



# PLC AT WORK™

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

## Sanger Unified School District SANGER, CALIFORNIA

From 2005 to 2012, student scores on the California Academic Performance Index (API) increased from 702 to 822. For EL students, the scores increased from 636 to 772.



*Sanger Unified School District students*

## DEMOGRAPHICS



- 20 Schools
- 10,800 Students
- PPE \$8,174
- 78% Free and reduced lunch
- 84% Minority
- 71% Hispanic
- 22% English learners

*Sanger Unified School District is located in Fresno County, California, 13 miles east-southeast of Fresno.*

## CHALLENGE

Sanger Unified School District, located in California’s Central Valley, is noted for extreme poverty and high numbers of English learners. In 2004, it was named one of the 98 lowest-performing districts in the state. Staff realized that too much focus was placed on teaching in isolation and that they needed to shift to a collaborative focus on student learning. Building systemwide professional learning communities provided a solid foundation for reaching success on multiple school improvement initiatives.

### Shifting the District Culture

From	To
Professional isolation	Collaboration and shared responsibility
Following the textbook	Diagnosing student learning needs
Principals as managers	Principals as leaders of adult learning
Top-down mandates and compliance	Reciprocal accountability

*David & Talbert, 2013*

## IMPLEMENTATION

Sanger district leaders launched the PLC initiative in 2005 after attending a professional development session offered by Richard and Rebecca DuFour. They succeeded in creating a collaborative teaching culture by making this a top, sustained priority, and Sanger has been celebrated as an exemplar of a districtwide PLC (David & Talbert, 2013, p. 35) (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2006, p. 151). *“In our journey of improvement, one of the best resources we have been able to turn to for support has been our partners at Solution Tree,”* says former Superintendent Marc Johnson, who was named 2011 National Superintendent of the Year by AASA.

On a daily basis, the staff work together to identify critical standards where proficiency is not yet in evidence. Then, they design focused instructional support, identifying successful instructional strategies and developing explicit direct instruction and lesson plans as teams. The success of these efforts is assessed and monitored regularly at the district level and daily at the classroom level. Adjustments are made as needed, with immediate support being provided to students who are not showing mastery. This collaborative effort is supported and sustained by teams of teachers districtwide who share a common vision and goal: “success for our kids!” (All Things PLC, n.d.).



“Whether it has been access to quality professional learning at PLC institutes and summits, customized site-based opportunities, or web-based connections with major events, Solution Tree meets our needs every time. The work of Solution Tree authors has served as a resource that we continually draw from to deepen our understanding.”

—Former Superintendent Marc Johnson

“The foundation of collaboration that Sanger has built over the last 10 years is what has prepared us to engage in the deeper conversations related to Common Core. Our conversations will continue to revolve around what we want students to learn, how will we know they learned it, how will we respond when learning has already taken place, and how will respond when learning has not occurred.”

—Superintendent Matt Navo

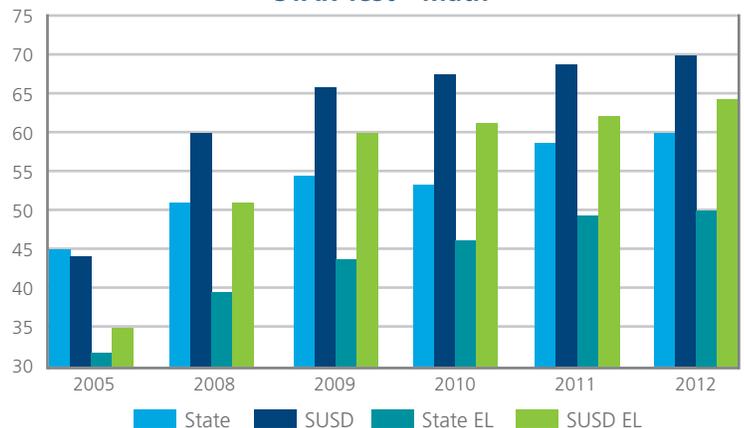
## RESULTS

Sanger became a culture in which collaboration thrived, not just in the initial PLC development, but as a sustained practice that united the district.

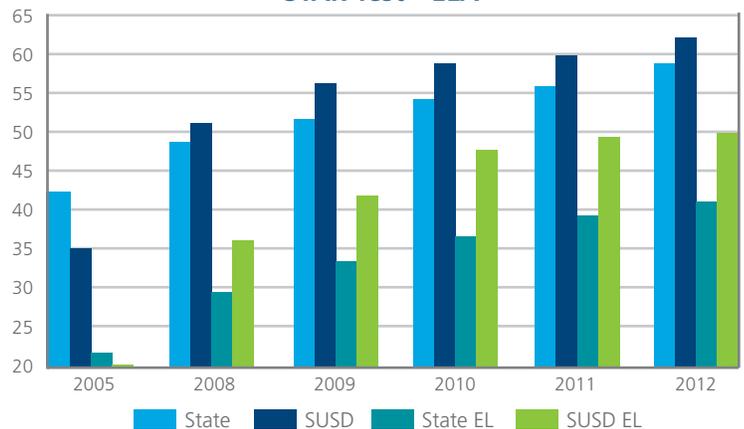
Since 2004, seven schools in the district have moved out of federal improvement status and four achieved state distinguished schools status. Sanger’s test score gains for all students and for English learners have surpassed average state gains each year since testing began under No Child Left Behind. From 2005 to 2012, student scores on the California Academic Performance Index (API) increased from 702 to 822. For EL students, the scores increased from 636 to 772. Currently, Sanger has a high school graduation rate of 94% for Latinos and close to 97% for all students.

Sanger seems poised for continued success. *“In this time of transition to the world of Common Core, Solution Tree continues to be a vital resource for us,”* says former Superintendent Marc Johnson. *“Now more than at any other time in our work, it is important to share the journey with members of a high-functioning collaborative team. Continuing to improve as a professional learning community is the pathway we must walk!”*

**Percentage of Proficient Students on California State STAR Test—Math**



**Percentage of Proficient Students on California State STAR Test—ELA**



All Things PLC. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://allthingsplc.info/evidence/sangerunified/index.php>

David, J. L., & Talbert, J. E. (2013). *Turning around a high-poverty district: Learning from Sanger*. San Francisco, CA: S.H. Cowell Foundation.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Karhanek, G. (2006). *“Under no circumstances blame the kids: Sanger Unified School District.” Raising the bar and closing the gap: Whatever it takes*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

# Reach new heights of student learning

You're dedicated to helping your students succeed. At Solution Tree, our experts are committed to equipping you with solutions that directly impact student achievement. We invite you to explore the best of content-rich, research-based professional development and discover just how rewarding the journey can be.

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