

*“Tengo un sueño / I have a dream”: A Consistently
High Performing School for English Language Learners*

Sarah Greenwood School Case Study

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This case study is a part of the report ***Learning from Consistently High Performing and Improving Schools for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools***. The report and its companion report, ***Improving Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Schools and Programs in Boston Public School***, are part of a larger project, Identifying Success in Schools and Programs for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools, commissioned by the Boston Public Schools as part of the process of change set in motion by the intervention of the state and the federal governments on behalf of Boston's English language learners. This qualitative retrospective case study, based upon interviews, document review, and observations, shares key themes found in one school identified for its consistent, multi-year out-performance of like schools in ELL outcomes during SY2006-SY2009. The purpose of the case study is to share and illustrate key lessons that may be adapted and applied in other school contexts for the education of ELL students. For more information on the methods used in this case study, please see the full report, ***Learning from Consistently High Performing and Improving Schools for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools***; Chapter 1 includes an overview of the study and methods and the Detailed Methods Appendix provides a complete description, including the identification of the site using multiple regression analysis and the qualitative methods used to study the site once selected. The full reports are available at www.cce.org and www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute.

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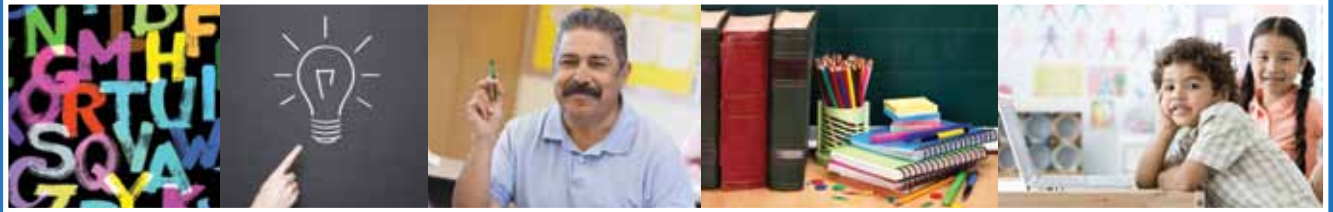
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CHAPTER

IV.

**“TENGO UN SUEÑO/I HAVE A DREAM”:
A CONSISTENTLY HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL
FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

A School Context

The Sarah Greenwood School (SGS) is a preK-8 school in Dorchester dating back to the turn of the twentieth century. During SY2009, this small school served 390 students, of whom 55% were native speakers of Spanish and 43% were students of limited English proficiency (LEP). In the school as a whole, 67% of students were Latino, 29% were Black, and 2% each were White or Multiracial. Students are assigned to the school according to the BPS student assignment plan,¹⁶ and the school is one of three BPS schools categorized as Two-Way Bilingual Program schools.

Of the 145 (86%) LEP students who took the MEPA in April 2009, 17 (12%) students were at MEPA Level 1, 11 (7%) were at MEPA Level 2, 45 (31%) were at MEPA Level 3, 58 (40%) were at MEPA Level 4, and 14 (10%) were at MEPA Level 5. Over half of the second grade students had progressed to MEPA Level 4, and in fourth grade, over 90% were at MEPA Level 4 or higher.

During SY2009, there were 29.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members at the Sarah Greenwood for a student-teacher ratio of 13.3 to one (BPS ratio

is 12.8 to one). Eighteen FTE teachers (62%) were teaching in ELL-related assignments. Eighty-three percent were licensed in their assigned position, which is 15% lower than the district average (98%), and 73% of core classes were taught by highly qualified teachers, which is also lower than the district average of 96%. In terms of the racial make-up of the teaching staff, 45% of teachers were White, 31% were Latino, and 24% were Black.¹⁷

In SY2009, the percentage of students from low-income households was higher than BPS district rates for both students of limited English proficiency (by 3%) and those who were English proficient (by 8.2%). The mobility rates were approximately four percentage points lower for SGS students than BPS. A smaller proportion of SGS LEP students had disabilities compared to BPS LEP students, while the rate for EP students was almost the same as BPS.

Table 4.1. Sarah Greenwood School Enrollment Defined by Native Language and English Language Proficiency, SY2009

Total	All Sarah Greenwood ^a (390)			
Native Language	Native English Speaker (NES) (166) (42.6%)		Native Speakers of Other Languages (NSOL) (224) (57.4%) ^b	
Language Proficiency	English Proficient (EP) (222) (56.9%)			Limited English Proficient (LEP) (168) (43.1%) ^c
	NES	NSOL-EP (26) (7%)	FLEP (30) (8%)	
^a Though the focus of the study is on the elementary grades, for context, we use enrollment numbers for the whole K-8 school.				
^b Native speakers of Spanish were 96% of NSOLs. Other languages were all 1% or less of NSOL.				
^c 162 (96% of LEPs) were native speakers of Spanish. Since the whole school is categorized as a Two-Way Bilingual school, all LEP students (and EP students) are in a program designated as an ELL program.				

Table 4.2. Selected Student Indicators, SY2009^a

	SGS LEP %	SGS EP %	BPS ES LEP %	BPS ES EP %
Low Income (% Eligible for free/reduced-price lunch)	94.6%	85.6%	91.6%	77.4%
Mobility (% not in the same school for October and June)	6.0%	3.6%	9.8%	8.1%
Students with Disabilities	13.7%	21.2%	17.6%	20.1%
^a LEP = Limited English Proficiency; EP = English Proficient; BPS ES = Boston Public Elementary Schools				

Table 4.3. Selected Student Outcomes, SY2009^a

	Number of SGS LEP Students with Data	SGS LEP %	SGS EP %	BPS ES LEP %	BPS ES EP %
Median Attendance	168	93.9%	95.6%	96.1%	95%
Suspension	168	4.8% ^b	6.3%	2.0%	3.3%
Retained in Grade	139	1.4% ^b	2.1% ^b	6.0%	4.1%
Passed ELA MCAS ^c	39	92.3%	93.2%	64.9%	80.0%
Proficient in ELA MCAS		38.5%	63.1%	13.3%	39.6%
Passed Math MCAS	39	82.1%	76.7%	61.8%	76.3%
Proficient in Math MCAS		46.2%	37.9%	17.8%	34.1%
Passed Science MCAS	10	60.0% ^b	77.4%	45.1%	72.0%
Proficient in Science MCAS		40.0% ^b	15.1% ^b	5.3%	21.7%

^a LEP = Limited English Proficiency; EP = English Proficient; BPS ES = Boston Public Elementary Schools
^b Data for this cell is n<10.
^c MCAS data includes grades 3-5 for ELA and mathematics and grade 5 for science. While case study site selection looked at MCAS proficiency in ELA and mathematics only for students at MEPA Levels 3 and 4, here the purpose is to present outcomes for the school as a whole, thus we include all test takers as well as pass and proficiency rates.

In terms of engagement outcomes, attendance at SGS is 2.2% lower than BPS rates for ELL students and almost the same for EP students, rates of suspension about 3% higher than rates for BPS LEP and EP students respectively, and grade retention rates are slightly lower at SGS. Academically, SGS students perform well on the MCAS tests compared to BPS students. In ELA, pass rates for SGS LEP students are almost the same compared to their SGS EP counterparts, though a higher proportion of SGS EP students are proficient. Compared to BPS, however, the proficiency rate is nearly three times that of BPS LEP students and almost the same as BPS EP students. The MCAS Mathematics pass and proficiency rates for SGS LEP students are higher than SGS EP students as well as BPS LEP and EP students. In Science, SGS LEP students also perform well, though relatively small numbers mean patterns could fluctuate due to individual differences.

At the time of data collection, the school appeared to be in a state of transition. Only nine of the teachers who had been employed at the school during the study period (SY2006-SY2009) were still working there. The Principal during the study period retired after 21 years in 2010, but still emerged as a strong presence in interviews with staff.¹⁸ Her strong vision is represented by the school’s mission statement for 2006-2009, which referred to “each child as an individual” and to the need for practitioners to take a holistic view of children. The school mission also highlighted safety, literacy, the belief

that all children could and would learn, cooperation among teachers, as well as collaboration with families and community.

Our mission is to make our school a safe learning environment and to allow our students to grow in directions that will educate and prepare them for life. We seek to produce literate and socially healthy students who are valuable to the community and the world. We view each child as an individual in a holistic manner. Each child can and will learn. As professionals, our mission is to open our hearts and minds, to work together as a cooperative team, and to promote parent and community collaboration.

“All our students are language learners” is one of the first statements we heard upon touring the school, shortly after being handed a fact sheet on school demographics, with students’ race, gender, and age presented in charts with a brief statement at the bottom that “English is not the first language for 58% of our students.” During interviews, teachers and administrators distinguished between “bilingual” and “monolingual” students. The term “bilingual” refers to students who arrive in school speaking a home language other than English – mostly Spanish – and who cannot access classroom work in English. “Monolingual” is a

designation used for native speakers of English. In brief, although school staff talk about all students as language learners, a distinction is still made between sub-groups, which are labeled as monolingual, bilingual, and also special education.

Throughout the remainder of this study, we highlight many practices vis-à-vis ELL students that incorporate the values expressed in this mission statement. First, we identify key themes that explain the school's success with ELL students from the point of view of the school staff. In the conclusion, we incorporate our own analysis and compare the themes to existing empirical evidence and expert recommendations.

B Key Themes in Success with Educating English Language Learners

When the former Principal arrived at the Sarah Greenwood in 1989, the school used Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) as the language program for its English language learners. Under the leadership of the former Principal, the Sarah Greenwood transitioned from TBE to a dual language program. Members of the school staff use the term "dual language" synonymously with other commonly used designations such as Two-way Immersion or the preferred BPS term, "Two-Way Bilingual Program." Currently, BPS defines a Two-Way Bilingual Program here:

In this program, there are critical masses of English language learners who represent the same primary language and who are in the same grade...Two-way begins in Kindergarten, where students are instructed 90% of the time in a language in which they are fluent in English 10% of the time. By third grade, the languages of instruction are 50% in English and 50% in the native language and continue as a 50-50 model through the fifth grade, at which time students transfer to secondary schools.

– Office of English Language Learners, Boston Public Schools

The school's change in language program was guided by a vision to provide equal educational opportunity for all students. The transition was

completed before SY2006, at which point the Sarah Greenwood was one of three Two-Way Bilingual Program schools in Boston. The first theme describes the strategies used to build equity among students and teachers at the school through this ELL program model. The title of this study, a Spanish translation of a verse from Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, illustrates the school's strong commitment to validating all students' identities. In the second theme, we portray the importance given to collaborative work among adults for student success. Collaboration was and has remained a prevailing modus operandi at the school. The third theme illustrates what the school knew about its students and what it did to address their academic needs, along with non-academic issues that might diminish their readiness to learn.

Theme 1: Parity for "Bilingual" Students and Teachers

In the 1980's, as in other Boston public schools, ELL students assigned to the building were placed in a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program. TBE separated ELL students from native English speakers, at least in the first few years, to enable ELL students to learn content in their native language (Spanish) at the same time that they received instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL). When students became proficient in English, they were moved to regular education classrooms where they continued to learn solely in English. Although this program worked well at some schools, at the Sarah Greenwood teachers reported that standardized test scores were low. Thus, in 1989, the former Principal was recruited to spearhead the school through a process of reform that would improve performance significantly. Indeed, in SY2006 the Sarah Greenwood won a "School on the Move" award from EdVestors for continuous improvement of student outcomes.

In re-designing the Sarah Greenwood's language program from TBE to Two-Way Bilingual, teachers and administrators shunned any form of student segregation, including by language, in order to avoid possible inequities in learning opportunities for student sub-groups within the school. Not only did staff reject the TBE model, but they also rejected the district's strong endorsement of Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) after the passage of Referendum Question 2 in 2002, which eliminated TBE.

*It's easy for the mainstream to say,
"That's for bilingual students. We
put a sign up – SEI classes over there."
But those kids are going to lose out
because they're not part of the main-
stream where everything's happening.
– former Principal*

Instead, the Sarah Greenwood gradually, and in order to fit the specific needs of its students, developed a Two-Way Bilingual Program which was accepted under the new language policy provisions adopted when Question 2 passed.

The Center for Applied Linguistics, a nonprofit that provides information, tools, and resources to improve educators' understanding of language and culture, categorizes components of "Two-Way Bilingual Education" into four domains: integration, instruction, population, and program duration (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011). Integration is defined as the practice of teaching "language-minority" and "language-majority" students together at least 60% of instructional time (ideally more) at all grade levels. Two-Way Instruction means that all students receive instruction in English and the partner language at least 50% at all grade levels. The population component of a Two-Way Bilingual program requires that there be a balance of language-minority and language-majority students. Finally, a Two-Way Bilingual program should begin in pre-K, Kindergarten or first grade and run for at least five years. The language program at the Sarah Greenwood meets integration and population criteria clearly. English language learners and English proficient students are integrated in the same classrooms in roughly equal numbers throughout their schooling.

One of the main purposes of the dual language program was to create a safe climate for learning for all students at the school, particularly for Spanish-speakers who had been banned from speaking their home language prior to the arrival of the new Principal. Instead of pursuing this implicit message that Spanish was a deficit, the school adopted a strength-based model that presented Spanish as an asset – thus the designation of ELL students as "bilingual" – and a resource for learning English. In this way, the school set the ground for ELL students to develop positive identities connected to their family and cultural roots. At the same time that Spanish was instituted as a language of instruction, the school highlighted the rich traditions of African-

American students, some of which were visible at the time we toured the school. "Tengo un sueño," began the translation into Spanish of a paragraph from Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech posted on the door of the Spanish specialist's classroom. Finally, teachers repeatedly mentioned the spirit of inclusion, and of the collaboration they observed among native Spanish speakers and native English speakers as they helped each other learn the language they did not know.

*It was beautiful to watch the relation-
ship among monolingual and bilingual
students as they helped each other
with the language they knew best.
– Teacher*

Historically, the Sarah Greenwood adopted Two-Way Bilingual as a program that normalized the use of Spanish and that set the grounds for developing a multicultural school that welcomed and reconciled the learning interests of all students. Not only were all students allowed to speak their native languages socially, but all received formal instruction in Spanish.

*We wanted children to be able to
talk in whatever language they were
comfortable. It was important that
everybody felt that they were going to
be part of that community too – that
everybody could become bilingual in
the school. So that's how the Two-Way
Bilingual program started.
– former Principal*

During SY2006-SY2009, a bilingual teacher was assigned to each grade level, one who spoke English and Spanish fluently. Literacy and numeracy instruction in English and Spanish were provided to all students in the early elementary grades (K-1). The ELL students in these grades were all at MEPA Levels 1, 2, and 3. After early elementary, as students moved up to the second and third grades, these ELL students were at MEPA Levels 3, 4, and 5. The focus was on building students' capacity to learn in English. Indeed, school staff attributed their success to the adoption of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Originally developed as a classroom observation tool, SIOP has become a widely used, evidence-based model for sheltering content instruction for English language learners (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

AUTHOR'S NOTE:
"All Students Are Language Learners"

When asked to identify the specific needs of ELL students, school leaders and teachers default to the statement "All students are language learners." The use of "all" infuses a measure of equality among the two predominant student sub-groups at the school – African-American students and Spanish-speaking English language learners – and normalizes language learning as a universal task. However, reference to "all" students as language learners can hide sub-group patterns that are best identified and addressed when disaggregated (Pollock, 2004).

The school has excelled at highlighting the strengths of ELL students, but remains silent about the traditions behind African-American English (AAE), a specific kind of vernacular English (some call it a dialect, others a language) with its own lexicon, syntax, phonology, speech events, and supporting scholarly literature (Green, 2002). Instead, staff mentions of the Sarah Greenwood's specific brand of dual language program end with a comment that the school adapted to its students' needs—i.e., the needs of two linguistic minorities. We also heard recurring references to the value of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) for all students because of the early introduction of "academic" English. This conversation obscures the different needs of the school's two largest student sub-groups when learning Standard American English, and the conditions under which what works for one subgroup works for all. Distinguishing more explicitly between the needs of ELLs and of speakers of AAE, and developing an understanding of why and how an instructional approach is effective with both sets of needs, may help schools create systematic strategies for dealing with different patterns of language learning needs in their student bodies.

I tend to be holistic, so that nothing happening in this school is just thinking about one section of the school. If it's a good teaching strategy, it's a good teaching strategy for everyone. So even when we're looking at the SIOP, [we think] the SIOP is also good for monolingual students.
– former Principal

From a structural perspective, the adoption of Two-Way Bilingual program resulted in the equal distribution of resources among all students at the school, ranging from classroom space to highly qualified teachers, paraprofessionals, classroom materials, field trips, and in-service training. During SY2006-SY2009, each school staff member at all levels of school organization was responsible for all students. The adult organizational structure reflected this priority as well. The school's instructional leadership team (ILT) included the Principal and the LAT facilitator, both seasoned bilingual educators, as well as ESL and regular classroom teachers. An ESL-certified teacher collaborated with a regular education teacher in each grade level to provide native English speakers and English language learners with exposure to their home language (L1) and to the second language (L2).

Over time, school staff reported adaptations made to the Two-Way Bilingual Program in response to emerging challenges. For example, the students' Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) performance after its introduction in 1999 indicated that students needed increased exposure to English. Furthermore, as ESL-trained teachers retired or departed, the school had difficulty finding highly qualified replacements, which in turn created challenges for the continuation of the Two-Way Bilingual Program. By the former Principal's own account, when faced with a choice between a highly qualified regular education and a less-qualified bilingual teacher, the school favored the highly qualified teacher. Another challenge to the school's Two-Way Bilingual Program was the tendency of students who were achievers to leave the school after the third grade to attend schools with Advanced Work Classes (AWCs). When departing bilingual students were replaced with monolingual students in the fourth grade, the new monolingual students did not have sufficient Spanish-language skills to continue in Two-Way Bilingual classes. Unlike the earlier grades, which had roughly equal numbers

of ELL students and native English speakers, the school's fourth and fifth grades typically enrolled fewer ELL students than native English speakers.

In brief, the former Principal of the Sarah Greenwood attributes the school's success with ELL students to the successful development of an "error-free" learning community. This safety for learning was also reflected in a sense of trust and camaraderie that changed the culture of the school to this day.

Theme 2: Change is Collaborative and It Starts with Adults

When the former Principal entered the school, she reports, she found a staff divided. Teachers were working in isolation, with scarce support. There was a climate of distrust, coupled with low student expectations. From the outset, the former Principal was determined to change this based on two general principles: change starts with adults, and teacher buy-in is built through genuine collaboration, not top-down direction. Thus, the former Principal firmly set the stage for adult collaboration for the benefit of students. The school did not have specialized structures (such as SEI classrooms, or ESL pull-out) to support the needs of ELL students. Rather, the presence of a Principal and of an LAT facilitator who were Spanish-speakers, who had been ELL students themselves, and who had received extensive training in language development, provided a structure to identify and address the needs of ELL students. Bilingual teachers also were involved at all levels of school organization. A crucial piece in the reform of the Sarah Greenwood was creating support structures conducive to transforming a culture of isolation into a culture of collaboration, including (1) personally leading teacher study groups and modeling behaviors the Principal expected teachers to adopt; (2) using school organization to facilitate collaboration; and (3) using professional development models such as teacher study groups and Collaborative Coaching Learning (CCL) cycles to encourage experimentation and reflection.

One of the former Principal's reform strategies was to model the behaviors she expected her teachers to adopt. For example, when children presented behavior problems, she modeled curiosity about what might be causing those behaviors rather than adopting a judgmental attitude. One teacher observed the former Principal working with an ELL student, and it changed her attitude toward ELL

students in general. Indeed, explicit reference in the school mission to the fact that "all students can and will learn" serves as evidence that this belief was not taken for granted. Modeling extended also to learning behaviors. Rather than mandating changes from above, instructional leaders took it upon themselves to work collaboratively with teachers in study groups, not just to design instruction, but also to help them select and prepare new materials, especially bilingual materials. This modeling approach was also used by in-house and outside coaches who came to the school and demonstrated teaching strategies in the classroom.

Collaboration was facilitated also by school organization, from the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to grade level team meetings (GLMs), student support team (SST), and teacher study groups. In SY2006, the Sarah Greenwood ILT was large,¹⁹ including representatives of different levels of instruction, different subgroups of learners (ELL students, native English speakers, special education students), and different curriculum content areas. Members of the ILT used (multi) grade level team meetings, and teacher study groups to share information and hear feedback. Grade level teams were organized by grade span (K0-K2, first and second grade, third and fourth grades, fifth grade, and middle grades). One of the advantages of this cross-grade structure is to allow teachers to discuss student performance across grade levels, and to brainstorm support strategies that can be sustained from one year to the next.

.... and I have information from the prior year. And I can see that they've been having problems before, I will ask, "How long have they had that problem? And what did you do to help them?"
– Teacher

Teachers and administrators reported that the current structure of student support teams (SSTs) was also in place during SY2006-2009, and that they included teachers, students, parents, and a counselor or special needs coordinator if the student had one. These teams met monthly and served as a supervisory structure to ensure that teachers and students stayed on a plan to work on a range of issues, from academic to emotional²⁰ to family issues. Also in place at the time were Teacher Study Groups, which consisted of groups of six to eight staff members, working across disciplines and

grades in collaborative professional development. TSGs met once a week during common planning time while specialists covered their classrooms, during union-approved professional development time (EdVestors, 2006). They were the primary vehicle for Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) cycles. All school staff participated in study groups, initially facilitated by coaches, the Principal and the LAT facilitator; eventually this responsibility was transferred to teachers, generating leadership opportunities, and greater buy-in to reform efforts.

Teachers report that study groups and CCL cycles were at the root of school change. CCL was an instructional coaching model developed by Boston Plan for Excellence that the district launched in SY2002. The program was based on the premise that the best professional development is “sustained, collaborative, and connected to classroom practice” (Boston Plan for Excellence, 2003). Boston Plan for Excellence describes a CCL cycle as a six- to eight-week period in which a team of teachers and an instructional coach work together. Each cycle has three main components. Teams meet to review and discuss readings and relate them to classroom practice. Classrooms become lab sites where participants take turns demonstrating lessons and analyzing their effects on students during a debriefing meeting. Coaches provide one-on-one support to teachers when they are in the process of implementing new practices.

The former Principal remembers that one of the first school-wide study subjects was inference and higher order thinking skills. When she asked the staff to define inference, she realized there was no consensus on the meaning of this term and how to teach it. Immediately, teacher study groups ordered best practices literature to understand inference, or rather, as they found out, different kinds of inference, how to teach it, and how to assess it. Teaching of inference went beyond the realm of literacy, reading and writing. Math and science teachers also adopted instructional practices to promote it in their classroom. Indeed, math instruction was overhauled in 2007 when the school brought in a Robotics and Engineering program developed by the Tufts Center for Engineering Education and Outreach with the purpose of building higher order thinking skills, in addition to math skills.

In addition to developing inquiry and assessment-based practice, Sarah Greenwood teachers attributed the collaborative climate of the school to CCL cycles. By turning their school into a “lab

site,” teachers worked with coaches (both in-house and external) who trained the teachers, encouraged them to try new teaching strategies, and also encouraged them to observe and be observed by colleagues and coaches for constructive feedback.

A specialist ... would come in and we would work on a specific skill each week for the month. And then she would come in at the end of the month and come observe us and see how she could help us...

It was tied to our practice. If we had a problem, we could say, “Listen, I tried X, Y and Z; it’s not working. I tried it this way, I tried it that way. Can you come in and help?” She would also do modeling, ... “Okay, we’ll try this.” And we’d come back and talk about it.

We’d plan for the whole year, the books we were going to use, the curriculum, everything. We’d just map it all out with her.

So if we were all here and the students were here, I might teach a lesson or somebody else might teach a lesson. And then we would debrief and we would talk about the lesson and how it went. We’d have goals ahead of time of what we wanted to look for. So it was basically peer observation and watching. I found it to be very helpful.

Teacher reflections about CCL cycles

One example of work done in TSGs was related to a curriculum gap identified when students were not performing well on the MCAS. The gap was in the fifth grade math curriculum, and was closed by changing the curriculum sequencing so that units from sixth grade math were moved to the fifth grade. In other instances, science and ELA teachers collaborated to provide writing opportunities across the curriculum.

In brief, the Sarah Greenwood School’s success with ELL students is attributed to the successful development of an “error-free” learning community, together with a sense of trust and camaraderie that changed the culture of the school to this day.

I don't know if you can snapshot the comfort level that we have within the staff ... that sense of ease that we can talk to each other. And if it's a bad day, I think, "Okay, what do I do?" And I just don't have to wait.... I can go to anybody. And I think that sense of community that we have in here, it really helps. And I think the students notice that, they can recognize that. And I don't think – if we didn't have that comfort between each other, I don't think it would have gone, it could go over to the students in the way that I teach.

– Teacher

Theme 3: We Know Our Students Well and Support Them

In the previous section, we discussed relationships among adults as the first step toward change. This theme captures what it took for the school to sustain high expectations for all, with as much of a focus on ELL students as possible, given that the inclusive nature of classroom assignment and instruction made it hard to distinguish what worked for ELL students from what worked for all students.

As mentioned previously, CCL cycles' emphasis on inquiry created the foundation for the development of data-driven instructional design. One such effort that is widely remembered in the school has to do with improving higher order thinking skills, inference in particular. The Principal remembered that the need for a focus on inference was identified during a late-summer three-day professional development retreat that the school conducts yearly to review student assessment data, identify strengths and weaknesses, and set instructional priorities for the upcoming school year.

The assessment of student progress on inference helped establish regular in-house mechanisms for measuring student progress in other skills and content areas throughout the year. For example, the school decided to focus on improving the first grade as a first step toward whole-school reform. Traditionally, the early elementary program (K1, K2, 1) has been strong in order to give students a head start. In the first grade, students were monitored closely to determine which Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Books (available in English and Spanish) they were reading, and what kinds of inference were

developed through those readings. Monitoring took the form of teacher running records. Today, the focus on inference is instituted as an area for ongoing improvement and as "good teaching" that moves beyond basic reading and vocabulary instruction.

I think one of the biggest things that we've found, pretty much across grade levels and subject matter is that we need our students to get better higher order thinking skills. So they're pretty consistent and pretty proficient at answering basic skills, demonstrating what that kind of evidence sort of makes them, like reading comprehension. But we need them to go further than that, to be able to synthesize more information, evaluate many pieces of information, and then make an inference from it.

–ILT member

Another example of the school's ability to respond to individual student needs was the use of formative and summative assessment data. According to interviewees, assessment drove instruction during the study period, SY2006-SY2009. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), the Stanford Reading Inventory (SRI), writing samples, teacher-constructed math tests, MEPA, MELA-O, and MCAS were all used to inform instruction. Teachers disaggregated student scores on these measures by race, and also by language status. Item analysis report summaries on the Spring MCAS scores were used to predict which students might not attain grade level skills the following year.

These report summaries were examined annually, at a three-day in-service institute held in late August to examine student data and prepare for the upcoming year. One year, the school identified questions in the fifth grade MCAS that were not covered by district math curriculum and pacing guide until the sixth grade. This gap was addressed through changes in sequencing.

“Push the Mainstream to Accommodate”

The former Principal came to the Sarah Greenwood as a seasoned educator and native Spanish speaker whose experiences learning and teaching English as a second language, as well as her extensive academic training, informed decisions she made as leader of the Sarah Greenwood. In addition, her personal and professional experiences “helped us push ..., always guided by the data.” “Pushing” as a strategy to attain school reform goals was mentioned several times in the study. Pushing refers to shifting the school from a deficit to a strength-based paradigm; to re-assigning bilingual and monolingual students of the same grade level to contiguous classrooms after bilingual students had been relegated to a Transitional Bilingual Education program in a separate part of the building for years; to strongly encouraging previously estranged bilingual and monolingual teachers to work together, at first by having to share common planning time; to closely examining student data to develop and implement changes in instruction; and to leading teacher study groups in order to support teachers’ changes in curriculum and instruction. All of these changes took place prior to the study years, and laid the foundation for success in that period.

When asked about instruction that worked for ELL students, most staff members at the school speak about the Sheltered Immersion Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Readers and Writers Workshop as good instructional models for all students. Teachers reported liking the scaffolding provided by Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop for teaching literacy – i.e., reading the story, asking questions, going back to the story, and re-reading it a couple of days later. This structure was found to give K-5 youngsters comfort and control over their learning. As they gradually took on more responsibility for learning independently or in small groups, under the supervision of a paraprofessional, teachers worked closely with small groups of students who needed additional support.

The SIOP, on the other hand, facilitated the sheltering of content accompanied with language instruction. Like Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop, this instructional approach was found to be useful not only for ELL students, but for all students at the school, as was the early introduction of academic language. Many instructional strategies endorsed by the SIOP were observable during classroom visits, including: clear posting of language objectives in relation to curriculum frameworks, the use of Spanish for clarification, and the multimodal presentation of vocabulary and new concepts. In accordance with SIOP, teachers were observed presenting vocabulary through bilingual songs in early elementary grades. By the time we observed classrooms, the school had acquired SmartBoards and iPod Touches that were designed to provide access to the Internet on large screens, thus opening up a wealth of visual resources. These resources were not available during the study period, which implied that the responsibility of designing and/or finding already-made visual and audio materials rested mainly on teachers.

In interviews with current teachers, they discussed the challenges they experience today teaching academic vocabulary, especially abstract words such as “heirloom,” “survival,” “blindness,” and “homeless people.” A first grade teacher was observed introducing the concept “tradition” with visual representations of different cultural celebrations, and by engaging students in a conversation about their own family traditions, such as birthday celebrations. Another teacher reported teaching the term “weather conditions” by depicting different kinds of weather, and using the more abstract term “conditions” to encompass all. Teachers also

reported using mini-lessons to introduce topics that may not be familiar to students, such as the life of Helen Keller, prior to engaging in literacy activities involving her life. Although these reports are contemporary, they are examples of practices recommended by the SIOP.

For students who were identified as academically behind through teacher observation or an assessment instrument, the school offered three structures for additional academic support: (1) support during the school day; (2) extended learning time; and (3) student support teams (SST). In addition, practices of family engagement supported their achievement.

School Day Support

The former Principal arranged the school schedule to provide students with maximum opportunities for academic support during the school day. During school support was, and continues to be, provided through slight modifications of the schedule, whereby students are pulled out during selected times and matched with a qualified teacher or specialist to work on specific needs. The schedule was modified slightly in order to avoid interferences with ELA or math classes. Sessions would occur in small time blocks, such as fifteen minutes during lunch or the last ten minutes of a specialty class.

Extended Learning Time

To supplement interventions during the school day, the school provided afterschool support. Current administrators estimate that about 30% of all students were identified for reinforcement in math and English for afterschool support, and about two thirds of that number or 20% of students actually enrolled in programs. Some areas that teachers currently recognize as requiring academic reinforcement are (a) literacy, specifically communicating ideas and reading comprehension, (b) higher order thinking skills, (c) math, and (d) MCAS preparation. Teachers reported that, currently, a majority if not all students in afterschool reading, math, and MCAS preparation were ELL students.

Students who could attend before- and after-school support received grade-specific math and reading tutoring from the school's teachers. Examples of out-of-school time support included "Guided Reading," "Knowing Math," and "Soar to Success," a direct teaching program focused on reading strategies such as visualization, reflection, and making connections (EdVestors, 2006). Participat-

ing students therefore received a "double dose" of instruction. Afterschool instruction was supervised by a member of the ILT to ensure continuity with materials covered in class that day. Students were moved in and out of afterschool tutoring as needed.

Student Support Teams

During the study period, the school had student support teams (SST), or "safety nets," for those who needed support beyond the extended learning time offered during, before, and after the school day. SSTs were, and still are, a multi-disciplinary group of specialists including an administrator, a special educator, an occupational therapist, a counselor (if relevant), and a bilingual teacher. SSTs meet once a week to assess student progress, student by student. Student referrals to SSTs can be initiated by ILT members based on formative or summative assessment results; or by teachers when they observe that in class and extended-day support systems have not been effective.

Support for the Whole Student Involves Support for Home Life

The school sees students holistically, as proclaimed in the mission statement. This perspective means that there is an understanding that a student's life outside the classroom and beyond the school impact academic performance. "We know our students well" is an often-heard expression at the school in reference not only to students' academic skills, but also to the student's family context, socio-emotional health, and extracurricular needs. Knowing that each student's academic performance is impacted by non-academic developmental needs within and beyond the classroom and the school, the Sarah Greenwood reaches out to families to learn about needs for economic and/or socio-emotional support related to poverty, immigration, and neighborhood safety. For example, during home visits conducted prior to the start of the school year, members of the staff identified and tried to meet material needs. In one case, a teacher reported providing an extra mattress to a family whose school-age child was sleeping on the floor. Parents also reported this sense of non-judgmental collaboration between school and home that developed as a result of these actions.

In addition, family involvement practices included elements of parent education for their children's success in literacy. The former Principal spoke about the importance of interacting with mothers, and focused on pointing out to them ways to rein-

force their young children's initial experimentations with writing. Knowing that mothers were likely to dismiss their children's doodling as not "real" writing, the Principal would explain to them the need for positive reinforcement that would build their child's confidence and interest in writing. She also encouraged parents to ask questions to their children about a book they were reading, even if the parent was not reading with the child.

During SY2006-SY2009, the school staff proactively reached out to all families and provided resources and support to parents, some of whom were burdened with child and work responsibilities. Family engagement in schooling was facilitated through home visits, breakfast clubs, Friends of the Families, and other activities. The current school librarian was, and still is, in charge of translating all materials to Spanish. Currently, paraprofessionals take responsibility for calling and visiting families. Then as now, parents had access to their teachers' cell phone numbers.

In terms of family involvement in education, not all parents were expected to be involved in the same ways, especially parents of ELL students. One current teacher spoke eloquently of "differentiating" interactions with families, just as they differentiated instruction within the classroom.

The more I think about it, it's kind of like differentiating instruction within the students. You have to differentiate instruction with the parents...So for the parents you haven't contacted, you send home notices, you send home ideas for things to help their children at home. You have different projects, like we said. We did like a timeline where they set up and made pictures and the parents helped them to write a timeline of their lives.

– Early elementary teacher

This particular teacher created an opportunity for parents who were less involved to help their children work on a project about their lives. This subject did not require prior knowledge and gave parents an opportunity to be involved in an educational activity with their children on their own schedule.

C Conclusions and Lessons for Other Schools

The theoretical framework that guided our research focused exclusively on domains of school practice in the education of ELL students for which there is enough empirical support to be considered "evidence-based." However, as we became familiar with the school, it became clear that some of the practices we were observing were best practices for schools in general, not just for ELL students. It was beyond the scope of this study to be guided by such a broad framework. The practices, however, are documented for the purposes of the cross-cutting analysis – i.e., to compare them with other study schools and determine whether they were shared practices.

Modeling and collaboration were effective tools for institutional change

The success of the Sarah Greenwood rests on a story of change that broke down divisions to create inclusive classrooms and cross-grade level teams. The Principal's own life experiences were key in formulating and implementing a vision of equity. One important premise of change described in this study is that change is collaborative and starts with adults. Effective schools for ELL students have been found to have Principals like the Sarah Greenwood's, who share decision-making responsibility with the school community, assume the role of guiding and supporting staff through changes, serve as a stabilizing force that creates a sense of safety in taking risks for school improvement, focus on continuous improvement, and support and develop teachers of ELL students (Waxman et al., 2007). Thus, this case study confirms the importance of collaboration for achieving institutional change for ELL students.

ELL students benefited from being in schools with standards-based learning outcomes and clear expectations

The Sarah Greenwood's Principal instilled in the school a vision of high expectations for all students, and used the same performance benchmarks for ELL students as for native English speakers. ELL below-grade-level performance was not seen as "normal" and as something that would resolve itself with increased language proficiency. The learning objectives were standards aligned; the teachers developed instructional approaches and support structures to assist all students to reach those objectives. These findings replicate those of a California evaluation of 237 schools (Williams et al., 2007) included in our theoretical framework. It should be noted though, that ELL students participated in large numbers in extended day instruction that was targeted and aligned with daytime curriculum. This suggests that ELL students may require out-of-school-time support in order to keep up with standards-based instruction.

Using data-driven inquiry to improve instruction led to better student performance

The school's focus on setting In the case of ELL students, (Williams et al., 2007) found that using assessment data to improve student achievement and instruction led to higher outcomes. The Sarah Greenwood used itemized analysis of student responses on the ELA and Math subtests of the MCAS to determine learning objectives for ELL students. This data-inquiry based approach supported an inclusive school organization that gave voice to teachers of ELL students in the Instructional Leadership Team, grade level teams, student support teams, and teacher study groups.

Cultural understanding and validation were necessary supports for the whole student.

When staff at the Sarah Greenwood spoke of knowing their students, they did not just mean in terms of their academic outcomes, but rather holistically, including the cultural communities they came from, the kinds of stressors they faced daily, and their home languages. The fact that students and their parents could speak their home language at school, not only among themselves, but also with their teachers was advantageous. Understanding parents' cultural practices around parenting was also valuable, as it enabled teachers and administrators to highlight cultural practices that were inconsistent with school practices, such as criticism, and recommending alternatives, such as encouragement to build confidence and self-esteem. The use of Spanish in classrooms and hallways, among teachers and administrators, among students, and between teachers and parents created a climate where Spanish ability and the various cultural backgrounds of ELL students were valued. Indeed validating students' ethnic identity has been recommended as an effective practice by experts on ELL education with a focus on Latino ELL students (Tellez & Waxman, 2005).

The school visit also confirmed that the Sarah Greenwood practiced a number of evidence-based strategies for family engagement, including (a) school and teachers reach out to parents through their language and culture, (b) school hires bilingual personnel who are available to speak with parents when they come to school, (c) school uses a variety of strategies to communicate with parents, and (d) school offers a variety of formal events to communicate with parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).

Teachers liked on-going, in-house professional development, and training on formative use of data

Repeatedly, teachers praised Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) cycles for targeting the specific skills they needed to build, and for creating a culture of trust and collaboration. They also preferred having in-house math and LAT coaches, as they could provide ongoing support when questions arose about classroom practices that were not working. Also, the relationship of trust that developed with in-house coaches facilitated help-seeking for teachers.

Professional development practices similar to those that the Sarah Greenwood engaged in during SY2006-SY2009 were highly recommended in a recent Practice Guide issued by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (Gersten et al., 2007). The practices included: (1) training teachers to use formative assessment to guide instruction; (2) training teachers and other specialists to effectively deliver small-group instruction for ELL students who fall behind; and (3) training teachers to teach academic English starting in the early grades. In addition, grade level team meetings were focused on examining instruction and student learning with the support of the ILT and the Principal (Saunders et al., 2009).

In conclusion, the Sarah Greenwood's success in SY2006-SY2009 was the result of a process of comprehensive reform brought about by a Principal who intentionally adopted a collaborative leadership style that spread buy-in for change school-wide. Teachers' empowerment and dedication to data-driven assessment and instructional design, the spirit of collaboration created through strong professional development models, and the school's efforts to reach out to the community created the conditions for academic success for ELL students, and all students.

¹⁶ Under Boston's student assignment plan, the city is divided into three geographic "zones" (East, West, and North) for elementary and middle schools. Students may apply for: schools in the zone in which they live; schools in other zones if the schools are within their "walk zone"; and K-8 schools citywide. The assignment algorithm prioritizes applicants within a one mile "walk zone" for elementary schools and entry for siblings of current students.

¹⁷ The data on teacher qualifications come from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/teacherdata.aspx).

¹⁸ The Interim Principal, a 21-year school veteran who held positions of increasing responsibility, from teacher to assistant Principal, led the school for two school years following the Principal's departure. A new permanent Principal was appointed to lead the school starting SY2012.

¹⁹ During SY2006 it had ten members (EdVestors, 2006).

²⁰ Counselors do not have Spanish speaking ability currently, which limits support for ELL students to those who are MEPA Levels 3 and 4.

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