




Partners in School Innovation
Annual Report 2006–07




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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As the Executive Director at Partners in School Innovation for the past four years, I come to this work every day with a deep commitment to educational equity. I come to this work as a believer in the potential of public schools and, even more importantly, that public schools serving students of color are the single most important institution in determining the future of our country.

Partners in School Innovation is an organization committed to helping schools, leaders and teachers realize their full potential so that students can realize their full potential. Our work is not only about closing the achievement gap and supporting Latino, African American and English Learner students to achieve at the same or higher levels than white and Asian students. Closing the achievement gap is only one indicator. It is a proxy for being able to read, to critically analyze, to communicate in sophisticated ways that can have a profound impact not only on a student's life experience, but on his or her ability to lead our community to new possibilities.

As an organization we believe in the power of exceptional teaching and bold leadership. We work with our teachers and leaders every day to create a culture where excellent teaching and leadership are the norm, and accelerating student learning is always in focus.

We believe in partnership. Our work in San Francisco Unified School District has given us inspiring examples of what is possible when schools are committed to meeting the needs of Latino and African American students. Our expansion in San Jose Unified School District next year to serve all 12 of its downtown low-performing elementary schools is an opportunity to set a new standard for systemic change in an urban public school district.

We believe in a learning orientation. Our English Language Development Initiative has deepened our organizational knowledge of what it takes for schools to increase English Learner student achievement and yielded important lessons for the field on how to educate our growing population of English Learner students well. Our Leadership Development Initiative—in partnership with the San Francisco School Alliance and UC Berkeley—will address the impending leadership gap facing our country and create relevant examples of how to effectively meet this challenge.

We believe in sustainability and capacity building. Fundamentally, our goal is to work ourselves out of a job. We work with our schools and districts for up to five years, implementing a continuous improvement process that is student-centered and results-oriented. Our goal is to leave our schools and districts with the systems and expertise to ensure that students 10 years from now are still benefiting from the work we're doing today.

Finally, we believe in possibility. We believe in the innovative ideas that each of our colleagues bring to this work. And we believe, more than anything else, in the potential of our students. Maya Angelou said, "If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can transform one million realities." Our work is about transforming one million realities. Through focus, through leadership and great teaching, through partnership, and through capacity building, we can create the kind of community in which we all dream of living.

Thank you for your contributions to this kind of community through your support of Partners in School Innovation.

Sincerely,



Becky Crowe Hill
Executive Director

2006–07 Highlights

San Francisco Unified School District **triples the number of schools** PartnersSI intensively serves from two to six low-performing elementary schools. The district also invites PartnersSI to expand its Leadership Networks to provide rigorous professional development for the teacher leaders of all 33 low-performing elementary and middle schools.

Based on results in PartnersSI schools in San Jose, San Jose Unified School District and Applied Materials join with PartnersSI to **expand from four to 12 downtown schools** in 2007–08. This represents PartnersSI's first systemic effort working with school and district leaders to transform the quality of education across all of the low-performing elementary schools in a district.

PartnersSI launches a three-year **English Language Development Initiative** to improve the quality of education for English Learners in our partner schools. In the first year of the initiative, PartnersSI successfully implements a more systematic approach to ELD at select research and development schools in San Francisco and San Jose to improve the quality of teaching, enable English Learners to achieve at high levels and develop the field's knowledge of what it takes for schools to increase English Learner student achievement.

PartnersSI, San Francisco Unified School District, the San Francisco School Alliance and UC Berkeley launch a partnership focused on **developing and retaining the best leaders** to serve San Francisco's public schools.

PartnersSI completes its first year post AmeriCorps employing a **talented cohort of 14 School Improvement Fellows (SIFs)** to lead the school improvement process in its intensively served schools. SIFs, with their prior teaching and leadership experience, are able to hit the ground running, build strong relationships with teachers and leaders and implement a continuous improvement process to transform our schools.

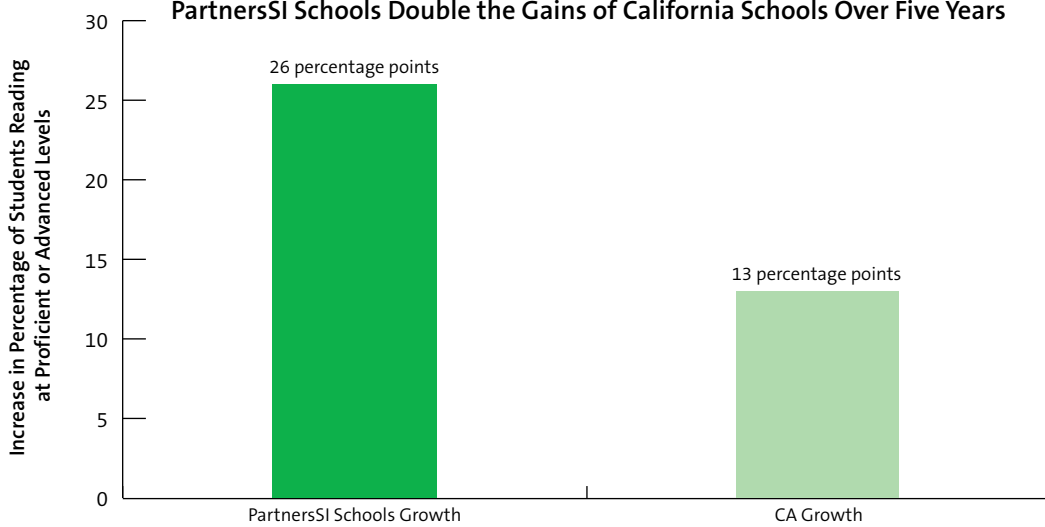
PartnersSI **increases its organizational budget from \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million and projects a \$3.5 million budget for 2007–08**. Earned income from schools and districts doubles to \$1 million, reflecting school and district satisfaction with our work and impact, and enabling PartnersSI to continue building a sustainable funding structure.

Impact on Student Learning

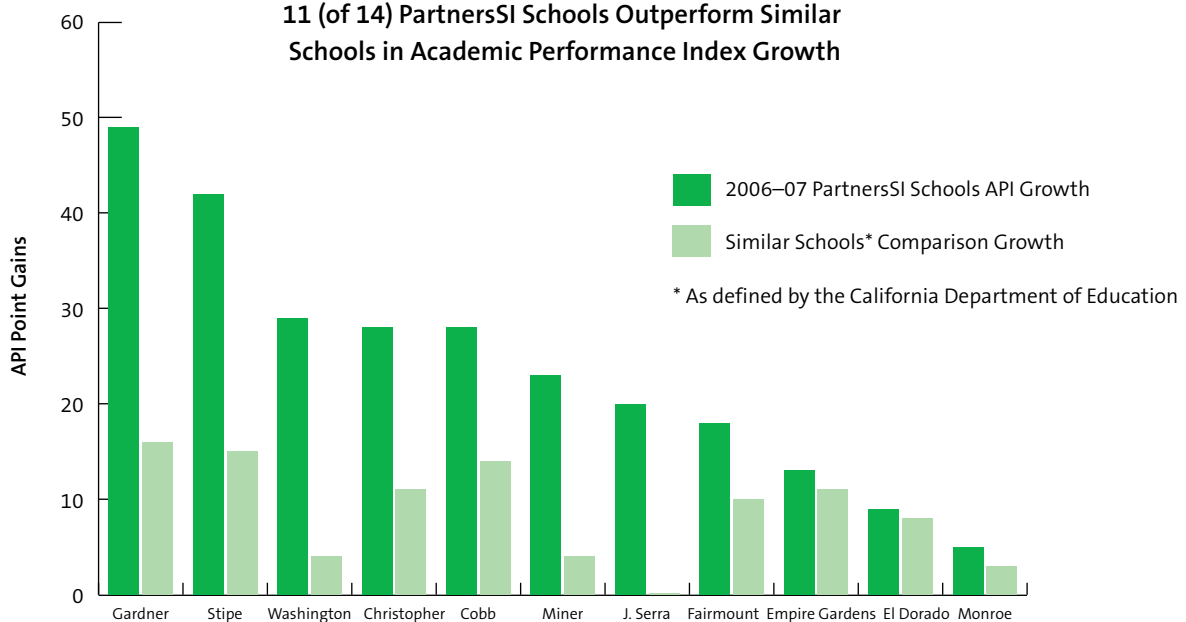
PartnersSI Schools Dramatically Narrow the Achievement Gap From 2005 to 2007



PartnersSI Schools Double the Gains of California Schools Over Five Years



11 (of 14) PartnersSI Schools Outperform Similar Schools in Academic Performance Index Growth





Envisioning Educational Equity

Since the enactment of No Child Left Behind, a few individual schools across the country have been upheld as success stories, but rarely has there been an urban school district better positioned to achieve breakthrough results across all of its low-performing schools than San Jose Unified School District. The four downtown elementary schools that Partners in School Innovation served this year each achieved steady growth in student learning and have created a solid foundation on which the other low-performing schools in the district can build.

Washington Elementary achieved 7 percentage points growth in students reading at proficient levels between 2006 and 2007, with particularly strong results from the 3rd grade team (to whom Partners in School Innovation provided the most strategic support), who increased the percentage of students reading at proficient levels from 18% to 31%. Empire Gardens and Gardner each achieved 5 percentage points growth and Gardner continues to make impressive gains in the Academic Performance Index (109 points over the past two years). Grant Academy met federal Adequate Yearly Progress targets for all of its student subgroups and has moved out of Program Improvement status for the first time since it began working with Partners in School Innovation five years ago.

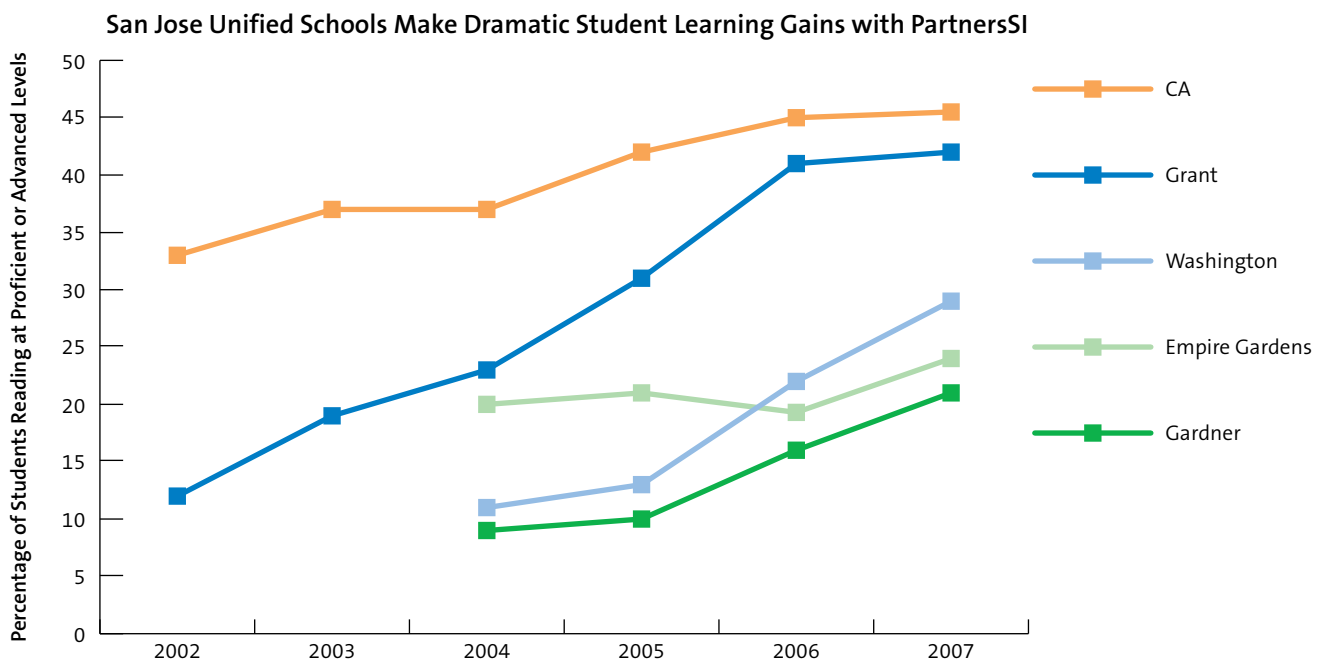
The results across these schools demonstrate what is possible when school leaders work in partnership with Partners in School Innovation to transform the quality of education in their schools. And with increasing

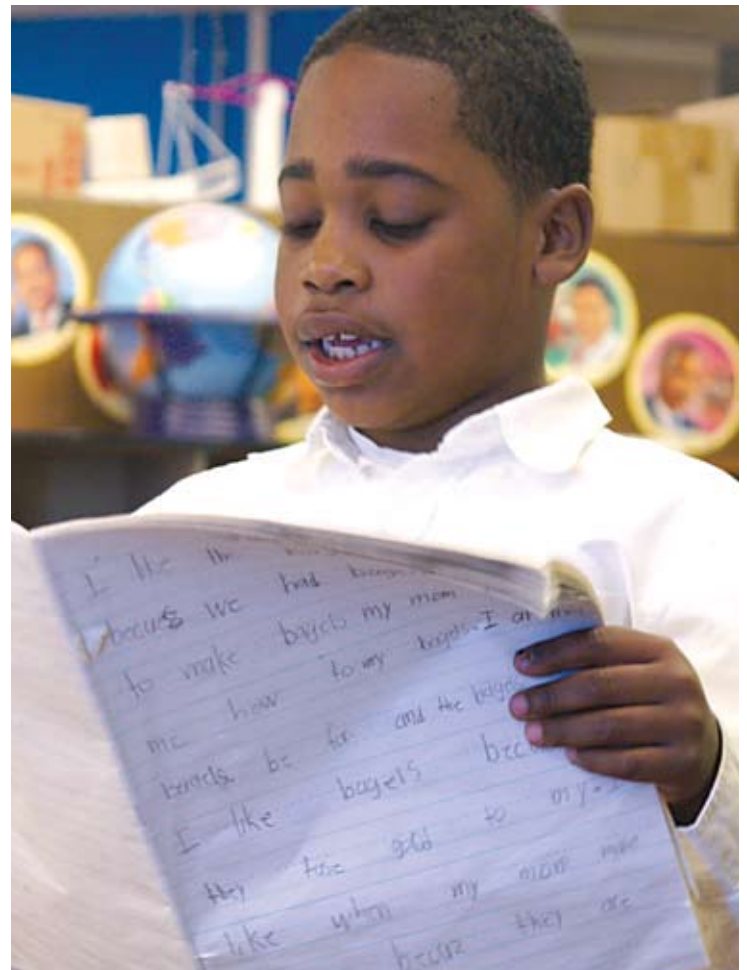
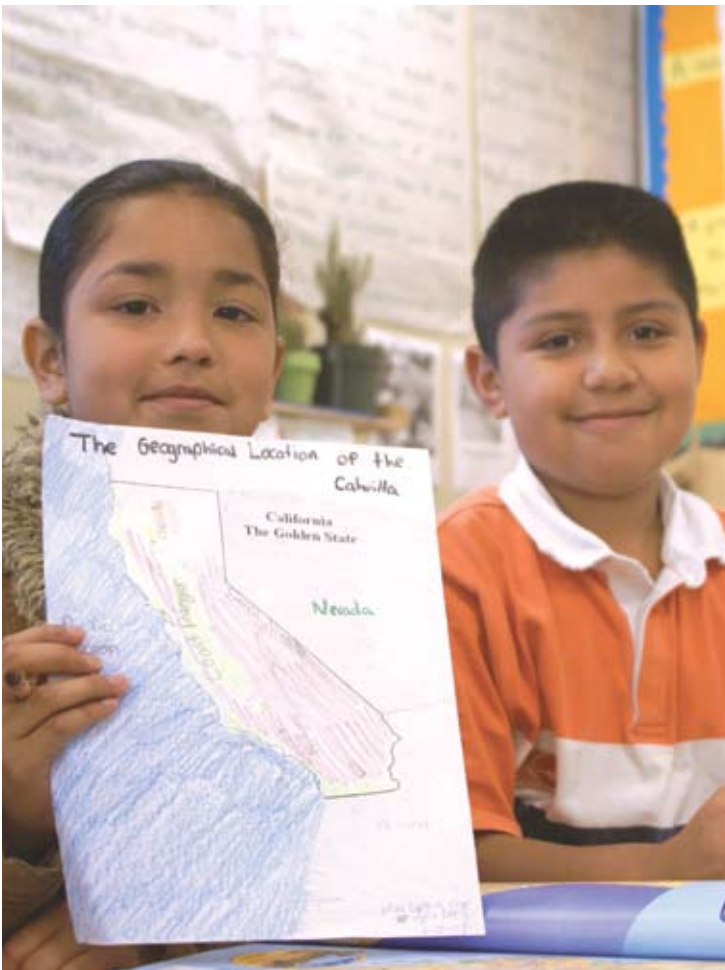
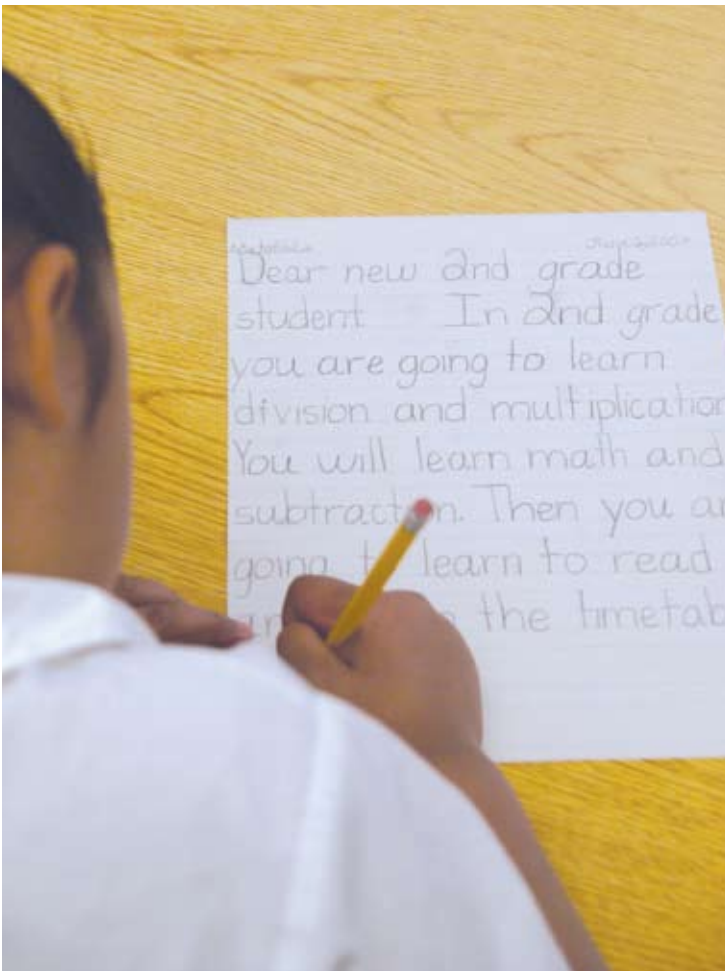
involvement from the Superintendent and other district leaders, San Jose Unified has demonstrated a deep commitment at all levels of the system to set a new standard for Latino and English Learner student achievement.

Looking forward, Partners in School Innovation has been invited by San Jose Unified and lead corporate investor Applied Materials to launch a three-year partnership to scale its school transformation efforts from four schools to all 12 downtown elementary schools. The objectives for the partnership are nothing short of visionary: move all 12 schools out of state sanctions, accelerate student achievement, develop effective leaders to sustain improvements and create a thriving system of public schools where students are prepared academically and socially for a successful future.

Said Don Iglesias, Superintendent of San Jose Unified School District, "Success doesn't happen in isolation. Success happens when partners come together, roll up their sleeves and do what it takes day in and day out."

The district has turned to Partners in School Innovation to be its key partner to redefine what's possible for its low-performing schools. And with a combination of strong district leadership, vision and collaboration, along with Partners in School Innovation's focus, passion and on-the-ground experience, San Jose Unified is poised to achieve breakthrough results and accelerate its Latino and English Learner students toward educational equity.





Accelerating Student Achievement

Partners in School Innovation works with its partner schools to create the kind of learning environments where students believe in their potential and are supported to develop the knowledge, skills and disposition to be successful through the entirety of their school experience, through college and into the workforce.

At Fairmount Elementary in San Francisco Unified School District, accelerating student achievement began by working with teachers to be more focused on meeting their students' learning needs and to improve the essentials of teacher practice: planning, teaching, assessing and reflecting. School Improvement Fellow Bela Bhasin challenged and motivated teachers to capitalize on their existing strengths and worked with them to be more systematic about using classroom-based evidence to monitor student learning. She also encouraged teachers to get to know their focal students—students like Ron who, despite having a tough family life, is smart, funny and engaged in class—in order to better understand and meet their learning needs. As a result, this year Fairmount achieved 7 percentage points growth in students reading at proficient levels, compared to 1 percentage point growth across the district. Not only were teachers able to learn more about their students and share effective teaching strategies with each other, their professional development yielded measurable improvements in student achievement.

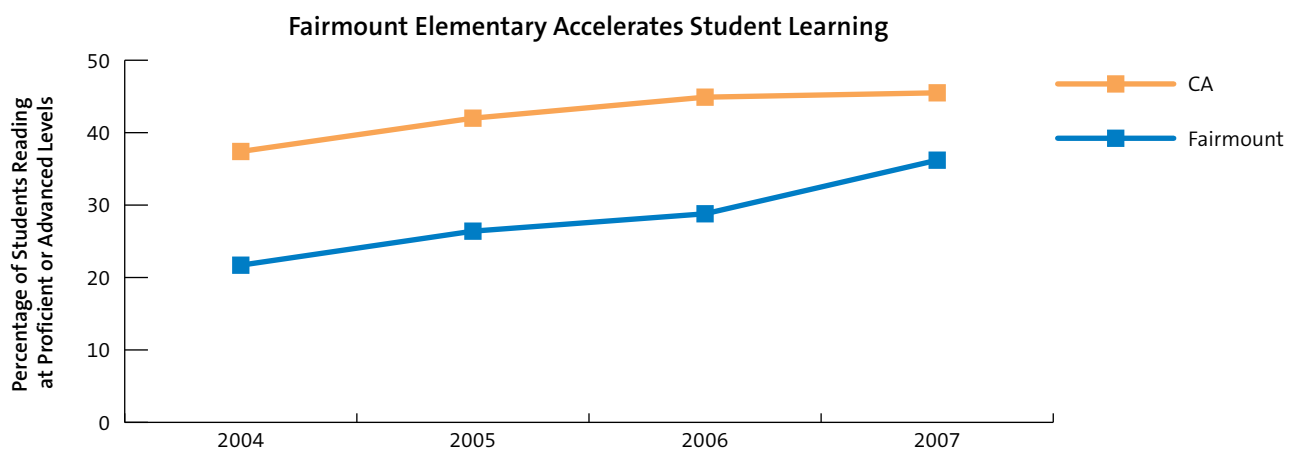
The successes of Carver Elementary, on the other hand, are not ones that will show up on the results of the California Standards Test. The story of Carver is about growth, about taking a school that has been in decline

and rebuilding a foundation for all students to succeed academically and socially.

The Partners in School Innovation team made a strategic decision to focus on the 2nd grade after diagnostic tests revealed that all but one student in this grade were reading at a Kindergarten level. Their plan to accelerate the 2nd grade students' reading levels began with building phonics and fluency—essential skills students need to master in order to learn to read. They supported teachers to specifically target these skills and worked with them to improve the quality of their instruction, identifying what teachers were good at and working with them to leverage these strengths. Similar to their approach with teachers, they also built on the existing strengths of focal students. They prioritized time for observations and discussions with teachers to deeply understand how focal students learned, then designed lessons that appealed to their strengths.

As a result of everyone's hard work, Carver's 2nd graders have all made accelerated progress. 80% of focal students in the 2nd grade moved up one performance band on the California Standards Test, making more than one year's growth. And while there is still a lot of work that needs to be done before students are fully proficient in reading, students who couldn't read at all when they entered the 2nd grade are now able to read, write and express themselves.

"You can't let anybody distract you from reading," reflected Acie, a 2nd grader. "You need to be able to read to learn."





Transforming Schools Through Bold Leadership

If Grant Academy were a children’s book, it might be called “The Learning Engine That Could.” Grant, a low-performing elementary school in downtown San Jose, has dramatically increased the number of students reading at proficient levels over the past five years and become an example of what is possible when a school is committed to educational excellence.

Grant’s success can be attributed to its teachers, who have deepened their understanding of what students need to reach proficiency, and to the results-oriented leadership of Principal Cecilia Barrie. Cecilia has set a tone of urgency around accelerating student learning and created a vision for Grant to be a model school in the state. In her daily work, she reinforces an orientation toward learning and holds teachers accountable for results. She empowers a talented staff of teacher leaders to guide the improvement process at each grade level. And she closely collaborates with the Partners in School Innovation team to implement strategies that continue to achieve dramatic student learning growth.

One of these strategies is working closely with focal students. Focal students help teachers develop the discipline of understanding their students’ needs, adjusting their teaching to meet those needs and, in doing so, impacting the rest of the classroom as the quality of teaching rises. Focal students also give teachers a window into the factors beyond academics that influence learning, such as what motivates students, their belief in themselves and their perception of whether their teacher believes in them.

At Grant, student learning results are publicly displayed on a color-coded chart—red, yellow and green—to show the progress students are making toward their goal of mastering grade level English Language Arts standards. Cecilia believes that

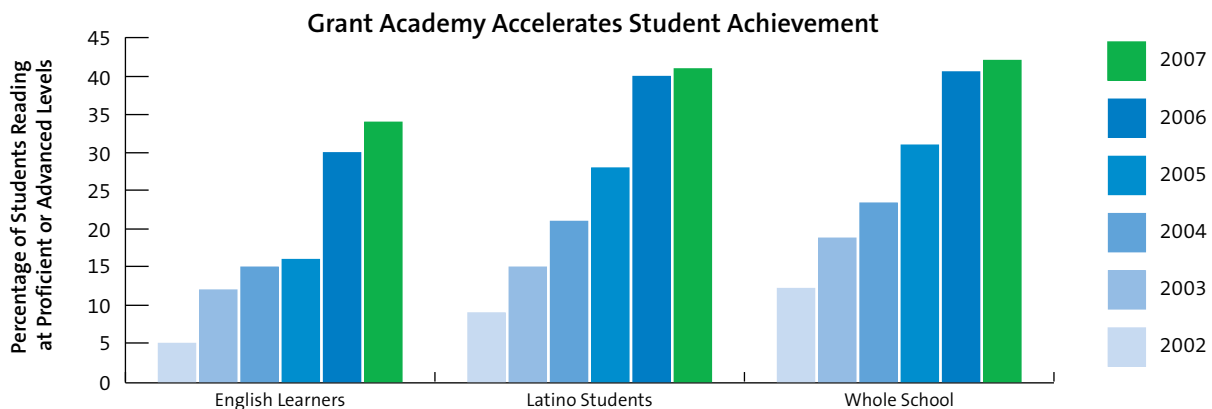
making these results transparent holds teachers accountable to improving student learning and encourages students to work harder. “I walk around the playground during recess and the kids run up to me and say, ‘I got in the green!’”

By setting high expectations for teachers and students alike, and by providing the resources and support to meet these expectations, Grant has achieved double-digit growth in reading proficiency for its Latino and English Learner students. Based on the results of the 2007 California Standards Test, 41% of Grant’s Latino students are reading at grade level—a 32% increase since 2002. The percentage of English Learner students reading at proficient or advanced levels has increased to 34%, compared to the 23% district average. The achievement of Grant’s English Learners, in particular, have enabled the school to meet federal Adequate Yearly Progress targets for two years in a row and exit Program Improvement status.

Cecilia credits Grant’s strong results to the continuous improvement process that Partners in School Innovation has brought to the school. “It’s become a way of working,” she says. “It’s integrated into our thinking and actions.”

School Partnership Director Jennifer Wu offers another perspective. “Schools often focus improvement efforts on adopting a new curriculum or helping teachers master an innovative teaching technique. We brought a student-centered approach. When the challenge is focused on student learning, it becomes very concrete. Teachers know where students are and where they need to go.”

Across the staff and student body, Grant has met the challenge of continuous improvement and become a school where students can, and do, succeed.





Sustaining Continuous School Improvement

What are the indicators that a school district is ready to sustain continuous school improvement on its own? Over the five years that Partners in School Innovation has worked with Oak Grove School District, there has been steady growth in student learning as teachers increased their understanding of how to implement the Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry—Partners in School Innovation’s research-based school improvement process. With those pieces in place, and with the partnership drawing to a close, this year Partners in School Innovation focused on building the capacity of school leaders to continue the work on their own.

For example, at Christopher Elementary, School Improvement Fellow Kristin Ohnstad took an apprenticeship approach with the school’s literacy coach to build her capacity to lead school improvement. “I worked hard to reduce the risk for her in the beginning of the year. Purposely and explicitly modeling the process was key. I said some things no one else wanted to say and carried the bulk of the work to get things started,” Kristin said. As teachers worked smarter and student learning began to improve, “that’s when [the literacy coach] gained the confidence and started to lead.” Eventually, Kristin stepped back and the literacy coach and teachers began to assume responsibility for implementing an improvement process that was student-centered and results-oriented.

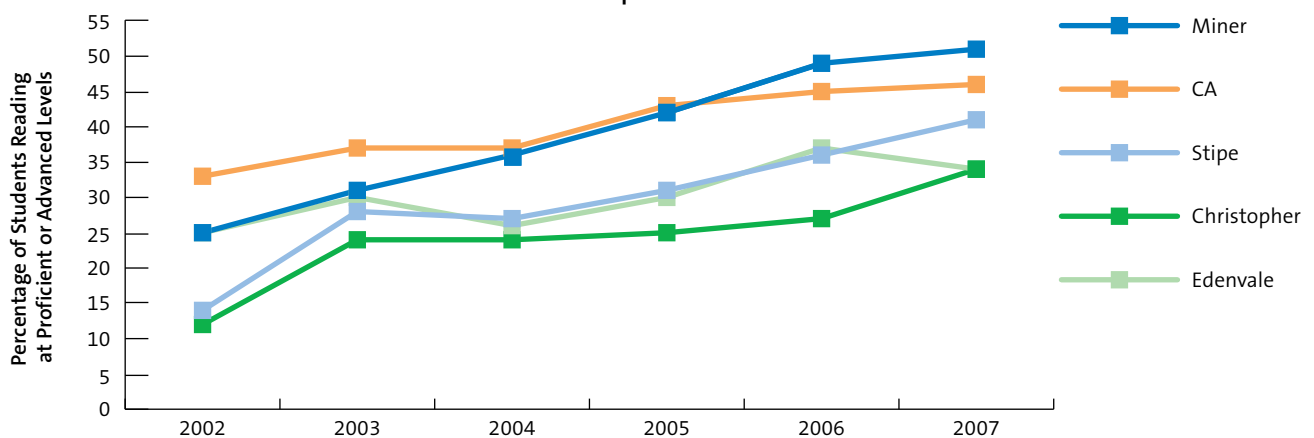
Across the four Oak Grove schools, the work of the Partners in School Innovation team to build leadership capacity has yielded growth in student learning. This

year Miner Elementary surpassed the state and district average, with 51% of students now reading at proficient levels. Christopher Elementary and Stipe Elementary each achieved 7 percentage points growth in students reading at proficient levels from 2006 to 2007.

“The Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry is the driving force that’s moving our work forward,” said Barb Service, Oak Grove’s School Reform Coach. “It is accelerating not only the growth of our students, but also the leaders of our district on staying results-oriented.”

In addition to increased leadership capacity at the schools, the district has made systemic shifts to sustain the school improvement process. Barb Service has moved into a new position as the Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services and will be in charge of curriculum, instruction and improvement for all of the district’s schools. The district has also created a new position, modeled after the School Improvement Fellowship, and has engaged Partners in School Innovation to train these promising teacher leaders. The new position will add capacity to Oak Grove’s low-performing schools and ensure that they stay focused on improving student learning. Enthusiastically supported by teachers and leaders alike, it is a testament to the value that Partners in School Innovation has brought to Oak Grove’s schools, and the district’s continued priority to close the achievement gap employing Partners in School Innovation’s approach.

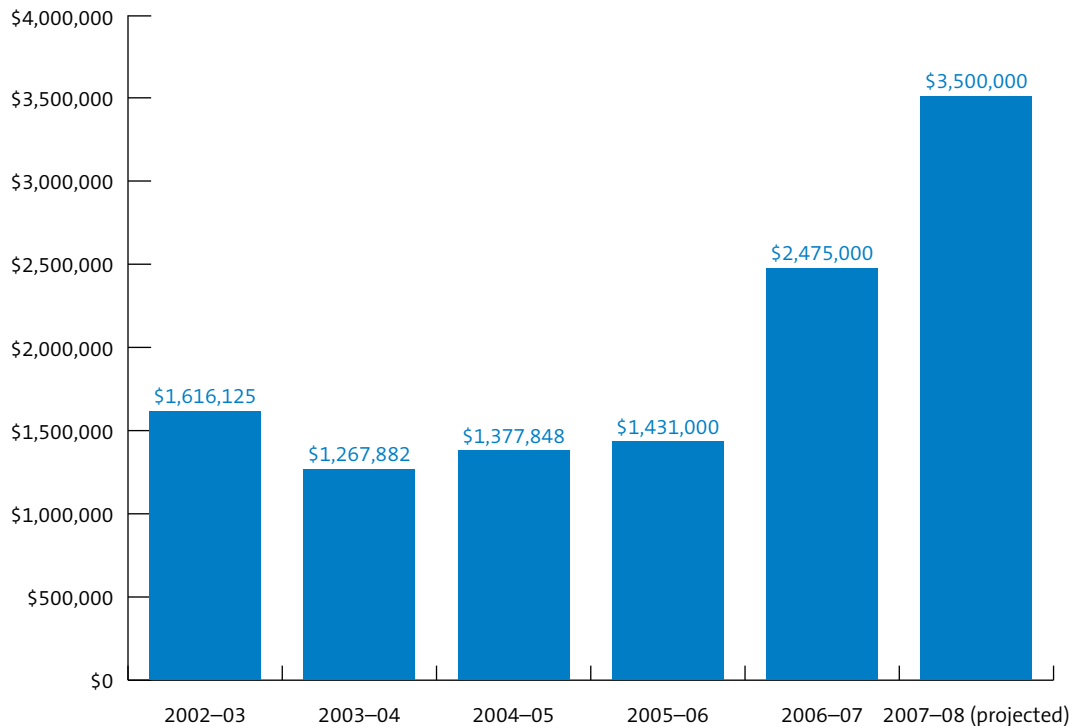
Oak Grove Schools Achieve Strong Results Over the Five-Year Partnership with PartnersSI



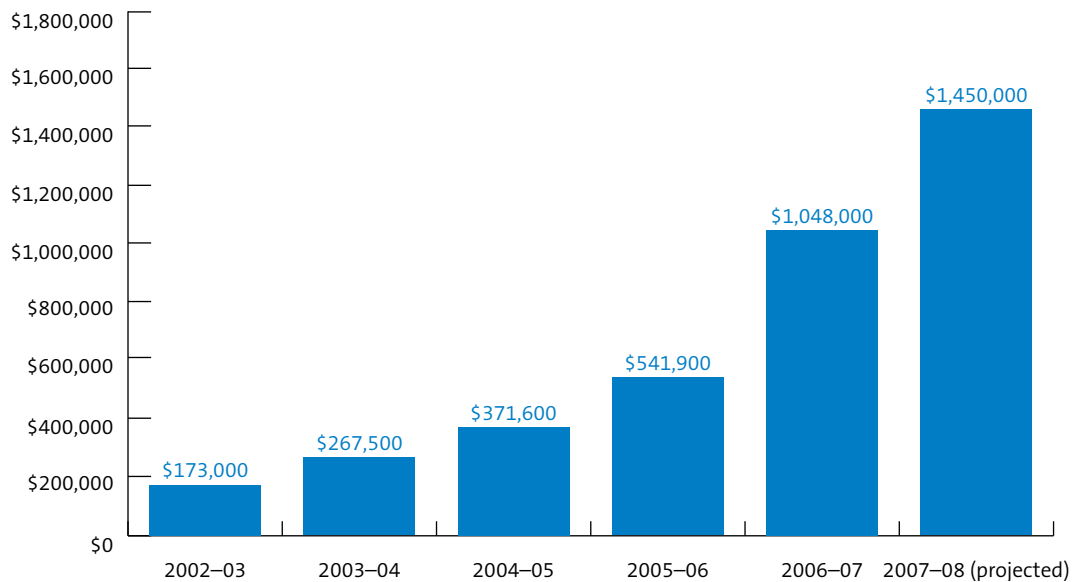
Financials

Our financial strength is a direct result of our programmatic excellence. As our student learning results have improved each year, schools and districts have derived great value from our partnerships. In response to growing demand for our services from schools and districts, our organizational budget increased by \$1 million between 2005 and 2006 and is projected to increase by another \$1 million in 2007. Additionally, over the past five years we have increased our earned revenue from schools and districts by a factor of 6 and have shifted our contributed to earned income ratio from 16:1 to nearly 1:1.

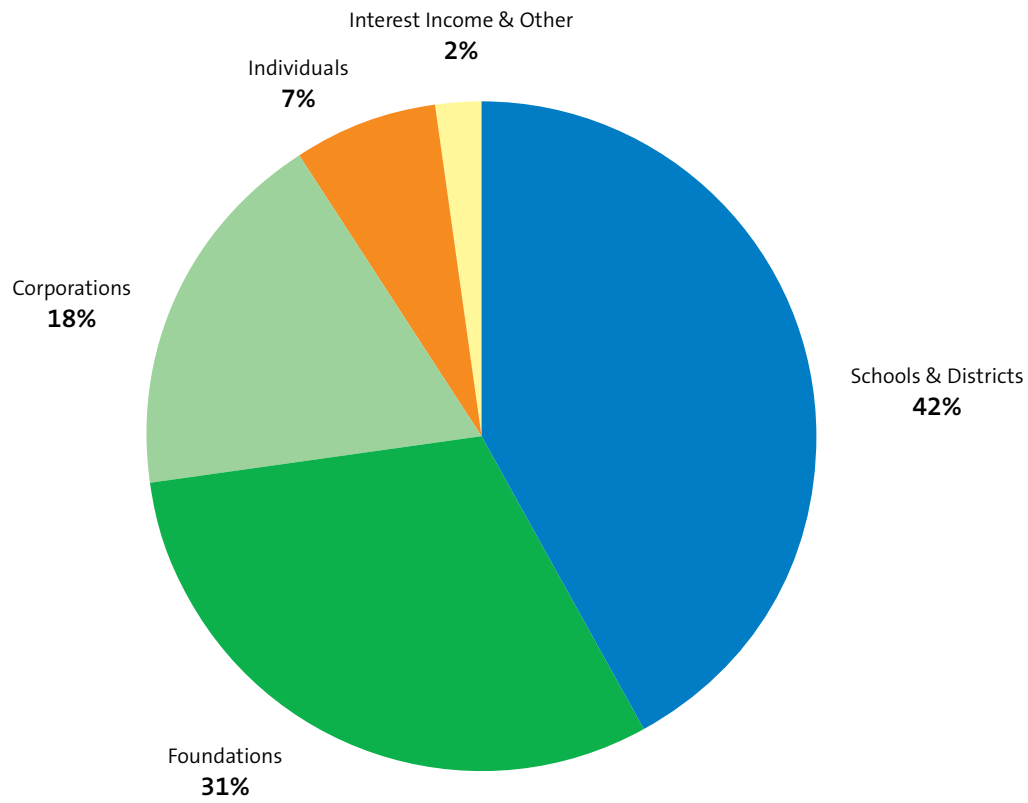
Growth in Organizational Budget



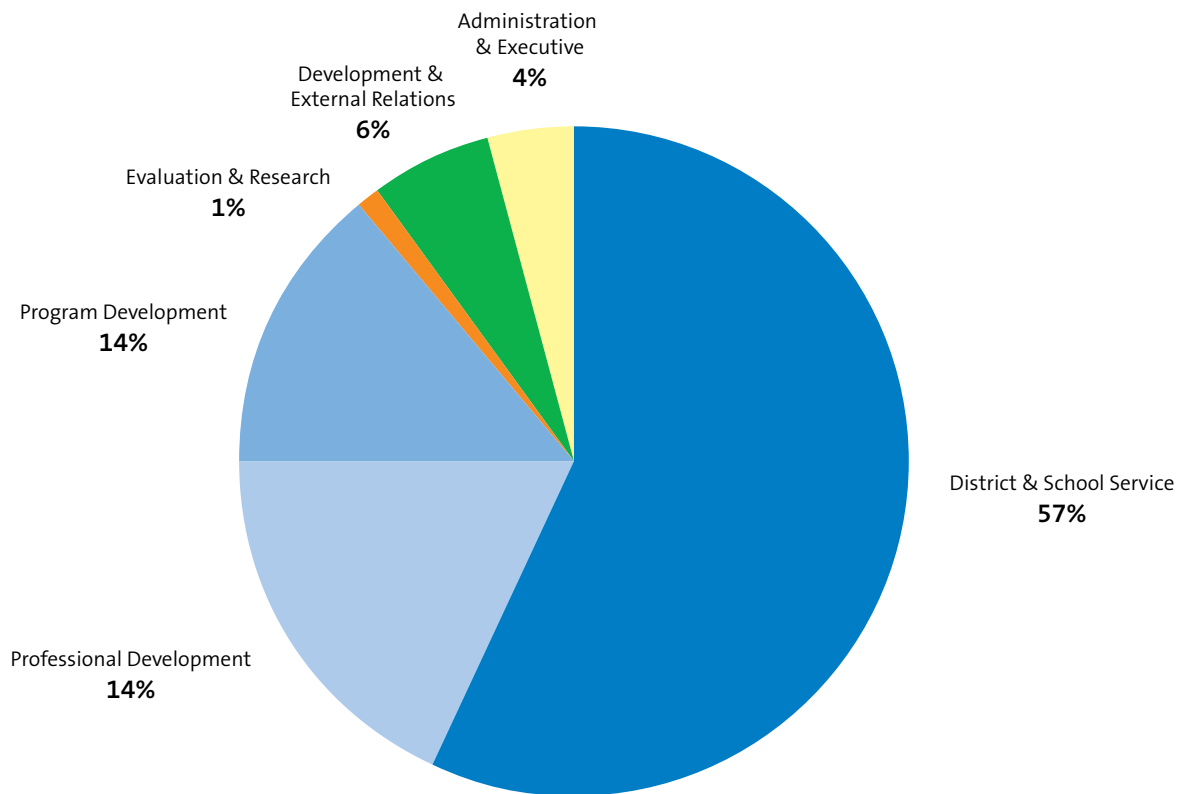
Growth in Earned Revenue from Schools and Districts



Income by Source



Resource Allocation



Donors

Partners in School Innovation gratefully acknowledges those who invested in our work between August 1, 2006 and July 31, 2007. Thank you for your commitment to public education.

* We also enthusiastically recognize our School Improvement Fellow sponsors. Your investment has helped build capacity at our schools to accelerate student learning and create a sustainable continuous improvement system.

\$300,000+

Applied Materials

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Thank you BCG

PartnersSI thanks Jason Miller and the team from the Boston Consulting Group for pro bono consulting services. Through support from Echoing Green, BCG worked with us this year to design an organizational staffing and leadership structure that will strengthen PartnersSI in our next phase of growth and development.

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Mission, Vision, Schools

Mission

To enable public schools in low-income San Francisco Bay Area communities—serving students of color and English Learners—to achieve educational equity through school-based reform.

Vision

Partners in School Innovation envisions a thriving system of urban schools that fosters the growth of all of its students and eliminates the achievement gap by creating vibrant places to teach, learn and grow—with rigorous standards and an unwavering focus on results.

2006-07 Partner Districts and Schools

San Francisco Unified School District

Carver Elementary School
Cobb Elementary School
El Dorado Elementary School
Fairmount Elementary School
Monroe Elementary School
Junipero Serra Elementary School

San Jose Unified School District

Empire Gardens Elementary School
Gardner Academy
Grant Academy
Washington Elementary School

Oak Grove School District

Christopher Elementary School
Edenvale Elementary School
Miner Elementary School
Stipe Elementary School

“Literacy is understood not merely as skills or job preparation, but as ‘critical literacy’ that enables us to more fully read and to transform the world, to recognize injustice, to create democracy in the collective struggle against the forces that oppress and marginalize the poor, racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and women and men throughout society.”

—Paulo Freire

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