's academic achievement, three indicated they saw no change in student performance, and two reported that it was negative. With such a small sample, the study is in not representative of what all SIG schools are experiencing.

Restart

Requires that districts convert the school into a charter school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, charter management organization, or education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.

Under the restart model, districts choose an independent operator, which may be a charter or an education management organization, to run the new school. Of the 843 schools that have received SIG grants, only four percent have chosen the restart model. Outside of SIG, districts can also work to redesign and restart their own new schools.

It's very hard to change a school's culture. Inertia is a powerful force. Starting a new school –usually in the old building—allows educators to design a school, establish a culture of high expectations and performance, and hire people committed to the mission. The sections below highlight some strong examples where restart and turnaround have worked, and have been a high-leverage, fast way to start a high-performing new school with the same students and in the same building.

Restarts rely on finding high-quality school managers. Thus a district selecting this option must be very cognizant of the capacity of external operators or its own district team to redesign and restart a school from scratch. A recent large-scale study on charter school performance by Stanford's Center on Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) indicates some very promising news about the capacity of the charter management sector in California—and thus significant potential for the possibilities of restart work in our state and region. CREDO reports that students attending charter schools connected to networks of charters called charter management organizations (CMOs) in California have much stronger learning gains than students in traditional public schools and charters not part of CMOs. Specifically, CMO-attending students made about an additional 36 days of learning in reading and 28 more days in math each year compared to similar students in a traditional public school. Not only is it proven that CMOs in California are significantly adding more days of learning, they are particularly doing well with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. CREDO finds that charters in this state are doing a much better job at educating students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including low-income students, English learners, and students of color.

Closure

Closure under SIG requires that districts close the school and enroll its students in higher-achieving schools in the district.

Only two percent of SIG schools nationally adopted this approach. Some districts have used this approach to either close or phase out schools and open new, high-performing schools in their place.

Plenty of school closure examples exist throughout the country, but many of these closures were not related to or based on the academic performance of the school. Some districts have closed schools because of declining enrollment or budget pressures, while others focused on phasing out or quickly closing schools that have been failing for a number of years.

Research on the impact of school closure is limited given that few districts have closed schools based solely on performance alone. The two districts highlighted as having closed schools, New York City (NYC) and Chicago, used different approaches that led to distinct outcomes for the students moved from their original schools. While Chicago's approach did not move students into high-performing schools, NYC's approach generally did.

The information provided below is just a start—a basic roadmap to some common elements and examples of effective turnaround efforts. We suggest digging deeper into each example and approach highlighted—each has rich information about the policy and practice complexities that come with managing urgent and dramatic turnaround of very low-performing schools. You can find more information on each of these examples on our website, with detailed school profiles and a list of studies and resources on turnaround efforts.

What Does It Take To Turn Around Persistently Low-Performing Schools?

"While school leadership contributes to the learning environment in all schools, leadership has particular implications in the context of persistent low performance, where challenges like unable staff, low expectations for students, and the need for a dramatic change in culture might require a specific set of leadership skills."

— CA Collaborative on District Reform

Changing a persistently low-performing school is certainly difficult work, but there are many examples that now show it's possible. There are signs of promising results for schools and districts participating in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program in California, though research-based evidence has not yet determined which of the four SIG-required approaches is most effective.[ix]

In California, participating schools received around $1.5 million dollars per year to support the implementation of one of four intervention models promoted by SIG: school turnaround, restart, transformation and closure.

The first cohort included 89 schools. Schools that implemented the turnaround and transformation models increased their API by roughly 34 points more than expected. The 29 schools that used the turnaround model – which involves replacing the principal and half the staff – improved the most.

Based on successful school improvement examples and SIG research to date, below are some of the essential elements for successful turnaround.

Successfully turning around a persistently low-performing school requires several conditions:

- **A culture of high expectations for all students and adults:** To create a high-performing school, the staff must believe that it is possible – that all students have the ability to perform at high levels. That means all teachers and staff must know they have the *ability* and *responsibility* to improve learning for students. Sanger Unified, for example, started their turnaround story with this very important belief in mind, and improved their district through changes to staffing, training, and operations, after getting district and school staff on the same page about what could be done for their disadvantaged students.

- **A highly capable leader and staff:** Strong leaders and a leadership team are necessary to create sustainable change. The most effective leaders and teachers should be placed in struggling schools, particularly schools that are undergoing significant turnaround efforts.[x] The importance of this can't be emphasized enough—without truly effective school-site leadership and staff, the implementation of any of these models will be ineffective. Several turn-around examples—and some best practices among highly effective districts—focus on finding and developing the best possible talent and mission-driven mentality needed to turn around and run a high-quality, high-need school.
- **Significant instructional and operational authority:** School leaders must have authority and full responsibility over key school-level operations, most importantly staffing, school day schedules and calendars, budget, and curriculum.[xi]
- **Using data to identify what works:** Improving underperforming schools requires school and district leaders who can analyze results to see what is or isn't effective, and can quickly act on that information to improve student outcomes. As several superintendents in the California Collaborative on District Reform report, "Ongoing data use [is] critical for this kind of responsiveness, as it enables them to examine the effectiveness of their interventions in struggling schools and change course immediately when an approach doesn't work."

Places Where It's Worked

Some districts have made dramatic improvements to the quality of struggling schools. Others have found high-quality alternatives for students who were stuck in low-performing schools. We provide examples of both approaches, and there are plenty of others.

Alum Rock School District: Creating Sustainable Change in Two High-Performing Schools

Alum Rock was once considered one of the lowest-performing school districts in Silicon Valley. While the district still has some low-performing schools, the academic growth of the entire district (135 API gain since 2004) and notable performance in various schools demonstrate that turnaround can happen effectively and can be sustained. Alum Rock operates three of the highest-performing, high-need traditional district schools in Silicon Valley: Millard McCollam Elementary, James McEntee Academy, and LUCHA (Learning in an Urban Community with High Achievement).

McEntee Academy is an interesting example of successful turnaround. In 2006, Lester W. Shields Elementary School was required by both state and federal law to implement drastic

A Vision for World-Class Schools: Lessons from High-Performing, High-Need Schools

A successful turnaround requires the right conditions, but conditions alone aren't enough. School leaders must have a clear and compelling vision of what an effective culture of high achievement looks like and the ability to put that vision into action with all the staff in the school.

To find the common elements that support strong student achievement, we have looked to some of the highest-performing schools in the region which predominantly serve students from disadvantaged backgrounds (identified in both FIGURES 5 AND 6). We asked the principals what they believe makes their school successful, how they build and sustain effective instructional teams, and how they design learning time for students to ensure they reach their full potential.

Below are four critical elements that are consistently present in high-performing schools. They're simple, but difficult to get right. When implemented correctly, these elements help leaders build truly effective schools.

Create a culture of academic rigor that values the urgency of learning and maintains high expectations for all students.

Teachers and leaders in great schools consistently focus on and structure the school day in ways that actively protect and prioritize every minute for engaged student learning. From the moment a student enters the school until the moment they go home for the day, the school leverages every opportunity to reiterate the importance of learning, achievement, and strong character development. This means all aspects of school—from the master calendar and behavior norms inside and outside of the classroom, to enrichment activities and engagement with parents and the community—are purposefully designed and structured to ensure students are learning to be strong achievers and developing the character traits of successful lifelong learners.

> "So the stronger the school's culture is, the less time you have to focus on behavior or say the same thing over and over. Because it's just the way you do things."
>
> **— Frances Teso, Principal of Voices College-Bound Language Academy**

The primary lever principals use to build this strong school culture is a clearly communicated set of verbal and written beliefs, rules, practices, and systems (e.g., student discipline or character development) that determine how a school functions.

At Cornerstone Preparatory Academy in East San Jose, for example, teachers and school leaders have established such a strong culture that students demonstrate joyful engagement throughout their classes, ensuring that most of the day is spent learning rigorous academic content and helping students internalize the school's core values. The evidence of an effective school culture is clear: the majority of teachers consistently use the same classroom management practices, including having students track the speaker closely with their eyes and use engaging calls/responses to ensure students are always paying attention and not wasting time. The high expectations for behavior enables students to participate in exceptionally rigorous academics, including the opportunity to learn to code, beginning in their first few years of school.

Principals said that a strong school culture enables their staff to focus on instruction at almost all times of the day.

"[School culture] frees up the time and resources and attention of students and staff to focus on what's important. So that's why it's important, because it's like an investment. So the stronger the school's culture is, the less time you have to focus on behavior or say the same thing over and over. Because it's just the way you do things. That's an expectation; that's just the way we do things here. And so then we can focus on teaching and learning… [The] culture here is that kids know that they're here to learn, so they take learning seriously."

- Frances Teso, Principal of Voices College-Bound Language Academy

Be highly selective when hiring teachers and staff.

Effective principals recognize that the quality of the classroom teacher is the biggest predictor of student academic achievement. Therefore school leaders at high-performing schools dedicate an immense amount of time and energy into hiring the best teachers for the school. They know the character traits they want to hire for: mission-aligned individuals who believe they have the capacity to determine how much a student learns in a year and are constantly looking to improve their practice.

At Rocketship Brilliant Minds in San Jose, for example, the principal recently interviewed over 200 teachers for four open positions. But securing a big pool of candidates isn't the only factor this school leader uses to ensure that exceptional teachers join the Rocketship team. Candidates are vetted through an intense screening process that includes multiple interviews with various stakeholders, including recruiters, principals, and teachers. Candidates also must put together detailed sample lessons. To get offered a job, candidates must show they have the technical skill and a deep belief in the ability of all students to achieve at very high levels. At Cornerstone Academy in San Jose, the principal routinely receives nearly 100 applications per open position. At Cornerstone, a teacher-led hiring committee of seven to eight individuals must all collectively vet and agree to hire a candidate before an offer of employment is made.

Invest in teacher coaching & prioritize teacher collaboration.

Schools that beat the odds for low -income students and students of color dedicate significant resources to training, coaching, and developing teachers.

> "The most important thing is having the right team. Because nothing that I do matters —it doesn't matter how long your vision document is. It doesn't matter how well-planned or how good your strategies are. You have to choose the right people and you have to get the right people to buy in. So I would say it's the team and also the skills to create buy-in for the team."
>
> **— Amy Filsinger, Principal of Rocketship Brilliant Minds**

At Rocketship Brilliant Minds, for example, a team of three instructional leaders spend most of their time coaching teachers, which involves observing and meeting with each teacher in the school at least once a week. During these coaching meetings, teachers reflect on their practice and receive guidance and feedback on how to improve the quality of their lessons. They are expected to implement feedback to improve their practice.

Effective instructional coaching also requires an investment in high-quality whole-school professional development, as well as daily or weekly co-planning time for teachers who work with the same students or who teach similar subjects. At Voices College-Bound Language Academy, for example, teachers have co-planning time weekly. They are often provided coverage so they can plan instructional units together and reflect together on student achievement data. Principal Teso says this investment in teacher collaboration time is one of the most important elements driving her students' success.

Build a system of support to personalize learning and ensure students master rigorous academic content.

Highly effective schools are clear on their purpose—to ensure that all of their students achieve at a level that sets them on track for success in college and career. The structure of the school day and the smart use of technology are both key to supporting schools to individualize instruction.

At Gilroy Prep, a Navigator School in Gilroy, California, the school day goes from 8 am to 3:35 pm, and an extra half hour for personalized learning, providing roughly 50 percent more instruction in a school year than the minimum required by state law. Teachers spend the majority of their time working with students in small groups and one-on-one rather than doing direct instruction to the entire class. The school has a block of roughly 30 to 45 minutes per day dedicated to real-time intervention, and double this time for students that need additional support. Students work on high-quality computer programs at their own pace that, in combination with interim assessments, allow the teacher to see exactly where students are academically. The teacher then pulls together small groups of students stuck on the same area to provide intense help while other students work collaboratively on projects or work in various computer programs to master additional skills at their own place. This restructured use of school time has yielded impressive results. Three other high-performing schools in the region leverage a similar approach: Cornerstone Academy, Rocketship Brilliant Minds, and KIPP Heartwood.

This brief list of important elements in high-performing schools is just a start. Innovate plans to do a more in-depth analysis of high-performing, high-need schools to further develop this vision for world-class schools.

changes due to its chronic low performance. Shields was closed at the end of the school year, and then the district designed and opened two smaller schools using the same facility: Anthony P. Russo Academy and James McEntee (both schools are on the same campus, and now operate under one principal at the school site). With the same students, the same building, but almost entirely different staff, these two schools immediately saw significant growth in academic performance in their first year of operation. Both schools have sustained their academic performance levels till 2012-13, with James McEntee being among the top performers in the region and the state with the high-need student population they serve.

Each school started fresh—a new principal and almost all new staff, with only about 10 percent of teachers returning who had previously taught at Shields. The district focused on building an excellent team and implementing a very focused, high-quality curriculum. The current Alum Rock Superintendent, Hilaria Bauer, who at the time was a district administrator, attributes the success to hiring the right people.

> "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 who did not come back actually became better teachers, only some of them, in other sites. In some cases they needed to look for another career… But the focus here was around building the right team."
>
> **— Superintendent Bauer, Alum Rock Union Elementary**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools: Finding, Developing and Using In-District Expertise

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, a 350,000-student district, made very significant academic progress in the past six years—in part through improving the performance of their low-performing schools. Identifying them was the first step.[xii] In 2010, Miami-Dade created the Education Transformation Office (ETO) to work with the lowest-performing schools in the district. Since then, the 19 original schools identified and placed under ETO moved from receiving "Ds" and "Fs" on Florida's statewide performance system, to receiving mostly "A's," "B's," and some "C's." Performance across all indicators has dramatically increased, with a 12 percent increase in the graduation rates of the high schools under ETO and significant performance gains in both math and reading.[xiii]

"Miami-Dade…developed a leadership program to train a bench of highly effective secondary principals who are prepared to turn around the most challenging, chronically low-performing senior high schools and to attract, empower, and lead high-performing teachers in order to improve student outcomes."

— American Institutes for Research, 2011

Many, but not all, principals in these schools were replaced. A competitive review process of all principals in the district identified leaders who were willing and *most able* to implement the district's turnaround vision.

Although not all of these schools participated in SIG (and therefore were not bound by SIG requirements), the district replaced more than 50 percent of the faculty in the first years of implementation. That "brought new energy and greater willingness to go above and beyond for our kids," reported Nikolai Vitti, then Assistant Superintendent of ETO,[xiv] noting that changing staff is critical to success.

The quality of the leader and staff chosen to operate the school is critical.[xv] Miami-Dade's and many other successful turnaround examples demonstrate that, ideally, the best and most experienced teachers would be placed in the turnaround school, but the reality is that many of the teachers hired for SIG turnaround efforts have been new teachers. Some districts, like Long Beach Unified School District, have found ways to work towards preparing these new teachers for success, such as creating relationships with teacher preparation institutes.[xvi]

Education Transformation Office at Miami-Dade

Miami-Dade, the fourth largest school district in the country, created ETO to overhaul 19 persistently low-performing schools. ETO has the authority to hire the most capable school leaders and to provide additional time for collaborative planning for teachers, full teacher transfer rights, and performance pay. Key to ETO's success was its ability to make decisions on staffing.

Then Assistant Superintendent Vitti reports that his ETO team is fully responsible for the schools, including all operational aspects and the academic results. Through gathering a team of "proven, experienced, and passionate urban educators," ETO is demonstrating they can provide the decision-making and capacity support to turn around the 19 schools in their charge.

At the heart of their work is improving instruction through developing a clear vision at each school and being very focused on implementing that vision, ensuring strong leadership and staff through competitive recruitment and other personal management practices focused on the students, and implementing effective intervention for their struggling students, among other strategies.

NYC Department of Education's iZone: New Schools Opened to Create Higher-Quality Options for Students

For over a decade, New York City Department of Education closed low-performing comprehensive high schools and opened small, specialized schools of choice. The iZone initiative created more than 100 new schools serving 20,000 students. These schools are organized around a theme such as law, public service or science, often partner with community, cultural or business groups, and offer a personalized environment. College expectations are reflected in the curriculum and instruction. School leaders were chosen through a competitive proposal process "designed to ensure that school founders met specific conditions and to stimulate creative ideas from a range of stakeholders and institutions."[xvii]

MDRC, an independent research organization, found that the new schools have produced very significant positive academic growth with disadvantaged students of color gaining the most. Clearly, starting new schools can be an effective, high-leverage way of achieving improvement at the school level and at scale.

Chicago Public Schools: School Turnaround at Scale

Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) turnaround efforts go back to 1997. CPS has implemented dramatic school turnaround efforts in 36 schools to date, including:

- Seven high schools reconstituted,
- Six elementary schools and two high schools closed and restarted,
- Four elementary schools placed under an internal district school turnaround program,
- 10 elementary schools and two high schools given to an external operator called Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), and
- Two elementary schools and three high schools managed by CPS Office of School Improvement.

The high school turnarounds were not effective, but 22 elementary schools showed significant gains in reading and math. The results for those 22 schools are shown below.

The American Institutes for Research and the Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) found that reading achievement in elementary schools was significantly better after the second year of intervention, and the gap between these low-performing schools and the entire district was reduced by almost half within four years.[xviii] The trend was even better

in math. After four years, the gap between students in these elementary schools and the district average was reduced by almost two-thirds (in both cases, these results controlled for any changes to the student populations at these schools).

A closer look at performance trends reveals that certain approaches were more effective than others. The largest learning gains in these elementary schools were produced by the closure/restart models and by the schools managed by the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL). The in-district Office of School Improvement (OSI) and the School Turnaround Specialist program also resulted in academic gains. Both of these efforts involved replacing the principal and developing an excellent new school leader, and the OSI approach involved replacing all teachers as well. See APPENDIX 2 AND 3 for performance data on each CPS school turnaround model.

Academy for Urban School Leadership in CPS

AUSL, a Chicago-based nonprofit school management organization, led improvement efforts in 10 low-performing elementary schools and two low-performing high schools, starting in 2006. AUSL hired new principals who were committed to the model and replaced many staff members at each school. Turnaround plans focused on establishing a positive school culture, shared responsibility for achievement, proven curriculum, and engaging and personalized instruction. AUSL schools produced some of the highest achievement gains of the reform schools.

UP Education Network in Boston and Lawrence, Massachusetts

The high-leverage strategy of starting a new school enables strong school management organizations with excellent leaders to quickly turnaround previously low-performing schools. UP Education Network, a nonprofit school network, has restarted five low-performing schools in Massachusetts. All of the UP schools have made notable gains in both reading and math. In 2013, two of the schools, UP Academy Boston and UP Academy Dorchester, led the state in student growth in mathematics. Students at UP Academy Dorchester also made the most significant one-year gain in overall reading and math proficiency of any school in the state's history.

As a school turnaround organization, UP is given the existing facility of a low-performing school, and practically all of the students at the former school enroll in the new UP school. UP's success is rooted in their commitment to recruiting and training high quality leaders, holding students to rigorous academic expectations, and providing teachers with intensive, ongoing training and significant time to collaborate and use data to drive their instruction.

Hard Lessons: Where It Hasn't Worked

This report focuses on successful turnaround stories, but there are also many examples of failed efforts in California and around the country. The high-leverage strategies that enable schools to improve — such as hiring effective teachers and giving autonomy to strong leaders — depend on effective implementation. Following are some approaches to avoid.

Closing a Low-Performing School, Then Sending All the Students to Another Low-Performing School. One of the most challenging issues related to school closure is the quality of school options available to the displaced students once their school is closed. Unlike the New York City case of phasing out schools to start new schools that are higher performing, some turnaround efforts have sent students from closed schools to surrounding neighborhood schools, which were also low-performing.

"Don't blame the kids. The challenges of Sanger's student population are not an acceptable excuse for failure."

— **Marc Johnson, Retired Superintendent**

Early in its turnaround efforts, Chicago Public Schools repeatedly closed low-performing schools and sent students to schools that were doing almost as badly. From 2001 to 2006, when the district closed 18 schools, only six percent of students moved to schools scoring in the top quartile.[xix]

Terminating Half Your Staff, and Replacing Them with Other Ineffective Staff. Finding effective leaders and teachers for turnaround schools is a huge challenge. Often the new principal and the new teachers are no more capable than the old ones.[xx] California districts often staff turnaround schools with inexperienced teachers.[xxi] The seniority rules in many districts mean that the most difficult jobs are too often filled by the newest teachers.[xxii]

The District Also Must Change

School turnarounds aren't just about the school. The district's practices and policies must change to support improvement.[xxiii] Placing the most talented and experienced principals and teachers in the highest-need schools requires district leadership.

Sanger Unified School District is a model for phenomenally successful district-wide change. Serving about 11,000 students in a rural community outside of Fresno, Sanger faces many challenges. With many students whose parents are migrant farm workers, mobility is high in the district. Three-quarters come from low-income families and nearly half speak English as a second language.

Over a period of nine years, Sanger moved from the bottom 10 percent of districts in the state, with an API of 636, to an API of 833. It has been recognized as a high-performing, high-growth district for disadvantaged students.

Sangers' successful turnaround story is lengthy and complex, but at the heart of its success is a set of beliefs about how to maximize student learning:

- "*Hope is not a strategy.* The district employs concentrated efforts to improve student outcomes and reverse trends of low performance."
- "*Don't blame the kids.* The challenges of Sanger's student population are not an acceptable excuse for failure."
- "*It's about student learning.*" Student learning is generated by high-quality instruction; dialogue must constantly focus on the evidence of teacher impact, on the learning itself. The focus is shifted from adult needs to the needs of students and a commitment to do whatever it takes to find solutions for those students.[xxiv]

The district uses a "tight-loose" approach. That means that the district has a set of non-negotiable expectations for its principals and school staff, including the implementation of professional learning communities, high outcomes for students, and explicit direct instruction—but almost full autonomy on how to implement that at the school site.

In practice, this means the district sets "essential" standards for all grade levels. Using a set of principles about learning instead of a prespecified curriculum, teachers focus on diagnosing and responding to student learning needs. Student data gathered from periodic assessments helps determine instruction and lesson planning, so the curriculum can be adjusted as needed. Sanger uses a system of interventions for all students during classes and has additional time specifically allocated for instructional interventions each day for struggling students.

Principals and teachers receive significant support and leadership from the central office. The district also created clearer guidelines for assessing progress. In this manner, Sanger has coupled high pressure for improvement with increased support. Sanger's story demonstrates that effective district-wide policies and strong school-level implementation can achieve impressive academic gains for high-need students.

What Would It Take for The Lowest-Performing Schools in Silicon Valley to Become Great?

Dramatically improving the performance of the lowest-performing schools in the region will take bold moves from school officials, parents, educators, policy-makers and business leaders. Here are some recommendations:

Don't tinker. A program here and a program there won't be enough. What is needed is **whole-school reform,** based on proven models. Schools that have been persistently

underperforming for years tend to have significant problems that affect all aspects of school operations. The people and the culture of the school – the two most important levers for high performance – won't be changed by adding an intervention program or some after-school tutoring. Very low-performing schools require fundamental change.

Learn from models of excellence. District leaders and the community should examine the most successful schools in the region and the country for lessons on what makes for a sustainably excellent school for high-need students. Here in Silicon Valley, we are fortunate to have a number of high-performing, innovative schools, with proven practices that can be replicated.

Act now. The students attending these schools can't wait – they need and deserve a great education now.

Conclusion

The odds are stacked against the 15,985 students that attend the 28 lowest-performing schools in the Valley. Most of them are not performing at grade level in core subjects under the previous California standards and will face even greater challenges under the more rigorous Common Core Standards and new state tests. The need to change these students' educational trajectory is great—not acting with deliberate urgency means their chances of going to college and onto competitive 21st century careers are diminished as the years go by.

We intend for this report to focus community attention and effort in finding solutions for these students. While the challenge is great, there are examples of entire districts and schools that have achieved significant success in California and throughout the country. Transplanting models that have worked elsewhere does not ensure success here, but exploring the approaches others have taken can help us learn valuable lessons about the dramatic changes that can be accomplished for students of all backgrounds. In Silicon Valley, unlike many other parts of the state and country, we have the resources and can build the capacity to achieve this at scale.

List of Figures

Methodology

Data and Performance Indicators

The following publicly available data files were obtained from the California Department of Education (CDE) for the 2008-09 to 2012-13 school years:

- Public Schools and Districts Directory
- Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR)
- California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)
- Growth Academic Performance Index (API)
- Enrollment by school

Multiple performance indicators were used to define the absolute performance, absolute growth and comparative performance of low-performing schools.

Academic Performance Index (API)
The API was developed by the CDE for state and federal accountability purposes to measure district, school, and student group performance and improvement on statewide assessments. The API is calculated by averaging student test scores on the California Standards Tests (CSTs) in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, history-social science; and science, the California Modified Assessment (CMA) in ELA, mathematics and science; the California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA) in ELA and mathematics; and the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)[1] in grade 10 ELA and mathematics. Various weights are applied to each exam. API scores range from 200 to 1000, with a state set target of 800.[2]

Academic Performance Index Growth (APIG)
The APIG is calculated by the CDE to measure year-to-year improvement on statewide assessments. The APIG is the difference between the API based on prior year assessment results and the API based on current year assessment results (e.g., growth from 2012 Base API to 2013 Growth).[3]

School Achievement Index (SAI)
We also used a comparative perspective on school performance developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) through the California Comprehensive Center (CA CC) to support the California Department of Education (CDE) in its effort to monitor and improve the quality of schools in California. Students enter school at different levels of preparation and with different challenges – whether they are living in poverty, learning English, or have special learning needs. Many different factors have an impact on students and schools, so the addition of the CA CC's measure enables us to paint a fuller picture of school performance. The CA CC's School Achievement Index (SAI) is a measure that demonstrates a school's performance relative to its student population, indicating whether it is over or underperforming compared to other schools serving similar students across the state. This gives credit to schools that are beating the odds for high-need students and identifies schools that should be doing much better.

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1 CAHSEE grade 10 mathematics results were used because no other standardized test is required of all high school students.

2 For more information about the API, see: HTTP://WWW.CDE.CA.GOV/TA/AC/AP/

3 More information about the APIG can also be found at: HTTP://WWW.CDE.CA.GOV/TA/AC/AP/

For more information on the methodology, see the Supplemental Technical Guide at WWW.INNOVATESCHOOLS.ORG/TURNAROUND_TECHNICALGUIDE.PDF

Criteria Used to Identify Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools

We used the following three-part methodology to identify the lowest-performing schools across San Mateo and Santa Clara counties:

1) Absolute Performance: Schools in Bottom 10 Percent in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties

A school is first identified as persistently lowest performing if it falls in the bottom 10th percentile compared to schools in the same grade span for three out of the most recent five years of API data (2008-09 through 2012-13) in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

API at the 10th Percentile from 2008-09 to 2012-13

	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09
Elementary	754	764	759	741	729
Middle School	735	732	719	706	688
High School	675	683	682	668	657

2) Improvement: Cumulative API Gains for Greater Than 59 Points from 2008-09 to 2012-13

Schools that have improved at a high rate are on the right path. Those schools that have demonstrated significant growth over five years - more than 59 points from 2008-09 to 2012-13 - **are not identified as lowest performing in our report.**

High improvement defined: Schools that have grown more than 75 percent of schools in the state using cumulative API gains over the last five years.

3) Comparative Performance: Schools Performing Above Predicted Performance on the SAI Are Not Identified as Lowest-Performing

Students enter school at different levels of preparation and with different challenges – whether they are living in poverty, learning English, or have special learning needs. Many different factors have an impact on students and schools. In order to account for this, we used a comparative perspective on school performance developed by the AIR. This approach enables us to paint a fuller picture of school performance, by allowing us to identify the schools that are performing at a lower level than schools serving similar students across the state.

Our report excludes lowest-performing schools that have a SAI that indicates they are performing at a better level than most schools with similar demographics in California.

In other words, the schools included in this report are not only in the lowest 10th percentile, but are also low performing in comparison to schools serving similar students. This gives credit to schools that are beating the odds for high-need students and identifies schools that should be doing much better.

The table below details the thresholds each school must meet or exceed in order to not be identified as one of the lowest-performing schools in our report. Performing below this thresholds means schools are performing below or as predicted for the particular students they serve. When a school's SAI score is below these thresholds, the school's data indicates they fall below positive predicted performance threshold.

Schools falling below SAI threshold in each year are still identified as persistently lowest-performing schools

	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09
SAI Threshold	.5240648	.5230334	.5260307	.5174598	.5036939

Appendix 1

Demographic and Performance Data for Silicon Valley's Lowest-Performing Schools

Five Years of Analysis, from 2008-09 to 2012-13

		Demographic Data		
School	**District**	**Enrollment 2013-14**	**Percent Low-Income 2012-13**	**Percent English Learner 2013-14**
ELEMENTARY & K-8 SCHOOLS				
Daniel Lairon College Prepatory Academy	Franklin-McKinley Elementary	467	94%	46%
McKinley Elementary	Franklin-McKinley Elementary	454	93	80
Santee Elementary	Franklin-McKinley Elementary	468	97	81
P. A. Walsh Elementary	Morgan Hill Unified	580	81	57
Mt. Pleasant Elementary	Mt. Pleasant Elementary	354	79	69
Linda Mar Educational Center	Pacifica	26	19	8
Belle Haven Elementary	Ravenswood City Elementary	564	92	71
Fair Oaks Elementary	Redwood City Elementary	366	91	86
Garfield Elementary	Redwood City Elementary	693	64	79
Hawes Elementary	Redwood City Elementary	408	38	78
Hoover Elementary	Redwood City Elementary	828	42	77
John Gill Elementary	Redwood City Elementary	451	81	66
Selby Lane Elementary	Redwood City Elementary	694	83	63
Empire Gardens Elementary	San Jose Unified	454	85	65
Gardner Elementary	San Jose Unified	508	78	65
Horace Mann Elementary	San Jose Unified	576	76	57
Selma Olinder Elementary	San Jose Unified	467	83	67
Horrall Elementary	San Mateo-Foster City	520	74	54
Scott Lane Elementary	Santa Clara Unified	491	86	71
MIDDLE SCHOOLS				
Lee Mathson Middle	Alum Rock Union Elementary	539	92	40
Sylvandale Middle	Franklin-McKinley Elementary	840	77	27
Cesar Chavez	Ravenswood City Elementary	206	97	70
Ronald McNair Academy	Ravenswood City Elementary	241	97	62
Herbert Hoover Middle	San Jose Unified	1080	70	26
Columbia Middle	Sunnyvale	740	74	29
HIGH SCHOOLS				
James Lick High	East Side Union High	1193	81	22
William C. Overfelt High	East Side Union High	1447	92	28
K-12 SCHOOLS				
Escuela Popular Accelerated Family Learning	East Side Union High	330	80	78

*See predicted performance threshold in the METHODOLOGY

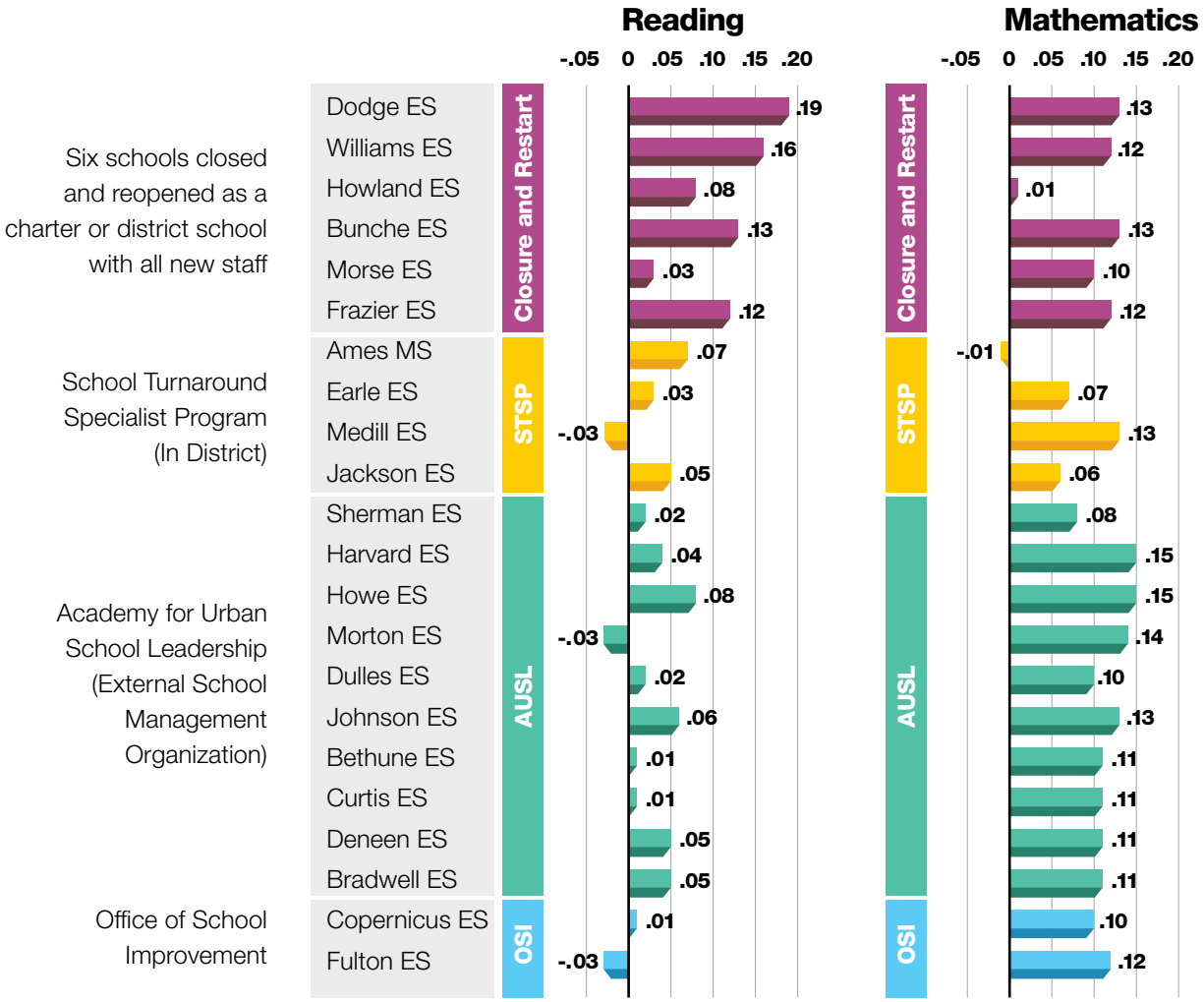
School	Academic Performance Data			
	API 2012-13	Five-Year Cumulative API Gain 2008-09 to 2012-13	Years in the Bottom 10% in Silicon Valley	Years Below Predicted Performance Threshold*
ELEMENTARY & K-8 SCHOOLS				
Daniel Lairon College Prepatory Academy	719	15 ▲	5	5
McKinley Elementary	691	44 ▲	4	5
Santee Elementary	701	48 ▲	5	5
P. A. Walsh Elementary	742	31 ▲	3	5
Mt. Pleasant Elementary	731	12 ▲	5	5
Linda Mar Educational Center	703	-69 ▼	3	3
Belle Haven Elementary	661	27 ▲	5	5
Fair Oaks Elementary	741	47 ▲	5	4
Garfield Elementary	662	-24 ▼	5	5
Hawes Elementary	728	16 ▲	3	5
Hoover Elementary	737	28 ▲	5	5
John Gill Elementary	699	-80 ▼	3	5
Selby Lane Elementary	730	24 ▲	5	5
Empire Gardens Elementary	661	38 ▲	5	5
Gardner Elementary	689	-10 ▼	4	5
Horace Mann Elementary	704	-12 ▼	5	5
Selma Olinder Elementary	741	3 ▲	4	5
Horrall Elementary	746	1 ▲	5	5
Scott Lane Elementary	750	39 ▲	4	5
MIDDLE SCHOOLS				
Lee Mathson Middle	708	11 ▲	4	5
Sylvandale Middle	735	34 ▲	3	5
Cesar Chavez	640	15 ▲	5	5
Ronald McNair Academy	621	2 ▲	5	5
Herbert Hoover Middle	705	55 ▲	5	5
Columbia Middle	733	20 ▲	4	5
HIGH SCHOOLS				
James Lick High	674	45 ▲	3	5
William C. Overfelt High	676	25 ▲	4	5
K-12 SCHOOLS				
Escuela Popular Accelerated Family Learning	581	50 ▲	5	5

*See predicted performance threshold in the **METHODOLOGY**

Appendix 2

Figure 8 **Most Chicago Public Schools' Elementaries Significantly Grew Student Learning in Both Reading and Math After First Year of Turnaround Implementation**

Difference in reading and math growth in turnaround schools relative to average growth at comparison schools, first year of reform



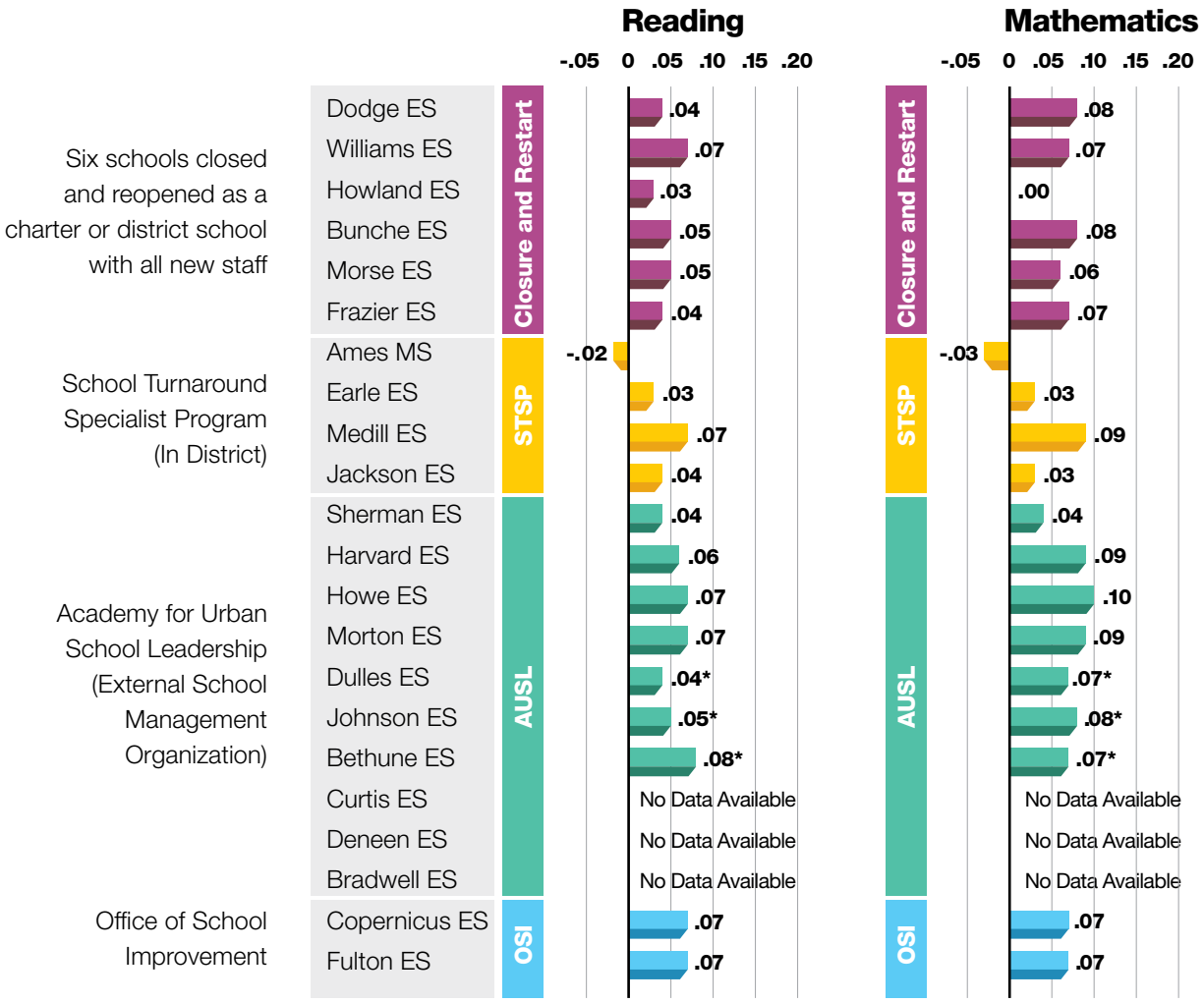
Note: These numbers come from statistical models that chose comparison schools on the basis of the nearest neighbor approach and control for changes in students' background characteristics over time. Units are in standard deviations and represent the first year effect and average post-intervention growth in years 2, 3, and 4 above the values of the comprarison group of schools.

Source: American Institutes for Research and Chicago Consortium for Research, 2013

Appendix 3

Figure 9 **Chicago Public Schools' Elementaries Sustained Gains After Year One in Both Reading and Mathematics**

Difference in reading and math growth in turnaround schools relative to average growth at comparison schools, years two to four of reform



*One year of data available

Note: These numbers come from statistical models that chose comparison schools on the basis of the nearest neighbor approach and control for changes in students' background characteristics over time. Units are in standard deviations and represent the first year effect and average post-intervention growth in years 2, 3, and 4 above the values of the comprarison group of schools.

Source: American Institutes for Research and Chicago Consortium for Research, 2013

Endnotes

[i] Hein, V., Smerdon, B., Quill Research Associates, LLC, & Sambolt, M., 2013; Hernandez, D., 201; Lesnick, J., Goerge, Robert, Smithgall, C. & Gwynne, J., 2010

[ii] Hernandez, 2011.

[iii] Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010; Hernandez, 2011; Hein, V., Smerdon, B., Quill Research Associates, LLC, & Sambolt, M., 2013; De la Torre, M., Allensworth, E., Jagesic, S., Sebastian, J., Salmonowicz, M., Meyers, C., & Gerdeman, R. D., 2012; Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1993; Malecki & Elliot, 2002; Welsh, Parke, Widaman, & O'Neil, 2001.

[iv] Balfanz, 2009; De la Torre, M., Allensworth, E., Jagesic, S., Sebastian, J., Salmonowicz, M., Meyers, C., & Gerdeman, R. D., 2012.

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[vi] Complete College America, 2012.

[vii] Bailey, T., 2010.

[viii] California SIG study, AIR analysis.

[ix] O'Brien, E. M. & Dervarics, C. J., 2013.

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[xi] Institute of Education Sciences, 2013. Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M., 2008; School Turnaround Group, Mass Insight Education, 2012;

[xii] Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, 2012.

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[xiv] Educational Research Strategies, 2013.

[xv] O'Brien, E. M. & Dervarics, C. J., 2013.

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[xvii] Unterman, R., 2014.

[xviii] De la Torre, M., Allensworth, E., Jagesic, S., Sebastian, J., Salmonowicz, M., Meyers, C., & Gerdeman, R. D., 2012.

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[xxiii] Knudson, J., Shambaugh, L. & O'Day, J., 2011

[xxiv] Knudson, J., Shambaugh, L. & O'Day, J., 2011; Stuart, L. & Hahnel, C. (2011).; David, J. L. & Talbert, J. E., 2012.

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