Hawthorne School District

Positive Outliers Case Study

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LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE

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Executive Summary

Serving a working-class suburb of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, the Hawthorne School District (HSD) is a small district with 11 schools: seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and one dependent charter high school. HSD's students are predominantly from low-income families (87%). Most students (71%) are Latino/a and about fifth (21%) are African American, with smaller numbers of Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander, and White students. Hawthorne has received notable attention for high performance, with five of the district's seven elementary schools earning Gold Ribbon status from the state of California in 2016.

HSD is one of seven districts studied by researchers at the Learning Policy Institute in a mixed-methods study, which sought to learn from positive outlier districts in which African American, Latino/a, and White students did better than predicted on California's math and English language arts tests from 2015 through 2017, after accounting for differences in socioeconomic status. This in-depth case study complements the research series by describing the critical practices and policies within HSD that have promoted student learning, especially among students of color, in the context of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the deeper learning they seek to foster.

Through an analysis of interviews and documents, this case study describes key factors that participants described as central to the district's success:

- **A climate of respect, trust, and strong relationships**—HSD built a climate characterized by respect, trust, and strong relationships among and between adults and students, and this climate facilitated learning and change in schools and classrooms. Staff shared a common commitment to a set of values related to improving education and ensuring equitable opportunities for all students. District and teachers-union leaders reported a strong relationship between the school board and the teachers union and said this relationship contributed to staff longevity.

- **Strong, stable district leadership**—HSD's district leadership played an important role in the district's ability to facilitate improvement in teaching and learning. Stable, collaborative, visible, and strong leadership at the central office level, along with external leadership from strategic partnerships, was seen as critical to HSD's ability to deeply implement new standards and curricula.

- **Intentionally building capacity and buy-in for CCSS**—HSD took a deliberate approach to CCSS implementation, intentionally building capacity and buy-in with staff. The phases of this rollout included: (1) studying the standards; (2) adopting curriculum "not all at one time" (HSD started with math) and delivering professional development to advance implementation of that curriculum relative to standards (including guidance around pacing); and (3) refining implementation and incorporating resources such as assessments. Much of this deliberate approach was teacher-driven, as teachers were given time and resources to study and then implement the new standards. The teacher-driven approach characterized much of the district's work beyond CCSS as well, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that teachers understand, support, and have the resources necessary to implement reforms.

- **Consistent support for CCSS instruction**—HSD's supports for CCSS instruction were aligned districtwide, with a number of consistent structures and practices across school sites. These common practices supported teacher collaboration and were designed to ensure that all students had access to rigorous instruction in math and English language arts. Schools engaged in site-level planning; participated in professional development for teachers, administrators, and coaches; used data for decision-making; provided supports targeted to student needs; and hired a family outreach special projects teacher to support family engagement.

Two additional themes illuminate the complex challenges facing school districts, although they were not central contributors to the strong performance in Hawthorne. First, we heard mixed reports regarding new initiatives associated with school climate, social-emotional needs, and disciplinary reform. Second, we found that declining enrollment, which was attributed to gentrification and the rising cost of living in Hawthorne, presented a significant challenge to the district moving forward. While we do not present causal claims regarding these findings, the practices and challenges of this positive outlier district may yield insights for district leaders and policymakers seeking to implement new standards that engender meaningful learning across all students and support the success of historically marginalized students.

Introduction

California, like the nation as a whole, has long struggled with educational inequities regarding race, socioeconomic status, and language background.[1] Well-documented gaps in academic achievement reflect similar disparities in resources and facilities, instructional quality, and school climate. The results of California's new state assessments, adopted as part of the shift to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), continue to show evidence of such inequities.[2] Although statewide gaps persist, some school districts have outperformed expectations among African American, Latino/a,[3] and White students, even when accounting for differences in their families' socioeconomic status. To help understand what practices may have contributed to the academic success of historically underserved students in these "positive outlier" districts, we examine the case of Hawthorne, a district with higher-than-predicted student performance on CCSS assessments. This case study is part of a larger quantitative study of district performance in California[4] and of a qualitative study that examines trends across seven case studies of districts, such as Hawthorne School District, that are doing better than expected.[5]

Hawthorne School District (HSD) serves approximately 8,500 students in a working-class suburb of the Los Angeles metropolitan area's South Bay region. The city of Hawthorne is near the Los Angeles International Airport, next to the communities of Inglewood, Gardena, El Segundo, and Manhattan Beach. HSD consists of 11 schools: seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and one dependent charter high school. Given that this district has only one high school—a dependent charter—it functions largely as a k–8 district, and this case study focuses on the district's role in supporting k–8 schools.

Hawthorne's student body is predominantly low-income, about two thirds Latino/a, and one fifth African American. (See Figure 1 for district demographics.) The district's teaching force, while not an exact reflection of its student body, is more diverse than the teaching force in California or nationally: Fewer than half the teachers in Hawthorne are White, one third are Latino/a, and one tenth are African American. (More details about teacher demographics are presented in Figure 1.)

Figure 1
Hawthorne School District Snapshot, 2017–18

- 8,520 pre-k through 12th-grade students

- 11 schools: 7 elementary schools, 3 middle schools,
  and 1 dependent charter high school

- Student racial/ethnic identifications: 71% Latino/a, 21% African American,
  2% White, 2% Asian, 2% Filipino/a, and 1% Pacific Islander

- Teacher racial/ethnic identifications: 45% White, 33% Latino/a,
  9% African American, 7% Asian, 2% Filipino/a, and 2% two or more races

- 33% of students are ELs and 8% are RFEP

- 92% of ELs report Spanish as their primary language; other reported
  languages include Arabic, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese

- 87% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch

- 1% of students are foster youth

- LCFF overall unduplicated students: 88%

- Total district budget: $97,249,632

- LCFF supplemental and concentration funds: $78,363,945

Notes: ELs = English learners; RFEP = Reclassified Fluent English Proficient; LCFF = California's Local Control Funding Formula.

Sources: California Department of Education, Hawthorne School District. (n.d.). Hawthorne School District website. https://www.hawthorne.k12.ca.us/ (accessed 05/07/19); Hawthorne School District. (2017). *Local Control Accountability Plan and annual update (LCAP) template.* http://hsd-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1531973529994/1368363791771/8370112090367 493740.pdf.

As illustrated in Table 1, African American and Latino/a students and students from low-income families in Hawthorne have outperformed their peers across the state on California achievement tests.[6] For example, 26% of African American students and 32% of Latino/a students met or exceeded the grade-level standards on the 2017 math assessment, compared to 19% of African American students and 25% of Latino/a students statewide. Hawthorne has also suspended these students at lower rates than districts statewide: For instance, whereas 10% of African American students were suspended in California in 2016–17, only 4% of African American students in Hawthorne were suspended in that same year. In contrast to the statewide pattern, Latino/a students in Hawthorne were suspended at a lower rate than their White peers; however, African American students continued to be disproportionately suspended in comparison to students of other racial groups. For more on Hawthorne's test performance, see Appendix A.

Table 1
Hawthorne School District Performance Compared to State

Demographic	Hawthorne School District	California
Percent of students who met or exceeded standard on 2017 CAASPP in math		
Overall	32	38
Low-income	30	25
African American	26	19
Latino/a	32	25
Asian	61	72
Filipino/a	57	70
Pacific Islander	24	42
White	48	53
Percent of students who met or exceeded standard on 2017 CAASPP in ELA		
Overall	41	49
Low-income	38	36
African American	36	31
Latino/a	40	37
Asian	62	75
Filipino/a	68	57
Pacific Islander	38	31
White	51	64
Percent of students suspended at least once in 2016–17		
Overall	1	4
Low-income	1	5
African American	4	10
Latino/a	1	4
Asian	0	1
Filipino/a	1	1
Pacific Islander	1	5
White	3	3

Notes: "Percent of students who met or exceeded standard" represents the percent of students of a given group who met or exceeded the grade and subject standards on CAASPP, averaged across grades. Suspension rates represent the unduplicated count of students suspended divided by the total number of students enrolled in the district in the given group. "Low-income" refers to students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Data sources: California Department of Education. (2017). Suspension data. https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filessd.asp; California Department of Education. (n.d.). California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) results. https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/ (accessed 08/24/18).

HSD has received notable attention for high performance. Five of the district's elementary schools earned Gold Ribbon status from the state of California in 2016. The district has also been profiled by Pearson Education for its implementation of elementary math curriculum[7] and by the California Department of Education for its use of state-provided interim assessments.[8] One of Hawthorne's middle schools was featured in a study of school climate in schools outperforming achievement expectations.[9]

The case study of HSD is part of a larger mixed-methods study, which includes a quantitative analysis that identified positive outlier districts such as HSD in which African American, Latino/a, and White students did better than predicted on California's math and ELA tests from 2015 through 2017, even after accounting for differences in socioeconomic status.[10] The case study is also part of a series of seven individual case studies of positive outlier districts, as well as a cross-case study, that examine trends across all seven districts.[11] More information about the study methods is included in Appendix B.

Based on interviews and document reviews, our case study of HSD revealed four key themes that participants described as central to the district's success:

1. a **climate** of respect, trust, and strong relationships;
2. strong, stable district **leadership**;
3. intentionally taking time to **build capacity and buy-in** for CCSS; and
4. **consistent support** for CCSS instruction.

Although they are not central contributors to the strong performance in Hawthorne, two additional themes illuminate the complex challenges facing school districts: First, we heard mixed reports regarding new initiatives associated with school climate, social-emotional needs, and disciplinary reform. Second, we found that declining enrollment, which was attributed to gentrification and the rising cost of living in Hawthorne, presents a significant challenge to the district moving forward. While we do not present causal claims regarding these findings, the practices and challenges of this positive outlier district may yield insights for district leaders and policymakers seeking to support the success of historically marginalized students.

"The Hawthorne Way": A Climate of Respect, Trust, and Strong Relationships

One consistent narrative emerged from the data: Hawthorne had built a climate characterized by respect, trust, and strong relationships among and between adults and students, and this climate had facilitated learning and change in schools and classrooms. Many individuals summed up the culture as "the Hawthorne Way," a districtwide belief that all individuals are respected and valued. The Superintendent, Helen Morgan, explained,

> We are like a family in Hawthorne. People stay because they know that they are valued…. Everybody refers to the Hawthorne Way—that every person that touches this school district is part of the Hawthorne School District family. Everybody is respected…. In some districts, there's really a hierarchy … and that's not true here. Everybody is really, truly treated as an equal.

Similarly, the Associate Superintendent, Brian Markarian, reported,

> The Hawthorne Way … is a way of interacting with each other that's deeply grounded in respect. I find this to be a really respectful place to work. We're so appreciative of the effort that's put in by all of our certificated and classified staff. We're appreciative of what our families do, and our students. I think that permeates all relationships and all aspects of what we do. I don't find that in a lot of places. It's genuine here, where I think there is just this understanding that we're all part of a family, and we're dedicated to a large purpose, which is opening the doors of opportunities for our kids.

Interviewees also communicated a districtwide understanding that students come first: Staff share a common commitment to, and a set of values related to, improving education and ensuring equitable opportunity for all students. "The focus is always on what's best for kids," said one teacher. "That's very evident to me in this district." Similarly, another teacher noted, "It's what's best for students … that seems to be a common theme throughout the district." When asked to describe key strengths of the district, a parent leader with multiple children in HSD schools echoed this sense of commitment to students:

> Interviewees communicated a districtwide understanding that students come first: Staff share a common commitment to, and a set of values related to, improving education and ensuring equitable opportunity for all students. "The focus is always on what's best for kids."

> I would say the attitude of putting the kids first [is a strength of the district]. I think it really, really does shine in everything … from preschool all the way up to a senior. I've had great experiences at the three schools that [my children have attended]…. From the teachers to the playground supervisors to the admins, it really just goes through [the whole district]. And even to the staff here at the district office, when we have district meetings, it's: "How can we help our kids? What can we do to get these kids to really achieve their potential?"

This climate was also reflected in the district's strategic plan, adopted in 2016, that included the core value that "all individuals are valued and treated with dignity, courtesy and respect." Relatedly, the strategic plan's vision statement stated, "Students, families, staff and community will continue to maintain respect, trust, integrity and a sense of belonging." The plan's core values and goals were prominently posted in the school board meeting room, where district meetings regularly take place. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2
Hawthorne School District's Core Values and Goals Prominently Displayed in the School Board Meeting Room

Source: Observation of Hawthorne School District.

The positive climate in Hawthorne was widely viewed as the foundation for supporting students' success. "[There is a] whole culture of respect," said the associate superintendent. "That does trickle down to our classrooms." Others viewed this climate as helping to build support for reform efforts. "There's collective buy-in for things because there is the voice of a teacher, the voice of a classified employee, and the voice of a parent," noted one district leader. An elementary school teacher affirmed the importance of this positive district climate and how this translates to the classroom:

> When morale for teachers is down, it hurts the classrooms because we're all human. And so, I think we have an amazing dean, an amazing principal, and when you feel like you are listened to, I think that helps because then you want to go in and kind of give that extra [effort], where you feel like you're appreciated.

Many people cited examples of teachers being included in important district-level decisions. For example, large groups of teachers participated in selecting CCSS-aligned curricula (as described further in subsequent sections). Central office leaders said they involved teachers because they wanted "to hear, 'What are the possible pitfalls, what are the concerns, where are our strengths?'" The president of the Hawthorne Educators and Teachers Association (the district's teachers union) similarly noted a district commitment to ensuring that teachers' voices are included in the decision-making process:

> It's a past practice between the association and the district that whenever there is a decision, such as pacing guides or things that affect [the] classroom, teachers are part of the decision-making process. So even with our mission statement, even with our [Local Control Accountability Plan] or even with everything that goes on, there are teachers involved with the process…. It's been done as far as I can remember.

As we explore next, this positive climate, or "Hawthorne Way," was facilitated by (1) the nature of district relationships with the union and school board, (2) the longevity and stability of staff, and (3) district size.

Union and School Board Relationships

The district's positive climate was particularly evident in the strong relationships among the central office, the Hawthorne Educators and Teachers Association, and the school board. District administrators consistently characterized the teachers association leaders as "change agents" and "partners in what we do." Importantly, Superintendent Morgan served as the HSD teachers union president for 6 years, which contributed to her credibility and the strength of the district-union relationship. "Being president of the association really was the best training for this job because you see the big picture," she explained.

Union leaders echoed the value of the superintendent's experience. Commenting on the "very good relationship" they have with the district, the current union vice president noted that the superintendent "has an open-door policy for us. No matter how crazy our ideas might be, she's willing to listen, and the best part is, because she used to be a president, she gets the reason why we ask [various questions]."

Both district and union leaders cited the strength of the district-union relationship as a critical ingredient in the district's ability to advance improvements in teaching and learning. "Negotiations are hard at every place, but I think … what allows [HSD] to focus on student achievement is an amicable relationship with teachers and the district and the various bargaining units," said an external consultant supporting the district in CCSS implementation. The associate superintendent reported,

> I'm proud of the fact that our teachers association agreed this year to expand our professional development time at the expense of giving up some of their discretionary teacher planning time. I don't think that's happening everywhere. That was a good sign.

A similarly positive story emerged around district and union interactions with the school board. There was a widespread perception that board members placed the interests of the district and its students far above their self-interest or career aspirations. "I'm a doctor," explained one board

member, "so I've already achieved whatever ambitious accolades and so forth. I came in [to the board] strictly to try to make a difference.… I didn't have an agenda to run … for higher office or do anything like that." Board members were described as active in the community, and several had children in HSD schools, which some believed contributed to their dedication. In fact, union leaders at least partly attributed their good relationships with the district to the members of the board:

> [The board members] honestly are true-life real people.… They don't have agendas. They're members of the community. They're role models, and the best part is, they're willing to listen. They're not just here to say, "Well, this is what we want. This is what's going to happen." On the news, you see that everywhere. Here, they have an open-door policy with us.

Longevity and Stability

Many individuals also associated this positive district climate with the longevity of leadership, faculty, and staff, suggesting that staff longevity was both a cause and a result of the district's supportive climate. Most individuals interviewed in Hawthorne—from teachers to the superintendent—reported starting their careers in the district. On average, staff interviewed had worked in the district for 16 years, and the leaders in the central office all exceeded this number, with an average tenure of 22 years. It is thus not surprising that Hawthorne has an unusually low number of "underprepared" teachers (i.e., teachers with intern credentials; provisional, short-term, or limited assignment permits; or waivers). In 2016–17, only 0.2% of HSD's teaching force fell into the underprepared category, compared to 4% of teachers statewide.[12]

Some participants suggested that staff longevity provided a sense of stability and trust in the district. The school board president noted,

> A lot of our administrators have come up through the ranks, where they were teachers at first and eventually [got] their credentials and move[d] on.… Even [the] superintendent, you know, she was a teacher at one point. I think there's a certain appreciation for everybody's role. We don't have a sense of hierarchy.

Some also suggested that the district's positive climate caused people to stay. When asked about the long tenure of faculty and staff, a teachers association leader explained,

> I think it's because you feel like you're in a family.… When they come to your site, they know everybody.… They know whether you're a teacher, a secretary, a custodian, doesn't matter who. They know your name and who you are, and that's why I think people stay: because they feel like [they're] part of something.

The associate superintendent echoed this sentiment:

> I think people really feel like they play a role and their voice is heard.… [T]hat's part of what makes people stay in their jobs. It's not always the paycheck. It's that sense of purpose, being a part of a bigger effort, satisfaction, [and] feeling valued. I feel like people feel that here.

District Size

Another reported facilitator of the positive climate—and staff longevity—was the size of the district. HSD is small enough that district office leaders were able to know principals, teachers, and support staff by name. In fact, the superintendent has been sending each employee an individualized birthday card. "Everyone gets a special note. That's because she knows everyone. It's something unique for each person," explained the union president. Several external consultants working with HSD attributed the strong climate to the district's size. A consultant supporting CCSS implementation explained, "This ability to have relationships and be able to be responsible and really thoughtful in listening is more easily facilitated in a smaller district. It's not always a guarantee. Clearly, this district does it well."

Yet the district is also big enough that employees can move to different positions (within or outside of their schools) as their career goals shift and change. According to one middle school principal,

> It's a great district to work for. It's big enough to be diverse, yet small enough where … you know the superintendent. They are able to call you by name, so it's not just a number. You'll be able to know a lot of staff members, not just at your site, but overall in the district.

In sum, interviewees described a positive, respectful, and trusting climate in HSD, which many described as foundational to the district's support for student learning. District leaders have been central in fostering this climate and in supporting instructional improvement, as we discuss in the following section.

"The Guy Knows Everything About Everything": Strong District Leadership

Our data suggest that Hawthorne's district leadership has played an important role in the district's ability to facilitate improvement in teaching and learning. Stable, collaborative, visible, and strong leadership at the central office level, along with external leadership from strategic partnerships, was critical to HSD's ability to deeply implement new standards and curricula.

Stable, Visible Leaders

As noted previously, central office leaders had deep and long-standing roots in Hawthorne schools. The superintendent, for example, had worked in the district for 4 decades, and she cited her beginning as a teacher and association president as critical to her effectiveness. The superintendent's second-in-command, the associate superintendent, started his teaching career in HSD and had worked there for 17 years. Their longevity contributed to a consistency in their approach to supporting teaching and learning. Unlike other districts that experience churn when faced with a new leader, HSD has maintained commitments to several key practices and structures over time. Many of those we interviewed reported a long history of using data to ground discussion of practice, aligning professional development (PD) to teacher needs, using coaches to support site-level practice, enacting strategies and interventions for English learners, and observing instruction within and across schools.

> Central office leaders had deep and long-standing roots in Hawthorne schools. The superintendent had worked in the district for 4 decades. Their longevity contributed to a consistency in their approach to supporting teaching and learning.

District leaders have also had a visible presence throughout HSD. They regularly visited classrooms and knew all faculty and staff by name. The superintendent, for example, participated in school events—greeting parents at a Saturday STEM event and dancing in an elementary school ballet folklorico performance.

Finally, the leadership has played a big role in building the culture described above. Both the superintendent and associate superintendent recognize the value of building relationships and trust, which were seen as "trickling down" to schools and classrooms. Leadership within the central office and schools was widely characterized as caring and supportive. As noted earlier, close, familial relationships helped leaders encourage change from the top down.

Partnership Between Superintendent and Associate Superintendent

A key part of Hawthorne's story was a strong partnership between the superintendent and associate superintendent. This collaboration—rather than a single leader—seemed to be a contributing factor to HSD's strong performance. As the superintendent explained, "I am fortunate to have probably

the best associate superintendent of education services anywhere in the world, and his focus on students and learning goes right along with what we value in this school district." We heard similar praise for the associate superintendent throughout our visits. One district partner exclaimed:

> The guy knows everything about everything. He really does. He has reach.... He was the first one sitting there when we're doing the study task with the standards. He was right there, studying them himself, thinking about them as a teacher.... He's fairly unique in being able to see, to understand things so much—from what the compliance issues are, the policy issues, all the way down to the instruction. You probably [can] give him a school and a room number and [he'll] be able to name the teacher.

Clear Vision for Teacher Quality

Top leaders were also clear that educators should be serving students and collaborating at a school, across grade levels, and across the school district. First, they worked hard to attract strong teachers. One important strategy for doing so was developing a pipeline via strong relationships with local teacher preparation programs. The superintendent reported working hard to build relationships with Loyola Marymount University and, more recently, the University of Southern California, and noted that "having student teachers is a really wonderful way to get some really … great staff." Second, district leaders held teachers to a high standard of performance. The associate superintendent explained,

> [The superintendent] has just a relentless mission to say, "If you're not in this for serving students, you shouldn't be here," and really sets the bar high for who should be in this organization. And I feel like everybody buys into that, so our principals are clear. If somebody's not the right fit, [the principals] show that they're addressing that and we give everybody every support they need, but I feel like you do need to go the extra mile in supporting kids that not only come with incredible assets and resources but also sometimes broad levels of need.

Leveraging External Leadership

District leaders also intentionally built long-term, strategic partnerships, utilizing outside consultants and local experts as leaders in improvement efforts. Some of these partners included the Talking Teaching Network, which has led the PD efforts around CCSS; UCLA's Center X, which has focused on math and science instruction, as well as equity and culturally sustaining teaching; and several publishers that have supported the implementation of new curricula. In addition to offering expertise, these external leaders were seen as valuable for validating internal priorities and approaches. "We leverage all those people to support the internal work that we're doing," said the associate superintendent. "It's been a great combination." The superintendent echoed,

> It helps if somebody else is going to say the same message that you would have said. I think bringing in outside experts is a vital part in letting the message be heard.... Also, I think the other thing is I'm trying to run a school district, and they have the expertise and the time. They're doing one thing, and they're doing it really, really well.

Other central office leaders affirmed the value they find in these partnerships. The curriculum coordinator, for example, has consultants from the publisher walk classrooms with her and other district and school leaders. She noted that this feedback from curriculum experts is "critical for us to hear."

The associate superintendent also participated in a South Bay Chief Instructional Officers group that brought together "role-alike" district leaders to develop common capacity-building strategies for faculty and staff. Working with a partner from Sierra Consulting, the group collaborated in offering training for coaches and administrators. The associate superintendent explained,

> [Members of the South Bay Chief Instructional Officers group] talked about, "Wouldn't it be great if we could do something jointly in developing the capacity of our out-of-classroom staff, our coaches?" We started with a large consortium that came together and just did some general training with [a consultant] on how, as a coach, do you support teachers? That's everything from content coaching to relational—how do you move people of all different types of personalities? We had a great experience there. We expanded that to working with our administrators, where it really focused on how do you coach and also supervise, and that delicate balance…. How do you move people? How do you have those difficult conversations? [The consultant has] just been fantastic."

"Baby Steps": Building Capacity and Buy-In

Another critical piece of the puzzle was the deliberate approach HSD took to CCSS implementation, intentionally building capacity and buy-in with staff. The phases of this rollout included: (1) studying the standards; (2) adopting curriculum "not all at one time" (HSD started with math) and delivering PD to advance implementation of that curriculum relative to standards (including guidance around pacing); and (3) refining implementation and incorporating resources such as assessments. (We discuss the details of this final phase in the next section.)

Much of this deliberate approach was teacher-driven, as teachers were given time and resources to study and then implement the new standards. This approach characterized much of the district's work beyond CCSS as well, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that teachers understand, support, and have the resources necessary to implement reforms. As one central office administrator noted, "One of the realizations is that the work doesn't always move as quickly as maybe you would like because of the fact that you want to make sure that people are validated in their concerns that they have."

First, the district took pride in being an early adopter of CCSS, choosing to start this process

> Teachers were given time and resources to study and then implement the new standards. This approach characterized much of the district's work beyond CCSS as well, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that teachers understand, support, and have the resources necessary to implement reforms.

before it was mandated by the state. District leaders first brought in the Talking Teaching Network to support CCSS implementation in 2011, and, in 2012–13, Talking Teaching Network staff facilitated monthly meetings of administrators, coaches, and teachers to study the new standards. District leaders believed it was critical that they built in time early for administrators and teachers to engage with the new standards and to understand the significant changes required, rather than rushing into implementation. The central office coordinator of curriculum and instruction explained,

> It was critical and extremely beneficial that we took 2 years to study the new standards. During this time, not only were we studying the standards as a team, we were also strategic and intentional in developing professional development sessions. During Year 1 [2012–13], the focus was on informing teachers of the critical shifts from the "97" standards to the new CCSS. Then, Year 2 [2013–14], we were able to focus on how we are going to address these standards in our teaching. How does instruction have to shift?

School-level educators also consistently cited the importance of having an "early start" or "head start" and easing into the implementation of CCSS, as illustrated by comments from a literacy coach and a teacher, respectively:

> Something else that's been key, besides the fact that we spent time to get to know the standards … is the fact that we did work slow[ly].... We really took our time with any of the learning that was taking place. We didn't just say, "Today we're learning

the standards. Tomorrow we're adopting."… I think that's huge for us to make sure we didn't leave anybody behind, for our teachers to be well informed, as well as our teacher leaders and our principals.

Our district was so proactive in easing the teachers into the transition, … first looking at the California standards and then comparing them to the Common Core standards, and that actually put a lot of teachers' minds at ease because there was a lot of correlation between the two, then really diving deep into, "What are these standards all about?" and really researching them. So by the time the transition took place with the testing and everything, we were like, "Oh, we've got this. We know this."

District leaders used this gradual rollout process to build teacher understanding and commitment. This included PD early on with external partners and all teachers. According to the associate superintendent,

What's been the greatest benefit for us is the … intense teacher-centered focus on understanding the standards. I mean, we started years ago with in-depth study of the standards … [to] hear the voice of our teachers … before we just blindly move forward…. There were some significant shifts in what students were expected to know and be able to do…. I still don't see any way in which you could mandate that from here in a building and say, "You are going to do this." Really, what we had to do was build an understanding of, "Where are we now, where are we going, and what does the Hawthorne School District need to do to get there?"

School-level staff attested to the value of these early investments in building knowledge. One teacher explained,

Everyone was really receptive. At the … beginning of course there's going to be that natural pushback: "Oh, not another new thing…." We took baby steps, and everybody felt like, "Okay, we've got this…." We had a lot of staff development on it, a lot of collaboration, whole-school collaboration, subject-level collaboration, grade-level collaboration. There was a lot of discussion and making sure everybody understood it."

The rollout allowed teachers to be actively involved in the process of adopting new standards. "I know that could be slow-moving work sometimes," said the associate superintendent, "but, if you want it to be sustainable, there needs to be buy-in. I think we make sure that people have a voice." A Talking Teaching Network leader conveyed the importance of building teacher commitment through this early work:

You need intellectual commitment from the teachers, and you're not going to get that just by requiring it. You're going to have to go out and grow it. You're going to have to go out and invest. That requires getting people involved from the get-go. I think you can go into maybe three to four phases.

Interviewees suggested that HSD's approach of studying the standards before adopting new math and English language arts (ELA) curricula improved the process of selecting and implementing curricula. The coordinator of curriculum and instruction told us:

> We spent a good amount of time learning the CCSS and understanding the new demands they had on teaching and learning, so that we would be critical consumers once the time came to purchase new curriculum and instructional supports. Studying the CCSS as long as we did allowed us the opportunity to closely analyze and examine curriculum to find the best fit for our student population and their needs.

For each new curriculum, the adoption process began with the formation of a committee of teacher leaders from all school sites in the district, as well as parent representatives. Before reviewing new materials, the committees examined student demographic and performance data and identified what they would want from a curriculum serving HSD's student population. For example, in selecting the middle school ELA curriculum, the committee noted that they wanted passages that would be interesting to middle school students of different cultural backgrounds, as well as supplemental materials to use for interventions and support classes. In reviewing potential curricula, committees paid attention to whether the materials truly reflected their understanding of CCSS or whether they were merely a repackaging of the previous state standards. Through this process, HSD selected enVision and SpringBoard in elementary and middle school math, respectively, and Benchmark Advance and StudySync in elementary and middle school ELA. Curricula were selected one at a time over several years, further reflecting the district's commitment to a gradual rollout of new programs.

This deliberate, gradual approach to implementation emerged in other accounts of district reform efforts. For example, partners at UCLA's Center X who worked with HSD on math and science instruction recounted ways in which central office leaders grasped the value of taking time to invest in teachers. In science, the district had begun the process of training teacher leaders around the new Next Generation Science Standards. These teacher leaders were then expected to lead the work at their school sites. The UCLA science lead praised the district for honoring one group of teacher leaders' request to hold off on lesson study until they built a better understanding of the standards. The partner working on math observed a similar responsiveness and willingness to take a gradual approach. When math coaches requested more time before leading PD, the district purportedly responded, "We hear you. This is for you to learn. Don't feel that pressure." The UCLA partner explained, "It's that they're looking for some long-term movement and that they are going slow and they're starting off. We want to focus on the coaches, at least on the math side, and then we'll talk about how to get this out to the rest of the district."

Overall, respondents indicated that HSD's gradual and deliberate implementation of CCSS was crucial in building teachers' buy-in for instructional reform. A key aspect of HSD's approach to CCSS implementation was the adoption of common curricula and assessments, which have been supported through coaching, teacher collaboration, instructional leadership, and PD. We discuss these practices in the following section.

"On the Same Page": Aligned Support for CCSS Instruction

HSD's CCSS instructional support, developed through the gradual and deliberate approach described above, was aligned districtwide, with a number of consistent structures and practices across school sites. Interviewees suggested that these common practices supported teacher collaboration and ensured that all students had access to rigorous instruction in math and English language arts. Math and ELA curricula (discussed above), pacing, assessments, data use, PD, and student supports were consistent districtwide. Common assessment data came from curriculum unit assessments, drawn from districtwide curricula (with some revisions from math and literacy coaches) and administered at the end of each unit of instruction. Other assessment data included a selected set of Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs), which are formative Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)–aligned assessments provided by the state. Assessment results were stored and organized on the district's common data management system.

HSD also had several common practices for student support and intervention across school sites, with the goal of providing equitable opportunity for all students. All schools had an English learner special projects (ELSP) teacher, and all elementary schools had an intervention teacher. These staff members provided students—who were identified by assessment data—with small-group instruction on skills with which students were struggling. In middle school, all students enrolled in a Targeted Academic Support class intended to support their success in their core classes, particularly math.

Below, we describe how the district approaches three key aspects of site support: PD, instructional leadership, and coaching. We then discuss the role of collaboration: District leaders noted that collaboration has been used to design common structures and that the use of districtwide curricula has facilitated collaboration within and across school sites. Next, we describe the role of data use in HSD's instructional support model, with a particular focus on the use of data to inform interventions and placement, and we discuss HSD's approach to sharing CCSS information with families. The following section discusses how HSD allocated resources, including staff and time, in service of this instructional support model. We conclude by noting that although most interviewees expressed positive attitudes toward HSD's approach to instructional support, there were dissenting voices in the district.

Planning for Site-Level Support

As the associate superintendent described the district's approach to planning site-level instructional support, "We do a lot of meetings here [at the central office] and then everybody kind of rolls out at the school sites from there." The central office organized three meetings each month for site leaders (illustrated in Figure 3): Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings to plan site PD; administrators' PD to build capacity for instructional leadership; and coaching meetings to build coaching capacity, plan for teacher collaboration meetings, and revise curricula and assessments.

Figure 3
Relationship Between District-Level and Site-Level Efforts for Instructional Support in Hawthorne School District

District Level		Site Level
Math/ELA ILTs monthly.	→	Site PD monthly.
School administrators' PD monthly.	→	Instructional leadership, including weekly "sacred time" walks.
Coaching meetings monthly.	→	Teacher coaching
		Demonstrating lessons
		Teacher collaboration meetings *(several times a month; varies by school site)*

Source: Data triangulated across interviews and HSD administrative documents.

Site professional development

Math and ELA ILTs—which included school administrators, grade-level lead teachers, school-level coaches, and special projects[13] teachers—met at the central office roughly once per month. ILT members collaboratively developed plans for monthly site PD, ensuring that these sessions were consistent across the district. These meetings were facilitated by district-level math and literacy coaches and consultants from the Talking Teaching Network. "[We want to] make the time we have for PD count, so it's carefully planned and centralized. We have little pockets of time ... [for] professional development at the school sites.... We need to make every second of that time count," said the associate superintendent.

Site PD supported teachers with instructional strategies aligned with the district's common CCSS curricula, including student collaboration and group work, speaking and academic language, and close reading. (See Figure 4 for PD slides on reading instruction in ELA and collaboration in math.) District and school leaders also used site PD to support teachers' use of data, discussed further below. These PD sessions consistently included discussion of how different instructional strategies could be used to support English learners in particular. Interviewees reported that the new curricula and instructional strategies have helped teachers move to a more student-centered pedagogy.[14] One elementary teacher explained, "[Before CCSS] it was basically direct instruction and it was teacher-centered. And now it's student-centered, and [students are] learning from each other, and they're becoming more motivated to learn."

> "[Before CCSS] it was basically direct instruction and it was teacher-centered. And now it's student-centered, and [students are] learning from each other, and they're becoming more motivated to learn."

Figure 4
**Slides From District-Level English Language Arts (a) and Math (b)
Professional Development Session**

(a)

(b)

Note: These slides are examples of instructional strategies that ILT members explore in meetings at the central office and, in turn, share at site PD sessions.

Source: District professional development session.

Instructional leadership

District leaders have also articulated a strong vision for instructional leadership among principals and assistant principals. The superintendent required all principals to spend Thursday mornings visiting classrooms, which she calls "sacred time." This has been in practice for 8 years. The superintendent explained,

> I instituted what I call sacred time. Every Thursday from 9:00 to 11:00, you won't be called from the district office, you won't have any interruptions from the district office. You are in classrooms, and you are walking classrooms. It's not exclusive time, but that time is set in stone. I expect that you're in classrooms more than that. However, it ensures that at least once a week for 2 hours administrators are watching practice.

In the 2017–18 year, Hawthorne added monthly PD sessions for principals and assistant principals, led by district math and literacy coaches. Interviewees reported that this PD is intended to deepen school administrators' grasp of math and ELA curricula and instructional strategies, with the goal of fostering instructional leadership. In the words of the superintendent, "We have really invested time, energy, and effort in ensuring that our administrators have the skills necessary to be true instructional leaders at the schools, instead of just managers."

Walks—organized, strategic time for observing classroom practices—were used not only by school leaders, but also by various levels of leadership in the district, including central office administrators, deans, curriculum consultants, and coaches. District leaders organized walks regularly and have developed common observation protocols to facilitate conversations across schools. Figure 6 shows an example of a report generated after such a walk. The associate superintendent explained, "We have periods of time where everybody walks looking for collaboration in language arts, looking for articulation of math reasoning in mathematics, so that we can have conversations about [whether we are] moving the needle in those critical areas." Data gathered in walks are used to inform the district's approach to instructional improvement.

Figure 5
Report Created by Leaders After a "Walk": An Organized Observation of Classroom Practice

Problem of Practice: How do students demonstrate that they understand the mathematical concepts being addressed and how does their instructional experience change based upon whether they do or do not demonstrate this understanding?

Findings:

1. Students demonstrated understanding in a variety of ways (individual questioning, whole class questioning, shout-outs, whiteboards/posters/other visual displays, etc.)

   a. Most observations yielded evidence of heavily guided teacher-directed practices

   b. In some settings, students were observed self-assessing their understanding or confirming their understanding with peers via questions, discussion, and structured collaborative activities.

2. Responses to student demonstrations of understanding varied across the observations.

   a. Problems were redone on the board for the entire class, notes were being made about tomorrow's focus based on today's learning, guiding and reflective questions were asked, individual redirection or guidance was given, time was extended as needed, etc.

3. The presence and effectiveness of the change in instructional experience was dependent upon multiple factors.

   a. When combined with an intention to examine student work or listen to student statements/discussions, frequent circulation by teachers allowed for more immediate and responsive support and differentiation.

   b. When provided as needed, teacher guidance and input made collaborative activities a stronger vehicle for students articulating their own learning and supporting the learning of others.

Next steps:

1. Reinforce the posting and active utilization of learning targets that are truly representative of student understanding/learning rather than simply tasks, can be accomplished in a single instructional setting, and written in a fashion that promotes student ownership, as that is the first step in students and teachers assessing the learning that is taking place.

2. Continue to promote and celebrate the wide range of ways in which students are asked to demonstrate learning. Support classrooms in incorporating more opportunities for students to articulate and assess their learning with peers.

3. Stress the need for formative assessment to be an ongoing and active process that requires all learners, students and adults, to be working together in close proximity with frequent interactions.

Source: Observation notes provided to the Learning Policy Institute research team by representatives of Hawthorne School District.

Coaching

Each school site had its own math coach and literacy coach, and the district held monthly, 4-hour meetings to support these coaches. In these meetings, which were led by district coaches, participants deepened their understanding of coaching strategies and prepared to facilitate teacher collaboration and data analysis meetings, which occurred several times a month at each school. A central office administrator explained that these coaching meetings helped to ensure consistency across school sites:

> We have 11 literacy coaches, 10 math coaches. It takes a lot of centralized planning and working together with them so that we're staying on the same page with the types of messages we're communicating, the actions we're engaging in at the school sites.... I think that they've significantly changed the instructional environment in all of our schools.

Coaches—who support all teachers at the elementary level and support math and ELA teachers at the middle school level—were trained to implement a four-phase coaching cycle that includes: (1) working with individual teachers to identify a focus area of practice; (2) having an (optional) preconference to discuss the lesson plan; (3) an observation; and (4) a post-conference, in which the coach uses questioning to guide the teacher's reflection and future plans. Coaches used a common observation form to document key aspects of the classroom environment, teachers' instruction, and students' participation. As a math coach described the process,

> I'm not evaluative. I'm a peer coach. For example, I just sent out an email last week [and] said, "Okay, in the classrooms next week [while] observing, ... remember what we're looking for, what we're focusing on.... How are you helping your kids access the text?" And so we'll talk about it. I'll go in there, and I'll look around. I've a whole thing that I go through. Then we debrief afterwards: "Well, how do you think it went?" It's a really collaborative piece with teachers. It's not like, "You did this great, you did this poorly." No, that's not my job. My job is, "If we're going to have your kids access this curriculum, how can I help you do that?"

Coaches also delivered demonstration lessons in teachers' classrooms. The district coach suggested that, in addition to giving teachers the opportunity to observe lessons and instructional strategies, demonstration lessons allowed coaches to build credibility with teachers:

> You have to demonstrate. You have to teach the program.... [Teachers] don't want someone who has never taught this, or how are you going to coach me [if you] haven't taught the program yet?... And my support has always revolved around informing yourself: Educate yourself, expose yourself to as much of the curriculum as possible, experience it as much as possible. That's the Hawthorne message we're giving our coaches. Because you have to build credibility. You have to know what you're talking about.... Your whole job is to support this curriculum and these teachers.

Consistency *For* and *Through* Collaboration

Interviewees explained that many of these consistent structures were not top-down mandates, but instead reflected collaborative decision-making among educators. As the superintendent explained, "We've put those tools [curricula and assessments] in the hands of our teachers, but not to just blindly follow. I mean, that's where our instructional leadership team comes in to say, 'This is where we need to tweak this,' or 'This is where we need to enhance something.'"

Central office administrators drew on assessment data, conversations with coaches and principals, and classroom observations to determine focus areas for site PD. Then, with the support of district coaches and external partners, ILT members collaborated in planning this PD. In the middle school ELA ILT meeting that we observed, teachers, administrators, ELSP teachers, and coaches worked together to develop a plan to facilitate teachers' analysis of IAB results. In addition, coaches have collaboratively revised pacing guides, assessments, and other aspects of the curricula. For example, a central office administrator described the literacy coaches' work to adjust the StudySync pacing guide:

> We have to understand, well, what are the critical points that the grade level calls for?... We had to make those decisions as a team.... [Our] literacy coaches had a voice. They were able to speak to these decisions when ... their teachers were asking them. It's important to have input from everybody.

Furthermore, district leaders reported that the purpose of consistency is to facilitate collaboration within and across schools, as educators can plan together using common curricula. Thus, Hawthorne's common structures not only reflected collaborative decision-making but also supported further collaboration. A central office administrator explained this reasoning:

> Because we are very strategic and intentional, we have to come up with something that we can say we're going to follow.... When the teachers say, "Do we really have to follow this?" ... [the coach asks,] "How great would my meeting be if I don't have that data when I meet with you? ... It would be great to know that you're about to all finish unit one. We can meet and we can collaborate and unit plan together...." If we're not all done with unit one, how can I ... schedule a meeting to plan for unit two?

Supporting Data Use

Educators at multiple levels described using data, particularly results from unit assessments and IABs, to inform practice. Interviewees explained that data use had been a long-standing feature in the district, beginning with "data rooms" that had data physically posted on the walls, and later evolving to common computer-based data management systems (first Data Director, then SchoolNet). The superintendent elaborated on this,

> We have been very data-driven for a long time.... We had big chart paper and different colored Post-Its, and if you were an English learner, you were a yellow Post-It, and if you were also free and reduced [price] lunch, you had a green sticky on your Post-It, and we had levels: below basic, basic.... With the data, [we would] move them around by class, by teacher. That was the start of the data rooms, and we saw huge results from really having the data in your face every day.... [Now] I can jump onto SchoolNet at any time and just do a check-in.... "How is this school doing on this, that, or the other?" I just think having it simple and accessible is the key.

Through coaching, teacher collaboration, and site PD, Hawthorne engaged teachers in analyzing assessment results and using this analysis to inform practice. For instance, in school-site PD, teachers hand-scored free-response items from the IAB. Educators reported that this process deepened teachers' understanding of the SBAC rubric. Figure 6 shows one elementary team's debrief of this site PD, in which they described hand-scoring as an aha moment. In the words of a central office administrator:

> It was critical that they calibrated scoring.… Some of the realizations that come out—some of the grammatical features maybe are not as important in writing as we'd graded in the past, and really looking at the student's thought, understanding, and expression. With mathematics, you can actually get the wrong answer and still [get] partial credit based on your thinking and your approach. Those were things that were powerful enough that we said if we can get to those conclusions as a result of this experience, that will undoubtedly affect classroom practice.

Figure 6
Zela Davis Elementary School's Team Debrief of a Site PD
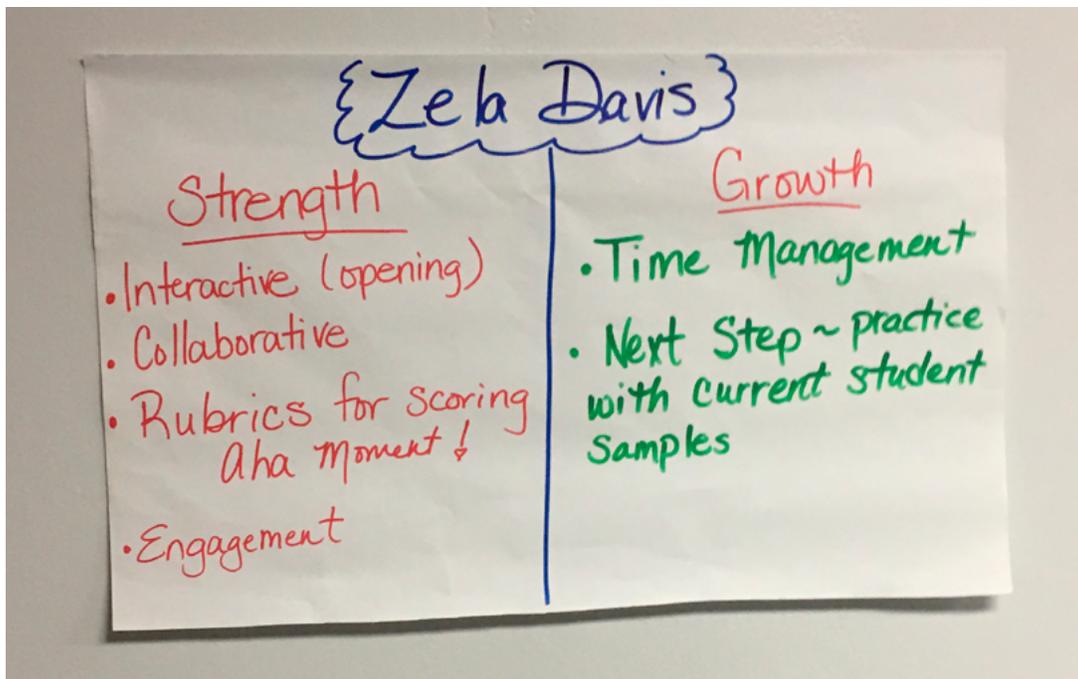
Note: The PD focused on hand-scoring IABs using the SBAC rubric, an experience that educators described as an aha moment.

Source: HSD professional development session.

At every school site, coaches facilitated math and ELA teachers' reviews of unit assessment results, looking at individual, classroom, and school-level scores and examining the performance of English learners, Reclassified Fluent English Proficient students, and African American students. For example, at one school we visited, the coach created a handout to guide teachers in documenting class and subgroup performance on unit assessments, developing plans for reteaching key standards, and tracking the progress of focal students.

At middle schools, these data analysis meetings took place during a common planning time. Elementary schools employed different strategies to provide time for data analysis; at the site we visited, teachers were offered a stipend to participate in data analysis meetings after school. Teachers used this analysis to adjust future instruction and to plan within-class small-group interventions. As a coach described this process:

> Each teacher will get a complete printout of how every single student did in all of their classes.... We have to break it down: How did your [English learners] do? How did your African Americans do? Then you're comparing that to how the entire class did. Then we're going question by question.... You'll see exactly which questions were the strongest in your classroom, which may be different or similar to the person next to you.... They have to pinpoint ... the three weak points for the class as a whole and how [they're] going to reteach that.... Then we're going to look at 6th grade as a whole.... If we see that theme is still an issue, then how do we address that again [for the whole grade]?

Targeted Support Structures

Our data also indicated that HSD utilized consistent support practices districtwide. We heard that all students, including English learners and special education students, were enrolled in core classes, and students with additional needs received targeted instruction in small groups and, at the middle school level, in support classes. Interviewees explained that coaches and teachers used assessment results to identify students for small-group instruction from ELSP and intervention teachers. Several interviewees suggested that this additional support was a key factor in HSD's success. One ELSP teacher told us, "I think what's unique to Hawthorne, from my understanding, is the fact that we even have EL special projects teachers.... We are able to target specific groups and pull them out into a setting where they get their own individualized instruction specific to EL."

Data were also used to determine referrals for special education assessments. A school psychologist indicated that before conducting assessments, she worked to ensure that other interventions had already been provided and that issues of language and culture had been fully considered. She explained that, before conducting an assessment, the school needed to determine:

> What is their English language acquisition?... What are some interventions that have been tried, especially with our population with African Americans, and English language learners, and kids who are coming in with a different culture? There are some biases that I have to rule out before we say, "Let's go for it and assess for special education," because sometimes if a student is new to [the] country, am I even going to assess? Is it a language issue, is it a culture issue before we move forward and say, ... "You might have a disability."

Here, this school psychologist indicated that the district was deliberately analyzing special education assessments to minimize the influence of biases associated with race, language, cultural background, or immigration status.

Interviewees reported that, at all three middle schools, multiple data sources (including SBAC scores, teacher recommendations, and grades) were used to place students in leveled math and ELA courses. At the middle school we visited, there were three course levels in ELA and two in math. In ELA, there were "Support" and "Proficient" levels and, in 7th and 8th grades, an "Honors" level. Students in the Support level were enrolled in a language support class in addition to their regular English class, whereas students in Proficient and Honors classes could select an elective course. In language support classes, newcomer English learners used LANGUAGE! Live, a blended learning program, while other students (including long-term English learners) were taught using the supplemental English language development resources offered as part of StudySync, the district's common middle school ELA curriculum. Although some researchers have criticized practices of tracked or leveled courses,[15] one middle school educator suggested that tracking in ELA benefited students:

> The Support class is really kind of like that extra hour to give you all of the background you need…. And if you're in a Proficient class, we're assuming that … it's because you really don't need that extra hour. You will benefit more [from] having … this 1 hour to really do something you enjoy. To say you're in Honors, the 7th- and 8th-graders take it very seriously. And they know you have to work very hard if you want to stay in Honors, or they will put you back in a Proficient class.

The two math levels were a regular 7th–8th grade sequence and an accelerated 7th-grade class leading to an 8th-grade Algebra I class. Interviewees reported that the Algebra I class was instituted in response to parent interest and to attract enrollment (the district's enrollment challenges are described further in a subsequent section). Although all students took the same 6th-grade math course, the math coach explained that students' ELA placement also affected their math class placement: "Remember though, [language] support classes dictate who's in your math class. So, if you have children who … need a support class at this time during the day, those kids are grouped similarly."

Family Engagement

In 2014, HSD hired a family outreach special projects teacher to support family engagement, particularly around the transition to CCSS. As the family outreach teacher described early efforts to keep parents informed about the new standards, "When the new Common Core State Standards came out, we did brochures, we did flyers, everything to make sure that … parents were informed."

The family outreach teacher organized three bilingual (English and Spanish) parent meetings each year in support of CAASPP testing: a fall meeting to review the prior year's test results, a winter meeting on the parent guide provided by SBAC, and a spring meeting on strategies to prepare students for the test. The family outreach teacher conducted each meeting 22 times, once in the morning and once in the evening at each of the 11 school sites.

At the fall meeting to review the previous year's test results, families were encouraged to bring in their student's CAASPP report, and the family outreach coordinator delivered a PowerPoint presentation describing the school's overall performance and explaining all of the elements of the report. (See Figure 7.) The family outreach teacher told us,

> All the parents get their student report by mail.... The purpose of the meeting is to review the student score report. What does the assessment report mean? I discuss the four achievement levels, the overall scores, and the scale range. I review in detail the four claims for language arts and the three claims for mathematics. We want parents to have a good understanding of the score report. After each meeting or workshop, we provide time for questions or concerns. Parents are also asked to complete an evaluation and provide any feedback or comments.

Figure 7
Slide From CAASPP Presentation to Parents

Source: PowerPoint presentation from HSD parent meeting.

Working with school counselors, the family outreach teacher also organized Parent Academies, a series of monthly meetings for kindergarten parents (at elementary sites) and 6th-grade parents (at middle school sites). As the family outreach teacher described these efforts,

> The Hawthorne Parent Academy consists of monthly workshops to provide support in language arts, math, technology, and more. Each month parents are presented with a different topic. At the middle school parent academy, we present topics such as preparing for college, social media, and how to support your teenager socially and emotionally. Our main goal is to give parents information, resources, and strategies on how to support their children at home. Parent attendance fluctuates. One of the biggest challenges is getting parents to attend meetings on a consistent basis. We

send flyers, do all-call messages, reminders, and sometimes provide incentives for parents and students. The biggest obstacle that parents identify for not attending meetings is work.

In addition to these district-organized family engagement efforts, we heard that school sites have also organized their own parent events, including game nights, movie nights, and other recreational activities.

Although the parent leaders we interviewed were very engaged in the district and generally participated in these meetings, we also heard that the district often struggled to get turnout at family engagement events. The family outreach teacher elaborated on these challenges:

> It's not like we get big numbers of parents. And just getting parents to the meetings, that's one of the biggest challenges…. We send flyers…. We do all-call messages…. We do that. Sometimes we even do incentives to the kids: "Tell your parents there's an important workshop. You must come." But the biggest challenge is just getting parents there. And one of the things is parents say they're working. They don't come out until late.

Allocating Resources for Common Support Structures

We observed that HSD allocated both staff and time in service of its aligned approach to instruction. Regarding staff, although HSD had a few coaches and ELSP teachers before California's 2014 finance reform (the Local Control Funding Formula, or LCFF), interviewees suggested that LCFF's supplemental and concentration grants allowed the district to hire a math coach, a literacy coach, an ELSP teacher, and a dean of students for each school site, as well as an intervention teacher (serving both general and special education students) for each elementary site. As described above, coaches played a key role in adapting curricula and assessments and facilitating teachers' collaboration and data analysis. ELSP and intervention teachers provided targeted support to students based on results of on common assessments. Interviewees explained that deans, by focusing on school discipline, freed up principals and assistant principals to prioritize instructional leadership. The superintendent told us,

> We've added a lot of supports at the site level. We really took our supplemental and concentration funds…. Every one of my schools has a dean of students, so that again, we could look at ways to work to ensure that students are staying in the classroom, but also to remove the discipline piece from the administrators' plate, so they could be more of that instructional leader.

In addition, HSD allocated time for collaboration at multiple levels. District leaders reported that they consistently found coverage for grade-level lead teachers and school administrators so that they could attend monthly ILT meetings (using substitute teachers or other school-level staff). As mentioned above, coaches had a monthly 4-hour meeting at the central office, and school administrators held 2 hours of "sacred time" each week for visiting classrooms. With the agreement of the teachers union, HSD scheduled monthly site PD and monthly teacher collaboration meetings. Moreover, at middle schools, physical education teachers covered classes so that math and ELA teachers could have a collaboration meeting every other week. Elementary schools pursued a variety of strategies to ensure teachers have collaboration time; at the school we visited, the counselor

met with students while math and ELA teachers met to plan upcoming units. School-level coaches planned and facilitated these teacher collaboration meetings. As one principal described the importance of allocating structured teacher collaboration time, "We make time, no matter what, for the teachers to collaborate and talk with each other.… When there's a scheduled time and it's directed and you have a focus in it, that produces a lot of great teaching in the classroom."

Critiques of Common Structures

Although most of our interviewees described HSD's approach to instructional support in a positive light, a few expressed a more critical view. One coach suggested that some teachers may not be bought into districtwide expectations:

> The ILT meetings, to be honest, this year I haven't found as valuable.… When we get back to our sites, there's a disconnect between being able to make teachers do number talks and having them volunteer to do number talks.… I'm not seeing [the strategies] being implemented, even after all my professional developments and demonstration lessons. The district wants it to happen, but there are no mandates to make teachers do them yet, and I don't know if that's good or bad. I'm not saying we should mandate teachers to do things. However, I feel like I'm spending a lot of time on something that's not quite being implemented.

Relatedly, several teachers voiced concern about the lack of autonomy afforded by the district's consistent approach to instruction. "I do appreciate a pacing guide, but yeah, I am feeling a little micromanaged," said one teacher. A middle school teacher, however, pointed out that her support classes gave her an opportunity to develop her own curriculum, which satisfied her desire for autonomy. District leaders expressed awareness that some teachers had voiced critiques of alignment and consistency. In response to these perspectives, administrators described working with coaches and ILT members to consistently reiterate that the purpose of this consistency was to support teacher collaboration and student success.

To sum up, we found that Hawthorne has allocated staff and resources to support consistent practices and structures, including curricula, assessments, PD, and data use. Although a few interviewees expressed concerns about this approach, most suggested that Hawthorne's instructional approach was a strength of the district and a key factor in supporting their students' achievement.

"We're Not Going to Send Them to the Office?": Emerging Efforts to Support Positive Culture and Social-Emotional Well-Being

In addition to the focus on standards-based instruction, HSD was implementing a variety of nonacademic programs and interventions at the time of our visit. In large part to reduce suspension rates for students from low-income families and students of color, HSD pursued efforts to improve school climate and foster social and emotional learning. District leaders suggested that these efforts reflect a broader commitment to educational equity in Hawthorne. Unlike the reforms around instruction, however, these were newer efforts and might not have played a large role in the positive student outcomes observed in recent years. These efforts were also met with some pushback, perhaps because they were still fairly new. In our interviews, central office leaders indicated that they were reflecting on the challenges associated with these initiatives and that strengthening these efforts was a district priority moving forward.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a disciplinary reform that emphasizes clear behavior expectations and rewards for students who meet those expectations, with the goal of helping educators move away from punitive practices. District administrators told us that PBIS was adopted across the district to reduce suspensions, particularly among African American students whom leaders had identified as being suspended more frequently than their peers of other racial groups. As noted at the beginning of this report, the overall suspension rate in HSD has declined significantly, from 482 students suspended in 2013–14 to 106 students suspended in 2015–16, offering some evidence of success. However, as district leaders acknowledged in HSD's 2017 Local Control Accountability Plan, African American students continued to be suspended more frequently than their peers.

HSD adopted PBIS in spring 2015 through a partnership with a professor at the University of California–Riverside. Schools formed PBIS teams, which included the dean of students, the school psychologist, the counselor, and one or more teachers. Schools' approaches to selecting teachers varied. Some schools recruited volunteers, while others assigned PBIS responsibilities to teachers already in leadership positions. The PBIS teams began with efforts to develop whole-school supports for student behavior. They developed clear sets of school expectations, such as "Be Responsible" and "Be Respectful," and they delineated what these expectations might look like in different areas of the school, such as the classroom, the cafeteria, or the playground. Teams then created systems of rewards, such as vouchers for prizes, assemblies, and awards, to encourage students to meet these expectations. These site-level teams determined how these expectations would be communicated to staff and students.

Deans of students, who are responsible for leading PBIS efforts at each school site, were supported through individual coaching from the district-level school climate project facilitator, as well as through quarterly PD meetings at the central office. Deans also engaged in walks—similar to those walks used to support academic instruction—to observe PBIS implementation across school sites, and each school had a designated PBIS model classroom. A central office administrator described these efforts to build capacity for PBIS:

> We went around in the fall, and each site identified a model classroom that they felt was really implementing PBIS well…. Our consultants [from UC Riverside] and the [school climate] project facilitator, they actually went into the classroom and talked about how to strengthen implementation…. We just had our dean excursion last Friday where the deans actually went to multiple classrooms to see that implementation. So the goal is to now have other teachers at that site go into that classroom [and] see how it's being done, so they can bring it back into their own classroom.

Most interviewees acknowledged the district was still in the early stages of this work, starting its third full year of implementation. The director of pupil personnel services acknowledged, "I wouldn't say it's a huge role [in our district's success] yet. We're working on making it a huge role." By all accounts, teachers and staff at all schools have successfully developed systems of expectations and rewards. One dean of students reported strong support for these efforts: "Celebrating and recognizing the good things kind of puts it into perspective how much good is going on in our schools." A school psychologist described improvements in recent years, particularly around teacher buy-in:

> Initially when we started it, it was like, "Wait. What? You're going to take away my clip chart?" They were asking teachers to take away their old methodologies of reinforcing and punishing students. People were like, "So, we're just going to keep our kids. We're not going to send them to the office?" It was just like, "Oh my God." The first year and the second year [were] a little hard, but I think now [teachers] are understanding in the long run we're all doing the same thing. I feel like it's helping, especially as people are slowly buying in.

Yet not everyone bought in, and some resistance from teachers remained. District leaders attributed this resistance to underlying beliefs about the necessity of punishment. One administrator explained,

> The main pushback is the people who view discipline as punitive rather than corrective…. [B]ehavioral intervention should be looked at [in] the same vein as academic interventions. And so they send a student to the dean because they feel the student's being disruptive in their class, and then the dean does some type of behavioral intervention that is designed to correct the behavior, be it a reteaching, or a community service, or something that they do [that] will be effective. And then the person says, "Well, what happened to the student? What punishment did you hand out?".… That mindset.

As part of PBIS implementation, the district also adopted social and emotional learning curricula at both the elementary (Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills) and middle school levels (Second Step), but efforts remained a work in progress. According to district leaders, school counselors were largely responsible for "making sure [social and emotional learning curricula] gets into the classroom." Leaders have also worked hard to develop effective rollout strategies. One administrator explained,

> In some cases, it's [counselors] going in and teaching grade-level groups [one] at a time. And at the middle school, we rolled out where pretty much the whole staff is teaching certain pieces of Second Step. We don't want [everyone] to teach the [lessons]

that are really sensitive. It might really dredge up some emotions and stuff in the kids. But some of them that are a little more benign, we are having [the whole staff] teach on a regular basis so that we know that there is a common implementation. Again, work in progress. Some people will go, "I don't understand why I have to teach this." But we want to make sure that everybody gets a taste of this, so that's why.

Central office leaders consistently expressed that PBIS implementation was an area for future growth in Hawthorne. One administrator suggested that a future goal was to involve more teachers and staff members in interventions that are targeted toward students who struggle to meet behavior expectations:

> Now we really need to move to re-evaluating [interventions for struggling students].… [These interventions] really should be one person working with a group of students and not just the dean or just the counselor.…This classified person might be a good person [to work with those students].… Or this teacher might be a perfect person to work with this group of students.

This administrator also suggested that teachers' buy-in for PBIS would increase as the district helps them understand that "continuing the conversation of academic and behavioral [skills] should be on par [with each other]." This quote reflects the overall optimism we heard from district leaders regarding the future of PBIS in Hawthorne.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (CRTL)[16] is another initiative that HSD implemented in order to improve school climate. Partners from Center X at UCLA had been working with district administrators since 2015, providing training to support cultural responsiveness and practices that support and affirm students of low-income or racially minoritized backgrounds. As with PBIS, administrators tied the origins of this work to a review of data showing disproportionately high rates of suspensions for African American students. According to the superintendent, this work was intended to engage educators in "those hard conversations about race, ethnicity, [and] culture." Similarly, the associate superintendent explained,

> We've carved out time to really just talk about how we validate and affirm all of our students in the classroom, knowing that when students feel accepted and they feel valued in the classroom, there's going to be a payoff in a variety of areas … really understanding where our students are coming from, what they bring to the table. How do we then open up the doors for them to achieve the even higher levels?

A Center X consultant explained that this work was tailored to the needs of each school site. The Center X team began with several months of observing classrooms and school- and district-level PD. Consultants then led site PD sessions that introduced the concept of varied cultural norms and invited educators to reflect on how their practice might reflect certain cultural assumptions. At some schools at which staff have welcomed CRTL concepts, Center X has facilitated monthly meetings of teacher cohorts who are collaboratively developing and reflecting on culturally responsive teaching strategies. Consultants have also provided coaching and PD sessions for principals. A Center X consultant reported that these sessions explored questions such as, "How do I … understand the inequity that sits in my schools? And then how do I help lead my staff to continuously have these conversations around equity?"

Once again, discussions of these efforts yielded mixed views. Some district and school interviewees reported positive results from this work, noting "more supportive learning environments" in classrooms. One principal described the work as "very helpful," and said the readings and discussions had been "an eye-opener. It makes people start really thinking about these topics, which we do need to … because this is our population." Another principal noted that the work was helping teachers "affirm and validate" students.

Other evidence indicates that the work may not have fully penetrated classroom practice. When asked to describe changes in practice prompted by CRTL trainings, respondents described few or no changes in teaching in response to the cultural backgrounds of African American students in their classes. Some other interviewees described experiencing discomfort or feeling attacked during CRTL trainings, illustrating the difficulties of engaging educators in conversations about race and bias.

As with PBIS, central office leaders expressed awareness of teacher pushback, as well as optimism that buy-in would increase given time. For example, in the district's 2017–20 Local Control and Accountability Plan, administrators wrote,

> [Our suspension] data clearly substantiate a need for a continued focus on the factors that might be contributing to this trend [of racial disproportionality] that is seen at the school, district, state, and national levels. The district's commitment to PBIS and CRTL remains strong, and there is confidence that building capacity to support staff in proactively and positively addressing behavior concerns and in identifying ways to bridge cultural and situational behavioral expectations will result in this gap closing over time.

Trauma-Informed Practices

Lastly, an approach being tried in HSD is trauma-informed practices, intended to support students who have experienced painful events in their home lives. At quarterly PD meetings, the deans of students received training on these practices from the Los Angeles County Office of Education and the nonprofit Richstone Family Center. These trainings addressed topics such as the origins of trauma and strategies for supporting students in the classroom. Several of these trainings were also offered at selected school sites. In addition, the district provided families with information about the Richstone Family Center's low-cost, bilingual support groups—for parents and youth—on topics including parenting skills, anger management, and processing grief. The director of pupil personnel services described this effort as helping school educators understand a broader set of issues facing students:

> Just knowing that it's really the background of a lot of our students, … having students that you know didn't make it past 9th grade because they were murdered, and stories of kids walking past people that were being harmed, and things like that…. Knowing that's where a lot of our students come from [is] a larger lens. It's community violence, systemic violence, it's sometimes stepparent fighting, custody issues. There [are] so many different layers that it could take…. Again, that student that's acting out, they're really not trying to piss you off. They just need extra support.

"Feeling the Pinch": Declining Enrollment

When asked to identify the biggest challenge facing Hawthorne School District moving forward, nearly every interviewee named declining enrollment and the accompanying budget cuts.[17] HSD's enrollment decreased from 9,180 students in 2007–08 to 8,520 students in 2017–18.[18] District leaders suggested that the main reason for this decline was the rising cost of living in Hawthorne, and interviewees reported that the district would likely need to lay off personnel in the 2018–19 year. However, both central office and union leaders were optimistic about the district's ability to navigate these budget challenges.

Rising Cost of Living in Hawthorne

Our interviewees mentioned the rising cost of living as a cause of declining enrollment, but some also pointed to declining birth rates and to charter schools in neighboring districts. A school board member noted that enrollment changes were creating budget challenges despite California's generally healthy economy:

> It's sad because we're actually doing well financially in the state. But then we still get hit because of declining enrollment and, from what I'm hearing, it's [happening] all over [the state]. You know, people are leaving California, it's too expensive…. [Even though] the economy is, as a whole, doing better, we still are feeling the pinch.

Interviewees suggested that the rising prominence of SpaceX, headquartered in Hawthorne, and the construction of a new professional football stadium in nearby Inglewood have led to gentrification and a lack of affordable housing in the community. Supporting the gentrification narrative, in 2017 the *Los Angeles Times* declared that Hawthorne was becoming "hip," with a number of breweries, coffee shops, bars, restaurants, and hotels appearing in the city.[19] Interviewees described landlords responding to these economic changes by dramatically raising rents. The superintendent told us,

> I think that [enrollment is declining because] it's become too expensive to live here. With the stadiums going in, a lot of the landlords are raising the rent drastically. They're throwing families out so that they can redo their apartment buildings…. [People are] saying that their rent was raised $600 in one month. It's not possible for our families to meet that demand. There's just no way. We're finding they're going to [places like] the Inland Empire, Nevada, [or] Texas.

District Response to Enrollment Declines

The district has responded to enrollment declines by pursuing strategies to attract families. It has established themed "academies" in each of the middle schools: a business academy, a fine arts academy, and a STEM academy, each offering elective courses tied to the theme. The superintendent explained, "The reasoning behind the academies was we were losing kids and trying to compete with charters." The district is also giving its middle school students priority in the lottery for entrance to its high-performing charter high school, and interviewees described plans to combine an elementary and middle school, with the thought that families would be less likely to leave the district if their students were enrolled in a k–8.

District leaders also described plans to cut a number of positions for the next academic year, though these decisions had not been finalized at the time of our visit. Many interviewees expressed disappointment about these cuts, but we also heard a refrain of optimism that the district would be able to weather challenges. Interviewees noted that district leaders were very open, transparent, and communicative about the budget, which facilitated a positive relationship with the unions. A school board member described the district's budgeting process as an "open book," explaining, "We break it down, so when it comes to negotiations, it's kind of like, 'We get it. We were there and let's just move forward, sign this.'"

Finally, union leaders expressed confidence in the district's capacity to handle budget cuts, pointing to their experience during the Great Recession. The union president noted that the district drastically lowered its reserve (funds set aside to protect against future uncertainties) in order to minimize layoffs, and the union contributed to this effort by voting to give up furlough days:

> This year we're going to be letting go people … but if I have one place of reference it would be 8 years ago when it literally looked like doomsday every day. We were able to bring everyone back. It was a tough time, and we got through it…. We came together to do the right thing for everyone…. We gave up furlough days for 3 years to help out with the situation…. It was a collective effort to help.

In sum, Hawthorne is facing financial challenges in the years ahead as a result of enrollment declines. Interviewees described the rising cost of housing in the district as a primary cause of declining enrollment, noting that this problem is not unique to Hawthorne. Nevertheless, district actors were optimistic that the district could navigate this challenge and would continue to serve students well.

Conclusion

HSD's higher-than-predicted achievement among African American, Latino/a, and White students prompted us to investigate the practices happening in this positive outlier district. We found that Hawthorne educators built a positive **district climate**, have strong **district leadership**, have **built capacity and buy-in** among staff members, and have invested in a **consistent approach** to supporting CCSS instruction. The case of Hawthorne suggests that respectful and trusting relationships among educators can facilitate the stability, buy-in, and collaboration needed for the successful implementation of reforms. The longevity of HSD's leadership—and its workforce at large—not only seems to support these relationships, but also allows the district to pursue long-term efforts and initiatives, including the slow, deliberate adoption of CCSS. This intentional approach to the new standards has led the district to develop a coherent approach to supporting instruction and collaboration. These practices may be informative for practitioners and policymakers seeking to emulate HSD's record of success among historically underserved students.

The case of Hawthorne also raises some important questions and challenges. First, HSD's experience with the early implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning (CRTL)—two initiatives intended to decrease the suspensions of African American youth—may illuminate challenges relevant to other districts pursuing similar reforms. In both cases, district leaders acknowledged a lack of buy-in from some teachers. This might be explained by the fact that both initiatives were new to the district, and we also noted that PBIS and CRTL adoption did not reflect the investment in teacher leadership that characterized the district's approach to more academic policy reforms. However, this pushback from teachers may also be representative of challenges faced when asking educators to change deeply held beliefs. Collectively, these findings suggest that there is both a continued challenge and a continued need to engage educators in conversations about racial inequity.

Second, declining enrollment has led the district to consider cutting staff. HSD is not alone in its financial challenges. California's Local Control Funding Formula is approaching full funding and will be leveling off, after several years of rapidly increasing many districts' revenue, and the challenges of declining enrollment and lack of affordable housing are widespread in the state.[20] Our findings indicate that, facing cuts in funding, districts may be forced to cut back on staff and resources that support students' academic success.

The positive outlier case of Hawthorne illuminates key practices that may support the success of traditionally marginalized students, and the challenges HSD faces represent concerns shared by districts across California and the nation. To promote greater educational quality and equity in California and the nation, practitioners and policymakers would be wise to learn from the successes and challenges of "the Hawthorne Way."

Appendix A: HSD's Achievement and Climate Data

Table A1
CAASPP Test Results

Demographic	Residual	Proficient and Above in District (%)	Proficient and Above in California (%)
2014–15			
Math All Students	**0.319**	**24**	**34**
Math Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	23	21
Math African American	0.126	18	16
Math Latino/a	0.258	25	21
Math White	0.133	38	49
ELA All Students	**0.317**	**31**	**44**
ELA Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	29	31
ELA African American	0.161	25	28
ELA Latino/a	0.302	32	32
ELA White	0.074	34	61
2015–16			
Math All Students	**0.289**	**28**	**37**
Math Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	26	23
Math African American	0.131	22	18
Math Latino/a	0.235	27	24
Math White	0.050	42	53
ELA All Students	**0.277**	**39**	**49**
ELA Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	37	35
ELA African American	0.123	31	31
ELA Latino/a	0.232	39	37
ELA White	–0.001	48	64
2016–17			
Math All Students	**0.359**	**32**	**38**
Math Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	30	25
Math African American	0.264	26	19
Math Latino/a	0.325	32	25
Math White	0.158	48	53
ELA All Students	**0.313**	**41**	**49**
ELA Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	38	36
ELA African American	0.249	36	31
ELA Latino/a	0.303	40	37
ELA White	0.106	51	64

Notes: "Residual" represents the difference, measured in standard deviations, between the actual average performance of a district's students in a given racial/ethnic group and the predicted performance of the district's students in the given group based on the socioeconomic status of each group's families in the district. The residual for economically disadvantaged students was not calculated. "Proficient and Above" represents the percentage of students in a given group who met or exceeded the grade and subject standards on CAASPP, averaged across grades.

Source: LPI analysis of data from California Department of Education. (n.d.). California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) results. https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/ (accessed 08/24/18).

Table A2
Suspension Rates, 2016–17

Demographic	Rate in HSD	Rate in California
African American	3.7%	9.8%
Latino/a	0.7%	3.7%
White	2.9%	3.2%
All Students	1.4%	3.6%

Data source: California Department of Education. (n.d.). DataQuest. https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/.

Appendix B: Methods

This individual case study of Hawthorne School District (HSD) is part of a larger, three-part, mixed-methods study that includes a quantitative analysis of district performance in California,[21] six additional individual case studies of positive outlier districts conducted from fall 2017 through winter 2018,[22] and a cross-case study that synthesizes findings from all seven individual cases.[23]

Site Selection

Results from a multivariate, quantitative study of positive outlier districts in California identified districts eligible for the individual case studies. As described more fully in a separate report,[24] the quantitative study used a statistical regression model for predicting and measuring student achievement to identify positive outlier districts in which scores on the CAASPP were greater than predicted for African American, Latino/a, and White student groups from 2015 to 2017. For each racial/ethnic group, the model accounted for indicators of family socioeconomic status, including household income, parent education, family structure, and parent employment, all of which are factors that are beyond the district's control and that typically influence student performance. We used the size of the residual scores (the difference between the predicted and actual scores for each group) as the measure of performance for each district. This analysis both identified positive outlier districts and examined predictors of achievement at the district level.

In the second part of the project, we selected a demographically and geographically diverse set of seven districts from among the positive outliers in which we conducted individual case studies to examine the factors associated with their strong outcomes. To select districts for these individual case studies, we began with the group of districts that we had identified by our quantitative study in which African American, Latino/a, and White students consistently achieved at higher-than-predicted rates from 2015 to 2017 in both English language arts and mathematics. This reduced the sample to districts in which there were at least 200 African American and/or Latino/a students and at least 200 White students, to ensure adequate sample sizes and stability of the predictor variables.[25] Then we considered additional criteria—graduation rates, suspension rates, and relative rank on English language arts and mathematics test score residuals from the regression analyses both overall and for African American, Latino/a, and White groups individually. These criteria helped ensure that we selected districts that had positive outcomes on additional measures. We also intentionally selected districts that offered different levels of urbanicity, were from different geographic regions, and were of different sizes.

Data Collection Methods

The overarching research question for this case study was:

> **In HSD, what factors may account for the success of all students in the district and for that of students of color in particular?**

We used a case study approach to address this question. Case studies allow researchers to investigate real-life phenomena in context, generating understandings of a phenomenon and its interplay with its environment.[26] A four-person research team was assigned to the district. We used

a multi-method research design with data from a range of sources, including documents, district data, and interviews with a range of personnel at the district and school levels. We examined the following aspects of district and school operations:

- approaches to instruction and instructional improvement;
- approaches to curriculum and assessment;
- strategies for hiring, developing, and retaining staff;
- supports for school climate or social and emotional learning;
- supports for students with additional learning or out-of-school needs;
- provision of wraparound services;
- outreach to families and communities; and
- approaches to continuous improvement, including uses of data to focus efforts.

The research team conducted a screening phone call with senior district leaders to gain an initial understanding of factors that districts identified as relevant to their success in supporting student achievement, to learn important background information, and to generate an initial list of potential sites and interviewees.

We also reviewed data and documents. Among the sources were the Local Control Accountability Plan; the selected schools' Student Accountability Report Cards; PowerPoint presentations from PD and family engagement meetings; administrative calendars and plans; observation and instructional round protocols; coaching materials; and 4 years (2013–17) of *Getting to the Core*, the central office's monthly newsletter on CCSS implementation.

During 2-day site visits in fall 2017 and winter 2017–18, researchers conducted 30- to 60-minute interviews at district central offices and school sites with district leaders, principals, coaches, teachers, and other staff and community members. Researchers also observed two district meetings: an English language arts instructional leadership team meeting and an administrators' professional development session (approximately 6 hours total).

Research teams identified potential sites for school-level interviews through discussions with district offices. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to identify interviewees. In other words, researchers selected and interviewed several participants based on their positions and responsibilities and then asked those participants to recommend others well-placed to speak to instructional strategies, change processes, and other factors supporting greater-than-predicted outcomes for African American, Latino/a, and White students in the district. In addition, researchers sought to interview staff who could speak to programs supporting achievement and increased equity in the district. A total of 36 individuals participated in interviews (Table B1).

Table: B1
Interviewees by Role

Interviewee Roles	Number
Central Office Administrators	6
Principals	3
Deans	2
Classroom Teachers (does not include Teachers Union Leaders)	4
Site-Level Coaches	4
EL Special Projects & Intervention Teachers	4
Teachers Union Leaders	2
Psychologists, Counselors & Social Workers	3
Parents	2
External Partners & Consultants	5
School Board Member	1
Total	36

Interviews with district administrators and senior staff focused on strategies, steps, and tools they were using to shift instruction to the in-depth learning required under CCSS, to support teacher and administrator learning, to use data to monitor and support school progress, to meet student needs, to engage the community, and to allocate resources to support their improvement efforts. Interviewers also asked district leaders about challenges to this work and how they overcame these challenges. We tailored the interview protocol based on the role of the interviewee and their tenure in the district. This differentiation ensured that some questions could be explored in more depth with respondents who were most likely to hold relevant and reliable knowledge on the topic of discussion. Each interview was audio recorded for transcription purposes if the respondent gave consent.

Analysis

Case study analysis addressed themes identified from the literature and those that arose from the research data. These themes included human capital issues, resources, instruction, curriculum, professional learning, social and emotional learning, data and accountability, culture, parents and community, schedules, and organization. Research teams triangulated findings across multiple data sources and sought both confirmatory and disconfirmatory evidence to develop illustrations of the key factors that emerged as well grounded from the evidence. Each case study draft was reviewed internally by two members of the research team, checked by district leaders for accuracy, and revised based on feedback by two expert peer reviewers.

Endnotes

1. Betts, J. R., Reuben, K. S., & Danenberg, A. (2000). *Equal resources, equal outcomes? The distribution of school resources and student achievement in California*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California; Rumberger, R. W., & Gándara, P. (2004). Seeking equity in the education of California's English learners. *Teachers College Record*, *106*(10), 2032–2056; Education Trust-West. (2017). *The majority report: Supporting the educational success of Latino students in California*. Oakland, CA: Author; Education Trust-West. (2015). *Black minds matter: Supporting the educational success of Black children in California*. Oakland, CA: Author.

2. Fensterwald, J. (2017). *Average scores flat in 3rd year of California's Common Core-aligned tests*. Oakland, CA: EdSource.

3. We recognize that terms for racial/ethnic groups may fail to capture the nuances of individual identities, and preferred terms are often in dispute. Throughout this report, we use the terms "African American," "Latino/a," "White," and "Asian, Filipino/a, & Pacific Islander" to refer to racial/ethnic social groups, yet we acknowledge that others have argued for alternate language. For more on this topic, see: Tatum, B. D. (2017). *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. 94–97.

4. Podolsky, A., Darling-Hammond, L., Doss, C., & Reardon, S. F. (2019). *California's positive outliers: Districts beating the odds*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

5. Burns, D., Darling-Hammond, L., & Scott, C. (with Allbright, T., Carver-Thomas, D., Daramola, E. J., David, J. L., Hernández, L. E., Kennedy, K. E., Marsh, J. A., Moore, C. A., Podolsky, A., Shields, P. M., & Talbert, J. E.). (2019). *Closing the opportunity gap: How positive outlier districts in California are pursuing equitable access to deeper learning*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

6. While our method for determining "positive outlier" status focused on African American, Latino/a, and White students, we note that, in Hawthorne, the average performance of Asian, Filipino/a, and Pacific Islander students (roughly 5% of the student population) was lower than state averages, though this comparison does not take socioeconomic status into consideration.

7. Pearson Education. (2017). *Reimagine your craft: Professional development success story. Hawthorne School District, Hawthorne, CA*. Boston, CA: Author.

8. CAASPP. (2017). *CAASPP in action: Integrating interim assessment blocks—building and maintaining a comprehensive assessment system: Hawthorne School District*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

9. Voight, A., Austin, G., & Hanson, T. (2013). *A climate for academic success: How school climate distinguishes schools that are beating the achievement odds*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

10. Podolsky, A., Darling-Hammond, L., Doss, C., & Reardon, S. F. (2019). *California's positive outliers: Districts beating the odds*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

11. Burns, D., Darling-Hammond, L., & Scott, C. (with Allbright, T., Carver-Thomas, D., Daramola, E. J., David, J. L., Hernández, L. E., Kennedy, K. E., Marsh, J. A., Moore, C. A., Podolsky, A., Shields, P. M., & Talbert, J. E.). (2019). *Closing the opportunity gap: How positive outlier districts in California are pursuing equitable access to deeper learning*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

12. Calculated from dashboard data from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and from the California Department of Education's DataQuest website.

13. A "special projects" teacher is a non-classroom teacher engaged in duties assigned by the district. Many districts call this position a "Teacher on Special Assignment."

14. We note that researchers have argued that direct or "teacher-centered" instruction is sometimes appropriate, depending on the particular instructional objectives. See: Stockard, J., Wood, T. W., Coughlin, C., & Rasplica Khoury, C. (2018). The effectiveness of direct instruction curricula: A meta-analysis of a half century of research. *Review of Educational Research*, *88*(4), 479–507.

15. For example, see: Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration Interrupted: Tracking, Black Students, and Acting White After Brown*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

16. While Hawthorne interviewees referred to this initiative as "Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning," "Culturally Sustaining Teaching" is the term used by UCLA's Center X.

17. Many California districts are experiencing financial challenges related to rising pension costs and special education expenditures, as well as declining enrollment. While these first two factors did not emerge as themes in our data, it is possible that they are playing a role in Hawthorne's budget challenges. See: Krausen, K., & Willis, J. (2018). *Silent recession: Why California school districts are underwater despite increases in funding*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

18. California Department of Education. (n.d.). DataQuest. https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/.

19. Masunaga, S. (2017, December 15). With the rise of SpaceX and Rams stadium, Hawthorne's industrial areas are becoming hip. *Los Angeles Times*. http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-hawthorne-real-estate-20171215-story.html (accessed 04/11/19).

20. Fensterwald, J. (2017, August 2). *Watchdog agency's new CEO warns of impact of dwindling school revenue*. Oakland, CA: EdSource. https://edsource.org/2017/watchdog-agencys-new-ceo-warns-about-slowing-school-revenues-fcmat/585585 (accessed 04/03/18).

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