



UNSTOPPABLE LEARNING

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Chula Vista Elementary
School District
CHULA VISTA, CALIFORNIA

Student progress as measured by the California Standards Test in both ELA and mathematics doubled from 2002 to 2013.



DEMOGRAPHICS

- 29,642 Students
- 1,200 Teachers
- 56% Free and reduced lunch
- 36% Limited English proficient
- 11% Special education
- 6% African American
- 68% Hispanic
- 2% Native American/Alaska Native

The largest K–6 district in the state of California, Chula Vista is comprised of 45 schools, including 5 charter schools. Thirty of the 40 noncharter schools receive Title I funding. The district spans suburban and urban areas from downtown San Diego to the border with Tijuana, Mexico, and serves many transborder families.

CHALLENGE

Direct student achievement data remained relatively flat from 2002 to 2006. Administrators observed that there was a lack of consistency in instructional practice and determined this was what was impacting the inconsistent and overall static performance across the 45 schools.

Knowing Chula Vista could do better, district leadership initiated conversations with literacy and instruction expert Douglas Fisher about instructional methodology.

In 2007, Dr. Fisher and his colleague, Nancy Frey, began providing professional development to Chula Vista district administrators. The initial focus was on effective delivery of the gradual release of responsibility instructional model: “I do. We do. You do together. You do independently.” As their work with Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey progressed and the administrative team developed a common language around instructional delivery, they realized this training needed to be shared with teachers districtwide.

IMPLEMENTATION

Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey worked for three years with site-based instructional leadership teams comprised of the principal and one teacher per grade. Eventually, the professional development extended to all teachers districtwide.

Participants discovered how to launch student learning by establishing clear learning targets, making learning relevant, anticipating student errors and misconceptions, and incorporating numerous strategies to invite students into learning. They also learned how to consolidate student learning—how to deliver instruction in a way that students would know how and when to use the information gained.

Chula Vista spent two years focusing on the “You do” phase of gradual release. Special emphasis was placed on instruction for English learners. Follow-up professional development included productive group work and

collaborative conversations about engaging students in learning. Additional guided instruction focused on questions, cues, and prompts to assist and scaffold learning for students.

Chula Vista spent seven years developing the capacity for understanding and implementing common instructional pedagogies systemwide. To support and sustain these changes, training continued for teachers, administrators, and support staff. Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey also conducted regular walkthroughs and engaged numerous teachers and administrators in one-to-one coaching.

Chula Vista’s executive directors and the assistant superintendent continue to visit schools and conduct walkthroughs with site principals on a regular basis. This has sustained the common language and high expectations systemwide.

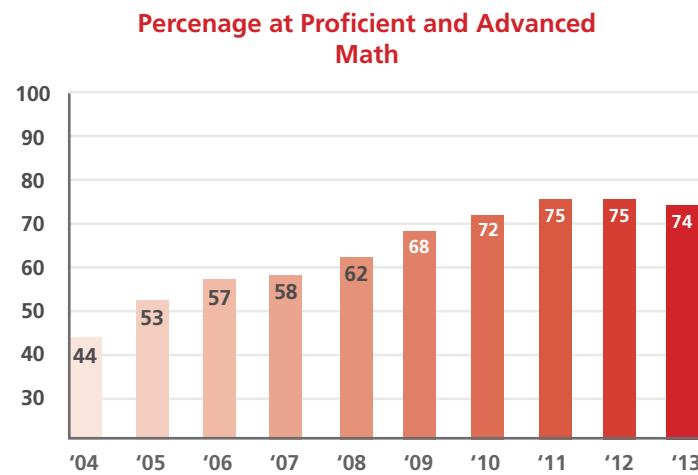
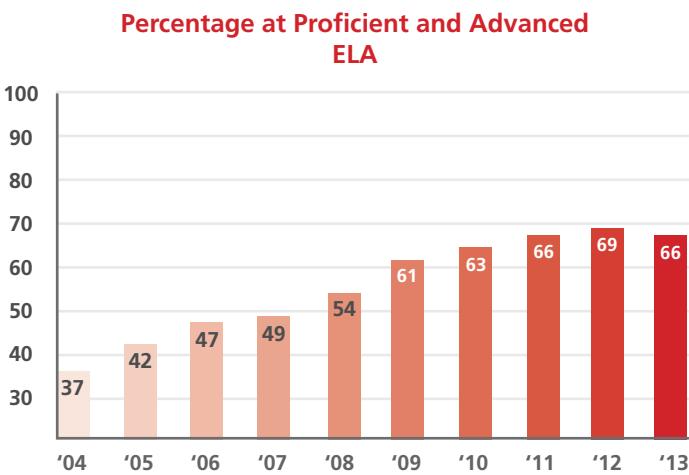
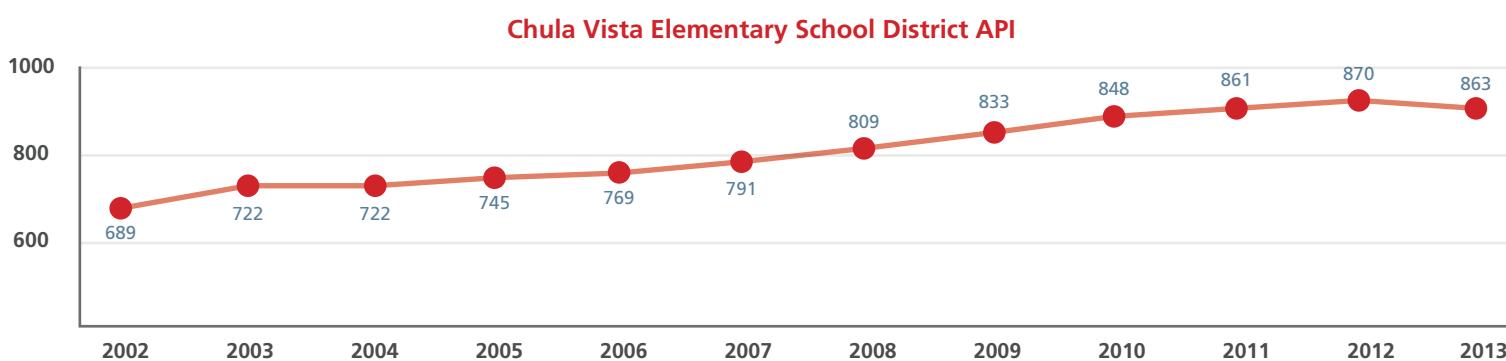
Chula Vista is so thankful for the work on developing common language around instructional practice as a result of our professional learning and the ongoing support provided by Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey. Our students are receiving a first-rate education program as a result."

—Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services John M. Nelson

RESULTS

"The results—both qualitative and quantitative—have been amazing," says Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services John M. Nelson. Teachers across the system are able to engage in conversations not only about what to teach and assess, but also about how to effectively use instructional practices to ensure quality teaching.

The data continued to improve. Student progress as measured by the California Standards Test in both ELA and mathematics doubled from 2002 to 2013, the year the testing ended. During this same period, the Academic Performance Index (API), California's growth model target, increased over 150 points.



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