



# BayCES Impact 2012 Initiative Year One Progress Report

*August, 2008 - June, 2009*



*SRN LEADS at Stanford University*

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## **Executive Summary**

This report examines the first year (2008-09) of implementation of the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools' (BayCES) Impact 2012 Initiative. Impact 2012 seeks to dramatically change student achievement through equity focused leadership and instructional coaching. Impact 2012 has been launched in ten Oakland Unified School District middle and high schools and one Berkeley Unified School District middle school. Using mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, this report summarizes Year One findings and describes preparations for Year Two. This report is guided by two major research goals:

1. To understand the progress BayCES Impact 2012 is making towards its proposed goals, in particular the initial Year One intended outcomes for students and adult learning.
2. To identify what practices and strategies are facilitating progress and what is still needed to accelerate progress toward those goals.

Our findings are derived from a mixed method evaluation approach that blended quantitative and qualitative analyses. SRN researchers analyzed student demographic data, student achievement data from benchmark exams, state standardized test data including California Standards Tests (CSTs) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), and multiple observations and interviews with BayCES leadership and coaches and school staff and extensive document review. Case study methods were used to conduct in-depth qualitative inquiry in two program sites: Life Academy and East Oakland School of the Arts.

The evaluation executive summary presents high-level findings for the study's six key research questions followed by a series of program recommendations for Year Two. The research questions are:

### **Research Question 1: How did Impact 2012 affect student outcomes for focal students?**

- In all grades, students in focal classrooms averaged slightly lower course failure rates than those in non-focal classrooms.
- Impact 2012 teachers in case study schools reported that increased attention to focal students resulted in improved engagement, self-confidence,

commitment to learning and academic performance, particularly among students who engaged in intensive afterschool interventions.

**Research Question 2: How did Impact 2012 affect student outcomes for all students taking ELA and Algebra?**

- Impact 2012 schools gained an average of 42 points on California's Academic Performance Index, which represents a very large increase.
- Impact 2012 schools show a pattern of improvement in student achievement on California Standards Tests (CSTs) overall and in English and Algebra 1 specifically.

**Research Question 3: How did the implementation of Impact 2012 affect changes in teacher practice?**

- In case study schools, Impact 2012 teachers more closely examined students' learning styles and used formative assessments to gauge student progress. These changes suggest that Impact 2012 teachers are making progress toward changes in pedagogy that reflect multiple forms of student data.
- Impact 2012 teachers in schools characterized by staff and leadership stability were more likely to report success in adapting instructional practices, with veterans reporting greater success in changing their teaching than novices.

**Research Question 4: How did Impact 2012 support teachers in diagnosing gaps in enabling skills and sub-skills for individual students as well as patterns of need across students?**

- Impact 2012 teachers made progress in developing a diagnostic approach to examining student work and identifying learning gaps in their focal students.
- In addition to learning how to better identify student-learning gaps, Impact 2012 teachers were able to use focal students as indicators of the instructional needs and strategies for the class as a whole.

**Research Question 5: How did the inquiry teams support the development of teacher knowledge and capacity to impact student learning?**

- Impact 2012 inquiry teams helped teachers engage in productive discussions focused on students and student work and helped reduce isolation by serving as a forum for sharing instructional knowledge and practices.
- Impact 2012 inquiry teams provided teachers with substantive and concrete strategies for identifying learning gaps in students, understanding how to bridge those gaps, and using formative assessments to evaluate their success in meeting students' learning goals.

**Research Question 6: How did changes in student learning outcomes impact school leadership decisions?**

- At East Oakland School of the Arts, Impact 2012 coaching and inquiry helped school leaders use data to understand the need for and create support classes for struggling incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- At East Oakland School of the Arts and EXCEL Academy, Impact 2012 coaching and inquiry helped school leaders use data to inform instructional interventions for English language learners and struggling readers in both English Language Arts and mathematics.

**Year One Recommendations**

**Strengthening the overall Impact 2012 program**

- Given that program implementation is taking place across diverse school contexts, SRN suggests that Impact 2012:
  - Establish explicit expectations for all schools regarding the length of inquiry cycles, outcomes for inquiry teams, and where teacher interventions should take place (e.g., in class or afterschool).
  - Continue to articulate and communicate the relationship between focal student work and classroom/school-level instructional decision-making.
  - Differentiate learning opportunities for struggling and novice teachers who may need more support.
  - Continue to refine systems for monitoring of coach, teacher and student progress.

We believe that these steps will help BayCES achieve stronger and more consistent implementation of Impact 2012 and be less susceptible to the particular experience-base of teachers and the variations in schools' existing academic cultures.

### **Strengthening Leadership**

- Communicate expectations for team configuration, meetings, and outcomes.
- Support leadership teams in providing instructional leadership in mathematics.

We believe that these strategies will help more fully engage leadership in Impact 2012 schools and provide the necessary support for leaders to, in turn, provide instructional support to their teachers.

### **Strengthening Coaching**

- Continue to build on BayCES' core strengths and expertise.
- Continue to increase coaches' capacity to help teachers understand instruction and connect instructional practices to student results.

School coaching is the lynchpin of this initiative and as such warrants particular attention. School coaching in equity issues, one of BayCES' core strengths and expertise, directly supports several aspects of the Initiative, including: creating functioning inquiry teams of PLCs, creating learning partnerships with students in an intervention, and surfacing and changing teacher beliefs in service of changing practices. BayCES' expertise in equity would be a particularly important asset to coaches who are new to BayCES. Similarly, new coaches are likely to benefit from the same kind differentiated supports and approaches that BayCES is using with teachers in Impact 2012.

## **Report Overview**

This report examines the first year (2008-09) of implementation of the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools' (BayCES) Impact 2012 Initiative. Impact 2012 seeks to dramatically improve student achievement by focusing on equity-centered leadership and instructional coaching. Impact 2012 served ten Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) middle and high schools and one Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) middle school. Using qualitative and quantitative methodology, this report describes the implementation and impact of the initiative's first year. It describes the Impact 2012 initiative's theory of action and the organization of the project, analyzes quantitative and qualitative data collected to measure progress toward Year One goals, reports on program changes underway for Year Two, and concludes with recommendations based on the analysis conducted.

## **Part 1. Overview of Impact 2012**

The Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools (BayCES) located in Oakland, California has built a national reputation for its coaching expertise and strong focus on equity. Over the past decade, BayCES has played a key role in transforming the highly challenged Oakland Unified School District. In partnership with the Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), BayCES helped to mobilize the Oakland community to open new small schools and to transform the district's comprehensive high schools into campuses of small schools.<sup>1</sup> However, as valuable as this work has been, BayCES realized that if it was going to make truly transformational change, it would also need to more strategically focus on instruction. As one BayCES leader noted, "[We were] internally wrestling with [how to create] more equitable schools. What is our role vis-à-vis instruction?"

Historically, BayCES had worked diligently and strategically to create the conditions necessary to move toward equitable outcomes for students. According to a BayCES leader, "[We had been] fairly transformative in OUSD with small schools, but [that] didn't

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on BayCES' small schools' work, please see SRN LEADS' recent report entitled [Oakland Unified School District New Small Schools Initiative Evaluation](http://www.SRNleads.org/resources/publications/ousd/ousd.html) at [www.SRNleads.org/resources/publications/ousd/ousd.html](http://www.SRNleads.org/resources/publications/ousd/ousd.html)

guarantee anything in terms of classroom practice... [There was] inconsistent and unpredictable classroom practice.” BayCES’ leadership felt strongly that the organization could build its capacity to work on instruction and that doing so was essential to BayCES’ mission. As a result, BayCES created Impact 2012.

In 2008-09, BayCES launched Impact 2012 in one Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) middle school, one Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) middle school, eight OUSD high schools, and 1 OUSD continuation school (11 total, 10 completed the year). The initial cohort of 2012 schools consisted of the following:

- Claremont Middle School (OUSD, middle school)
- Coliseum College Prep Academy (OUSD, middle and high school, dropped out of the program in January)
- East Oakland School of the Arts (OUSD, high school)
- EXCEL High School (OUSD, high school)
- Leadership Preparatory High School (OUSD, high school)
- Life Academy (OUSD, high school)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School (BUSD, middle school)
- Media College Prep (OUSD, high school)
- Ruidsdale Continuation (OUSD, continuation school)
- Sojourner Truth Independent High School (OUSD, high school)
- Youth Empowerment School (OUSD, high school)

These schools reflect the demographics of the OUSD, which is predominately poorer, has more English language learners and African American students and fewer Caucasian students than California as a whole.

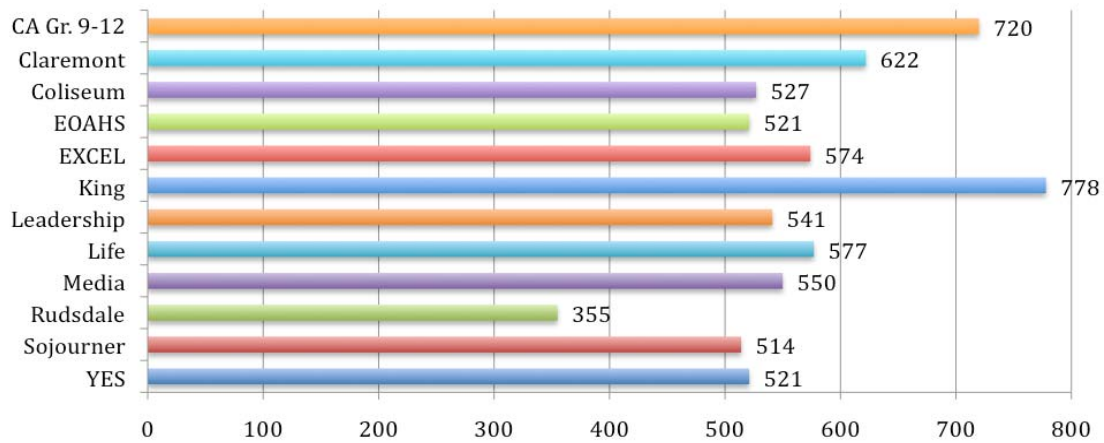
## Student Demographics in Oakland Schools as Compared to California

Demographic Characteristic	Oakland USD	California
Free & Reduced Lunch	70.60%	53.00%
English Language Learners	30.60%	24.20%
Ethnicity		
African American	34.80%	7.30%
American Indian	0.40%	0.70%
Asian	11.70%	11.70%
Latino	37.30%	49.00%
White	6.50%	27.90%
Multiple or No Response	5.80%	3.40%

Source: <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

Furthermore, as is illustrated in the chart below, for the most part Impact 2012 schools scored far below the California average on the state Academic Performance Index. Note that King and Claremont are middle schools and the state average provided is for grades 9-12.

### IMPACT 2012 Schools' 2008 Growth API



Source: <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

As the data included here suggest, Impact 2012 was launched in challenging conditions. While OUSD had made progress through its previous work with BayCES, it still was a “distressed” district according to a BayCES leader. To illustrate the challenging conditions, note that only 1 in 10 Oakland 9<sup>th</sup> graders scored at the basic level. As the data included here suggest, Impact 2012 was launched in challenging conditions. While OUSD had made progress through its previous work with BayCES, it still was a “distressed” district according to a BayCES leader.

### **Theory of Action**

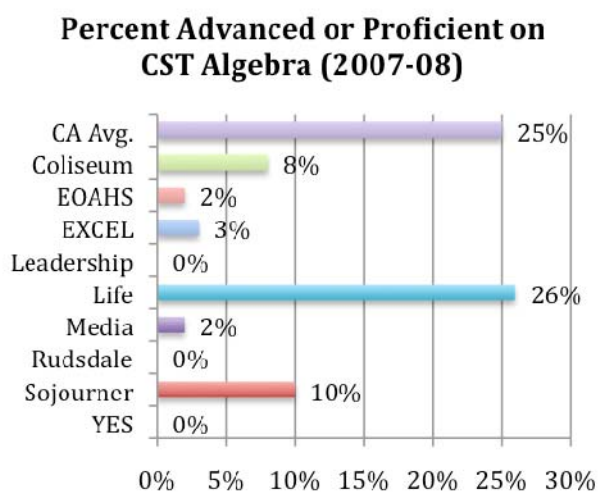
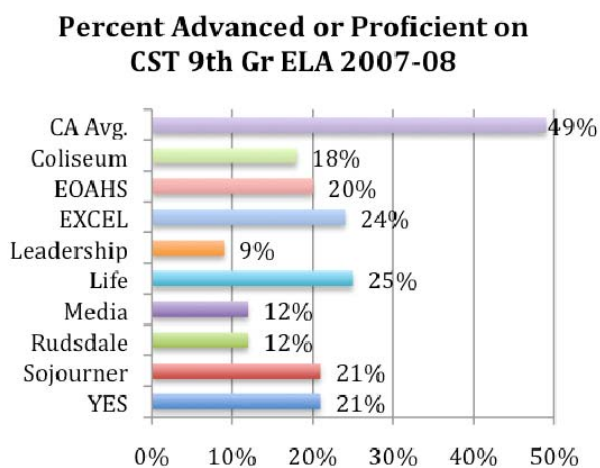
The goal of Impact 2012 is to improve student outcomes by coaching teachers and administrators to build their instructional and organizational decision-making capacity. Though a departure from the school-wide work BayCES has traditionally provided, Impact 2012 critically examines the inequities of unexamined teacher practices and creates opportunities for educators to make a change. The ultimate purpose of Impact 2012 is to get schools to organize and teachers to work toward accelerating the learning of students who are “outside the sphere of success”.

BayCES Impact 2012 leaders knew from their work in the district that a major challenge to the academic success of Oakland’s secondary students was a gap in basic skills usually taught in the primary grades, rather than reasoning or critical thinking abilities. Using an analogy comparing teachers to surgeons, BayCES coach and leader Zaretta Hammond describes these students, who are allowed to continue from grade to grade without addressing these skill gaps in numeracy, as “casualties”. To convey the weight of this issue and its direct connection to equity, Hammond argues,

“If that child were bleeding, somebody would [call the hospital]. How did you let that child just bleed to death like that? But somehow, if it's the cognitive development of children and particular children, then somehow it's just okay. I always say, ‘What's your casualty rate? What's acceptable to you, 10% of your kids, 20%, 30% who go to the next grade and you know darn well they're not prepared?’ Because that's what happening. So, our whole 2012 process is designed, to interrupt that never ending cycle.”

According to Impact 2012 leadership, the goal of the program is to give teachers and school leaders tools to put a stop to reproduction of inequity and be able to say, "Now I have a plan of attack."

More specifically, the Initiative uses a coaching model to support teachers using data-driven instructional strategies, inquiry teams using assessments to drive instructional improvements, and school leaders promoting school-wide use of data-based inquiry. Seeking to target their efforts where they could leverage the most possible change, BayCES carefully analyzed district achievement trends and concluded that 2012 should focus on 9<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts (ELA) and Algebra.



BayCES selected ELA and Algebra because, as the data presented here suggest, student achievement in both of these areas was alarmingly low. Also, by addressing 9<sup>th</sup> grade core subjects that often act as gatekeepers to future success in high school and are often linked to graduation chances, BayCES sought to lay the foundation for students to successfully graduate from high school.

### 2012 Organizational Structure

BayCES dedicated considerable resources to the launch of 2012. The project was led by Executive Director LaShawn Routé Chatmon and managed directly by Project Director Tom Malarkey, a seasoned veteran on the BayCES staff with considerable coaching experience.

Veteran school and literacy coach and project instructional coordinator Zaretta Hammond, who returned to the organization where she had previously developed a strong reputation as a coach, managed the project's instructional work. Hammond also oversaw the management of the ELA team and veteran educator but BayCES newcomer Phil Tucher initially managed the math team<sup>2</sup>.

Beyond the leadership team, each school was assigned to at least two BayCES coaches: one school-wide and ELA coach, and one math coach. These coaches have a variety of professional backgrounds with some having been longtime BayCES coaches and others having been principals or department heads in schools. As the chart below indicates, coaches who acted as both instructional and leadership coaches had 60 days of dedicated time for their school assignments while coaches who had just instructional coaching responsibilities (primarily math coaches) had 30 days.

In assessing BayCES' internal capacity to provide high quality instructional coaching, Malarkey's initial instinct was to hire coaches from outside the organization on a contract basis. Eventually, however, Malarkey and the BayCES leadership team decided that it would be better to hire coaches internally so that 2012 would be fully a part of BayCES. According to a BayCES leader, among existing BayCES coaches, there were a few with some ELA capacity, but there was "zero in-house math capacity." The existing coaches had "enough literacy and humanities background" to be ELA coaches. As such, 2012 hired three new math coaches and determined that the existing BayCES coaches who would be joining the project would act as both ELA and school leadership coaches. As was indicated above, this meant that existing BayCES coaches (i.e. the ELA coaches) would spend 60 days over the course of the year with a school while the new math coaches would spend 30 days over the course of the year with a school. This arrangement also meant that math coaches new to BayCES would be spread over multiple schools while existing ELA coaches would concentrate on fewer schools. The ramifications of this structural decision will be addressed in more depth later in this report.

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<sup>2</sup> The math team underwent three leadership changes in the 2008-09 year. Further details are included below.

## **Adopting an Instructional Model: New York City’s Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model**

As BayCES prepared to launch Impact 2012 in the spring of 2008, its leaders were examining a range of options for what the instructional coaching model would look like. Conversations with lead project funder the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Carnegie) helped them to select New York City’s Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM). Carnegie had supported SAM’s development and, impressed with its initial results, suggested that BayCES consider adapting it. Recognizing the program’s strengths for the Oakland context, BayCES adapted it for Impact 2012.

In New York City, SAM “is an action research cycle in which a team of practitioners identifies a high-leverage learning gap for 15-30 struggling students at their school—something specific that these students need to learn that they have not learned; studies the current learning conditions that have resulted in those outcomes (they may find, for instance, that current curriculum assumes prior mastery); designs and implements instructional strategies to close the identified gaps for target students; and then implements and monitors one systemic change to learning conditions so future students will not get stuck in the same places”<sup>3</sup>

To explain the focus of the SAM model, a SAM leader working with BayCES stated, “Assessment is how we taught teachers (in SAM) to teach... We want teachers to come to the table with real data, not just hunches or opinions.” This approach to identifying and addressing student needs is incorporated into existing/regular teacher practice and school-wide practices. As a report on SAM NYC notes, “The idea... is that the cycle... will become embedded in standard practice, so that the school will continue to learn and the sphere of success will continue to grow.” The purpose of the work is to see how systems within schools create the conditions of success for some and also actively create conditions for failure for other students. This concentration on a few students makes it possible to see how changes within teacher practice can affect the entire school. “What’s different in SAM, however, is that you study a small group of students not primarily to close their skill gaps or

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<sup>3</sup> Talbert, Joan & Nell Scharff, “Leading School Improvement with Data: A Theory of Action to Extend the Sphere of Student Success.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York City, March, 2008, p.1.

to test and spread effective practices for doing so—both of which are important. Instead, the study of a specific group outside the sphere of success is most important because it illuminates how the school works as a system not just for those who are successful, but also for those who are not.”<sup>4</sup>

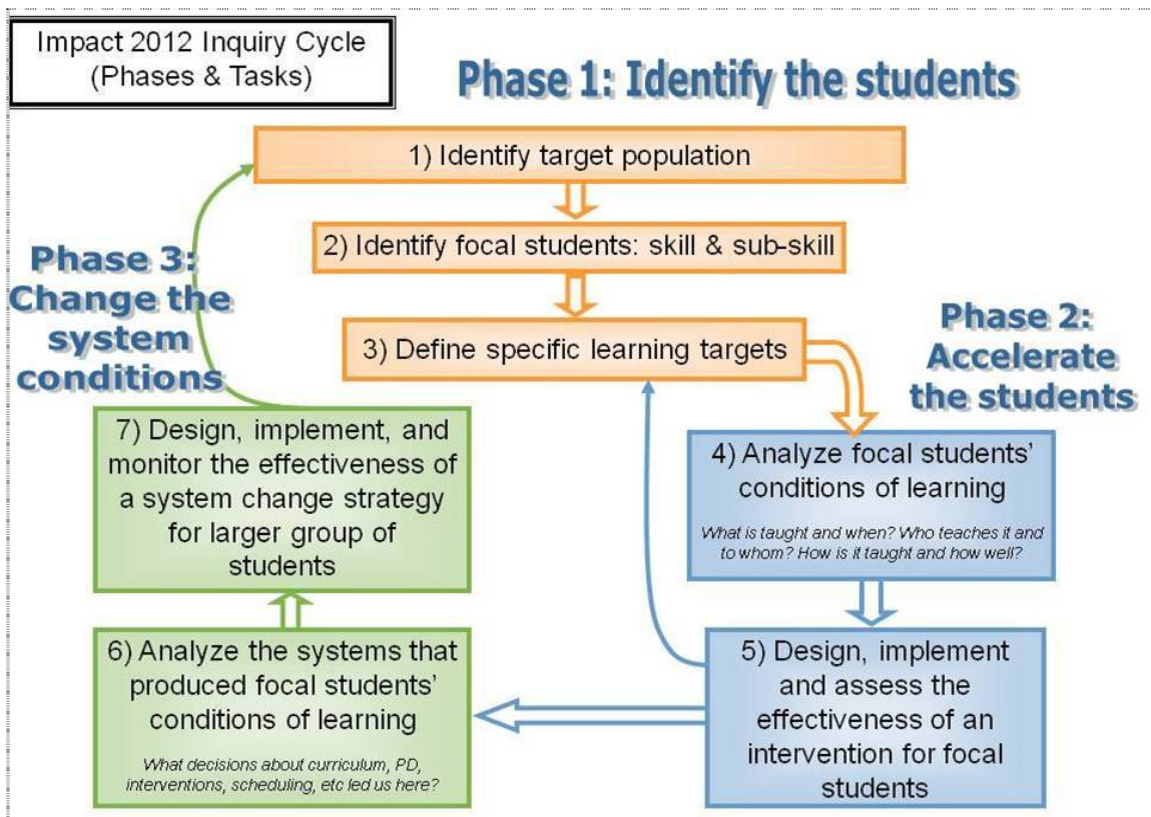
As executed by BayCES, this model focuses on individual focal students and the specific learning targets of those students. Teachers go through inquiry “intervention cycles” on the focal students while also considering how what they are learning can inform their greater instructional practice (i.e. with the whole class). While there were advantages to adopting a successful instructional coaching model, there were also challenges. Implementing the program locally required attending to local conditions and needs. Assessing these needs took time, as did the creation of instructional materials, a curriculum for instructional seminars, coach training and inquiry teamwork, and refinement of the inquiry model to incorporate BayCES’ leadership coaching.

All of the work of the teams centers on deep inquiry into focal student learning using data which has three levels of work school inquiry, subject area inquiry, and intervention work with students. The Impact 2012 school inquiry cycle is organized into three phases and seven tasks in which the deliberate identification and acceleration of a small group of students provides the opportunity for school-wide learning.

As seen in the diagram, the inquiry cycle engages both leaders and teachers in moving a small group of students forward. First teachers identify, through assessment data, who their target students are and their specific learning targets. This is followed by ongoing efforts to accelerate student learning by understanding the current conditions that may contribute to the skill gaps and then addressing these gaps by designing, implementing and assessing “the effectiveness of a change strategy for focal students”. Finally in the third phase, the system conditions are analyzed and systematically changed to improve learning for the focal students and all of the students in the school.

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<sup>4</sup> Talbert & Scharff, 2008, p. 2



Within this larger inquiry cycle, each school’s ELA or math inquiry team examines whether their focal students met specific learning targets in a second level of inquiry. They begin by diagnosing student performance, which helps to identify what roadblocks or never learned sub-skills may be obstructing student learning of grade level tasks. From here teachers design an intervention to either “Clear up a misconception; teach new information or procedures; or build automaticity [term used by 2012 for internalization]”. An intervention is specifically designed to help a student internalize new learning so she can do something differently when working at the performance task independently. Thus, the goal is to create independent learners.

Finally, the third level of inquiry is the intervention with the individual focal student. BayCES identified five components of an intervention:

### **Five Components of an Effective Intervention**

1. Turn the **student's learning target into specific plans** for what and how she will teach.
2. **Create a learning partnership** with the focal student. Relationship building is necessary to help the goal become the students' goals as well as the teachers and is a critical part of any pedagogy.
3. **Choose the right scaffolds** based on student's prior knowledge and students learning style.
4. Make time for **intensified, continuous guided practice** that is low stakes and non-evaluative with regular corrective feedback.
5. Create assignments and work projects that are **formative assessment tools for monitoring**.

When the intervention is in progress, teachers continue to monitor using the formative assessments and re-teach if necessary. A post-intervention summative test is then administered to determine whether the new information was internalized. And the last step of the inquiry is to revisit the performance task which prompted the inquiry.

The implementation of these cycles of learning required a commitment from participating teachers and school leadership and multiple Impact 2012 supports to the schools offered through four program strands.

## **PROGRAM ORGANIZATION**

### **Doing the Work: The Four Strands of the Program**

To achieve improved teacher practice and increased student learning, the Initiative was organized into four program strands: *leadership training* and coaching of principals and teachers (Leadership Teams); *inquiry training* and coaching of school based Inquiry Teams, *instructional seminars* for ELA and Algebra teachers and *instructional coaching* in classrooms for ELA and Algebra teachers.

### *Instructional Seminars*

Teachers attended six, three-hour instructional seminars throughout the year with their team and their instructional coach. Instructional seminars were the primary method through which the 2012 team convened teachers from across all of the 2012 schools for professional development. The agendas for these seminars, as the year progressed, became more and more teacher practice focused. In the spring seminars, the meetings opened with “Voices from the Field” during which teachers would share their progress with focal students, which proved to be very significant to teachers. Teachers from one of our case study schools presented video of an intervention and a student interview. Another teacher reported on her approach to working with a struggling twelfth grade student and her ongoing interventions designed with her instructional coach.

Instructional seminars were also a time to bring cohesion to the participating schools. During these seminars broad concepts and strategies would be introduced, such as the “Five Components of an Effective Intervention” or the subskills of reading for the main idea. Teachers also had opportunities to revisit the main themes of Impact 2012 including how an inquiry cycle proceeded and the steps of a completed intervention. The final hour of the instructional seminar was generally dedicated to Inquiry Team work so that the new concept or emphasized strategy could be firmly situated in the context of the teachers work with the help of the coach. Ultimately, these seminars were designed to create a network of 2012 teachers where practices could be shared and a larger reform movement could take hold.

### *Inquiry Teams*

The network wide instructional seminars were often opportunities for introducing protocols, strategies and action plans, but real meaning making occurred during the inquiry team meetings and instructional coaching. Data-based inquiry took on new meaning for teachers as a way to identify learning targets. Instead of working “from my gut” as one teacher explained, teams combed through state test data, student classwork and other, more specific assessments of skills to identify gaps in student learning. At one of our case study schools, coach Mark Salinas engaged teachers in identifying student misconceptions. Instead of merely doing an item analysis of benchmark scores to see what standards were met or not met by a student, he asked teachers to move beyond identifying when students have an

incorrect answer, and to also identify patterns and ask themselves why students might have picked that answer. Salinas stated, “that allowed for me to be in conversation with them around that [student misconceptions] so that they actually not only make a decision on what to reteach, but how to reteach it *differently*”.

Coaches modeled protocols for examining student work and observed and reported teacher practice as a way to “unpack” the meanings of these new concepts. For example, using a tuning protocol designed specifically to examine an intervention with a student, teachers at Life Academy sought to further refine a vocabulary learning target. By looking across multiple team members’ practice and student work, instructional coach Shane Safir worked with her inquiry team to create more precise formative assessments, use those assessments to monitor student progress, and as a team develop more effective strategies for teaching the internalization of new vocabulary.

### *Instructional Coaching*

A common critique of professional learning communities is the gap between gaining new knowledge and understanding as a group and putting that knowledge into action in individual teachers’ classrooms. Through individual instructional coaching, which included observations of instruction and one-on-one meetings with teachers, Impact 2012 offers a solution to this common challenge for professional learning communities. For example, coaches conducted bi-weekly observations focused on the goals of the inquiry cycle and tailored their approach to the skill level and commitment of each teacher. These observations served several purposes including supporting teachers in monitoring focal student progress, identifying appropriate learning targets, and providing feedback on the implementation of an intervention or formative assessment. Math coach Jessica Gammell conferenced with a teacher to identify issues in student progress and used observations as a time to closely monitor focal student work. Shane Safir sometimes videotaped observations of interventions and led teachers through a discussion of observed student learning and misunderstanding. Coaching also involved modeling specific strategies for teachers followed by an observation of teacher implementation of that strategy. One ELA teacher stated “If I can see it, I can do it.” And coaches often found this approach to have the most

traction with teachers who were learning multiple new instructional practices at once – a common occurrence in the Impact 2012 initiative.

Instructional coaching required intensive interpersonal skills, content knowledge, and a level of system understanding to move teacher practice toward Initiative-wide goals. The work of the coach was to use the knowledge they had of the school context, accumulated resources and pedagogical content knowledge to guide teachers toward better instructional decision making on a daily basis. ELA coach Mark Salinas offered the following to describe his approach: “[Teachers] don’t have to do anything we say but what I can do is hopefully raise enough questions to where all the complexities and dilemmas of what you’re going to do and the choices you make surface. That you actually are thinking about trade-offs and benefits in all of your choices.”

### *Leadership Teams*

In addition to instructional coaching in ELA and math, Impact 2012 also sought to impact the school conditions necessary for instructional success by working with school leadership teams. As one Impact 2012 leader noted, “[this initiative] is about equity and instructional coaching, [strategies that are often] bifurcated in practice.” Impact 2012 held its first leadership seminar in early 2009 bringing together teacher leaders and school administrators. The session revisited the purpose and structures of Impact 2012 and gave school administrators an opportunity to learn from their teachers about the initial successes and challenges in their work.

Within the schools, school coaches worked to help create leadership teams and met weekly or bi-weekly with the school administrators to share findings from inquiry work and partner with the leadership on ways to support teachers in their development of new practices. The school coach in many cases was also the ELA coach; however, the intent of the leadership coaching was to create school wide change in student outcomes in ELA and math. In one of our case study schools, the principal and coach met every two weeks to plan agendas for inquiry team meetings and think strategically about ways the principal could reinforce expectations around instruction for particular teachers.

Moreover, leadership coaching was firmly planted in the equity domain, which required an additional extensive skill set for coaches. The initiative aimed to coach leadership team members “to be advocates for students while mobilizing the energy of the school community to hold high expectations for every student and adult, to engage in honest reflection and dialogue across differences of role, race, class, and culture and to improve their practice to realize significant increases in student learning”. While equity coaching is the foundation of BayCES’ mission, Impact 2012 is the first occasion in which it has shared center stage and organizational emphasis with instructional coaching.

Each of these program strands is designed to coherently support learning in the other. Working with instructional coaches, the Inquiry Teams and teachers surface key issues around student learning based on information from inquiries. The Inquiry Teams not only address learning needs in their own classrooms through changes in instruction, they share these learnings with school leaders. In turn, the leadership team makes data-based system changes in school conditions (i.e. creation of new courses, improved curriculum design, targeted professional development).

### **Coaching for Change**

Coaches were a critical factor in the early implementation of Impact 2012. They were provided ongoing professional development during BayCES Coach Learning Practicums led by BayCES directors and in bi-monthly Impact 2012 Instructional Coach Development meetings facilitated by the project director and instructional coordinators. The learning practicums were designed to build skill in coaching toward BayCES’ larger mission. During bi-monthly coach meetings, coaches became more familiar with the design of the initiative, learned specific coaching strategies for moving teacher learning, had opportunities to reflect on their work and create shared understandings and were provided with specific resources on content, inquiry cycles and interventions. Coaches were also provided with one-on-one support from the instructional coordinator, during which coaches could secure materials and deeper content knowledge specific to the needs of their particular school. As a collaborative learning group, coaches used this time to work with distributed program materials to create shared meanings before carrying them out to the schools. In their work, coaches focused on

all four program strands: targeted coaching for leadership, inquiry teams, , individual teachers, and instructional seminars.

## **Intended Outcomes**

When BayCES launched Impact 2012 in the summer of 2008, it had a list of ambitious intended ultimate outcomes:

- Three-Year 75-75-75 Goals: 75% of students will score proficient on the CST in Algebra and English (combined), 75% graduation rate, and 75% college ready (A-G course completion).
- Expert use of formative assessments to improve learning.
- Increased facility with instructional strategies.
- Collaboration among teachers to improve school-wide effectiveness.
- More authentic and more public accountability.
- More engaged students who understand learning expectations.

These three-year goals were then tiered and student outcomes and adult learning outcomes were identified for each year. We identify year one outcomes here and address progress toward these outcomes later in the report.

Student outcomes for Year One were three fold: First is for 7% percent (up from 3%) of students to achieve Proficient or Advance in the California Algebra I test and for 25% (up from 22%) of students to achieve Proficient or Advanced in the CST English Language Arts test. The Year One outcome goal is to reach a 63% graduation rate in Impact 2012 schools. Finally, to meet the college readiness goal, 47% of graduates will have completed all “A-G” course required for CSU/UC admissions.

Knowing that these three year outcomes would require extensive learning and understanding on the part of the adults whose practices BayCES aimed to change, short-term interim goals were created for the three levels of the initiative: teachers, inquiry teams, and finally, leadership teams and school community.

*Teachers.* Each of the teacher practice Year One goals fall under a habit of mind or disposition viewed as a necessary component to improving instruction for target students. The four habits of mind Impact 2012 aims to develop in teachers are: develop a diagnostic

eye, refine instructional decision making, focus on students and their progress, and take an inquiry stance.

These emerging dispositions are formed during Year One through the following concrete goals in which teachers work to:

1. Understand the formative assessment process to reveal gaps in student learning and use assessment data to set appropriate learning targets for focal students.
2. Begin to connect instructional strategies to specific learning targets and know what instructional procedures, tools, scaffolds, and strategies they will use to move student toward learning targets.
3. Understand the need to talk about student proficiency and mastery (as different from teacher practice). Moreover teachers will understand the need to create learning partnerships with focal students.
4. Become familiar with the Impact 2012 Inquiry Cycle and complete at least 3 cycles of inquiry.

*Inquiry Teams.* Inquiry team goals included focusing on understanding and using formative assessments, completing at least three formal cycles of inquiry a year, and learning to share interventions that are tied to learning targets.

*School leadership and community.* Lastly, leadership teams would meet the following goals: to monitor and support classroom implementation, begin to monitor meta interim student indicators (i.e. attendance, discipline, course completion, etc.), begin their own inquiry process, and finally, host at least one public data/accountability event.

The remainder of the report will analyze progress made toward these Year One goals. In the next section we state our research questions and explain our methodology for addressing these questions.

## **Part 2. Research Questions and Methods**

In this section we identify the research questions and methods that informed this evaluation report:

RQ1: How did Impact 2012 affect student outcomes for focal students

RQ2: How did Impact 2012 affect student outcomes for all students taking ELA and Algebra?

RQ3: How did the implementation of Impact 2012 affect changes in teacher practice?

RQ4: How did Impact 2012 support teachers in diagnosing gaps in enabling skills and sub-skills for individual students as well as patterns of need across students?

RQ5: How did the inquiry teams support the development of teacher knowledge and capacity to impact student learning?

RQ6: How did changes in student learning outcomes impact school leadership decisions?

Over the course of the year, researchers from SRN LEADS at Stanford University gathered extensive qualitative and quantitative data to answer these questions as they relate to Year One Initiative goals. A multi-methods approach allows for a layered and rich analysis of program outcomes, and the level and quality of implementation.

In order to understand the development and structure of the Impact 2012 initiative and its overall progress toward goals Stanford researchers observed dozens of meetings, professional development sessions, and interviewed BayCES leadership, Impact 2012 leadership, and coaches. Focus groups were conducted with BayCES staff as well as with Impact 2012 school administrators and teachers.

With the aim of understanding implementation of the Initiative, we completed case studies of two Impact 2012 schools, Life Academy of Health and Biosciences and East Oakland School of the Arts (EOSA). The two schools were purposely selected to investigate how the Initiative would interface with a range of schools. Life Academy is one of the highest achieving schools in OUSD and serves a large percentage of English language learners. The

second school, East Oakland School of the Arts, has experienced years of growth in student achievement over the past five years, but suffered a significant dip in its API scores in the last year. It serves a predominately African-American population and has an increasing English learner group. Over the course of the year research included observations of BayCES coaches on site at the schools facilitating inquiry team meetings, meeting with school leadership and engaging with teachers and students in classrooms. At case study schools we also conducted interviews of teachers and leaders, observed classroom teaching, and collected student work. Moreover, researchers gathered and reviewed hundreds of documents including meeting agendas and notes, planning documents, reflection notes, and correspondence between 2012 participants.

Quantitative data included teacher and student demographic data, student achievement results on benchmark examinations, the California Standards Tests (CST) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). In addition, an in-depth baseline survey was administered to teachers. This report summarizes the analysis of this data as well as the primary findings.

### **Part 3. Student Outcomes in Impact 2012 Schools**

In order to address research questions 1 and 2: *How does Impact 2012 affect student outcomes for focal students* and *How does IMPACT 2012 affect student outcomes for all students taking ELA and Algebra?*, we examined student achievement on a variety of measures including: Change in overall school performance (Academic Performance Index); change in average school achievement in Algebra 1 and English (California Standards Tests); passage rates on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) for focal and non-focal students; and, course failure rates in focal versus non-focal classrooms.

**Taken together, these measures provide a consistent picture of academic improvement in Impact 2012 schools in the 2008-09 school year, and also that students in focal classrooms showed more improvement than those in non-focal classrooms.** Specifically, Impact 2012 schools made overall gains on California Standards Tests (CSTs) and in English and Algebra One specifically. Impact 2012 schools gained an average of 42 points on California's Academic Performance Index, which represents a very large increase on this state measure. Similarly, across all grades, students in Impact 2012 focal classrooms averaged slightly lower failure rates than those in non-focal classrooms, and Impact 2012 teachers in case study schools reported that increased attention to focal students resulted in improved engagement, self-confidence, commitment to learning and academic performance, particularly among students who engaged in intensive afterschool interventions. Although our analyses do not yet allow us to attribute these results specifically to the Impact 2012 program, they do indicate positive academic results for Impact 2012 schools in 2008-09.

Table 1 below shows the change in each school's overall academic achievement measured by California's Academic Performance Index.<sup>5</sup> The 2008 Base and 2009 Growth measures use the same formula for computing API using data from 2007-8 and 2008-09 respectively. Therefore, they are appropriate data points for measuring one year's growth in API, and are used in by the state to measure academic growth in its accountability system. As can be seen in the following chart, Impact 2012 schools gained an average of 42 points, with individual schools ranging from of -9 to 102 points. This change reflects a large positive gain in average achievement. It should also be noted that all Impact 2012 schools fall quite a bit short of the state's ultimate goal of all schools having an API score of 800 or higher, with many schools falling far below this level. This demonstrates that Impact 2012 has met its goal of working with low-achieving schools. Thus, on average, Impact 2012 was implemented in low-performing schools and, on average, these schools showed substantial increases in achievement in 2008-09.

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<sup>5</sup> The API is computed using a complex formula based on achievement in multiple subjects that is described on the website (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/>).

**Table 1: Academic Performance Index<sup>6</sup>**

School	API Score		
	2008 Base	2009 Growth	Change
Claremont Middle School	613	703	+90
Coliseum College Prep	568	591	+23
East Oakland Arts HS	481	554	+73
EXCEL College Prep HS	553	544	-9
Leadership Prep HS	523	516	-7
Life Academy	635	659	+24
Media College Prep	521	600	+79
Rudsdale Continuation	455	505	+50
Sojourner Truth Independent Study	518	620	+102
Youth Empowerment School	537	535	-2
Average	540	583	+42

We also compared 2007-08 achievement with 2008-09 achievement for IMPACT 2012 schools in English and Algebra 1. We again used school-level data, but this time disaggregated by specific tests and performance levels. These results also show improvement in student performance, but provide a more complex picture than can be seen in the API score alone. The chart below shows the average change in percent of students that scored at each performance level for each test between 2007-08 and 2008-09. Improvement is indicated in the upper levels of the chart when numbers are positive, because this means that more students scored as Proficient or Advanced in 2008-09 than in 2007-08. And improvement is indicated in the lower levels of the chart when numbers are negative, meaning that few students scored below or far below proficient. As can be seen from the summary, students showed small but clear improvement in Algebra, with all categories increasing except for the lowest (Far Below Basic). A general pattern of improvement was also evident in English. In most grades, students in Impact 2012 school

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<sup>6</sup> Source: California Department of Education (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/>).

scored higher than did students in the same schools before the introduction of the program. In grades 6, 7, 8, and 11, there was a 7-10% increase in students scoring at Proficient or Advanced in English. Thus, school-level test results show a pattern of improvement in student achievement in Impact 2012 schools overall, and in English and Algebra 1.

**School Level Changes in STAR Testing<sup>7</sup>**

Performance Level	Average Change from 2007-08 to 2008-09 (%)						
	English						Math
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Algebra 1
Advanced	+3.5	+0.0	+2.5	+0.9	-0.6	+1.1	+1.9
Proficient	+5.5	+9.5	+4.5	-3.4	+2.9	+8.6	+2.3
Basic	-4.0	+6.5	+7.0	+3.0	+7.9	+0.1	+0.1
Below Basic	+8.5	-9.5	+3.0	-0.7	-10.6	-2.9	+0.1
Far Below Basic	-13.5	-7.0	-16.0	+0.6	+0.4	-6.9	-4.3

Another academic outcome we explored was the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), comparing passage rates in 2007-08 with 2008-09 in English and in Math. As can be seen from the following chart, while individual schools had different rates, the overall passage rate changed little (decreasing by 3% in English, increasing by 2% in math) in Impact 2012 schools in 2008-09 as compared with 2007-08. In both cases the passage rates were well below the rates for the state, which is not surprising given that Impact 2012 has focused on low-achieving schools. Pass rates are more likely to be influenced at later stages of Impact 2012, as students are exposed to teachers who are progressively well versed in the initiative.

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<sup>7</sup> Source: California Department of Education (<http://star.cde.ca.gov/>).

### Grade 10 CAHSEE English Pass Rates by School<sup>8</sup>

School	2007-08	2008-09	Difference
East Oakland School of the Arts	33%	60%	+27%
EXCEL	47%	45%	-2%
Leadership Preparatory High School	53%	43%	-10%
Life Academy	70%	63%	-7%
Media College Prep	57%	53%	-4%
Rudsdale Continuation	50%	29%	-21%
Youth Empowerment School	61%	52%	-9%
State Average	79%	79%	0%
IMPACT 2012 Average	56%	53%	-3%

### Grade 10 CAHSEE Math Pass Rates by School<sup>9</sup>

School	2007-08	2008-09	Growth
East Oakland School of the Arts	33%	60%	+27%
EXCEL	47%	58%	+11%
Leadership Preparatory High School	53%	38%	-15%
Life Academy	71%	65%	-6%
Media College Prep	58%	59%	+1%
Rudsdale Continuation	21%	24%	+3%
Youth Empowerment School	42%	47%	+5%
State Average	78%	80%	+2%
IMPACT 2012 Average	50%	54%	+4%

<sup>8</sup> Source: California Department of Education (<http://cahsee.cde.ca.gov/datafiles.asp>). Data were not available for Sojourner Truth Independent Study.

<sup>9</sup> Source: California Department of Education (<http://cahsee.cde.ca.gov/datafiles.asp>). Data were not available for Sojourner Truth Independent Study.

In addition to examining student achievement results, we also looked at failure rates in math courses, making two comparisons: focal vs. non-focal students, and students in focal classes versus students in non-focal classes. We examined results separately for different assessments (Math Grade 6, Math Grade 7, Algebra 1, and Geometry). As can be seen, students often received low grades in these courses, with failure rates ranging from 35% in Math Grade 6 to 50% in Algebra 1. Comparing focal and non-focal students, focal students had higher failure rates in Geometry and lower failure rates in Math Grade 7 and about the same failure rates in Math Grade 6 and Algebra 1. Since focal students were intentionally selected as students facing significant challenges, this comparison is likely to be biased by preexisting differences in students. Of greater interest, and likely to be less biased by preexisting differences, students in focal classrooms averaged slightly lower failure rates than those in non-focal classrooms in all subjects, ranging from a 1% lower failure rate in Algebra 1 to a 7% lower failure rate in Math Grade 6.

### Course Failure Rates

Course	Student			In Class With		
	Focal	Non-Focal	Difference	Focal	Non-Focal	Difference
Math 6	36%	35%	1%	31%	38%	-7%
Math 7	26%	42%	-17%	42%	44%	-2%
Algebra 1	50%	51%	0%	50%	52%	-1%
Geometry	48%	39%	9%	35%	42%	-6%

**Thus, in summary, a variety of analyses of academic achievement outcomes showed that Impact 2012 schools showed academic growth in 2008-09 overall, and specifically in English and Algebra.** There was little change in CAHSEE pass rates. Looking more specifically at course failure rates, students in courses with focal students were less likely to fail in all levels of math courses than students in courses without focal students. We are limited in our ability to attribute these outcomes to the IMPACT 2012 program specifically, but it does appear that the program supported academic improvement in the areas of English and math, and for students in courses with focal students. When more data becomes

available, we will use propensity score matching to test outcomes for individual students matched with those that were like them prior to program participation. This will allow for more fine-grained assessments of the program's outcomes.

#### **Part 4: Changes in Teacher Practice**

In this section we investigate the following research questions: *How did the implementation of Impact 2012 affect changes in teacher practice?* and *How did Impact 2012 support teachers in diagnosing gaps in enabling skills and sub-skills for individual students as well as patterns of need across students?* Data from focus groups, observations of classroom teaching, interviews with teachers and coaches were used to address this research question. To identify specific changes in practice these questions were then mapped onto the Year One goals. As such, we investigated how well teachers were able to identify student needs, select learning targets, base their instructional decisions in student learning as opposed to teacher practice, use formative assessment, and make changes in their practice based on this information.

#### **Our findings indicate clear but variable progress toward changes in teacher practice.**

Impressive accounts of individual teacher gains are balanced by more modest school-level shifts toward initiative goals. For example, most teachers identified focal students, but some did not stay with the same focal students throughout an inquiry cycle or dropped them entirely. Second, formative assessment became a regular part of many teachers' classes, but they were not always tied to a selected learning target nor were they a part of an inquiry. Finally, there is evidence that some teachers did adjust their practice due to information gathered from assessments, but many teachers struggled to make shifts in their practice. We suggest that where changes in practice were more modest, it is likely because of competing pressure to increase student achievement on standardized tests and relative inexperience in the classroom.

In year one, a major focus was to help teachers develop a "diagnostic eye". This practice requires learning to see students individually and to accurately target their abilities. There was overwhelming progress in this aspect of teacher practice. Initially, many teachers were

apprehensive about targeting a few students and “ignoring” the others in the class, and some refrained from even telling their students that they were focal students. By the mid-year more teachers were enthusiastically reporting the effect of choosing focal students and were seeing a change in their students’ motivation. One math teacher stated, “Once I told students that they were my focal students, they got more engaged.” Others reported that students became more confident due to one on one work with the teacher. Another teacher shared that a focal student started attending before and afterschool tutoring “Now he can’t get enough.”

Over time, identifying focal students and paying attention to their abilities became a regular practice for most teachers. In some cases this resulted in a true partnership. As explained by this ELA teacher, his coach helped him to frame students as “special” and important which changed the dynamic between teacher and student. He stated,

My students also felt special, and a little more open and willing to ask questions. Students who may not have asked many questions before started doing it more when they were focal students. There was a new comfort level because they knew they were special to you in some way. I let them know that they were teaching me too, they were helping me figure out what I could do better. They felt like a teammate, not like I was trying to fix them and their problems, we were doing this together.

A second change in teacher practice was the increased use of formative assessment. During the final instructional seminar, teachers shared formative assessments they used to inform their practice, such as exit slips, monitoring clipboards, equity sticks, and mini “quizzes”. While some teachers’ understanding of the assessments were more sophisticated than others, it was clear that formative assessment had become a regular way for them to gauge student abilities and to inform their practice. One teacher stated that she had undergone what her coach called an “assume-omectomy” – she no longer relied on assumptions but used assessments to determine what her students needed.

Though teachers became more familiar with different methods to assess student needs, they sometimes struggled with using formative assessments as part of an intervention or an inquiry cycle. Focus group and teacher interviews indicate that some teachers neither completed three inquiry cycles nor conducted interventions that included BayCES’ “Five Components of an Effective Intervention.” Coaches were able to help teachers identify

specific learning targets and select students, but moving all teachers to use assessments and conduct interventions on a regular basis and in a timely manner remained elusive.

A major obstacle was teachers' lack of experience with differentiation. Teachers struggled to use flexible instructional grouping during cooperative learning and to provide scaffolds for student learning. Therefore, they felt they had to do intervention work outside of regular class time (i.e., during lunch or afterschool), which was burdensome. They also felt pressure from school and district administration to direct their energy to addressing standards and increasing standardized test scores. For some teachers it was difficult for them to see the connection between the intervention work they were doing and arriving at the standards. However, one teacher aptly came to the conclusion that her students' performance on the test was not due to their lack of critical thinking skills, it was her reading skills. She remarked, "If I could sit with [my student] and read her the CSTs, she'd be advanced. But I now know she can't answer what she can't read."

Another obstacle was that teachers felt the intervention work was outside of their area of expertise as high school ELA or math teachers. One of our case study teachers expressed his frustration at not knowing how to "break down" phonics for his students who he discovered had very weak fluency skills. With a B.A. degree in English literature, he had never studied literacy instruction. His coach partnered with him in his classroom and modeled several mini-lessons in decoding long vowel sounds, which included instructional activities and assessments of the targeted skill. In addition, the instructional coordinator Zaretta Hammond held a mini-workshop in decoding and interventions for the whole department. Even with these supports, the teacher did very few interventions on his own, which he attributes to never feeling confident or comfortable teaching reading skills.

The most important level of change we looked for was teachers changing their practice based on what they learned from assessments. Progress toward this goal was uneven. One teacher expressed annoyance at having to go slowly through an inquiry cycle, and suggested that good teachers are, "always assessing in the back of [their] heads." Not understanding the advantage of being deliberate and explicit, she could not make clear how her instructional decisions, particularly for certain students, were the result of assessing for particular skills.

But we also saw great movement among particular case study teachers, one of whom implemented new practices based on her assessment of student learning, support of her inquiry team, and direction from her coach. Ongoing observations and interviews showcased her growth over the year. In the fall, she admitted to using group work primarily for classroom management purposes and by the end of the year she was using flexible grouping for multiple purposes. She realized that in order for her to meet with focal students and track their progress around specific learning goals, she needed to make space for those conversations during groupwork. To teach a specific skill to a group of students, she might group all students struggling with identifying main idea on one day. On another occasion, she devised partnered reading during which a pair of students would read and question each other. She did this so that she could listen to certain focal students and hear how a student read a grade-level text. Other changes in her practice included using mini-lessons to teach specific skills instead of ignoring gaps and developing a tiered scaffold which addressed different levels of proficiency amongst her students. Upon reflecting on her abilities to differentiate for different students needs, she attributes the changes in her practice to her instructional coach. She stated:

[Coach] Shane really, really helped push me around ideas of differentiation, of how to use groups and how to use your time well. What does it look like to achieve mastery? What are we doing with all these rubrics? How do we really understand what a student knows and doesn't know? And I had never had somebody sit down and at such a fine detail with me, really work through everything from how am I setting up a lesson to how is the student hearing that, to how is the result— kind of going through the entire sequence. I think it just helped make me a much smarter teacher, being able to look at [differentiation] at multiple levels and being able to have someone with such a vast knowledge be able to look at it with me... I felt like it really was serving the needs of my students and it made me so much of a more honest teacher with them around where they were at and how we pushed them forward.

The teacher quoted above was a fourth-year teacher working with a highly functioning team. Many teachers in the cohort did not share these characteristics. Teachers generally reported more success if their school was more established/stable and if they were a more seasoned teacher. Conversely, teachers for less established/stable schools and teachers with less experience reported greater challenges/frustrations with 2012. These teachers tended to report being “overwhelmed” or “doing too much” and, as such, 2012 was perceived as

somewhat of a burden (even if they liked it conceptually, liked their coaches, etc.). These findings indicate a need for greater differentiation in Impact 2012 goals and professional learning for multiple skill and experience levels in the teacher cohort.

### **Mary Smith: A Case of Improved Teacher Practice**

To provide deeper insight into 2012's work with teachers, SRN observed and interviewed one of the teachers, Ms. Smith, multiple times. Smith is a veteran teacher who has been at Castlemont High School since 2000 and then became a founding teacher of East Oakland School of the Arts [EOSA]. After having previously taught three years in Mexico, she started at Castlemont with an emergency credential and then earned her math credential from a local university. Smith teaches Algebra I, Pre-Calculus, and Calculus. Although she could have taught any course she desired, Smith volunteered in 2008-09 to teach Algebra so that the 9th graders could begin their math careers at EOSA with the most veteran teacher in the department. Smith has both her CLAD and National Board Certification.

Smith focuses her planning and instruction on "10 key state standards." These "power" standards, aligned with the CST, serve as a guide for her instruction and were clearly posted in her classroom. During observations of her class, students were consistently focused and Smith managed the room with a strong, commanding voice. Throughout the year, there is a daily message on the wall: "Only XX days left to the CST!" The agenda for the day is always clearly marked on the whiteboard: "Review polynomial operations and area and perimeter."

Smith is clearly in charge, but also unafraid to smile, laugh, or even sing to keep students engaged. The wall includes a handwritten sign that says, "Obama loves math." When she made a computational mistake on the board during one lesson, she rewarded the student who noticed with extra credit and jokingly chastised herself. When the fire alarm went off during one class, she said, with a smile in her voice, "I'm going to ignore that and talk louder." Her message was clear: she was focused and her students were going to learn math no matter what. At one point, when teaching a lesson she sang the following to the 1980's hit "Whip It": "When you're dividing by a negative number, you must flip it! When you're multiplying

by a negative, you must flip it!” While the students didn’t know the tune, they loved the effort and were heard singing the song during subsequent observations.

As the year progressed, Smith paid more and more attention to providing scaffolding to help the students succeed. The walls were covered with general scaffolds as well as specific ones pertinent to the lesson at hand (e.g. step by step directions for solving a quadratic equation on the board). In one lesson in the spring while they were reviewing CST released items, she commented, “If you are reading a problem and find a word you don’t understand, please circle it and bring it to my attention.” As she worked through problems with students, she constantly reminded them of steps or strategies through the use of verbal scaffolds. She increasingly made use of pre-made note-taking sheets that were scaffolded for a specific lesson and would often ask questions or make suggestions such as:

- “Is there another way to do this problem?”
- “Put a note so you remember it.”
- “Don’t ask the calculator to do for you what you can do for yourself.”
- “Did you make a mistake? That’s wonderful. Did you see what you did wrong?”
- “If I do it anywhere, I have to do it everywhere” (i.e. distributing across equation).”
- “You can help each other. You’re never alone.”

Smith generally begins class with a warm-up activity, reviews the previous lesson, does a short 10-12 minute lesson, and then provides time for structured groupwork. She assesses by polling the class, using exit tickets, progress assessments, and checking in with individual students.

In conversations with Smith, she discussed the impact of 2012 on her instructional practice:

2012 has helped me to analyze and be more particular about individual students and their skills... For instance, I realized Donald was a visual learner as are other students in the class. And Latisha is an auditory learner as are other students. In serving their needs, also serving other students with those learning styles.

She added, “I’ve changed my lessons. Before, I used some scaffolded notes, now I use them a lot. 9<sup>th</sup> graders just can’t take notes!”

Her intervention cycles with focal students were generally informal although they got more formal as the year progressed (i.e., she completed more steps of the intervention cycle). Her initial work with 2012 was stymied in the fall from choosing focal students who had tremendous needs – and highly erratic attendance patterns as well. “They were 9<sup>th</sup> graders. I didn’t know them yet so it was hard to pick appropriately,” she said. As 2009 started, she shifted her focus to students who attended more regularly. Over the course of the year, Smith learned that interventions did not need to be elaborate or lengthy, just targeted at a specific learning need. She noted, “I realized it doesn’t have to be long for me to connect with a student one-on-one. I just need to create the space for it.”

Despite these challenges, Smith had a highly favorable impression of Impact 2012. She reflected that her involvement helped her to focus more on the needs of her students, to consider patterns across students, and it helped her students to surface and address math misconceptions, and ultimately correct them.

## **Part 5: The Work of Inquiry Teams**

In this section we address the following research question: *How do the inquiry teams support the development of teacher knowledge and capacity to impact student learning?* We used data gathered from teacher focus groups, interviews of case study teachers, observations of inquiry team meetings and observations of instructional seminars to speak to this question. We also tracked progress towards Impact 2012 Inquiry Team goals for Year One which were: focusing on understanding and using formative assessments; completing at least three formal cycles of inquiry a year; and learning to share interventions that are tied to learning targets. The following summarizes our findings and is followed by a case of one emerging successful inquiry team.

Overall we found that coaches were able to organize teacher teams for collaboration, and that they were able to center their discussions on student work. Inquiry team meetings were

pivotal in keeping focused on students and also served as a forum for sharing knowledge and practices publicly. However, inquiry teams were delayed toward meeting some goals (i.e. completing 3 inquiry cycles and producing lesson plans and shared practices) largely because most teams were learning still how to work collaboratively. Though professional learning communities were underway in most schools, many teachers did not know how to make their work public and to offer and receive meaningful feedback from colleagues. The challenge of establishing open dialogue and trust slowed progress toward teachers working jointly to produce shared understandings and practices.

In addition, the productivity of teams was directly impacted by existing school conditions and individual teachers' skill and readiness to engage in the inquiry work. When teachers were still learning to manage a classroom or develop sound unit plans, they were less able and willing to engage in inquiry work.

The work of Inquiry teams varied across schools in ways that aligned with context. At one school the team met weekly and did a regular check-in on each focal student. Another team met bi-weekly and rotated the discussion of focal students to a different teacher each week. Across schools coaches and teachers report using the time to “build muscle” around how to teach learning targets or sub-skills and beginning the intervention process. But this took many different forms as well. Teachers may or may not have shared learning targets and coaches had a plethora of materials and resources to draw from, leading to variance across schools.

A promising practice occurred at one of our case study schools, where coach Mark Salinas led the team through a deep data analysis as a means to get teacher investment in the inquiry process. Knowing that benchmark, CST and CAHSEE scores were important to the school leadership, Salinas engaged the inquiry team in benchmark data analysis as a way for teachers to learn how to use data to inform their practice— essentially how to use formative assessment. As noted in the Part One of this report, Salinas encouraged teachers to go beneath the surface of students' incorrect answers and ask themselves *why* students might have picked them. Salinas's goal was not only to help teachers decide what to reteach, but how to reteach it *differently*". Though these fine-grained data analyses could be “tedious” at times, tenth grade teacher, Monique Gray, found this work to be “eye-opening”. Trying to

find out what thinking was underneath a student's wrong answer was a learning process for her. "You could know a student didn't get comprehension but going this route helped me to get to *why*."

**Across the initiative, teachers found inquiry team work to be extremely meaningful and expressed that for the first time department meetings were the site of new learning.** One teacher reported on the power of observing her colleagues' practice. On three occasions the team, along with the coach, observed each other's classroom practice and held pre- and post-observation conferences. She noted how important it was to have feedback from colleagues who were not only familiar with her lesson plan, but with her goals, teaching, and thinking. Finally, several teachers at one small school were excited to have colleagues as "thinking partners" whereas they had previously felt isolated from one another.

Context challenges slowed down the pace with which inquiry teams were able to meet their goals. For example, when teachers did not have focal students or the students had spotty attendance, it was difficult for coaches to facilitate meaningful discussion around student work. In addition, teachers in schools with more established collaboration structures expressed greater levels of initial success. After hearing from other successful network schools inquiry teams, a teacher aptly observed that Impact 2012 work "can exacerbate [existing] problems within the department or actually help decently functioning departments." Her experience had been the former; her colleagues' resistance to completing inquiry cycles and intervention work frustrated her.

There were also cases of interpersonal dynamics hampering inquiry work. One teacher experienced feeling alienated by her department and at one of our case study schools, a teacher reported feeling "boxed out" by an emerging clique of colleagues. Even more challenging was a department comprised of teachers entirely new to the school, with two out of three teaching ELA for the first time.

Coaches and Impact 2012 leadership reflected in the winter that they needed to spend more time creating the conditions for functioning professional learning communities. PLCs were a part of OUSD central office initiatives, but it was clear that they needed more focus and

greater purpose. Coaches spent considerable time building trust, respect, commitment and team expertise, and when groups began to function collaboratively, inquiry teams did take off. One teacher explained,

...it can be intimidating to bring an assignment you designed in front of your colleagues for their critique. But Impact 2012 gave us the space for a dialogue about what we're working on and struggling with and to learn from each other without judgment. Because it was all based in trying to help this group of focal students.

### **Inquiry Team at Life Academy: A Case of Teacher Learning and Improved Practice**

Instructional and school coach Shane Safir facilitated Life Academy's inquiry work in English language arts. A former principal, school coach and experienced social studies teacher, Safir brought many skill sets to her work with the Life team. As a frequent participant in BayCES' equity initiatives, Safir's professional experience and orientation complemented the Impact 2012 mission. Safir had been a founding teacher at Life Academy, and thus had a longstanding relationship with the school that she coached. At the same time, she had no previous connection to the humanities teachers on the ELA inquiry team, all of whom had arrived after Safir's tenure at Life.

The Life Academy team was made up of the humanities department: a veteran 12<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, an 11<sup>th</sup> grade teacher new to the school, a 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. Their experience ranged from 3 to 8 years. Aside from 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the humanities curriculum at Life is project-based, combines ELA with history/social studies, and is taught during a double-block period. Three of four team members were trained specifically in history/social studies so they welcomed the chance to deepen their ELA content knowledge and practices.

In order to provide the foundation for inquiry work to begin, Safir began the year by building relationships with the team, a regular practice in her coaching. She reflected, "I definitely spent a lot of time just getting to know them, asking them questions, observing, getting a sense of their classroom strengths and weaknesses, and trying to build some trust." In turn, the teachers gained a deep respect for Safir. According to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher it was because of Safir's willingness to work with their needs and respect their ongoing work that

the group was willing to engage in the 2012 project with her. This trust between coach and teachers was mirrored by the relationships forming between the teachers.

While Life Academy as a whole demonstrates a culture of collegiality, teacher collaboration is generally organized around interdisciplinary projects. This meant that grade-level teams of humanities, science, and mathematic teachers would meet regularly to design projects, assess them and additionally, meet to discuss student progress. When Impact 2012 was initiated, humanities teachers had an opportunity to regularly meet around “meaningful” instructional issues for the first time. One tenth grade teacher described the previous year’s department work as concentrating on surface issues like scope and sequence but not teaching practice and student learning.

During the course of the year, the ELA inquiry team began to exhibit high levels of engagement in Impact 2012. As one team member put it they were “a hard working team”. They attended all of the instructional seminars, seriously engaged in the exercises at the seminars, and even stayed late to have a drink as a team. Moreover, they were a well prepared team. Each of the four teachers had attended a nationally recognized teacher education program and their experience ranged from three to eight years. With these contributing attributes, they were able to build norms, develop shared meanings, focus on student learning and reflect intensely on their practice – all markers of a functioning professional learning community.

The inquiry work emerged gradually at Life Academy. At the onset, the team was most interested in investigating expository writing. Teachers were frustrated that students were not making progress from ninth to twelfth grade on these types of major writing assignments. Using the Impact 2012 guidelines, teachers selected focal students and began the process of learning about them. Safir gathered student writing data from many sources, including CST scores, Improving Student Academic Writing (ISAW) assessments, and ninth grade Process Writing Assessments (PWAs). Safir then worked with BayCES’ instructional coordinator to administer a Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) assessment for the focal students. After a month of testing, the inquiry team gathered for a full-day retreat in November to analyze the patterns of student needs.

The work the teachers did at the retreat was the catalyst for the first inquiry cycle which lasted from November to February. At the retreat, Safir created a matrix that allowed teachers to do a student by student analysis and then select which two skills were the highest priority for students. The first was vocabulary and the second was summary or retelling. Safir describes it as an “organic shift” in teachers’ thinking that came directly out of their understanding of the data. With the QRI information and the team’s deepened understanding of learning progressions (i.e., how main idea is essential for comprehension, which is essential for expository writing about texts) the team mobilized around moving students forward.

At the November retreat, the inquiry group discussed specific vocabulary-building practices they would learn, implement in their classrooms and then reflect on with the inquiry group. One strategy the team decided to try was helping students to activate their prior knowledge. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Kate, created a worksheet that prompted students to select unknown words from the text and either list words with similar Spanish roots or English words that looked similar (e.g., amiable and *amigo*). In the next column they were asked to define the known word and make a logical guess about the unknown word. Another strategy was to assess students weekly on five vocabulary words by having students write a paragraph using the words. This was a huge departure from the 20-25 vocabulary word lists and weekly quizzes one teacher was accustomed to doing.

To determine whether a practice was working, teachers brought in student work such as the student paragraphs, and as a team looked for common patterns across students. Based on these discussions, they agreed to adjust instruction. At the end of the cycle, the teachers assessed all their students with an assessment they designed themselves.

While the inquiry cycle was unfolding, Safir was providing targeted instructional coaching to each teacher. Safir used agreed-upon teacher practices to focus her observation and examined instruction as well as focal student progress. She usually observed teachers for a class period twice a month and wrote low-inference transcripts of what she observed, share her “wows” and “wonderings,” and observations of growth and concern.

Though Safir was not seen as an intimidating figure, the teachers felt compelled to try new practices if they knew they were being observed. Kate described how she really started using the clipboard assessment tool the group had agreed to use when Safir observed. Trying the tool led to Kate internalizing the practice of monitoring student work during group work, and she later recounted how this has changed her interaction with students when she is not doing direct instruction. In fact, it has made her more comfortable doing less direct instruction because she is more able to engage in one-on-one discussions with students and she better understands the purpose of instructional grouping.

In March the teachers moved into a new inquiry cycle. Frustrated by a lack of movement in student progress on vocabulary – and that students did not appear to be internalizing new skills – the teachers worked with Safir to implement a new instructional strategy. Safir built upon teacher learning regarding diagnosing and monitoring student learning and began to have them focus on their own practice asking “What do you need to improve in your own practice in order to get students to internalize these things?” She created a self assessment that asked teachers to reflect on what they have done based on BayCES’ five features of effective intervention. She stated that this step helped her feel she could “coach toward something”—the goals teachers created for themselves. This new move was also due to Safir’s belief that teachers had not changed their “core practices” enough. She felt there was still room for growth:

They weren’t differentiating enough. They weren’t assessing closely enough to the kids. They weren’t doing enough guided practice with the kids and corrective feedback, and so that’s why we have the new aspect about teacher practice goals.

Because of Life Academy’s academic calendar and Safir’s maternity leave, the second inquiry cycle was not as comprehensive as the first. Teachers began to prepare for the school’s intersession classes and the performance assessments that students would be executing in the spring. Safir, eight months pregnant, took her maternity leave and the tenth grade teacher took up the lead with the increasingly over-extended team.

Despite slowing down to accommodate the school schedule and Safir’s growing family, Life Academy’s ELA inquiry team made significant strides in their work to accelerate student

learning in their first year. By the end of the year they had rallied around each other and the Impact 2012 work. Safir reflected that their apparent “affective energy” was what helped them “be open to learning and invest in [2012], because this stuff is heavy. It’s not easy work.” First, a true inquiry stance was developed amongst the teachers and the professional learning community emerged as a result of deep engagement in their practice and student work. More importantly, teachers changed their practices based on this work and individual coaching from Safir. During the second inquiry cycle teachers developed tiered scaffolds to differentiate their instruction. Teachers moved from groups for behavior management to forming flexible groups for instructional purposes. They learned to create assessments to focus on specific skills and how to listen to student reading.

Safir reflected that while their approach was instrumental in building common conversation and group learning, it may have supported individual students more effectively if they had selected particular learning targets for each student. Teachers also regretted not moving more quickly through cycles and not ultimately completing the writing inquiry on summarizing that they intended.

Clearly Life Academy’s team developed into a highly functioning learning community. The targeted inquiry work led by Safir gave structure to their collaborative work, helped them set goals for their students, and to develop shared practices to improve student learning outcomes. While there is still room for teachers to grow, their collaboration in Year One is foundational and serves as a model for continuing deep inquiry in the Impact 2012 initiative.

## **Part 6: Impact 2012 and School Leadership**

In this section we investigate the following research question: *How do changes in student learning outcomes impact school leadership decisions?* To address this question we conducted two focus groups with Impact 2012 school leaders and used data gathered from our case schools. **There is compelling evidence that increased and more specific knowledge of student learning progress and outcomes has directly affected Impact 2012 school leadership decisions. However, there are also aspects of program design**

**which have inhibited these changes from happening more widely across subject matter and schools.** Our findings are discussed in detail below.

### *Data-Informed Systemic Changes*

Work with Impact 2012 coaching and inquiry has led to data informed school system changes designed to better serve students struggling with reading and mathematics. As a result of leadership and instructional coaching, the EOSA team created support classes for their incoming struggling 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. ELA coach Mark Salinas spent considerable time gathering student data across measures including previous year's CST scores, English language learners level, and Qualitative Reading Inventory results. The leadership and inquiry teams analyzed the data and uncovered patterns in student performance and a dire need for more concentrated work to increase student skills in reading. The analysis also helped the school use more complete information to place students, particularly English language learners and struggling readers, in appropriate classes in the future. Ultimately the school decided to forgo Reading 180, a packaged reading program focused on reading comprehension, and design its own 9<sup>th</sup> grade literacy support class for struggling readers. Principal Abdel-Qawi and math coach Phil Tucher used school resources to do similar work in math. Principal Abdel-Qawi explains their decision:

In the past we've done what other schools do, jamming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students with a ton of academic courses early in their high school career, and then lightening the load as they go so seniors are taking only a few courses and heading out from school early to go to work. What we've done is flip that paradigm to give 9<sup>th</sup> graders more support and less heavy academics, when they are most vulnerable, struggling with the transition, to make sure they get their footing. So they get English and a support class, math and a support class, and the introduction to high school is a smoother transition. Yes, they won't be able to work jobs as seniors because they'll be taking their AP classes then, but they'll be more qualified for them. All that has come as a result of the work we've done with IMPACT 2012.

At EOSA, Impact 2012 not only resulted in new courses but it also prompted a new "paradigm" or vision for how students should be prepared for advanced courses, college, and beyond.

EXCEL high school took a similar course of action as a result of the work of the ELA inquiry team, instructional coaching, and leadership coaching. By the close of the year,

major program changes were made at the school. Based on formative assessments and ongoing intervention work in ELA, teachers discovered the extent of students' needs in reading. Working with coach Colm Davis, the team began to understand that in order to raise reading proficiency, students must read more often and have the opportunity to read texts that would not frustrate them – texts at the students' proficiency level. To address this, ELA teacher Cory Kim, who is also a member of the leadership team, encouraged school principal Yetunde Reeves to adopt an accelerated reading program. As described by Kim, this program requires students to read several grade-level novels in a short period of time and regularly assesses students' literacy skills and reading grade level.

EXCEL, a small school designed to increase personalization and offer students multiple supports, had historically made individual student CST performance public. After adopting the new reading program, they are now posting student reading grade levels, prompting a buzz about reading not heard before. Reeves describes the open exchange and peer encouragement around increasing reading levels as “powerful” and relayed her own conversation with a student:

One student took the assessment in my office and got his result – “Huh, I’m at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level.” “Yeah, that what it says,” I said. And then we had a discussion about how the more you read the better you get, and this 7<sup>th</sup> grade level is not a life sentence, you just need to read more and build your vocabulary and fluency. So they respond to that. “I don’t want to be at a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level, I need to read more!”

In addition to the investment in reading program, EXCEL hired an additional teacher to provide focal students with additional mathematics support. In this, “behind the scenes” intervention, students are periodically released from elective classes to provide extra time focusing on issues raised by content area teachers.

### *Ongoing Leadership Needs*

While there is evidence that Impact 2012 helped guide school-level leaders, there are aspects of the leadership team program that may require attention in the coming years. First, Impact 2012 only held one leadership seminar during the 2008-2009 school year. While several principals made a point to attend instructional seminars with the inquiry teams, school leaders received little professional development outside of leadership coaching sessions.

Second, teachers and coaches report school leaders provided more support to the English language arts arm of the initiative than mathematics. This imbalance is most likely due to the fact that most school coaches were also ELA instructional coaches. Because school coaches had significantly more time with school principals, more information was likely shared regarding progress and strategies in the ELA inquiry teams. Thus, Impact 2012 math work was often disconnected from the ELA and leadership work at the schools. At Life Academy, one of our case study schools, math coach Jessica Gammell reported that the two coaches had very limited contact: “We are never at the schools at the same time (i.e., Gammell and the other 2012 coach).” Subsequently, the school/ELA coach did not have much knowledge of the work being done in mathematics, and there was a perception among the team members at Life that math was not as great a priority at the school as ELA and literacy.

A similar pattern emerged at EOSA, where the math coach Phil Tucher and principal Abdel-Qawi rarely had opportunities to meet. Tucher was spread across three school sites and was not in the role of school coach, which limited his opportunity to speak directly with the principal concerning math progress. As a former math teacher, Abdel-Qawi spent significant time with the ELA coach in order to increase his own knowledge of literacy instruction. This imbalance in contact contributed to a perception of greater leadership support of the work in ELA.

Finally, we found that in some schools, leadership *teams* were not active, which resulted in school coaches primarily coaching the principal and/or dedicating significant effort to organize school leadership teams. Work at our case study school Life Academy exemplifies the difficulty coaches had in centering their work in Impact 2012 when a leadership team did not previously exist. Because of coach Shane Safir’s history with Life Academy as a founding teacher, her leadership coaching had immediate traction and was based in a deep knowledge of the school culture and existing structures. She also has considerable experience as a school leader and school coach. Consequently, Life Academy’s leadership had strong interest in learning from Safir’s experience as a small schools’ principal, so her energy was directed toward helping the school create a functioning leadership team.

Safir coached the principal and assistant principal weekly. The leadership team was organized for the first time that year and Safir worked with the two school leaders to develop agendas for the meetings, facilitated the leadership team meetings and organized team work on school-wide projects. The year's primary project was designing the school's performance assessment system, which would embed concrete benchmarks and outcomes for student learning in the school's portfolio and exhibition work. Though the work of the leadership team was not focused on Impact 2012, Safir reasoned that the performance assessment system would ultimately support the Initiative:

Right now the only way that BAYCES has of measuring kids, focal students' progress, is through these standardized tests, CST, benchmark or whatever, and so that's what gets talked about the most. I don't know how accurate those measures are, number one. And number two, I know that they don't always correlate to college readiness. And so I think the performance assessment work will provide benchmarks and criteria for the longer term, what an excellent reader and writer is able to do, that then become the backdrop to these mini cycles. They're something bigger to measure kids' progress against.

Safir's leadership team coaching was specific to the needs of the school, attempted to create congruence between the school's mission and culture and the goals of Impact 2012, and was done in part to create conditions for Impact 2012 even if though it did not directly support Impact 2012 work.

As stated earlier in the report, the Year One leadership team goals were for leadership teams to 1) monitor and support classroom implementation; 2) begin to monitor interim student indicators (i.e. attendance, discipline, course completion, etc.) and begin their own inquiry process; and 3), host at least one public data/accountability event. Our findings explain the slow progress toward Impact 2012 goals for leadership. Though some teachers reported they were supported specifically to implement instructional practices, many did not report an increased presence of school leadership. Increased attention to developing leadership teams will likely assist the implementation of inquiry work on a whole-school level.

Despite early implementation challenges, there is evidence that school coaches have established strong relationships with school leaders and helped them to use student data to make system changes in their schools. EOSA principal Abdel-Qawi's reflection on data

analysis with Impact 2012 is an indication of the transformational potential of the project. He states, “We’ve looked at student data before, we’ve used data before to help inform instruction. This year with the assistance of Impact 2012 coaches, I think we’ve become more efficient at it; more able to do it and produce results.” And Years Two and Three have the promise to usher in even more results.

## **Part 7: Year One Recommendations**

BayCES leadership has been aware of and responsive to many of the challenges identified in this report. As such they have made some significant adjustments to their model in year 2 (2009-10), including changes at the program structure, program approach and implementation level. Some of the significant changes include having one inquiry team per school that focuses on either ELA or math, integrating subject coaching and school leadership coaching, addressing leadership development, focusing on instructional coaching, and having all inquiry teams use the same formative assessment tools.

With these BayCES programmatic changes in mind, we make the following recommendations to assist BayCES in meeting its objectives to strengthen the overall program, leadership, and coaching.

### **Strengthening the overall Impact 2012 program**

Given that program implementation is taking place across diverse school contexts, SRN suggests that Impact 2012:

- Establish a “common curriculum” and explicit expectations for all schools regarding the length of inquiry cycles, outcomes for inquiry teams, and where teacher interventions should take place (e.g., in class or after school).
- Continue to articulate and communicate the relationship between focal student work and classroom/school-level instructional decision-making
- Differentiate learning opportunities for struggling and novice teachers who may need more support.
- Continue to refine systems for monitoring of coach, teacher and student progress.

We believe that these steps will help BayCES achieve stronger and more consistent implementation of IMPACT 2012 and be less susceptible to the particular experience-base

of teachers and the variations in schools' existing academic cultures.

### **Strengthening Leadership**

- Develop Leadership Team “curriculum” – with a focus on assessment driven decision-making, in particular on the relationship between Benchmarks (in OUSD) and assessment that informs instruction daily/weekly.
- Communicate expectations for team configuration, meetings, and outcomes.
- Support leadership teams in providing instructional leadership in mathematics.

We believe that these strategies will help more fully engage leadership in Impact 2012 schools and provide the necessary support for leaders to, in turn, provide instructional support to their teachers.

### **Strengthening Coaching**

- Continue to build on BayCES' core strengths and expertise.
- Continue to increase coaches' capacity to help teachers understand instruction and connect instructional practices to student results.

School coaching is the lynchpin of this initiative and as such warrants particular attention. School coaching in equity issues, one of BayCES' core strengths and expertise, directly supports several aspects of the Initiative including: creating functioning inquiry teams of PLCs, creating learning partnerships with students in an intervention, and surfacing and changing teacher beliefs in service of changing practices. BayCES' expertise in equity would be a particularly important asset to coaches who are new to BayCES. Similarly, new coaches are likely to benefit from the same kind differentiated supports and approaches that BayCES is using with teachers in Impact 2012.