

# Oakland Unified School District Case Study Elmhurst Community Prep



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This case study is one of six conducted for the report, *Oakland Unified School District: New Small Schools Initiative Evaluation*. The report and case studies can be downloaded from <http://www.srnleads.org/resources/publications/ousd/ousd.html>.

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**The School Redesign Network at Stanford University** engages in research and development to support districts and schools that are equitable and enable all students to master the knowledge and skills needed for success in college, careers, and citizenship.

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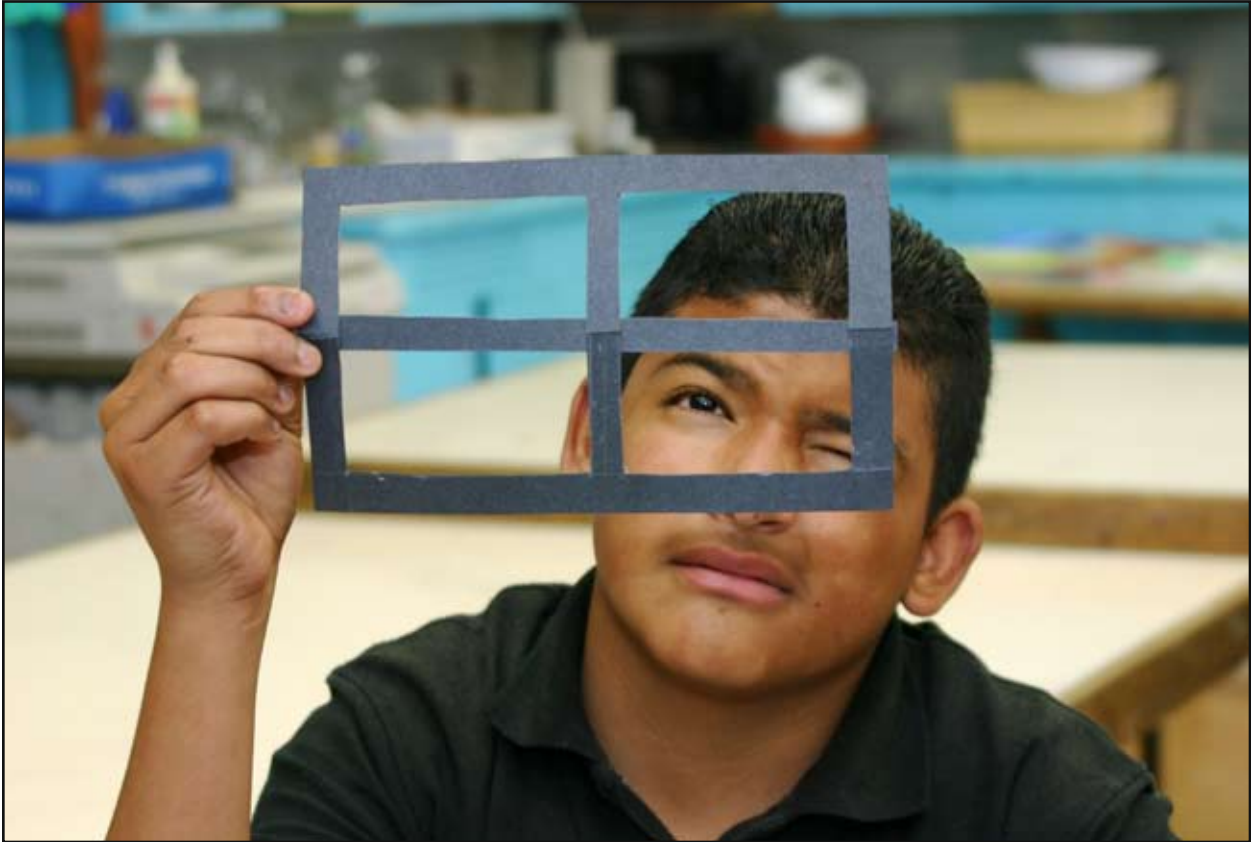


Photo: Mindy Pines, courtesy of Oakland Unified School District

## Introduction

After helping to turn around a failing middle school as an assistant principal in New York City's Harlem, Matthew Duffy came to Oakland in search of another challenge. When he became the principal of Elmhurst Middle School in 2002, it was the lowest performing middle school in Oakland. Elmhurst had 17 teacher vacancies, was covered in graffiti inside and out, and had grounds littered with high weeds and abandoned cars. Fights among students were common, and Duffy recalls tension between students and staff. In 2005, Duffy simultaneously led Elmhurst Middle School while designing a new small school, Elmhurst Community Prep (ECP), which along with another small school, Alliance Academy, was designed to phase in over 2 years and take the place of the old middle school. In 2006-07, Duffy became the principal of ECP.

Today ECP is a calm, positive school where students and staff have a strong sense of belonging. Students love the school and buy into a culture of achievement. Although Duffy considered himself a “big school” turnaround principal and was somewhat

skeptical of the small school reform strategy, he now contends that ECP could not achieve these same results had it remained a large school. The school now has a positive academic culture and in 2007-08, ECP attained the largest Academic Performance

Index (API)<sup>1</sup> growth of all middle schools in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). According to Duffy, both of these accomplishments result largely from efforts to personalize each student's academic experience and raise the rigor of classes through reflective professional development for ECP teachers. The ECP case study also illustrates the power of co-incubating small school leaders who share the same campus. Both ECP and Alliance Academy (located on the same campus as ECP) have achieved positive results, in part reflecting the collaborative relationship that Duffy has with Alliance Academy's principal, Yvette Renteria.

Section One of the case study describes the academic trajectory and creation of ECP. In its second year as a small school (at the writing of this report), it is too early to draw long-term conclusions about the school's academic trajectory. However, based on initial data from ECP and Alliance Academy, compared to the old Elmhurst Middle School, it appears the students on the Elmhurst campus have made impressive academic gains. Neither ECP nor Alliance suffered the implementation dip that is common in school start-ups, partially because of the work of Duffy prior to the phase-out of Elmhurst Middle School, and also because of the district's co-incubation strategy used for ECP and Alliance Academy. This model, in which administrators incubate together and then work together on the same campus, has helped the two leaders, Duffy and Renteria, to develop a strong, collaborative relationship.<sup>2</sup> This relationship, combined with Duffy's earlier work in developing order at the old Elmhurst Middle School, has made for a smooth start-up of the two new small schools.

Section Two of the case study describes four critical attributes of ECP's academic functioning: the school learning climate, instructional program, professional capacity, and parent and community relations. By discussing these four attributes and the district policy supports that contributed to their development, the case study is designed to inform, improve, and strengthen understanding and connections between OUSD's central office and local schools.

School leaders at ECP leveraged the small school design to build in structures, such as an advisory period, that allow staff to provide individualized attention to every student. The small school design also allowed staff members at ECP to improve their collaboration efforts and develop a cohesive view of instructional practice and the importance of personalization. ECP staff also foster a sense of community pride in the academic accomplishments of their students by publicly celebrating student achievement.

Once it became a small school, ECP significantly increased the strength of its instructional program by using academic achievement data to make changes in the school's instructional program that further personalize the learning experience of all students. ECP uses student data not only to improve school climate, by making achievement public, but also to inform its instructional program through teacher reflection and collaborative instructional planning. By creating an instructional program that responds to student needs, ECP has laid a foundation for long-term success, as teachers refine their instructional practice.

Although many attribute much of the success at ECP to the considerable skill of its principal, success has also occurred because

Duffy has also been able to build capacity in others by distributing leadership throughout the staff. Teachers are expected to show initiative for improving ECP and are supported in their efforts. Although the small school design fosters a more communal relationship among staff members, ECP illustrates the limitations for small schools that look internally for the majority of capacity building.

With respect to parent and community relations, ECP has been successful at organizing specific events, but has not yet realized its initial vision for interacting with the community. ECP faces continued challenges in this area as it restructures the family coordinator position because of a lack of funds.

## Section One: ECP's Academic Trajectory and Development Story

**E**CP opened in stages, beginning in 2006 with grades 6 and 7, while the eighth graders spent their last year at the old Elmhurst Middle School. Although ECP just completed its second year, its students have already demonstrated improved academic performance that began under Duffy's leadership of the old Elmhurst Middle School. Opening the two new small schools accelerated the gains made by students in the Elmhurst community, even in year one. ECP, Alliance Academy, and the eighth graders attending the old Elmhurst Middle School exceeded the test scores achieved by the same students when they all attended Elmhurst Middle School (see Figure 1).

The similar school rank<sup>3</sup> improved as well. In 2006-07, Elmhurst Middle School eighth graders scored high enough to move their school to a similar school rank of 4. The 2008 California Standards Test (CST)

scores reveal a similar trend. A document compiled by Duffy, which he shared with his staff, outlines the highlights in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies, summarized here.

### English Language Arts (ELA)

Increase or decline in cohort-matched data of average scale scores, for ELA

Grade/Program	ECP	District
Sixth Grade	+30.1 points	-2.4 points
Seventh Grade	+15.9 points	+10 points
Eighth Grade	+1.6 points	-5 points
Special Day Class*	+15.9 points	-8.2 points
Sheltered English language learners**	+8.8 points	-2.4 points
Read 180***	+14.4 points	+5.2 points

\*A special day class is an intensive educational program designed for children with special needs. A child may be eligible for this program if he or she suffers from severe mental or emotional disorders and learning disabilities. These problems must be severe enough to cause a child difficulty in performing in a regular school setting, or in alternative less intensive special education programs, or to be at risk for harming himself/herself and/or other classmates. <http://www.wisegEEK.com/what-is-a-special-day-class.htm>

\*\*Sheltered English instruction is an instructional approach that engages ELLs above the beginner level in developing grade-level content-area knowledge, academic skills, and increased English proficiency.

\*\*\*READ 180 is reading intervention program that incorporates computer-assisted instruction and audio books, along with teacher-led instruction.

## Math

In cohort-matched data of average scale scores<sup>6</sup>

Grade/program	ECP	District
Sixth grade	+35.3 points	-15.4 points
Algebra students	18% Proficient/Advanced	13% Proficient/Advanced
Special Day Class	+17.5 points	+1.1
In cohort-matched data, +20% more sixth graders scored Proficient/Advanced in math than in 2007.		

## Science

52% of ECP eighth graders scored Proficient or Advanced, compared to the district's 36%.

ECP's average scale score on the science test beat the district average by 23 points.

## Social Studies

36% of ECP eighth graders scored Proficient or Advanced, compared to the district's 23%.

ECP's average scale score on the social studies test beat the district average by 18 points.

Overall, ECP increased the number of students who are Proficient or Advanced in ELA by +5.8%, and moved +15.5% of students out of Far Below Basic/Below Basic in ELA, the largest growth of any district middle school.<sup>7</sup>

Given the newness of ECP, it is difficult to determine its long-term academic trajectory, but it is clear that replacing Elmhurst Middle School with new small schools has markedly improved the performance of students in the Elmhurst community.

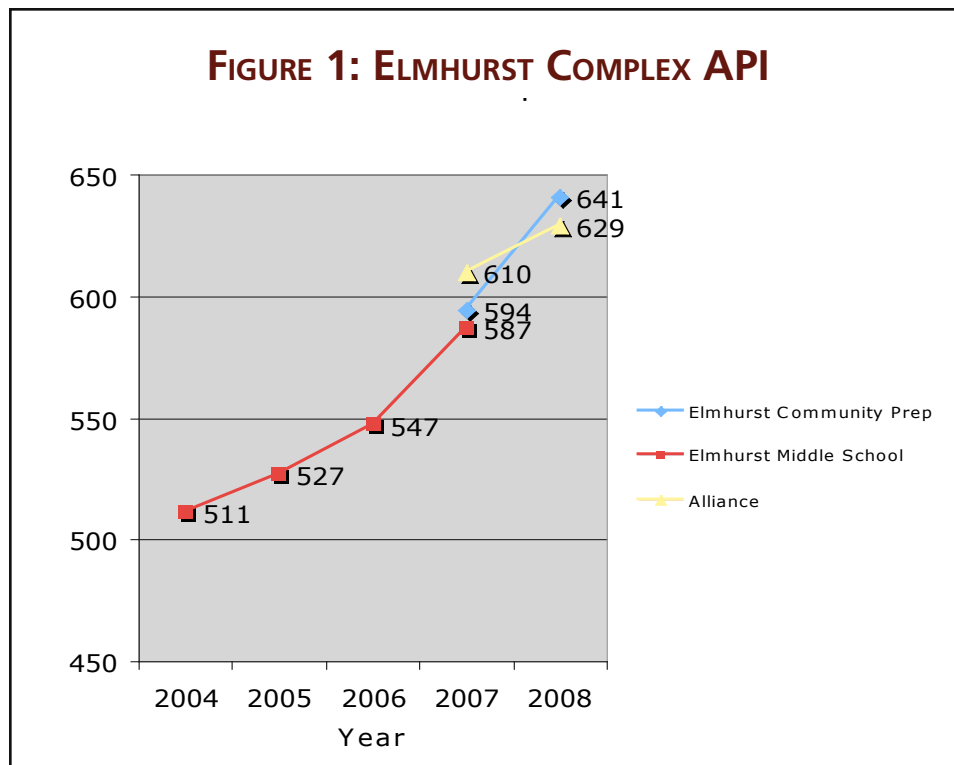




Photo: Mindy Pines, courtesy of Oakland Unified School District

## Section Two: The Design of Elmhurst Community Prep

Elmhurst is located in East Oakland in a traditionally African American community that is becoming predominately Latino and faces racial tension. According to Duffy, one third of all murders in Oakland in 2007 happened within a one mile radius of the Elmhurst complex. The community has few commercial areas, with limited commercial and social service resources for the community.

When Duffy arrived as the new principal of Elmhurst Middle School in 2003 after helping to turn around a failing middle school as an assistant principal in New York City's Harlem community, he found a new and daunting challenge. Elmhurst Middle School was the lowest performing middle school in Oakland. It had 17 teacher vacancies, the school was covered in graffiti inside and out, with 8-foot high weeds and abandoned cars on the school grounds.

In an incident in Duffy's first year, a school counselor beat a student so badly that the student needed medical care. Duffy recalls how a group of truants from his and other schools sat outside on the bleachers and made "strategic runs" inside to vandalize and tag the school. He and the other administrators would chase them back outside. Fights among students were the norm and Duffy describes a "combative culture from students against staff."



ECP has not duplicated that contentious climate. The school has developed a positive culture and is tackling the challenges of raising the rigor of its classes through reflective professional development and through intentional and carefully managed coaching of teachers by administrators and external subject-area coaches. According to ECP's Network Executive Officer (NExO),<sup>8</sup> "Matt (Duffy) knows how to turn around a large, tormented, pathetically underperforming and terrible-looking school. He whipped that school into shape."

Duffy found himself at a school that was unsafe, not fostering academic success, and with an instructional program with no coherence. He described students' haphazard chances for learning, such that "success was dependent upon the individual teacher" rather than a consistent approach to teaching. He recalled how difficult it was to plan effective staff meetings because "people were generally [angry] ... and needed to be heard." It would be a significant challenge to turn the school around.

Duffy began by transforming the school culture — a strategy that began in the old Elmhurst and continues today at ECP. Duffy's strategy included changing how the space was used physically, celebrating student success, and holding all students accountable for problems. He began by physically placing each grade level in its own section of the building and assigning an assistant principal to oversee each grade level. "It's not rocket science but it needed to happen," he says. He then worked with a supportive assistant principal who had been at the school for several years, deciding how to move students through the school building in ways that limited places they had to hide out and disappear.

While Duffy instituted a zero tolerance policy for fighting, he did so in a way that created a sense of ownership and community among all the students. He explains:

I started doing a lot weird things, like holding all kids responsible for the actions of one or two kids, even if that was 800-900 kids. I made the whole school stay after school because there was a fight. Because the school was so big, if you were on one side of the school and something happened on the other side, you'd have no way of knowing. So I tried to create a sense of community.

In addition to building a shared sense of ownership for the problems facing the school, he also worked to create a school in which students and staff took pride in the accomplishments of the school. Duffy built pride at Elmhurst Middle School by aggressively celebrating student success with both students and staff:

We started doing elaborate award ceremonies, so kids got fired up; now they were walking out of here with trophies, medals, and certificates. We started celebrating every little thing. We had the highest improvement in attendance in the district one year; we had great CST results one year. You start to celebrate and then people [staff] start to see that we are doing something here.

A teacher describes Duffy's philosophy as "showering kids with love." She

adds, that students and staff celebrate 4.0 grade point averages (straight As), and “It is really cool to do well here.”

In 2005, Duffy was asked to co-lead the redesign of the Elmhurst campus into two small schools on the site. The plan was that he would go through the incubation process in the 2005-06 school year, and then the following school year, 2006-07, two new small schools would be opened for sixth and seventh graders, while the eighth graders would attend the old Elmhurst Middle School. In 2007-08, all students would attend one of the two new small schools.

Duffy was very reluctant to lead this effort for several reasons. First, he was beginning to experience success with Elmhurst Middle School, which he had worked very hard to achieve. Second, Elmhurst had been in the community for 100 years and he thought to himself, “Am I the guy that is going to end Elmhurst Middle School? That is going to be me? I wasn’t really comfortable with that.” Third, he was nervous about continuing to serve as principal in a school where it was known that some teachers would not be rehired in the new schools. Fourth, the time commitment for participating in OUSD’s incubation process, and the lack of recognition for his individual challenge incubating a school while running a big school, made him resistant:

I was definitely difficult to deal with. I was running this big school, had to take off every Friday [for incubator sessions], had to plan another school, and I knew I had to let go half the staff here. It was so stressful ... it was very difficult for me to leave the

school on Fridays. Friday afternoon? That’s where I make my money; that is where a principal earns his worth. If you can hold down a middle school on a Friday afternoon, that is when stuff goes down. I was [angry] to have to leave.

Eventually, as he became engaged in the incubation process, however, Duffy increasingly bought into the idea of starting a small school. He was initially sold on the idea that he could pick his own staff, and recognized that although his school was a much calmer and safer place with some academic improvement, he was still not going to meet the adequate yearly progress requirements of No Child Left Behind and therefore had to make some substantial changes. Furthermore, once he became engaged in the incubation process, he started to get excited: “You have to go through these weeks of lessons, like who is your community. I had to get a little team together and that got exciting.” He became very focused on selecting a strong team of teachers; however, that also proved tremendously challenging:

The incubation process is an ugly process. Nobody really recognized what I was doing, or if they did, they wouldn’t let me get distracted by it. Every other leader who came in to take over [new] schools came from the outside. I had to look all these people in the eye who worked with me for many years and say you were good enough for Elmhurst but not good enough for ECP. My soul was wrenched all the time. There was no back-up. [The incubator team] were there for moral support, but I was going through it alone. I was not making any friends. They could have

paid me a little bit more for running two schools. The amount of work I was doing was ridiculous.

Three district practices were particularly helpful to Duffy as he worked with his team to create ECP. The first was the very existence of the incubator. Incubation consisted of being walked through the process of designing a new school, learning about the community, developing instructional goals and creating a hiring process. Duffy explains, “They [incubator team] helped me do a lot. They helped me do the interview questions, shape the interview process. I think they were really helpful on that.”

Second, quickly being given the support of additional strong administrators to lead the new school creation process was tremendously helpful. Hae-Sin Kim and Monique Epps, as the leaders of the incubator, arranged for a participant in the New Leaders for New Schools<sup>9</sup> program, Renteria, to serve as an assistant principal mentee for Elmhurst Middle School, while incubating the second new small school, Alliance Academy, to be co-located on the Elmhurst campus. In addition, assistant principal Lucinda Taylor ran the school when Duffy and Renteria were off site at incubator meetings every Friday.

Taylor was also in charge of the eighth grade at Elmhurst Middle School the following year, as Alliance Academy and ECP were phased in. According to Duffy, several aspects of these strategies were essential. The quick assignment of administrators to the site “set the tone that this was really happening.” Also by incubating their schools concurrently, Duffy and Renteria established a strong collaborative relationship upon which they draw now that their

schools are up and running. However, this process was particularly challenging for Renteria, who learned to be an administrator while simultaneously designing a new school. Renteria was out of the building frequently for New Leaders for New Schools work as well as for the incubator meetings. She was also in charge of the sixth grade at Elmhurst Middle School, and Duffy felt her heavy workload was particularly difficult.

Now that the schools are autonomous, the fact that Duffy both mentored and collaborates with Renteria has greatly enhanced their ability to share the facility. They share the library and gym, a strong instrumental music program, a newcomers program, and several staff members, and they have a very positive and mutually supportive relationship.

In addition to the district incubator and working with strong leaders such as Renteria, a third district practice that provided support for the creation of ECP was the year of hiring autonomy that they were given. Duffy recalls that, “This first year it enabled us to hit the ground running ... [he thought to himself], ‘Oh my god, I really just get to work with these teachers? Is this really happening?’” One teacher commented that in her third year as a teacher (ECP’s second year), “All the teachers are passionate about students and teaching,” which was not the case in the old Elmhurst Middle School. According to a design team teacher, prior to the small school, there were teachers that were strong instructionally, but were not “connecting with kids; we are not intentional with their relationship building with kids.”

About 25 of the 30 original teachers stayed at either ECP, Alliance, or the eighth grade

closeout school (old Elmhurst). Of those who went to the eighth-grade close-out school, a couple were hired at ECP or Alliance the following year, a few went with Dr. Taylor to her next school assignment, and the remaining teachers either retired or went to another school for their last few years of teaching.

In the first year of implementation, Duffy believes the district decision to phase in the small schools did not fit the culture and conditions of his site. The model was designed to create a new culture. The six new middle schools that opened in 2006 would each serve sixth and seventh grade only; the old schools would be only for continuing eighth graders, and would be phased in the following year. Duffy felt that since he had already successfully created a new culture at the old Elmhurst, this approach did not make sense at his campus. It also created tension between Duffy and the eighth graders, as they were left out of the new small schools and felt alienated:

I had great connections with those kids. So when they got placed in eighth grade in their own school, they felt shafted; everybody felt shafted. They had the senior teachers, but they also had a group of second-year TFA [Teach for America]<sup>10</sup> teachers. I had purposely brought in a bunch of first-year TFA teachers the previous year because I wanted to get them ready for the new school. It was a weird mix of new and veteran.

Although Duffy felt that Taylor did an excellent job running the eighth-grade school, he also felt that separating the

eighth graders into a different school was harmful to the school culture.

One challenging area of building a small school was the different approaches of the incubator network<sup>11</sup> and the middle school network to which ECP was assigned in its second year. There seems to be little alignment or articulation between the two networks to ease the transition. Duffy describes his 2 years of experience in the two networks:

[In the incubator network] we were encouraged to think outside of the box, think about different ways we could work in our environment; we were supported and protected. This year [in the regular middle school network], we don't see the same sense of support for trying things differently; it can be interpreted as breaking the rules.

According to several ECP administrators, whereas compliance with state and district policies and requirements seemed to be the primary focus of the middle school network, the incubator network for first-year schools coming out of the OUSD new schools incubator focused on thinking about what was best for kids. On the other hand, the middle school NExO was critical of the incubator, suggesting that it gave administrators “carte blanche” and did not help them get a “grasp on reality.” Thus when an incubated school entered the middle school network, the NExO explained that she had to “crash down on them.... I am not going to let something slide that could cost me my license. I am the big old hammer.”

The lack of alignment between the two networks made it difficult to know what was expected of either the school or the district.



Photo: Mindy Pines, courtesy of Oakland Unified School District

## Section Three: Organizational Supports

### SCHOOL LEARNING CLIMATE

While the school learning culture began to change when [redacted] arrived at the old Elmhurst in 2002, the small school size of ECP further fosters a sense of community. As Duffy explained:

I was convinced that we could make something happen in the big school, and I think we really did. I think that is what helped us in the end make such a good transition to small schools is that there was already momentum.

Once the new school opened in 2006, the design team had already identified creating

a positive school culture as the school's first goal. "We went after it really hard in that first year," recalls a teacher who had served on the ECP design team. In the first year, at the summer retreat, the staff spent "a lot of time talking about what we wanted the school to be ... what are we going to focus on, what are we going to push?" according to a veteran teacher. They focused on grade levels, set high behavioral

and academic expectations for students, and created personalization structures such as advisory to establish a strong school learning climate. The staff also worked to build informal camaraderie among teachers and students. By grouping students in separate spaces by grade level and assigning an assistant principal to each grade level, Duffy created a strong grade-level community for the students within the already small school. In addition, cohorts of students who travel from class to class within grade levels are given college names, further helping students to develop an attachment to each other and the school, and also help students “get college on the brain.”

High behavioral and academic expectations are set and upheld by administrators and teachers alike. For example, when a few students are seen pushing each other in line waiting to get into class, the principal holds them out of class and talks to them about being respectful of each other and their teacher’s time, before he allows them to enter the classroom. In another instance, a couple of girls are waiting for a third girl in the office to settle an altercation, and Duffy speaks to them about his expectations of them and not wanting them to miss more class. To one student he says, “You missed two classes. You still haven’t made the honor roll, which we are expecting of you.” He then turns to the other and says, “And you just had the best marking period of your career here, and that is not going to slip, you are going to stay up on top. I’ve got to get you back to class, but I need a commitment that you are going to be focused on your work.” Then to both students he says, “I hope in your hearts you are thinking of a way to solve this, because you two are terrific people and you are not going to end your ECP career like this. The

school year is almost over and we want to end on a positive note.”

High expectations and an academic culture are also promoted through the posting of student work and pro-college messages posted in the hallways.

Being a small school has made a tremendous difference in the staff’s ability to know their students well. According to a design team teacher:

The attention on the kids is through the roof.... The adults know the kids. We know so much about them. When it was a large urban school we couldn’t keep tabs on the kids.... There is a sense of family and caring on campus that did not exist before.

Other teachers agree that it has enhanced a sense of community among students and between students and teachers. Another teacher adds, “It is the kind of close-knit family that it needs to be for us to support our kids.”

Creating a small school does not build community by itself, but being small can facilitate certain practices, such as advisory periods, that increase personalization. ECP has created an advisory program to support the types of relationship they want to develop among all members of the school. Students meet in advisory 4 days a week for 40 minutes, with a grade-level teacher/advisor. One teacher serves as a school-wide advisory coordinator who plans the curriculum and provides all the materials. She also folds in additional programs, such as drug prevention and anti-violence curriculum, so that these areas do not have to be inserted into the core academic classes. Advisory has four main

goals: 1) to monitor and support students academically, socially, and emotionally; 2) to ensure that each student has a primary adult connection on campus; 3) to build community and culture school-wide; and 4) to support family involvement in the school. During the advisory period, advisors monitor their students' weekly progress reports, hold 20 minutes of daily sustained silent reading, and prepare students for their student-led report card conferences with their parents. All major school events are channeled through advisory, such as regular community-building activities, holding beginning of the year advisory potluck with families, and having advisory field trips. Advisors are also expected to set expectations of 100% family participation in the student-led report card conferences, and to ensure that the parents sign all progress reports. Advisors also call the homes of students whose progress reports are unsigned or who are not doing well in their classes.

As a result of the transformation of the school culture, the staff has a shared instructional vision and shared commitment to the students. The students feel a sense of community. "We are all like a big family," one eighth-grader explains. The students have also developed an academic orientation. In the classes we observed, students were engaged and eager to participate. Student response to the district's annual Use Your Voice Survey<sup>12</sup> in 2006-07<sup>13</sup> corroborates this perspective. For example, 72% of students "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt safe at school compared to a district middle school average of 66%. Seventy-nine percent of students felt there was at least one adult at their school that they could go to for good advice and support compared to the district middle school average of 70%.

The Use Your Voice Survey results also reveal teachers' high expectations. Ninety-eight percent of students indicate that their teachers expect them to do their best in school compared to a district middle school average of 92%, and 88% of students state that most of their class lessons are interesting and make them want to learn more compared to a district average of 82%.

As one teacher explains, "Students are so eager to do well." She describes that the change in culture has also enabled students to maintain the child side of themselves. "They act like 12- and 13-year-olds — before was this sense that they had to front like they were adults, now they are kids." With their defenses down, in a safe environment, students can be open to learning.

### Instructional Program

Although ECP does not have autonomy over curriculum and scheduling, teachers have developed an instructional program that meets the needs of their students by aggressively supplementing the district materials and finding different ways to teach the core curriculum. In ECP's first year, staff focused on creating a positive school culture, while in year two, the staff has focused on instructional rigor. A teacher articulates this focus as "students knowing what grade-level work looks like and choosing to achieve it."

Overall, ECP's instructional vision is to create a student-centered learning environment. According to the principal, student-centered means, "We are hearing from them, we listen to them, we are looking at their work. The conversations are centered on them rather than the teachers." He wants students to be able to speak to each other and their teachers about what they

are learning to demonstrate their understanding. According to veteran teachers, the instructional focus of ECP has increased students' sense of accountability for their learning: "It has drawn out the goodness in all these students, because they are all great kids." A component of student-centered work is the student-led conferences that ECP holds twice a year. Students present their work to their parents and then, together with their parents, set goals. The school typically has about 90% of parents participating. Evidence that staff listens to students emerges from the Use Your Voice Surveys. According to the 2006-07 survey, 82% of students felt that their teacher challenged them to share their opinions and ideas compared to a district middle school average of 72%. The clarity of instructional vision is facilitated by being a small school.

Several teachers recall that prior to being a small school there was no unified instructional vision: "[Now] the school has a focus, we create a school and say 'this is what it is going to be about,' and fill it with people who have the same focus." High expectations are also set through the shared instructional vision. As one teacher explains, the expectations are clear that teachers give homework every night and that teachers will not show a movie to their class just because it is a few days before winter break. The instructional vision is also reinforced through professional development time, which will be discussed in the next section.

Teachers value having flexibility regarding their instruction. At ECP it is common for teachers to use both district-approved texts as well as supplemental material. For example, one social studies teacher understands that she needs to prepare her students for the CST and uses the textbook

for that purpose, but she also wants students to understand multiple perspectives of historical events, so she brings in other resources. Teachers recognize that they may have more flexibility than the district recommends because, "We are buffered by administration, so we have autonomy over what we teach and how we teach it." Another teacher adds that the administrators remain compliant with district requirements and that "they [administrators] are not rebels in the district, just always fighting for the kids."

Students at each grade level take an academic load of classes. They take four core classes in English, social studies, math and science. In sixth grade, students take blocks of classes in English/Social Studies and Math/Science. In addition, those students who take Read 180 (a reading intervention program) receive that class in a longer block of time. The other classes are 55 minutes long 4 days a week, and 75 minutes long 1 day a week. In addition, students take two electives, one of which is usually PE. The electives are computers, music, library, and conflict mediation. Electives meet 4 days a week. Students also have advisory 4 days a week.

Because the day is made up primarily of instruction in the core academic subjects, all students are enrolled in an extended day, or seventh period. It offers a wide range of electives, which ECP students take along with students from Alliance Academy, the other small school sharing the campus. These classes include music, dance, chorus, percussion, Spanish, French, sports, clothing design, games, boys and girls club, and yearbook. Having these classes together with Alliance students also helps to create a unified campus, according to Duffy. He also feels that offering this seventh period



enables students to feel like they are at a big school while still reaping the benefits of a small school. One of the challenges of this program is that many classes are taught by students' core teachers (as an add-on to their teaching contract). Teaching an extra period a day of a different subject can be taxing on teachers, so ECP is trying to bring in more outside teachers.

ECP also has built-in structures to support all students academically. For example, all students receive a weekly progress report in their advisory that is compiled by their core teachers. According to the students, the progress reports "tell you what you need to make-up" and "how to stay on track." Students comment that teachers will always meet with them at lunch or after school to help them. They also trust their principal, and comment that he knows every student's name, and "you can talk to him about anything, personal stuff, he's funny." The students not only buy-in to the notion that the whole school is a strong community, but also that everyone is accountable for everyone else's success. According to one eighth-grade student, "Eighth graders often tutor sixth graders because we want everyone over 80%. We want everyone to pass all their classes."

Students who are performing below grade level take an English or math intervention course as their elective. As soon as they demonstrate mastery of that subject, however, they can transfer out of the intervention course and back into a regular elective; they do not have to wait until the end of the semester. In addition, the resource teacher<sup>14</sup> works with individual students who are struggling. For example, one year she worked closely with the teachers of eight boys, and the boys themselves to tried to figure out how to

help themselves learn. This resource teacher explains that "the smallness of the school enables us to be flexible and responsive" to students needs. It enables us to be flexible in how we group students from day to day or week to week, both low-performing and high-performing students." She adds that as a result of that flexibility and having fewer students, the students are well known by their teachers:

We are catching most kids, and those that we are not catching, we all know we are not getting through to them and we all work to meet their needs...There will be an e-mail with one kid's name and 13 responses. [We will ask their former teachers] "What did you do with them that helped last year?"

The students comment that the smallness of ECP also enables teachers to know them better and teach to their learning modalities. An eighth-grade student explains, "They get accustomed to how you learn, and teach you the way you learn. Some have an easy time watching, some kids get examples, some kids need to draw a picture." This comment is reinforced by the Use Your Voice Survey in 2006-07 in which 87% of students felt that their teachers used different ways that help them learn.

Although many teachers feel that the CST does not align with their goals of teaching students higher-order thinking skills, they appreciate that the administrators buffer them from much of the pressure coming from the district. One administrator sums up their approach, "There is pressure, but it is not something they [teachers] should have to worry about. That is our job. Everybody works really hard to do the best by kids."

ECP uses the district benchmark assessments, but oftentimes the district benchmark does not align to the ECP teachers' pacing of the curriculum. Sometimes ECP teachers receive very short notice on when the assessments need to be administered, which increases the difficulty in preparing students to score well on the district benchmark assessment. Problems such as this are exacerbated at a school like ECP, where many students enter middle school below grade level, and the teachers have to do considerable work to get them ready for the grade-level curriculum before they can actually start teaching at the grade level. Many ECP teachers commented that it would be helpful to have more flexibility over when the benchmark tests are administered. However, they do find that the data they receive back from the assessments informs their practice and enables them to reteach the areas where students' performance is low. Now that the district is working with Action Learning Systems to redesign the benchmarks, the teachers feel that the assessments' quality has improved.

To supplement the district benchmark assessments, ECP teachers are working hard to develop multiple assessments to best assess how their students are learning. It has become a major focus of their professional development time as teachers create their own assessments every 6 weeks. This enables them to closely align their instruction and assessments. According to the principal, the math department has been particularly successful with this work and has used Edusoft<sup>15</sup> to develop its assessments. The math department's success has begun to influence other teachers. Edusoft has become a tool that has been useful to ECP teachers and enables them to align their assessments with their curriculum. Duffy explains that

in 2007-08, social studies teachers, building off the math teachers' model, developed assessments that gave them quantitative data about their students for the first time. The assessment work is supported by a math coach as well as one of the assistant principals who is a strong literacy coach.

In addition to regular assessments, students also participate in an exposition of learning at the end of the year. In each class, students work in groups of two or three for several weeks. The goal of this final project is to keep students motivated and to demonstrate their learning. For example, an eighth grade social studies project focused on a study of the abolitionist newspaper, the *Liberator*. Students created their own edition of the newspaper, which included a fact-based story on an event during the abolitionist movement against slavery in the U.S., a personal profile or human interest story, an editorial response to the Fugitive Slave Act, and a political cartoon.

In general, ECP teachers prefer to get their instructional support in-house because they feel that the interactions they have had with district personnel have been mixed. Others suggested that the district support can be episodic rather than sustained. Teachers also feel that the instructional materials that they are provided with are of variable quality. For example, the algebra books they have to use are written for high school students, so the skills progress too quickly, have too few practice problems, and the vocabulary is too advanced.

### Professional Capacity

ECP's NExO believes building professional capacity is one of Duffy's greatest strengths. The NExO said, "The way that the leadership builds leadership in all the staff, that

is what Matt does. Everyone is a learner and leader, which is a wonderful culture.” Having hiring autonomy in its first year also enabled the school to hire the staff that are the best fit for the school, and Results-Based Budgeting as well as flexibility over the use of professional development time also enables the school to build teachers’ capacity.<sup>16</sup> While ECP has made great strides in building staff capacity it faces continuing challenges with district bureaucracy regarding the hiring process, as well as some district-mandated professional development.

Results-Based Budgeting has enabled Duffy to staff his school in the way that he believes best meets the needs of his student population as well as the ways that are most compatible with his leadership style. Rather than having to follow a formula that because he has a certain number of students he qualifies for specific numbers of administrative, classified, and certificated staff, he has control over his budget and staffing. While he still benefits from this site-based control, he found it most useful in his first year as a principal of the old large Elmhurst Middle School:

We had no need for positions for two people in the office, health office, and five P.E. teachers. We didn’t have enough custodians. It was a hugely important tool. It allowed me to get the right people in the right places. You only get that leverage for one year when you are really radically shifting things.

Because Duffy’s philosophy is to focus on building the instructional capacity of teachers by delegating leadership, he used Results-Based Budgeting to hire assistant principals who are themselves strong in-

structional leaders. He explains, “I am a huge believer in assistant principals. It is one of my own personal theories of action. If I have to hire an assistant principal over a curriculum designer, I’d do it in a second.” The trade-off of this investment is that he does not provide a lot of supplies to teachers, and does not have any curriculum coaches, instructional facilitators, or counselors. In their place, the assistant principals fulfill all of these roles as they oversee a grade level, which enables them to develop deeper relationships with teachers, students, and parents, rather than having these relationships divided among many people. This strategy is particularly powerful in a small school like ECP, with four to six teachers and under 130 students per grade level.

Beyond distributing leadership to administrators, the administration also formed a leadership team of teachers representing each of the core content areas. The teams meet with the administration once a month to provide teacher feedback on how the administrators can best move forward to meet the school’s instructional goals. For example, they discussed strategies for engaging more teachers as facilitators of professional development. The administrators also use the time to check in with the team to “get a read on how teachers are doing.”

In addition to the leadership team, teachers are encouraged and supported in taking on leadership roles. Some of these roles are formal. For example, there is a teacher who designs all curriculum and materials for the school’s advisory<sup>17</sup> program. Others, however, are informal, and respond to perceived needs. If a teacher wants to teach a specific class or create a Spirit Week, they are supported in doing that. According to one veteran teacher, “If you think of something, you can do it,” and in this way teachers are

building their investment in the school and students beyond the walls of their classrooms.

Although Results-Based Budgeting has provided ECP more autonomy over the staffing process, the hiring process itself has not always worked smoothly. For example, for the 2008-09 school year, the other small school on the Elmhurst campus, Alliance Academy, wanted to hire an additional assistant principal and had allocated the money to do so. However, because ECP already has three administrators on site, Alliance's request was denied because it would result in "too many" administrators on one site, according to the district office. This is detrimental to Alliance, which reaps no benefit from the number of administrators at the ECP site. Some feel that the district is not yet fully equipped to support autonomous schools sharing the same campus or the expanded roles played by small school administrators.

ECP also faced a number of struggles with the hiring process in the 2007-08 school year. ECP administrators went to a job fair and hired a math teacher. Months after the contract was set, the Human Resources Department informed ECP that math teacher would be placed at a different school. ECP was then stuck in mid-July with a math teacher vacancy. Fortunately, the school was able to find and hire another math teacher. Mid-year, Human Resources notified the principal that the teacher did not have the "authorization to work" document issued to employees prior to hiring. Upon investigation, the administration found out that this teacher had not completed a small portion of his application. Technically, because he was not allowed to work while the problem was under investigation, it was also a hurdle to pay him

for the time he had already worked. The teacher quit out of frustration, leaving ECP without a math teacher after the school year had already started. Consequently, the three administrators and a math coach each taught math that year to fill in for this vacancy. Duffy made this decision because he did not believe he would find a qualified math teacher at that point in the school year, and he was not willing to give students a long-term substitute teacher, whom he believed would not be of high enough quality.

Another challenge for ECP is sharing some staff with Alliance Academy. There are a number of staff who work half-time in each school to provide music and computer instruction. In the past, each school paid the salary of one teacher, and they made up the \$10,000 difference in salary between the teachers by balancing other shared expenses. However, in 2007-08, the two schools were told that their budgets needed to reflect the actual time each staff member worked on each campus, half-time on each payroll. It required "bureaucratic maneuvers and lots of paper work," according to school administrators. Now, because these teachers have half-time positions at each school, they have fewer job protections than full-time teachers and could lose their jobs in 2008-09 or be bumped by a more senior teacher who may want one or both of the half-time positions. Although the NExO was instrumental in helping the school leaders navigate the human resources system, these issues were still difficult to resolve.

Duffy has not only invested his time in hiring strong staff, but also in supporting the staff once they are at ECP. He does this primarily through the assistant principal positions. Assistant principals evaluate, observe, mentor, and support the teachers

in their grade level. Although new teachers receive little support from the district, the administrators and staff provide mentoring, resources, and guidance to new teachers. For example, one new teacher worked closely with the resource specialist who would design modified lessons for the special education students in the class for each lesson that the new teacher had designed, until the new teacher learned how to design her lessons to be more accessible to all of her students.

Duffy also builds a sense of community and collegiality among his staff. Building a sense of community begins with a three-day, off-site retreat in late summer, that Duffy describes as “cheesy and corny,” with a lot of community-building activities. Duffy feels that these retreats play an instrumental role in building community, and he and the staff look forward to them each year. These activities continue throughout the year, celebrating success and the staff. “We are not afraid to be mushy,” he adds. A teacher adds that the time invested in building community and setting goals during the retreat helps to create an environment in which teachers “have the respect for each other and have a same common vision.” Another teacher recalls an off-site professional development day where the staff all made breakfast together and then sat down and really worked hard on focusing on building “higher level” questioning strategies.<sup>18</sup> Building community also is conveyed in the expectations of professional development time that teachers should engage in critical reflection on their own and their colleagues’ instructional practices. These expectations are reinforced in teacher collaboration time and modeled by administrators. As a small school, it is easier for the teaching staff to develop a shared instructional vision that is reinforced by the administrators and

through the collaboration time teachers have with each other. According to one veteran teacher:

Staff is clear about what the objectives are, it is supported, its stressed, its observed, its monitored more, we get to debrief about it, we get to reflect more about what we are doing. We are beyond the basic components of classroom management... we’ve had the opportunity to become in synch as teachers. It is a huge transformation.

Teachers meet for after-school professional development once a week for 90 minutes. The administrators help create a positive culture of critique and reflection by using protocols. For example, a teacher may share his or her own work or students’ work, and then the observers will share their critique, not to the teacher but to a third person, while the presenting teacher listens. According to the administrators, this helps teachers more willingly engage in the critique process: “I’ve seen teachers use the protocols to push each other, it is done through the structure of a protocol.” Teachers add that working in grade-level groups that are small improves collaboration.

The NExO describes the principal’s leadership in professional development in supporting a connection between data and practice. “He fosters an environment where all the adults challenge each other to do better and stretch and grow. They are always talking about how they are doing in the classroom. They are always looking at student data.” According to data collected by an OUSD district administrator on special assignment, Susan Ryan, 100% of teacher respondents stated that Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at ECP

enabled them to discuss instructional strategies or best practices at least five times a year.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned previously, one of the ways teachers look at student data is through their 6-week unit and assessment presentations. Every 6 weeks, teachers present their units and assessments to their departments or grade-level small groups. Administrators work closely with teachers during this time to provide instructional guidance. Accountability is built into this system, since at the end of the 6 weeks, the teachers are expected to present their student assessment data, compiled on Edusoft. This process is designed to provide teachers with ample feedback. Teachers explain that this differs from practices they experienced in the past in which they were asked to turn in six-week unit plans with no follow-up. Ryan's survey data reveals that 94% of teachers state that PLCs enabled them to fine-tune or discuss assessments at least three times, 75% of teachers state that PLCs enabled them to analyze test data at least three times, 69% of teachers state that PLCs enabled them to analyze student work at least three times, and 50% of teachers state that PLCs enabled them to analyze benchmark data at least three times. Finally, Ryan's research indicates that 88% of teachers believe that PLC's strongly help them promote new thinking about what their students should know or be able to do.

Duffy recalls a turning point among the staff in 2006-07 when one staff member was not fitting into the school's instructional vision. This teacher was having students write 33 literary critiques for their end-of-year exposition of learning, because there were 33 stories in the textbook. The staff stood up to this teacher and told him that he should have the students do one critique

well — quality over quantity. Duffy noted this as a moment where the staff took ownership of their school and demanded quality from their peers.

In 2007-08, ECP also participated in the district-mandated Focus on Results professional development. Many schools went through the professional development together and, according to Duffy, "It was a blanket approach for PD for everybody." While he commended the quality of the PD, he felt the timing was not right. The professional development was designed to help schools identify an instructional focus; however, the ECP staff felt that they already had an instructional focus and wanted to move to the next level of looking at data within their instructional focus.

The Focus on Results leaders and ECP's NExO did not feel ECP's focus area, instructional rigor, was measurable. Although the ECP administrators ultimately changed their focus area, they did not inform their teachers, because it was near the end of the year. According to an administrator, "We got pushed and pushed and pushed to change [our focus]. We heard some of the reasons, and some were valid, but it was too late to redirect our staff."

One teacher reflects on the criticism that focusing on rigor is not specific enough. She believes that, since it was their first year focusing on rigor, and "the community has been devastated by low expectations," ECP's goal was not to come to consensus on what rigor is, but to continue to "get this into our consciousness and think about how far on Bloom's taxonomy<sup>20</sup> are we going to go." In their formal and informal collaboration, the staff are pushing each other to explore what rigor might look like in their classrooms.

Teacher capacity is also built through access to instructional coaching. ECP has used a strong math teacher on campus to provide coaching to teachers. In addition, under the guidance of the NExO, ECP contracted with a coach from Action Learning Systems to provide math coaching to teachers. Furthermore, the resource specialist has worked closely with classroom teachers on how to support special education students' learning in math. In addition, one of the assistant principals is a strong literacy coach and provides coaching to teachers to support students' literacy development. Despite these efforts, ECP's NExO believes that the school's relatively inexperienced staff still has work to do in raising the level of rigor for students. She believes more coaching from external sources would be the greatest support to the staff.

Beyond school-wide and district-led professional development, teacher capacity is also supported through informal interactions between administrators and teachers. According to ECP's NExO:

[Duffy] knows what people's capacity is, where they are developmentally as teachers. The principal is the head teacher. He is a good head teacher. He's got emotional intelligence. He reads people well. He knows how to gauge what they are capable of and meet them in their zone of proximal development.<sup>21</sup>

For example, one third-year teacher who spent 2 years in the old Elmhurst Middle School before joining the ECP staff said that he received a lot more administrative support at ECP than he had previously: "I am being pushed in ways that I was never pushed before." Administrators work with him on his daily lessons and instructional

practice by observing his teaching, making recommendations, observing the following day for changes in his practice. He describes the feedback as "real curricular stuff" that supports him in becoming more student-centered in his instruction and more intentional in how he scaffolds students' learning to reach his desired outcomes for his students. Because the ratio of administrators to teachers is lower within the small school, the administrators have the capacity to invest their time in teachers' classrooms who need personalized support in increasing the rigor in their practice.

Up until the 2008-09 school year, core academic teachers (teaching English, social studies, math, and science) received two preparation periods a day. They used one of their daily preparation periods for formal grade level collaboration time once a week. This time was often used to discuss students who were shared by a team of teachers. Teachers also collaborate informally more frequently. Now school leaders face the challenge of supporting teacher collaboration in the face of cutbacks to one preparation period a day.

## Parent and Community Relations

Family involvement is one of the four pillars of ECP's theory of action. However, it is the one that they struggle the most to achieve. ECP's stated vision is that:

Our parents and guardians will have the knowledge and skills necessary to hold themselves, their students, their school and their community accountable for their child's academic success and social and emotional well-being.

The components of their design was that family involvement would be supported by having parents sign students' weekly progress

reports, attend student-led conferences, and run the school site council.

In practice, the school has been able to get parents to sign weekly progress reports and attend student-led conferences. Teachers also call at least five homes per week with both negative and positive feedback, but they have had limited success with the school site council. The school has also engaged fewer parent volunteers than expected.

Progress is being made by the family coordinator, a former teacher in (but not a member of) the East Oakland community, who has focused on her areas of strength, which are providing information to students and families that she believes is critical for students' ongoing success. She writes a weekly parent newsletter, incorporates high school information into the advisory curriculum, and provides support to student-led conferences and an awards banquet each semester.

Under the mentorship of an Oakland Community Organization's (OCO) organizer, the coordinator also organized two major events for students and their families. The first event was a high school Options Fair. Many families do not know about choices beyond the three new small high schools on the Castlemont campus. In preparation for the Options Fair, the family coordinator visited many high schools to learn about the best options. At this event, parents were given information about A-G requirements,<sup>22</sup> the API, and AYP<sup>23</sup> of the various high school options. In conjunction with the fair, the family coordinator worked with individual students and families to help them complete charter and private school applications as needed. In addition, the coordinator made it possible

for all eighth graders to go on high school visits.

The second major event that she coordinated was a Summer Options Fair, because many students do not have anything to do over the summer. This fair provided information to students on various summer programs in which they could participate. Fifty families and 300 students attended. This event was also opened up to families from Alliance Academy.

The family coordinator also recruited the support of a parent who did not feel welcome at the school and has since become a full-time volunteer. This parent has taken over the after-school gardening class and transformed the school garden. This parent has also supported the family coordinator in all of her event planning, and spearheads efforts to support struggling families. The parent also created a space on campus called the Family Resource Center, which serves as a home base for families and as a place for parent meetings.

Finally, the family coordinator is working with a community organizer and a program called Rebuilding Together Oakland. This program will repair and rebuild ten homes in the community. They held a volunteer launch of this program at ECP in June 2008, and plan to conduct home visits to establish who will qualify for the program.

Due to funding constraints, ECP has to restructure the family coordinator position. For the 2008-09 school year, a combination of parent volunteers and parents who receive a stipend will fill the family coordinator position.

In addition to the work of the family coordinator, the Elmhurst campus benefits from



a grant to fund the Safe Passages<sup>24</sup> program. This program has a coordinator and a couple of case workers who provide constant feedback to staff on their case loads and updates on the cases. Students can get referred to the program from their teachers or administrator.

Under the effective leadership of Duffy, Elmhurst Middle School's climate was radically transformed, and this improvement carried over into the

development of two new small schools with positive academic trends. Duffy has distributed leadership through an administrative team, and has helped to create a new small middle school focused on understanding and responding to student needs more effectively. ECP has also capitalized on being a small school to implement valuable personalization strategies, which have contributed to a much stronger connection between the students and the school.

# Endnotes

1. The Academic Performance Index (API) is a single number, ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1000, that reflects a school's performance level, based on the results of statewide testing. The state has set 800 as the API target for all schools. Its purpose is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools. The information that forms the basis for calculating the API comes from the results of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program and the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). The API is calculated by converting a student's performance on statewide assessments across multiple content areas into points on the API scale. These points are then averaged across all students and all tests. The result is the API. 2007-08 Academic Performance Index Reports Information Guide Prepared by the California Department of Education <http://www.cde.ca.gov/api/>
2. Incubation is a year-long process that includes a 12-part curriculum that requires forming a community-based design team and creating a school vision, culture, and theory of action. The design team then develops an aligned instructional program and implementation plan, begins hiring teachers and recruiting students and families, and getting systems in place for the opening of the new school.
3. API ranks are provided in the Base API reports. Schools are ranked in ten categories of equal size, called deciles, from 10 (highest) to 1 (lowest). A school's statewide rank compares its API to the APIs of all other schools statewide of the same type (elementary, middle, or high school). A school's similar schools rank compares its API to the APIs of 100 other schools of the same type that have similar demographic characteristics.
4. Cohort-matched growth examines how a school is moving the performance of the same students over time. There are two categories measured: is the school moving at least 1/3 of its students at least one performance band? Is the number of students improving greater than the number of students decreasing in performance? Each of these categories is measured for both Math and ELA, resulting in FOUR possible points. OUSD Tiering Methodology PowerPoint January 3, 2008.
5. CST scores are grouped into Far Below Basic, Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Proficient is considered meeting grade-level standards.
6. As a score-reporting technique, a scale provides a standard range for test takers and permits direct comparisons of results from one administration of the examination to another. (An administration is the combination of the specific test and date it was taken.) Scores on different tests that use the same scale may also be compared. Such comparisons would be difficult to make using raw scores (number correct), because the tests may have different numbers of questions and the number of correct answers.
7. Matthew Duffy, Personal Communication. September 6, 2008.
8. Network Executive Officers (NExO) supervise a geographically defined network of schools and principals at the elementary, middle school, or high school level.
9. New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) is a non-university based organization that develops and builds the capacity of aspiring principals and other education leaders in strategies to dramatically boost student achievement, especially student performance in schools located in high poverty, urban districts." Aportela, A., & Goetz, M. (2008). *Strategic management of human capital: New leaders for new schools*. Madison, WI: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
10. Teach for America is a national non-profit organization that partners with school districts to provide an alternative path for teacher certification. Teachers in the program commit to teaching in a high-need school for a minimum of 2 years.

11. All 12 schools – 6 elementary and 6 middle schools – that came out of the OUSD incubator and opened in 2006 were in a first-year schools network, led by NExO Hae-Sin Kim Thomas, who had been a principal of a new small school (ASCEND) and had been director of the OUSD New School Development Group incubator in its first year.
12. In January 2006, Oakland Unified School District created the Use Your Voice Survey initiative to serve as a public, formal vehicle for all school stakeholders to share their experiences and shape the future of their schools. Surveys have been administered in 2006, 2007, and 2008, and will continue each year to give voices to students, parents, teachers, staff, and community members. District leadership will continue to use the survey results as a key driver of improvement in Oakland public schools. <http://webportal.ousd.k12.ca.us/WebItem.aspx?WebItemID=210>.
13. Since only 3% of ECP parents and 32% of teachers responded to the Use Your Voice Survey, their responses were not used; 70% of students responded to the survey.
14. Resource teacher hired by the school to provide support for students identified as having special needs.
15. The Edusoft Assessment Management System is a standards-based assessment solution that enables districts and schools to design, score, and analyze student assessments each year.
16. For RBB, each school receives money based on its student enrollment and daily attendance, and then can allocate the dollars as it chooses.
17. Advisory classes provide time for teachers to meet regularly with a small group of students to discuss academic issues, career and college guidance, or other issues that may be beyond the traditional curriculum. Typically, the advisory teacher gets to know these students very well, and provides a strong element of personalization for secondary students who have multiple teachers throughout the day.
18. Questions that require students to work at a higher level of Bloom’s taxonomy, such as “How would you design a science experiment to test a hypothesis?” rather than “How do you define hypothesis?”
19. Survey data collected at ECP by OUSD high school administrator Susan Ryan, 2008.
20. Bloom’s Taxonomy is a classification of different academic skills students develop. The taxonomy moves from basic skills such as remembering to higher-order skills such as synthesis and creation.
21. The area in which desired new skills are neither too easy nor too difficult for individuals to attain.
22. The A-G requirements are a sequence of high school courses required by the Academic Senate of the University of California as appropriate for fulfilling the minimum eligibility requirements for admission to the University of California. It also illustrates the minimum level of academic preparation students ought to achieve in high school to undertake university level work. Source: [http://www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/a-g/a-g\\_reqs.html](http://www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/a-g/a-g_reqs.html)
23. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measures a series of annual academic performance goals established for each school, local education agency (LEA), and the state as a whole as directed by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Schools, LEAs, and the state are determined to have met AYP if they meet or exceed each year’s goals. Under California’s criteria, schools and LEAs are required to meet or exceed requirements within each of the following four areas in order to make AYP: STAR test participation rate, percent of students who are proficient on California Standards Tests, API as an additional indicator, and graduation rate. If a school or an LEA misses one or more requirement, it does not make AYP and may be identified for program improvement. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ayp/>

24. Safe Passages is an inter-governmental partnership including the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), philanthropic and community-based partners. Safe Passages is committed to advocating for children, youth, and families with a special emphasis on vulnerable populations within the County of Alameda. Safe Passages designs, funds, implements, and evaluates programs for poor and vulnerable families in Oakland, particularly those exposed to community violence. <http://www.safepassages.org/>



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