

**The Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project:
Evaluation Findings**

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**THE LOS ANGELES ANNENBERG METROPOLITAN PROJECT:
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Executive Summary

In the latter part of the 1990s, education in California was caught in a whirlwind of change. Schools scrambled to find enough teachers and enough classroom space to fulfill state-mandated class-size reduction requirements. The voters eliminated bilingual education, leaving schools with no specific classroom tool for teaching English-language learners. Schools were required to administer a new standardized test each spring to Grades 2 through 11 that was not aligned to classroom work and yet carried great weight for both students and educators.

Amidst this upheaval, a major new school-reform initiative was trying to make headway in Los Angeles County. From 1994 through 2000, the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project, or LAAMP, was one of 18 major school improvement initiatives across the country to be funded by the \$1.1 billion Annenberg Challenge. Its centerpiece was a new educational structure known as the School Family, which brought together teachers, administrators, and parents from high schools and their feeder middle schools and elementary schools, plus others with an interest in education. LAAMP organizers hoped the School Families would create a stable learning environment for students by encouraging coordination among schools and between grade levels.

Today, the Annenberg Challenge has drawn to a close. A final report released in June called the national effort a partial success. The report credited the program with strengthening urban, rural, and arts education and with raising the quality of teaching. The report also found that school-reform programs must learn to deal with rapid leadership turnover, changes in direction, and other setbacks. And it found that the grant money, while generous, frequently was spread too thin over too many schools.

The national findings parallel conclusions drawn about the 6-year Los Angeles program, which received \$53 million from the Annenberg Challenge in December 1994. LAAMP commissioned a group of education researchers from UCLA and USC to evaluate the local project. Known as the Los Angeles Consortium for Evaluation, or LACE, the researchers found that LAAMP accomplished some of what it set out to do. But for a variety of reasons, it did not attain its ultimate goal of improving student performance.

The tumultuous period of California history that suctioned off time, energy, and financial resources from schools and the people working in them bears much of the blame. Researchers found other explanations. Among them were:

- School Family teams of teachers, administrators, and parents needed more time than was anticipated to develop the group process skills necessary for success and spent much of their time trying to learn how to collaborate instead of instituting change.
- The teams needed time to learn about and understand the concepts of results- or standards-based school reform and to develop the skills required to analyze available data and use them in the planning process.
- There were insufficient resources to ensure adequate support for teachers attempting to implement programs devised by the School Families. There also was no mechanism for extending the reforms to teachers not directly involved in the reform project.

LACE also acknowledged that the research methodologies it used to evaluate LAAMP, although the best that were available, might not have presented a full and accurate picture of the effects the program had on its participating schools. In addition, researchers suggested the need for more sensitive gauges of student accomplishment that measure the actual curriculum taught. The primary measurement used—California’s Stanford 9 test—may not have been the best tool for detecting the effects of specific changes in teaching and learning.

Overall, the researchers found that the LAAMP reform can claim many achievements that have benefited K-12 education in Los Angeles County, including:

- Creation of the School Family concept, which in many cases was responsible for productive changes that could not have been realized by a single school working alone.
- Strengthening of schools’ acceptance of accountability, their focus on performance, and their capacity for self-evaluation especially in regard to accessing and using student-achievement data.
- Creation of valuable teacher professional development activities and access to new instructional programs, which were especially helpful for the many new and uncredentialed teachers who were hired to fulfill class-size reduction requirements.
- Encouragement of parental involvement in the schools and in children’s learning at home, which had demonstrable effects on student performance.
- Demonstration of the potential of stable learning communities for curing many of the ills facing urban schools.

Looking at test scores, LACE researchers saw improvement at LAAMP schools over the 3-year period from 1997-1998 to 2000-2001. However, there was no statistically significant difference between LAAMP schools and non-LAAMP schools with regard to student performance on the state’s Stanford 9 standardized test.

Researchers also found no indication that LAAMP has had a wide impact on classroom practices. In other words, its core school-reform principles have not yet permeated participating schools. However, researchers saw signs that LAAMP initiatives were starting to move into the classroom in the later years of the program

after so much time and energy were spent initially on developing the School Family structure.

When Walter Annenberg issued his challenge in December 1993 by giving what at the time was the largest gift ever dedicated to improving public education, he called it a “crusade for the betterment of our country.” Nine years later, that crusade has made a difference. The public schools “in most major cities are still not doing the job they must,” the June report said, but they are “better today than they were a decade ago and teachers are better equipped to help children overcome obstacles and achieve higher standards.”

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Introduction

In 1993, philanthropist, former ambassador, and retired media mogul Walter H. Annenberg committed \$500 million to enhancing the capacity of the nation's public schools. He challenged selected urban and rural areas to find innovative approaches to accelerate their reform processes and enable all students to achieve high intellectual, moral, and social standards. Seizing the challenge, Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) analyzed the core problems of educational achievement in Los Angeles County and concluded that new structures were essential to forging effective solutions for children. The LAAMP proposal centered on the creation of the School Family, a new, intermediary organization that would bring sets of schools together in stable, intimate, learning communities to provide all children a quality, integrated K-12 experience and assure their continuous progress toward high standards. Rooted in a commitment to decentralization, LAAMP asked School Families to combine professional development, parent and community involvement, rigorous standards-based curriculum, and assessment and accountability mechanisms in a coordinated effort to improve teaching and student learning. The LAAMP plan was innovative too in that it encompassed schools throughout Los Angeles County, bringing under its umbrella the mammoth Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and other school districts in the county. The Annenberg Foundation in December 1994 awarded LAAMP \$53 million to implement its vision, to be matched by an additional \$53 million raised from other sources.¹

From the outset, LAAMP made a strong commitment to public reporting and the use of evaluation to support its efforts. As part of that commitment, LAAMP

¹ LAAMP subsequently received major grants from the Weingart and Ford foundations as part of its matching requirement to strengthen teacher professional development and parent involvement through the Design for Excellence: Linking Teaching and Achievement (DELTA) and Parents as Learning Partners (PLP) components of LAAMP, respectively.

contracted for a comprehensive evaluation with the Los Angeles Consortium for Evaluation (LACE), a collaborative effort between researchers at the UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing and the USC Center on Educational Governance. LACE engaged in a number of studies of LAAMP, from large-scale, quantitative inquiry on implementation and impact to more fine-grained case studies of various LAAMP foci. This report summarizes the results of LACE's work. In the sections below, we first provide an overview of LAAMP's vision and LACE's approach to evaluating its implementation and effects. We then turn to the evaluation results, starting with our findings on the effects of the program on student performance and moving to what we learned about the principles guiding the LAAMP vision. We close with lessons learned about implementing and evaluating large-scale reforms such as LAAMP and about promising practices for future efforts.

The LAAMP Vision

LAAMP's original framers, a coalition of leaders from USC and UCLA in partnership with local school-reform leaders and business executives, viewed the instability in students' educational environments as the critical underlying problem in urban education in Los Angeles County. They saw such instability in inconsistent policies for curricula, instruction, assessment, and discipline as students moved within and through elementary, middle, and high school. The roots of the problem, as they saw it, lay in many factors, including the isolation of school staffs from one another, lack of staff time and attention within schools to coordinate teaching efforts, and a high rate of student, teacher, and administrator transiency, especially in those schools serving the poorest students.

LAAMP's School Families

LAAMP thus sought to create a new structure that would promote stability within and across schools and that would focus and accelerate existing reform efforts. LAAMP funded networks of schools, termed "School Families," consisting of a high school, one or more of its feeder middle schools, and at least three feeder elementary schools. LAAMP theorized that ending the isolation of schools from one another would foster ongoing collaboration among them on efforts to increase stakeholder participation and leverage resources from supporting institutions. In addition to supporting reform efforts at individual schools, School Families were intended to be structures that encouraged administrators, principals, and teachers to

work together to assess the performance of the school network as a whole and each member school on its own. Based on what they found, the School Families were to act accordingly.

Having only just been created, LAAMP had to get up and running as an organization before it could implement its vision by issuing a request for proposals to interested School Families. Only a year and a half after it opened for business, LAAMP was able to award grants to 14 Cycle One families by the end of the 1995-96 school year. Seven additional families were designated for funding in Cycle Two, and at the end of the 1996-'97 school year, a final group of seven families was added in Cycle Three.

LAAMP's 28 School Families were nested within 15 of the 81 school districts in Los Angeles County. Generally consisting of a high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools, the School Families encompassed 247 schools and approximately 200,000 students. Half of the 28 families were part of the LAUSD. Although LAAMP's original proposal to the Annenberg Foundation envisioned School Families of at least five schools located within one school district, most School Families contained many more schools than that (ranging from six to 17), and in a few instances, spanned two school districts. The typical elementary school enrolled nearly 650 students, the middle or junior high school was about twice that size, and the high school housed nearly 2,100 students.

Hispanic students accounted for a slight majority at the typical middle and high school and constituted just less than 50% at the elementary schools served by LAAMP, while white students made up about a fifth of the school population. African American students accounted for less than 10% and Asian and Filipino students constituted the remainder. Approximately a third of the elementary school students in a typical School Family were limited English proficient, with slightly lower proportions at the middle and high school levels. Seventy percent of students in the typical LAAMP elementary school received free or reduced-cost lunch. Sizable proportions of students received Aid to Families with Dependent Children, although because many of the schools serve an immigrant population, these percentages probably underestimate the proportion of children at these schools who live in poverty.

Action Principles for School Families

LAAMP believed that establishing policies for students based on school- and student-level data was key to creating higher quality learning environments that would be responsive to student needs and support children’s continuous progress. Additionally, LAAMP believed that coordinated student learning policies (e.g., agreement on priority standards, curriculum goals, assessment tools) within and across schools would create more consistent and stable environments for students, even in the face of continued student and teacher mobility and changes in administrative leadership. Serving the same community over the years, School Families provided the opportunity to create a “seamless” K-12 education for children.

With this philosophy in mind, LAAMP formulated a broad set of research-based “action principles” to guide School Families’ efforts (see Figure 1).

- Stable learning communities of intimate scale
- A broad, intellectually challenging curriculum
- Inclusiveness among parents and stakeholders
- To decentralize control of resources and decision making
- To link professional development to the creation of stable learning communities
- To reallocate professional time in schools and families of schools in ways that make it possible for teachers to engage in ongoing conversations about curriculum, pedagogy, standards, and the students themselves
- Public accountability

Figure 1. LAAMP action principles.

However, because LAAMP’s intent was to deepen reform efforts already ongoing in Los Angeles County rather than to create anew a substitute or competing program, LAAMP asked each interested School Family to come together and propose its own program of improvement building on reform efforts already in place. Each family was instructed to consider the unique local context and needs of each of its schools and to develop learning plans to guide teachers’ classroom work. LAAMP later required the development of more detailed learning plans, with annual updates on progress and subsequent action.

Learning plans prompted School Families to formulate specific goals for student performance and articulate particular strategies for achieving them. Families were to specify actions they would take to reach each strategic goal and the rationale supporting those actions. They also were to specify the time frame, cost, and indicators of implementation. While each family's plan was unique, there were commonalities across them. Beyond their attention to LAAMP action principles, almost all School Families were committed to increasing students' literacy skills in line with a statewide reading initiative backed by California Gov. Gray Davis, which included the goal of having all children reading by the end of the third grade.

In addition to funding various programs and reform activities, LAAMP provided a range of support to School Families to help them further their reform efforts. For example, as described in more detail later in this report, LAAMP helped leverage professional development and change at schools by providing training and support for so-called Critical Friends Groups and for literacy coaches, mechanisms intended to promote collaboration and support among teachers to improve their instructional practices. LAAMP also provided direct support to School Families and individual schools by helping them use and analyze student data and apply for grants. Additionally, LAAMP developed three strategic initiatives in partnership with other agencies and funded several School Families to help them extend their efforts in these areas. Included in the three initiatives were teacher training (Design for Excellence: Linking Teaching and Achievement, or DELTA, in collaboration with the California State University system), parent involvement (Parents As Learning Partners and the Parent Institute for Quality Education), and technology (in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Office of Education). All three of these programs have been the subjects of independent analysis and evaluation.

Evaluating LAAMP

The complexity of LAAMP's School Family design presented an evaluation challenge. Founded on a broad set of principles, LAAMP purposively encouraged School Families to tailor their goals and activities to the specific needs of their schools. Thus, there was not a specific set of overarching program goals and activities that could be simply monitored and evaluated. Instead, the evaluation had to be sensitive to the *variation* in School Family strategies and concentrate on LAAMP's *general* action principles and goals for student achievement. LACE thus engaged in multifaceted and complementary strands of research to address its

primary evaluation questions: (a) How was LAAMP being implemented across schools? (b) what effects could be found to be associated with LAAMP funding support? and (c) how should results be interpreted? (See Figure 2.)

LACE's Indicator System

At the broadest level, LACE designed an indicator system to provide a dynamic and comprehensive view of the status and progress of LAAMP reform across *all* School Families (see Goldschmidt, 2002; Gribbons et al., 1999; Gribbons, Herman, & Baker, 2000).

The indicator system consisted of quantitative measures drawn from a variety of sources, including archival data on student demographics, school and teacher characteristics, and student performance on the Stanford Achievement Test Series, 9th edition (SAT-9). In addition, specially designed teacher surveys were

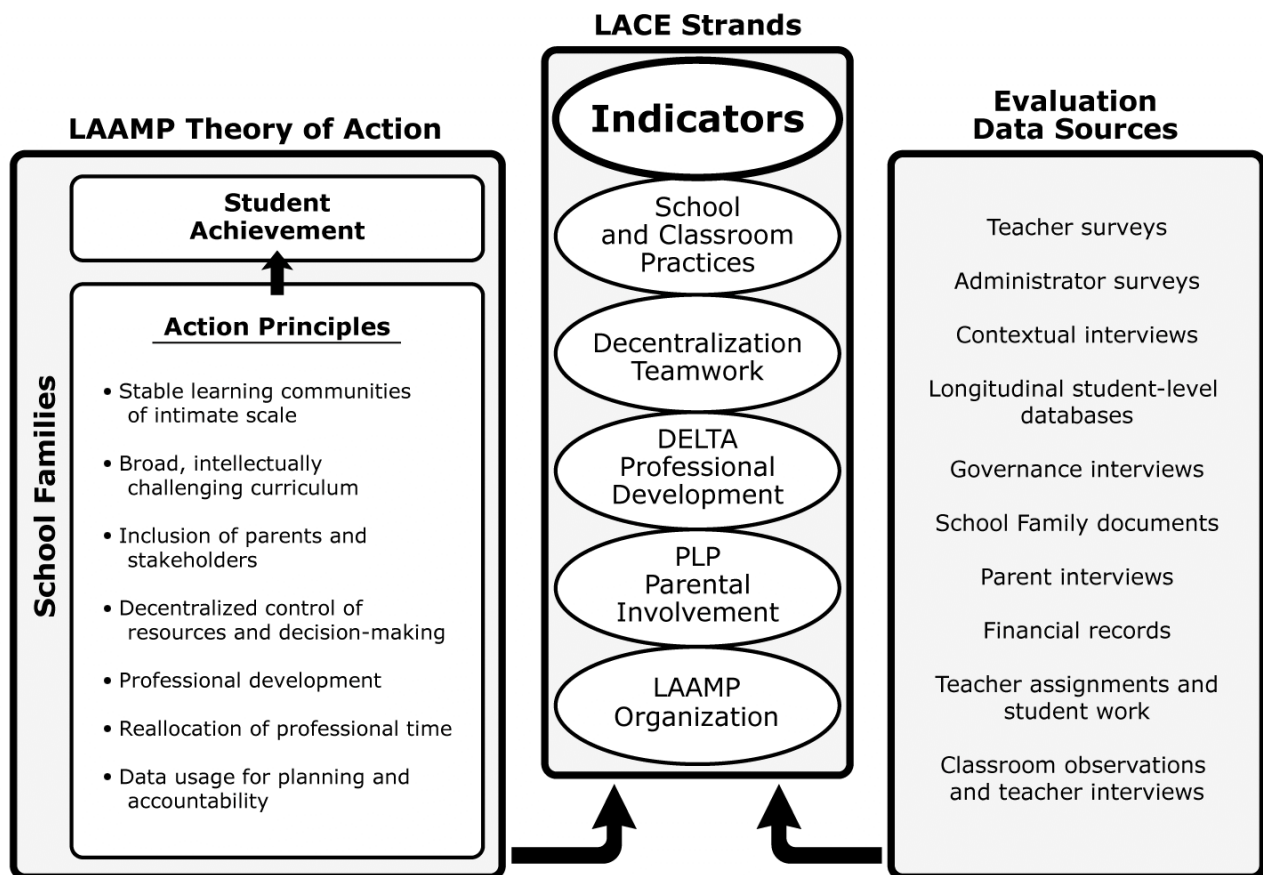


Figure 2. LACE evaluation model.

developed to assess the implementation of the action principles underlying the LAAMP reform program. The indicator system enabled LACE to examine the extent to which School Families were implementing action principles, to track the progress of student performance, and to examine the relationship between LAAMP's principles and intended outcomes. With the application of sophisticated hierarchical linear model methodology, the indicator system was able to account for differences attributable to student and school demographics, teacher characteristics, and LAAMP principles, as well as differences attributable to LAAMP as a program.

As a complement to its indicator system, LACE also conducted intensive studies in smaller samples of School Families to provide an up-close view of how schools and School Families implemented LAAMP. These studies were conducted in four School Families that, because of external funding and initial leadership, represented high hopes for significant innovation. Two of the families were in LAUSD and two were from other districts in Los Angeles County. Three of these School Families were also participants in DELTA—LAAMP's strategic teacher training initiative conducted in collaboration with the California State University system—and in Parents as Learning Partners (PLP).

The intensive studies focused on several of LAAMP's action principles and strategic initiatives. The Teamwork Studies emphasized LAAMP action principles related to decentralization, inclusiveness, and accountability and examined how School Families organized themselves to create more stable learning communities for their children (Wohlstetter et al., 2000; Wohlstetter, Smith, Polhemus, & Hao, 2001; Wohlstetter, Smith, Stewart, & Griffin, 1999). The School and Classroom Practices Studies shifted attention closer to the core of the classroom learning environment and the interactions between teachers and students. This strand examined how LAAMP principles of stability and challenging curriculum became manifest in schools and instructional settings. In addition, a study on professional development focused on the DELTA initiative (Griffin, Wohlstetter, Clayton, & Smith, 1999; Wohlstetter, Griffin, Bharadwaja, & Smith, 2000; Wohlstetter, Griffin, Malloy, Thomas, & Smith, 2001), and another study on parent involvement (Quigley, 1999) focused on LAAMP action principles and areas in which LAAMP solicited and invested additional resources for selected schools. A fifth study documented the strategies used by the LAAMP board of directors and staff to effect change in School Families (Kerchner, Abbott, Ganley, & Menefee-Libey, 2000).

Evaluation Context

The results that follow should be seen in the context of a number of important circumstances. First, as previously noted, LAAMP received its initial funding at the end of 1994 and had to establish itself as an organization and institute its operating policies and procedures before it could initiate and begin funding School Families. The first cycle of School Families was funded during the period December 1995 to September 1996; Cycle Two School Families followed in spring 1997, and Cycle Three School Families completed the set at the start of the 1998-'99 school year. LAAMP's grant to School Families extended only through the end of the 1999-2000 school year, and spring 2000 was the last point of data collection for the evaluation. This means that half of the School Families we evaluated were funded for only three years, a very short period of time in which to show effects, particularly since LAAMP-created School Families needed to get organized and operational before they could be expected to orchestrate significant changes in schools.

In addition, the period during which LAAMP School Families were initiated was a time marked by unusual external turbulence that undoubtedly influenced School Families' ability to focus on LAAMP reforms. LAAMP and School Families had to respond to sea changes wrought by state initiatives. For example, in 1996-'97, California mandated class-size reduction in primary grades, bringing with it an enormous challenge to find and hire new teachers and find space for new classrooms. Also at this time, Proposition 227 eliminated bilingual education for most English-language learners in the state, leaving affected schools and districts struggling with how to respond. The state reduced the number of pupil-free professional development days allocated to schools from 8 down to a maximum of 3. This seriously cut into resources that LAAMP had been counting on to implement teacher training initiatives. Finally, during this period, a new statewide testing system was put in place, followed by standards for student performance that were not well aligned with the test. Strong accountability sanctions and incentives then ensued to encourage schools to attend to test results. At the local level, changes in leadership at districts and schools also produced changing pressures and directives.

LAAMP's action principles, furthermore, embedded a theory of action about what needed to occur in schools to support significant improvement in student performance. While improvement in student achievement certainly was its ultimate goal, LAAMP in its action principles highlighted the importance of coordinated professional development, rigorous standards-based curriculum and instruction,

and ongoing assessment and accountability in producing improvement in student learning. Common sense, furthermore, would suggest that quality professional development needs to precede productive changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and that improvements in curriculum and teaching need to occur before student performance can be affected. This chain of logic also suggests a sequence for observing various types of effects in LAAMP. That is, first one would expect to see action at the School Family level regarding LAAMP principles of decentralization and stakeholder involvement. This would be followed by changes related to professional development, then, in turn, by changes in curriculum and instruction, and lastly improvement in student outcomes. In terms of the LAAMP indicator system, process indicators reflecting LAAMP action principles would be expected to change prior to outcome indicators. Similarly, proximate indicators of achievement, such as curriculum-based or classroom measures, would be expected to show impact prior to more generalized measures of student achievement such as standardized tests. (See Baker, 1999, for a discussion of leading, early outcomes, and trailing indicators). Given this chain of action, we encourage readers to consider what effects are reasonable to expect from LAAMP over the period of evaluation.

Evaluation Results

As previously noted, LACE examined the effects of LAAMP from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. We begin with our qualitative findings, which show a variegated view of how LAAMP's theory of action unfolded and with what impacts. From this perspective, we start with an analysis of the impact of LAAMP as an organization, then move to the effects of School Families as an organizational innovation, and then examine specific effects of LAAMP on teacher professional development, parent involvement, and classroom practices. We close with our longitudinal findings with regard to the effects of LAAMP on student performance, considering also the effects of student and teacher characteristics as well as LAAMP action principles.

The Impact of LAAMP as an Organization

Evaluators interviewed more than 50 individuals, including LAAMP board and staff members and LAAMP collaborators, along with school administrators, teachers, and school board members serving in LAAMP school districts. Based on those interviews, Claremont Graduate University education professor Charles Kerchner concluded that LAAMP as an organization had an impact on educational

reform in Los Angeles on three primary fronts: (a) It strengthened public engagement in educational reform, (b) it created the structural innovation known as School Families, and (c) it focused attention on accountability for student performance (Kerchner et al., 2000).

Public engagement in and support for educational reform. Building on past reform efforts, the creation of LAAMP extended and strengthened the public coalition engaged in educational reform. The LAAMP board had strong ties to the community, a history of support for public education, and it represented the diverse constituencies of the region. Its membership included leaders of corporations, foundations, educational institutions, government, and the media. It built a professional organization and capacity for stimulating educational improvement through School Families.

The board and staff also were effective in fundraising and in launching additional initiatives to support the organization's reform goals. They met the challenge of raising \$53 million in matching funds and created and managed major substantive endeavors to further support School Families' efforts. For example, LAAMP mounted DELTA in collaboration with the California State University system, the Weingart Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. DELTA sought to enhance teacher professional development through innovative pre-service and early-service training programs. Focused on four School Families, DELTA modified pre-service training and provided earlier and more extensive opportunities for pre-service teacher candidates to engage in fieldwork and practice teaching in LAAMP schools. The project also established a coaching system whereby experienced teachers would serve as mentors for new teachers, a particularly important function given the influx of new and emergency-credentialed teachers caused by California's newly enacted class-size reduction laws. DELTA further created a system for providing and training instructional coaches for entire School Families.

LAAMP provided leadership training for Critical Friends Groups, which provided a forum for teachers to discuss curriculum and instruction issues within and across schools and School Families.

With support from the Weingart Foundation, LAAMP also provided support to help School Families deepen their efforts to involve parents in the education of their children. LAAMP initiated the Parents as Learning Partners program in three School Families and involved families in the Parent Institute for Quality Education. LAAMP also provided direct support for School Families' use of technology through

needs assessment and training endeavors and direct training and assistance on data use. These analysis efforts assisted School Families in applying for new grants. LAAMP, in collaboration with UCLA and California State University Northridge, also took the lead on a \$1.48 million technology-training grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Creation and support of School Families. As noted earlier, the School Families were a structural innovation created by LAAMP to support the development of stable learning communities. LAAMP believed that schools working together in networks with external partners and stakeholders could be more effective in bringing about improvement than schools working alone. Such networks would facilitate information exchange and dialogue about standards and school practices. They also would promote active problem solving with regard to improvement strategies across the three levels of schooling (elementary, middle, and high school), and in the process, would foster common expectations and consistent, effective modes of teaching for all students. The process was intended to build strong interpersonal relationships and trust among and between teaching professionals and other stakeholders, produce the synergy and social capital needed to support stable learning communities, and create the infrastructure to bring about and sustain significant change. That School Families came together voluntarily and had the flexibility to define and focus on local priorities, moreover, was important in building personal investment and local ownership of the change process.

As fundamentally new organizational entities, however, School Families required substantial developmental help from LAAMP to get established. For example, the process of creating a learning plan presented the first opportunity for School Families to come together, agree on goals and strategies for improving K-12 education, and establish their commitment. Yet, virtually all School Families experienced difficulties in devising coherent, concrete plans, and initial submissions were disappointing. LAAMP worked with School Families to bring their goals and strategies into stronger focus and continued to require annual updates that encouraged School Families to reflect on their progress, consider lessons learned, and continue to modify and refine their strategies and better target their efforts. These documents and the process they embodied were evolutionary in that the attention paid to reporting student achievement and the clinical use of data grew progressively greater over time. Through these processes and requirements, LAAMP also stimulated the development of its vision of School Families.

Discussions of annual learning plans, self-evaluations, and annual reports provided a forum for developing community and commitment and also contributed to families' capacity for strategic planning and the implementation of results-focused educational reform.

While the process of family building was not without its difficulties and frustrations, it did produce some notable successes. District superintendents and school principals, for example, had positive attitudes about the benefits of School Family networks. They were impressed by the planning process; they observed that the School Family structure met or exceeded their expectations; and they expected School Families to persist in their districts beyond the end of LAAMP funding. We report more of the specifics of School Family organization and effects in a later section.

Focus on student performance and its improvement. A third major impact LAAMP as an organization had on K-12 education, according to Kerchner et al. (2000), was the attention it has focused on student achievement as the primary goal of school reform. LAAMP's learning plan requirement underscored this focus, as did the requirement that all School Families report student test results to the public and as did LAAMP's high-visibility annual reporting events during which test results were disseminated to the community. Through its requirements, LAAMP insisted that School Families give priority to answering the questions, "What were the results for students?" and "Why?" Were plans implemented? What was the relationship between student results and programmatic efforts? These inquiry-focused questions and the process of self-evaluation were not easy for School Families to address, so LAAMP mounted the Data Driven School Reform program in 1999 to help School Families and school leadership build capacity to access, analyze, and use data for school improvement. The discussion surrounding LAAMP-required self-evaluations, annual learning plans, and annual reports, in turn, fostered the development of School Families' capacity for strategic planning and results-focused reform.

The Challenges and Benefits of School Family Teamwork

Moving from what LAAMP as an organization accomplished to the work of its School Families, Priscilla Wohlstetter and her colleagues conducted extensive interviews, met with focus groups, and observed four School Families, in concert with conducting teacher surveys, to document the development and actions of this

new structure and its effects on K-12 education. The resulting report, Wohlstetter et al. (1999), chronicles the initial organization of School Families and their adaptation of strategies used in high-performing business organizations. The families used the strategies to create capacity to enact the LAAMP action principles and advance reform in their schools. While LAAMP did not dictate how the various School Families were to organize themselves—and there was considerable diversity of activity across them—there was striking similarity in their organizational patterns. All School Families created networks of work teams to engage in family wide planning and decision making. These teams included representatives of schools and various stakeholder groups. Each School Family was led by a management team, which was responsible for the direction and management of the overall reform effort. Each also comprised one or more integration teams, which were responsible for maintaining the core focus of the learning plans and coordinating reform work across the various components of those plans. Typically, the principals of the schools within the School Family formed the integration team. Finally, School Families charged improvement teams with responsibility for planning and implementing specific changes in the educational process. For example, a literacy team would be responsible for planning family wide efforts to improve literacy achievement; professional development and parent involvement teams would plan and implement improvements in those areas. Over time, School Families recognized that they needed full-time coordinators to manage and facilitate their efforts, as individuals who took on coordination in addition to other roles burned out quickly. School Families found that additional time and effort were needed to support family development.

School Families also invested in training to improve their functioning, as many team members had little experience in the process skills needed to build consensus and engage in group problem solving. They got acclimated to budgeting and other financial issues and, in a number of cases, had to work to streamline district procedures for approving expenses so that families could actually get access to funds. The development and smooth functioning of School Families, in short, took significant time and attention.

School Families worked to enact action principles. The composition of work teams clearly showed School Families' commitment to incorporating LAAMP's action principles into their reform efforts. We now take a look at each of those principles and how School Families worked to enact them.

School Families themselves and the work teams they created represented the *decentralization* principle, and the Wohlstetter, Smith, et al. (2001) research documents the potential power of this principle: School Families that gave teams decision-making powers on important matters within their purview were better able to effect reform.

School Families worked toward building *parent and community involvement* by including these constituencies in teams and in the teams' planning and decision-making processes. School Families created work teams for the specific purpose of increasing parent and community involvement in school reform. Families invested in workshops and training to help parents assist their children with learning at home. Wohlstetter et al. (2000) report that these workshops enabled many parents to become more involved in their children's education. School Families also used a variety of communication strategies to increase the flow of information between home and school, including public meetings, conferences, special school bulletin boards, e-mail, and voicemail systems. Moreover, Denise Quigley's study of the Parents as Learning Partners program (2000) showed that PLP elementary schools also participating in LAAMP were more attentive to parent involvement than comparable non-LAAMP schools. That is, PLP/LAAMP teachers reported more involvement in professional development and slightly higher commitment to involving parents in their children's education. Results also showed better communication between teachers and parents in these schools and higher parent satisfaction compared with non-LAAMP schools.

School Families also focused on teacher *professional development* through the work of teams charged with family wide planning and decision making in this area. Reviews of learning plans and teacher-survey results reveal that School Families' professional development activities indeed were focused on School Family goals and largely were concentrated on improving literacy instruction. The professional development teams worked to assure that professional development activities were coordinated across the family, linked to one another, and to the central reform goals. The strategies that were implemented ranged from fairly traditional workshop and seminar sessions to innovative attempts to create local leadership to support teacher improvement through cadres of coaches and Critical Friends Groups. Evaluation findings suggest that professional development was a powerful strategy for focusing teachers' attention on School Family goals and intended strategies. Furthermore, teachers who participated in more innovative professional development formats

directly stimulated by LAAMP, such as the coaching and Critical Friends Groups, were more satisfied with the results.

School Families supported the *challenging curriculum* principle by progressively focusing their reform efforts on specific student goals and attendant curricular areas articulated in their learning plans. As noted above, the predominant curriculum focus was student literacy, and with help from LAAMP and external partners, School Families developed more focused, concrete plans to improve curriculum and teaching in their goal areas. While School Families did create work teams to plan, implement, and evaluate improvements in curriculum and instruction, these teams were less prevalent in the early years of LAAMP. Over time, after School Families had addressed more basic organizational and structural issues and stabilized their coordination, improvement teams aimed at student instruction grew in prevalence. Evaluation results do suggest, however, that these teams were able to give only limited attention to long-term strategies for improving instruction and assuring continuing attention to evaluation and follow-up of their plans for improving curriculum and teaching.

In building *public accountability*, as noted earlier, School Families engaged in self-evaluation in the development of their annual learning plans and annual reports. They constituted evaluation teams and secured the help of LAAMP and external consultants to conduct the evaluation work. While building capacity for accessing and using student assessment data was a continuing challenge, School Families nonetheless were able to gather sufficient information to host reporting events for a variety of stakeholder groups to educate the public on educational reform and student performance. Furthermore, evaluation results suggest that the process of sharing expectations and progress with parents and the public at large enabled School Families to better define their goals and refine their process for improving student achievement. School Families, in short, developed new forms of authority and accountability: School Families focused on *results*. The annual self-evaluation process supported *peer accountability* and provided an opportunity for acknowledging and rewarding individual and group efforts as well as creating an important forum for building consensus and reinforcing community. Finally, the accountability was *stakeholder driven*, with School Families recognizing the importance of the public in establishing expectations and cooperating in effective solutions (Wohlstetter, Smith, et al., 2001).

In terms of building *stable learning communities*, the School Families themselves represented progress in this area. Coordination teams, in particular, were charged with maintaining a shared focus and common goals and in assuring the implementation of a coordinated set of strategies across schools and school levels. Moreover, some School Families created plans to ease the transition for students from one level of school to the next (elementary to middle, middle to high school). Further, School Families developed strategies to facilitate communication and information sharing throughout their schools. Early on, School Families largely counted on representatives sent to participate in family deliberations and events to carry information back to their constituencies at individual schools. Families eventually found they needed other communication mechanisms to effectively disseminate information. As a result, they developed regular family newsletters, special LAAMP bulletin boards at every school site, and made some attempts at electronic communication through voicemail and e-mail systems to increase communication between educators and between parents and schools. Family wide events also served to foster communication across individual schools. However, fostering communication, input, and ownership across all members of the School Families has been a continuing challenge, particularly with regard to communication with members who are not directly involved in the family structure.

Evaluation findings, furthermore, indicate the power of building community among those directly participating in School Families and their teams. Team meetings gave members a forum for sharing knowledge and expertise and for sustained and continuing dialogue on how to improve student learning. The learning plans codified a shared set of beliefs. School Family teams, nurtured and supported by family coordinators, provided an important haven of stability in the face of changing demands from the external environment, and they provided an important resource for efficiently responding to some of those demands. Team members also reported feeling empowered by the experience and professionally satisfied. As Wohlstetter, Smith, et al. (2001) comment, “When School Families worked together, they were able to accomplish goals that were beyond the capacity of any single school to achieve“ (p. vii).

Benefits of School Families. Wohlstetter, Smith, et al. (2001) go on to document the many benefits of LAAMP’s School Family structure: geographic proximity and a common pool of students established natural, shared interests among the member schools. Building on these commonalties, School Families

provided opportunities for valuable collaboration that promoted deeper and more effective problem solving. By creating shared leadership and including teachers in the leadership process, School Families also effectively helped to mitigate problems associated with non-savvy school leadership and frequent principal turnover, which are common in urban schools. That is, in school-by-school reform, much depends on the principal who may or may not foster the collaborative environment needed to support reform. In School Families, however, teachers and other stakeholders share authority and can receive information and support from other family members.

Cost and knowledge sharing were other advantages of the School Family approach. For example, the costs of program development and the conduct of professional development could be spread across the School Family and spread over a larger number of participants. Schools Families also pooled resources for literacy and training technology and materials. As previously noted, the costs of responding to external requirements also were shared among members of the School Family. For example, a family could bring a team together to create a response to a district requirement for grade-level benchmarks that could be used by all of the family's schools.

This latter example represents an important instance of knowledge sharing as well. Other examples of such sharing abound. Practices developed in one setting were broadly shared and adopted by others. For instance, one school adopted a cross-curricular grading system that was adopted by another; teachers in one team shared with other teachers the work they had completed to align available storybooks by grade level and with the district reading program. Resource sharing and better access to knowledge were also hallmarks of the relationships LAAMP and School Families encouraged with external partners, like DELTA, PLP, and the data and technology projects noted earlier. As Wohlstetter, Griffin, et al. (2001) note, these kinds of sharing and communication enabled innovation to spread more quickly than would have been possible under other reform models.

LAAMP Effects on School and Classroom Practices

Given these benefits of School Families, what evidence suggests that LAAMP influenced schools and improved teachers' classroom practices? Lindsay Clare and her colleagues conducted case studies in four School Families to examine this issue (Clare, Steinberg, Valdés, & Pascal, 1999; Clare, Valdés, Pascal, & Steinberg, 2000; Clare, Pascal, Steinberg, Valdés, & Goldschmidt, 2001). Her sample included one

elementary, one middle, and one high school from each family, and her data sources included analysis of School Family learning plans; interviews with teachers, principals, and School Family coordinators; teacher surveys; classroom observations; and analysis of teachers' assignments and student work. Because School Family learning plans placed a high priority on improving student literacy, her study focused primarily on efforts to create a *broad and intellectually challenging literacy curriculum* in classrooms, efforts to support *stable learning communities* for students, and the *professional development activities* that supported both efforts. Results suggest that LAAMP had the greatest impact on elementary schools, with less action observed at middle and high school levels.

Comprehensive efforts to improve literacy instruction. Mirroring other findings already cited, Clare and her colleagues found that School Family learning plans developed with assistance from LAAMP became progressively more focused and integrated. The plans placed a distinct emphasis on improving students' literacy, with a secondary focus on expanding technology in the classroom. Across all years of the study, Clare et al. found that the prime strategy used to create a broad and intellectually challenging language-arts curriculum at the elementary school level involved the purchase and implementation of highly structured, comprehensive programs that started with the primary grades. Three of the four elementary schools the researchers studied were so engaged; the fourth elementary school took a more bottom-up approach by using the results of quarterly district wide literacy assessments coupled with regular analysis of student work to diagnose students' learning needs and plan instruction accordingly.

At the middle and high school levels, efforts to improve students' literacy skills featured supplementary programs for children most at risk, such as after-school tutoring, summer school programs, and mentoring.

Professional development supports literacy, standards, and assessment. New curriculum programs at the elementary school level were coupled with professional development to assure that teachers would understand and effectively implement the programs. Professional development related to standards and assessment also was a prime focus across all grade levels and particularly emphasized the development and/or implementation of family wide or district wide rubrics for assessing the quality and progress of students' literacy development.

Most of the professional development activities available to teachers across the School Families were traditional workshop sessions with limited opportunities for

teacher follow-up to assure that new practices were being implemented as intended. Further, particularly at the middle and high school levels, the opportunities were available to only some teachers at each school, with the expectation that those who attended would share information at their local sites with their peers who were not able to attend.

However, School Families also implemented more innovative professional development options, notably the use of literacy coaches and Critical Friends Groups. These approaches were intended to provide teachers with ongoing support to encourage their professional growth and improvement through self-reflection and peer feedback on their practices. Literacy coaches provided on-site training, demonstration lessons, peer observation, and feedback on instruction to support the improvement of language-arts teaching and the alignment of standards with instruction and assessment. Critical Friends Groups were intended to bring participating teachers together on a regular basis to discuss student performance and ways to improve student learning.

During interviews, both principals and teachers agreed that professional development opportunities and instructional materials that LAAMP made possible were very beneficial to their schools. Further, the majority of surveyed teachers reported that they were satisfied with the professional development opportunities available to them and felt they were able to use what they learned in their classroom practices. During interviews, teachers also reported that these opportunities were having a positive effect on their instruction. Moreover, teachers who participated in Critical Friends Groups generally were very positive about their value. They viewed the groups as providing support, boosting their esteem, and furthering a sense of professional community at their school.

Support for stable learning communities. Innovations in professional development and opportunities for cross- and within-school collaboration on standards and assessment helped to develop stable learning communities of participating teachers and also increased the coherence and stability of the curriculum to which students were exposed. However, while teachers and principals reported an increase in communication between schools as a result of LAAMP, they felt that more work was necessary to create a fully articulated curriculum across grades and levels of schooling. Lack of time and competing demands were noted as important obstacles to greater collaboration both within and across schools.

In support of stable learning communities for students, School Families also implemented special programs to ease the transition between school levels. For example, one school family worked to ease the transition between elementary and middle schools by identifying the 125 incoming sixth-grade students who were most at risk and assigning a coordinator to monitor and mentor this cohort through eighth grade. Similarly, at the high school level, all incoming ninth graders were assigned a teacher who was responsible for supporting their academic progress and advocating on their behalf throughout the year.

Teaching and learning practices. As previously noted, School Families in their initial stages of development had to concentrate on organizational and management issues and tended to give priority to process principles over the rigorous curriculum principles and efforts to directly improve student learning. Wohlstetter, Smith, et al. (2000) note that over time, School Families gave more attention to the creation of improvement teams to deal with specific curriculum areas, but that more attention needed to be given to longer evaluation and follow-up at the school level. Findings in Clare et al. (2000, 2001) strongly underscore the need for such attention. Based on classroom observations of the teachers in their research sample and analysis of the teachers' language arts assignments and student work, the researchers "found room for improvement in the quality of [language arts] instruction in our targeted schools." While they note examples of excellent practice and challenging curriculum, they found students frequently did not engage in activities that were cognitively challenging nor were they provided the opportunity to practice complex thinking and problem solving. The quality of classroom interaction they observed was modest, and the alignment of teachers' goals with instructional activities and student assessment was fairly basic. The quality of students' writing was similarly low.

Looking at trends across the 3 years of the study, however, the researchers were optimistic about observed improvements in quality at the elementary school level, although the increase was not statistically significant. Improvement in the quality of teachers' assessment criteria suggests the influence of family wide efforts to implement standards and assessment (see previous subsection on professional development) and may imply that School Family learning plans were beginning to touch classroom practices. Moreover, teachers and principals reported positive effects of LAAMP on classroom instruction.

Effects of LAAMP on Student Performance

Our qualitative findings suggest that LAAMP started with the development of School Families and later on through its various initiatives, moved closer and into the arenas of classroom practice and the teaching and learning process. Since one might expect to see substantial improvement in student performance only at this latter stage of LAAMP's history, it seems premature to expect to find LAAMP effects on student outcomes. However, given the LAAMP board's and the public's interest in student learning, LACE examined the effects of LAAMP on a range of student performance indicators, including achievement in reading, language arts and mathematics on the SAT-9. Our analyses considered both the status and progress of student performance in each of these areas.

LAAMP schools show increased achievement. Based on unadjusted school-level scores, Figures 3, 4, and 5 display the growth in student reading, language arts, and mathematics achievement for LAAMP and non-LAAMP schools² from 1997-'98—the first time the test was required statewide—through the last year of LAAMP funding, 1999-2000. The results in the three figures show that during this period, LAAMP schools improved in all three subject areas at the elementary and middle school levels and in reading at the high school level. LAAMP elementary schools ended the period slightly below the 50th percentile (equivalent to an NCE score of 50) in language arts and mathematics. Scores were somewhat lower in reading and at the other school levels.³ Such score levels are what might be expected given the demographics of the schools. Mirroring statewide trends, LAAMP elementary schools showed the greatest growth and high school performance was relatively low and uneven.

To answer the question of whether LAAMP schools performed better than they would have without LAAMP, we offer a comparison of schools with and without the program. Although it is probably the case that the non-LAAMP schools also were involved in some improvement efforts, the comparison gives an indication of LAAMP's effect. The simple adjusted scores suggest that at the elementary school

² Non-LAAMP schools include all schools in each participating district that did not receive LAAMP funding.

³ A percentile is a rank that describes the relative position of a student among the population of examinees. The major shortcoming of percentiles (and why they cannot be used for analysis) is that percentiles are not an equal interval scale. Changes in test scores have a different effect on percentile ranks depending on where along the scale a student falls. Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE) are standardized scores based on the actual scores. They have a mean of 50, a standard deviation of 21, and are an equal interval scale. Percentiles and NCEs are equal at 1, 50, and 99 on both metrics.

level, LAAMP schools started out slightly below the non-LAAMP schools and ended the period performing at a very similar level. At the middle and high school levels too, it appears that the improvement in LAAMP schools was slightly more than in non-LAAMP schools.

**1997-1998 Through 1999-2000 SAT-9 Reading Achievement*
for LAAMP and Non-LAAMP Schools**

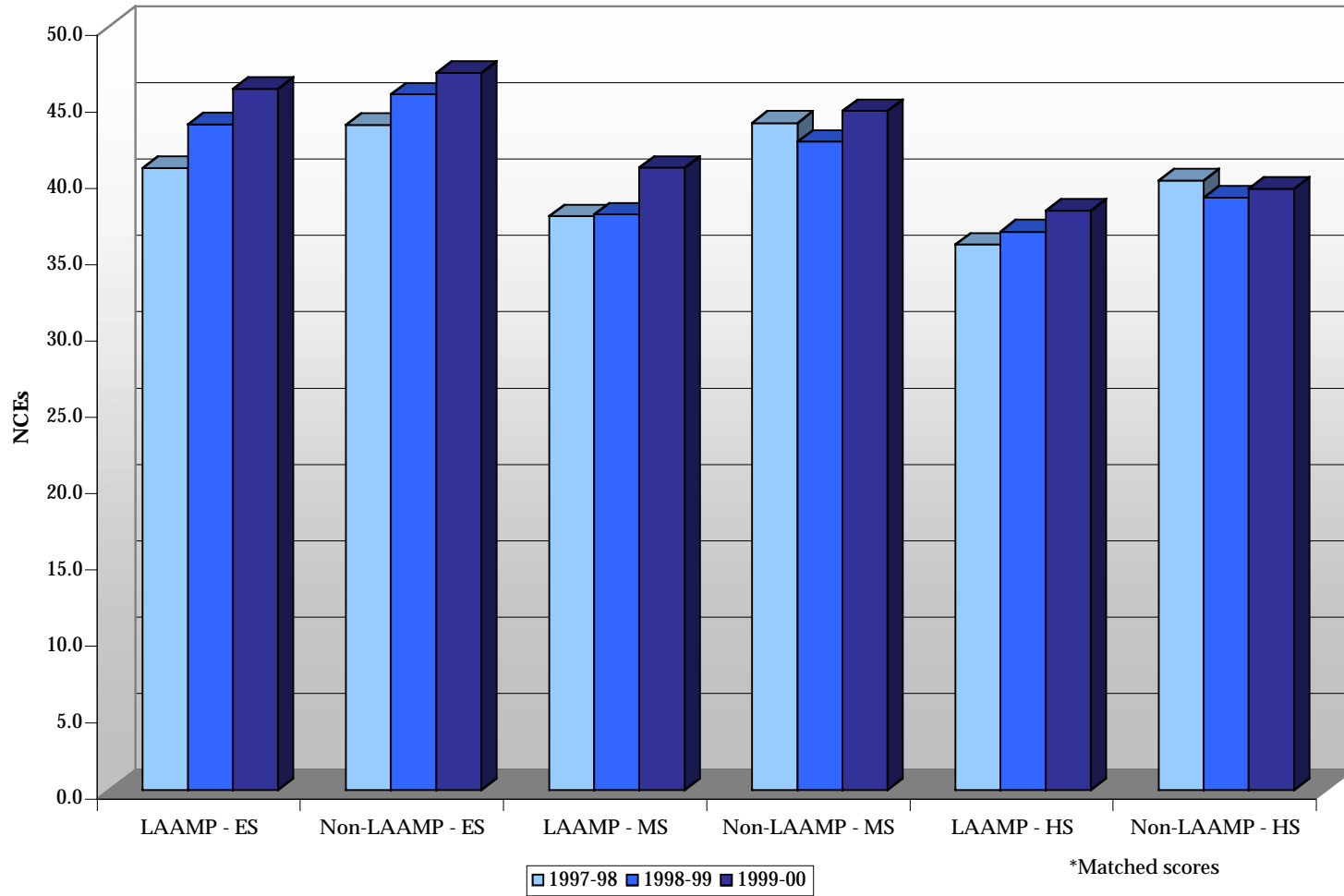


Figure 3. LAAMP versus non-LAAMP school performance in reading. Does not include ELLs.

**1997-1998 Through 1999-2000 SAT-9 Language Achievement*
for LAAMP and Non-LAAMP Schools**

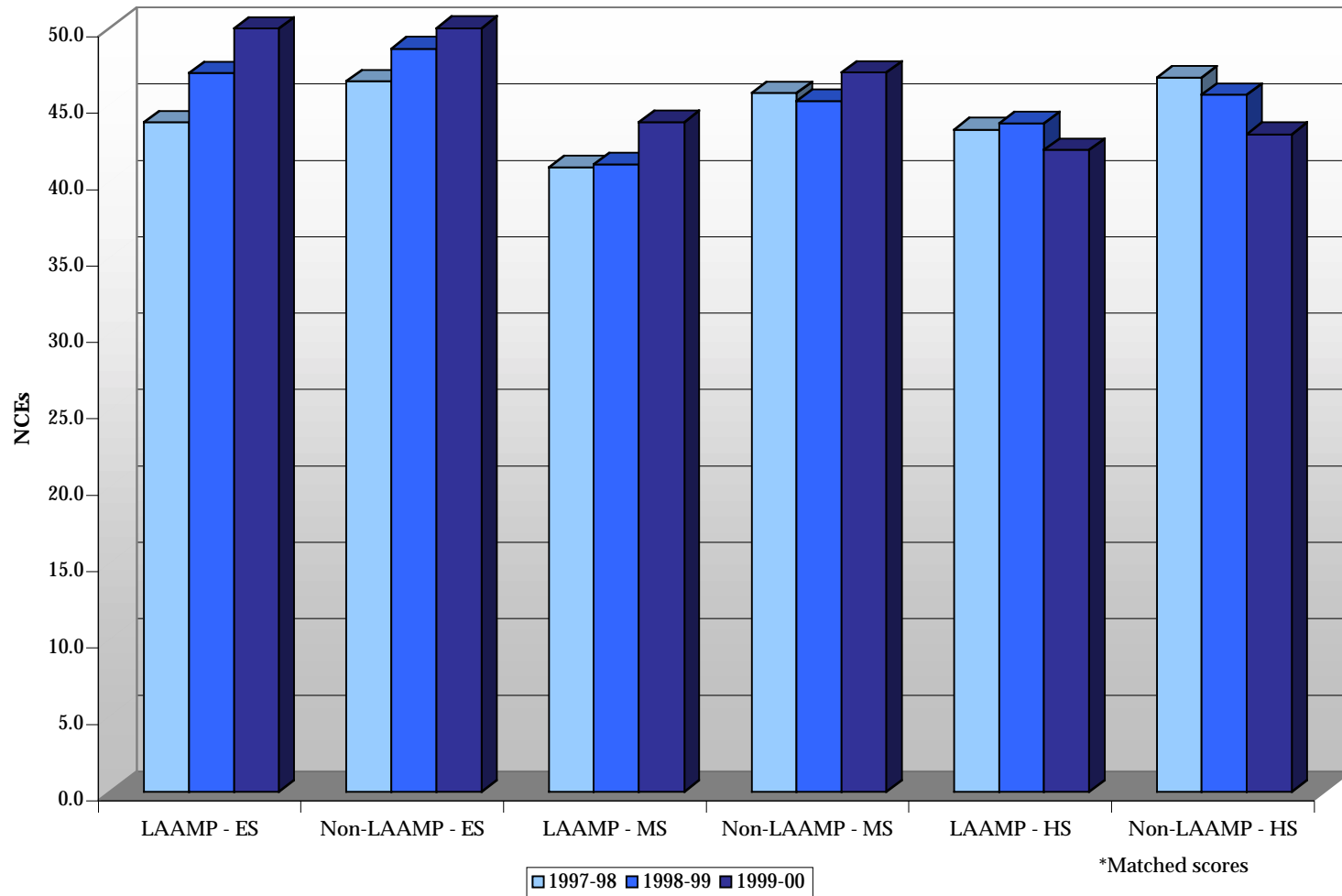


Figure 4. LAAMP versus non-LAAMP school performance in language arts. Does not include ELLs.

**1997-1998 Through 1999-2000 SAT-9 Mathematics Achievement*
for LAAMP and Non-LAAMP Schools**

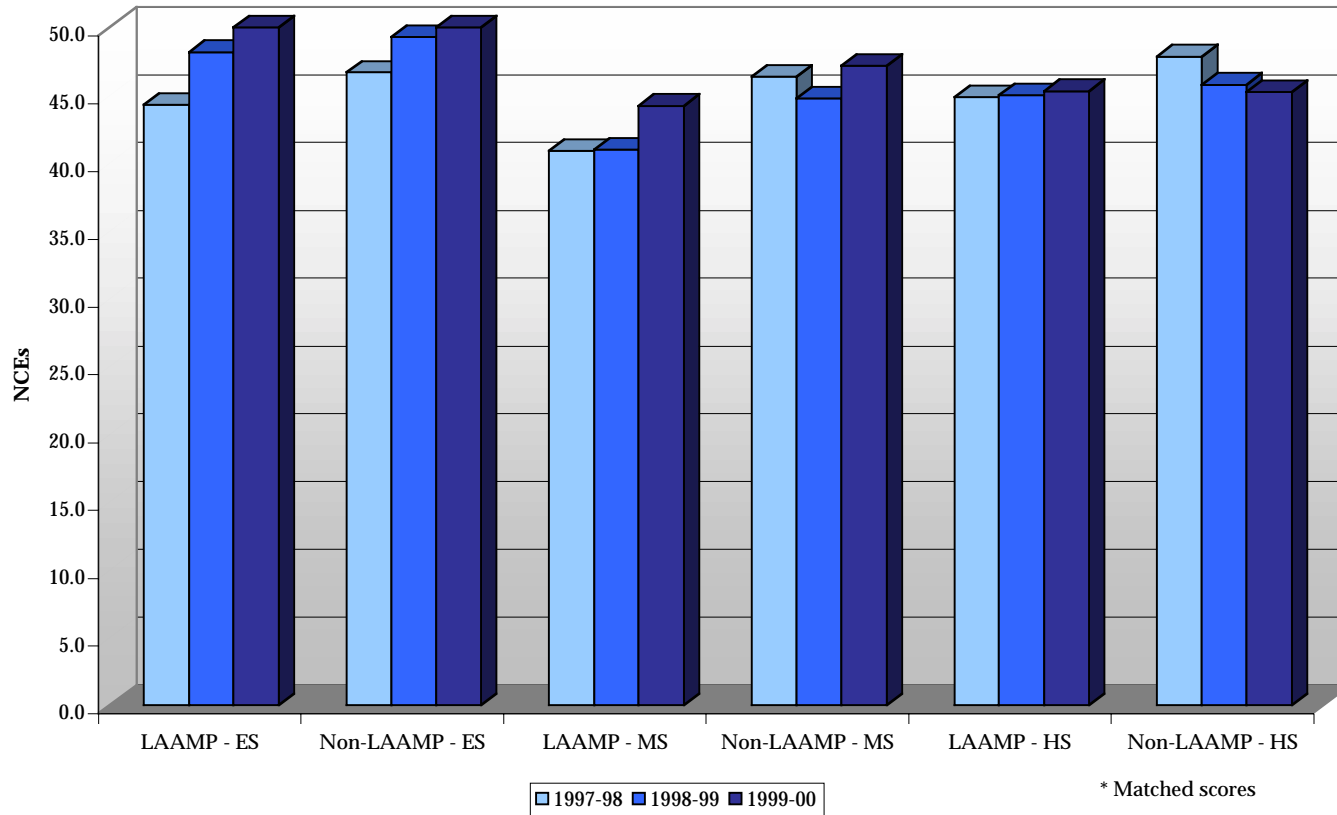


Figure 5. LAAMP versus non-LAAMP school performance in mathematics. Does not include ELLs.

Difference in performance not statistically significant. However, these simple comparisons provide an incomplete picture of LAAMP's effect on schools because they do not take into account potential differences in student and school characteristics that are known to influence student achievement. It is essential that these differences be taken into account in the evaluation of any program so that it is possible to differentiate effects that are attributable to pre-existing differences in schools from those that can be attributed to the program.

Using advanced statistical techniques that take into account the effects of student and school backgrounds and socioeconomic status characteristics, we find no significant differences between LAAMP and non-LAAMP schools for reading, language arts, or mathematics performance.⁴ That is, taking into account student and school characteristics, we found that participation in LAAMP had no significant effect on student performance, whether we looked for effects on students' level of performance in 1999-2000 or the growth in their performance from 1997-'98 through 1999-2000.

Implementation of LAAMP action principles. As noted earlier, we used data from teacher surveys to examine the extent to which LAAMP action principles were being implemented and the relationship between those principles and student performance, again taking into account differences in student characteristics and school composition. Figure 6 displays the items that were used to assess each action principle.

⁴ See Goldschmidt (2002) for a full description of the rationale and procedures of this methodology.

Survey item number	
Stable Learning Community	
153	In our School Family, curricula are consistent among teachers at the same grade level across schools.
154	In our School Family, there is good articulation of curricula for students across grade levels from elementary to secondary.
155	In our School Family, information on individual students who move between schools is readily available to teachers.
Challenging Curriculum: Low Expectations	
15	It is very difficult to provide a challenging curriculum in my class because of the wide range of student ability and preparation.
16	Many of the students I teach are not able to learn the material I am supposed to teach them.
17	My students are not ready for “higher order” learning until they have acquired the basics.
18	It is difficult to provide a challenging curriculum in my class because of the wide variation in language proficiency.
Professional Development	
107	Participation in professional development activities contributed to changes in my classroom practices.
108	Professional development activities addressed the needs of my students.
110	Professional development activities in which I participated were connected to our LAAMP School Family goals.
111	When changes (e.g., organizational, curriculum) were initiated in our LAAMP School Family, they were supported by professional development activities.
Decentralized Decision Making	
140	Vision in this School Family is shared widely among all stakeholders.
145	School Family vision guides conversations in decision-making forums.
146	Teachers are aware of specific goals for accomplishing the School Family vision at my school.
148	Most decisions affecting teaching and learning are made collectively by School Family teams.

Figure 6. Items used to comprise indicators of LAAMP’s action principles. (Continued next page.)

Survey item number	
Parent Involvement	
165	Parents help raise funds for the school.
166	Parents regularly attend schoolwide special events.
167	Parents attend PTA meetings.
168	Parents voice their opinions and concerns about school matters.
Data Use	
177	Data regarding student achievement, absenteeism, etc. are available to any of the various school constituencies.
178	Useful information to make informed decisions (e.g., about student performance, resources, community satisfaction) is readily available to teachers.
179	Once we start a program at this school, we follow up to make sure that it is working.
180	Assessment of student performance leads to changes in our school's curriculum.
182	Most changes introduced in this school over the past year help promote the school's goals for student learning.

Figure 6. Items used to comprise indicators of LAAMP's action principles. (Continued from previous page.)

Results indicate uneven implementation of LAAMP reform efforts through its action principles. As Figure 7 shows, teachers responded most positively about the implementation of the principles of challenging curriculum and professional development, with 73% and 67% of teachers, respectively, agreeing that the principles were evident in their school environment. For the challenging curriculum action principle, this meant that nearly three quarters of the teachers agreed that they held high expectations for students and felt able to provide students with a challenging curriculum. Another two thirds of teachers agreed that professional development at their school was linked to their LAAMP family plans, addressed the needs of students and their school, and supported changes in teachers' classroom practices. Slightly more than half agreed that data were available and used at their school to make changes in curriculum and help promote school goals, and somewhat less than half responded positively about issues related to parent involvement, stable learning community, and decentralized decision making. The latter focused on consensus on and use of the School Family vision in planning and on representation in decision making. Teachers had a far less positive attitude about

items related to reallocation of teacher time—only a minority (26%) agreed that teachers had time to meet, collaboratively plan, and observe and receive feedback on their practices.

As with the achievement results, there was much more variation within schools than between schools. That is, teachers from classroom to classroom at individual schools were likely to vary in their responses to the action principles. Moreover, only slightly more than half of the schools were consistent implementers of any single principle, and less than a third were able to incorporate more than one principle consistently into their school setting. Because LAAMP implementation started at the School Family level with the constitution of leadership and planning teams, this variation and uneven implementation may signal that the plans and intentions of LAAMP School Families had not yet filtered down to all teachers or spread throughout the school or family. Teachers who were most involved in their School Families had more knowledge about and more positive views of the action principles of the LAAMP program than did those who were not so active (see also Wohlstetter, Smith, et al., 2000).

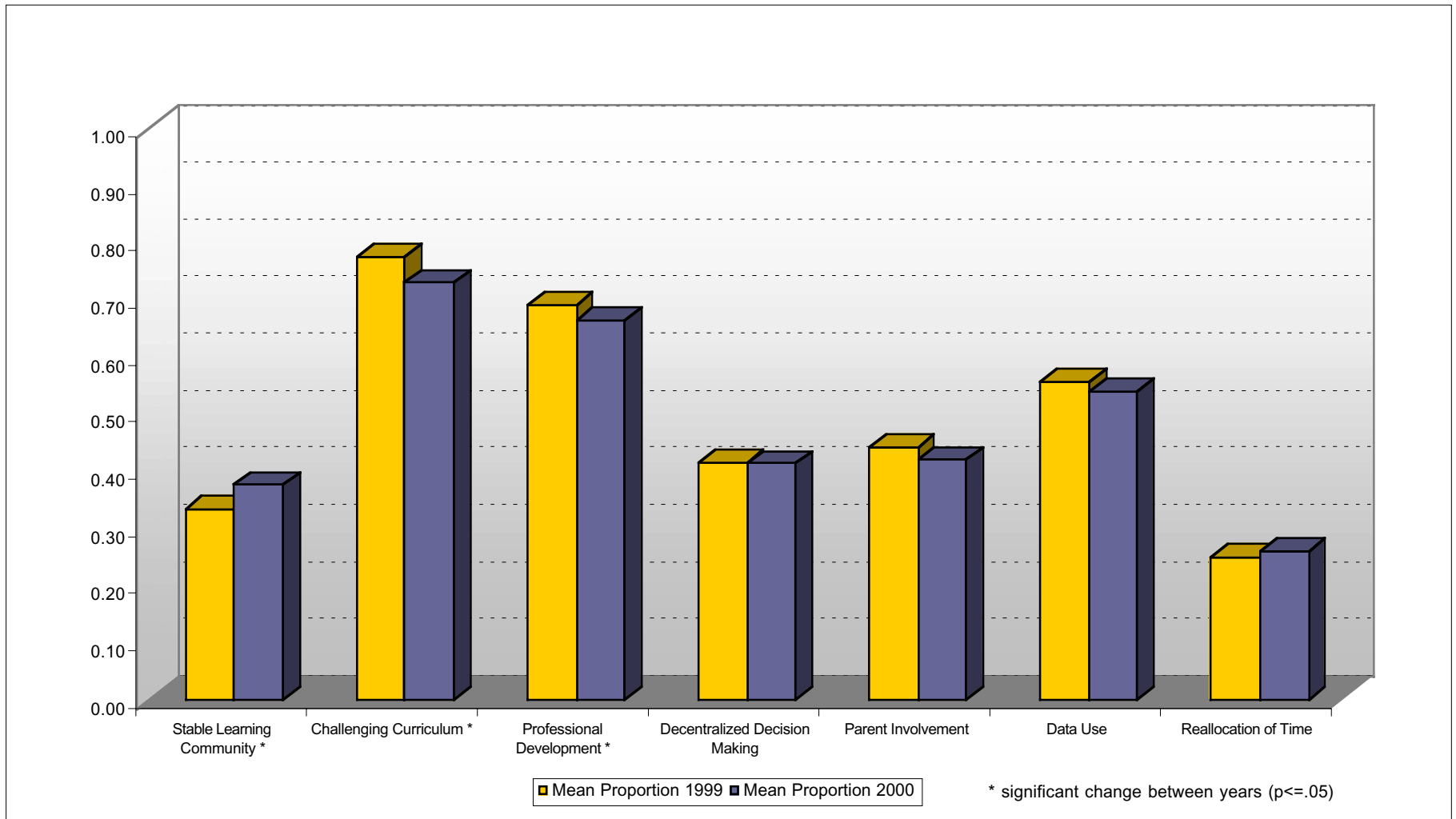


Figure 7. LAAMP action principles: Proportion of teacher agreement by year.

Effect of LAAMP action principles. These differences in teachers' views about the extent to which LAAMP action principles were being implemented also underscore an important limitation in examining the relationship between the action principles and student performance. Ideally, one would want to be able to link student performance to individual teachers' responses, since different teachers had different reactions or exposure to the action principles. Such linking also would provide a more sensitive test of the effect of LAAMP, since we could then compare students in classrooms taught by teachers who were engaged with the principles with those who were either not at all or were less engaged in LAAMP. However, because surveys were completed anonymously⁵ and teachers were not identified in the student database, such linking was not possible. Our analyses thus had to be conducted at the school level, which severely limited their power in detecting effects.

Simultaneously taking into account student and school-level characteristics, our analyses looked at the relationship between the implementation of the action principles and the status and progress of student performance in reading, mathematics, and language arts. Results provided support for several of the LAAMP action principles and raised questions about others. First, the principle of data use emerged as a strong predictor of student achievement; it was consistently and positively related to the status and growth in student performance across all three subject areas. Parent involvement, too, showed a relationship to performance in all three subject areas, but not consistently across both status and growth indicators, a result also confirmed by a more intensive study of the Parents as Learning Partners program (Quigley, 2000). Schools that were high on the challenging and equitable curriculum indicator also showed higher achievement, but this effect was moderated by student background characteristics, which suggested that teachers' expectations regarding student readiness for a challenging curriculum were related to the demographic characteristics of the students they teach.

Surprisingly, decentralized decision making was negatively related to the status of reading and mathematics achievement, and growth in mathematics and language. Recall, however, that this indicator focused primarily on consensus building in the School Family vision and its use in decision making. It may be that in the short term, the time spent to achieve such consensus reduced time available to

⁵ Surveys were completed anonymously for reasons of human subjects protection and, as is common in survey research, to encourage honest responses.

plan and make actual changes in schools, including changes to curriculum and teaching, but that over time, such consensus will provide a strong foundation for productive change. It may also be that schools which devoted the most attention to consensus building were those most in need of organizational change and that such change needed to precede substantive changes in classroom practices.

The professional development indicator showed a single negative relationship with mathematics achievement, perhaps because much of professional development activities focused on literacy. We found no significant relationship between the other three action principles and student performance, but as already noted, our ability to detect such effects was severely limited by our inability to link teacher and student responses.

Other support for LAAMP's theory of action. LAAMP's action plan was predicated on the core problem of stability, and results regarding the effects of teacher characteristics underscore the importance of the concept. Using data from the California Basic Education Data Set (CBEDS), our analysis examined the relationship between available variables related to teacher quality and stability and student performance. As with our other analyses, these also took into account school and student-level characteristics. Of the two stability indicators—teacher turnover, and growth in full-time teaching positions—the latter consistently showed negative effects on achievement. That is, schools with teaching staffs undergoing the highest rate of growth were associated with lower student achievement. This relationship held even after accounting for differences in teacher qualifications, and that suggests that the issue isn't that faster school growth forces schools to hire less qualified teachers, but rather that some other mechanism associated with rapid teacher hiring operates to lower student achievement. Results of our analyses regarding teacher quality also highlight the importance of LAAMP's professional development emphasis: schools with a higher percentage of teachers teaching on waivers or with emergency credentials had lower mean achievement. However, schools that had a greater proportion of teachers with master's or doctorate degrees experienced no added benefits.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of considering student- and school-level inputs in the evaluation process and show that student characteristics exert substantively important influence at the individual level, at the school level, and in combination. The gap between English language learners (ELLs) and non-ELLs is large and is little influenced by school contextual variables. As would be

expected, students classified as eligible for either Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) or special education score significantly above and below unclassified students. Interestingly, special-education students benefit from attending a school that has a *higher* proportion of special-education students, while GATE students derive no benefit from attending a school with a higher proportion of GATE students.

At the student level, the gap between high and low socioeconomic status (SES) students is significant but not nearly as large as the difference associated with ELL, GATE, or special-education students. The proportion of low SES students at a school, however, shows an interesting effect: low SES students perform more poorly as the percentage of low SES students at a school increases, and alternatively, low SES students perform better as the percentage of low SES students at a school decreases. However, the percentage of low SES students at a school does not affect achievement for all other students.

Factors Influencing the Evaluation Findings

What factors help to explain our findings about LAAMP effects? Certainly there are many, but among them are the challenges LAAMP faced in implementing its vision. Intrusions from the external environment siphoned off attention and resources while the implementation of LAAMP innovations required the development of new capacities. The limits of available data and the sensitivity of our outcome measures also influenced our ability to detect effects. Future reform efforts can benefit from an understanding of these challenges.

Turbulence from the external environment. The external demands imposed on schools during the period of LAAMP funding well demonstrate the core problem of instability identified in LAAMP's initial proposal. We've noted the turbulence created by drastic changes in state requirements. These changes in turn brought new challenges to already struggling systems. School Families may have helped to buffet and respond to some of these demands, but the reality is that School Families and their schools needed to expend effort and resources just to stay even. For example, class-size reduction meant that the demand for new teachers vastly exceeded the supply; schools needed to recruit and hire many new teachers, regardless of whether they were qualified or credentialed. Leaders of already overcrowded facilities engaged in a race for space, of whatever kind. Libraries, meeting rooms, and even

closets were converted, and temporary buildings were erected on playgrounds to create space for new classrooms.

Our quantitative findings discussed here document the havoc that can be brought upon schools and student achievement by such rapid growth in the teaching force and the need to put uncredentialed teachers in place to cover all classrooms. It goes without saying that these new teachers represented a professional-development challenge of great magnitude as well as an enormous strain on the system that could not be anticipated at the time of the LAAMP proposal. The LAAMP proposal assumed that the primary challenge with regard to teachers would be to support the improvement of a more experienced cadre. To its great credit, LAAMP responded with DELTA to help School Families deal with this new, immediate challenge.

Similarly, the passage of California's Proposition 227, which abolished bilingual education, required that many schools rethink and retool their approach to teaching English language learners, and gave them little time to do so. Near the same time, the state reduced the number of pupil-free days for teachers, drastically cutting into the time available for teachers to collaborate on School Family or individual school activities or to be involved in serious professional development. As these changes were going on, the state established a new testing program that essentially set new goals for performance. It later instituted a new set of content standards, the result of a contentious process and not fully in sync with the test. And the state created a strong accountability system with substantial incentives for test performance.

Meanwhile, change at the local level also was endemic. For example, during the period of LAAMP implementation, four different superintendents were at the helm of the Los Angeles Unified School District, and several district re-organizations occurred. As is common in urban districts, furthermore, principal turnover in participating schools was substantial.

Competing demands and time pressures. In the face of these competing demands, School Families had little choice as they set their priorities; the need to respond to external requirements detracted from attention that could otherwise have been given earlier to the School Families and broader reform plans. The response to these external demands also took time, always a precious commodity in schools, made scarcer by the reduction of pupil-free days for teachers. The development of reform, and particularly the new structures and processes of the type LAAMP

envisioned, required time and attention. Principals and teachers uniformly reported that available time was a major barrier to their School Family efforts and the implementation of reform. For example, as Clare et al. (2001) noted, teachers reported that lack of time to collaborate on a regular basis was the greatest barrier to teachers setting and working on common learning goals across classrooms.

Creation of new structure required new skills. The development of School Families not only involved time but new kinds of skills to make the process work. School Families needed to learn to work together and group process skills were at a premium, as Wohlstetter, Smith, et al. (2000) observed. Without such expertise and without the nurturing of a dedicated coordinator who could foster communication, guide the process, and buffet school families from external pressures, School Families had difficulty in making progress. While schools working together as families accomplished goals beyond the capacity of any single school, the impact of their work was not usually immediate. “Because of its complex requirements, collaboration had a more deliberate, plodding pace. Consensus decision making, coordination of many volunteers from different schools, and gradual building of social capital were time consuming” (Wohlstetter, Smith, et al., 2001, p. 31). The process, however, did result in productive changes in the practice of education.

The contrast between the vision and then-existing capability. LAAMP’s vision of School Families building consensus on school goals and coming together to discuss and agree on improvement plans and engaging in continuous improvement based on results is very powerful and appealing. However, as LAAMP’s actual experience well attests, this vision also required School Families to create or access new capabilities. Results- or standards-based reform was a new concept for most participants, and most School Families needed substantial help to engage in data-based planning and decision making. They experienced difficulty in accessing and analyzing data to identify their strengths and weaknesses, to assess their progress, or to establish priorities. Similarly, they had difficulty in reflecting on their results and creating focused plans that integrated available programs and reform processes to improve student performance in specific areas. LAAMP framers perhaps were overly optimistic about the participating schools’ entering capabilities. In fact, the schools required years and substantial support to develop sufficient capabilities, and even now, evaluation results suggest there is still room for growth. For example, Clare et al., 2001, noted the continuing need to focus, deepen, and integrate the ongoing reform efforts in School Families. The researchers recommended that the

goals and activities of school reform be “reduced in number to ensure penetration into classrooms and engage[ment of] at least a majority of teachers and students.” Clare et al. also recommend that schools work to integrate the various programs and sources of funding available to them into support for common, schoolwide goals that are clearly focused on improving classroom practice and student learning.

Even given that School Families and individual schools can acquire the technical and sociopolitical capacity to engage in data-based decision making and continuous improvement, they do not have access to the kinds of data they need to fully inform their decision making. That is, available data typically are limited to scores from annual state-mandated tests, such as the California STAR system’s SAT-9. Certainly there are definite limits to what can be learned by such data. Even as STAR becomes more standards-based, these once-a-year results are at considerable distance from the real issues of curriculum and instruction or from providing teachers and schools with the kind of detailed and qualitative information they need to help move students ahead. At the same time, there is a danger that accountability for results on a limited set of measures, coupled with pressure and incentives to show results, will lead to a curriculum of test preparation rather than meaningful learning.

There is a continuing need for better measures of student progress that are embedded in curriculum and classroom work and are linked to standards and broader assessments. As with the challenge of the school inquiry process, moving to better classroom assessments is a problem with capacity, resource, and sociopolitical dimensions.

Adequacy of resources for scale-up. LAAMP’s agenda was ambitious: the goal was to transform K-12 education. While its budget appears sizeable, one must consider what it means when it is spread over 28 School Families comprised of 247 schools, nearly 8,600 teachers, and more than 200,000 students. School Families needed to focus their resources, and in general, gave priority to their elementary schools. Even with this narrow focus, however, there were not sufficient resources to assure adequate follow-up and support for all teachers in any school. For example, while the literacy coach concept that LAAMP enabled seemed a very promising strategy, the amount of time a coach could spend with any individual teacher was very limited. Critical Friends Groups also had value (Clare et al., 2001), but only some teachers participated, and time and regular attendance were ongoing challenges. Teachers who were directly involved in LAAMP teams and activities

benefited from the experience, as Wohlstetter et al. (2000) demonstrated. However, not all teachers participated—both because of the voluntary nature of the reform and because of limits in resources.

Extending the reach of School Families and their reforms to those who chose not to or could not be directly involved is a continuing challenge. School Families need to find better incentives to motivate and maintain participation. They also need to find ways to ensure that all stakeholders are being given a voice in planning, that they feel ownership and commitment to improvement, and that they receive the mentoring and support to improve teaching and learning for students.

Relationship of structural innovations to student impact. LAAMP created new structures and worked through its School Families to effect reform and improvement of student performance. It did so because its theory of action stressed the importance of decentralized decision making and the value of having solutions formulated and applied where problems could be best understood—at the local school level. Furthermore, LAAMP as an organization could not statutorily require changes in curriculum and instruction in its participating schools. On the one hand, it is unrealistic to expect improvement in student performance without direct innovation in classroom curriculum and instruction. On the other hand, structural changes do not quickly result in instructional improvement, and the local character of the LAAMP innovation meant that approaches to change were varied. Expecting structural changes to result in direct and immediate impact on students remains an unmet challenge for all school reform efforts as well as their evaluations.

Sensitivity of methods for detecting effects. Finally, we note the challenge of assuring that our evaluation methodologies can capture the effects of complex programs such as LAAMP. There are important issues here of methodology and of the sensitivity of our measures.

Our findings document great variation in how School Families implemented their reforms and the effectiveness of the reforms at various levels. We've also documented the tremendous variation in teachers' reports of implementation within and across schools. Given this variation, as Goldschmidt (2002) notes, it may be unrealistic to expect a uniform "program" effect. Instead, to identify the effects of reforms such as LAAMP and to discover and verify promising practices, we need to be able to link differences in levels of implementation and differences in practice directly with student outcomes. Without the ability to link teacher responses with

their students' performance, any form of advanced analysis methodology will be limited in documenting effects.

In addition to needing better measures of implementation that are linked to teachers and their students, as noted, we also need more sensitive measures of student outcomes, ones that actually measure the curriculum taught. The mismatch between SAT-9, which was the only common outcome measure available, and California's standards is well known. Furthermore, because the SAT-9 is a norm-referenced test purposely designed as a general measure applicable to a variety of curricula, it is not optimal for detecting the effects of specific changes in teaching and learning. We had proposed alternative measures of student learning for the evaluation, but sufficient resources were not available to accomplish them.

Conclusions

In conclusion, what were the effects of LAAMP? How did its vision and tenure affect schools and children? Our results show that LAAMP schools' performance on the SAT-9 improved over the course of the study. However, because we found no statistically significant difference between LAAMP schools and non-LAAMP schools, we can claim no direct evidence of LAAMP's impact on student achievement results. Furthermore, while our case study findings are promising with regard to LAAMP's effects on those who directly participated, our teacher survey results suggest that LAAMP action principles have not fully permeated participating schools, nor has the reform fully reached classroom practices. However, our studies do document a number of important accomplishments.

- LAAMP created School Families, a new intermediate structure that brought educators and their constituencies together in learning networks to support change and continuous student progress. Effective School Families were able to realize changes that were beyond the capacity of any single school. The success of the School Family structure can be seen in the number of families that continue to exist.
- LAAMP strengthened the accountability culture in schools and built the capacity of its School Families to engage in self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Evaluation findings clearly indicate the value of student assessment data and an outcomes-based approach in supporting student performance. Every outcome analysis, including both status and progress measures, showed a positive effect for data use.
- LAAMP enabled innovative professional development activities that were valued by participating teachers and that appear promising in improving

teachers' practices. LAAMP's professional development efforts and its reform-oriented DELTA program were particularly important in easing the stress of state-mandated class-size reduction and the need to incorporate so many new and uncredentialed teachers.

- LAAMP encouraged attention to parent involvement, and it increased parents' ability to support their children's learning at home. Through the Parents as Learning Partners program, LAAMP demonstrated the effects of parent involvement on student performance.
- LAAMP stimulated stable learning communities and demonstrated their potential for combating core problems of instability throughout the region. LAAMP's experience and its evaluation findings provide important lessons learned from creating and strengthening effective communities and supporting school reform.

These accomplishments provide an important foundation for the future improvement of teaching and learning in the challenging urban settings served by LAAMP-initiated reform. As LAAMP's legacy organizations, Los Angeles County Alliance for Student Achievement and Families in Schools, continue to fuel innovation and assure support for public education and its improvement in the region, they may someday see the fruits of this foundation in the form of student performance results.

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